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No Better Officer in the Confederacy: The Wartime Career of Daniel C. Govan

DANIEL E. SUTHERLAND

SIXTEEN ARKANSANS SERVED the Confederacy as general officers. Most of the sixteen remain obscure figures in the annals of history, largely because they compiled lackluster records or because they served in the low-profile Trans-Mississippi theater. Yet neither of these limitations explains why historians have ignored the military career of Daniel Chevilette Govan. Govan never held independent command, but he rose rapidly from company commander to brigade commander. Promotion came in part from his Arkansas connections with Thomas C. Hindman and Patrick R. Cleburne. Yet Govan also possessed qualities—personal courage, loyalty, compassion, and common sense—prized in military leaders by both superiors and subordinates. He left few personal papers to reveal his thoughts or explain his actions, yet his wartime career, like those of many regimental and brigade commanders, may be explored and evaluated through the story of his men. The brigade he led for nearly half the war formed part of the “best fighting division in the Army of Tennessee” and the “hardest-hitting division in the Confederate army.” John M. Harrell, himself a Confederate colonel and one of the earliest historians of Arkansas’s role in the war, maintained, “No officer of the army of Tennessee enjoyed to a greater degree than General Govan did, the esteem of his men and of his superior officers.”¹

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Govan settled in Arkansas in 1854, when he was twenty-seven. He had by that time already led an adventurous life. Born July 4, 1827, in Northampton County, North Carolina, he moved west as a child with his parents, Andrew R. Govan, a planter and politician, and his mother, Mary Pugh Jones Govan. The Govans emigrated first to Tennessee, but by 1830 they had made their home in Mississippi. Govan studied with a private tutor in his youth before going to South Carolina, his father's native state, to attend his father's alma mater, Columbia College (now the University of South Carolina). The younger Govan drilled as part of a military company while at college. In 1848 he returned for unexplained reasons to his father's Mississippi plantation, Snowdown, without graduating.²

The following year, Govan joined the California gold rush with his cousin Ben McCulloch, another future Confederate general. A dozen men—eight whites and four blacks (probably slaves)—departed Austin, Texas, on the southern overland route to California through northern Mexico. "A small party of gentlemen," McCulloch said of the white men, were "bent on getting wealth . . . for the glorious privilege of being independent." They attracted additional followers en route, so that

their assistance in the preparation of this article.

¹Quoted are Wiley Sword, *The Confederacy's Last Hurrah: Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 127, 221; and John M. Harrell, *Arkansas*, in *Confederate Military History*, ed. Clement A. Evans, (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Company, 1899), 10:402. As many as twenty-nine Confederate generals have been claimed by Arkansas, but the best analysis of the issue speaks convincingly for sixteen. Seven of the twenty-nine have been claimed by Phillips County, but that number is now generally recognized to be five. See Jno. P. Morrow, Jr., "Confederate Generals From Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 21 (Autumn 1962), 231–246. The most reliable biographical sketches of all these officers are to be found in William C. Davis, ed., *The Confederate General*, 6 vols. (New York, 1993).

²Davis, *Confederate General*, 3:17–18; *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing, 1890), 594–595. Most modern biographical sketches of Govan, including those in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, *Generals in Gray*, *The Confederate General*, *The Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, and *American National Biography*, list Govan's year of birth as 1829. The correct year is 1827, as given in *Confederate Veteran* 19 (September 1911): 444, and Dale P. Kirkman, "General Govan," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly* 23 (December 1984 and March 1985): 94–100.

a rugged band of some twenty men finally reached Mazatlan on Mexico's Pacific coast. From there they traveled by sea to San Francisco, where in December the group concluded a journey of nearly three months.³

Govan met with only fair success panning for gold along the San Joaquin and other rivers. So when McCulloch won election as the sheriff of Sacramento in 1850 (following the shooting death of the previous sheriff), Govan accepted his offer to serve as deputy. But neither McCulloch nor Govan was keen on California. The weather did not suit them, the mines were not as rich as reputed, and the population, with its anti-slavery leanings, was not entirely congenial. When McCulloch went home, so did Govan, who returned to Mississippi in 1852 to engage in planting. The following year he married eighteen-year-old Mary F. Otey, the daughter of the first Episcopal bishop of Tennessee.⁴

The Govans had been operating a plantation in Phillips County, Arkansas, for six years when the war came. They had four children by that time, two boys and two girls, the eldest being five and the youngest under a year. The eldest was named for Ben McCulloch, and a proud grandmother back in Mississippi liked to boast about how little Ben "is outgrowing his clothes and is very pretty, smart and sweet." The Govan homestead was worth twelve thousand dollars in real property and twenty-two thousand dollars in personal property in 1860. The personal property included twenty-five slaves, eleven male and fourteen female, who ranged in age from a few months to fifty years. Govan owned a respectable amount of livestock, including two horses, six mules, eight cows, five oxen, fifteen cattle, and fifty hogs, the whole valued at two thousand dollars. But he made his money from cotton. He grew nearly twenty-eight thousand pounds of cotton (sixty-nine bales) on two hundred acres in 1860. This amount could not compare with the state's largest

³Thomas W. Cutrer, *Ben McCulloch and the Frontier Military Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 106–108. Cutrer refers to a man named Daniel Gavan on the California expedition, but this is almost certainly Govan.

⁴*Biographical and Historical Memoir*, 594; Cutrer, *Ben McCulloch*, 108–118. Cutrer causes confusion about the marriage and removal to Arkansas of Daniel and Mary Govan by implying that their first child was born in 1852 or 1853, but in the face of other evidence cited below, this early date was clearly impossible.

cotton producers, but it was more than that grown by about 30 percent of Arkansas planters.⁵

No record remains of Govan's position on the heated political debates of the 1850s, but a planter with Govan's background—South Carolina birth and Mississippi boyhood—undoubtedly sympathized with the secession movement. Phillips County's slave population expanded tremendously in the decade before the war, and the white population strongly supported secession by 1861. When Arkansas seceded in May, Govan helped raise a volunteer company in Phillips County. The enthusiastic band, evenly divided between "plain country folk" and planters, elected Govan, a man of wealth and influence with at least marginal military experience, as their captain. The men trained initially at Hopefield, Arkansas, where on June 5 they mustered into Confederate service as Company F, 2nd Arkansas Infantry. Commanded by Col. Thomas C. Hindman, the recent United States congressman from Phillips County, the 2nd Arkansas traveled to Memphis. The regiment spent nearly two months drilling and equipping itself and soon numbered seventeen companies. On July 3 Gen. William J. Hardee assumed command of this expanded legion. Hardee, a no-nonsense Georgian and an 1838 West Point graduate, had been sent to defend northeast Arkansas and southeast Missouri against a possible Union advance from St. Louis. Arkansas was in military and political turmoil early in the war, far beyond the ability of a man with Hindman's limited military experience in the Mexican War to put right. The situation required a professional soldier.⁶

⁵U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the Eighth Census [Free], 1860, Phillips County, Arkansas*, National Archives Microcopy 653, Roll 47, p. 78; *Population Schedule of the Eighth Census [Slave], 1860, Phillips County, Arkansas*, National Archives Microcopy 653, Roll 54, p. 63; *Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 4: Productions of Agriculture During the Year Ending June 1, 1860, Phillips County, Arkansas*, pp. 25–26; Mary Pugh Govan to Maria Thomson, February 1855, letter in possession of Sarah Ward; Rachel Skoney, "Large Planters and Planter Persistence in Antebellum Arkansas, 1850–1860" (M.A. thesis, University of Arkansas, 1991), 57–58, 74.

⁶Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 16–20; James M. Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas's Road to Secession* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 138, 156–57, 190–91; Davis, *Confederate General*, 3:17–18; Howell Purdue and Elizabeth Purdue, *Pat Cleburne, Confederate General: A Definitive*

Govan and his men chafed for action by early July. At first many in the regiment had refused to serve outside of Arkansas. They had even threatened to resign from the army should they be ordered eastward. In Tennessee rumors circulated about a Union invasion from Missouri. The "whole militia" of Arkansas would be called out to defend the Arkansas-Missouri border, Govan informed his wife, "and he who lags behind must be either traitor or coward." On July 10 the men marched into northeast Arkansas to establish Camp Hardee at Pittman's Ferry, within a "stone's throw of the Missouri line." Their leader, however, despaired of the Arkansas troops assigned to him. One officer reported Hardee as saying, "These men have no manners and I am afraid we can't make much out of them."⁷

Captain Govan and his company now found themselves part of a brigade that included five infantry regiments, a battalion of cavalry, and four batteries of artillery. Col. John R. Gratiot commanded the 2nd Arkansas, Hindman having been sent to northwest Arkansas to persuade mutinous troops there, who were unhappy with the lack of clothing and pay, to stay in Confederate service. One of Govan's fellow Phillips County residents, Patrick R. Cleburne, commanded the 1st Arkansas Infantry. Govan also witnessed the grim side of army life at Camp Hardee. By late July the men still lacked "clothing of every description," and they had been struck by a catastrophic outbreak of measles. Govan

Biography (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Jr. College Press, 1973), 76; *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1880-1901), ser. 1, vol. 3, 590 (hereafter cited as *OR*, and all references are to Series 1); Daniel C. Govan to wife, July 4, 1861, Daniel Chevilette Govan Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Govan Papers); Diane Neal and Thomas W. Kremm, *The Lion of the South: General Thomas C. Hindman* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1993), 90; Nathaniel C. Hughes, Jr., *General William J. Hardee: Old Reliable* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 73-75. A complete roster for Company F appears in "Confederate Soldiers from Phillips County," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly* 2 (September 1963): 32.

⁷*OR*, vol. 3, 588, 609-610; Govan to wife, July 4, 1861, July 28, 1861, Govan Papers; Hughes, *Hardee*, 75-76; Mark K. Christ, ed., *Rugged and Sublime: The Civil War in Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1994), 17; Nathaniel C. Hughes, ed., *Liddell's Record: St. John Richardson Liddell, Brigadier General, C.S.A.* (Dayton, OH: Morningside Press, 1985), 121.

estimated some two hundred cases of measles in the brigade, with most companies suffering two to three deaths in the epidemic.⁸

However, spirits rose significantly on July 27. Govan had been visiting friends in Cleburne's regiment when he heard thunderous cheering in his own neighboring camp. He hurried back to learn of a great Confederate victory at Manassas, Virginia. War whoops and Rebel yells sounded a "general jubilee in which men and officers mingled together . . . without restraints." Govan liked such occasions. He never expressed disdain for enlisted men; he was never seduced by the authority of command. And on this July evening, he, like many southerners, expressed the naive hope that the quick, decisive Confederate triumph in Virginia meant that he could soon return home to his wife and children.⁹

On the contrary, the war soon began in earnest for Govan when Hardee led his men north to Greenville, Missouri, in early August. Lack of coordination among Confederate units aborted a possible military action against the Federals, but the expedition gave Hardee an opportunity to drill his undisciplined force and mold a unit that would form, in time, the nucleus of the famous Hardee-Cleburne division. Hardee roused his men daily at four A.M., Govan informed Mary. Col. John S. Marmaduke, a Missouri-born West Point graduate, instructed the men in regimental drill for two hours before breakfast. Then came two hours of company drill to finish out the morning, followed at four P.M. by two more hours of company drill. The brigade returned to Pittman's Ferry on August 28, and by mid-September, as more regiments continued to assemble there, Hardee commanded a force of nearly six thousand men.¹⁰

Hardee moved his brigade to Columbus, Kentucky, in mid-September. The move was a direct response to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's victory at Belmont, Missouri, on September 6, which encouraged Union and

⁸Hughes, *Hardee*, 76-77; Neal and Kremm, *Lion of the South*, 91; *OR*, vol. 3, 609-610, 614-615; Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 82-84; Govan to wife, July 28, 1861, Govan Papers.

⁹Govan to wife, July 28, 1861, Govan Papers.

¹⁰Hughes, *Hardee*, 78-80; Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 84-88; Govan to wife, August 17, 1861, Govan Papers.

Confederate armies to jockey for position in Missouri and Kentucky. The brigade passed through Bowling Green to join forces with Gen. Simon B. Buckner, with both Hardee and Buckner under the command of the new Western Department commander Albert Sidney Johnston. The Arkansans bivouacked near Cave City, so called, Govan informed his wife, "from its proximity to a considerable cave within a hundred yards of our Camp." He also noted that the army was within eight miles of the famous Mammoth Cave, and that a large hotel had been built at Cave City for tourists.¹¹

By mid-October Hardee had been promoted to major general and given command of a division. His promotion meant elevation for three of his regimental commanders—Cleburne, Hindman, and R. G. Shaver—who now commanded three brigades containing eight Arkansas, two Tennessee, and one Mississippi regiments. Hindman was even promoted to brigadier general. From his company camp Captain Govan had no notion of becoming a general or of what the generals were planning. He only knew that from fifteen to thirty thousand Confederates were assembling in the region and that they must soon be tested in battle.¹²

Govan's company, along with Hindman's entire brigade, stayed in nearly constant motion during September and October as it screened Hardee's division, conducted reconnaissance, and formed raiding parties. Govan's men had by this time earned a reputation as "the best company in the Reg." How they earned that reputation is unclear, although, given Govan's military experience in college, they likely were a well-drilled and well-disciplined group when compared with most green troops. They nearly engaged the enemy in October when assigned to "special duty" with a battalion of cavalry. In an odd mode of advance, Govan and his men were each mounted behind a cavalryman. The expedition had hoped to launch a surprise attack on a nearby Union encampment. When heavy

¹¹Hughes, *Hardee*, 80–83; Neal and Kremm, *Lion of the South*, 93–94; Govan to wife, October 15, 1861, Govan Papers.

¹²Hughes, *Hardee*, 83; Govan to wife, October 15, 1861, Govan Papers.

rains made the rivers impassable, the Confederates were compelled to retire.¹³

Such missed opportunities frustrated Govan. The nation had been at war for half a year, yet he and his men seemed to spend all their time marching aimlessly through the countryside. Like many a junior officer, he questioned the wisdom and ability of his superiors. "A battle is so uncertain and distant," he lamented to Mary, "that I cannot form any idea as to when it will occur. Military operations are so slow that our military leaders seem lacking in enterprise and energy." Equally disheartening to Govan, sickness continued to plague the army. Most of the problems, he was convinced, came from exposure, sleeping on the ground, and the failure of many men to take "proper care of themselves." Besides battling measles and scurvy, men from Texas, Mississippi, Tennessee, and central Arkansas had difficulty adjusting to the damp climate of Kentucky's cave region. When his orderly sergeant died from sickness, the solemnity of war and finality of death weighed heavily on the sensitive Govan. He himself traveled to Bowling Green to arrange shipment of the sergeant's remains to Arkansas.¹⁴

The longer the war continued without resolution and the longer he remained away from home, the more Govan worried about his wife and children. Nothing is known of the arrangements Govan made for his family or his plantation while in service. Presumably, like many planters, he left an overseer in charge of the latter, and other members of the Govan and Otey clans who had settled nearby likely watched out for Mary. The separation made Govan "far sadder" than he had been in "many, many years," and "more depressed" than ever in his life. He would try to visit in December, he promised Mary, but for the moment he took satisfaction in serving his country and resisting "Northern fanaticism" and the Yankee "war of extermination upon the South."

¹³Hughes, *Hardee*, 84–85; Govan to wife, October 25, 1861, Govan Papers. For a common soldier's view of the tedium and boisterousness of camp life at Cave City see Dorothy Stanley, ed., *The Autobiography of Sir Henry Morton Stanley* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), 179–185.

¹⁴Govan to wife, October 25, November 4, 1861, Govan Papers; *OR*, vol. 4, 507, 555; Thomas L. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861–1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 70.

Should men leave the army now, they would expose their families to “the mercy of a brutal soldiery, ready to do the bidding of their abolition master.” “Can I or ought I to resign in the very face of the enemy”? the introspective captain asked his wife. “These are questions which it is difficult for me to answer.”¹⁵

Govan’s worries and mixed emotions stemmed, no doubt, from scenes he witnessed daily in the Bluegrass state. “The condition of things in Ky is lamentable and heartrending,” he assured Mary. “Many families houseless and homeless, driven by the abolition incendiary or the fanatic soldier to put themselves at the mercy of every pitiless storm.” People were being murdered, their property destroyed, and everyone lived “in constant dread.” “They know not when they lie down at night but that the torch or the musket may rouse them before morning. This is civil war in earnest—with all its terrible realities.”¹⁶

Govan finally saw action at Rowlett’s Station on December 17. When Gen. Don Carlos Buell advanced with the intention of seizing Bowling Green, an important railroad center in the struggle for eastern Kentucky and eastern Tennessee, Hindman, directed by Hardee to be aggressive in holding the region, attacked. It was not much of a fight, only a minor action. Hindman moved forward cautiously with his force of 1,100 infantry, 250 cavalry, and 4 pieces of artillery in response to reports that the 32nd Indiana Infantry was attempting to repair a railroad bridge across the Green River near Woodville. After his cavalry drove back a handful of Union infantry skirmishers, the general decided to decoy the main Federal force up a small hill and into the teeth of his combined

¹⁵U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the Eighth Census [Free]*, 1, 84, 103; Govan to wife, October 28, 1861, Govan Papers. Several other Govans, mostly Daniel’s brothers, served in Arkansas and Mississippi regiments, but at least two of them, William and Jack, are mentioned as being in Phillips County at various time during the war. William was usually the closest one available to check on Mary. He served as a major and quartermaster at various times under Hindman and Theophilus Holmes. Russell P. Baker, ed., “‘This Old Book’: The Civil War Diary of Mrs. Mary Sale Edmondson,” *Phillips County Historical Quarterly* 11 (March 1973): 3; Betty M. Faust, ed., “Diary of Sue Cook (1844–1912), 1864–1865,” *Phillips County Historical Quarterly* 5 (December 1866): 37; *OR*, vol. 13, 246, 833, vol. 47, pt. 3, 850.

¹⁶Govan to wife, October 28, 1861, Govan Papers. For official confirmation of Govan’s view see *OR*, vol. 4, 481–482.

infantry and artillery. The plan went awry when a Federal force of three hundred men suddenly appeared on Hindman's right flank. Col. Benjamin F. Terry of the 8th Texas Cavalry threw seventy-five of his Texas Rangers against the Hoosiers. The Texans attacked with "lightning speed" and "infernal yelling," but Terry fell mortally wounded. More Federals moved onto the flanks. The 1st Arkansas Battalion under Marmaduke drove back the enemy's right. The 2nd Arkansas and an artillery battery moved up in support, but by that time Hindman realized he was outnumbered two-to-one and withdrew. Total Confederate losses numbered four killed and ten wounded; the Federals lost eleven killed and twenty-two wounded.¹⁷

Govan considered the contest "severe." He was most impressed by the action of the Texans, and much saddened by the death of Terry, a "gallant and heroic" officer whom he had met in California through Ben McCulloch. However, it does not appear that his company or even the 2nd Arkansas came under direct fire. The regiment's job, Govan reported to his wife, had been to support the artillery. The Rangers and two infantry companies from the 1st Arkansas did all the fighting. Govan was pleased, though, that his men had at least been prepared for combat. They had recently exchanged their flintlock muskets for Enfield rifles, and all the training, drill, and forced marches of October and November had made them fit for battle.¹⁸

On January 28, 1862, while the army sat impatiently in winter camp at Bowling Green, Hindman promoted Govan to colonel and gave him command of the 2nd Arkansas. No record tells why Hindman promoted Govan in preference to his other company commanders. The fact that they both came from Phillips County may have worked in Govan's favor, as would the high reputation of his company. In any event, Govan suddenly found himself in an entirely different military circle. He probably joined the "Shynnedygge Militaire," an evening of dancing and joking for the regiment's officers and local civilians, organized that night by Hindman's staff. Otherwise, the Confederates in Kentucky and Tennessee did not fare well that winter. They suffered severe setbacks at Logan's Cross

¹⁷Hughes, *Hardee*, 87; Neal and Kream, *Lion of the South*, 97-99; *OR*, vol. 7, 14-21.

¹⁸Govan to wife, December 3, 22, 1861, Govan Papers; *OR*, vol. 4, 555.

Roads (or Mill Springs) on January 19. Fort Henry on the Tennessee River fell to Grant on February 6. As a result, the Army of Central Kentucky evacuated Bowling Green on February 11. Its original destination was Nashville, where Johnston hoped to concentrate his disparate forces, but when Fort Donelson fell to Grant on February 16, the Confederate defense of western and central Tennessee seemed on the verge of collapse. Hardee's army pushed on to Mississippi by way of Decatur, Alabama, to arrive at Corinth in late March. By then, word of Confederate defeat at Pea Ridge and the death of Ben McCulloch had reached the army.¹⁹

Pittsburg Landing was the next test for Govan and the Arkansans in Johnston's newly created Army of Mississippi, "our first lesson in the stern realities of the battlefield," as Govan put it. As luck would have it, Colonel Govan was too ill to lead his new regiment, which was assigned to Hindman's 1st Brigade of Hardee's 3rd Corps, for much of the fight. After having boasted of his good health all through the sickly time in Kentucky, Govan succumbed to a severe case of flux, or diarrhea, around the first of April. Even though still in a weakened condition when Johnston caught the Federals napping near Shiloh church, Govan led his men all through the horrendous first day of the three-day battle (April 6-8). Hindman's two thousand-man brigade moved hesitantly during the initial assault of April 6, as though reluctant to engage the enemy. Finally, however, the men methodically pushed forward across Seay Field, and when other less disciplined brigades lost their alignment and broke ranks, Hindman's men held their ground and saved the morning's earlier success with a bayonet charge. They remained in the thick of the action and continued to push back the Federal right flank all morning, "exposed all the while to the fire of the enemy" and sustaining heavy casualties. Not until eleven A.M., physically spent and nearly out of ammunition, did the brigade fall back to rest and rearm.²⁰

¹⁹Davis, *Confederate General*, 3:18; Neal and Kremm, *Lion of the South*, 99-102; Hughes, *Hardee*, 89.

²⁰Govan to C. J. Lincoln, April 9, 1862, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Arkansas, National Archives Microcopy 317, Roll 55, (cited hereafter as Compiled Service Records); Fay Hempstead, *Historical Review of Arkansas; Its Commerce Industry and Modern Affairs* (Chicago:

All this was but prelude to the Hornet's Nest. Hindman had withdrawn from the fight due to painful injuries suffered when his horse was shot from under him earlier in the day. Colonel Shaver replaced Hindman, and after allowing the brigade to rest for about an hour, led it back to the field. As the men rejoined the struggle at about three P.M., they anchored the center of a Confederate line that sought repeatedly to dislodge the last enclave of Federal defenders. As the brigade charged "with great vigor" directly against three Iowa regiments, the 2nd Arkansas faced not only superior numbers but a withering crossfire by cannon and rifle. Govan's men remained pinned down for an hour while "taking advantage of every possible cover." They fought "desperately," enemy bullets whizzing all around them, until, when darkness came, the Federals withdrew, and they collapsed in exhaustion. Govan was so ill by then that he could not file the regiment's battle report.²¹

After Shiloh the army retreated to Corinth and reorganized once more. Govan took five days leave of absence to regain his strength, but he was back in harness by the time the army evacuated Corinth on May 29-30 and continued its retreat to Tupelo. By summer Hindman had returned to Arkansas to command the Trans-Mississippi District, and Govan had a new brigade commander, Gen. St. John R. Liddell, a former staff officer for Hardee. It was an all-Arkansas unit, including the 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Arkansas regiments. Gen. Simon B. Buckner was Govan's new division commander, and the 2nd Arkansas remained in Hardee's corps. Gen. Braxton Bragg assumed command of the army, and he wanted to recapture Kentucky. The climactic battle of the resulting campaign, fought at Perryville on October 8, 1862, was Govan's second major action, and he and his regiment performed admirably.²²

Lewis Publishing, 1911), 1:243; Davis, *Confederate General*, 3:18; *OR*, vol. 10, pt. 1, 383, 575-576; Wiley Sword, *Shiloh: Bloody April* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), 145, 151-155, 311-312, 317-318, 458.

²¹Neal and Kremm, *Lion of the South*, 107-109; Sword, *Shiloh*, 281, 293-294; *OR*, vol. 10, pt. 1, 576.

²²St. John R. Liddell to Samuel Cooper, October 14, 1863, Compiled Service Records; Neal and Kremm, *Lion of the South*, 113-114; Hughes, *Liddell's Record*, 77-78; "The Opposing Forces at Perryville," Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, (New York: Century, 1887), 3:30; Davis,

Buckner's division held the center of the Confederate line at Perryville, opposed by the Federal corps of Gen. Alexander McCook, a West Point classmate of Hardee. Gen. Benjamin F. Cheatham's division opened the attack against McCook on the Union left, but Buckner's men soon joined them, advancing, according to Hardee's instructions, "upon the enemy where the firing is hottest." As Govan moved the 2nd Arkansas into position, he hurriedly asked Cheatham for his assessment of the battle. "By the Gods, Govan," Cheatham replied, "they are giving us particular hell, pitch into them." As Govan later recalled, his regiment proceeded to give the Yanks "what Gen Cheatham said they were giving him." It was a confusing battle, starting in mid-afternoon and continuing well beyond twilight, "with a bright full moon shining" during the latter phases of the conflict. Govan's regiment suffered its share of the brigade's seventy-one casualties, but it also captured two ambulances, one of them carrying McCook's personal baggage, as well as four Federal flags.²³

As the army moved out of Kentucky following Perryville, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, loomed as the next test for Govan, who, based purely on his date of promotion to colonel, found himself the senior regimental commander. The 2nd Arkansas still formed part of Liddell's brigade, but Cleburne, now a major general, became their division commander. Murfreesboro is of some interest in the study of Govan's military career, for it is the first action for which his battle report survives. Liddell's brigade formed the extreme left of Cleburne's division (indeed, of the entire army) on December 30, the first day of this three-day battle, while the 2nd Arkansas formed the extreme right of the brigade. Govan's men suffered heavy losses in fighting early that morning when Liddell moved the brigade forward prematurely. The Arkansans found themselves unsupported in fierce fighting against Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky troops "posted behind a fence and in the woods near a house used by the enemy as a hospital" below Wilkinson Pike. Govan led his regiment to within a hundred yards of the Yankee line, the furthest advance made by the brigade. They held their position until the remaining regiments

Confederate General, 3:18.

²³Hughes, *Hardee*, 128-131; Hughes, *Liddell's Record*, 91-96; Hempstead, *Historical Review of Arkansas*, 1:243; *OR*, vol. 16, pt. 1, 1158-1160.

arrived to help scatter the Federals. Govan then maneuvered his men in a flanking movement to within twenty-five yards of the 1st Ohio Infantry. After a "closely contested fight," the Federals "gave way in confusion and fled across the field."²⁴

Liddell's men rested briefly, but by noon they were up again and had approached the edge of a cedar ridge along the Nashville Turnpike. Cleburne's men swept forward and seemed to have the situation well in hand. Liddell even stopped to talk with some Federal surgeons as his regiment moved ahead easily without his direction. Then things went terribly wrong, and Cleburne's entire division folded. The panic began when two Tennessee brigades, both in advance of Liddell, wavered in the renewed attack. Govan, in Liddell's absence, assumed responsibility for the brigade and made a crucial decision. He and the other regimental commanders had been waiting for additional ammunition to be distributed to their men when the "disorderly and disgraceful" retreat of the Tennesseans swept past them. "I was at first at a loss what course to pursue," admitted Govan. "Our success had been all that we wished." But with his brigade nearly out of ammunition, with no support in front or on his right flank, which was nearest the enemy, and being exposed in an open field, he conducted an orderly withdrawal. Liddell was mildly critical, noting in his report that "but little firing [was] going on at the time" of the retreat, but he recognized the precarious position the brigade had occupied, and he lavished praise on the 2nd Arkansas for its performance earlier in the day.²⁵

Despite this anti-climactic end to the day's struggle, Bragg's army had gained a victory. Unfortunately, two days of fighting remained. The 2nd Arkansas engaged only in light skirmishing during this time, but for the entire battle the regiment suffered 118 casualties, including 15 killed, 94 wounded, and 9 missing. The brigade as a whole had 607 losses. During the following months of Bragg's drawn-out retreat toward Chattanooga, Govan continued to gain the admiration of his superiors.

²⁴Peter Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 74–75, 94–98, 230; *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 660, 860–861.

²⁵Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 147–150; Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 168–175; Hughes, *Liddell's Record*, 109–113; *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 858–859, 861–863.

Liddell, Cleburne, and Hardee all recommended Govan for promotion to brigadier general in January 1863. Hardee called him "an officer of tried courage of energy & ability," but Bragg had no brigade for him to command. Govan and his regiment performed exceptionally well at Liberty Gap (June 25–26, 1863) during the Tullahoma campaign. By then, however, like many officers in the Army of Tennessee, Govan had lost confidence in Bragg. When Liddell predicted that their commander would make a stand at Tullahoma against the pursuing Federals, Govan quietly but confidently wagered an oyster supper that Bragg would continue to retreat. Govan won.²⁶

Bragg again reorganized his army in August 1863, and Govan took command of the entire brigade when Liddell was placed in charge of this and another brigade to form a demi-division in Gen. Daniel H. Hill's corps. Govan's old regiment had been so depleted by the Murfreesboro fight that it was consolidated with the 15th Arkansas Infantry. In addition, his brigade consisted of an artillery battery, 1st Louisiana Infantry, 8th Arkansas, the consolidated 5th and 13th Arkansas, and the consolidated 6th and 7th Arkansas. Col. Arthur J. L. Fremantle, the noted British military observer, had been impressed with the brigade after reviewing it earlier in the summer. "General Liddell's brigade was composed of Arkansas troops—five very weak regiments which had suffered severely in the different battles," he reported. "The men were good-sized, healthy, and well clothed, but without any attempt at uniformity in colour or cut." Later he added, "Most of them were armed with Enfield rifles captured from the enemy. Many, however, had lost or thrown away their bayonets, which they don't appear to value properly, as they assert that they have never met a Yankee who would wait for that weapon. . . . They drilled tolerably well, and an advance in line was remarkably good."²⁷

²⁶OR, vol. 20, pt. 1, 680–682, vol. 23, pt. 1, 589–590, 592–593; Liddell to Samuel Cooper, January 16, 1863, with endorsements, Liddell to Jefferson Davis, January 19, 1863, Compiled Service Records; Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 19.

²⁷Davis, *Confederate General*, 3:18; OR, vol. 30, pt. 1, 231; Arthur J. L. Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States April–June 1863* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1863), 156–157. Hardee at this time was much impressed by the improvement

By mid-September Bragg had abandoned Tennessee, but he hoped to lure Gen. William S. Rosecrans into a trap at Chickamauga Creek in northwest Georgia. Govan did not at first seem destined to play a very big role in closing that trap, as all of Liddell's division had been assigned to Gen. William H. T. Walker's reserve corps. But, in Govan's words, "It proved to be . . . anything but a reserve division." On September 18 Walker ordered Liddell's two brigades to advance by way of Alexander's Bridge, one of the crucial crossings on Chickamauga Creek. They seized the position easily against only light resistance. The Yankees, however, had torn up the planks of the bridge, so Liddell took his men upstream that night to cross at Byram's Ford.²⁸

September 19 found the division deployed for battle along LaFayette Road. Govan's brigade formed the left wing as they moved toward Federal positions along Brotherton Road at about 10:30 A.M. Liddell cautioned Govan to watch his left flank, which was unprotected. At 11:30 A.M. the line charged and sent the Federals reeling. The men in Govan's front, as so often in the past, came from Ohio and Indiana. It was tough going, even without the fighting, as both sides moved through woods and undergrowth. Visibility was no more than fifty yards. Govan's men rounded up some three hundred prisoners and several pieces of artillery. After pausing only briefly to catch their breath, they then pushed up a small hill against a second Union line, these defenders being from Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Indiana. It was no contest. "Steady boys, steady, for God's sake, don't run away," pleaded a Federal officer as his men fled in panic.²⁹

The day did not end on this high note, but Govan's personal performance was sterling. As his brigade moved back down the hill with additional trophies of war, Govan was still mindful of Liddell's warning to watch his left flank. He had already deployed the 6th and 7th Arkansas as skirmishers on that flank when a long blue column appeared, the vanguard, it turned out, of six full brigades. Govan's single brigade

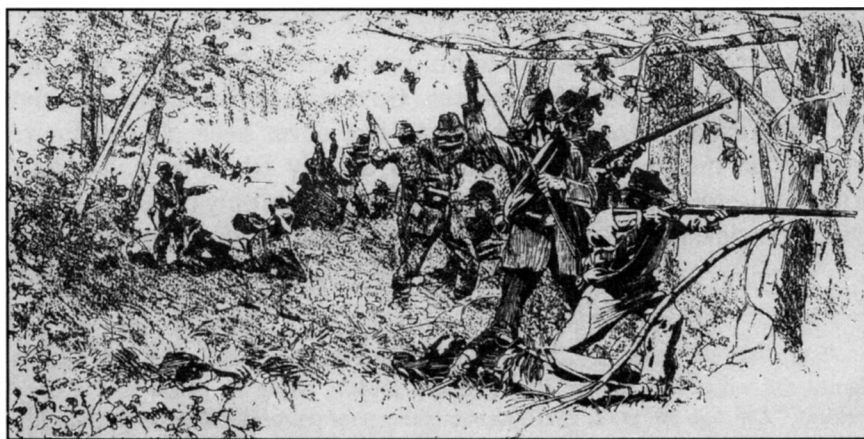
his Arkansas troops had made since the previous summer. Hughes, *Liddell's Record*, 120-121.

²⁸Hempstead, *Historical Review of Arkansas*, 1:244; OR, vol. 30, pt. 2, 14, 239, 257-258; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 108-110.

²⁹OR, vol. 30, pt. 2, 258; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 141-146.

stood no chance, even though it fought stubbornly for a half hour. When the 6th and 7th buckled under the pressure, the rest of the brigade slowly gave way, too. However, as at Murfreesboro, Govan controlled the damage by skillfully withdrawing his men.³⁰

As the entire division reformed on a line held by Cheatham's division, most men hoped they had completed their role in the day's fight, but more was to come. Cheatham, desperately needing reinforcements on his right, asked Liddell to send in his division again. The Arkansans pushed ahead briefly, but then fell back, and the unlucky 6th and 7th Arkansas proved to be the weak reed once more. With Govan's men on the right of Gen. Edward C. Walthall's brigade, the 6th and 7th, forming Govan's own left flank, came under an enfilading fire about 3:30 P.M. At the same time, one of Govan's own batteries wounded



Confederate line of battle in Chickamauga woods. *Civil War Times*, May 1969.

³⁰OR, vol. 30, pt. 2, 258–259; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 149–151.

several men by firing short into his ranks. The entire line collapsed, and Govan could do nothing but retreat. He reformed on Walthall's right as night drew near.³¹

The final day of fighting, September 20, proved the least successful for Govan and his men. Ordered against the Federal left at 9:00 A.M. in support of Gen. John C. Breckinridge's position, the brigade did not actually advance toward LaFayette Road, a half mile distant, until noon. One staff officer, aiming his barbs at Polk and Liddell, considered the attack "ill planned and ill conducted." Directed to wheel left and assist the brigade of Gen. States Rights Gist, another of Walker's reserve units, Govan and his men played their part successfully. They had a difficult maneuver, made across an open field while Ohio infantrymen fired into them from a woods on the left flank. Yet, in Govan's proud assessment of the day's work, his brigade "pressed gallantly forward and succeeded in driving the enemy from his position." The men continued on enthusiastically southward along the road until they found themselves "almost immediately in the rear of a line of the enemy's strongest breastworks."³²

But Govan now fell victim to his own success, Gist's failure, and a blunder by the 6th and 7th Arkansas. Govan's men had penetrated too far, and Gist's brigade, which Govan had never been able to locate properly in the woods and fields, had already fallen back. Govan's brigade thus found itself "completely isolated." Not only that, but the 6th and 7th regiments, unaccountably moving ahead of the main body, had

³¹OR, vol. 30, pt. 2, 258-259; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 192-195. Liddell blamed the withdrawal on the short artillery rounds, which he called an "unlucky accident." OR, vol. 30, pt. 2, 252. The continuing poor performance of the 6th and 7th, whatever its reason, was becoming an embarrassment to the men. One member of the regiment who kept a detailed diary of his service made entries for September 18, 20, and 21, but not September 19. Civil War Diary of Rufus W. Daniel, September 18-21, 1863, U.S. Army Military History Institute.

³²Russell K. Brown, *To the Manner Born: The Life of General William H. T. Walker* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 176-177; Walter B. Cisco, *States Rights Gist: A South Carolina General of the Civil War* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane, 1991), 101-102; OR, vol. 30, pt. 2, 259. Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 353-355, says Govan's brigade performed "poorly" on the previous day, September 19, but this is too harsh a judgment, based solely, it appears, on the final retreat.

left a considerable gap between themselves and their comrades. The Yankees pounced on the opening with a "vigorous attack" that enfiladed and overlapped the consolidated regiment while the rest of the brigade continued to advance. The 6th and 7th fled "in great confusion," the men throwing away arms and accoutrements to speed their flight. The collapse came so rapidly that only the initiative of Govan's regimental commanders on the right saved the day. With Govan unable to communicate with them quickly enough, they organized a coordinated withdrawal in the heat of battle. As they pulled back toward the right, or westward from the field, a cavalry scout intercepted them and led the brigade to safety.³³

Unfortunately the day's disappointment was not yet spent. At about 5:00 P.M. Liddell reformed both brigades, Govan on the left and Walthall on the right, and moved across LaFayette Road toward Savannah Church and the Mullis house. It was nearly the precise route Govan's men had taken that morning, and again, as in that fighting and on the previous day, the left flank proved to be the brigade's undoing. Govan grew more and more uneasy as the lines advanced. His left was protected by Breckinridge's men, but Liddell, steadily outpacing Breckinridge, moved ahead too quickly. Govan slowed his own advance at first, trying to maintain contact with the left, but he had been told to align his men with Walthall, so forward he went. Gen. John B. Turchin's mostly Buckeye brigade lay in wait some three hundred yards to the left. Govan had only a few minutes warning from his skirmishers before the bluecoats came screaming from concealment out of heavy woods. Too late to change front, Govan hurried his men into some undergrowth and ordered them to take cover. The Yanks, supported by two artillery batteries, hit them before they completed the maneuver. The 6th and 7th Arkansas, on the brigade's left, broke first. Without this pivot regiment to anchor the line, Govan's remaining regiments melted away. "Under this heavy and galling fire," Govan reported, "no other alternative was

³³Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 355–356; *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 2, 259. Rufus Daniel fails to mention yet another collapse of his regiment on September 20. His diary entry for that date includes only the regiment's earlier advance.

left but to withdraw the brigade as speedily as possible to save it from annihilation or capture.”³⁴

The brigade retreated “in considerable confusion,” admitted the colonel, yet he was able to rally and reform the men some four hundred yards to the rear. Somehow he inspired them to advance once more, the third advance of the day. The men surged forward and were making progress along LaFayette Road, slightly to the right of their previous advance, when the Federals fell back, and the day’s fighting ended. It had been a hellish three days, in which Govan lost 50 percent of his command. Yet, given the circumstances, he and his men had performed well. Always quick to share credit, Govan praised his regimental commanders for their “coolness and skill” on the two occasions when he had to depend on them for quick independent action. The brigade, Govan stressed in his report, “never failed to drive the enemy in their front, and advanced each time with a single line unsupported, and with one or the other of my flanks unprotected, and that on no former occasion was their courage and endurance more severely tested, nor in any previous battle did they ever exhibit more determined bravery and gallantry.”³⁵ It was just that darned left flank.

Liddell also seemed satisfied. He appreciated the performances of both Govan and Walthall, especially their “prompt co-operation in every movement and quick apprehension of the constantly recurring necessities that arise on a battle-field.” Moreover, Liddell knew that their men, despite being driven back on three occasions, had performed in superior fashion. “Although no brilliant results were directly accomplished,” he observed truthfully, “the record for hard fighting cannot be well surpassed.” The “best evidence of good soldiers,” he maintained, comes “when over-powered by immense numbers on all sides to be able to rally promptly and return again and again to the contest undaunted.” Govan and his men had done that on more than one occasion.³⁶

As Bragg’s army pursued and laid siege to William S. Rosecrans’ army in Chattanooga during the following weeks, Govan had much upon

³⁴Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 490–491, 493–494; Brown, *To the Manner Born*, 177–178; *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 2, 259–260.

³⁵*OR*, vol. 30, pt. 2, 260–261.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 254.

which to reflect. His new responsibilities as brigade commander weighed heavily on him. Quiet and introspective by nature, he had always felt the loss of any man under his direction. How much more keenly, then, he must have been affected to see his men killed or maimed in battle. And he had lost half his men in three days. Then, too, his brother Andrew, fourth youngest of five brothers, and one of three Govan boys present at Chickamauga, had died of wounds suffered in that battle. Govan grieved and worried about how his mother would take the news. He also had to inform Mary that her cousin Hugh Otey had been killed.³⁷

Despite the success of his men in checking the Federal advance at Chickamauga, another army reorganization required that Liddell's division be broken up in October. Cleburne took command of a new division in Breckinridge's corps, with Liddell resuming his place as brigade commander and Govan returning to lead the 2nd Arkansas. However, when Liddell went on leave in November, Govan once again assumed temporary command of the brigade. Govan himself hoped to take leave soon, for thirty days if he could manage it. Mary was expecting another child, and he wanted to be with her during her "confinement" or shortly after the birth, even if it meant returning to a region swarming with Federals. "I think by the middle of Dec all active military operations will be suspended," he told her, "and my chances are very good . . . unless a battle is imminent, in which event I shall feel it my duty to remain."³⁸

By September 1863 Govan had reason to be concerned about a pregnant wife in Arkansas. Gen. Frederick Steele's Union forces had taken possession of Little Rock in that month and turned the capital into a permanent base of operations. Closer to home, Helena had been occupied by the Federals since April of 1862, and all Phillips County had suffered at the hands of foragers. An Indiana soldier described Helena as a "miserable . . . looking place," in July 1862 with "the best part of town . . . completely destroyed." "The remaining houses are all deserted

³⁷Govan to wife, November 28, 16, 1863, Govan Papers; *OR*, vol. 11, pt. 2, 753, vol. 21, 603; Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Mississippi*, (Atlanta: Southern Historical Publishing Association, 1907), 1:793-794.

³⁸Davis, *Confederate General*, 3:18; *OR*, vol. 31, pt 2, 660; Govan to wife, November 16, 1863, Govan Papers.

by their owners," continued his bleak description, "and are now occupied by Soldiers for different purposes." Gen. Samuel Curtis, for instance, made his headquarters in Hindman's house. The situation was not quite so dangerous on outlying plantations like the Govan's, but the countryside faced other perils: "Every where, they [Federal soldiers] are devouring and laying waste the labor of man's hands. Our [wives] are not free from their insults—but they walk in armed with pistols & sabres, and thus compell with arms, our wives to cook for them! The surrounding country is, for miles around, swept by foraging parties. Farmers have both negroes and all kinds of stock stolen from them."³⁹

The anticipated battle came sooner than Govan would have liked, as his brigade helped shield the retreat of Bragg's army following the fiasco at Missionary Ridge on November 25, 1863. The division had already been evacuated to Chickamauga Station on November 23 in anticipation of joining Gen. James Longstreet's corps in the siege of Knoxville when Cleburne ordered a portion of his men, including Govan's brigade, back to a position on the right of Missionary Ridge. Although Govan's part of the line never came under direct attack that day, his old regiment helped to defend the army's flank. Between eleven A.M. and three P.M. the 2nd Arkansas, now consolidated with the 15th and 24th Arkansas under Lt. Col. E. Warfield, bore the brunt of some of the heaviest Union assaults. The regiment seized an enemy battle flag and helped to capture five hundred prisoners.⁴⁰

The rest of Bragg's army did not fare so well, and as the precipitous retreat began, Cleburne's division covered Hardee's corps. Cleburne rushed Govan's men to "dispute the enemy's advance" at Shallow Ford Road, which they did to perfection. The brigade's most dramatic moment, however, came on November 27 at Ringgold Gap. At 8:00 A.M.

³⁹Christ, *Rugged and Sublime*, 44; Moneyhon, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Arkansas*, 130; Anne J. Bailey, *Between the Enemy and Texas: Parsons's Texas Cavalry in the Civil War* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1989), 85–97; "Indiana Troops at Helena: Part III," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly* 17 (March 1979): 11; Russell P. Baker, ed., "William Henry Barksdale Journal," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly* 15 (December 1976): 40–41. See also Carl H. Moneyhon, "The Civil War in Phillips County, Arkansas," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly* 19 (June and September 1981): 18–36.

⁴⁰*OR*, vol. 3I, pt. 2, 745–753.

Govan deployed his regiments in a small ravine across the mouth of the gap in Taylor's Ridge to await the enemy's arrival. Two Napoleon guns from Semple's Battery augmented his infantry. When the Federals came to within 150 yards of his line, the two guns opened up with canister shot. The bluecoats "reeled and staggered." They made several attempts that morning to puncture Govan's defenses, but eventually pulled back. The brigade withdrew that afternoon, having helped buy the army an entire day to facilitate an orderly retreat. Cleburne lavished praise on Govan and his other brigade commanders—Mark P. Lowrey, Lucius E. Polk, and Hiram B. Granbury—for their day's work. "Four better officers," he proudly asserted, "are not in the service of the Confederacy." Govan, as always, praised the performance of his men. "For this fight I think we deserve especial credit," he maintained, "as it was fought under peculiarly discouraging circumstances, while retreating in the face of overwhelming numbers, and without assistance or support from any quarter."⁴¹

The army finally settled that winter around Dalton, Georgia, although Cleburne's division, acting as a buffer between the main body and any Federal advance, positioned itself seven miles to the northwest on Tunnel Hill Ridge. During this encampment, Cleburne showed the "good judgment" to recognize Govan for his services as brigade commander during the autumn campaigns. Liddell had been seeking a transfer to the Trans-Mississippi theater for several months, and he had urged everyone from Cleburne to General Samuel Cooper, adjutant general of the Confederate army, to promote Govan as his replacement. When Liddell finally received his transfer, Cleburne requested a promotion for his Phillips County friend. "This is one of the best Brigades in my Division," Cleburne informed General Cooper, "it is composed exclusively of Arkansans and I feel a peculiar interest in its being well commanded." Govan had already led the brigade in several battles, he emphasized to Cooper, "and always with skill and valour." The promotion finally

⁴¹Irving A. Buck, *Cleburne and His Command* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959), 175, 182–184; Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 253–263; *OR*, vol. 31, pt. 2, 752–757, 763; Hempstead, *Historical Review of Arkansas*, 1:245.

approved, Govan took permanent command of the brigade on December 29.⁴²

Meantime, in a show of mutual confidence, Govan supported his fellow adopted Arkansan in a bold political step by endorsing Cleburne's extraordinary proposal to train slaves as soldiers in the Confederate cause and, once the South gained its independence, to free those slaves who had loyally served the nation. Govan, like Cleburne, was doubtless appalled by the growing thinness of Confederate ranks and believed that southern independence could be secured only by sacrificing slavery. With his own slaves probably long since taken by the Federals as "contraband," Govan was the first of thirteen Cleburne brigade and regimental commanders to sign the document. But the controversial proposal was too hot for most Confederate generals and politicians. Jefferson Davis called the proposal "injurious to the public service" and ordered that it be "kept private."⁴³

Otherwise, the winter encampment was a mixture of hard work, hard play, and the usual boredom of inaction. Govan and Cleburne's other senior officers spent part of the winter studying tactics and the art of war. Cleburne personally listened to the recitations of his four brigade commanders. They, in turn, heard the recitations of their regimental officers, who drilled the troops and tightened discipline considerably. On the lighter side, Govan's and Polk's brigades waged a monster snowball fight following a four-inch snowfall in late March. Thousands of men

⁴²Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 267-268; Hughes, *Liddell's Record*, 150-151, 165-166; Liddell to Cooper, October 14, 1863, Patrick R. Cleburne to Samuel Cooper, December 3, 1863, Compiled Service Records.

⁴³Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 268-278; Hughes, *Liddell's Record*, 150-151, 165-166; *OR*, vol. 31, pt. 3, 869, Vol. 52, pt. 2, 586-592; Steven E. Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 262-263; Robert F. Durden, *The Gray and the Black: The Confederate Debate on Emancipation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 53-62. For the possible reasoning of Cleburne and Govan, see Dale P. Kirkman, ed., "The Diary of a Soldier: Thomas J. Key," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly* 24 (December 1981 and March 1982): 35-36; for a good account of how this episode may have affected Cleburne's military career, see Paul R. Fessler, "The Case of the Missing Promotion: Historians and the Military Career of Major General Patrick Ronayne Cleburne, C.S.A.," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 53 (Summer 1994): 211-231.

engaged in a day-long war for supremacy, and while there is no record of Govan's participation, he probably joined the mob. Cleburne led the ailing Polk's brigade, and Govan would not have missed a chance to lead his men in such a contest. Govan was no doubt elated that his brigade was victorious.⁴⁴

Govan and his men engaged in rugged action all the next spring and summer during the Atlanta campaign. The men of his Arkansas Brigade, as it was now known, were battle-hardened veterans by this stage of the war. All had "seen the elephant," and their ranks had been thinned considerably. The brigade's eight Arkansas regiments had been consolidated into four: the 2nd with the 24th, 5th with 13th, 6th with 7th, and 8th with 19th. At Resaca (May 14), Pickett's Mill/New Hope Church (May 27), Kennesaw Mountain (June 27), and Atlanta (July 22), his men fought doggedly and Govan led them expertly. "We had a continuous battle" from Dalton to Atlanta, recalled one of Govan's soldiers. "We moved back slowly, and only when flanked and outnumbered. When we adopted a new line a few miles back, we built breastworks. Thus marching, battling, building works, in rain and mud, with no camp, no tents and but little food, the campaign went on." Govan himself recalled, "It was a campaign that tried the endurance of the soldier to the utmost extent, and tried his soldierly qualities as in a crucible. We slept on our arms, lulled to sleep (if we slept at all) to the sound of the bullet, and awoke in the morning saluted by artillery."⁴⁵

Yet Govan and his men paid a heavy price for the heroics of that spring and summer. In fighting from May 7 to May 20, including the action at Resaca, the Arkansas Brigade lost three killed and thirty-one wounded, the third highest casualties in Cleburne's four brigades. Granbury's Texans played the critical role at Pickett's Mill/New Hope

⁴⁴Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 268; Daniel E. Sutherland, ed., *Reminiscences of a Private: William E. Bevens of the First Arkansas Infantry, C.S.A.* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1992), 151–155; Ben LaBree, ed., *Camp Fires of the Confederacy* (Louisville: Courier-Journal, 1898), 48–53; S. R. Watkins, "Snow Battle at Dalton," *Confederate Veteran* 1 (September 1893): 261–262.

⁴⁵*OR*, vol. 38, pt. 3, 639; Albert Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 404–405; Davis, *Confederate General III*, 18; Sutherland, *Reminiscences of a Private*, 159; Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 338.

Church, but, as one of Govan's men recalled, the Arkansas Brigade was "in that fight from start to finish." The brigade lost thirty-four killed and eighty-six wounded on that day. The tables at last turned on Kennesaw Mountain, where Gen. William T. Sherman suffered fearful losses.⁴⁶

In the battle of Atlanta, Govan's men, exhausted by lack of sleep and two days of endless skirmishing, marching, and entrenching, faced a "murderous fire," yet routed the enemy in hand-to-hand combat and took hundreds of prisoners. "My men carried three distinct works of the enemy without being once repulsed," reported a satisfied Govan, "and held the ground gained until ordered back from the last position, being unsupported." A Confederate artillery officer admired how Govan had deftly maneuvered the brigade in the face of the enemy. "The most successful movement [of the day] was performed by two of General Govan's regiments," he reported, and went on to insist that "Generals Govan, Lowrey, and Smith acted nobly, and all their men fought with the courage of lions."⁴⁷

But Govan's men were mauled on July 22, and worse was to follow. On that morning Govan's brigade counted 1,221 effectives; on the morning of July 23, it numbered just 722. He had lost 86 killed, 322 wounded, and 91 captured. A week later on September 1 at Jonesboro, he and his men suffered humiliation and their only real defeat of the war. Gen. John Bell Hood, now commanding the Army of Tennessee, had

⁴⁶OR, vol. 38, pt. 3, 686-687, 720-726; Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 322-328, 347-350; Buck, *Cleburne and His Command*, 230-240; Sutherland, *Reminiscences of a Private*, 171-177; Stan C. Hurley, "Govan's Brigade at Pickett's Mill," *Confederate Veteran* 12 (February 1904): 75; Edward Bourne, "Govan's Brigade at New Hope Church," *Confederate Veteran* 31 (March 1923): 89; Philip L. Secrist, "Scenes of Awful Carnage," *Civil War Times* 10 (June 1971): 5-9, 45-48; T. B. Roy, "General Hardee and the Military Operations Around Atlanta," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 8 (August-September 1880): 364.

⁴⁷OR, vol. 38, pt. 3, 737-741; Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 332-335, 350-362; James L. Nichols and Frank Abbott, eds., "Reminiscences of Confederate Service by Wiley A. Washburn," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 35 (Spring 1976): 70-71; Dale P. Kirkman, ed., "The Diary of a Soldier: Thomas J. Key, Part V," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly* 22 (June and September 1984): 9-10, 13. This portion of the field could be identified for many years by two Atlanta streets that ran through it: Hardee and Govan. The name of Govan Street was changed not long ago to Caroline. Kirkman, ed., "Diary of a Soldier: Part V," 30, n.9.

decided belatedly that Jonesboro, an important railroad terminus fifteen miles south of Atlanta, must be protected. In late August he ordered troops, including Cleburne's division, to defend it. Corps commander Hardee's report of the ensuing action was terse: "The enemy attacked my whole line fiercely at Jonesborough yesterday, turning my right flank at the same time. The assault was everywhere repulsed, except upon Lewis' and Govan's brigade, which gave way." The Yankees captured Govan and six hundred of his men, along with eight artillery pieces, largely because the brigade had been placed in an indefensible position by the following sequence of events.⁴⁸

Early on the morning of September 1, the Arkansas Brigade formed part of a thin defensive line formed by Gen. John C. Brown's division and three of Cleburne's brigades. They held a less than ideal position. Cleburne's men braced themselves behind "an inferior line of entrenchments incomplete and on ground badly selected." Bad as it was along some parts of the line, Govan's men, positioned on the right flank, "found no works at all, but a few fence rails." When Hardee, fearing an attack on the right, hurriedly rushed two more brigades to that flank, Govan's men had to make room for them. They wound up relinquishing what scanty protection they enjoyed and were still working frantically to erect new temporary works when the Federals advanced. The Arkansans turned back the first assault, but when the Yankees brought up reinforcements and three divisions converged on the brave men of Govan and Gen. Joseph H. Lewis, the bulk of both brigades, outmanned and ill-protected, surrendered. "Their fire upon the advancing enemy was steady," reported one Confederate officer, "but the immense numbers and overwhelming forces of the Yankees ran upon the works, sweeping over the right of Govan's fortifications." Sgt. Patrick Irwin of the 14th Michigan Infantry captured Govan.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 372–380; *OR*, vol. 38, pt. 3, 696, 728–729, 741.

⁴⁹Castel, *Decision in the West*, 512–518; Nichols and Abbott, "Reminiscences of Confederate Service," 74–76; Dale P. Kirkman, ed., "The Diary of a Soldier: Part 6," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly* 23 (December 1984 and March 1985): 13–14; *OR*, vol. 38, pt. 1, 676, pt. 3, 728–729. Major Key thought Govan's works "were fairly strong," but he seems to have been alone in this opinion.

The captivity did not last long. Govan and his men had been transported only as far as Nashville when on September 9 Union and Confederate authorities arranged for "a special exchange" of two thousand prisoners. Govan served as the central Rebel in the trade, being exchanged for Union general George Stoneman. The entire brigade had returned to duty within a fortnight. Atlanta had been abandoned by then, and the army was preparing to embark on its fateful Tennessee campaign (November 29–December 27). A series of forced marches in October and November carried Hood's men through Georgia and Alabama and into Tennessee. Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville awaited an army that would soon cease to exist.⁵⁰

A falling out between Hood and Hardee had resulted in the latter being replaced by Cheatham as Govan's corps commander, but Cleburne still led the division. Cleburne's men could have given the Confederacy a signal triumph at Spring Hill (November 29), but miscalculation and miscommunication by his superiors produced an unsatisfying half-victory. Govan's brigade formed the center of Cleburne's command as it made a tricky maneuver to reinforce Lowrey's brigade in a rout of the Federal left. Typical of Govan, while his men reformed for another attack—the potentially lethal strike that never came—the general halted with his staff to rescue a family whose house had been set ablaze by Union artillery.⁵¹

As the Union army slipped away, Hood pursued, and fate gave him another opportunity to seize victory at Franklin (November 30). Blaming his subordinates—particularly Cheatham, Cleburne, and Brown—for his own failures at Spring Hill, Hood ordered a direct assault against a formidable Union line. Incredibly, Hood thought Cleburne's men had lacked spirit and resolve at Spring Hill. He intended to teach them a lesson on this day. When Cleburne gathered his brigade commanders to

⁵⁰Davis, *Confederate General*, 3:18; Kirkman, "Diary of a Soldier: Part 6," 34, n.10; Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 382; Thomas L. Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 476–493. An interesting anecdote concerning Govan's captivity is in Frank S. Roberts, "C.P. Roberts, Adjutant, Second Georgia Battalion," *Confederate Veteran* 22 (March 1914): 112.

⁵¹Sword, *Confederacy's Last Hurrah*, 126–139.

relate Hood's orders, Govan could see his friend was "greatly depressed." Upon hearing the orders—to carry the enemy works at all hazards—Govan and the others knew they must suffer horrendous casualties. As Govan turned to leave the brief conference, he told Cleburne, "Well, General, few of us will ever return to Arkansas to tell the story of this battle." Cleburne nodded grimly: "Well, Govan, if we are to die, let us die like men."⁵²

Cleburne tried to shield his men by forming them on a narrow front into columns of brigades, rather than in lines. The Confederates actually succeeded in breaking through the first Federal line, but they lost much unit cohesion in the process and poured after the fleeing enemy "more like a wild howling mob than an organized army." They fell on the main Union lines in a frenzy of hand-to-hand combat. "I raised my gun to get my man," related one gray-clad survivor, "and was shot in rig[h]t elbow my hat shot off, my gun stock broken with 100 holes thru my blanket. So I laid down in the ditch. They began to cross fire on us and were doing us lots and lots of harm." Govan's men, forming the center of Cleburne's three attacking brigades, were in the thick of it. "General Cleburne then moved forward on foot, waving his cap," recalled Govan, "and I lost sight of him in the smoke and din of battle." Plunging ahead of Govan and his men, Cleburne fell dead eighty yards from the enemy works. Five other Confederate generals died that day at Franklin, including Granbury. Cleburne's division, reported Govan, had been "decimated," "literally ruined," with a loss of 50 percent. Among the wounded was a nephew, Frederick H. Govan, whom the general had recently added to his staff. "Our Brigd and the Ark. Brigd are so badly cut up that we can't move," wrote one of Granbury's men. "Some officers have no men, and some companies have [no] officers—So we have to reorganize and consolidate, a Captain has to command the Brigade."⁵³

⁵²Richard M. McMurry, *John Bell Hood and the War of Southern Independence* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1982), 171–175; Sword, *Confederacy's Last Hurrah*, 177–180; Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 419–425.

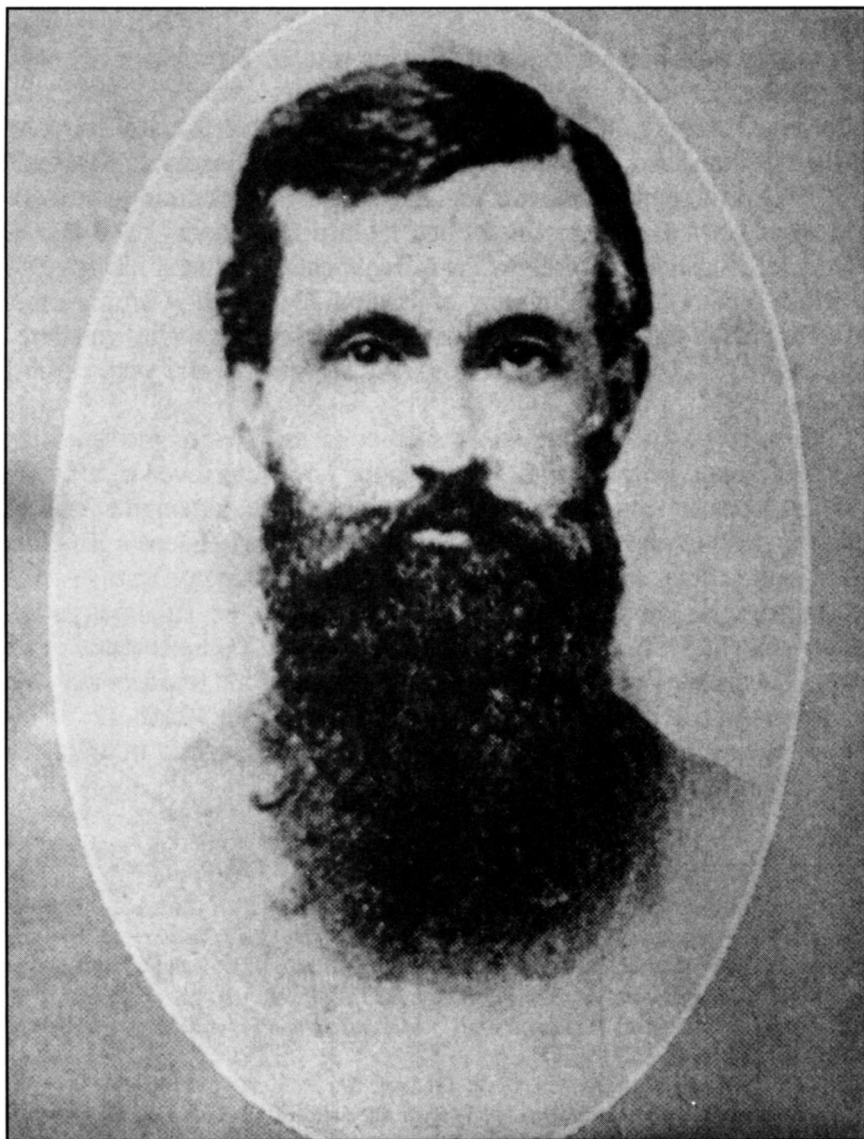
⁵³Sword, *Confederacy's Last Hurrah*, 183, 190–196, 200, 220–224, 265; Nichols and Abbott, "Reminiscences of Confederate Service," 82; Hempstead, *Historical Review of Arkansas*, 1:242; Daniel C. Govan to wife, December 14, 1864, Govan Papers; *History*

Govan remained bitter for many years about the Franklin fight. Although he did not use the word, he and many survivors believed that Hood had "betrayed" the army. Two weeks after the battle, he told Mary it had been the "most desperate fight" he had ever seen. He rejoiced in his "safe deliverance from the perils of that bloody conflict the bloodiest by far for the time it lasted of all the battles" in which he had engaged. "As usual, Gen. Cleburne's and Cheatham Div. bore the brunt of the fight and sustained the heaviest loss. It really seems as if it is intended that we should do the fighting of the Army and where the severest opposition is to be encountered there we are surely to be placed."⁵⁴

With the army still staggering from Franklin, the subsequent Nashville campaign must have seemed like a nightmare. Hood continued to pursue the Federals as they fell back toward the Tennessee capital, but he had no army. Hood laid siege to Nashville with a mere 23,000 men. The Federals soon had twice that number, and when they assaulted Hood's works on December 15, the once mighty Army of Tennessee disintegrated. Govan held the left of his division's position, now commanded by Gen. James A. Smith, which in turn anchored the army's right wing. Govan's brigade, consisting of ten regiments consolidated into three, had 534 men. Still, they shredded a Yankee regiment sent against them during the day's fighting. That night Hood shifted Cheatham's corps to the left, where Govan's brigade formed the extreme left of the line. Incredibly, the men maintained their sense of humor. As they passed Gen. William B. Bate's men, Govan's troops shouted out, "Lie down, Mr. Bate, Mr. Govan is gwine to pop a cap." They needed more caps. They found themselves assigned to defend a sector that required a division, and when the Yanks resumed the attack on December 16, the line snapped. Govan's men, unable to withstand the concentrated artillery fire that poured in on them, fled in disorder. The

of Eastern Arkansas, 595; Hempstead, *Historical Review of Arkansas*, 1:246; Norman D. Brown, ed., *One of Cleburne's Command: The Civil War Reminiscences and Diary of Capt. Samuel T. Foster, Granbury's Texas Brigade, C.S.A.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 150.

⁵⁴Sword, *Confederacy's Last Hurrah*, 268–269; Govan to wife, December 14, 1864, Govan Papers.



Daniel C. Govan. *Courtesy Washington County Historical Society.*

general fell with a bullet wound to the throat near the Granny White Pike.⁵⁵

Govan went home to recover from his wound. He could easily have sat out the rest of the war, but he returned to service in April 1865 with a reformed Army of Tennessee near Greensboro, North Carolina. John Brown commanded Cleburne's old division, once again in Hardee's corps. Govan commanded two regiments, the 1st Arkansas (a consolidation of ten Arkansas regiments and the 3rd Confederate) and the 1st Texas (a consolidation of eight Texas regiments). His men had given a spirited performance in fighting at Bentonville, North Carolina, that March, but the fighting was over for Govan. He and his men surrendered as part of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's army on April 26 and were paroled on May 1.⁵⁶

Govan's postwar career was quiet but active. He resumed planting near Marianna, where he was "very popular and much loved by all." He refused repeated suggestions that he enter public life, although a resident of his neighborhood reported that Govan helped lead Helena's Ku Klux Klan in the 1860s. In 1894 he moved briefly to Washington state to serve as Indian agent for President Grover Cleveland at the Tulalip Agency. Mary died in 1896, and Govan returned to west Tennessee two years later. Thereafter he resided with one or another of his fourteen children in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi. He died on March 12, 1911, of pulmonary edema and old age at the home of a daughter in Memphis and was buried at Holly Springs, Mississippi.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Sword, *Confederacy's Last Hurrah*, 322–325, 370–373, 377; Christopher Losson, *Tennessee's Forgotten Warriors: Frank Cheatham and His Confederate Division* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 232–240; B. L. Ridley, "Last Battles of the War," *Confederate Veteran* 3 (January 1895): 20; *OR*, vol. 45, pt. 1, 667, 680, 739–740; Jack D. Welsh, *Medical Histories of Confederate Generals* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1995), 85.

⁵⁶Davis, *Confederate General*, 3:19; *OR*, vol. 47, pt. 1, 1061, 1106–1109.

⁵⁷*History of Eastern Arkansas*, 595; "Reminiscences of the Late Lon Slaughter as Told to Mrs. E.D. Wall, September 3, 1920," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 8 (Summer 1949): 169; Frank Armstrong to Daniel C. Govan, April 24, 1894, commission as Indian agent dated May 24, 1894, Govan Papers; Davis, *Confederate General*, 3:19; Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, March 13, 1911; *Confederate Veteran*, 19 (September 1911), 444; Welsh, *Medical Histories*, 85.

Like many Civil War veterans, Govan could not let go of the war. In 1878 he wrote a brief history of Cleburne's division, published after his death in 1911. He also corresponded with other veterans, both northern and southern, and tried to set the record straight about events in which he had participated or had special knowledge. He corresponded with St. John Liddell, and Liddell sent him a portion of his reminiscences for comments and criticisms. He remained interested, almost hauntingly so, in the Atlanta campaign, Spring Hill, and Franklin. He became active in veterans' affairs and attended occasional veterans' reunions, including those of his old brigade. In 1900 he served on the executive committee for the United Confederate Veterans reunion in Memphis.⁵⁸

Govan made an honest confession of the lingering hold the war had on him. In the 1880s, he corresponded with former Union general William W. Belknap concerning the Atlanta campaign, in which Belknap and his Hawkeyes had frequently run up against Govan's Arkansans. Toward the end of one long letter, in which he recounted his brigade's role in the battle of Atlanta, Govan paused to say, "I find myself, General, unconsciously fighting over again the battle of the 22nd of July, reciting facts and incidents well known to you and not exactly pertinent to the subject of inquiry of your letters; but you must really excuse it from the well-known weakness of all old soldiers, to fight their battles over again."⁵⁹

The highlight of Govan's veterans' activities came in September 1883, when Belknap invited him to attend a reunion of the 16th Iowa Infantry at Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The men of the 16th had been among the hundreds of prisoners taken by Govan's Arkansans at Atlanta on July

⁵⁸Hempstead, *Historical Review of Arkansas*, 1:243-246 (1911); Hughes, *Liddell's Record*, 7, 129; William W. Belknap to Govan, September 2, 1878; T. B. Roy to Govan, March 8, 1880; J. W. Green to Govan, November 26, 1886; Hugh B. Roland to Govan, May 5, 1894; N. W. Cooper to Govan, November 27, 1895; J. P. Young to Govan, March 23, 1897; Irving A. Buck to Govan, August 20, 1907, Govan Papers; Govan to Belknap, December 15, 1878, in *The Veteran; Devoted to the Interests of the Grand Army of the Republic* 2 (January 1882): 11; "Officers of the Memphis Reunion," *Confederate Veteran* 8 (September 1900): 391.

⁵⁹Govan to Belknap, November 13, 1878, December 15, 1878, in *The Veteran* 2 (January 1882): 9-11.

22, 1864. His brigade had also captured the regiment's flag, which Govan had kept for nearly twenty years. He went to Iowa to return the colors. Word spread quickly through the North of Govan's gesture. A month later, at a reunion of the Army of the Tennessee, one of the Union armies against which Govan had waged war so furiously, a member of the 16th Iowa related the Govan tale to the assembled crowd. "The roof of the immense house nearly cracked with the noise of the shouting when I alluded to your name & to your chivalric act. You may depend upon it that you will always have a most warm place in our hearts."⁶⁰

Govan had been a steady, patient commander who lacked the charisma of Cleburne, but who became known for his coolness and common sense in battle. He had a knack for surrounding himself with "intelligent, prompt, active and efficient" subordinates who performed "all duties required of them well & with alacrity." No one ever questioned his courage or loyalty. Thus his quiet nature and military talent produced an odd combination of qualities, noted by many. General Hardee praised Govan for being as "true and brave as he was courteous and gentle." Liddell described him as "an unpretending and reliable gentleman, zealous in the cause, deliberate and cool in judgment. . . . Brave, yet cautious, unwilling to sacrifice his men without cause." Irving A. Buck, staff officer and chronicler of Cleburne's campaigns, eulogized Govan by saying, "I regard him as one of the best soldiers it was my good fortune to know—a true Christian gentleman, a noble patriot, a loyal and uncompromising friend."⁶¹

Most importantly, Govan's men always responded to him, always did their best for him. He, in turn, drew confidence from their loyal service. During the Atlanta campaign, "gallant Govan" saw one of his company commanders go down. "The General dismounted," declared a witness, "and, calling him by name, asked if he could do anything for him. Between gasps, as if each would be his last, the brave captain said: 'Give them _____, General.'" Govan rose, ordered that the captain be tended,

⁶⁰Belknap to Govan, October 1, 21, 1883; J. S. Bosworth to Govan, September 22, 1884, Govan Papers.

⁶¹Purdue and Purdue, *Pat Cleburne*, 268, 370-71; Liddell to Cooper, October 14, 1863, Compiled Service Records; Davis, *Confederate General*, 3:19.

remounted, and moved forward with his brigade determined “to comply” with the captain’s directive. Another of Govan’s men recalled “the old days when Cleburne leaned on Govan in peril’s utmost stress,” the days when there was no better officer in the Confederacy.⁶²

⁶²“Humors of Camp Life,” *Confederate Veteran* 2 (December 1894): 357; Will H. Thompson to Govan, November 22, 1894, Govan Papers.