



Painting by James Peckham - The Battle of Chattanooga

Grant opens the gateway to the Deep South Tennessee, September - November 1863

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The Chattanooga affair was rather peculiar. Indeed, it began with an unconventional siege war and quickly turned into a conflict of movement ending in a pitched battle of grand style. Contrary to what one might imagine, the besieged maneuvered more than the besiegers who confined themselves to fatal immobility. The Chattanooga campaign was certainly the last act of a long tragedy that began on January 1, 1863.

IMPORTANCE OF TENNESSEE

The events that follow are closely related to the importance of the State of Tennessee in the Confederacy. Tennessee was the last southern State to secede. The decision was not made until June 8, 1861, nearly three months after the bombardment of Fort Sumter on April 11, 1861, and nearly six months after South Carolina took the big step as early as December 20, 1860. According to the census of 1860, the population of the State amounted to about 1,110,000 inhabitants of whom 827,000 were whites. Tennessee ranked second after Virginia in providing the largest military effort of the Confederacy. It recruited 135,000 soldiers, thus outclassing Virginia that mustered 120,000 men. In

1861, the State militia formed the nucleus of the Army of Tennessee, which was formally established on November 20, 1862. This large unit lined up at times more forces than those of the Northern Army of Virginia commanded by General Robert Lee.

Due to its geographical position, Tennessee constituted a barrier against a Union invasion of those States located farther south such as Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and to a lesser extent Florida. Its agricultural production was considerable and its heavy industry far from negligible, at least on a southern scale. Its railway network ideally ran from north to south. One line of particular interest is the Nashville & Chattanooga RR. Military statistics later emphasized the importance of the State of Tennessee by the eagerness of the belligerents to possess it during the Civil War. In this respect, Tennessee once more ranks second. In fact, of the 10,455 engagements recorded during the conflict, 1,462 took place on its territory. Virginia occupies the first place with 2,154 known actions.

THE 1863 CAMPAIGN

As of March 1862, the Federals occupied northern Tennessee and Nashville, the State capital. Southern Tennessee was still in the hands of the Confederacy. In the fall of 1862, the invasion of Kentucky by the Confederates had been postponed. The Army of the Cumberland was thus able to pursue its offensive on December 26. For the people of the South, 1863 began under the darkest auspices. On January 4, at Murfreesboro, south of Nashville, after a bloody and uncertain battle at Stones River, the Army of the Cumberland commanded by General William Rosecrans compelled the Army of Tennessee of General Braxton Bragg to abandon its position.

After six months of inactivity, Rosecrans resumed his advance. From June 23 to 30, 1863, by a series of intricate but clever maneuvers between Murfreesboro and Tullahoma, and meeting little resistance, he forced the Confederates to retreat beyond the Tennessee River. On September 7, under severe pressure, Bragg abandoned the important place of Chattanooga without a fight and retreated to northern Georgia.

On September 19 and 20, the Army of Tennessee now reinforced by two divisions of the 1st Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia under James Longstreet, inflicted a resounding defeat on the Army of the Cumberland along the Chickamauga River in Georgia. At the conclusion of this hard fought battle, the Northerners narrowly escaped annihilation and retreated to Chattanooga thanks to the resilience of General George Thomas, the *Roc of Chickamauga*.

BRAXTON BRAGG AND HIS GENERALS

The battle of Chickamauga was probably the only significant encounter that the Army of Tennessee won throughout the war. While delight and high morale should normally have prevailed in its ranks, it was quite the opposite. Large dissensions quickly arose between Braxton Bragg and his principal generals. He claimed that his subordinates had disobeyed his orders or not executed them properly. For their part, his officers asserted that Bragg was both physically and mentally unfit for command. He had not given the proper instructions, especially with regards to the pursuit of the defeated Army of the Cumberland.

However, since Bragg had the support of President Jefferson Davis, transfers and dismissals swiftly followed. On September 28, 1863, Generals Polk and Hindman were relieved of their command and sent to Atlanta. William Hardee replaced Polk. On the

same day, General Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry corps was merged with the forces of *Fighting Joe* Wheeler, one of Bragg's few supporters. Forrest was furious. Arriving at Bragg's headquarters he declared that he would never again obey his orders and even threatened his life if he interfered with him in the future. Such a virulent case of insubordination had never been recorded before! Fortunately for Bragg, Forrest was sent to Mississippi.

On October 4, twelve generals including James Longstreet, Simon Buckner, D. H. Hill and Patrick Cleburne signed a petition requesting the removal of Bragg at the head of the army. Breckinridge, although a notorious opponent of Bragg, did not sign it and thus managed to keep his position. Benjamin Cheatham, another antagonist, did not sign it either and discretely went on leave. The petition was handed over to President Davis during his visit to the army between October 9 and 14. But to no avail. General Bragg could do no wrong in the eyes of the President and he remained commander-in-chief of the Army of Tennessee. On the 15th, General D.H. Hill was removed, being wrongly accused of having drafted the petition of October 4, as investigations indicated that Buckner was the officer behind it. General Simon B. Buckner was the last to suffer the wrath of Bragg. Being a Kentuckian and the petition affair proved fatal. On October 29, at the instigation of Bragg, his Department of Eastern Tennessee was dissolved as was his corps. Buckner was demoted to division commander. Ultimate vexation, on November 22, his division was sent on the Knoxville front in Eastern Tennessee.

Relations were also tensed between Bragg and James *Pete* Longstreet who had won many laurels in Virginia. However, to dismiss such a respected general was no easy task. Despite everything, Bragg managed to remove his cumbersome bully on November 5 and sent him to wage war at Knoxville. On November 12, finally rid of all the troublemakers, Bragg reorganized his army into two corps under Generals John Breckinridge and William Hardee. He took the opportunity to smash the Tennessee-Kentucky lobby by dispersing the units of these States in different divisions. At the beginning of the campaign, Benjamin Cheatham had twenty-two Tennessee regiments in his division. He was now left with only six. Breckinridge's division no longer possessed any of the brigades present at Chickamauga. These measures led to a gloomy consequence: the men who were exasperated by their officers were now fuming at their general-in-chief. This state of affairs could only hinder the efficiency of the entire army.

CHANGE OF COMMAND IN THE UNION ARMY

In the Union camp, the battle of Chickamauga of September 20 had also led to significant changes at the senior command level. On the 28th, Generals McCook and Crittenden, respectively head of the XXth and XXIst Corps, were sent to Indianapolis to attend a court martial. Their corps was dissolved and the men transferred to the newly formed IVth Corps of General Gordon Granger. On October 16, the Mississippi Military Division was formed, uniting the Departments of Ohio, Cumberland and Tennessee. General Ulysses Grant, the victor of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, was put in charge of the new organization.

On October 17, Grant met Secretary of War Stanton in Cairo, Illinois. From that time on he became the most prominent Union commander. On the same day, General Rosecrans was dismissed. George Thomas, the *Rock of Chickamauga* replaced him and the XIVth Corps was transferred to his colleague John McAuley Palmer. On the 24th, General William T. Sherman, backed by Grant, was promoted commander of the Northern Army of Tennessee.

GENERAL SITUATION - IMPORTANCE OF CHATTANOOGA

As of September 22, 1863, and during the following two months, Chattanooga was to become the center of North America for both Federals and Confederates. Chattanooga was a small town of 2,500 inhabitants located in southeastern Tennessee, almost on the border with Georgia. Grant said it was more *“an idea than a city!”* It was also an important railway node where the Nashville & Chattanooga RR joined the Western & Atlantic RR. It was by and large the gateway to the Deep South. General Bragg knew the site well. He had already established his headquarters there in 1862 and more recently, from July 7 to September 7, when he abandoned the place although he had heavily fortified it. General Rosecrans finally entered the town two days later and his troops immediately began to improve the existing defenses. From September to November, large numbers of federal troops - eight army corps - gathered around the town. The Vth and XIVth Corps of the Army of the Cumberland already on the scene, the XIth and XIIth Corps of the Army of the Potomac from Virginia and the XVth and XVIIth Corps of the Army of Tennessee from Memphis, Tennessee, would take part in the forthcoming campaign. The IXth and XXIIIrd Corps based at Knoxville since September 2 would be kept in reserve. The entire force comprised seventeen divisions plus cavalry. On the confederate side, ten divisions and Wheeler's cavalry were scattered between Chattanooga and Knoxville.

CHATTANOOGA BESIEGED

Following their defeat at Chickamauga, the 35,000 men of the Army of the Cumberland and their thousands of horses as well as 2,500 unfortunate civilians, were besieged in Chattanooga as early as September 22. They were confined in a space of about two miles long by a mile wide, wedged between the Tennessee River and the 50,000 soldiers of the victorious Army of Tennessee. Houses and dwellings were stripped clean of their furniture, doors, window frames and wooden floors, which were used as fuel or construction materials. The Army of the Cumberland certainly destroyed the town like a swarm of locusts!

The Confederates judiciously settled on the neighboring heights: Missionary Ridge in the east and Lookout Mountain in the south. The Chattanooga Creek Valley was also occupied. No enemy movements could theoretically escape their attention. Unfortunately, no confederate troops occupied the north of the city. Indeed, the sinister Walden's Ridge was considered - wrongly - impracticable for any form of transportation. Braxton Bragg had decided to besiege and starve the enemy army while quietly awaiting their surrender. There was no question of an assault on the town since he knew the importance of its fortifications.

All the federal supplies came by railroad from Nashville and were unloaded at Bridgeport, Alabama. To bring these provisions to Chattanooga, there were five possibilities:

1. by railway, a one hour journey of 25 miles;
2. by a road along the railroad tracks;
3. by the Tennessee River;
4. by Haley Trace;
5. by the inhospitable Walden's Ridge, a 55 mile journey that took eight days in dry weather and twenty when the rain turned the track into a stream of mud, which was often the case during the late season.

The occupation of Lookout Mountain and the destruction of the Bridgeport railway bridge by the Confederates eliminated the first three possibilities from the outset. On October 8, Longstreet occupied Lookout Valley. His snipers prevented any movement at the Haley Trace exit. There was only one route left: Walden's Ridge. The journey proved an ordeal for both men and pack animals. It was sometimes necessary to tie sixteen mules to a wagon to progress through the quagmire. Thousands of exhausted beasts died along the road during the journey.

CONFEDERATE CAVALRY IN ACTION

General Bragg possessed a large cavalry composed of Joe Wheeler's Corps and the independent cavalry brigade of Philip Roddey, a combined force of about 20,000 horsemen. On September 25, in order to tighten the blockade further, he decided to use it to disrupt the long-range enemy communications. He even envisioned the participation of Stephen Dill Lee's mounted troops stationed in Alabama. On October 1, Wheeler's riders bypassed Chattanooga by way of Walden's Ridge and on the following day, at Anderson's Cross Road, they fell on a large supply convoy of 800 wagons stretching a mile long, of which they destroyed 50 percent. Wharton's division took McMinnville on October 3 and Wheeler advanced on Murfreesboro, a bold movement that created immense panic in Nashville. However, the Union's cavalry managed to block him. On October 7, Wheeler was intercepted and beaten at Farmington on the Duck River. Two days later, he hastily re-crossed the Tennessee River at Rogersville.

The outcome of the raid was rather mixed. Although Wheeler had indeed destroyed 400 wagons and killed some 1,000 mules, he had nevertheless lost 2,000 men in the process. In fact, Wheeler's Corps was no longer operational and its effectiveness greatly diminished. Furthermore, its already disorderly men had become out of control. On October 26, Wheeler was back in Chattanooga. Northern communications would no longer be interrupted. Colonel Roddey's Cavalry Brigade started its own raid on Walden's Ridge at the same time as Wheeler's but vanished into the wild. Reappearing on October 21, Roddey admitted not having achieved much, apart from crossing the Tennessee River and re-crossing it at full gallop. On October 12, General Stephen D. Lee was in Decatur. Since Roddey had not joined him and Wheeler was out of action, he remained cautiously in Alabama.

THE ARRIVAL OF ULYSSES GRANT

On October 16, 1863, General Grant was still in Cairo, Illinois. On the 21st, he reached Stevenson, Alabama, where he met the unfortunate Rosecrans. The overall state of affairs was not bright. After receiving the order to hold Chattanooga at all costs, General Thomas telegraphed on October 18: "*We will keep the city until we are starving.*" This was about to happen since the troops were already on quarter rations. The situation was no better in the opposite camp. Confederate supplies had to be shipped by rail from Atlanta to Chickamauga Station. Meanwhile, the Atlanta depots had run dry and Colonel Lucius Northrop who was in charge of the provisions admitted his inability to resupply. Unsurprisingly, between September and October 1863, 2,149 southern soldiers deserted, including an officer on Bragg's staff. Soldiers on both sides were almost in the same boat and since the enemy outposts were very close to each other, cases of fraternization were not uncommon. Grant was now enduring the hard journey on Walden's Ridge. On his way, he came across the wagon debris and the

carcasses of thousands of dead animals. On the evening of October 23, he finally arrived exhausted at Thomas' headquarters in Chattanooga. His first concern was to restore the supply of his troops, called the *Cracker Line*. To achieve this, he planned an audacious amphibious operation with Thomas and William *Baldy* Smith, the commander of the army engineers.

BROWN'S FERRY - OCTOBER 27

On October 27 at 3 AM, in the greatest secrecy, the 3,500 men of General John B. Turchin, nicknamed *Mad Russian*, and three artillery batteries left town and marched to Brown's Ferry. At the same time, 1,800 men from General William Hazen's division took place in 60 pontoon boats and quietly descended the Tennessee River. They landed by surprise at Brown's Ferry and silenced the terrified enemy outposts. A pontoon bridge was then built allowing Turchin and his men to cross the river. The two Alabama regiments defending the opposite bank were no match for the assailants and were forced to flee. The whole affair had been carried out smoothly and Brown's Ferry was firmly into federal hands. As Confederate General Law had very judiciously suggested, an entire division should have been deployed in this area!

HOOKER ENTERS THE SCENE - OCTOBER 28

On October 26, important Union reinforcements left Bridgeport, Alabama. On the evening of the 28th, they joined their comrades at Brown's Ferry after crossing Lookout Valley without major problems. They had progressed under the scrutiny of an impassive James Longstreet who firmly believed that this was simply a diversion and expected a main attack by way of Trenton, which would never materialize. His superior Braxton Bragg was less serene. These newcomers were the two divisions of Howard's XIth Corps and Geary's Division of the XIIth Corps, 20,000 men in total, a majority of them Germans. They belonged to the Army of the Potomac operating in Virginia and were under the command of General Joseph Hooker. On September 25, these troops had embarked on trains in Virginia. Passing through Nashville, Tennessee, they had arrived at Bridgeport, Alabama, as early as October 2.

WAUHATCHIE - OCTOBER 29

General Bragg was furious. The Yankees were comfortably maneuvering in Lookout Valley and obviously nothing much was being done to stop them. On the evening of October 28, General Longstreet finally decided to send Micah Jenkins' only division in Lookout Valley whereas those of McLaws and Walker were kept idle. The next day, at Wauhatchie, Bratton's South Carolina Brigade finally attacked the rearguard of Geary's Division that was isolated from Hooker's main force. Assaulted on three sides, Geary was surprised but quickly recovered. His mules panicked and bolted through the ranks of Hampton's Legion. Mistaking this stampede with a cavalry charge, the rebels ceased their attack and retreated.

Meanwhile, at Smith's Hill, between Wauhatchie and Brown's Ferry, McLaws' two unfortunate brigades had been unable to stop the progress of the XIth Corps heading for Geary's rescue. However, when it arrived at Wauhatchie, Bratton's Confederates had already been routed. Longstreet who was responsible for this part of the front had failed all along. Since the beginning of the siege he seemed to have been very careless. It was

not without relief that Braxton Bragg saw his former subordinate leave for Knoxville on November 5. The only downside of Longstreet's departure was that he took with him the two divisions that he originally brought in September. This reduced the besieger's force of 10,000 precious men.

REOPENING OF THE CRACKER LINE

The *Cracker Line* was now definitely reopened. On October 29, the steamboat *Chattanooga* landed 40,000 rations at Kelly's Ferry. This was not enough to satisfy the hungry garrison but it was a good start. Grant then ordered thirty railcars of supplies to be sent each day from Nashville to Bridgeport. The siege of Chattanooga was virtually over. The battle of the same name could now commence.

SHERMAN AND THE XVth AND XVIIth CORPS - NOVEMBER 16-21, 1863

The Federals continued to receive reinforcements. Joseph Hooker had arrived since October 28 with three divisions from Virginia. Between November 16 and 21, He was joined by his colleague William Tecumseh Sherman who brought with him four divisions of the XVth and XVIIth Corps of the new Army of Tennessee. These were arriving from Mississippi with more than 20,000 infantrymen. Stephen D. Lee's cavalry had harassed them in Mississippi and Alabama but had barely managed to slow down the irresistible progression of Sherman's columns.

Unknown to the Confederates, these divisions bivouacked north of the town, beyond the Tennessee River. Losing sight of them, Braxton Bragg thought they had continued their journey to Knoxville. He was wrong. Grant's astuteness had succeeded. The federal forces were growing stronger by the day while those the Confederates were weakening. As early as November 22, Bragg sent Buckner's and Cleburne's Divisions to Knoxville to reinforce James Longstreet and Wheeler's cavalry already there since November 18. Practically deprived of mounted troops, he knew nothing of the enemy movements. In doubt, Cleburne's Division and Buckner's Brigade were held back at the last moment. However, the rest of Buckner's forces had already embarked at Chickamauga Station and could not be called back.

GRANT'S DISPOSITIONS

On the evening of November 21, Grant's army was now complete. He undoubtedly possessed powerful means: thirteen infantry divisions, the garrison of Chattanooga, an unused cavalry brigade and the engineers of the efficient General *Baldy* Smith, together more than 60,000 men supported by 200 guns, not mentioning those of the forts. He was finally ready to go on the offensive. On the opposite side, Bragg had under his command seven small divisions comprising 35,000 infantry and perhaps 150 field guns. On the other hand, he had no reserves. The next goal for General Grant was no other than the total annihilation of the Confederate army. To achieve this, he divided his forces into three factions: on the left, Sherman with six divisions; in the center, Thomas at Chattanooga with four divisions and on the right, Hooker with three divisions. The plan was as follows: main attack by Sherman - secondary attack by Thomas - diversion by Hooker.

ORCHARD KNOB OR INDIAN HILL - NOVEMBER 23

General Grant was in great need of an observation point close to the front line, all the more since rebel deserters reported a confederate retreat. This proved to be false. The only noticeable movements were those of Cleburne and Buckner departing for Knoxville. However, the general-in-chief still wanted more information. Between Chattanooga and Missionary Ridge, midway between the front lines, stood a mound called Orchard Knob or Indian Hill. This was exactly what Grant was looking for. Unfortunately, the knoll was in the hands of the Confederates. It was therefore essential to take it from them by all necessary means. More than a third of the northern army, or 5 divisions out of 13, would be involved in the operation.

On November 23, at 1 PM, Grant put on a great show for his staff and the astonished Confederates: 25,000 men left Chattanooga and lined up in the plain, as if on parade. Bragg and his senior lieutenants were bewildered. Only General John Breckinridge, commanding one of the two confederate corps seemed to have understood the obvious: the Yankees were about to attack. Around 2 PM, the situation became clear. With Howard's XIth Corps to the north and Baird's Division of the XIVth Corps to the south, Wood and Sheridan's Divisions launched an assault on the coveted hill that was defended by the skeletal 24th and 28th regiments of Alabama. More than 14,000 Union soldiers were pitched against 600 Confederates!

There was no doubt on the outcome. The fight quickly turned to the advantage of the Federals with their superior numbers. Many Confederates surrendered while some survivors of the blue storm fled to the top of Missionary Ridge where they collapsed from exhaustion. The rebel artillery finally opened fire but was quickly silenced by the guns at forts Wood and Negley. Fort Negley alone aligned 33 guns! Shortly before 3 PM, the fight was over. The Northerners had lost 131 men, the Confederates perhaps 175. Orchard Knob had changed hands. During a couple of hours, the enemy artillery resumed its bombardment but without much success. Dusk was now falling, too late for a counterattack. On the morning of November 24, General Grant installed his headquarters firmly on Indian Hill.

TUNNEL HILL - FIRST PHASE - NOVEMBER 24

From this moment on, the pace of battle accelerated. Sherman's troops were still hidden in the woods north of Chattanooga. They would soon come into action. Their aim was Tunnel Hill on the northern flank of Bragg's army. Further north, along the North Chickamauga Creek, 116 pontoons boats prepared and camouflaged by the unrelenting *Baldy* Smith were waiting for the go ahead. On November 24 at midnight, the Confederate outposts were discreetly captured. Unnoticed by the rebels and even the federal sentries, the boats quietly descended the Tennessee River. At 2 AM, they reached the South Chickamauga Creek where the engineers assembled a 1,300 feet long pontoon bridge. Between 6.30 AM and noon, 3 divisions or 12,000 men crossed the Tennessee River. Around 1 PM, with the aid of the ex-confederate steamer *Dumbar*, the rearguard of Ewing's Division was on the other side of the river. Sherman's army was now at full strength.

At 1.30 PM, Sherman ordered to march forward. At 3 PM, his troops crossed the Western & Atlantic RR tracks. An hour later, they drove away a Texas brigade from one of the many hills in the area and then arrived north of Missionary Ridge. Sherman believed his mission was accomplished. However, relying on poor maps and having

neglected to make any serious reconnaissance, he had gone astray. Tunnel Hill was the next prominence. As there seemed to be few enemy forces around, he could still take the real Tunnel Hill. However, Sherman preferred to play it safe and ordered his men to entrench for the night. He had missed a great opportunity especially since General Howard had sent Bushbeck's Brigade north to liaise with his XIth Corps.

Sherman had not encountered many Confederates so far. And yet they were there. Cleburne's Division had been recalled from Chickamauga Station in the afternoon of November 23. At dawn, Braxton Bragg had noticed the smoke from the *Dumbar* and also seen Sherman's Divisions cross the Tennessee River. Was this a feint or the main attack? He did not know. He could moreover not weaken any of his position to strengthen another. To save time, Cleburne had engaged his Texas brigade in the afternoon of the 24th. Wright's Tennessee Brigade had accidentally skirmished with Sherman's left flank on South Chickamauga Creek. Meanwhile, Cleburne had concentrated the bulk of his division around Tunnel Hill, the real one.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - NOVEMBER 24

As Sherman wandered through the northern part of Missionary Ridge, Joseph Hooker sent 10,000 men into a diversion attack on Lookout Mountain, at the southern end of the battlefield. His artillery had been reinforced by the guns massed at Mocassin Bend, which represented a quarter of Grant's artillery. Hooker divided his three divisions into two groups of equal strength. By 10 AM, they had crossed Lookout Creek and begun the painful ascent. Osterhaus' forces attacked from west to east and Geary's from south to north. The troops advanced in the fog, encountering little resistance. Their junction took place at Cravens Farm. To counter the enemy, Confederate General Carter Stevenson was in charge of two divisions or about 7,000 men, which seemed sufficient for a defensive fight. However, these forces were scattered all over Lookout Mountain, at its base, on its slopes and at its summit.

At Cravens Farm, only 1,500 men from Walthall's Brigade were available to oppose the advance of Hooker's 10,000 infantrymen. Although totally surprised and stunned by the intense federal bombardment, Walthall resisted until 1 PM, then retreated a quarter of a mile further east and joined Moore's Brigade. At 1.30 PM, Pettus' Brigade descended from the summit and reinforced the confederate line that miraculously held until the evening. The rebels withdrew during the night. Bragg ordered them to redeploy on the right flank where the fighting would no doubt resume the next day. At first light of November 25, the men of the 8th Kentucky reached the summit and planted the Union flag to the delight of the rest of the army stationed in the plain and in the town of Chattanooga. The "battle over the clouds" was over. Hooker had won it cheaply at the cost of only 481 casualties whereas the enemy had lost 1,251 men, including 1,000 prisoners.

ROSSVILLE GAP - NOVEMBER 25

On the next day at 10 AM, Hooker resumed his advance eastward. He had to seize Rossville Gap and outflank the Confederates on Missionary Ridge. Before noon, he was moving along the Chattanooga River. However, the fleeing rebels had destroyed the bridge and he lost three precious hours repairing it and having his troops cross the river. Finally at 3 PM, Hooker's three divisions were ready for an attack on Rossville Gap where was stationed Holtzclaw's Brigade consisting of four unfortunate Alabama

regiments isolated at the southern end of the battlefield. Also present was General John Breckinridge who was theoretically supposed to be at Missionary Ridge with his three divisions. He had suddenly been concerned with his left flank and found himself in Rossville. He was completely intoxicated, having drunk bourbon since the day before. He would thus be of no help. The overwhelming federal forces assaulted the Confederates from three sides simultaneously. General Breckinridge's son was taken prisoner during the first contact. Some 27 officers and 679 men surrendered while others disappeared into the wild. They were captured further north by Carlin's Brigade. By 6 PM, Holtzclaw's Brigade had ceased to exist.

TUNNEL HILL - FINAL PHASE - NOVEMBER 25

Just as Hooker was attacking Breckinridge and Holtzclaw at Rossville Gap, General Sherman resumed his assault on Tunnel Hill where the Confederates had established their main defensive position. At dawn, he had nine brigades or 17,000 men available. General Jefferson C. Davis' Division was near the Tennessee River and too far away to support the attack if necessary. On the opposite side, General Patrick Cleburne could only align three of his four brigades, about 4,000 men. Tunnel Hill was only defended by the 1,300 men of his Texas Brigade. Around 9.30 AM, Cleburne's Division was fortunately reinforced by Kentucky's Orphan Brigade and by Brown's and Cumming's Brigades of Stevenson's Division, both survivors of Lookout Mountain.

The terrain was characterized by a series of steep climbs and descents, a real ordeal for the infantryman. It favored a defensive action and could be put to good use. A deep ravine also separated the enemies. In addition, the rebel artillery dominated the field. Sherman was about to send half of his brigades to the slaughterhouse, one after the other, omitting to commit the other half of his forces. At 10.30 AM, Corse's Brigade attacked from the north while Loomis' Brigade proceeded from the west. Around noon, Loomis was reinforced by two "German" regiments from Pennsylvania belonging to Bushbeck's Brigade of the XIth Corps. At 1 PM, Matthies' Brigade was in action between those of Corse and Loomis.

At 2 PM, somewhat irritated by the poor evolution of the situation, Grant requested the help of Schurz's Division of the XIth Corps. However, it failed to respond to the call. As for Davis' Division, it remained idle all day by the river, as did the brigades of Alexander and Cockerill. Smith's Brigade that had skillfully slipped to the left and on the rear of the Confederates was recalled without any reason. At 2.30 PM, Raum's Brigade advanced between those of Matthias and Corse.

Maneuvering on his inner lines, Cleburne deployed the men gathered from neighboring units. His artillery was wreaking havoc. At 4 PM, the Texas Brigade reinforced by regiments from Arkansas, Tennessee and Georgia charged down Tunnel Hill, counter-attacking and destroying what was left of Raum's Brigade. At 5 PM, the Federals were on the retreat. Sherman went no further. His troops lost more than 2,000 men, including 500 prisoners. The Confederates suffered only a few hundred casualties and captured eight flags. Cleburne's victory was indisputable although he had not used all of his resources. Govan's and Lowrey's Brigades of his own division and the Kentucky brigade had seen limited action.

Although the rebel resistance had collapsed elsewhere, Tunnel Hill remained strangely in the hands of the Confederates.

MISSIONARY RIDGE - NOVEMBER 25

General Grant was perfectly aware of the difficulties that his favorite subordinate Sherman was now facing. He was annoyed by the turn of events on his left flank. The same was true of the confusing attitude of General Gordon Granger, commander of the IVth Corps. Indeed, like Napoleon, he had spent much time personally directing the fire of his artillery rather than concentrating his efforts on the movements of his army corps! Grant was forced to relieve Sherman. He had to attack in the center and the originally planned secondary attack would become the main thrust. Grant was about to lose his nerves. The assault on Missionary Ridge was about to begin.

CONFEDERATE POSITION

The enemy position on Missionary Ridge seemed formidable. It barred the horizon to the east for more than four miles, overlooking the town of Chattanooga. The Confederates had occupied it since the end of September 1863, probably in great strength and it was supposed to be strongly fortified. To reach the summit, one had to climb a steep slope. However, in reality, the position presented some drawbacks that would prove fatal to its defenders. The artillery posted on the summit could possibly bombard Chattanooga but without doing much damage because it was out of range. It could nevertheless reach the plain below very efficiently, but was unable to cover the base of the mountain, even when lowering the guns at the maximum. The slope was too steep and there was unfortunately a blind spot. The confederate engineer in charge had been ordered to fortify the ridge. However, his efforts concentrated on the “topographic” peak, the highest point. In fact, he ought to have fortified the “military” ridge, that is to say the highest point from where one can oversee everything happening below. From a certain position, the infantrymen could no longer see the attackers who would fall on them unexpectedly. The field fortifications were rudimentary because the works had not seriously begun before November 22, 1863. On the 25th, the day of the attack, they were obviously far from completed.

The troops in the trenches were not really numerous. The four mile front was held by three divisions, about 15,000 men and 50 guns. However, their disposition was odd. General Bragg had placed half of his infantry in a first line of trenches at the base of the mountain, with orders to fire a salvo and then climb up as quickly as possible, assuming having disorganized the attackers. In reality, this order was not executed. Some men resisted until they were overwhelmed or most often captured. Those who withdrew were shot in the back by the storming federal soldiers or hindered the gunfire of their comrades posted above. In any event, they were unavailable to man the main position above. The other half of the defenders was aligned on the mountain summit, but they were so few that they were spread every three feet on a single line.

FEDERAL ASSAULT

On the Union side, General George Thomas, commanding the Army of the Cumberland, had aligned his four divisions of 20,000 men in the plain as on the parade ground. Grant had clearly limited his objective, which was to seize the enemy’s first line at the base of the mountain. If all went well, he would advise further. In fact, Grant had only limited confidence in the Army of the Cumberland, which had been beaten at

Chickamauga in September. At 4 PM, the firing of six guns gave the signal to attack. The artillery unleashed on both sides. The Union infantry quickly neutralized the enemy's first line of defense. Following the action from Orchard Knob through his binoculars, Grant could not believe his eyes: instead of halting as ordered, the infantry was continuing the ascent of the ridge. Who gave the order? Apparently no one! Grant was furious, apprehending a new Tunnel Hill disaster. However, the irresistible advance continued. Hazen's brigade of Wood's Division reached the top first and poured an enfilade fire on the defenders. The Confederates yielded in panic. Their line had been broken through everywhere. Stewart's, Bate's and Anderson's Divisions had melted away. The rebels surrendered en masse or fled at full speed. Much of their artillery, including the symbolic *Lady Breckinridge* and *Lady Buckner* guns was captured by Thomas' men.

By 5.15 PM, the battle was over and Missionary Ridge was entirely in the hands of Union troops. Generals Bragg, Breckinridge and their entire staff narrowly escaped capture. Breckinridge's Corps had been annihilated. Cheatham's Division that had lined up on the ridge to the right of Anderson's had only taken a small part in the action and was retreating in fairly good order. Walker's Division had not been attacked at all and withdrew even more easily. During the night, the Confederates regrouped painfully at Chickamauga Station. Their rearguard set fire to a considerable amount of supplies that had been gathered with great difficulty. The army was no longer able to transport them, which caused much anger among the troops since they had been starving for weeks.

The victors did not pursue their foe. It was already dark. Fog covered the battlefield and the troops were tired, hungry and cold. Only Sheridan's Division advanced towards Chickamauga Station but finally halted. On Tunnel Hill, General Patrick Cleburne was still relishing his afternoon victory, unaware of the drama unfolding on his left. Finally, his superior General William Hardee informed him that the confederate center had been crushed and that he was at risk of being killed or captured. A full retreat was thus ordered. The Battle of Chattanooga was over as would soon be the campaign.

RETREAT

After the usual congratulations for his great victory at Chattanooga, General Grant received from President Lincoln an urgent order to liberate Knoxville where General Ambrose Burnside was besieged by Longstreet's troops since mid-November. This disturbed his plan, which was to pursue the main enemy with maximum force. Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee was in full retreat on the axis Chickamauga Station - Ringgold, Georgia. To meet the presidential requirements, Grant detached Granger IVth Corps and Sherman's XVth Corps. When they finally arrived in Knoxville on December 5, *Pete* Longstreet had left the scene since the previous day! To embark on the pursuit, Grant had only 30,000 men at his disposal, which greatly reduced his chances of success. The Confederate army was retreating towards Dalton, Georgia, via Ringgold Gap. The perilous mission of securing its rearguard was assigned to the two barely fit divisions of States Rights Gist and Patrick Cleburne, the victor of Tunnel Hill.

GRAYSVILLE - NOVEMBER 26

On November 26, at Graysville, Georgia, the XIVth and XIth Union Corps seriously mauled Gist's Division. The latter escaped annihilation and ceased to be operational.

The next day at 2 AM, Gist crossed Ringgold Gap and joined the bulk of the rebel army near Dalton, Georgia.

RINGGOLD GAP - NOVEMBER 27

Bragg's rearguard now consisted solely of Cleburne's Division, nearly complete with its four brigades of 4,157 men and two guns. On November 27, at 10 AM, at Ringgold Gap, Georgia, the 10,000 or 12,000 men of Hooker's three divisions attacked Cleburne without surprise. For four hours the Confederates successfully repulsed the enemy's incessant assaults. Finally, the Federals left 509 dead and wounded on the field while Cleburne lost only 20 dead and 201 wounded. The bulk of Bragg's army with its baggage train and one hundred guns managed to move on without further harassment. An exasperated Grant ordered the end of the pursuit to the great satisfaction of his exhausted troops. This put a definite end to the campaign.

LOSSES

Casualties during the Chattanooga campaign were relatively light. The Union lost about 5,800 men of which reportedly 753 killed, 4,722 wounded and 349 missing, representing about 10% of the force engaged. The Confederates suffered approximately 8,600 killed, wounded or prisoners and abandoned about 50 guns or a third of their artillery. Grant also claimed the capture of some 2,000 rebel stragglers between Chickamauga Station and Ringgold. In total, confederate losses amounted to a quarter of the men who fought in the campaign.

EPILOGUE

Between November 27 and 28, 1863, the city of Dalton, Georgia, witnessed the pathetic procession of what was left of the Army of Tennessee. There were some 28,000 survivors, many of whom had neither weapons nor shoes. The next day, General Bragg, sick and depressed, was finally forced to hand his resignation. President Davis had no other choice than to accept it. On the night of December 2, with no one to greet him farewell, Bragg discreetly boarded a train bound eastward. He would never again command a large army in the field. General Hardee, his mind focused on his forthcoming marriage, took over his duties until December 22. General Leonidas Polk then replaced him until the 26th of the same month. Finally, on December 27, 1863, the Army of Tennessee was given a new commander-in-chief who, far from being President Davis' favorite, enjoyed the respect and confidence of the military. He was General Joseph Eggleston Johnston upon who now rested the last hopes of the Confederacy in the western theater of the war.

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