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# A. P. HILL

## *Lee's Forgotten General*

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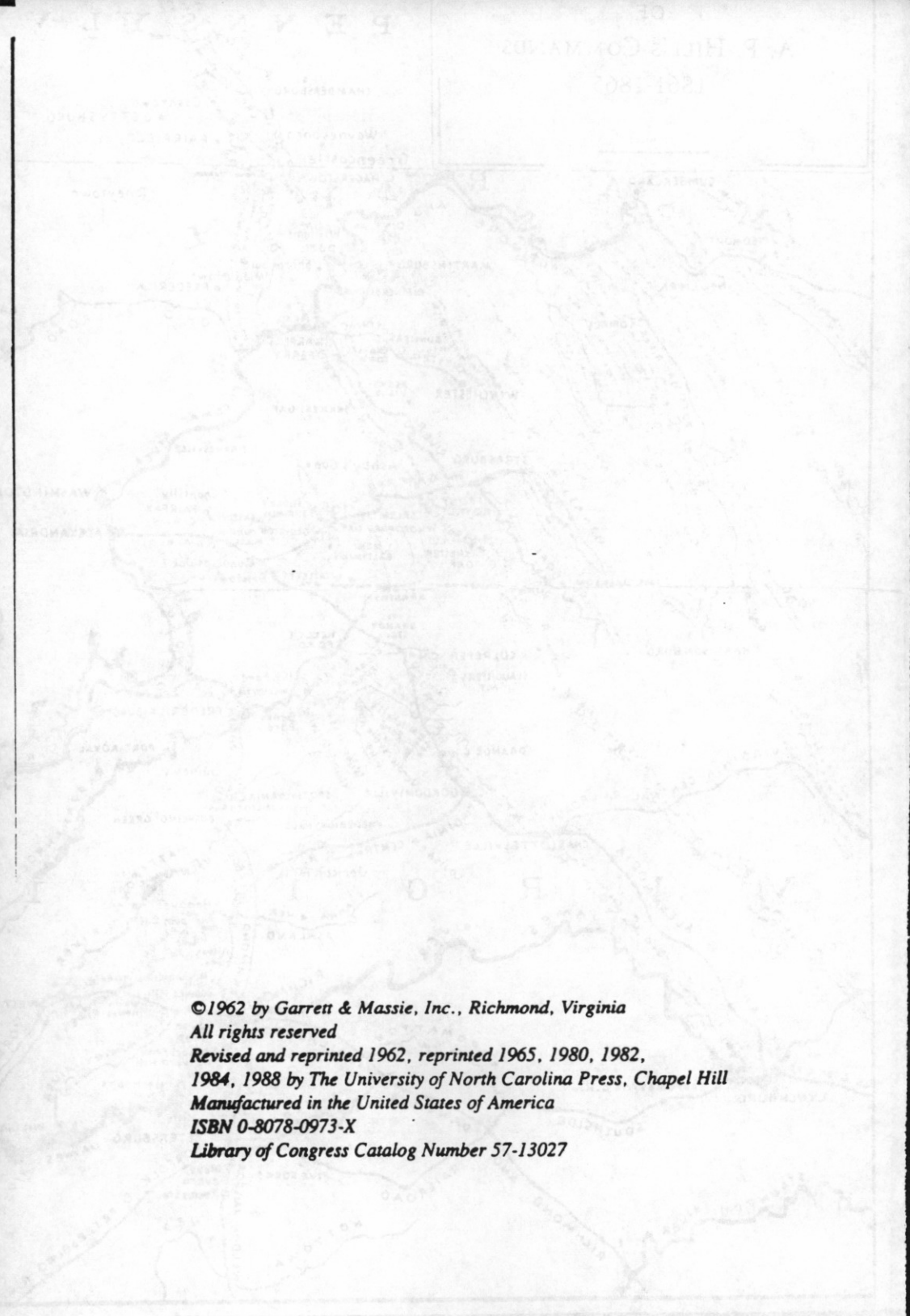
WILLIAM WOODS HASSLER



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## CHAPTER XVI

### "I Made The Attack Too Hastily"

(Bristoe Station)

BY THE flickering light of a lone candle in Hill's tent, Lee and Hill planned the army's retreat from Gettysburg. After studying a map spread between their campstools the two commanders agreed that unless Meade assumed the offensive, the Third Corps, which had suffered most heavily,<sup>1</sup> should lead the retreat after dark on Saturday, July 4. As the Federals showed no signs of stirring the next day, Lane's brigade led the long procession through a driving rain along the short route to Hagerstown via Fairfield and Waynesboro.<sup>2</sup> Much of the way Lee and Hill rode together at the head of the column.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately this road was not macadamized and the wagons and artillery carved deep ruts in the muddy surface rendering it almost impassable.<sup>4</sup> Veterans plodding through the dense mud acquired a coat of mire which completely obscured the color of their clothing.<sup>5</sup> Added to these woes was the disheartening news that the enemy had partially destroyed the pontoon bridge at Falling Waters over which Hill had crossed into Maryland and over which the army now intended to retreat.<sup>6</sup> As the Potomac was swollen to swimming depth<sup>7</sup> which precluded fording, Hill's Corps erected breastworks at Hagerstown where the troops engaged in skirmishing and artillery duels with the enemy.<sup>8</sup>

By Monday, July 13 the waters had subsided sufficiently for Hill to pull his famished men out of the trenches and start them

<sup>1</sup> Allan listed Lee's losses at Gettysburg as follows: Longstreet's Corps—7,659; Ewell's Corps—6,087; and Hill's Corps—8,982. S.H.S.P., 4, 34.

<sup>2</sup> O.R., 27, Part 2, 322, 608; Welch, 69; S.H.S.P., 2, 46.

<sup>3</sup> N. C. Regts., II, 662.

<sup>4</sup> Welch, 69.

<sup>5</sup> N. C. Regts., II, 587.

<sup>6</sup> S.H.S.P., 2, 46.

<sup>7</sup> Caldwell, 105.

<sup>8</sup> N. C. Regts., II, 478, 587; *Ibid.*, IV, 183; S.H.S.P., 5, 45.



toward the repaired bridge at Falling Waters<sup>9</sup> where Lee anxiously awaited the withdrawal of his army in the face of Meade's threatening advance. While Ewell's men shouldered the receding waters farther upstream at Williamsport, Longstreet's Corps and the division of R. H. Anderson crossed the pontoons at Falling Waters.<sup>10</sup> Heth's and Pender's divisions at the rear of the infantry column trudged all night through ankle-deep mud to reach the heights bordering the Potomac early Tuesday morning.<sup>11</sup>

Here Hill halted the two divisions and ordered Heth to form in line of battle facing northward "to let the wagons and artillery get over the river."<sup>12</sup> No skirmishers were posted as friendly cavalry presumably screened the retiring column from the enemy, and after stacking their arms the exhausted footsoldiers dropped off to sleep on the wet ground.<sup>13</sup>

Later in the morning Hill directed Heth to move both divisions across the river. Pender's division had just started to cross when a squadron of Federal cavalry suddenly debouched from the woods into an open field about half a mile from Heth's line.<sup>14</sup> This group of about forty-five horsemen, which Heth and his staff mistook for a unit of Confederate cavalry passed earlier in the morning, nonchalantly advanced to within 175 yards before halting. Some of Heth's men became nervously suspicious of the blue-coated cavalry, but Heth cautioned them, "No, don't fire."<sup>15</sup> Then at the command, "Draw sabers, charge!" the mounted force quickly overran Heth's epaulements crying "Surrender you damn rebels, surrender." An enemy sergeant interposed between Heth and Pettigrew, and in the ensuing melee Pettigrew was unhorsed. As he started to rise the sergeant shot him in the groin.<sup>16</sup>

As the rudely awakened defenders scrambled for their muskets, Heth rode rapidly along the line excitedly exhorting his troops

<sup>9</sup> O.R., 27, Part 2, 609, 639; S.H.S.P., 2, 225; Caldwell, 106; *N. C. Regts.*, II, 587.

<sup>10</sup> S.H.S.P., 2, 46, 225.

<sup>11</sup> Welch, 70; O.R., 27, Part 2, 639.

<sup>12</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 375, 662; S.H.S.P., 2, 47; Dunaway, 97.

<sup>13</sup> Dunaway, 97.

<sup>14</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 375

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 560.

<sup>16</sup> Heth MS, 150; Dunaway, 98.

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<sup>17</sup> Dunaway, 98.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*; Heth MS, 150

<sup>19</sup> O.R., 27, Part 2, 60

<sup>20</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 56

<sup>21</sup> O.R., 27, Part 2, 60

<sup>22</sup> O.R., 27, Part 2, 31

<sup>23</sup> Caldwell, 109.

<sup>24</sup> Fremantle, 215.

<sup>25</sup> Cullum, No. 1325.



to "Keep cool, men, keep cool!"<sup>17</sup> A color-bearer in Brockenbrough's brigade exclaimed, "Come on boys; it's nothing but cavalry," and ran forward with his bullet-ridden flag. Others followed and within five minutes the entire Federal squad of Illinois cavalymen was killed, wounded or captured.<sup>18</sup> Only two Confederates were killed in this brief scuffle, but as Hill lamented, "Unfortunately for the service, one of these was the gallant and accomplished Pettigrew,"<sup>19</sup> beloved by his men as "the Sir Philip Sidney of the South."<sup>20</sup>

Soon another enemy force appeared and demonstrated vigorously, whereupon Hill ordered Heth to retire his troops across the river. This was accomplished with the loss of about 500 men and two pieces of artillery which had to be abandoned.<sup>21</sup> After the last soldier had crossed, the bridge was swung loose from the Virginia shore.<sup>22</sup>

Safe on Virginia soil, the Third Corps slowly threaded a circuitous route to Culpeper Court House and thence to Orange Court House where Hill proceeded to rehabilitate his shattered and disheartened command.<sup>23</sup> Shortly after establishing headquarters at Orange Court House, he called on Cadmus Wilcox, his old friend and classmate to inform him of his probable promotion to Major General to succeed Pender as commander of the Light Division. Wilcox, in his short round jacket and battered straw hat,<sup>24</sup> resignedly dissented. When Hill asked why, he answered that there was no particular reason other than his past disappointments at being passed over following his performance at Williamsburg, Gaines' Mill, and Salem Church. Consequently, he was now one of the oldest brigadiers in the service, his commission at that rank antedating Hill's.<sup>25</sup> However, he said he had ceased to dwell upon his situation as he hoped to be relieved soon from the army.

<sup>17</sup> Dunaway, 98.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*; Heth MS, 150.

<sup>19</sup> O.R., 27, Part 2, 609.

<sup>20</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 568.

<sup>21</sup> O.R., 27, Part 2, 609.

<sup>22</sup> O.R., 27, Part 2, 310; *N. C. Regts.*, II, 478.

<sup>23</sup> Caldwell, 109.

<sup>24</sup> Fremantle, 215.

<sup>25</sup> Cullum, No. 1325.

Hill expressed regret at this possibility and said he hoped Wilcox would remain in the service.<sup>26</sup> A week after this interview Wilcox received his promotion as Hill had predicted, and he stayed with his new command until Appomattox.<sup>27</sup>

Despite numerous desertions which reached nine one day in Wilcox's division,<sup>28</sup> Hill managed to restore the morale of his troops. With the cooperation of Major J. G. Field, his Chief Commissary, the Third Corps was better supplied than any in the army.<sup>29</sup> Lean bodies fattened on plentiful rations of beef, bacon, flour, sugar, potatoes, and vegetables.<sup>30</sup> Provision for care of the sick and wounded improved so markedly that hospitalized patients no longer were considered hopeless.<sup>31</sup> One veteran later recalled the cheerful spirit in Hill's Corps during this period when "our elastic spirits revived from the depression of July, and satisfaction with the present and confidence of the future was almost unanimously expressed."<sup>32</sup>

Morale in the Third Corps was further strengthened by a widespread surge of religious fervor. The hitherto perfunctory attitude of battle-jaded veterans toward religious observances was now supplanted by genuine interest and concern in spiritual matters. Even the dullest preachers drew large, attentive congregations in crude chapels built by the men.<sup>33</sup> Services were held almost every day<sup>34</sup> followed at night by hymn singing and prayer services. Professions of faith increased as did formal church membership, "and many more evinced from this time a seriousness in beautiful contrast with former immorality."<sup>35</sup>

Hill welcomed this spiritual revival as a force which elevated the moral tone of his command by diminishing gambling, intoxication, and carousing—vices which he felt impaired a soldier's verve and

<sup>26</sup> Wilcox MSS, no date.

<sup>27</sup> M. J. Wright, *General Officers of the Confederate Army, Officers of the Executive Departments of the Confederate States*, 35.

<sup>28</sup> Welch, 78-79; Caldwell, 112.

<sup>29</sup> "Sketches of Southern Generals," Part IV.

<sup>30</sup> Welch, 73-75; Caldwell, 111.

<sup>31</sup> Welch, 74-75.

<sup>32</sup> Caldwell, 112.

<sup>33</sup> C.M.H., III, 429.

<sup>34</sup> Welch, 78.

<sup>35</sup> Caldwell, 112-13.

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<sup>37</sup> Robertson, Part



efficiency. In so far as Hill personally was concerned, there is no evidence that he was affected by this movement. The few extant references to his religious life portray an undemonstrative, highly principled Episcopalian who confined the outward observances of his faith to Sunday worship. His wife averred that before the war he never missed a service, and during the conflict he attended church whenever possible.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast to Jackson and Lee, Hill never invoked or acknowledged divine aid in battle. On the other hand, an incident at Mine Run in the fall of 1863 illustrates his sensitivity to the spiritual appeal. While riding with Lee to the shell-raked front, Hill came upon a group of ragged soldiers holding a prayer meeting at the end of the Light Division. Both commanders dismounted, removed their hats, and stood quietly until the last prayer was finished. Those who observed Hill at this scene noted that he was visibly touched.<sup>37</sup>

Two additional sidelights on Hill's attitude toward religion have been preserved by Rev. J. Wm. Jones who served as chaplain under Hill in the Thirteenth Virginia and later became Chaplain of the Army of Northern Virginia. In his book *Christ in Camp* Jones significantly omitted any reference to Powell Hill in the chapter on "Influence of Christian Officers," although he had the highest personal regard and affection for Hill. Jones also recorded a revealing episode which occurred shortly before the evacuation of Petersburg. While distributing tracts and religious newsletters to a throng of veterans, Jones noticed the approach of a distinguished cavalcade that included Lee, Gordon, and Powell Hill. As the officers drew rein Gordon eagerly inquired about Jones' work, and Lee said he had several prayer books for the chaplain to distribute. As for Powell Hill, Jones stated: "My old colonel,

<sup>36</sup> The Times-Dispatch, Richmond, June 11, 1905—An interview with the General's wife. Before the Maryland campaign, Captain C. M. Blackford described a service he attended at Green Springs where "I found a very distinguished party gathered at the church. General Jackson was there, and Generals Winder, Pender, and A. P. Hill . . . all like myself, dressed in their best." *Letters from Lee's Army*, compiled by S. L. Blackford, letter dated August 4, 1862. Dr. Welch, a surgeon in Hill's Corps, reported seeing Hill in attendance at an Episcopal church in Petersburg a few weeks before the latter's death. Welch, 124.

<sup>37</sup> Robertson, Part IV, 8, Nov. 4, 1934.



now Lieutenant General A. P. Hill, and one of the most accomplished soldiers, as well as one of the most high-toned gentlemen whom the war produced, pleasantly asked of me, as he gave me a hearty greeting, 'John' (As he always familiarly called me), 'don't you think the boys would prefer hard-tack to tracts just now?' 'I have no doubt that many of them would,' I replied, 'but they crowd around and take the tracts as eagerly as they surround the commissary when he has anything to issue, and besides other advantages, the tracts certainly help them to bear the lack of hard-tack'. 'I have no doubt of it', he said, 'and I am glad you are able to supply the tracts more abundantly than we can the rations'.<sup>38</sup>

By fall "the tone of the whole command was all that could be desired,"<sup>39</sup> whereupon Hill decided to stage a grand review for the commanding General. Word of the forthcoming pageant spread quickly, and on a balmy Friday early in September<sup>40</sup> the local populace and soldiers from other commands gathered on the plain at Orange Court House to watch Marse Robert review the Third Corps.

Hill's twenty-thousand veterans—their bright muskets glittering in the sun as their tattered but proud banners fluttered in the breeze—were drawn up by divisions in a long column. At the appointed time Hill mounted Prince, his favorite jet black steed, and rode up to Lee who as usual was astride Traveller. After exchanging greetings the two generals and their staffs galloped around each division, Anderson, Heth, and Wilcox joining the cavalcade as it reached their respective commands. After traveling the nine mile route at a rapid gait, Lee and Hill drew rein at the reviewing stand where they gazed admiringly as the troops broke by companies and paraded before them in review.<sup>41</sup>

None witnessing or participating in this imposing spectacle doubted that the Army of Northern Virginia, even stripped of Longstreet's Corps recently sent West to reinforce Bragg, could

<sup>38</sup> W. J. Jones, *Christ in Camp*, 52-53.

<sup>39</sup> Caldwell, 113.

<sup>40</sup> O.R., 51, Part 1, 1088. This review was held Sept. 11, 1863.

<sup>41</sup> Captain R. E. Lee, *Recollections and Letters of Robert E. Lee*, (cited hereafter as *Recollections and Letters of Robert E. Lee*) 106-07.

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<sup>42</sup> O.R., 29,

<sup>43</sup> O.R., 29,

<sup>44</sup> B. and L.

<sup>45</sup> O.R., 29,

<sup>46</sup> Caldwell,

<sup>47</sup> O.R., 29,

whip the Army of the Potomac which Meade was concentrating on a front extending from Culpeper to the Rapidan.<sup>42</sup> When Lee learned later in the month that the Federal commander also was detaching troops to the West,<sup>43</sup> he decided to prevent the transfer of additional enemy reinforcements by clearing Virginia of the Army of the Potomac.

On Friday, October 9, Ewell and Hill broke camp, crossed the Rapidan, and started along the circuitous route to the enemy's left in accordance with Lee's plan to turn Meade's strong position at Culpeper and strike him as he retreated. However, the element of surprise was lost when a Federal signal station on Pony Mountain read Confederate signal flags communicating intelligence that a "formidable movement" was afoot.<sup>44</sup> When Meade retreated along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, Lee sent his two corps northward on a wide sweep in the hope of intercepting the Federal army before it reached the Washington defenses.

On Tuesday evening, October 13, Hill's column reached Warrenton where it rejoined Ewell's corps which had traversed a more direct route.<sup>45</sup> That night the veterans were in high spirits as they partook of white cabbage and "anticipated a pleasant affair if we should succeed in catching him (Meade)."<sup>46</sup>

In accordance with Lee's orders, Hill roused his troops before sunrise on Wednesday and started them moving along the Warrenton and Alexandria turnpike. At Broad Run Church he learned from various reports and the rumbling of distant wagons that the enemy were moving northward along a parallel road. Hill directed Anderson to take the leading division and attempt to strike the retreating column. When Anderson soon ascertained that the enemy force consisting of cavalry had been driven back by Fitz Lee, he turned his division toward Greenwich which Hill had reached about 10 A.M.<sup>47</sup>

Here Heth's men captured a number of stragglers from a

<sup>42</sup> O.R., 29, Part I, 410; *Ibid.*, Part 2, 706.

<sup>43</sup> O.R., 29, Part 2, 754.

<sup>44</sup> B. and L., IV, 83.

<sup>45</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 410.

<sup>46</sup> Caldwell, 114.

<sup>47</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 426; *N. C. Regts.*, II, 440.

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Federal force which had encamped nearby the previous night and hastily departed only two hours before Hill's arrival.<sup>48</sup> With the strong scent of the enemy dilating his battle-hungry nostrils, Hill prepared to move in for the kill. While Heth's and Wilcox's divisions, flanked on the right by Ewell's troops, advanced in the direction of Bristoe Station, Hill passed his skirmish line and galloped ahead to stalk the enemy and plan his destruction.

Picking his way between discarded guns, knapsacks, and blankets which had been strewn along the road by fleeing Federals,<sup>49</sup> Prince bore his rider to the hills overlooking Bristoe Station, Broad Run, and the plain to the north. Drawing rein, Hill espied swarms of bluecoats—those in the foreground were catching their breath while their comrades and wagons on the far side of the run appeared to be scurrying toward Manassas.<sup>50</sup> Hill, flushed with excitement at the prospect of a smashing victory, attributed the enemy's precipitate retreat to the approach of the Third Corps.<sup>51</sup>

"Determined that no time must be lost,"<sup>52</sup> Hill immediately notified Heth to hurry. Cooke's brigade, at the head of Heth's column, responded on the double—desirous of proving itself in its first battle under Powell Hill. Sensing a fight which might soil their newly issued gray coats and blue pants, the North Carolinians had just changed into their old clothes.<sup>53</sup>

On reaching a crest of wooded hill, Heth formed his line of battle perpendicular to the road and parallel to Broad Run.<sup>54</sup> As Cooke's troops filed to the right and Kirkland's and Walker's (formerly Brockenbrough's) brigades took position on the left, Hill glued his eyes on the retreating Yankees. Impatient lest his quarry escape before he could strike a blow, he ordered Heth to push forward with the troops already in line. While Heth's advance units started toward the front, Hill sent a courier to direct Poague's

<sup>48</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 430; *N. C. Regts.*, II, 440.

<sup>49</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 440.

<sup>50</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 426. The troops Hill saw consisted of about two Federal brigades. *N. C. Regts.*, II, 441.

<sup>51</sup> Heth MS, 151.

<sup>52</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 426.

<sup>53</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 444.

<sup>54</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 426, 430.

batteries to take position. The guns were ready and a few shots sufficed to clear the way across Broad Run into the plain.

Having scratched the surface, the Federals were now in position. Heth pushed forward from the thick undergrowth. In a few moments to the interval Hill shifted his concern to two enemy regiments on the right and to the left. To his flank, Hill took further precautions to keep an eye on Anderson to advantage. He ordered brigades to protect Cooke's

When enemy soldiers of the regiment, the Twentieth, in a hasty manner espied the bluecoats as far as the plain. Information was sent to the same time Captain Heth, having examined the report to Hill and explained the report but before Hill could act at once,"<sup>55</sup> with the enemy in view would be

Under the administration of Heth's three advance

<sup>55</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 444.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*; O.R., 29, Part 1, 426.

<sup>57</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 426.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 426, 430, 431.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 426, 428.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>61</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 444.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 426.



batteries to take position upon a hill on the extreme left.<sup>55</sup> When the guns were ready, Hill directed them to open—whereupon a few shots sufficed to send all the bluecoats in sight scurrying across Broad Run in confusion.<sup>56</sup>

Having scratched the enemy, Hill ordered Heth, whose troops were now in position, to cross the run and overwhelm the enemy.<sup>57</sup> Heth pushed forward his brigades, but as the front line emerged from the thick undergrowth into the clearing, the men halted a few moments to correct their faulty alignment. During this interval Hill shifted his gaze to the right where he viewed with concern two enemy columns busily engaged in getting into position on the right and rear of Cooke's brigade.<sup>58</sup> Realizing the danger to his flank, Hill told Heth to suspend the general advance. As further precautions he dispatched a courier to Cooke with orders to keep an eye on his right and hurried another aide to notify Anderson to advance McIntosh's artillery battalion and two brigades to protect Cooke's flank.<sup>59</sup>

When enemy skirmishers shortly began firing on Cooke's right regiment, the Twenty-Seventh North Carolina, its regimental commander espied behind the railroad embankment a solid line of bluecoats as far as his eyes could see.<sup>60</sup> This disconcerting information was sent to Heth who in turn relayed it to Hill. At the same time Captain S. R. Johnston, an engineer of Lee's staff, having examined the ground on the right volunteered to ride to Hill and explain the unforeseen peril.<sup>61</sup> After receiving Heth's report but before Johnston's arrival, Hill ordered Heth to "advance at once,"<sup>62</sup> with the reassurance that Anderson's troops now coming into view would cover his right.<sup>63</sup>

Under the admiring but anxious eyes of their corps commander, Heth's three advance brigades resumed the pursuit "in beautiful

<sup>55</sup> *N. C. Regts., II*, 441.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*; *O.R.*, 29, Part 1, 426, 430.

<sup>57</sup> *O.R.*, 29, Part 1, 426.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 426, 430, 435.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 426, 428.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>61</sup> *N. C. Regts., II*, 441.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

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order and quite steadily."<sup>64</sup> Cooke's brigade advancing at a quick-step passed the crest of a pine-domed hill and began the descent toward Broad Run when the front line perceived the enemy drawn up behind the railroad embankment and supported by batteries on rising ground to the rear. At that moment Hill heard this force "of whose presence I was unaware,"<sup>65</sup> fire a destructive volley which raked Cooke's line and severely wounded its scrappy commander.<sup>66</sup> While Cooke's troops rushed toward the railroad, Kirkland abandoned his advance on the left and swung around to assist them.<sup>67</sup> As Kirkland's troops wheeled to the right, the left of the line struck the enemy in the railroad cut near Broad Run. Fiercely the North Carolinians drove the enemy lining the embankment, but their charge faltered at the second line when a well-placed Federal battery north of the run opened a withering enfilading fire.<sup>68</sup> Kirkland was wounded and the brigade fell back leaving a number in the cut where they were captured.<sup>69</sup> Meantime, Walker's brigade, which had crossed Broad Run in accordance with Hill's original orders, recrossed to extend Kirkland's left; but Kirkland had been driven back before this movement was completed.<sup>70</sup>

On the right Cooke fared no better. His gaping line charged to within forty yards of the railroad when the bluecoats rose and delivered a volley that more than halved one regiment. Undeterred, the leading Twenty-Seventh North Carolina regiment pushed ahead several more steps only to find itself alone, whereupon survivors began the "murderous trip" back up the hill.<sup>71</sup>

Cooke's broken brigade retired through McIntosh's battery which Hill had posted in an exposed position on a hill between

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 426-27.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 427. This Federal force was General Gouverneur Warren's II Corps, about 3,000 strong, which had been marching northward along the railroad from Catlett's Station. Warren, who was familiar with this locality, galloped up after the cannonading began and ordered his men to face left and run for the railroad cut. After repulsing Hill's advance Warren resumed his march toward Manassas. O.R. 29, Part 1, 241-42.

<sup>66</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 442.

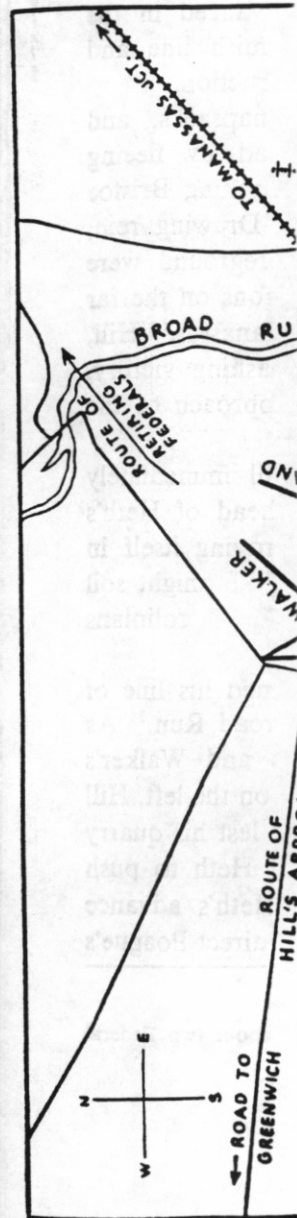
<sup>67</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 427.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 427, 431.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 432.

<sup>71</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 443.





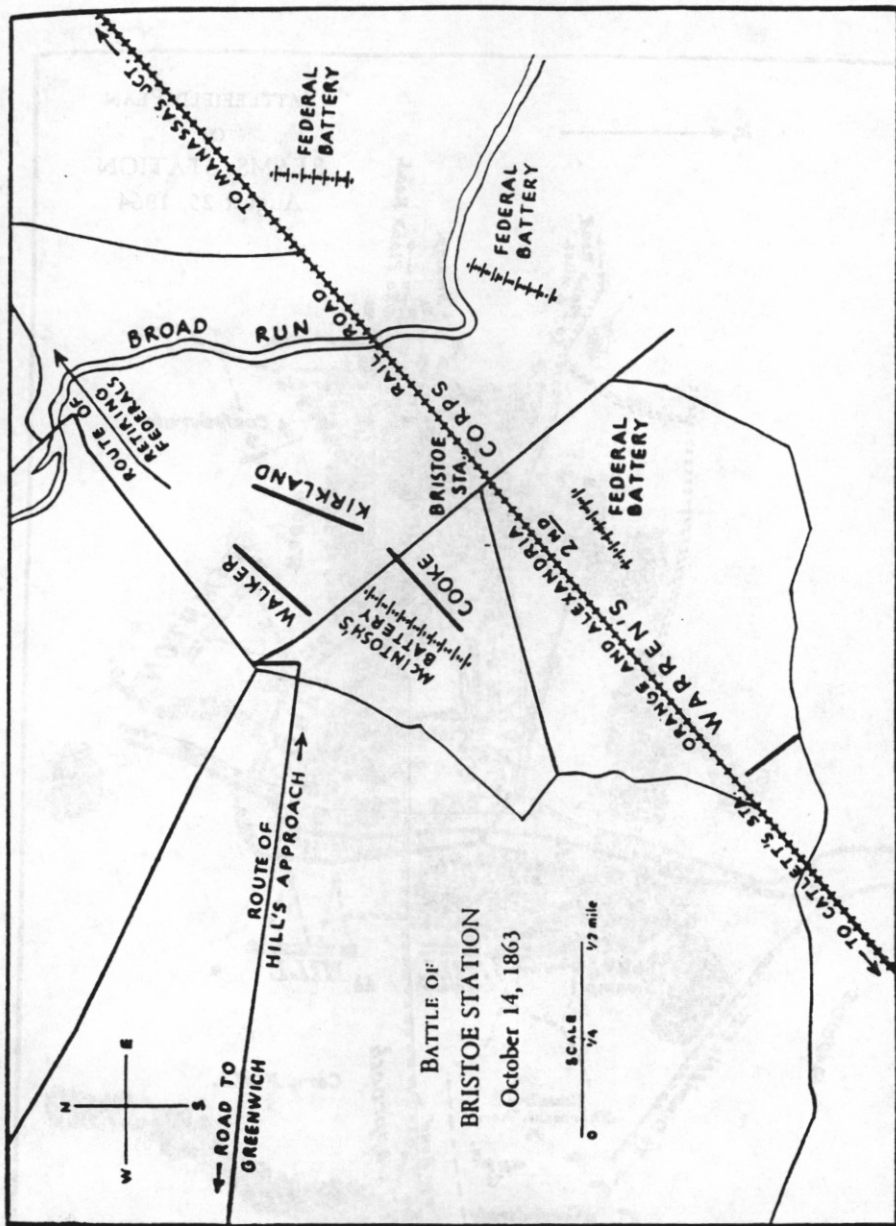
*General*

at a quick-  
 an the descent  
 e enemy drawn  
 ed by batteries  
 Hill heard this  
 a destructive  
 ded its scrappy  
 d the railroad,  
 swung around  
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 but near Broad  
 emy lining the  
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 d Run in ac-  
 tend Kirkland's  
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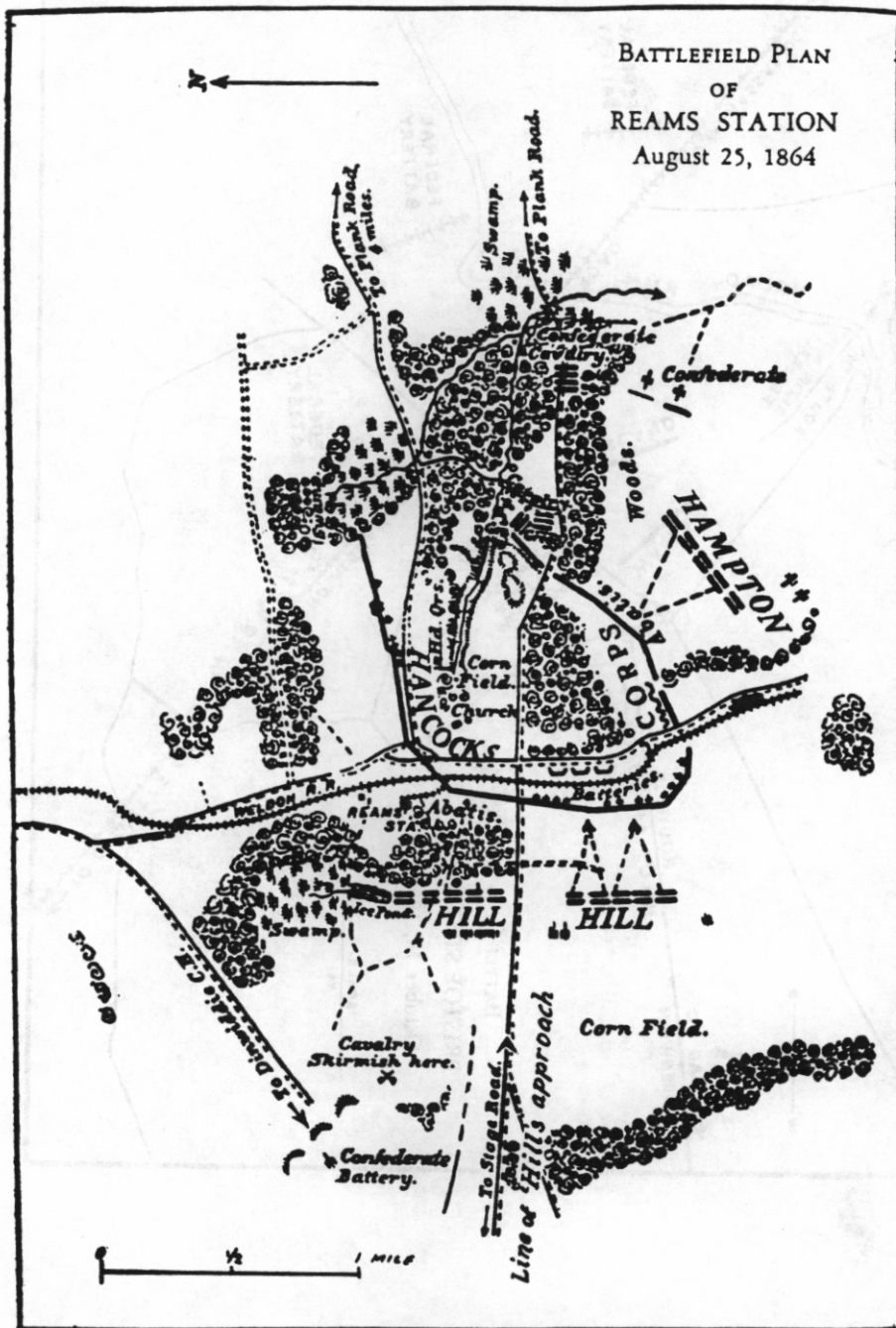
ing line charged  
 ats rose and  
 Indeterred,  
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 upon survivors

ntosh's battery  
 a hill between

Warren's II Corps,  
 the railroad from  
 lopped up after the  
 n for the railroad  
 toward Manassas.







Adapted from *North Carolina Regiments*.

"I Made The Attack  
two pine thickets  
had failed to notify  
been left without su  
enemy now rushed  
they quickly ran do  
batteries.<sup>74</sup>

Far more serious  
plight of Heth's two  
sustained almost 1,  
humiliating defeat w  
and official circles.  
pen,"<sup>76</sup> "bloody mas  
geon in Wilcox's div  
reported to his wife  
mismanagement of  
of them."<sup>79</sup>

Hill, fully cogniz  
him for this unreco  
sponsibility for the  
a few brief referenc  
set forth his outloo  
failure to reconnoit  
supposed that other  
With utter frankness  
the attack too hastil  
an hour, and there  
event I believe I sh  
tacking at once."<sup>82</sup> I  
port with the comm

<sup>72</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 431

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 426, 437.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 427, 433; *N. C.*

<sup>76</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 45.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 773.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, IV., 562.

<sup>79</sup> Welch, 81.

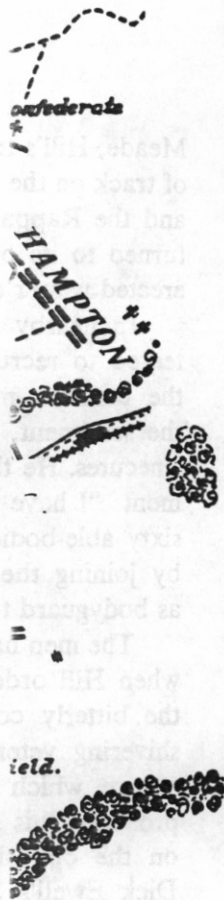
<sup>80</sup> Heth MS, 152.

<sup>81</sup> O.R., 51, Part 2, 811

<sup>82</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 427

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 427-28.

FIELD PLAN  
OF  
STATION  
ust 25, 1864



North Carolina Regiments.

"I Made The Attack Too Hastily"

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two pine thickets opposite the railroad station.<sup>72</sup> However, Hill had failed to notify Heth of this disposition and the battery had been left without support.<sup>73</sup> With Cooke's troops in full flight the enemy now rushed forward and seized five of the guns which they quickly ran down the hill under the protection of their own batteries.<sup>74</sup>

Far more serious than the loss of these guns was the tragic plight of Heth's two valiant North Carolina brigades which together sustained almost 1,300 casualties.<sup>75</sup> Reaction to this costly and humiliating defeat was quick and sharp throughout the ranks, press, and official circles. Veterans branded the engagement a "slaughter pen,"<sup>76</sup> "bloody massacre,"<sup>77</sup> and "rash enterprise,"<sup>78</sup> while a surgeon in Wilcox's division—which arrived too late to see action—reported to his wife that the repulse "was all due to the miserable mismanagement of General Hill or General Heth, or possibly both of them."<sup>79</sup>

Hill, fully cognizant of the barrage of criticism leveled against him for this unreconnoitered, headlong attack, assumed full responsibility for the fiasco.<sup>80</sup> His apologia, which he confined to a few brief references in his correspondence and official report, set forth his outlook on that fateful afternoon. He admitted his failure to reconnoiter beyond the railroad embankment, "as I supposed that other troops (Ewell's) were taking care of them."<sup>81</sup> With utter frankness he concluded, "I am convinced that I made the attack too hastily, and at the same time that a delay of half an hour, and there would have been no enemy to attack. In that event I believe I should equally have blamed myself for not attacking at once."<sup>82</sup> President Davis succinctly annotated Hill's report with the comment: "There was a want of vigilance."<sup>83</sup>

<sup>72</sup> O.R., 29, Part 1, 431, 436.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 426, 437.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 427, 433; *N. C. Regts.*, II, 443.

<sup>76</sup> *N. C. Regts.*, II, 45.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 773.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, IV., 562.

<sup>79</sup> *Waich*, 81.

<sup>80</sup> *Heth MS*, 152.

<sup>81</sup> *O.R.*, 51, Part 2, 811. Letter from A. P. Hill to H. Heth, June 13, 1864.

<sup>82</sup> *O.R.*, 29, Part 1, 427.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 427-28.



Lee characteristically refrained from direct criticism of Hill, preferring instead to express his disapprobation of the proud, sensitive commander's precipitate action in a far more poignant manner. The morning after the battle he rode with Hill over the corpse-strewn field. After listening gravely to Hill's account of the affair, he commented tersely, "Well, well, General, bury these poor dead men and let us say no more about it."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Long, 311. Hotchkiss stated that "Lee met Hill with stern rebuke for his imprudence, then sadly directed him to gather his wounded and bury his dead." C.M.H., III, 426. However, the "stern rebuke" was not corroborated by the ear-witness account reported above.

<sup>1</sup> Welch, 81; N. C.

<sup>2</sup> Heth MS, 152.

<sup>3</sup> Caldwell, 118.

<sup>4</sup> "Sketches of So

<sup>5</sup> B. and L., IV, 1