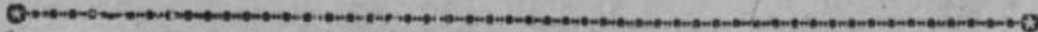


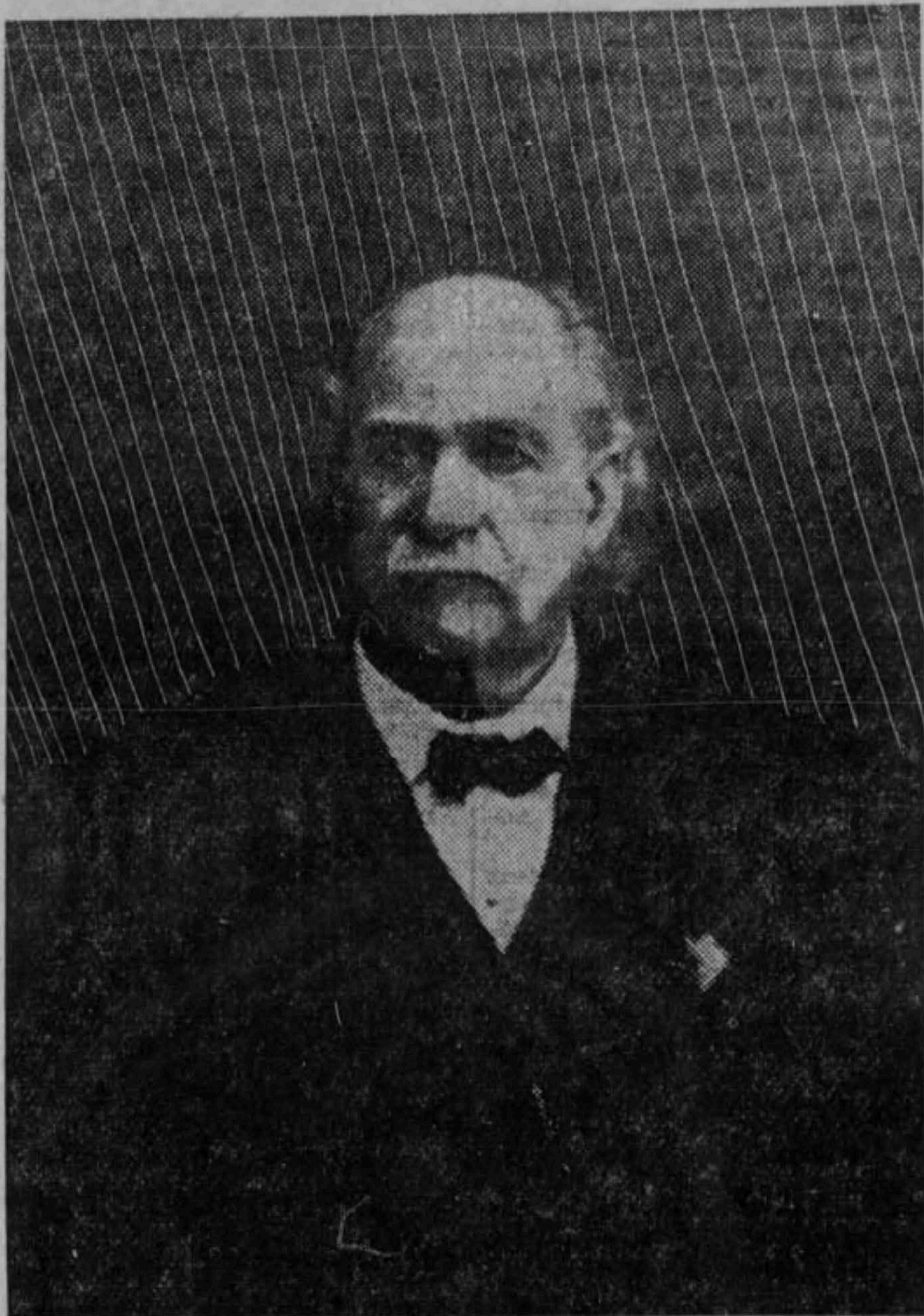
Birmingham.

THE AGE-HERALD, SUNDAY, JULY 20, 1902

FOURTH ALABAMA REGIMENT AT BATTLE
OF MANASSAS, SUNDAY, JULY 21, 1861

BY WILLIAM C. WARD.





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Company G, Fourth Alabama Regiment, Law's Brigade.

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At sundown, July 21, 1861, the greatest battle ever fought on the American continent, to that time, had been won by the Southern Confederacy and lost by the United States of America. So widespread and deep was the exultation of the southern people, and so profound was the depression of the north, that everywhere an easy achievement of southern independence was confidently anticipated.

In June, 1861, General Patterson, with a large and well-equipped army, crossed the Potomac in the vicinity of Martinsburgh Va., and confronted the army of the valley of the Shenandoah commanded by General J. F. Johnston, making such demonstrations as to indicate an immediate battle. After awaiting the expected attack for about ten days, General Johnston withdrew to Winchester, Va., and his troops resumed drilling, of which they stood in need. General Jackson, however, with his brigade and some cavalry remained in the presence of the enemy, concealing the movements of his commanding general.

In the meantime, General Beauregard, flushed with the cheap laurels won in the capture of Fort Sumter, was in command of a splendid, though not a large army, along the line of Bull Run creek, about three miles north of Manassas Junction. He was a splendid military engineer, and with the creek to protect his front had a well entrenched position. General McDowell with the flower of the Federal army, strong in numbers and with all the most modern equipments of war, occupied a strong position confronting Beauregard. On the 18th of July, McDowell made a reconnaissance in force along Beauregard's front, justly creating the impression that he intended to give battle. Over Beauregard was the shortest line of march to Richmond with a railroad to carry supplies. It thus became manifest that Patterson had not seriously intended to attack the army of the Shenandoah, but had made a strategic demonstration to amuse General Johnston. As soon as General Johnston, on the 18th, had information by telegraph that Beauregard had been attacked, the army of the Shenandoah was mobilized and at once marched toward Manassas leaving Winchester that afternoon. Infantry, artillery, commissary and quarter-

master wagons filled the highways all crowding toward the point of attack.

At noon, on the 20th of July, we reached Manassas and bivouaced in the woods about one mile north of the Junction. We were very tired and very much exhausted by the weary journey, on foot and in the cars, and the excessive heat. Early Sunday morning, off to the northwest, an occasional report of artillery could be heard, but soon that most alarming of signals, the dropping fire of skirmishers was heard. Directly a courier dashed up to General Bee, our brigade commander, who immediately mounted his little chestnut horse, and the order came to fall in. Sooner than it takes to write it, we were headed to the northwest at a double-quick guided by the artillery and skirmish fire. Of the Third brigade commanded by General Bee, composed of the Fourth Alabama, Second and Eleventh Mississippi, First Tennessee and the Fifth North Carolina regiments, only the Fourth Alabama, Second Mississippi, and two companies of the Eleventh Mississippi were present in this movement, the others following later in the day. General Bee was at the head of the Fourth Alabama, and ever moving toward that skirmish firing. So rapid was the march, that many of the men, weak from measles, were being left behind, afterwards to take their places when the battle was on. Imboden's rock brigade artillery, had unlimbered on a plateau, just north of the Robertson plateau, just north of the Robertson Rickett's battery, 500 yards over the hill and beyond the valley intervening. Arriving at the point of attack, it was found that General Evans (Shank) in command of an outpost numbering about 600 men, had been struck by McDowell's right brigade engaged in turning Beauregard's left. Wheat's battalion of Louisiana Tigers deployed as skirmishers, moved at right oblique across our front and disappeared in the timber. The Fourth Alabama was fronted into line of battle and ordered to load. It was then marched to the southwest for a short distance, partially behind a block of timber covering a steep hill side, when again fronting in line of battle marched up the hill and halted behind a low fence just in the edge of the timber.

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General Bee from the left, rode along our front and commanded, "Up Alabamians." At once, every one sprang up and forward into the corn field about one hundred and fifty yards, halted and laid down in the corn, then about two feet high. Over a little ridge, just out of sight, was Rickett's battery, near enough for us to hear the commands, "Load, aim, fire!" and the sound of the rammer as it drove the shot home, and the swab as it followed the shot sent across the valley to Imboden. We could on our right, see our men as they rose to fire and lay down to load. We could hear the commands of the Yankee officers, as they urged their men to advance. Every time the right of the Yankee regiment, immediately in our front, reached the crest of the ridge, we fired and the Yankees would fall back. On our right the men were more exposed, and the slaughter was terrible. The roar of musketry was fearful, and without intermission. It was, load, aim, fire, at will. The Second Mississippi had disappeared from our left. How long we were there, we never knew, but long enough to be left alone, and for Jackson to reach the plateau near the Henry house, half mile in our rear and take a strong position; long enough for Bartow, great of soul, to form line to the right of the Robertson house, supporting Imboden's battery, and long enough for Hampton, with his legion of infantry, cavalry and artillery to arrive from the right, and long enough to leave on the battle-field nearly one-third of the 650 men who went into battle.

Just who did it, was never known, but some one gave the command retreat. The regiment rose and faded as it were to the rear. Some men ran as they went by Colonel Egbert Jones, who stood by

his horse supporting himself, having received his death wound. He said, "Men, do not run." The men were demoralized. They fell backwards, through the woods, over the fence, down the hill, reformed facing to the front, then faced to the rear, crossed the brook and again halted and faced to the front obliquing to the right. Colonel Jones having been left wounded, Lieutenant-Colonel Law took command. It was then seen that immediately on our left there was a Federal regiment that had turned our left in close column by division at a support arms, and that our right had been turned by a Union brigade. The left company of the Fourth, notwithstanding the cry, "Don't shoot, they are Virginians," delivered a fire left oblique into the faces of the regiment on the left. This was returned with interest. The Fourth was literally hanging in the air without a support, enemies to the right of them, to the front of them and to the left of them. Again the men in front of the terrible fire fled up the hill. It was pitiful to see the poor fellows fall before the merciless hail. Chagrined, full of wrath and shame, some dragged themselves up the hill, and as they retired turned and emptied their muskets at short range into the faces of the foe.

Where was Shank Evans with his six hundred, where was Wheat with his Louisiana Tigers, where was Falkner with his Mississippians? Crossing the line of the Eighth Georgia, a shell exploded just over the head of Captain Clarke, who commanded the left rifle company, and immediately in front of this historian. The old captain fell, lay still on his face for a moment, rose, brushed the dirt from his clothes, and quietly continued to the rear. Here the celebrated Hampton's legion came into view, with the assistant surgeon in front carrying a stretcher, and firing volleys of red hot oaths at the retreating men. Hampton must have formed on the left of the Eighth Georgia. Halting around the old cotton-bale flag, which Sergeant Frank Fitts had carried through the day, just in the rear of the Georgians, it was ascertained that about two hundred of the regiment had rallied.

the regiment had fallen. It was just at this time that General Johnston and Beauregard, accompanied by their staffs, rode up to the regiment, having heard the firing from their position on the right, and concluded that McDowell had selected his own battle-ground and was giving battle. To General Johnston's question, "What troops are these?" the answer was, "It is what is left of the Fourth Alabama."

"Where are your field officers?" The answer was, "left on the battlefield."

"Who is in command?"

Here it was understood that no one had thought it the duty of the senior captain to take command. We asked that the general either lead or give us a commander to take us again into battle. He replied that he had just come on the field, and as soon as he could understand the situation he would place us again in battle.

Just at this point General Bartow, bleeding from a wound in the foot, his horse wounded and panting, rode up and said, "General Johnston, I am hard pressed on the right, and I cannot hold my positions without reinforcements. The General replied, "You must at all hazards hold your position, and you need reinforcements, this regiment here," pointing to the Fourth Alabama, "will support you." Bartow turned his horse and rode back to his command and to his death. General Johnston then, placing himself by the colors, moved the Fourth through the scrub pine timber, placed the regiment in a washout in the rear of the Georgians and left us shrouded by the thick pine bushes with orders to support Bartow.

There are some men who believe that a speech is always in order, and never lose an opportunity to fire an audience with their eloquence. Here was a great opportunity, and Captain, afterwards General Tracy rose to the occasion. The men were sad; their comrades had fallen; they had shown their backs to the foe, and they felt that hence forth they never would be able to wipe out the stain. They felt that they ought to have died on the battlefield. Tracy was eloquent. It is remembered that when he had exhausted

all his native resources, he closed with Hallock's lines, "Strike for your altars and fires; strike for the green graves of your sires, God and your native land." Just then a minnie ball, apparently having lost its course, came singing that song that threatens to strike but does not indicate where, yet apparently near Captain Tracy's head. He bowed low, saying, "and dodge boys, when you can."

The battle raging from our right towards our left came nearer. Bullets fell fast into our covering. The captains, not knowing what had become of Bartow and his Georgians, moved us out into an open field, where we could see the danger that threatened. A water detail was sent out while the men rested in the sun. It was here that General Bee rode up to the regiment. Mortified at the results of the morning and feeling all was lost, he called out:

"What regiment is this?"

Captains King and Clarke answered, "General, do you not know your own men? This is what is left of the Fourth Alabama." He said:

"Come with me and go yonder where Jackson stands like a stone wall." The captains replied, "we have sent out details for water and as soon as they return, we will go with you."

It was just before this that the Federal attack had become general. Advancing over the line of retreat of the Fourth Alabama, the Union army ascended the hill to the plateau in front of Jackson and Hampton and the Georgians, and as it uncovered the crest, there was a crash of musketry that can never be forgotten. The Yankees advanced, loading and firing, and their cartridge covers showed beautiful lines and magnificent drill.

When the water was distributed, General Bee mounted, placing himself on the left, and moved in the rear of Jackson's line of battle. Arbuthnot's battery changing position, cut the regiment in two at the colors. When the right again joined the left, we were told that General Bee had fallen mortally wounded, while leading the regiment to a place where it could again go into battle. He died that night. While waiting in front of the Lewis house, where General Johnston had established his headquarters, General Jackson rode by, having his arm in a sling. For hours he had held his position and it was understood that he had saved the day.

Directly there was an indescribable roar of battle and shouting. The cavalry came from the rear charging to the front. The cry was that the Yankee army was in full retreat, and all over the vast plateau the glad shouts of victory went up to heaven. President Davis, at this time, rode on the field, hat in hand, receiving the plaudits of the men. Stragglers were coming in. The happiest people ever seen were the negro mess servants, who laughed, shouted and wept. Steve., Captain King's body servant, was uncontrollable in his joy that he had found his master alive. The Fourth went back to the Junction that night to gather up the fragments and sleep. We were so tired! We laid down to sleep feeling that we were disgraced; we waked on Monday morning to find the air vocal with our praise. That a great victory had been won was being ascribed to the fact that the Fourth Alabama had for an hour held the Federal right in check until brigades and regiments could be moved from the right to the left. As fast as the regiments came on the field, marching by the left flank they were fronted into line of battle and moved into action. McDowell, at the same time, was always moving by his right until having uncovered his front about 12 o'clock he advanced to the main attack. His flanking movement had been discovered by Evans and checked by the Fourth Alabama. We never fully knew what the Fourth Alabama had done until General Heintzleman's report to his commanding-general was made public. In that report he paid a very great compliment to the valor of the Fourth Alabama regiment that for an hour or more delayed his advance successively driving back his four regiments, so that he was unable to again bring them to the attack. From the position named, all knew the

(Continued on Eighth Page.)

FOURTH ALABAMA REGIMENT

AT BATTLE OF MANASSAS,

SUNDAY, JULY 21, 1861

(Continued From Fourth Page)

regiment so designated was the Fourth Alabama.

To prevent a short line march to the rear of our line of battle by the Union army, it was necessary to keep a large part of Beauregard's army behind his earth works on Bull Run, when the day had been won. Colonel Cooke's Virginia regiment came on the battlefield, having all day listened to the roar of the great battle. The battle was fought by the southern generals without a plan, a rough and tumble fight made necessary by the splendid flanking movement of McDowell. As the day grew old, Generals Archer and Kirby Smith, coming by railroad train, when at a point equidistant from the battlefield and Manassas Junction, hearing the sound of battle, stopped the train and with their commands moved in the direction of the firing. They struck the Yankee right, squarely and doubled it back upon itself. Up to this time the Yankees had steadily advanced fighting with great confidence. This was too much and they fled from the field without order, never halting until under the shelter of Washington.
