

Report of Col. E. M. Law, Fourth Alabama Infantry, commanding Whiting's brigade, of operations August 29-31.

HEADQUARTERS THIRD BRIGADE,

September 10, 1862.

Sir: I have the honor to make the following report of the participation of the brigade under my command in the actions of Friday and Saturday, August 29 and 30:

Leaving Thoroughfare Gap at sunrise on the 29th, the brigade marched in the direction of Manassas Junction. At Gainesville, on the Warrenton turnpike, the line of march changed abruptly to the left, along the turnpike, in the direction of Centreville. On arriving about midway between Gainesville and the stone house, which is situated at the junction of the turnpike and the Sudley Ford road, I was ordered by Brigadier-General Hood, commanding the division, to form the brigade in line of battle to the left of the turnpike and almost at right angles with it, the right resting on the road and the left connecting with General Jackson's line. The Texas Brigade had been previously formed on the right of the road, its left joining my right. With a strong line of rifle-men in front, which drove the enemy's skirmishers as it advanced, the brigade moved forward, accompanied by Generals Longstreet and Hood, until it reached a commanding position in front of the enemy, about three-fourths of a mile from Dogan's house, which seemed to be the center of his position. At this point a severe artillery fire was opened by the enemy's batteries. A halt was ordered, and the troops remained in position until our artillery could be brought forward. Our batteries took position on a ridge to my left and rear, and opened fire with marked effect upon the enemy.

The fire of the artillery and skirmishers continued almost without intermission until near 4 p. m., when heavy musketry on my left announced an attack of the enemy on General Jackson's position. Soon after this attack commenced a brigade of General Jackson's command moved out of the wood on my left, drove the enemy from his position on the ridge to the left of the hamlet of Groveton, and captured a piece of artillery posted there. I immediately moved my line forward as far as Groveton, where it was halted on a line with the troops to my left. At about 6 o'clock a Federal battery, supported by a large body of infantry and some cavalry, was advanced along the turnpike to within 400 yards of our position. The guns had scarcely unlimbered when I was ordered by General Hood to charge. Moving rapidly forward, the brigade came first under fire of the battery, then in range of the enemy's infantry. Delivering volley after volley, my men continued a rapid and uninterrupted advance upon the battery and its supports. As they approached the guns three of them were limbered up and carried off at a run along the turnpike. One remained and continued to fire until my men were so near it as to have their faces burned by its discharges. Without faltering, they pressed forward, and the piece was taken. At this point a flanking fire was opened upon my right by a body of the enemy which was advancing on the opposite side of the road and passing to my right and rear. I at once formed a portion of the Second Mississippi Regiment along the road and at right angles to the line of advance, and

returned the fire with effect, the enemy breaking and retiring. The Second Mississippi now pressed forward beyond the road, and, together with the Texas Brigade, on the right, cleared the field of the enemy. Meantime, on the left, my other regiments--Fourth Alabama, Eleventh Mississippi, and Sixth North Carolina--re-enforced by the Twenty-third South Carolina, were advancing and driving the enemy before them. The advance was continued until darkness prevented further operations. I ordered a halt, and established my line across the turn-pike, half a mile from the position whence the advance began. A charge of cavalry on the road and an infantry attack on the extreme left were made after dark. Both were easily repulsed. The opposing force of the enemy, as I learned from captured officers, consisted of General King's division, of four brigades, and a battery of howitzers. One piece was captured and about 100 prisoners. Among the prisoners were Captain J. A. Judson, assistant adjutant-general to General J. P. Hatch, and Captain George A. I. Gerrish, of the battery.

During the night of the 29th, under orders from General Hood, I re-sumed the position to the rear of Groveton which I had occupied in the morning.

At daylight on the 30th the enemy advanced a heavy line of skirmishers toward this point. These were met by my riflemen and those from the Texas Brigade, and sharp skirmishing continued until about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when the main attack of the enemy began. This attack, which was made by General Morell's (Federal) division on General Jackson's right, in full view of my position, was no sooner repulsed than the whole line was ordered forward, and my brigade advanced to Groveton in support of a battery which was placed at that point. Here it remained for half an hour or more under a terrific fire of artillery, when I received orders from General Hood to move across the turnpike to the left of the Texas Brigade. On reaching an eminence a few hundred yards to the right of the road, which commanded a view of the field, I perceived large numbers of our troops pressing into the right toward the Blackburn Ford road. Unable to distinguish the locality of the Texas Brigade, and seeing that the enemy was pushing a heavy force into the ravine and pine thickets directly in front of me, and just below Dogan's house, apparently for the purpose of securing their formidable battery posted there, I carried forward three regiments to that point. Placing the Sixth North Carolina and Fourth Alabama in the pines and the Second Mississippi on their left and at the foot of the hill on which the house is situated, I waited a short time for the Eleventh Mississippi, which had been directed to move upon the battery from the left of the turnpike, intending to attack at the same time from the right with the Second Mississippi. While in this position the enemy advanced on the right of the house, but was repulsed by a well-directed and destructive fire from the Sixth North Carolina and Fourth Alabama. The Eleventh Mississippi not coming up, I united the Sixth North Carolina and Fourth Alabama with the Second Mississippi and moved upon the battery, which, taking time by the forelock, escaped, when the infantry was beaten. The enemy's wounded and a few prisoners were left in our hands. I continued the advance beyond Dogan's house, driving the enemy backward until after dark, when, by General Longstreet's order, I halted for the night.

At daylight on the 31st nothing was to be seen of the enemy except evidences of a precipitate retreat.

A mistake in the delivery of my order to the Eleventh Mississippi Regiment to advance on the left of the Warrenton turnpike caused it to move to the right, near Chinn's house, and by this means it was detached from the rest of my command. It advanced with the troops in that part of the field, fighting gallantly and incurring heavy loss, and at night rested on our most advanced line.

Captain Reilly's battery was detached from the brigade, and, together with the other batteries of the division, was placed under command of Major Frobel, chief of artillery of the division. Following closely after the infantry, the batteries contributed their full share to the success of the day.

In both actions the conduct of the troops was admirable. On the 30th their maneuvers under severe fire were characterized by the promptness and precision of veterans, no disorganization or confusion occurring while in action. This was due in a great measure to the efficiency of my field and staff officers.

Colonel [P. F.] Liddell, of the Eleventh, and Colonel Stone, of the Second, Mississippi; Lieutenant-Colonel K. McLemore, Fourth Alabama, and Major [R. F.] Webb, Sixth North Carolina, commanding regiments, handled their men with consummate ability.

The officers of my personal staff-Lieutenants L. R. Terrell and Cussons-rendered the most valuable service, discharging every duty faithfully and gallantly. Lieutenant Cussons was captured by the enemy while on a reconnaissance in front of the lines. Privates Smith, Fourth Alabama, and Sharpe, Hampton Legion, acting as officers, also contributed valuable assistance.

The following is a recapitulation of the loss in the several regiments composing the brigade, as shown by the accompanying list of casualties:

	Killed.	Wounded.
4th Alabama	19	44
11th Mississippi	9	69
6th North Carolina	6	64
2d Mississippi	22	87
Total	56	264

I am, captain, very respectfully,

E. M. LAW, Colonel, Commanding Third Brigade.

Capt. W. H. SELLERS, Assistant Adjutant-General.