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EXPERIMENT IN REDEMPTION: THE CONFEDERATE
INVASION OF KENTUCKY IN 1862

by

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INTRODUCTION

Long before the American Civil War began, Kentuckians were accustomed to being in the middle of a fight. The British and their Indian allies of the Old Northwest had vainly hurled their legions against the slim line of frontier stations during the American Revolution, but the slim line—guarding the "back door" to Virginia and the Carolinas—held. The renegade Chickamaugas from the Five Lower Towns on the Tennessee, to satiate their frustration for failing to destroy Tennessee settlements, attempted to cut off migration to the Bluegrass by attacking travelers on the Wilderness Road—but the migrants kept coming. The War of 1812 found Kentucky caught between the theaters of war in the Northwest and the Creek lands to the south—so Kentucky sent volunteers to both areas.

In 1862, Kentucky found itself again a battleground, as Confederate armies under Braxton Bragg, Edmund Kirby Smith, and Humphrey Marshall strove to establish the Confederacy's defensive line at the Ohio River. Political, diplomatic, and strategical reasons vied for importance as the primary motive of the invasion. The Confederates were convinced that Kentucky was a Confederate state being held in the Union against her will. An occupation of the Bluegrass would redeem territory the Confederates considered their own. Moreover, the capture of Frankfort, Louisville, and perhaps even Cincinnati, might strike a favorable chord in England and France, where recognition for the South was under discussion. Strategically, the invasion was to be a demonstration of Jefferson Davis' defensive-offensive
strategy of maintaining a defensive position until the enemy was forced to extend his lines and communications. Then move with a swift blow to strike the enemy's base, his communications—and his army. The Rebels were striving to regain the territory lost in the 1861-1862 disasters of Mill Springs, Island Number Ten, Forts Henry and Donelson, and Shiloh Church. Kentucky was the logical place to re-establish the defensive line that had been swept away. The state was a geographical bottleneck. On the west lay the Mississippi River, on the east, the Allegheny Mountains. The side which controlled the 250-mile stretch of Kentucky soil in between would have a clear advantage. Whoever controlled Kentucky would control the Ohio, the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and even part of the Mississippi. Down these rivers and across Kentucky earth would come the Federal armies to move against the western Confederacy. If the Confederates could establish a new defensive line on the Ohio River, the narrow pathway of Federal advance might be cut off. In August 1862, combined armies from the Confederate departments Number Two, East Tennessee, and Western Virginia, moved into the Bloody Ground to block this passageway to the Lower South.

The most striking feature of the Confederate invasion of 1862 was that it was a testing ground—and perhaps a graveyard—for Rebel political and strategical concepts. The summer of 1862 saw the only multiple invasion of the war by gray armies. While Bragg, Kirby Smith, and Marshall sought to restore Kentucky to the Confederacy, Lee crossed the Potomac with a similar purpose in mind for Maryland. The invasion of Kentucky was the
Confederacy's first experiment at interdepartmental co-operation. Six armies from three departments were to co-operate, with a command system that was at best haphazard. The campaign was the Confederacy's first serious attempt to push its defensive line to the Ohio River, and was the first--and last--attempt to test the loyalty of the Kentucky people. The invasion was to be the first trial of Bragg and Kirby Smith as offensive commanders. Both had previously served with distinction, Bragg under Albert Sidney Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard, and Kirby Smith under Robert E. Lee. For the first time Bragg and Kirby Smith were given the responsibility, and their ability--as well as their personalities--were to be sorely tried. The move into Kentucky would be the first test of the pride of the Confederate western armies--the Army of the Mississippi, later to be renamed the Army of Tennessee. After piecemeal and ignominious defeats from Mill Springs in East Kentucky to Island Number Ten on the Mississippi, the army had been hastily thrown together for a stab at U.S. Grant at Shiloh. Though they had fought hard and well at the "Place of Peace," the assorted units of which Bragg assumed command at Tupelo lacked the \textit{elan}--and tempering--of a sound fighting army. The move into the Bluegrass saw the first surge of self-confidence and of an \textit{esprit de corps} in the western armies, and gave the Rebels in the West their first real opportunity to prove they could march and fight.

But the invasion was to fall short of success, and the gray columns were to retreat into Tennessee. Historians have long searched for reasons for the failure. Unwilling to probe
beneath the surface criticism furnished by the professional anti-Bragg school which arose shortly after the campaign, most writers have remained content to explain the failure of the campaign by dependence upon hindsight or second-rate source material. Unfortunately, students of the campaign have been impatient—and perhaps a little confused—as to the problems of strategy, purpose, command, and logistics, that Bragg, Kirby Smith, and the other commanders faced.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze and weigh the purpose, success, and reasons for failure of the grand invasion. What was the purpose of the campaign? Who was to command, and what strategy was really adopted? Why did Kentuckians respond the way they did to Confederate overtures for support, and why did the Confederates retreat?

An attempt to answer such questions necessitates a return to basic source material hitherto untouched or passed over lightly by students of the campaign. To avoid the dangers of hindsight, the thesis is written in a semi-fog of war. Save for the first chapter, the text deals with Confederate operations, with the corresponding Federal moves included in footnotes. The fog of war method has been used in an attempt to eliminate the gross injustice committed against the Confederate leaders, especially Bragg, in holding them responsible for information they did not have at a particular time. To further eliminate the "arm chair approach," the thesis makes special examination of long-established criticisms—and rumors—of Confederate operations at such points as Munfordville, Bardstown, and Harrodsburg. Other factors must
be considered if the campaign is to be judged fairly, and they are here considered. The personalities of Bragg, Kirby Smith, and other commanders are given close attention, for much in the campaign hinged upon their interplay. The part of Richmond in the planning and execution of the movement, and the part of the invasion in the total war are both discussed. In general, the thesis attempts to reconstruct and re-evaluate an invasion too often given only surface consideration and study—yet an invasion which may well have been the high water mark of Confederate fortunes in the war.
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Edmund Kirby Smith needed a rest. Ill of typhoid fever and worried about his wife's first pregnancy, the young major general retired to Montvale Springs, Tennessee, in July of 1862 to ponder his unhappy situation. In February he had been called from enjoying his laurels won at First Manassas to head the difficult Department of East Tennessee, where his troubles began immediately. The Department was an offspring of the old Western Department commanded by Albert Sidney Johnston and the Confederate departmental command theory. Jefferson Davis and his advisers believed that the more departments there were in existence, the more attention could be given to local problems—and East Tennessee was full of problems. So Kirby Smith was sent to Tennessee, in hopes that his presence there would counteract the strong Unionist element operating in the territory between the Tennessee River and the Appalachian Mountains.1

But everything had gone wrong. When he arrived he had some difficulty finding his department. In fact, he did not know whether his was to be another department or a district of the Western Department, and was surprised when the latter department's Adjutant-General referred to Kirby Smith's command as separate. Kirby Smith had understood his assignment to be

1Kirby Smith to A.S. Johnston, March 2, 1862; Kirby Smith to Samuel Cooper, March 13, 1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, Adjutant General's Records, Chapter II, Volume 52 (Cited hereinafter as National Archives, Confederate Records); War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of
the District of East Tennessee in Sidney Johnston's department and now wrote Richmond for clarification. On July 18 his command was finally defined as a separate department composed of East Tennessee, that part of North Carolina west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the part of Georgia north of the railroad from Augusta via Atlanta to West Point. 2

Now came another problem. On June 25 Braxton Bragg, successor to P.G.T. Beauregard as commander of Department Number Two, the old Western Department, was also notified of some changes. At his implied suggestion, his department was combined with Mansfield Lovell's old Department Number One, so that the new command embraced eastern Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and that part of Georgia west of the railroad from West Point to Chattanooga via Atlanta. Three weeks later, Bragg was consequently confused when he read orders which gave Kirby Smith territory in North Georgia which had already been designated as part of his own department. The territory which overlapped included the large section of northwestern Georgia west of the railroad from Atlanta to Chattanooga and north of the road from Atlanta to West Point. On July 20 Bragg asked Kirby Smith whether he operated independently or was still under the jurisdiction of the Western Department. His pride hurt, Kirby Smith snapped back that his was a strictly independent command which reported directly

the Union and Confederate Armies (70 vols. in 127 and index; Washington, 1880-1901. Cited hereinafter as OR), Series I Volume VII, 849.

Perhaps he had reason to be unhappy. For four months he had been defending one of the most difficult positions in the Confederacy with a piecemeal force of some nine thousand troops. On March 31 Robert E. Lee had written him that his first duty was to hold the line of the East Tennessee & Virginia and East Tennessee & Georgia railroads, a link in the Confederacy's main line from Vicksburg to Richmond via Meridian, Mobile, Atlanta, Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Lynchburg. If this line fell, communication between the western and eastern theaters would be pushed back to a secondary and inferior line running from Richmond to Atlanta via Wilmington, North Carolina. The railroad through Kirby Smith's department was the soft underbelly of the entire system, for it was exposed along two hundred miles to Henry Halleck's Union armies on the west, and to fifth column tactics by Union elements in the East Tennessee mountains.

To guard this vital spot Kirby Smith had to disperse his troops on a line 180 miles long facing west, with his right flank anchored at Cumberland Gap and his left lapped around the Cumberland Mountains at Chattanooga. It would have been a difficult position to hold even with twice the number of men he had. Cumberland Gap, probably the most overrated defensive position in the west, a saddle 500 feet high in the Cumberland

Mountain range, lay where the Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia state lines converged. In earlier days of Kentucky settlement the Wilderness Road passed through the Gap and connected the Kentucky River valley settlement with settlements in the Shenandoah valley of Virginia. The importance of this road had declined with the shift of migration to the old Northwest, but in 1862 it was still considered an important road and a strong defensive position. It had its advantages as a road into Kentucky—but it was no longer a strong position. Kirby Smith had tried to hold it with Carter Stevenson's division of 4,000 good troops against an expected advance of George Morgan's division of the Union Army of the Ohio. With twenty guns and an impressive array of earthworks Stevenson could have held out against an army had Morgan not easily crossed the mountains at Rogers' and Big Creek Gaps, eighteen and thirty-five miles southwest of Stevenson's position on the Cumberland range. To avoid being outflanked by a move into Powell's Valley in his rear, Kirby Smith wisely ordered Stevenson to fall back on June 18 to Morristown, and prepare to make a stand to hold the railroad.

Though the northern press would hail the withdrawal of Smith's right flank as a great achievement, Kirby Smith wisely could breathe a sigh of relief. Since his arrival in East Tennessee he had been forced to shuttle his six small brigades back and forth between Cumberland Gap and Chattanooga, and had frankly looked ridiculous. Major General Don Carlos Buell and

five divisions of the Army of the Ohio were pushing slowly across North Alabama to seize Kirby Smith's left flank at Chattanooga while a sixth division under Ormsby Mitchel had already taken the Memphis & Charleston railroad from Bridgeport to Decatur and was biding its time until Buell arrived by harassing the unfortunate commander of the Chattanooga post, Brigadier General Danville Leadbetter. While Buell's column of 44,000 moved up the Memphis & Charleston railroad, George Morgan's seventh division, 9,000 strong, was applying pressure from the north. The strategy was to draw Kirby Smith's forces to one end of the 180-mile line while pressure was applied at the other end. The strategy apparently succeeded, and Kirby Smith, embarrassed and frustrated, complained to Adjutant General Samuel Cooper

My command has been almost broken down by constantly moving from one end to the other of the line. Communicating by telegraph and acting in concert from behind natural defenses of great strength they [the Federals] have foiled every effort made by me.

He had good reason to complain. In May news that 18,000 Federals were threatening Cumberland Gap while 11,000 were advancing on the railroad via Kingston forced Kirby Smith to throw most of his 8,600 men north to hold the right flank. No sooner had he arrived than Mitchel's division sent a force to seize the bridge over the Tennessee River at Chattanooga.

Smith to S. Cooper, June 15, 1862, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 685; Buell's force in the field numbered some 44,172 present for duty; George Morgan's seventh division had 9,018 present; this does not include 7,235 unattached infantry and cavalry, 3,090 troops at Nashville, and other small forces which would bring his total force present for duty, exclusive of Morgan's division, to 55,867. See OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt.2, p.193. For evidence Kirby Smith saw the Federal plan see OR, I, Vol.XVI, pt. 2, pp.683-85.
Surprised, Leadbetter failed to destroy the bridge, fell back into the town, and prepared to observe the enemy "from a favorable point" and await reinforcements. Nothing further developed and Kirby Smith had sent his force back north to hold the Clinch Mountain line when he received word that another heavy force was striking at Chattanooga. Kirby Smith ordered S. M. Barron's brigade to follow, and he arrived at Chattanooga on June 7 to find Leadbetter's 3,000 troops enduring a terrific bombardment from a Federal force across the Tennessee River. After bombarding Market Street and the Confederate works on Cameron's Hill, Mitchel's men retired down the Tennessee River. Kirby Smith wired Beauregard for reinforcements and rushed north to meet Morgan's division which was pouring into Powell's valley, behind Stevenson at Cumberland Gap. Kirby Smith sent A. W. Reynolds' and S. M. Barton's brigades to Tazewell to stop Morgan from moving up the valley. Scarcely had this been done when Leadbetter nervously reported that Mitchel's division was again moving into position near Jasper, Tennessee, for a full-fledged threat against Chattanooga. A hasty decision must be made, and Kirby Smith elected to hold the Georgia flank. So it was that Carter Stevenson spiked his guns, buried tons of shot and shell in the mountain ravines, and retreated back down Clinch valley to demonstrate the invulnerability of Cumberland Gap.  

It was a wise decision, for Chattanooga was a more vital position than the Gap. The town lay on the eastern slope of the Cumberland Mountain range at the point where the Tennessee River, fed by the Little Tennessee, the Clinch, and the Hiwassee, left the long trough between the Cumberland and Appalachian Mountain ranges, and instead pushed west through the deep gorge between Walden's Ridge and Raccoon Mountain into the cotton plains of North Alabama. It was a natural defensive position, for the Cumberland Mountain range on the west extended into Alabama and guarded the flank while the waters of the Tennessee, racing through the gorge, splashed off the high rock bluffs on each side and created the treacherous "suck." Union gunboats could not pass this whirlpool nor could they survive the swift current. Beyond the rock and river barrier lay the gateway to the entire East Tennessee valley and the vital railroad. At Chattanooga the Nashville & Chattanooga line coming eastward from Stevenson merged with the East Tennessee & Georgia from the northeast and with the Western & Atlantic that connected Chattanooga and Atlanta. If Union forces seized Chattanooga, they would not only sever the main rail artery to Virginia, but could operate down the Western & Atlantic to Atlanta, the most important rail hub in the Deep South. If Atlanta were taken, both trunk lines connecting Robert E. Lee in Virginia and Braxton Bragg in Mississippi would be severed.


8Statement of Major General Buell in Review of the Evidence Before the Military Commission Appointed by the War Department, in November 1862: Campaign in Kentucky, Tennessee, Northern
Confederate logistics also demanded that Chattanooga be held. Four of the South's eight arsenals—Atlanta, Augusta, Macon, and Columbus—all supplying Braxton Bragg's Army of the Mississippi, would be threatened if Buell seized the Chattanooga railhead. Atlanta, especially vulnerable, ranked third in November 1862 in the production of Confederate small arms ammunition and second in the production of field ammunition. The Augusta arsenal ranked second in both areas, and Columbus and Macon were not far behind. Twenty-three miles south of Chattanooga at Dalton, Georgia, Braxton Bragg had ordered his chief ordnance officer, Colonel Hypolite Oladowski, to deposit supplies for 60,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry and 100 pieces of field artillery, and supplies were already accumulating. Rich coal, copper, and saltpeter deposits in North Georgia and Tennessee would also be lost if Chattanooga fell. The capture of the city would also give the Union forces the advantage of inner lines for the invasion of the Deep South. It is no surprise that Abraham Lincoln regarded the move toward Chattanooga as the most important of the war, and the capture of the railroad in East Tennessee nearly as important as that of Richmond.  

While Kirby Smith waited for the approach of Buell's forces, it was a period of reorganization for armies of both sides. George McClellan faced Lee on the Peninsula, and Stonewall Jackson maneuvered in the Shenandoah country; hence

Mississippi and North Alabama in 1861, (Undated), p.30; Don Carlos Buell Papers, Rice University (This collection is hereafter cited as Buell Papers), Black, Railroads of the Confederacy, 180-81.

much of Richmond's time and material engaged in stifling the Federal offensive in the East. In the West Henry Halleck, commanding the armies of the Tennessee, Mississippi, and Ohio with a force of 108,000, faced the Army of the Mississippi, 45,000 strong, commanded by General Braxton Bragg. The Federals had taken advantage of the pressure being exerted on the Virginia front to detach Major General Don Carlos Buell to move along the Memphis & Charleston railroad across North Alabama and seize Chattanooga while the remainder of Halleck's force neutralized Bragg in Mississippi. By June 29, Buell had reached Huntsville, Alabama. He sent two divisions northeast to Battle Creek, on the Tennessee River below Chattanooga, to shield Mitchel's division, which was building pontoon bridges at Stevenson and Bridgeport, Alabama. When the bridges were constructed, Buell planned to move his army to the south bank of the Tennessee and advance on Chattanooga. But Buell was moving slowly, and his army, scattered from the Georgia border to Eastport, Mississippi, was engaged in guarding the rail line, supply depots, and bridges.10

Kirby Smith did not know the Federal offensive was bogging down, for the presence of Mitchel at Bridgeport and the reinforcements at Battle Creek indicated a full-sized advance on Chattanooga. And slow or fast, Buell's army seemed an unstoppable threat to Confederate communications. Beauregard and then Bragg had refused Kirby Smith reinforcements because each planned his own offensive thrust. Kirby Smith turned to Richmond.

10 *Statement of Major General Buell*, 1-16.
Although his argument, that either the railroad or Chattanooga would have to be abandoned if help were not soon sent to eastern Tennessee, was sound, Richmond remained apathetic. After McClellan had been forced to withdraw from his Peninsula lines, Lee turned against a threat by General John Pope in northeastern Virginia. Jefferson Davis and Secretary of War George W. Randolph could spare no men from this quarter and offered encouraging words only. Perhaps Davis was counting too heavily on what Kirby Smith—considered one of the best officers in the army—could do with his motley force. Davis and Randolph, preoccupied on the Virginia line, left Bragg and Kirby Smith to solve the problem Buell’s advance had proposed. Randolph wrote Bragg on June 23 that he could attempt any plan he desired, and instead of ordering Bragg to reinforce Tennessee, merely asked him to help Kirby Smith if he could. Jefferson Davis also did not offer a solution. He merely expressed confidence that Bragg would help Kirby Smith if he could. A lack of personal attention characterized the government’s attitude throughout the future planning of activities in Tennessee. Davis and Randolph only expressed approval of plans already made or hopes for cooperation between the departments. It was on his own initiative, and not on orders from Richmond, that Bragg ordered John McCown’s division to Chattanooga on June 27 to help hold the Tennessee River line.11

11 Kirby Smith to Samuel Cooper, July 2, 1862; Kirby Smith to George Randolph, July 4, 1862; Kirby Smith to Braxton Bragg, July 4, 1862; Kirby Smith to Bragg, July 6, 1862, National
McCown and 3,000 troops from the old Army of the West arrived at Chattanooga on July 3. McCown did not come highly recommended to the new department. Bragg, who blamed McCown for the loss of New Madrid, warned Kirby Smith that he lacked nerve and a capacity to command, and should not be trusted with an important position. Kirby Smith immediately showed his regard for Bragg's advice by making McCown commander of the Chattanooga flank, and then took advantage of Buell's and Morgan's inactivity to reorganize his command into three divisions. The able Carter Stevenson commanded the pride of the department, 9,000 well-organized troops, who held the right flank near Clinch Mountain. Brigadier General Harry Heth, recently transferred from the Department of Western Virginia, commanded 6,000 troops at Chattanooga which, together with McCown's 3,000 men, formed the only opposition to Buell's advance on Chattanooga. Satisfied with the new arrangement, which was far better than the old and awkward brigade system, Kirby Smith left the sultry Knoxville heat on July 7 to regain his strength at Montvale Springs and to contemplate the fate of a department he never wanted to command.12

Archives, Confederate Records, II-52; Kirby Smith to Samuel Cooper, June 23, 1862, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 702; Kirby Smith to Cooper, June 24, 1862, Ibid., p. 706; George Randolph to Braxton Bragg, June 23, 1862, Ibid., pp. 701-702; Jefferson Davis to W. G. Swan and J.G.M.Ramsey, June 21, 1862, Ibid. p. 596; Special Orders No. 95, Department No. 2, June 27, 1862, Ibid., p. 710.

As he tramped the rugged trails in the Smoky Mountains and surveyed the Tennessee valley at his feet, he began to change his mind about the possibilities of his department. He had been unhappy to leave the Army of the Potomac and the "halcyon days of my service" to take command of a weak defensive department, short on recognition and long on problems. He had longed to take the offensive against Nashville in April when the Federals were diverted at Shiloh, and had even secured Lee's approval, but a lack of troops forced him to abandon the idea. Now that he was reinforced by McCown and a few scattered Florida and Georgia regiments, he again grew impatient with the defensive, and desired to march with his army on an offensive campaign.

(March 1960), 9-10, asserted that Bragg sent McCown to test the feasibility of moving a larger part of his army east by rail. This is not supported by the evidence, for Bragg would not depart from his plan to move north on Nashville direct from Tupelo until mid-July. On July 28, Isham Harris wrote that he had just returned from Bragg, and that Tuscumbia or Florence were likely points where the army would cross the Tennessee (See Harris to Andrew Ewing, July 28, 1862, Buell Papers). As late as July 20, Bragg hoped Kirby Smith could cope with Buell with his force alone augmented by McCown's division, Bragg to Kirby Smith, July 20, 1862, OR, I, Vol. XVII, pt. 2, p. 651. For Kirby Smith's troops dispositions see OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 734.

13Robert E. Lee to Kirby Smith, April 15, 1862, OR, I, Vol. X, pt. 2, p. 422; Lee to G. T. Beauregard, April 16, 1862, Ibid., pp. 424-25; Kirby Smith to Beauregard, April 13, 1862, Ibid., p. 417; Kirby Smith to Samuel Cooper, April 15, 1862, Ibid., p. 422. Kirby Smith also hopefully asked to leave his department and accompany Sidney Johnston to Mississippi (Kirby Smith to Col. W. W. Mackall, March 14, 1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, II-52); Kirby Smith told Richard Taylor he felt for him in being sent to Louisiana but it was a just retribution for Smith being sent to East Tennessee; Kirby Smith to Wife, August 6, 1862, Edmund Kirby Smith Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill. Also see Joseph Howard Parks, General Edmund Kirby Smith, C.S.A. (Baton Rouge, 1954), 156.
There were several reasons for the change of attitude, and Kirby Smith's personality was probably the chief factor. When serving under Lee, he had been hailed as the "Blucher of Manassas" for his timely--some said lucky--arrival on the field at a crucial moment. Seriously wounded at Manassas, Kirby Smith recovered in Richmond amidst great popularity in social and government circles. Davis credited him with saving the day at Manassas, Lee called him one of his best officers, and when Kirby Smith later married, his wife was styled "The Bride of the Confederacy." Perhaps it had been too much and too soon for the young general. Modest at first, he had given credit for his achievements to "God in His mercy" who "spread a panic through their hosts," but soon was telling friends that it had been the arrival of his own troops that caused the Union panic. 14

Kirby Smith had personality traits which could only be revealed when co-operation and self-sacrifice were needed. He was a good leader, but not a follower; he could command, but not co-operate. Mark it off to age, to inexperience, to ambition, the fact remains there were two sides to Kirby Smith. To his fellow officers he was their humble and co-operative servant, but privately he burned with a mystical desire to redeem, to conquer; and on occasion he fancied himself as Cortez burning his ships behind him, and as Moses leading the Israelites from Egypt. His was a quiet ambition and a quiet conceit, and since

his transfer to East Tennessee he had bided his time until he could again be the talk of Richmond. Unfortunately, perhaps, that time was drawing near—a time when men would have to be big and sacrifice all to the difficult problem of interdepartmental co-operation. Whether Kirby Smith would rise to meet this most difficult test still remained to be seen. 15

By early July he was already losing interest in Buell's army, which was rightfully his main objective, and was setting his sights elsewhere. Someone else, perhaps Bragg, could take care of Buell. On July 6 he wrote Bragg that he was mobilizing his command for a movement on Morgan at Cumberland Gap or on Middle Tennessee; yet four days earlier Kirby Smith had written Samuel Cooper that the Federals were preparing to cross twenty miles below Chattanooga and that reinforcements were needed there. On July 7, Kirby Smith sent a confidential letter to Carter Stevenson in which he outlined a plan to outflank George Morgan at Cumberland Gap and drive into the Kentucky River country. On July 10 he wrote him

15 Though Kirby Smith wrote his wife on August 24, 1862 "I care not what the world may say. I am not ambitious", (Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina), other private statements would tend to contradict this. He compared himself to Cortez (Kirby Smith to wife, August 24, 1862, Ibid.); his army to the Israelites moving out of Egypt (Kirby Smith to wife, August 25, 1862, Ibid.); his campaign to an "Herculean undertaking" (Kirby Smith to wife, August 21, 1862, Ibid.); his march into Kentucky "one of the most remarkable of this age..." (Kirby Smith to Major C. C. Clay, August 29, 1862, Ibid.); and predicted the results "may be brilliant and if successful will be considered a stroke of inspiration and genius." (Kirby Smith to wife, August 24, 1862, Ibid.); On his return he stated "I see the papers will keep my name in their columns." (Kirby Smith to wife, November 18, 1862, Ibid.); and he "avoided a public reception slipping in at night." (Kirby Smith to wife, October 27, 1862, Ibid.)
again that this proposed expedition would depend upon the state of affairs at Chattanooga, where Kirby Smith knew at least 30,000 Federals were threatening. Yet this was not quite what he wrote Jefferson Davis on July 14, when he suggested that Bragg's co-operation would be needed to stop the Federal advance on Chattanooga, with no mention of his own private plan to leave Buell to someone else while his own East Tennessee army invaded Kentucky. In all justice, though Kirby Smith was a gallant officer, it appears that the reason he desired Bragg to come to his own department was that this would free him of his obligation to meet Buell and enable him to concentrate against Kentucky. Kirby Smith's activities after the later meeting with Bragg at Chattanooga would bear out this interpretation, and his actions after entering Kentucky would indicate that he had a strong antipathy to bringing his own army under the jurisdiction of a ranking officer unless he could still operate as an independent commander.

Kirby Smith had several reasons other than a desire to lead an expedition for wanting to invade Kentucky. George Morgan was an old friend from before the war. He and Kirby Smith had been carrying on a friendly duel by correspondence for several months, and Kirby Smith's pride was definitely hurt by Morgan's success in forcing him out of the Gap. He wanted revenge. More important, the time seemed ripe for a

move on Kentucky. On July 4, Kirby Smith had sent John
Morgan on a long raid into Kentucky. It was Morgan's first
raid into the Bluegrass, and he intended to destroy Federal
supply depots and to augment his own command, as well as to
strike at the communication line between Nashville and Louisville.
The raid was a dazzling expedition of Morgan's ability to
strike quickly, to confuse the enemy, and to evade superior
forces. Tompkinsville and a half million dollars in stores
fell on July 8, and Glasgow, Springfield, and Harrodsburg
were taken. By July 14, after having driven half way across
the state and 200 miles behind the lines in less than a week,
Morgan's troopers were at Lawrenceburg, only fourteen miles
from the capitol at Frankfort.17

Unionists cursed and supporters of the gray cheered as
Richard Gano's Texans and the Second Kentucky drove northeast
between Frankfort and Lexington to Cynthiana, almost to the
Licking River, defeated all pursuers and then retired from the
state via Richmond and the old battleground at Mill Springs.
It was an emotional experience for both sides: martial law
was declared in Lexington, General Jeremiah Boyle at Louisville
panicked and reported Morgan's force of 900 as 5,000, and a
disgusted Abraham Lincoln wired Halleck at Corinth "They are
having a stampede in Kentucky. Please look to it." Morgan
became intrigued with the idea of arousing Kentuckians to the
Southern cause, and urged them to rise and strike for their

17 Kirby Smith to Samuel Cooper, July 5, 1862, National Ar¬
chives, Confederate Records, II-52; for an account of the
altars, their fires, the green graves of their sires, God, and their native land. Kentuckians, especially women, were electrified by the exploits of the wild-looking crew dressed in sombreros, high cavalry boots, and large clanking spurs, who carried every conceivable weapon from long Enfields to shotguns. 18

These Rebels were fabulous, men cast in heroic mold, who raged larger than life and compelled admiration. There was Morgan's adjutant, George St. Leger Grenfell, former British officer and French cavalryman who had fought with the Moors against the French, battled the Riff pirates, and been with Garibaldi; Tom Quirk from Ireland, Morgan's excellent scout; D. Howard Smith of the Fifth Kentucky with waist-long, flowing beard; and "Old Lightning" Ellsworth, telegrapher and buffoon extraordinary. Kentucky people seemed fascinated, or fearful, of the improbable aggregation led by the dark bearded Lexington merchant. Exuberant with the achievements, Morgan telegraphed Kirby Smith from Georgetown:

I am here with a force sufficient to hold all the country outside of Lexington and Frankfort. These places are garrisoned chiefly with Home Guards. The bridges between Cincinnati and Lexington have been destroyed. The whole country can be secured, and 25,000 or 30,000 men will join you at once. 19

It was a misleading report, for while Morgan and his men might have won the hearts of the Kentucky people, they had not won men. No more than 300 volunteered, and Morgan was unable to

18 Lincoln to Henry Halleck, July 13, 1862, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p. 738; Cecil Fletcher Holland, Morgan and His Raiders (New York, 1943), 118.

19 John Morgan to Kirby Smith, July 16, 1862, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, 733-34.
hold the country outside Lexington and Frankfort the day
after he wrote his dispatch. Was it sentiment for the
Confederacy that Morgan saw or only popular sentiment for
himself and his special Kentuckians? It remained for Bragg
and Kirby Smith to resolve the answer.20

Elated by Morgan's false news, Kirby Smith forwarded it
to Samuel Cooper in Richmond on July 24, and the same day
sent Carter Stevenson at Bean's Station an almost incredible
message that indicated Kirby Smith's intense desire to move
into Kentucky. Stevenson was informed of Morgan's note, and
was told that if George Morgan detached part of his command
to pursue the raiders, the move would give Stevenson "the most
favorable opportunity of pushing forward your operations, and
probably enable you to enter Kentucky." No doubt Kirby Smith
was worried about conditions on his left flank, but the evi-
dence is clear that he was still interested in getting his own
expedition underway and leaving someone else to cope with
Buell. Even his troop dispositions revealed this. He stationed
Stevenson's 9,000 men to face Morgan, whom Kirby Smith believed
to have 10,000 troops. Heth and McCown at Chattanooga were to
oppose Buell, whom Kirby Smith believed to have at least

20Holland, Morgan and His Raiders, 126-27. Kirby Smith, ob-
viously impressed, relayed the message to Cooper (Kirby Smith
to Samuel Cooper, July 26, 1862, National Archives, Confederate
Records, II-51), and ordered Stevenson to prepare for an ex-
pedition (H. L. Clay to Carter Stevenson, July 24, 1862, OR, I,
Vol. XVI, pt. 2, pp. 733-34); Bragg was also impressed, for he
wrote Cooper that "The feeling in Middle Tennessee and Kentucky
is represented by Forrest and Morgan to have become intensely
hostile to the enemy, and nothing is wanted but arms and sup-
port to bring the people into our ranks, for they have found
that neutrality has afforded them no protection." August 1,
1862, Ibid., p. 741.

21H. L. Clay to Carter Stevenson, July 24, 1862, Ibid., p. 734.
30,000 men, with the most ill-armed and ill-trained 9,000 troops in the department. It appears strange that four days before Kirby Smith urged Stevenson to move into Kentucky with half the department's troops if he saw the chance, Kirby Smith had notified Bragg that Buell was preparing to cross the river at Bridgeport. And on July 4, he had written Bragg that Buell's whole force was across the Tennessee River and in considerable force twenty miles below Chattanooga. Again, on July 19, five days before his note to Stevenson, Kirby Smith had telegraphed Bragg that "Buell with his whole force, is opposite Chattanooga, which he is momentarily expected to attack." Then he had urged Bragg to hasten to his department for "The successful holding of Chattanooga depends upon your co-operation." 22

Kirby Smith was playing a hazardous game, for while his responsibility as department commander necessitated the holding of Chattanooga, he was quite willing to allow half of his force to move over the Cumberland Mountains into Kentucky while the weaker half waited 180 miles south for an attack momentarily expected. Bragg also had plans and ambitions for a move behind Buell's lines, but the dangerous situation presented by the Federal army moving up the Tennessee River was one factor which caused him to move his army to support

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Chattanooga. On July 20, Kirby Smith telegraphed him that Buell was expected to cross the river at Bridgeport hourly, and added:

Your co-operation is much needed. It is your time to strike at Middle Tennessee.\(^2\)

On the following day, Bragg notified Davis that he would move immediately to Chattanooga and advance from there, and added on July 22 that "obstacles in front connected with danger to Chattanooga induce a change of base."\(^3\) And so before the campaign had been planned, a difference in objective appears discernible in the minds of the two commanders. For Kirby Smith it was Kentucky, for Bragg it seemed to be Buell. But it was early yet, and there was still time for the two commanders to resolve this vital issue.

Bragg had been slow in making his decision, for he also had a host of departmental problems. After having finally ascertained the limits of his department in an embarrassing fashion, Bragg revamped Beauregard's disorganized force. He created the District of the Gulf under John Forney, who, with 9,000 troops, was to defend Mobile. Earl Van Dorn, who suddenly found his Department of South Mississippi and East Louisiana merged into Bragg's, was reduced to commander of the District of the Mississippi, and his 14,000 men were assigned responsibility for Vicksburg. Sterling Price, who had succeeded

\(^{23}\)& Kirby Smith to Bragg, July 20, 1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, II-52.

McCown as commander of the Army of the West, was given 11,000 men and the newly formed District of the Tennessee. He was ordered to prevent a Federal advance along the northern border of Mississippi. The command of Bragg's main force, the Army of the Mississippi, 31,000 strong, was given to Major General William J. Hardee, author and military scientist; and the ranking major general, Leonidas Polk, formerly Bishop of Louisiana, was given the dubious title of "second in command of the forces." 25

Bragg hesitated to send troops to Kirby Smith. Planning a drive into Middle Tennessee from his Tupelo base, he feared that if he detached heavily, his force would be too weak to be effective. On June 22 he asked Cooper in Richmond if Kirby Smith could not be aided more efficiently from scattered regiments in Georgia, as he planned to strike the Federal center with his own army. The same day he wrote Kirby Smith that in the proposed move he "will want every man." Yet Kirby Smith, a specialist at persuasion, continued to hammer at Richmond on the necessity of Bragg's assistance, and played down his own desire to take on the offensive, until he was reasonably sure of assistance. On July 20, Kirby Smith reminded Bragg that it was his time to strike at Middle Tennessee, but it was not until July 24, after Bragg had written that Middle Tennessee could not be reached from Tupelo, that the East Tennessee commander laid out his cards and proposed that Bragg move to Chattanooga and open

an offensive campaign "with every prospect of regaining pos-
session of Middle Tennessee and possibly Kentucky."26

By the time Bragg received this dispatch, he was already
at Montgomery, Alabama, en route to Chattanooga with the
Army of the Mississippi. The decision to move was motivated
by a combination of pressures. The idea of assuming the of-
fensive appealed to all, including Bragg. John Morgan's
information from Kentucky was evidently accepted by all con-
cerned, and Lee himself would write Jefferson Davis on July
26 that if the impression made by Morgan in Kentucky were
confirmed by a strong infantry force, it would have "the
happiest effect," and added that "if Bragg could make a
move, or with E. K. Smith & [W. W.] Loring, it would pro-
duce a great effect."27 The pressure was strong in Bragg's
own camp for him to regain Tennessee and Kentucky. During
June his headquarters resembled a legislative lobby as
prominant Kentuckians dropped by to assure him that the
state would be loyal to the South if only given a chance
to it. Such pressure had effect. The Tennessee delegation
was headed by the exiled governor and consistent camp follower
Isham G. Harris, who wrote his fellow Tennessean, Andrew
Ewing, on July 28 that Bragg had assured him that he would
carry Harris to Nashville before the last of August. The

26Bragg to Cooper, June 22, 1862, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2,
p. 701; Kirby Smith to Samuel Cooper, June 23, 1862, Ibid.,
page 702; Kirby Smith to Bragg, July 24, 1862, National
Archives, Confederate Records, II-51.

27Douglas S. Freeman, Lee's Dispatches: Unpublished Letters
of General Robert E. Lee, C.S.A., to Jefferson Davis and the
War Department of the Confederate States of America, 1862-65
pressures were not always consistent—some visitors wanted Bragg to move toward the Bluegrass, some toward the Middle Tennessee basin—but the result was the same. Bragg decided great things were in store north of Mississippi. 28

There were other reasons for going to Chattanooga. Bragg decided he could not operate north against Halleck from his Tupelo base. His army had dwindled to 31,000, and any further reinforcements to Chattanooga, which must be held, would make an advance against Halleck, who supposedly had 60,000 men, impossible. Equally important, the country north of Tupelo was barren of supplies and the creeks were dry in the summer drought. Bragg's wagon transportation was deficient, his commissary depleted by the loss of the rail hub at Corinth, and the railroad between Meridian, Mississippi, and Selma, Alabama, which would have helped sustain his forces, remained unconstructed. A move east would exhibit the fine points of the Confederate defensive-offensive strategy—to remain on the defensive and receive attack until certain objectives could be attained by a counterthrust. These objectives, diplomatic, logistical, geographical, and political, were to be important in Bragg's decision for the move and Davis's silent encouragement of it. 29


A move to regain Nashville or even drive to the Ohio River could be a vital factor in influencing England and France to recognize the Confederate States. During the summer of 1862 the gray fortunes rode high as Lee turned McClellan back on the James River line, Jackson frustrated his opponents in the Shenandoah, and John Pope came to grief at Second Manassas. The London Times appeared to be whipping up sentiment for recognition. James Mason reported from London in the spring that all the intelligent classes in England were in complete sympathy with the South. The English cotton reserve had slipped to an alarming 20,000 bales, so England might listen sympathetically to pleas for recognition. A smashing blow at Nashville, Louisville, Cincinnati, or even the Northwest might clinch British support. The redemption of Kentucky would bolster the ranks of the slave states and add to the Confederacy's prestige abroad by presenting a more united front of the slave powers.

finished railroad between Meridian, Mississippi, and Selma, Alabama, seized the Alabama & Mississippi Rivers property. He returned it but was able to appoint Samuel Tate as general military superintendent of the Selma-Meridian Project, see Black, Railroads of the Confederacy, 156-57.

There were also strong logistical reasons for Bragg's shift in plan. Louisville and Lexington were reported teeming with stores, and Tennessee and Kentucky were represented as rich in eager recruits. Since the Army of the Ohio's supply line stretched from northern Alabama to the Ohio River, a dash into Buell's rear, even if there were no Confederate occupation or seizure of supply depots, could force him to abandon the advance on Chattanooga. No less important was the desire to keep the war out of East Tennessee. Kirby Smith had tried everything from proclamations of amnesty to declarations of martial law, but Unionist sentiment continued rampant in the section which had cast 30,000 of 47,223 votes against secession in June, 1861. Twenty-four hour watches were required to save the railroad from destruction. Kirby Smith could not get the militia to assemble and could not have trusted it if it came. On March 23 he wrote Cooper that no Confederate recruits were to be had while at least 20,000 potential Union recruits were waiting for a successful Union invasion of East Tennessee. Buell obviously had to be kept out of East Tennessee, and perhaps the solution was to force him to defend his own bases. 31

Geographically, the Confederates depended partially upon their inner lines of communication to carry on their defensive war and could not afford to lose the feeble but important railroad link. And if an invasion were to be planned, Chattanooga offered many geographical advantages. Kirby Smith's line behind the Cumberland Mountain range, and the bastion at Chattanooga were positions the Confederates could not afford to lose, yet they would lose them if Buell turned their left flank. And from what better place than Chattanooga could a Confederate army start an offensive campaign? Bragg and Kirby Smith would have a choice of five possible routes of invasion; west to Jasper and thence southward into North Alabama; west to Jasper and then north into the Middle Tennessee basin; north from Chattanooga through the Sequatchie valley, shielded on the left by the Cumberland Mountains and on the right by Walden's Ridge; northeast along the eastern slope of Walden's Ridge to Crossville, where a move could be made west against Nashville or north against Kentucky; and northeast on the East Tennessee & Georgia railroad, shielded on the left flank by the Tennessee River, and thence into Kentucky through Rogers' and Big Creek Gaps. Like fingers on a hand these five routes spread out from Chattanooga, and it would be almost impossible for the enemy to discern the objective until the move had begun, and even then the destination could not be ascertained for certain.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{32}Buell, who now expected an advance, was awaiting a move into Middle Tennessee on Nashville, and placed his center at
But the political opportunities seemed most important to Richmond. It had been a great blow to Southern hopes when Kentucky refused to secede, and when Confederates were forced out of the state, they were robbed of the natural defensive line of the Ohio River. Davis, Bragg, and others believed that Kentucky would rise to the Southern cause if given the chance. Simon Buckner had tried to arouse support in 1861 as he drove north towards Louisville, but his two proclamations inviting Kentucky to throw off the Union yoke had produced little effect. After Albert Sidney Johnston succeeded Leonidas Polk as commander in Kentucky, he issued another proclamation written by Jefferson Davis, expressing the President's policy. The South invaded Kentucky in self defense; if the Kentuckians desired neutrality Johnston would drive the Federals out and retire himself, but if they wanted to join the Confederacy, they would be welcomed home with the fatted calf. But again the results were disappointing. John C. Breckinridge, who had left his Senate seat to fight for the South, issued a similar proclamation in October, Felix Zollicoffer in December, and George B. Crittenden, a local boy from Logan County, Kentucky, whose brother was a general in Buell's army, in January of 1862—but the results were negligible. 33

Decherd, with his left behind the Cumberland Mountains at McMinnville, and his right at Battle Creek on the Tennessee, and later argued that it was impossible to predict the Confederate route and destination. Statement of Major General Buell, 21-24, 28.

33 Davis to T. H. Holmes, October 21, 1862, Rowland, Jefferson Davis, V, 356; Davis to Bragg, August 5, 1862, Ibid., 313;
The conviction persisted that Kentucky's heart was with the South. A provisional government was established at Russellville, George W. Johnson was elected the Confederate governor, Kentucky congressmen were accepted at Richmond, and another star went up on the flag. Perhaps rationalization led Sidney Johnston to explain to Davis that a lack of concerted action and not a lack of will had held Kentucky back. Yet a genuine feeling prevailed among the Kentucky generals such as Breckinridge, Simon Bolivar Buckner, and Humphrey Marshall, that Kentucky had been kept in the Union against her will.\(^34\)

There was more basis than cavalry reports and vague sentiment for the Confederate government's policy. The summer of 1862 saw rising discontent in Kentucky against Union military interference with courts and popular elections. The Union home guard and provost marshals were arresting everyone in sight, there was no uniformity in the methods of treating runaway slaves, and General Jeremiah Boyle, military commander of the state during the all-important summer, had become vastly unpopular among Confederate circles on account of his treatment of Confederate sympathizers.


\(^34\) E. Merton Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill, 1926), 135-39.
Lincoln's suggestion in July of emancipating Kentucky's slaves had brought protest even from the Unionist state legislature. There was no doubt that Federal popularity had reached a low ebb in June and July of 1862, and John Morgan and others probably took cognizance of this in urging the Confederate army to enter the state. But was it resentment against the way the Union army was handling the occupation of Kentucky or was it genuine sympathy for the Confederate cause? The question could only be resolved by an invasion.  

The time was ripe for such an invasion because the Confederates had gained the initiative when Buell's expected advance had bogged down unceremoniously. During July Buell had extended his lines slowly along the Memphis & Charleston railroad, which he was forced to repair as he went. But by the end of the month it was apparent that Corinth was unsatisfactory as a supply base. Frank Armstrong's cavalry was sent by Bragg from Mississippi to strike the vulnerable line of track which stretched over 150 miles from Corinth to Stevenson, and Buell, forced to divert some 16,000 troops to repair and guard the Memphis & Charleston line, had only 25,000 troops available for an offensive.  

35 N. S. Shaler, Kentucky: A Pioneer Commonwealth (Boston, 1884), 331-37. Shaler, a pro-Union member of the state legislature during the neutrality crisis, gives a fair discussion of military interference in the summer of 1862; see also Coulter, Civil War and Readjustment, 145-65.  

Buell shifted his supply bases to Nashville and Louisville, and attempted to establish a supply line on the Nashville & Decatur and Nashville & Chattanooga lines. But everything went wrong. Attempts to forage the country proved useless, for the fertile territory west of Huntsville was planted mainly in cotton and a severe drought took care of what little forage was available. Buell was forced to lean heavily on his Louisville and Nashville bases. But the railroad lines had been torn up during the Confederate retreat from Fort Donelson, were damaged by heavy spring rains, and badly needed repair. Before any further advance could be made the lines must be repaired, and Buell put all of his army save the two divisions at Battle Creek to work patching the supply line.\(^7\)

By July 12 the Nashville & Chattanooga was repaired, and Buell planned to concentrate his army at Stevenson. But the Confederate cavalry had located the weak spot in Buell's advance—the supply line that stretched almost 300 miles from Stevenson to Louisville. On July 13 Nathan Bedford Forrest with scarcely a thousand men swooped down from the Cumberland Mountains into Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where was located Buell's largest and most important garrison on the Nashville & Chattanooga railroad. Forrest bagged 1,200 prisoners, including the post commandant Brigadier General T. T. Crittenden, and perhaps a quarter of a million dollars' worth of stores. More important, the Rebel troopers burned the railroad bridges over Stone's River. Buell would later admit this break in

\(^{37}\)Statement of Major General Buell, 13-16.
the railroad line delayed a forward move two weeks. 38

Forrest had done more. His raid, combined with Morgan's Kentucky expedition, forced Buell to take the first of several steps which would throw his force on the defensive. Halleck ordered him to do everything in his power to put down the cavalry raids, even if the Chattanooga move were delayed, and Buell sent a division to Murfreesboro and two thirds of one to Shelbyville, Tennessee, to guard the Elk River bridges. He tried again, and by July 28 had succeeded in repairing the Nashville & Chattanooga, and on the 31st finished the Decatur line. Supplies were pushed forward to the Stevenson depot, pontoons were readied, and his divisions prepared for another concentration. 39

But it was no use. There simply were not enough men to concentrate for an advance and hold the 300-mile line to Louisville at the same time. While Frank Armstrong pressed Buell in North Alabama, John Morgan stalled the Federals further. On August 12 his troopers slipped into Gallatin, Tennessee, captured the outpost, burned the depot, tore up the Louisville & Nashville track on both sides of town, destroyed the trestle bridges north toward Bowling Green, Kentucky, and then went to work on the 800-foot tunnel seven miles north of Gallatin. Burning cars were run in, the tim-

bers collapsed, and the route to Louisville was closed for months. The only alternate route would be up the Cumberland River from the Ohio, and the drought-induced low water had already rendered this useless.  

Buell now all but abandoned the offensive. Nelson's division was rushed to Kentucky to guard against further cavalry raids, Wood's division started grinding corn at Decherd, Tennessee, and troops were rushed to Nashville to guard the precious ten days' rations there. His offensive bogged, Buell played his last card. He drew off what little cavalry he had and massed it under Brigadier General R. W. Johnson, who was ordered to drive Morgan out of Middle Tennessee. Johnson heard that Morgan was still near Gallatin, and sent his 700-man column, the pride of the department, flying through Hartsville, Tennessee, in hopes of surprising the Rebels. Johnson was confident as he passed through the town, and reportedly boasted he would bring Morgan back in a band-box. Morgan, though weary from chasing Federal infantry toward Nashville and burning the railroad bridges between Gallatin and Edgefield Junction, moved his 800-man column eastward and fell on Johnson's troops east of Castalian Springs. After he had been driven back all morning, Johnson decided a retreat would be in order. Thence began the famed

40Jere Boyle to Don Carlos Buell, August 16, 1862, Buell to Halleck, August 15, 1862, Buell Papers. Statement of Major General Buell, 17-20. Buell tried to repair the road but found "the continued presence of Morgan's force made it impossible to carry it beyond Gallatin..." Ibid., 19-20; Testimony of Thomas J. Wood before the Buell Commission, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. I, p. 158; for account of raid see Ibid., pp. 843-57.
"Hartsville Races," with Johnson racing for the Cumberland River and Morgan racing to cut him off. Early in the afternoon Morgan flanked him on both sides, the Federal column was routed, Johnson and his staff surrendered, and the remnant of the cavalry of the Army of the Ohio made its way through the high corn and woods to the Cumberland River. 41

If things were bad in the rear, they were worse in the front. Unless he called in all of his divisions stretched from Alabama into Kentucky, Buell would have only 30,000 men to begin an advance. But even if he had enough troops, his commissary service was hopelessly snarled. Little

41 W.H. Lidell to Col. Fry, August 16, 1862, Buell Papers; Holland, Morgan and His Raiders, 142-44; Buell's dilemma was that if he moved his men to concentrate his supplies would be cut, if he guarded the roads, he could not start his offensive. He chose to guard his supply line. The Union command admitted the Confederate cavalry had stopped the offensive. Buell wrote "we must abandon our extensive lines, and concentrate at some point nearer our base of supplies.... Our communications are interrupted almost daily....Our communications are not yet opened with Louisville....I cannot collect at any point this side of Murfreesboro more than thirty thousand men...." (Buell to Halleck, August 29, 1862, Buell Papers); "The difficulties of the last two months in keeping open our communications make it plain that no permanent advance into East Tennessee can be attempted without a much larger force than is at present under my command." (Buell to Halleck, August 26, 1862, Ibid.); "My whole force will be at Murfreesboro on the 5th...this move became necessary both to accumulate from our extended lines a force sufficient to meet the enemy and to open our communications now effectually closed." (Buell to Halleck, September 2, 1862, Ibid.); General Thomas Wood testified the line of communication between Louisville and Nashville, as well as between Nashville and points farther south...was interrupted, by which the army was cut off from its supplies. (Testimony of Thomas J. Wood, Buell Commission, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. I, p. 158); General A.M. McCook testified the interruption of communications made it "absolutely necessary" to throw part of the Army into Kentucky and added "I was expecting and feared all the time that General Buell's army would have to abandon that country for supplies, if for nothing else." (Testimony of A.M. McCook, Ibid., p. 110).
problems popped up everywhere to frustrate his plans for crossing the Tennessee. The pontoons were due to be ready by mid-August, but General James McPherson lost the requisition slip for supplies, and someone lost the nails, oakum, and pitch. The Nashville quartermaster found the nails and the oakum, but reported he could not find the pitch, though someone had told him eight barrels were at a railroad station between Nashville and Huntsville, and the train conductor promised to look for them. Earlier in the summer when the supply line was still on the Memphis & Charleston no one could find a locomotive to haul forage from Eastport to Iuka, and on to Decatur. General George Thomas came up with three locomotives, but reported all three were broken down. Then someone forgot to repair the ferry at Decatur which was out of operation, and when this was discovered, no one had remembered to bring the proper tools. Sawmills between Stevenson and Huntsville were supposed to cut lumber for pontoons and a bridge floor, but only two of the five sawmills in the region could operate because of guerilla activity. When protection was provided, water pressure failed because of the summer drought, and then someone discovered the need of a circular saw, which could only be had at Nashville. Buell provided the understatement of his campaign when he wrote Colonel Thomas Swords at Louisville that "This army cannot be maintained in this way."\(^{42}\)

By mid-August, Buell had lost the chance for an offensive. Information reached him that Bragg was at Chattanooga with 60,000 to 90,000 men. Buell abandoned his depot at Stevenson, and established a new one at Decherd, where he would await an expected thrust on Nashville and Middle Tennessee. 43

On July 23, three days after Kirby Smith had written that Buell's crossing of the river was expected hourly, the first trainload of Bragg's army pulled out of Tupelo en route for Chattanooga. It was a tremendous task to move an army of almost 35,000 men 800 miles across four states. The cavalry, artillery, and wagon trains went overland through Aberdeen and Tuscaloosa, across the Black Warrior River, through Jones valley in the searing summer heat, across the Coosa River, and through Will's valley to Rome, Georgia. The infantry, in the finest hour of Confederate railroads, went by rail to Mobile, by ferry across the Bay, thence by steamboat and rail to Montgomery, by rail to West Point and Atlanta, where the troops boarded the Western & Atlantic line for Chattanooga. The movement had been well planned on short notice. Each man received seven days' rations as he boarded at Tupelo, and commissary officers waited on station platforms along the way to hand out more. Discipline was exceptional, and even the swap of several regiments and batteries between Hardee and John Forney at Mobile went smoothly. On

43 Buell to Halleck, August 7, 1862, Buell Papers; Statement of Major General Buell, 20-21.
July 27, two days before Sam Jones' division boarded the last train at Tupelo, the first units from Mobile and Pollard, scattered regiments that had been sent ahead, rolled into Chattanooga.  

It was a long ride from Tupelo, but the new spirit which seized the army compensated for the hardships. Veterans knew that an attempt would be made to regain Middle Tennessee and even Kentucky. The trains that rolled across Alabama and Georgia were filled with gay soldiers. Rebels stole apples and flirted with girls, and at every station they were showered with fruits, flowers, and messages of ardent admirers. This was their day, for after being pushed out of their home country from Columbus to Mill Springs, with all of the frustration of retreat and retreat again, they knew they were heading home.  

The Georgia countryside rolled by as the rickety trains puffed around Kennesaw Mountain, roared through the pass at

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44Special Orders No. 4, July 21, 1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, II-221; Special Orders No. 133, July 26, 1862, Ibid.; Bragg had planned to replace John Forney at Mobile with Sam Jones and send Forney with the army, but at Davis' request (OR, I, Vol. XVII, pt. II, p. 659), Jones remained with the army and Forney at Mobile. Special Orders No. 134, July 27, 1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, II-221; Special Orders No. 6, July 23, 1862; Ibid.; Special Orders No. 131, July 24, 1862, Ibid.; for an account of the trip overland with the artillery and trains see Diary of Major George Winchester, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville; Black, Railroads of the Confederacy, 182-84.  

45Major George Winchester wrote "I shall not attempt to describe the emotions which filled my bosom as I turned my face homeward, with a faith as strong as Abram's that within 60 days, I should once more tread my ancestral halls...." Winchester Diary, Tennessee Archives; also see William Vaught to Dear Mary, August 9, 1862, letters in possession of Mrs. Julian Fertitta, Beaumont, Texas.
Allatoona, and whistled through mile long Tunnel Hill. The trains rattled across the Chickamauga bridges and at last ground slowly around the north end of Missionary Ridge into Chattanooga. 46

Bragg had several problems to ponder as the train clattered along. He had moved his army, but had left Frank Armstrong's troopers and Price, Van Dorn, and Forney to guard his department. But there were other problems to solve. Who would command the proposed expedition, where would it go, and what would be its purpose? Answers must await the meeting with Kirby Smith. If these problems were then solved and the expedition successful, there would be truth in John Morgan's dispatch to a Louisville editor as his cavalry thundered through Kentucky, "All well in Dixie."47

46 The terrain description is from the writer's own observations as well as from Vaught to Dear Mary, Ibid. Vaught was a member of the Washington artillery battery that accompanied Bragg to Kentucky.

It was an awkward meeting on the afternoon of July 31, 1862, when Kirby Smith arrived at Bragg's headquarters at the Reese Brabson house. The two generals talked far into the night while a lamp flickered on a large map of Tennessee and Kentucky that Bragg had hung on the wall. It was a strange and awkward combination: Kirby Smith, who had trouble listening to people, and Braxton Bragg, who had never learned how to talk to anyone. Although only in his forties, Bragg, stooped, thin, and haggard, had suffered for years from a collection of ailments ranging from dyspepsia to severe migraine headaches. These had colored his personality, and now he had a dullness and sourness which often made him quarrelsome. Even when he had been in the old army, out on the Texas plains or at Buena Vista, Bragg had always looked for infringements of his prerogatives by his superiors and for infractions of rules by his subordinates. Although his officers and men respected him, many feared him, some disliked him, and others even hated him. Perhaps his sour personality had made them forget his better traits. He did not shoot three men for breakfast as the rumor was, but instead had taken Beauregard's disorganized force at Tupelo, had taught it to march and to fight, and had made it into something it had never really been—an army.¹

¹Kirby Smith to wife, August 1, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina. Of Bragg, Kirby Smith wrote "He is a prim
It may have been that Bragg's harsh discipline and aloofness cloaked weaknesses he knew he had. He lacked the caring of a Morgan or a Forrest, and he lost great opportunities by waverings from attack at the crucial moment to busy himself with transitory details. Some would call him a pessimist, others a realist. With a mind too moody to dare and too administrative to deliver a lightning blow, Bragg was a brave soldier and a good provider— but he was not a fighter. When the pressure developed he would become pensive and fretful, would sulk, lose his sense of balance—and his opportunity. Somewhere in his career, Braxton Bragg, organizer supreme and competent strategist that he was, had lost his nerve, and the ability to see a battle to the end had slipped from his grasp.  

His worst fault as a leader was probably his constant fear of making a mistake, and his consequent hesitation in committing his troops. He could drill, but he could not engage; he could plan, but he could easily change his mind. His weaknesses had not shown up in his previous career because he had been in situations where the final responsibility was not his—a captain in Zachary Taylor's army, a chief of staff to old fellow—but a true soldier. His men are all afraid of him, they respect though they do not love him." William H. Russell, My Diary North and South (Boston, 1863), 207; Richard Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction; Personal Experiences of the Late War (New York, 1900), 100; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, pp. 745-46.  

Beauregard, a corps commander, a second in command. But now he had full responsibility; for though Jefferson Davis, a little too busy on the eastern front, gave much encouragement and some advice, the President gave few orders. Bragg would have to rise above his weaknesses now. He could no longer compensate for his dilatory mind by being stern. He would now rise to greatness or fall to scorn—the choice was to be his own.3

The contrast of personalities and the past friction over department boundaries did not promise a pleasing setting in which the three problems of command, objective, and over-all purpose could be settled. Although Bragg was senior officer, he was out of his department and somewhat embarrassed at the transfer. Kirby Smith had little evident desire to be placed under Bragg's control, and so the matter of Bragg's authority was not pressed. Instead, the decision of the Chattanooga meeting was, as Bragg termed it, one of "mutual support and effective co-operation." Kirby Smith only too willingly agreed and labeled the expedition as "a movement in co-operation with General Bragg." True, Kirby Smith, on August 11, offered to place the disputed North Georgia section, or any other part of his department, under Bragg's direction, but it was a hollow gesture. Kirby Smith's later attitude would reveal that he considered Bragg in charge only after the two armies

3Stanley F. Horn, The Army of Tennessee (Norman, 1955), 113-14; Duke, Reminiscences, 297-98; Jefferson Davis revealed his ignorance of Bragg's character when he wrote T. H. Holmes that "my knowledge of General Bragg's purpose and capacity is too limited to enable me to speak of his army otherwise than hypothetically." (Davis to Holmes, Oct. 21, 1862, Rowland, Jefferson Davis, V, 356) and to Kirby Smith, Davis wrote of Bragg "that another Genl. might excite more enthusiasm is probable, but all...have their defects...." Davis to Kirby Smith, Oct. 29, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.
had united. Bragg, conscious of being a man without a department, acquiesced, made no attempts to clarify his position with Richmond, and avoided mentioning to Kirby Smith the matter of who should command. Jefferson Davis only muddled affairs when on August 5 he wrote Bragg that he would confidently rely on Bragg's and Kirby Smith's "cordial co-operation" and on September 7 when he issued a triple letter to Bragg, Kirby Smith, and Robert E. Lee, each addressed as a commanding officer.

The haze of command drifted over the question of the immediate objective, for here again the two generals failed to arrive at a definite plan. The proposed strategy was to be highly tentative. Kirby Smith would move against Cumberland Gap and force George Morgan's position and, if successful, would then join Bragg, with the Army of the Mississippi, in a move on Middle Tennessee and Don Carlos Buell. But the joint thrust at the Army of the Ohio that lurked beyond the Cumberlands depended upon precise timing. The absence of Bragg's wagon trains would delay him ten days or two weeks; and, during this interval, Bragg hoped that Kirby Smith could invest the Gap. If the arrival of Bragg's trains timed correctly with Kirby Smith's move on Cumberland Gap, the two armies might expel the Federals from Middle Tennessee and enter Kentucky; if not, the two forces might be wasted in piecemeal

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assaults against Buell and Morgan. Timing was especially essential on the left flank, where Bragg had elected to send two other armies into the campaign. Earl Van Dorn and Sterling Price would press upon Rosecrans and Grant to hold them west of the Tennessee River, and then drive into Middle Tennessee should the Federals attempt to reinforce Buell. But Bragg gave Van Dorn and Price no specific instructions. Instead he explained that circumstances would probably alter daily, and suggested only that Van Dorn move his troops from Jackson, Mississippi, up to the Tennessee border, to prepare for a joint move with Price. Nor did Bragg clarify who was to command, except to inform Van Dorn that his rank would give him command of the whole force "when you join Price...." Timing would be essential on the right flank also. By August 9, Kirby Smith had found another force to join in the campaign: 3,000 men of the Western Virginia Department under the command of Humphrey Marshall, former colonel of the First Kentucky Cavalry in the Mexican War, nephew of antislaver James G. Birney, and prominent Frankfortonian who had fled Kentucky under a treason indictment. Shortly after Kirby Smith returned to Knoxville from Chattanooga, he met with Marshall, and the two agreed that the Western Virginia troops would be held in readiness to move on the northern entrance to Cumberland Gap when Kirby Smith gave the word. It would be essential that Marshall move swiftly when the time came, should Morgan abandon the Gap and attempt to reach the Ohio River. Not to be outdone, Bragg was busily scraping up another force. He sent an envoy to the popular Kentucky
general John C. Breckinridge, then serving as a division commander under Van Dorn, with an invitation to join the ever-growing throng bound for Middle Tennessee and perhaps Kentucky, if Buell could be pushed aside or defeated. On August 25 Breckinridge became the last of the expeditioners to promise support, and the invasion column appeared complete. It would be a unique attempt at co-operation, with three departments represented by six armies. But it was poorly organized, for there was no one commander. Humphrey Marshall reported to Kirby Smith, Kirby Smith to Jefferson Davis, and Van Dorn and Price to Braxton Bragg, while Breckinridge remained under the immediate supervision of Van Dorn. Little bound this loosely organized group together save promises of support and the simple Confederate faith in a fellow officer's promise to fulfill a task.\textsuperscript{5}


The evidence appears that Bragg did not have authority over Kirby Smith until the two commands would unite again. On Oct.2, Bragg and Kirby Smith would meet at Lexington, Kentucky, where Bragg assumed command of the total force. On Oct. 2, Bragg's chief of orders, Stoddard Johnston, wrote in his diary, "It is greatly believed that he (Bragg) will take command of all the forces in Kentucky. I hope so. There must be a unity of command, or else failure will attend us." Diary of J. Stoddard Johnston, William P. Palmer Collection of Braxton Bragg Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. Hereinafter cited as Bragg Papers, Western Reserve. A few scattered documents in the Palmer Collection but not the Bragg Papers will be cited Palmer, Western Reserve. After the meeting Smith wrote his wife that "Gen. Bragg is in command. I am no longer at head of affairs but have only to obey orders." Kirby Smith to wife, Oct. 5, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina. Dr. S. A. Smith, Kirby Smith's staff physician, wrote the general's wife that "Genl. Bragg...assumed command of all the forces as soon as he arrived in Lexington." S. A. Smith to Mrs. Kirby Smith, Oct. 22, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina. On October 20, Kirby Smith wrote his wife that "Bragg's movements
Nor was the overall purpose of the campaign definitely established. Jefferson Davis did inform Bragg vaguely of what the President considered the objective, but gave little advice besides his hopes for co-operation among the generals. On August 5 Davis suggested that Bragg and Kirby Smith first defeat Buell and then, as they had already contemplated, move north and liberate Kentucky. The Confederate high command was anxious to re-establish the civil government on Kentucky soil, and Richard C. Hawes, former lieutenant governor of the defunct Russellville government which had supposedly brought the state into the Confederacy, was standing in the wings at Richmond. Should Bragg and Kirby Smith reach the Bloody Ground, Davis desired that Hawes be installed as governor of the "liberated" state.

since taking command in Ky. have been most singular and unfortunate." Smith to wife, Oct. 20, 1862, Ibid. Kirby Smith later wrote Stoddard Johnston that he had moved into Kentucky on his own responsibility as department commander. Kirby Smith to Stoddard Johnston, Oct. 31, 1862, J. Stoddard Johnston Military Papers, Filson Club, Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; Kirby Smith later wrote "I had moved into Ky. on my own responsibility...." Kirby Smith, "The Kentucky Campaign," MS. Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.

6 On August 30 Davis would write Kentucky congressmen George Hodge and W. B. Machen that "So soon as we obtain possession of the State of Kentucky the Provisional Government of the State will assume its functions...." Rowland, Jefferson Davis, V, 334; On August 27, the provisional government of Kentucky would send Hawes to Richmond to discuss financial aid with Davis as "that, in the judgment of the council..., the time is near at hand when the military forces of the Confederate States should enter the State of Kentucky; and that the Governor and council of the provisional government should, as soon as said State is occupied by said forces, proceed to organize and extend its jurisdiction and authority over the same...." OR, I, Vol. LII, pt. 2, p. 342.
Davis left Bragg and Kirby Smith to resolve the problem as to what policy was to be adopted in Kentucky. The only hint he gave them was a sample proclamation that Davis sent to Kirby Smith, Bragg, and Robert E. Lee, designed to explain the purpose of the Kentucky-Maryland invasion. Upon entering a state the generals were to convince the inhabitants that the Confederates were fighting only for peace, and that now, even though the gray armies had won new success in the summer, the same moderate plea of the days of Fort Donelson and Shiloh would be repeated—that the Confederacy simply wanted to be left alone. As the North had refused entreaties for peace, perhaps the people who lived in "the territory of their enemies..." might respond when the Confederates made it "the theatre of hostilities...," and might even conclude a separate peace with the Confederate States. And Davis threw in for good measure a promise of free navigation of the Mississippi and its tributaries. It is doubtful if the sample proclamation helped clear the uncertainty surrounding what was to be done if Kentucky were reached. Davis' note of August 5 suggesting an early defeat of Buell was suggestive, not pre-emptory, and though he evidently intended the proclamation for use on Kentucky soil, its reference to "the territory of their enemies..." was incongruous with the Confederate belief that Kentucky was a lost sheep out of the fold. But Bragg and Kirby Smith were left to determine the political policy to follow in Kentucky.  

7 Davis to Lee, Bragg, and Kirby Smith (probable date, Sept. 7, 1862), Rowland, Jefferson Davis, V, 338-39.
The Chattanooga agreement with its absence of unified command and its vagueness of objective soon exhibited its weakness. On August 9 Kirby Smith got busy with his pen to lobby for an independent move into the Bluegrass. He had some bargaining power now, for on August 5 Bragg had sent him two of his best brigades, Patrick Cleburne's and Preston Smith's. Bragg now had only 27,000 troops to confront Buell on the Chattanooga line, while Kirby Smith had 19,000 to oppose George Morgan's lone division. Kirby Smith garnered more support for his case when he received information that George Morgan had a month's rations at the Gap. Armed with this news, he immediately suggested to Bragg that if the reduction of the Gap proved to be impractical, the East Tennessee troops should move on Lexington, Kentucky, and gain "other most brilliant results...." Of course Kirby Smith promised he would push into the state only if the experiment at Cumberland Gap proved slow and costly.

Bragg, who by now was also looking beyond Middle Tennessee, could do little else but request that Kirby Smith not move too far into Kentucky before Bragg's own army could get in motion. Kirby Smith joyfully received this news on August 11 and immediately promised Bragg that his troops would remain on the north side of the Gap until Bragg thought a thrust on Lexington was feasible. Yet on the same day Kirby Smith outlined a slightly different plan to Jefferson Davis, whose ear Kirby Smith knew he had. Kirby Smith proposed to leave Carter Stevenson with 9,000 troops in the valley south of Cumberland

8Kirby Smith to Bragg, Aug. 9, 1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, II-51.
Gap, and push the remainder of his command around the position to Barboursville, Kentucky, twenty-nine miles north of the Gap on the road to Lexington. Should George Morgan attempt to flee, he would be pursued, but if the enemy held the Gap, Kirby Smith's next move would become a question of supply. Thus he proposed an alternate plan to Jefferson Davis: the Gap must be assaulted or, if it were learned that Morgan had an abundance of supplies, Kirby Smith would have to move further north into Kentucky where he could obtain subsistence for his own troops. He pressed hard for permission for the move on Lexington, labeled it the "true policy...," and warned Davis that further delay would find "a large army between us and the waters of the Ohio." But Kirby Smith omitted two details from his letter to the President which he should have mentioned—that already a large army faced Bragg and that George Morgan had thirty days' rations.  

Two days later and unknown to Bragg, Kirby Smith privately abandoned any intention of bringing his army to unite against Buell. His desire for an independent expedition was stronger than his will to co-operate, and, in the bustle of preparations to take the field, he penned his wife a hasty note:

After crossing the mts. my advance on Kentucky will be depended on Gen. Bragg's

movement and as we act in concert can only be made when he is prepared to advance on Buell. 10

But supposing Morgan chose to defend the Gap, would Kirby Smith keep his promise to Bragg not to move further until the time seemed right? That afternoon Kirby Smith impatiently inquired of Bragg as to just how long he would have to remain at Barboursville before Bragg was ready to move. Yet the same day he sent Carter Stevenson a curious and quite different message. Stevenson was ordered to pursue, should Morgan abandon the Gap, and J. W. Stone, Kirby Smith's adjutant, added that "the general would prefer that Morgan should abandon the Gap before he reaches his rear..." as "this would afford the only opportunity of moving direct upon Lexington." 11

The evidence is strong that Kirby Smith did not plan to hold his position at Barboursville until Bragg could move, if the opportunity to follow George Morgan into the Bluegrass presented itself. On August 10 Bragg had agreed to Kirby Smith's designs on Lexington with two stipulations: that it not be commenced while George Morgan's force remained intact at the Gap and that Bragg must first move his own army forward. Evidently Kirby Smith either misunderstood or discounted the second stipulation, and readied himself to drive across the Kentucky River should Morgan evacuate. Two days after his adjutant had reported to Stevenson on Kirby Smith's desire

10 Kirby Smith to wife, Aug. 13, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.

that Morgan abandon the Gap, Kirby Smith emphatically wrote Humphrey Marshall that if Morgan retreated, "I will follow him into Kentucky." 12

At Chattanooga Bragg knew nothing of Kirby Smith's intention not to await the move of the Army of the Mississippi should George Morgan abandon the Gap first. Bragg had hoped to patch something together out of the Chattanooga agreement, but he had failed. By August 12 he had not only given Kirby Smith his blessing and two fifths of the troops for the revised Lexington plan, but something more important--the initiative. Bragg meekly wrote Kirby Smith that he did not desire to hold up the Lexington thrust any longer than "will enable me to get in motion to support you...," and three days later asked Kirby Smith for "your suggestions..." for the Army of the Mississippi's own move. Bragg seemingly had little choice. Embarrassed at being in Kirby Smith's department, Bragg was also admittedly unfamiliar with the field of operations. Even if he had possessed a knowledge of the country, Bragg had no authority to order Kirby Smith to do otherwise than what the East Tennessee commander desired. Kirby Smith had been quick to seize advantage of these hindrances--so quick that by the time he left Knoxville on August 14, the direction of the campaign seemed to be his. 13

The sun had already swung low over Crab Orchard Mountain as John Scott's cavalry filed out of Kingston on the night of


Kirby Smith's Move on Lexington — Sept. 2, 1862

- **Union Troops**
- **Confederate Troops**

**Scale:** 1 inch = 12 miles
the 13th. The troopers were bound on a long 160-mile sweep across the mountain range to cut George Morgan's supply line at London, Kentucky. To the east, Kirby Smith pushed his infantry forward at dawn of the following morning in a bold move to outflank Morgan and gain his rear on the Lexington road. While Carter Stevenson moved up from Tazewell to feint against the south entrance of Cumberland Gap, the three remaining divisions of the Army of East Tennessee filed out of Knoxville and Clinton and converged at Big Creek Gap on the afternoon of August 15th. Harry Heth's division, 3,000 strong, was to cross the rugged Cumberland at Big Creek and move over the narrow mountain roads to Barboursville. Kirby Smith, with Thomas Churchill's and Pat Cleburne's divisions, a total force of 6,000, would veer northeast, follow the narrow road up Powell's valley, and cross at Rogers' Gap, only eighteen miles southwest of George Morgan's position.\textsuperscript{14}

On the afternoon of the 15th, Heth's and Smith's hard-marching columns caught their breaths, and early the next morning they disappeared into the mountains, to reunite at Barboursville. It was a difficult climb over the Cumberlands, and a strange Cromwellian zeal seemed to come over the entire force. Many were ragged and barefoot, and the stony roads, heat, dust, thin rations, the day and night marching, and the strain of hauling field pieces and wagons along the

horse trails molded an almost fanatical esprit. This transformation was one of the strangest phenomena of the war, for Kirby Smith's troops developed a fierce religious fervor so powerful that the march to Barboursville became almost a mass prayer meeting. Whole regiments prayed for their enemies, "that God may turn them from the error of their ways," and the desire was intense to carry flag and cross to Lexington.15

In sixty hours, Kirby Smith marched his troops over the Cumberland Mountain range, and on the morning of August 18 the gray column swooped down on Barboursville. The 300 pro-Union citizens were surprised by Cleburne's and Churchill's pouring into the village and capturing a train of fifty supply wagons bound for Cumberland Gap. Rebels suddenly appeared everywhere. To the northwest, John Scott, riding 160 miles in seventy hours, stormed in on London on August 17, drove the Third Tennessee Union Infantry back to Cumberland Gap, and seized 150 wagons. To the southwest Harry Heth, burdened with the main wagon trains and the artillery, toiled through Boston, Kentucky, and would not be expected to join Kirby Smith until August 22. In a lightning blow the Lexington road had been reached and George Morgan surrounded.16

Kirby Smith fretted as he waited for Heth to arrive at Barboursville. Although he suffered from a severe case of homesickness caused by his wife's illness, news which reached him on August 18 that John Morgan had smashed the Louisville

15 Kirby Smith to wife, Aug. 21, 19, 23, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.

Nashville tracks at Gallatin whetted Kirby Smith's desire to move on Lexington. Yet it had become a question of just who was cornered, George Morgan, or the Confederates. Kirby Smith had the proverbial tiger by the tail, for the Barboursville area was violently pro-Union, bushwackers and partisans sniped at his detachments from every rock, and a scant forage forced the Confederates to divide and scavenge the area. Foraging parties reported few results, Kirby Smith's wagons were absent, and there was a genuine danger that enemy Fabian tactics could wear away his small army.  

Although he may have received more trouble at Barboursville than he had expected, Kirby Smith had willfully placed himself in a situation in which he knew his only choice was to advance further north. On August 20 he informed Bragg of the problems of remaining longer at Barboursville, despite Bragg's request that he do so, and announced that he had "therefore decided to advance as soon as possible upon Lexington." But he had already contemplated this when he was at Knoxville. His proposal to Jefferson Davis that a move on Lexington would be necessary if George Morgan had ample supplies was made when Kirby Smith had information the supplies were in existence, information which was confirmed on August 20 by a captured dispatch. Thus the decision announced to Bragg on the 20th was not as sudden as Kirby Smith made it appear, for the evidence suggests that he had placed the Army of East Tennessee in such a position that neither Davis nor

17 Kirby Smith to wife, Aug. 19, 20, 23, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.
Bragg could scarcely object to his proposal.

The bonds of promised support and co-operation were severed, and Kirby Smith was forgetting his fellow general, Braxton Bragg. He spoke of Buell and the Army of the Ohio as Bragg's own worry. Kirby Smith remarked to Bragg on August 20 that his own force would prove "a most advantageous diversion for you in your movements against Buell," and boasted to Jefferson Davis on August 21 that "I have therefore nothing to fear from Buell...." Moreover the young department commander appeared too self-assured, despite the overwhelming logistical problems he faced. At Barboursville he paused to reflect on his accomplishments. Reveling in his march from Knoxville, he compared it to a Herculean endeavor, and wrote his wife on August 24:

"My expedition is something like Cortez. I have burnt my ships behind me and thrown myself boldly into the enemies country--the results may be brilliant and if successful will be considered a stroke of inspiration and genius."

and now in his "bold push for our cause" Kirby Smith had left Bragg to shift for himself. True, Kirby Smith had an imagination and boldness not unlike that of Stonewall Jackson--but Jackson would not have forgotten Lee.


19 Kirby Smith to wife, Aug. 24, 1862, Ibid.

Amidst self-applause, Kirby Smith poised his force for the drive on Lexington. He ordered John Morgan to tear up the Louisville & Nashville road north of Gallatin and then join him in Lexington, where he hoped to be by September 2. Carter Stevenson was to hurry forward Reynolds' brigade, Humphrey Marshall was ordered to move across Pound Gap into Kentucky, and General John McCown went back to Knoxville to take temporary command of the department. Still Kirby Smith delayed, for he wished to hear from Bragg, and Heth and Reynolds had not yet arrived. While he fretted over his wife's illness, bushwackers, and the green corn his men were forced to eat, bad news came in from John Scott. The Louisiana cavalryman, in advance on the Lexington pike, had run into his old enemy, the Third Tennessee, posted on a strong natural position at Big Hill. Scott, realizing the Federals blocked the advance on Lexington, immediately attacked. The blue line was routed, and retreated pell-mell to Richmond, Kentucky. During the chase Scott captured an important dispatch from Lew Wallace, commanding at Lexington, that held disturbing news for Kirby Smith—a Union brigade and artillery battery would move to Richmond on the 23rd.21

It was a perilous situation, and Kirby Smith's "bold push" threatened to grind to a dismal halt. Scott reported


a strong Federal column accumulating to regain strategic
Big Hill, where a single regiment and battery could probably
hold off the whole Confederate army. Scott, holding the
hill for dear life, warned that he was sorely pressed, that
his supplies were low, and that without swift support he would
be forced to retreat.22

Kirby Smith had not bargained for Federal resistance so
soon and now he groped for a plan. In letters to Bragg and
General Samuel Cooper on August 24, he sketched a hasty pro¬
posal of long-range strategy for the combined forces that
indicated he had given little thought to just what he would
do once he reached Lexington. In a style reminiscent of a
John Morgan raid, he suggested he push his 12,000-man army
north to Lexington, his admitted objective, and gamble that
the Kentuckians would join the Confederacy. If they rose to
his banner, he would remain; if not, he would have to fall
back. He was risking more than Kentucky's loyalty, for if
he met strong resistance on the Lexington road, his troops
would be trapped with empty knapsacks between the force
guarding the approach to the Kentucky River and George Morgan's
division at the Gap. Kirby Smith offered no sound plan of
operations should he break through into the Bluegrass region.
Instead he romantically suggested that Humphrey Marshall evade
any force in his front and join in a drive toward the Ohio
River. And what would Bragg do? Delivering the coup de grace

22Ibid.; Kirby Smith to wife, Aug. 29, 1862, Kirby Smith
Papers, North Carolina. Kirby Smith stated that if resistance
had been made, he could not have forced the mountain passes.
to any plans for meeting Don Carlos Buell's force, Kirby Smith bluntly invited Bragg to evade Buell, cross the Cumberland River, and move into Kentucky, where "we might hope to reach the Ohio." It was bold and unrealistic, but Kirby Smith cherished Sidney Johnston's and Buckner's dreams of 1861—he wanted to reach the Ohio River, the Mecca of the Confederacy. A frustrated symbol of a defensive line that might have been, the Ohio River was an old thorn in the flesh of the Confederates. Until its banks were reached and Kentucky restored, the men in gray could feel no satisfaction that they had redeemed all that was their own. Kirby Smith shared the overwhelming desire to push the Rebel line to the Ohio, but exactly what he would do when or if he got there, the East Tennessee commander did not confide.  

Kirby Smith hurried his preparations, and hoped to hear from Bragg. On August 27 he received Bragg's complete assurance that he fully concurred with Kirby Smith's decision. It was only a formality, for the column was already in motion when the letter arrived. While Cleburne and Churchill sent their divisions across the Little Laurel to the campground at Rockcastle River, Heth remained at Barboursville to wait for Reynolds. A wiser leader might have reflected on the dangers of dividing so small a force in the face of the enemy, of moving so far away from Bragg's army, and of ignoring the mounting subsistence problem. Perhaps Kirby Smith was a little blinded by the glare of the Ohio River.

in the Kentucky sun, when he confidently wrote his wife on August 25. Of the awaiting Federals he remarked "like the Egyptians of old he has hardened their hearts and blinded their eyes only to make their destruction the more complete." But Kirby Smith was not yet a Moses, and green corn did not taste so well as milk and honey. 24

By the evening of the 29th, the column had cleared Big Hill and streamed into the rolling country separating the Bluegrass from the mountains. Scott's troopers had fallen back that afternoon to report seven Union regiments nine miles north on the pike and in position to block the advance on Lexington. It was a do or die situation for the Army of Kentucky (Kirby Smith had recently changed its name), for, though the troops were too tired to fight, they were too tired to retreat a hundred miles back across the mountains. If a fight must be made, it was best to make it here, for, if the Federals had chosen to defend Lexington from the high bluffs overlooking the Kentucky River, the 5,500 men that Kirby Smith had brought from Barboursville could scarcely have dislodged them. Then, too, intelligence reports from Scott indicated the Federals were raw levies that might be easy prey for a sudden attack. Determined to seize this advantage, Kirby Smith ordered forward Pat Cleburne, his hardest

hitter, to assume the offensive.

At daylight on the 30th, Cleburne's lone division moved forward toward Richmond, while Thomas Churchill's men, more exhausted than Cleburne's, were to follow after a brief rest. A half mile north of the village of Kingston, the Rebel advance felt on the Union line. With his glasses Cleburne observed the Federals in position on a line that lay squarely across the Lexington road. Several regiments were posted on a stretch of high ground east of the pike and were protected by a fence and artillery battery. West of the road, a lone regiment held the ground. Since he expected Churchill's tired men to come up on his left, Cleburne threw most of his force to the east side of the pike and anchored his flank on a low ridge running at right angles with the Lexington road. Ben Hill's brigade was hidden on the southern slope of the ridge and Douglas' battery was placed on the crest, while Preston Smith's division was held in reserve on some small hills still further south. For two hours a slow skirmish and artillery duel flickered as Cleburne waited for Churchill to arrive. About 7:30 Kirby Smith arrived with Churchill's division and immediately prepared to roll up the weak Union right flank. Churchill was to move on a circuitous route, hidden by ravines and gulleys, to strike the Federal right, while Cleburne was to hold the Union force at bay until

Churchill got into position to attack. Cleburne must hold fast, for already the blue line was moving forward across the field around Mount Zion Church to attack Cleburne's own right flank. If Cleburne's Arkansas and Tennessee troops were swept back, the Lexington pike would be captured in Kirby Smith's rear, and his expeditionary force would be destroyed.

It was now 8 in the morning. The sun was already hot as the Federals smashed into Ben Hill's flank. Though seared by a shower of grape and cannister from Douglas' battery on the ridge, the bluecoats continued to drive the flank back. Cleburne saw the trouble, and threw in the veteran 154th Tennessee from Preston Smith's reserves, but still the blue line advanced. Three Federal regiments worked into the woods and cornfield to the east of the Tennesseans, killed their commander, Colonel Edward Fitzgerald, and wrecked Ben Hill's flank. Cleburne threw in two more of Preston Smith's regiments, led by Lucius Polk, but could not stem the wave; the line staggered back, Polk fell wounded, and Cleburne's entire right began folding back toward the Lexington road.

Where was Churchill? He must attack, as the only reserves left were three of Preston Smith's regiments. Cleburne prayed Churchill was in position and sent Preston Smith far to the right to get in behind the flanking column. While moving to the left to direct Ben Hill to attack simultaneously, Cleburne

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fell, wounded in the face. Preston Smith took charge, skirted to the right, flanked the flankers, and drove them into a pocket underneath Hill's ridge. At long last Churchill's guns began firing across the Lexington road, and the blue line faltered, collapsed, and melted rearward for two miles. The battle of Mount Zion Church was over. 27

Anxious to hit the Federals before they re-formed, Kirby Smith pursued and struck their right flank again. The attack was ill-timed, as Preston Smith lagged behind on the right, and Thomas Churchill ran into the Union column when only one of his brigades, T. H. McCray's, was on the field. McCray's Texas and Arkansas troops were ambushed by almost the entire Union column, which, ironically, was marching to attack the Confederate left wing. For twenty minutes the lone brigade lay flat, hidden by a fence and a ditch, as a terrific fire rained over the gully. Choked by dust and parched by a lack of water, the Rebels waited. Suddenly a lull came over the field, the smoke cleared, and the entire Union line was seen advancing in heavy order only fifty yards away. There was no time to run, so Churchill elected to fight. After a wait of several long seconds, he ordered McCray's men to fire. The blue line hesitated, and Churchill took advantage of the interval to order his men forward in a fierce countercharge. The thin ranks of the Texans and Arkansans slammed into the Union advance, and again it proved too much for the blue levies. At first they contested every fencepost, haystack, and corncrib, but finally wavered, broke and fled with the

loss of 500 men. The battle of White's Farm was over. 28

The Federals were not whipped yet, but instead re-formed on the outskirts of Richmond to make one final stand. Kirby Smith's own troops were in bad shape. It was now half past three, and the Confederates had been marching and fighting without water since daylight. There was just time enough for one last blow, for Kirby Smith had received word that General William Nelson's army, whom he was opposing, had received reinforcements. But Kirby Smith knew his own army could receive no aid, for Heth and Reynolds were far to the south. Nor did the Federal position appear an easy mark. The left flank was anchored in the Richmond cemetery, atop a slope that ran east to west along the southern end of the town; the right flank held a strong position in a thicket on the west side of the Lexington pike. An attack might be dangerous, but a retreat would be disastrous for Kirby Smith's plans for Lexington and perhaps for his army as well. Kirby Smith elected to attack, and shortly before 5 in the afternoon, as the shadows spread across the dry fields, he ordered the entire line forward. 29


29 Ibid., p. 934; Hammond, "Kirby Smith's Campaign," SHSP, IX (1891), 252-53. General William Nelson had not intended to fight at Richmond, but had sent General Mahlon Manson and two brigades from Lexington to Richmond to bolster the Federal cavalry that John Scott had defeated near Big Hill on August 23. Though Kirby Smith estimated Hanson's force at 10,000, it probably did not exceed 6,500. On the afternoon of the 29th, Manson received word of a heavy advance, and moved out the Richmond road to receive it, after sending a message to Nelson at Lexington. About 2:30 a.m. of the 30th, Nelson received the message, and immediately sent Manson word not to fight, as General H. G. Wright, commander of the Ohio
Across the open fields east of the Lexington road Preston Smith's division moved slowly toward the ridge. As Hill's skirmishers dispersed the Union sharpshooters, heavy patches of blue were seen massed behind a rock wall along the ridge and behind corncribs and haystacks east of the cemetery. Suddenly the sharp explosion of cannister and grape drowned popping skirmish fire as the Tennessee and Arkansas regiments crossed a small road at the foot of the slope, climbed a fence, and prepared to charge. Shells churned the ground as Ben Hill's brigade stalked wearily up the slope to the cemetery. Yankee artillery on the ridge roared and flashed: red spurts of fire darted from the cemetery wall, the corncribs, and the haystacks. Hill's men found themselves caught in a vicious cross fire from the cornfield on the right and the cemetery in front, but they went on, jumped the wall, and raged into the cemetery. Twilight and smoke cast an eerie pall over the fight among the tombstones. The Second Tennessee lost a third of its men as it fought hand to hand across gory graves and upturned monuments. But Preston Smith's force kept coming over the wall and through the cornfield, and finally the Federal left disintegrated into the town. Cheers from the Rebel left indicated Churchill's men were driving the fading blue line through the thicket south of town and onto

Department, had ordered Nelson not to risk a battle near Richmond unless he was sure of success. Instead Manson was to fall back by the Lancaster road up on Lexington. But Manson did not receive the message until the second battle had begun, and, when his line fell back into Richmond, he was met by Nelson, who rallied the troops to make a last stand, as a retreat seemed impossible. See OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. I, pp. 907-13, 932.
the Lexington road.

Nelson's army streamed north on the Lexington and Lancaster roads, only to be met by John Scott's cavalry, sent by Kirby Smith earlier in the afternoon to cut off a retreat. When the main body of Federals came flying down the Lexington road, Scott opened up with his horse artillery, and half the Federal army surrendered. Nelson was wounded and captured but escaped in the confusion; second in command Mahlon Manson and his staff were captured; and when it was all over, out of a force of 5,500 Federals, 1,000 had been killed or wounded and 4,300 were captured along with the trains and artillery. What remained of the organized Union forces in Kentucky fell back onto the Ohio River line. The mayor of Lexington surrendered an empty town to Kirby Smith's advance on September 1, and two days later John Scott was raising the flag of the First Louisiana Cavalry over the statehouse at Frankfort. 31

Although Kirby Smith jubilantly wrote his wife on September 6 that the force now opposing him was utterly demoralized, he probably did not know just how unprepared his dash on Lexington had caught the Ohio line. Cincinnati, Newport, and Covington were near panic and under martial law;

31 Ibid., 253-54; Memphis Daily Appeal, September 4, 1862, p.2; Chattanooga Daily Rebel, September 18, 1862, p. l; Kirby Smith, "Kentucky Campaign," Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. I, pp. 935, 938-39, 914. Though Kirby Smith lost only 451 men, Nelson's army was destroyed; out of a force listed at 6,500, some 5,353 were killed, wounded or captured, and only some 900 made their way back to Lexington. Ibid., pp. 907, 909, 932-33, 936.
General Lew Wallace was sent in to organize resistance; and business was suspended while the entire population dug trenches on the south side of the Ohio River at Covington Heights. Fire and church bells pealed alarm across southern Ohio, and local militia groups, like the Minute Men and Squirrel Hunters, poured into Cincinnati to help their city cousins hold the town. In the panic, Kirby Smith's force was rumored as 30,000 strong, Braxton Bragg was feared to be moving on Burkesville, and Simon Buckner was reported with another army near Tompkinsville. Politicians became worried: Governor David Tod of Ohio promised 50,000 men to hold Cincinnati, and Abraham Lincoln grew nervous, asked where Buell was, and inquired if Bragg might not be in the Shenandoah Valley. Meanwhile the hodge-podge Cincinnati defense force continued to watch the slopes of Boone County, Kentucky, for Kirby Smith's gray hordes to appear.\(^{32}\)

Kirby Smith knew little of this excitement as he happily wrote Braxton Bragg on September 3 of his victory and of his indication to push soon to the Ohio River. But something was wrong, for since he had neared the field at Richmond, Kirby Smith's statements were unsure, contradictory, and lacking in his earlier dash. In the same note to his wife on September 6, boasting the remnant of the Federals had fled broken to the Ohio, Kirby Smith spoke of remaining in Lexington and awaiting attack. He described the force at Cincinnati as

30,000 demoralized and untrained levies, yet in the same letter doubted he could hold Lexington unless Bragg came to his support. On September 3 he informed Bragg that 25,000 Kentuckians were flocking to his army, but twelve days later he warned Bragg he might fall back from the Bluegrass unless supported. What had happened to the general who had termed his march one of the most remarkable of the age and unparalleled in his experiences of war, who had been proud that his army had abandoned its communications and had turned its back to the enemy, and who had stoutly declared, "I care not what the world may say, I am not ambitious."³³

The lack of planning at Chattanooga and the faults of Kirby Smith's strategy revisions at Barboursville were beginning to tell. The East Tennessee commander, who had apparently given little thought to what he would do after reaching Lexington, now faltered, lost his balance, and fell back on the defensive. His plan as presented to Cooper and Bragg on August 24 had seen little success. Humphrey Marshall was late, so late that Kirby Smith was not sure that he had cleared Pound Gap. And from August 27 until after September 13 Kirby Smith was to be out of communication with Braxton Bragg, whose whereabouts he did not know. Kirby Smith was confused, so confused that eighteen days after he entered Lexington he still could not decide whether to support

Bragg, watch George Morgan, or move against Covington, Kentucky, on the Ohio River opposite Cincinnati. Unsure of himself, Kirby Smith ordered Harry Heth, who had been moved toward Covington, not to risk a battle with the levies unless more support came, because of "the great importance of our avoiding any reverse to our arms at this critical juncture."³⁴

There were other reasons for Kirby Smith to adopt the defensive besides his uncertainty about what to do. Trained in the Confederate school of defense, Kirby Smith considered the occupation of territory more important than concentration. Hence he scattered his troops to perform such relatively menial tasks as dispersing Home Guards, recruiting, and performing acts of good will so that the citizenry would be "favorably impressed." Kirby Smith was so dedicated to the occupation of territory that by September 11, his army, now augmented by John Morgan and John Scott to 12,500 troops, was ordered dispersed over a 200-mile line from near Cumberland Gap to within thirty miles of the Ohio River. Danville Leadbetter and W. G. McDavis were sent to hold the center at Frankfort and Georgetown; Preston Smith held Cynthiana, some thirty-four miles north of Lexington; Heth was sent still further north to Falmouth; and John Morgan's Second Kentucky went far below London to watch the Gap. By September 15 Kirby Smith was bound so tightly to the occupation

of territory that, after receipt of a dispatch from Bragg advising a retrograde move if hard pressed, he replied it was now impossible to abandon the foraging and recruiting undertaken in the Bluegrass without suffering severe loss. Four days later, Kirby Smith refused a suggested concentration with Bragg south of Louisville, for fear of losing "this valuable region...." He would hold what he had accumulated at Lexington—and risk the danger of losing all.35

His decision to adopt the defensive was even more than the product of his military training. It embodied his conception of the way to redeem Kentucky. In a proclamation issued from Lexington, Kirby Smith reiterated the statements made to Bragg and Cooper from Barboursville—that his campaign was to test the sentiment of Central Kentucky, and that if the people did not join him, he considered there would be no further need to remain. As he ordered copies of his proclamation scattered far and wide, Kirby Smith took a different approach from that suggested to Bragg by Jefferson Davis. Instead of first defeating Buell's army and then liberating the state, as advised by Davis, Kirby Smith felt the Kentuckians must rise first, and merit their independence by defending themselves. Time must be allowed for Kentuckians to join the Rebel army, so Kirby Smith substituted an offensive move with recruiting and other devices designed to enlist the state's aid. And a good appearance

could scarcely be presented to the citizenry if the army of redeemers Kirby Smith had brought were defeated in an offensive campaign. It was yet to be seen which would entice Kentucky to throw off the supposed yoke—military success or political bargaining. But Kirby Smith, who considered any gains made by military action now as not worth the risk of losing political prestige, was staking his success on the ballot box.

But the evidence indicates that Kirby Smith also decided to remain idle at Lexington because he felt he had done his part and that now it was Braxton Bragg's time to confront the enemy. This somewhat immature feeling was evident on August 20 when Kirby Smith spoke of his own campaign as a diversion for Bragg's move against Buell. After the battle at Richmond, Kirby Smith wrote his wife that

>This move has relieved Tenn. Buell is evacuating and if Bragg pushes him and gains a victory we will have made the most brilliant campaign of the war.\(^37\)

The feeling of aloofness toward Bragg's struggle with Buell continued to rise. On September 6, Kirby Smith wrote Samuel Cooper that "If Bragg occupies Buell we can have nothing to oppose us but raw levies..." And on September 27, Kirby Smith wrote his wife that his final dealings with George Morgan provided "the finishing touch to our brilliant little campaign."\(^38\)

\(^36\) Copy of Kirby Smith's Proclamation to the Kentuckians (undated), Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.

\(^37\) Kirby Smith to wife, August 30, 1862, \textit{Ibid}.

\(^38\) Kirby Smith, "Kentucky Campaign," Kirby Smith Papers, North
Again too much had come too swiftly to the young general who considered his "bold and hazardous enterprise..." as "crowned with success, even beyond my most sanguine expectations...." "A perfect ovation," he termed it, "old and young have flocked to me...." The only interest he manifested in what Bragg was doing was what Bragg could do for him. Not only did he expect Bragg to contest Buell alone, but also he considered Bragg now as a supporting arm of his own operations. Kirby Smith had digressed alarmingly toward an attitude of complete independence. His description on August 20 of his move as a diversion for Bragg, though itself steeped in a desire for independence, was mild compared to his September 6 declaration that "should Bragg come to my support in time the deliverance of the state will be insured."40

Thus when Kirby Smith learned of Bragg's approximate location, he offered little help. On September 11, when information placed Bragg and Buell as maneuvering for a battle south of Green River, Kirby Smith made no move except to send John Scott to see which one crossed the river first if they did not fight, and to give Kirby Smith "timely notice of Buell's approach...." The same day he ordered Heth to


39Kirby Smith to wife, Sept. 6, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.

fall back from near Covington without firing a shot because Kirby Smith feared to risk a battle. Although General Heth reportedly urged pressing the Covington line, Kirby Smith decided otherwise, and lost an opportunity to relieve the Louisville front. Four days later, after additional information had placed part of Buell's force moving north from Bowling Green, Kirby Smith still remained idle. He merely suggested that Scott burn some bridges north of Munfordville and "remain in observation of Buell." If there was a fight, Scott was to place himself "in communication with General Bragg"—all the help Kirby Smith planned to send.  

Although a gallant officer, Kirby Smith was not being wholly honest with Braxton Bragg. In the objection to falling back from the Bluegrass which he penned to Bragg on September 15, Kirby Smith magnified the obstacles on his own front. While he thought the forces at Cincinnati were demoralized levies, he failed to mention this fact to Bragg. Instead he described "the largely superior force of the enemy concentrating at Cincinnati...." Nor did Kirby Smith offer to help Bragg by some totally independent operation. After the war Kirby Smith wrote that his duties at Lexington included holding his command ready to join Bragg when requested, but


42 Kirby Smith to Bragg, Sept. 15, 1862, Ibid., p. 830; Kirby Smith to wife, Sept. 6, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.
Kirby Smith had dispersed his command by the time Bragg reached Kentucky. And did he wait for word to join Bragg? On the contrary, Kirby Smith, on August 24, September 3, and September 15, requested Bragg to join him, and on September 19 objected to moving to join Bragg below Louisville because he was reluctant to leave the Lexington area. 43

Kirby Smith had come a long way from the Chattanooga meeting that night of July 31, where courtesies and promises of co-operation had been fully given. So far there was little to show for the meeting, save a daring raid behind the enemy lines. But there was time to salvage something of the agreement, as Braxton Bragg now would move out, far across the Cumberlands to the south.

Braxton Bragg carried most of his problems with him as he moved north from the Tennessee River on August 28. The overall purpose of the combined invasion had still not been delineated, and Kirby Smith's independent drive on Lexington postponed the question of when the senior commander, Bragg, would direct the combined armies. Bragg's own army had problems of leadership, for the majority of the wing and division commanders were either untried or unworthy of the responsibilities of an offensive campaign. Bragg had abandoned his clumsy division command and had substituted a more solid wing command. Yet Leonidas Polk and William J. Hardee, the new wing commanders, had personal traits which might endanger the army. Polk, the fifty-seven year old Bishop of Louisiana, was one of the most loved and respected soldiers in the Army—also one of the most dangerous. He was the sort of Confederate general who combined chivalrous and paternalistic manners with lax discipline and aloofness. Bragg had not forgotten how demoralized were Polk's troops at Shiloh, where the seeds of a long quarrel between the two generals had been sown.

Hardee, a tall, broad-shouldered professional soldier—Seminole War, first major of the Second Cavalry, West Point commandant, and tactician—commanded the left wing. A dedicated soldier whom Bragg respected, Hardee tended to criticize his superiors yet lacked the desire for responsibility. He seemed the sort who might at a crucial time, remain aloof and immobile, rather
than risk participation. 1

Nor were the division commanders soundly tested. Benjamin Franklin Cheatham and Jones Withers commanded in Polk's wing. Cheatham, a farmer and state militia commander who was probably the best cussler in the West, Bragg considered an incompetent leader. Withers had won Bragg's praise at Shiloh, but was probably in too poor health to venture a strenuous campaign. James Patton Anderson and Simon Bolivar Buckner commanded in Hardee's wing. Anderson, who had performed well at Pensacola under Bragg's eye, had succeeded Sam Jones, who would remain as post commandant at Chattanooga to forward Bragg supplies and recruits. Buckner, recently released from Fort Warren, was immensely popular in his native state of Kentucky. Perhaps he would make a good public relations man when Bragg crossed the border, but he was still untried at division rank. Bragg's staff was probably inexperienced for such a campaign. His chief of staff, Thomas Jordan, had been sent to Mississippi to organize exchanged prisoners, and Colonel George Garner, his successor, had seen little experience. Bragg's chief quartermaster, L. W. O'Bannon, Jordan thought might do well as supply officer for "a two-company post on the Texas frontier"—but not for the Second Department's largest army. A mixture of inexperience and even

quiet rebellion, this aggregation could only be held together by an *esprit de corps*. Here Bragg had failed, for his critical observations at Chattanooga of the weakness of his staff did not build the morale that was needed in the officer corps.²

The only problem which Bragg had solved before he left Chattanooga was that of his destination, and this only after much hesitation. On the night of August 7, J. Stoddard Johnston, a prominent Kentuckian, later to be editor of the *Kentucky Yeoman*, made his way to Bragg's headquarters. He had slipped through the Federal lines in Kentucky, and Bragg eagerly pressed him for information on the possibilities of an invasion. All that night and into the next day the two men went over possible routes the army might take into Kentucky. Johnston's escape route, by way of Harrodsburg, Danville, and Albany to Sparta, Tennessee, appealed to Bragg, and as early as August 8 he privately confided to Stoddard Johnston his ambition to drive into Kentucky.³

Bragg kept silent on his decision, for he was struggling to make a final commitment amidst conflicting advice.


³"Diary of J. Stoddard Johnston, June 25-Sept. 9, 1862," Ms. in J.Stoddard Johnston Papers, Filson Club, Louisville; J.Stoddard Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky, by a Staff Officer, January, 1863," Ms. in J.Stoddard Johnston Military Papers, Filson Club, Louisville. Hereafter Johnston's military papers will be cited "Filson," while his private papers will be noted as "Johnston Papers, Filson Club."
Jefferson Davis had suggested first defeating Buell; Isham G. Harris headed a strong lobby for an assault on Nashville; and Bragg's military conscience would not allow him to ignore the Army of the Ohio. But Kirby Smith would not let Bragg forget Kentucky, and on August 24 invited him to skirt Middle Tennessee and concentrate somewhere in the Great Meadow around Lexington. Bragg, ever hesitant to make a final decision, waivered between the two objectives. By August 12 he wrote Kirby Smith that he favored a move on Lexington—but he still spoke of a possible move on Nashville. Despite his avowed interest in a Kentucky move, Bragg had clung stubbornly to a faint realization that Buell must be defeated sometime. But as the end of August neared, it was clear that Isham Harris must wait a little longer before he could again occupy the governor's chair. Bragg stiffened, abandoned Stevenson and Murfreesboro as possible objectives, and finally on August 27 wrote Breckenridge his intent—to evade Buell and drive north into Central Kentucky.

Although Bragg would be criticized for bypassing Buell and choosing Stoddard Johnston's suggested route, he really had little choice. When Kirby Smith bowed out of any design on Middle Tennessee, Bragg was left with 27,000 infantry to face the Army of the Ohio. Bragg had received information the

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Federals were digging in at Nashville. Since he had privately resolved at Chattanooga not to risk his depleted force in an assault on an entrenched position, he considered such a move on Nashville suicidal. More important, Bragg disliked the idea of Kirby Smith moving so far away from his own army as to enhance the danger of Buell getting between them. As he had no power to stop Kirby Smith, Bragg decided on the only alternative that would keep the columns within supporting distance—to join Kirby Smith. The Sparta-Burkesville route would keep Bragg between Kirby Smith and the Federals; and, if Buell moved into Kentucky to attack Kirby Smith, the blue column would have to cross in Bragg's front and be liable to a blow on the right flank.\footnote{5 J. Stoddard Johnston, "Memoranda of Facts bearing on General Bragg's Kentucky Campaign, Jan. 8, 1863," Ms, J. Stoddard Johnston Military Papers, Filson Club, Louisville, Johnston diary, Johnston Papers, Filson Club.}

Historians would later write that Bragg moved north from Chattanooga without a plan and that he waited for news of Kirby Smith's or Buell's operations before he would decide his own destination. Not so; for Bragg did have a plan. Conceived in the desire to liberate Kentucky and nurtured by Kirby Smith's pressures for a northward move, Bragg's dream of a dash into Kentucky took shape. The danger was not a lack of a plan—but the possibility that Bragg would not adhere to it. To Stoddard Johnston he had expressed a desire to go north, meet Kirby Smith, and then perhaps move on Cincinnati. The wisdom of this decision was debatable, for it remained to be seen which plan would secure Kentucky: an early defeat of Buell or an immediate
occupation of the Bluegrass. Bragg, who had little choice, had committed his army to the Kentucky line. Right or wrong, his plan must be consummated swiftly, for hesitation would cost time, supplies—and perhaps the campaign.6

Although Bragg may have had worries, his troops were exuberant as they marched away from the river. The Tennesseans and Kentuckians were fired up by Bragg's general order reminding them that their women were being insulted and their altars desecrated. Hymns had vied with "Dixie" around flickering campfires as Bragg's troops, like Kirby Smith's, whipped themselves up with a militant religious fervor. Up over the southern slope of Walden's Ridge, Hardee's men toiled. Far below the Tennessee raced through the gorge and Raccoon Mountain loomed in the west, but heat and dust were closer than the beauties of nature. Parched and grimed, Buckner's and Anderson's men struggled to haul their field pieces out of the valley of the Tennessee. Once over the ridge, the troops dropped into the Sequatchie Valley and followed the long trough between the Cumberland and Walden's Ridge north into Pikeville. Polk, slowed by the army's main wagon train, moved up the east side of Walden's, crossed high up opposite Pikeville, and joined Bragg on September 1.7

7 Winchester diary, Tennessee Archives; Gen. Orders No. 124, Aug. 25, 1862, Ms. in Sterling A. Wood Papers, Alabama State Library and Archives, Montgomery; Polk to Bragg, Aug. 29, 1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, VII-342; Cheatham to Polk, Aug. 27, 1862; Jones Withers to Polk, Aug. 27, 1862, Ibid., 159-3; Gen. Orders No. 1, Aug. 29, 1862, Ibid., VIII-342; Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," Filson; Marcus J. Wright, Diary of Brigadier-General Marcus J. Wright, C.S.A. April 23, 1861 - February 26, 1863, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville.
West from Pikeville Bragg pushed to the summit of the Cumberland range. Here the road forked: west lay the last good road to Nashville via McMinnville, and north the route led through Cane Creek valley into Sparta. There was no hesitation. On September 3, Cheatham's advance streamed into Sparta.  

Bragg arrived the following day—and soon found he had to make a decision. By September 5 he had received Kirby Smith's report of the Richmond victory and plea that Bragg join him at Lexington. News had also been received that the Burkesville route was devoid of forage and supplies, and could not sustain his army. Bragg now hesitated, for he must devise another route. Kirby Smith was at the moment in no immediate danger from Union forces already in Kentucky. The problem was to find a road that would both feed the army and take Bragg into Central Kentucky.  

Bragg's decision at Sparta would later be overrated by historians. The receipt of Kirby Smith's note did not convince Bragg that he should move into Kentucky, for at Chattanooga he had determined to bypass Buell and move into the Bluegrass. Nor did Bragg pause at Sparta and debate an attack on Nashville. True, the Sparta camp contained a large pressure group headed by Isham Harris, exiled governor, lobbyist, and probably general nuisance, who pressed Bragg to attack Nashville. Bragg, however, had determined at Chattanooga

8 Johnston diary, Johnston Papers, Filson Club.

riot to attack Buell if he fortified at Nashville. On the road to Sparta Bragg had received further news that Nashville was being fortified. Consequently, on the day he reached Sparta, Bragg wrote Sterling Price to move rapidly and capture the city, as Bragg suspected Buell would follow him north. Nor did Bragg decide to push into Kentucky because he received news on September 7 that Buell was evacuating Nashville and falling back to Bowling Green. As early as September 2 Bragg had sent an officer to establish forage depots on the roads from Sparta to Carthage and Gainesborough, where the army would cross the Cumberland River. Moreover, on September 5, two days before Forrest reported Buell retreating into Kentucky, Bragg had ordered Leonidas Polk to move his wing to the river crossing at Gainesborough.

10 Ibid.; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, pp. 796, 798-800; Vol. XVII, pt. 2, p. 698; Johnston diary, Johnston Papers, Filson Club; Horn, Army of Tennessee, 167; Parks, Kirby Smith, 223-24. At Decherd Buell was unsuccessful in his efforts to discern Bragg's objective, though he expected an advance on Middle Tennessee. Buell feared concentrating his forces on either the Decherd or McMinnville flanks lest Bragg turn his position, and a supply shortage prevented him from concentrating more than 25,000 at an advance position. Thus on August 30 he ordered his army to a central position at Murfreesboro. Yet he did not plan to fight there, as on the same day he wrote Andrew Johnson a confidential letter, which he requested be destroyed, stating that he had decided to fall back on Nashville where he could receive supplies, and where two divisions expected from Grant would bolster his force to some 50,000. Buell wrote Johnson "these facts make it plain that I should fall back on Nashville, and I am preparing to do so." (General Orders, August 30, 1862, Army of the Ohio; Buell to Thomas, Aug. 31, 1862, Buell Papers; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 451.) On September 1, while his army was still en route to Murfreesboro, Buell received news of Nelson's defeat at Richmond. Though he was unsure of Bragg's position, and though George Thomas believed Bragg would march into Middle Tennessee by way of Sparta and the Cumberland Mountains (Thomas to Buell, Sept. 2, 1862, Buell Papers), Buell already at Nashville, informed Halleck on September 2 that he would leave a defensive force at
Probably the single decision Bragg made at Sparta was to move north through the general area around Glasgow, Kentucky. In accordance with this decision he aligned his march in that direction. The Glasgow region, fed by the Green and Barren Rivers, was represented to Bragg as being a fertile section. It was also accessible from the river crossings. From Carthage and Gainesborough, the roads led forty-seven and thirty-seven miles respectively to Tompkinsville, Kentucky. At Tompkinsville the road debouched from the Cumberland foothills into the Green River plain. The road fork at Tompkinsville would give Bragg a choice of two routes. The army could move the twenty-six miles to Glasgow and get on the fine Bardstown pike which would lead into the Bluegrass region, or it could veer to the east, miss Glasgow, and intersect the pike at Clear Point. When Bragg ordered Polk to move out on the 5th, he evidently had not yet decided upon the exact route to take through the Glasgow region.\(^{11}\)

News from Forrest gave Bragg his answer. On the morning of the 7th the wiry cavalryman, who had ranged toward Nashville to observe Buell, reported the Federals rapidly evacuating the city. Bragg, who had lost three days at Sparta, pushed his columns toward the Cumberland River, although he still had not chosen his route. On September 9 Forrest sent in more

Nashville and move into Kentucky to protect his communications. Buell was less sure of an advance on Middle Tennessee now than was Thomas, as he stated to Halleck that "Some circumstances however justify the suspicion that he is moving up the valley, with the object of going into Kentucky." \textit{Statement of Major General Buell}, p. 24; Buell to Halleck, Sept. 2, 1862; Buell Papers.

\(^{11}\)Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," Filson.
THE RACE FOR THE LOUISVILLE PIKE

SCALE: 1 INCH = 10 MILES
disturbing news. Half of Buell's army was on the move north from Nashville on the seventy-one-mile march to Bowling Green, and the other half would soon follow. Bragg had committed the kind of tactical error that constantly plagued his generalship—he had underestimated his opponent. Although his troops were not unduly jaded when they reached Sparta, Bragg had rested them while he issued proclamations of congratulations for Kirby Smith's victory. The excellent time made between Chattanooga and Sparta now threatened to be lost—as well as the campaign. Should Buell win the race to the Louisville turnpike, which ran parallel to the Bardstown road, Kirby Smith would be isolated and Bragg would face alone an army he believed twice his size. 12

Bragg studied a map Hardee had sent him and pinpointed his route. Polk, already across the river at Gainesborough, was ordered to hasten by way of Tompkinsville to Glasgow, where Hardee would join him. It would be a close race, for while Polk must march sixty-three miles from the river to Glasgow, Buell, supposedly already in motion, had only seventy-one miles to go to Bowling Green. If Polk reached Glasgow swiftly, he could move nine miles across to the Louisville pike, which curved northeast from Bowling Green. If Bragg seized this junction, the main highway to Louisville would be blocked, and the Rebels could march unopposed on the parallel Bardstown pike to join Kirby Smith. To reach the

junction, Buell must move twenty-eight more miles from Bowling Green. Thanks to John Morgan, the railroad between Nashville and Bowling Green was wrecked, but what of the line north from Bowling Green? Bragg saw the danger and on the 10th ordered Polk to seize the railroad near the Cave City junction on the Louisville pike. Determined to keep the campaign moving, Bragg wrote Kirby Smith and suggested he fall back from Lexington if hard pressed, and then hurried north with Hardee to Polk's aid.13

Bragg reached Glasgow on September 14 and found the situation disappointing. Polk had succeeded in cutting the railroad. James Chalmer's brigade was across it at Cave City, and John Duncan's brigade held the road at the Glasgow road junction. But Glasgow was not the land of plenty Bragg had

13 OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, pp. 806, 811; Bragg to Polk, Sept. 9, 1862, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve. Ironically, both Bragg and Buell received information on the 7th that was incorrect yet spurred each commander to hurry his move into Kentucky. Buell, waiting further developments at Nashville, sent Thomas Wood's division to Bowling Green on the 7th to reconnoiter Bragg's move and then to guard the Bowling Green stores. On the night of the 7th Wood reported that his information put Bowling Green as Bragg's destination. (OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 493.) On the morning of the 7th Bragg had information Buell was rapidly evacuating Nashville. Neither statement was entirely correct. Buell pushed Crittenden's and Rousseau's divisions on to Bowling Green, and on September 10 Wood reported by information he deemed "entirely reliable" that Bragg had crossed the river en route for Glasgow. (Wood to Buell, Sept. 10, 1862, Buell Papers.) Buell followed with Jacob Ammen's and McCook's divisions, and arrived at Bowling Green on September 14, where his five concentrated divisions totaled approximately 35,000. (OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, pp. 562-563.) Buell was not entirely aware Bragg was moving into Kentucky until the night of the 13th, when he sent word for more reinforcements from Nashville. George Thomas' division, some 7,400 strong, left immediately for Bowling Green, but were not to join Buell until September 20th at Green River. (Buell to Thomas, Sept. 13, 1863, 8 p.m., Buell Papers.) Two divisions, Negley's and Palmer's, had an effective force of some 13,418 to guard Nashville. (OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 988).
hoped for. His troops, already self subsistent, were in
the Barren River country, where only three counties in the
region raised over a half million bushels of corn a year.
Buell held two of them, Warren and Simpson. Bragg held Barren,
of which Glasgow was the county seat, but it had long since
been scoured by foragers from Bowling Green. Moreover, on
September 10 Bragg had a fleeting desire to deviate from
his plan to join Kirby Smith and to strike at Bowling Green,
but this desire was abandoned when he reached Glasgow. By
September 14 Bragg had information that Rosecrans and part of
his army were at Nashville, and that the bulk of Buell's army
was moving into Bowling Green—too much for Bragg's under-
supplied 27,000 troops to handle.14

Bragg would later be criticized for not striking Buell
from Glasgow. But such a move would have been a difficult
task, and Bragg evidently sensed this. The Rebel supplies
were practically exhausted, Bragg believed he was heavily
outnumbered, and Kirby Smith was still 200 miles to the
northeast. It was imperative that Bragg push on and join
Kirby Smith. But with Buell so close, Bragg felt a revision
of strategy was necessary. Instead of marching to join
Kirby Smith for a move on Cincinnati, Bragg now planned a

14 Special Orders No. 17, Sept. 12, 1862, National Archives,
Confederate Records, II-15. On Sept. 10 Bragg wrote Polk
that from Glasgow the army would strike a blow at Bowling
Green, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, 806; On Sept. 23 Bragg wrote
Kirby Smith that "for want of provisions, I was compelled
to desist from my intention and desire to attack Buell, 12
miles south of Munfordville...." Bragg Papers, Western
Reserve; See also OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, pp. 811, 818,
825-26; Polk was out of provisions and forced to borrow from
Hardee. See George Williamson to Major J.J. Walker, Sept. 15,
1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, II-13; Eighth
Census of the United States (4 vols. Washington, 1862-1864),
joint assault with Kirby Smith on Louisville. Louisville, shining city of the Ohio and supply depot of Buell's army, symbolized Yankee power in the Bloody Ground. So far Bragg had seen little enthusiasm for the Confederates, despite his September 14 proclamation inviting the Kentucky people to throw off the Union shackles. Perhaps if the gray line swept to the Falls of the Ohio, the people could not resist this army of goodwill pledged to defend home and altar and to avenge insults on mother, God, and the Southern Rights Party. David Harris, Bragg's chief engineer, suggested a route which offered ample water in the fierce drought: north by way of New Haven on the macadamized pike to Bardstown, from whence several roads led northwest to Louisville. Bragg liked the route, and wrote Kirby Smith. The difficulties of co-operative command were now to be augmented, for Bragg would stake all on two distant commands. On September 12 he had reiterated his order to Sterling Price, far south at Iuka, to take advantage of Rosecrans' army at Nashville and sweep into Middle Tennessee. And now on September 15 Bragg requested Kirby Smith to hold his force in readiness for a combined thrust on Louisville by September 23. Bragg also asked that Cleburne's and Preston Smith's brigades be moved to Shelbyville, forty-six miles west of Lexington, where they would be in position to join Bragg. Again the scheme of co-operation would be strained. Bragg, who leaned heavily on a commander to accomplish a task about which the commander had received no orders, now counted heavily on Kirby Smith, even though Bragg knew little of Kirby Smith's position, nor did the East
Tennessee commander's past record in the campaign promise swift co-operation.\textsuperscript{15}

But the plan to join Kirby Smith suffered a setback. On the night of the 14th, Bragg received news that James Chalmers had marched his brigade north from Cave City to Munfordville and had attacked the Federal garrison guarding the Green River bridge. The attack had been as costly as it had been unauthorized. Chalmers had been sharply repulsed by the 4,000-man post and had retreated to Cave City. He had lost only 285 men, but the defeat jolted Bragg and touched sore spots in his strategical ability. Bragg became easily upset when obstacles seemed to jeopardize his plans, and he tended to magnify problems out of proportion. Chalmers' loss was small—but it was Bragg's first loss as Second Department commander, and the first of the campaign. In the early hours of the 15th, the chagrin of defeat outweighed the geographical and logistical problems involved in moving the army over to the Louisville pike—and Bragg decided to march to Munfordville. He considered it a mere detour, for his request for Kirby Smith to prepare for a junction was written after Bragg issued orders to march to Munfordville. But was the satisfaction to be gained in overpowering the garrison worth the price Bragg must pay? Time, supplies, and the advantage of moving on the Bardstown pike would be sacrificed, and the all-important junction with Kirby Smith

would be delayed. A few days later at Green River, Bragg
would, probably for the first time, ponder the wisdom of
his move. 16

Bragg now hurried to Munfordville, as Buell was re-
ported assembling his army at Bowling Green, only forty
miles southwest of the garrison. Polk scooped up what
meager stores he had on hand, left his empty trains behind,
swung east of the garrison, crossed Green River, and came
up behind the garrison. Hardee, with Bragg riding in the
van, moved up the Louisville pike, and by the morning of
the 16th, was in position on the hills south of Green River.
Bragg and his staff pushed forward to reconnoiter the forti-
fications. The garrison lay on the south bank of the river
opposite the village of Munfordville. Any expectations
Bragg may have entertained of a hasty seizure were dismissed
when he observed the extensive rifle pits, stockades, and
earthworks that guarded the river bridge. As Hardee's skir-
mishers fanned out into the river bottom, the field pieces
that bristled from behind the Yankee works flashed, and shells
shrieked over Bragg's head. The capture of the garrison
promised to be a difficult task, and Bragg had little time to

16 Bragg knew of Chalmers' defeat by midnight of Sept. 14. See
ibid., p. 825. Buell admitted at Bowling Green that Bragg
was "virtually between me and Louisville, and all communica-
tions by telegraph and railroad are cut off." (Buell to
Halleck, Sept. 14, 1862, Buell Papers.) On the 14th Buell
thought Bragg's main force at Glasgow, and prepared to move
against it on September 16, though Thomas was not expected at
Bowling Green until the 17th. (Buell to H.G.Wright, Sept. 14,
1862, Buell Papers.) Buell did not expect Bragg to move
from Glasgow to Munfordville, and so marched to Glasgow to
attack Bragg. Testimony of Major General Buell, 31, 34; Testimony
of General A. M. McCook, Ms., Buell Papers.
sparer. He rushed a staff officer to Polk: Bragg would attack at daylight if his surrender demands were refused; Polk was to notify him when his wing was in position. 17

Bragg sent the blue garrison a note, asking surrender. Colonel Cyrus Dunham replied he would defend to the last, God help the right, and the war of words was on. Surprised at the rebuff, Bragg moved his 27,000 in closer, unlimbered his artillery, and glanced nervously over his shoulder at Bowling Green. After Bragg breathed more fire, Colonel Dunham sent a request for a truce, to consider Bragg’s proposal. Bragg magnanimously agreed to hold his fire until 9 in the evening—as he did not plan to attack until dawn anyway. The afternoon wore into evening, and five notes later, Colonel John T. Wilder was in command of the garrison. Wilder stalled for time by engaging Bragg in a discussion as whether or not the "rules of honorable warfare" permitted Bragg to move his batteries into position while the truce flag was up. Then Wilder agreed to surrender if given ample proof of Bragg’s strength. Bragg mustered his most militant language and promised the only proof Wilder would receive would be the use of his force—but agreed to another hour's truce. But Simon Buckner, the local boy from Hart County, came down to the river and took Wilder on a cook's tour through Hardee's lines. Wilder counted some forty-five cannon, and decided a surrender would be honorable

But the night wore on and Wilder was not through stalling. Buckner brought him into Bragg's headquarters about midnight. Then the commander of the Munfordville, Kentucky, garrison and the head of the Second Department bickered for two more hours over the semantics of the term "unconditional surrender." After a rousing debate over whether Bragg would march in or Wilder would march out, Wilder won; the surrender was signed; and the Federal chief agreed to move out at 6 in the morning and stack arms.\(^{19}\)

Two precious days had been consumed, but Bragg, like Kirby Smith, was relishing his first victory as department commander, and was determined to act in grand style. Polk brought his troops across the river for the festivities, and the wing and division commanders joined Bragg and his cavalry escort in the reception line. Wilder was two hours late as his column approached the awaiting Confederates at Rowlett's Station. Buckner, the hometown boy, waited in the road, received Wilder's sword, and promptly handed it back, to the pleasure of onlookers. Then the Yankees stacked arms and marched off to be paroled while Bragg and his generals enjoyed themselves inspecting the fortifications.\(^{20}\)


\(^{19}\)Wilder, "The Siege of Munfordville," 62-63.

And now Bragg wavered at a crucial time. There was no change of plan—the march on Louisville with Kirby Smith would still be made—but Bragg had lost his sense of urgency. Perhaps he was too elated by the first fruits of his campaign. Probably he was again underestimating his opponent. He expected Buell to be still at Bowling Green, and even boasted to Samuel Cooper on the 17th that Buell would not dare attack him at Green River. Lulled by his success, Bragg set aside September 18 as a day of "thanksgiving and prayer" for his army. Had he planned to await Buell or had there been no force to the north to oppose his Louisville thrust, the delay might have been less serious. But on the 17th Bragg had informed Samuel Cooper that he would soon move to join Kirby Smith and reminded that commander to be ready for a concentration. If Louisville and the junction with Kirby Smith were Bragg's objectives, he should have moved out swiftly. On the 17th he had information that a strong force was digging in at Louisville to oppose his advance. To capture the city before Buell came up from the south would be difficult enough, and the day of "thanksgiving and prayer" bought the blue defenders more time. 21

But on the night of the 17th tension suddenly mounted at Green River. Bragg had misjudged Buell. Spy and scout reports indicated Buell was not behind his Bowling Green entrenchments as Bragg had supposed. Instead the Yankees were swinging west of the main Louisville pike.

and were reported moving through Leitchfield, Hawesville, Brownsville, and even Owensboro, to skirt Bragg and get into Louisville. Bragg, realizing his error, moved Cheatham's division north toward Beaver Dam Creek, and ordered the entire force to march at daylight on the 19th to join Kirby Smith.  

Bragg's inability to make a final commitment now began to tell. Early on the morning of the 18th, in the midst of a drizzling rain, Wheeler's exhausted troopers staggered in from near Bowling Green. At a crucial time Wheeler had failed to pinpoint Buell's location. He reported a heavy Union force was crossing Big Barren and moving north around Bragg. But another force of infantry in division strength had loomed up on the Munfordville pike. Wheeler had been pushed back, his picket at Merry Oaks had collapsed, and he could tell Bragg little of the mysterious force approaching Green River. Bragg hesitated, ordered Polk to halt his column, and sent Wheeler back to Cave City to feel out the Yankee advance. Had Bragg planned to remain and fight, should the force prove Buell's army, his hesitation might seem justified. But he was still committed to his junction with Kirby Smith, so committed that he sent Stoddard Johnston to Lexington on the 18th to arrange it. Johnston was to deliver an important verbal request—one which might easily be misconstrued. Would Kirby Smith do three things: send a heavy train of provisions to Bardstown to meet Bragg's column, move with all available force to Bardstown to prepare for the Louisville attack, and keep a sharp eye on George Morgan at Cumberland Gap? The request was

a poor substitute for an order, but was all Bragg could do—
the rest was up to Kirby Smith. Bragg must do his part by
hastening the junction and fulfilling the ambition expressed
to his wife on the 18th:

Tomorrow we march—full of hope and zeal.
Cincinnati must fall for the redemption
of New Orleans.23

He could not bring himself, however, to move his army—but
waited for news from Wheeler.

On September 19 Braxton Bragg lost his nerve—and another
day's supplies. Couriers from Wheeler had sloshed through the
pouring rain on the night of the 18th to bring news at last.
Blue columns were massing at Cave City, and light skirmishing
had already begun. Bragg had not expected a Federal move
which might interfere with his strategy, and he was unprepared
for it. At one in the morning of the 19th he panicked and de¬
cided Buell's whole army was moving through the cave country
toward Green River. Although the paucity of Wheeler's infor¬
mation did not warrant it, Bragg halted temporarily plans to
move north, and Bedford Forrest was called in from his position
north near Elizabethtown. Out on the Louisville pike Frank
Cheatham's marching orders were an indication of Bragg's
momentary breakdown—first toward Bardstown, then back toward
Munfordville, then halted, and now back to Green River. Bragg,
whose loss of balance was probably caused by a severe lack of

23 Bragg to wife, Sept. 18, 1862, Bixby Collection.
24 OR, I; Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p. 894; pt. 2, p. 843, Wright,
Diary, Tennessee Archives; Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in
Kentucky," Filson.
sleep, waited for further word from Wheeler.  

By the afternoon of the 19th Bragg had recovered his determination to join Kirby Smith. Nothing more was reported from Wheeler except a continuation of dull skirmish fire. Impatient to uncover Buell's location, Bragg sent Buckner's division to the front to feel out the enemy. Historians would later contend that Bragg sent Buckner to draw Buell into battle, but this contention is probably wrong. Bragg sent Buckner to ascertain if the force in Wheeler's front was merely covering the Yankee flank move that Bragg feared. Nor is there evidence Bragg would have remained to fight Buell should Buckner uncover the Union army, for Bragg's announcement of Buckner's move added that "we march at daylight tomorrow to effect a junction with General Kirby Smith." 

Buckner reported nothing of importance on his front, and Bragg continued plans for the junction. The trains were sent to Bardstown and early on the morning of the 20th, the Army of the Mississippi moved north to Nolin and veered off the Louisville pike onto the Bardstown road. But the hesitation had been costly--three days had been lost, and the army had only three days' meager rations. 

What did Bragg think--was it Buell advancing, or only a feint to cover a flank move on Bragg's right? Bragg knew only

what was reported, and reports had pointed to a flanking
move. Wheeler would later admit he considered the Federals
moving north around Bragg, and so reported to the general.
When Bragg conferred with his officers on the 17th, all
agreed Buell would not move on Green River but would flank
via Owensboro or Hawesville. And Bragg's own spies had re-
ported on the night of the 17th that Buell was flanking the
Confederates. If Buell had moved around Bragg, the Federals
could move into Louisville or take a position in Bragg's
rear at Elizabethtown, thirty-five miles north of Munfordville.
Such a position at Elizabethtown would have effectually cut
Bragg off from Kirby Smith. Bragg realized this danger on
the 18th, when he issued marching orders, sent Stoddard
Johnston to Kirby Smith, and wrote his wife of the planned
move north. And on the 19th, after Bragg recovered from his
early morning consternation, his chief apprehension was a
Federal flanking attempt—not a move toward Green River.

Bragg would be maligned for seemingly turning away from
Buell and marching off the Louisville road, and the
"Munfordville Myth" would persist that at Green River Bragg
blocked Buell's advance on Louisville. Bragg realized that
he did not have Buell cut off from Louisville, as there were
a half dozen other routes by which the Federals could reach
the city. Nor was the railroad bridge at Green River vital,
for Chalmers reported on September 19 that John Scott had

28 Johnston stated Bragg's own spies brought news on the night
of the 17th of the flank move. Johnston "Bragg's Campaign in
Kentucky," Filson. Wheeler admitted he mistook Buell's empty
wagon train, which Buell did send north around Bragg by way
of Leitchfield, for Buell's army, OR. I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1,
p. 894. See also Ibid., p. 1090; pt. 2, pp. 849, 876.
already cut the line north near Rolling Fork. And if Bragg had desired to fight at Green River, what would he have accomplished? Kirby Smith could not be ordered to Munfordville, and Bragg's own 27,000 infantry, with three days' poor rations, would have faced an army Bragg believed twice the size of his own—provided that army moved out to fight him. To remain at Munfordville would also pass the offensive to Buell. The Federals had three choices: they could flank Bragg out of his position, which move he feared. Or Buell could remain in the strong defensive works at Bowling Green which Bragg and his officers agreed were too strong to carry. Or, finally, Buell could attack Bragg at Green River. With short rations in the parched and barren Munfordville section, Bragg's small army would then be squeezed between Buell's army and the rapidly accumulating force at Louisville. Bragg had good reason to fear losing his army. Jefferson Davis had given him private instructions not to risk his army where a defeat might be suffered. Self confidence was never one of Bragg's virtues, and the admonition from Davis only moved him to be more cautious and fearful of making an error. To the south lay his own department. If his army were smashed, there would be nothing on Van Dorn's and Price's right flank to resist a Union drive into the Deep South. The burden of responsibility lay heavy on Bragg's shoulders—and he feared responsibility.  

In the light of his plans, Braggs mistake was not in abandoning Munfordville—but in going there in the first place. The move had shown his lack of appreciation for geography. He had thrown his army off the fine New Haven pike that ran north to Bardstown, and thus delayed his junction with Kirby Smith. At Green River, Bragg had placed his small force between Buell and the army at Louisville. Already Bragg was separated from Kirby Smith by the Muldraugh Hill range northeast of Munfordville, and a defeat at Green River would have driven Bragg into an angle between the Ohio and Salt Rivers. The Green River adventure may have slightly boosted morale, but it had proved detrimental in time, position, and supplies. His own tactical error had sent Bragg to Green River, victim of a tendency to become upset by blunders that a Jackson or a Forrest would have not considered worth redeeming. That Bragg fully realized his danger is uncertain, but he understood enough to abandon Green River for the belated junction at Bardstown.  

General McCook testified there was no point between Munfordville and the mouth of Salt River where an army could gain supplies. OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p. 113; Johnston, "A Memoranda of Facts;" Kirby Smith to J. Stoddard Johnston, Oct. 31, 1866, Filson; see also Horn, Army of Tennessee, 170; Parks, Kirby Smith, 225-26; Duke, Reminiscences, 307-17.

Johnston admitted Bragg was lured to Munfordville partially by the Green River bridge. Johnston, "Memoranda of Facts," Filson. The move surprised Buell, who expected a fight at Glasgow. Buell stated Munfordville was "not essential to Bragg's army in a strategical point of view," as three better routes were available to join Kirby Smith by way of Bardstown, the old Lexington road to Lebanon, and Columbia. Statement of Major General Buell, 32-33. On the 17th, Buell learned of Munfordville's surrender. On the 16th he had pushed toward Glasgow, but his cavalry reported Bragg had left, whereupon he moved back on the Louisville pike to Cave City and Horse
But the Bardstown junction never came. On September 22, Bragg arrived at Bardstown only to make the most signal yet most generally ignored decision of the campaign—to abandon the offensive. It came suddenly, a far cry from his resolutions to sweep to the Ohio, revenge New Orleans, and strike at Louisville. Bragg would later blame Kirby Smith for the abandonment of the Louisville design. Kirby Smith, enjoying his independence, had not responded to Bragg’s letter of September 15 or to his personal emissary. Instead Kirby Smith held the bulk of his army at Georgetown and Paris, near Lexington. On the 21st he wrote Bragg that

> With the enemy advancing from Covington and the Gap, and Marshall not in supporting distance, a junction with you below Louisville both loses us the valuable stores and supplies captured here and checks the organization of the new levies now in fair progress.\(^{31}\)

Moreover, Kirby Smith had halted until further orders came from Bragg Cleburne’s and Preston Smith’s brigades, which had been promised at Shelbyville by September 23. Bragg would later criticize Kirby Smith’s abandonment of the Louisville plan, and in May, 1863, he wrote Samuel Cooper that Kirby

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Smith's action

prevented a junction of our forces, and enabled General Buell to reach Louisville before the assault could be made upon that city.32

But Kirby Smith had not disrupted Bragg's designs on Louisville. On September 23 Bragg expressed no criticism to Kirby Smith for his actions. Indeed, he termed the halt of Cleburne and Preston Smith as "a very judicious move—and fully approved." Bragg added that he did not move direct on Louisville because of a lack of supplies, and noted that his troops were so jaded that they could not move anywhere for several days.33

But even if Bragg's troops had been in condition, he had abandoned his attempt to move on Louisville. Instead he decided to fall back on a defensive line in the Kentucky River region. Bragg had changed his attitude suddenly, and he had become despondent and discouraged over future prospects in Kentucky. By September 23 he was convinced that the Confederates could not successfully compete with the force gathered at Louisville. He suggested to Kirby Smith that the two armies might draw back to Danville, forty-five miles east of Bardstown and near the confluence of the Kentucky and Dick's Rivers, "if obliged to retire...." Two days later, Bragg gloomily wrote Samuel Cooper that "the garden spot of Kentucky...." might have to be abandoned, and discussed the losses that would occur "should we have to retire...." On September 27 Bragg


33Bragg to Kirby Smith, Sept. 23, 1862, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.
carried his mental retreat further. He informed Kirby Smith that a depot was to be established at Bryantsville, fifty-five miles east of Bardstown and across Dick's River. The depot would serve as "a rallying point for us in case of necessity." He also directed a depot to be established on the road to Cumberland Gap. He explained to Kirby Smith that this was necessary "so that in case of absolute necessity we could make the gap with our haversacks."

What caused Bragg's despondency and his decision to fall back into the Bluegrass on a defensive line? Bragg's personality and strategical concepts were important factors. When he started north through Tennessee, he had devised a loose but large plan with several interdependent components. Kirby Smith would co-operate with him, and the two would carry their banners to the Indiana or Ohio shore. Price and Van Dorn must press Grant and Rosecrans to prevent their reinforcing Buell, and then must sweep into Middle Tennessee. Breckinridge, the popular hero, must hasten reinforcements. And most important, Kentuckians must rise to defend themselves. The plan was difficult as it would require clear instructions and perfect timing. Bragg, recognized chiefly as an able disciplinarian before the campaign started, went into the campaign inexperienced in the planning of long-range moves. When he reached Bardstown, it was evident to him that his strategy was falling apart. An inability to give specific orders meant that the separate forces, instead of being co-ordinated, must

rely on each commander's personal discretion. The plan of concerted action with Kirby Smith had tied Bragg's hands. Bragg lacked the air of one who could command respect, and was unable to assume the initiative which might have brought Kirby Smith into closer co-operation. Nor could Bragg bring himself to give specific orders to those he could command—Price, Van Dorn, and Breckinridge. He gave them little personal attention, allowed them discretion to formulate much of their own plan—although he counted heavily on the results. His inability to commit an order now hurt, for the grand plan of invasion had broken apart. Seldom able to readjust a rigid scheme, he now became confused, lost his sense of timing—and surrendered the initiative.

The first failure of the strategy for Kentucky came in the Bluegrass. Kirby Smith could have aided Bragg in three ways, and he failed in all of them. While Bragg moved through Tennessee and into Kentucky, Kirby Smith could have threatened Cincinnati and relieved pressure on the Louisville line. Instead, he dispersed his force to perform numerous duties, considered his military objective to have terminated at Lexington, and waited for Bragg to finish with Buell. After the war Kirby Smith would write that he did not press Cincinnati because Bragg requested first he hold the command ready for a concentration. Yet Kirby Smith did not receive Bragg's request until September 18. In the first sixteen days

35 A discussion of Bragg as strategist and tactician is found in Hay, "Braxton Bragg and the Southern Confederacy," 302n, 304.
of his Lexington sojourn, Kirby Smith had made only one
half-hearted feint with Heth's division. 36

Kirby Smith's second means of aiding Bragg would have
been to move west to Bragg's support. But this he failed to
do: he considered Buell to be Bragg's responsibility. In
letters to Bragg on September 18-21, Kirby Smith advised
that Bragg move on Louisville alone, since Kirby Smith was
unwilling to leave the country around Lexington. He never
took seriously Bragg's request for a concentration. Two days
after he had received Bragg's note of the 15th, Kirby Smith
wrote his wife:

Bragg is moving on Louisville. Morgan is
reported to have evacuated the Gap and my
little command is posted so as to cooperate
with Bragg, to concentrate against Morgan
or the force from Cincinnati as circumstances
may demand. 37

Kirby Smith also took Bragg's personal emissary lightly.
After the war Kirby Smith would assert that Bragg did not
request a concentration at Bardstown but preparation for a
concentration there. Thirty years after the war Stoddard
Johnston could not remember exactly what he told Kirby Smith.
Kirby Smith seems to have taken advantage of Bragg's lack of
authority to give him an order. After his meeting with
Stoddard Johnston, Kirby Smith wrote Humphrey Marshall on
September 21 that although Bragg had requested aid for a
Louisville attack,

I feel every confidence in the ability of

36 Kirby Smith to wife, Aug. 29, Sept. 6, 1862; Kirby Smith,
"The Kentucky Campaign," Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina;
37 Kirby Smith to wife, Sept. 20, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers,
North Carolina.
General Bragg to take Louisville and in our ability to hold this section.

Then the young commander dashed off his note to Bragg informing him that there would be no concentration below Louisville. 38

Kirby Smith's third means of aiding Bragg would have been to keep a sharp eye on George Morgan at the Gap; but this he failed to do. Like Bragg, he was concerned with the possibility of Morgan's escape. Kirby Smith had counted heavily on Humphrey Marshall's force marching through Pound Gap to intercept Morgan should he retreat north. On September 18 Kirby Smith learned that Morgan had left the Gap and was fleeing for the Ohio River, and six days later Morgan was reported sixty-eight miles southeast of Lexington and driving hard for the Ohio. Although Humphrey Marshall had arrived at Mount Sterling, Kentucky, in position to block Morgan's path, Kirby Smith's old rivalry with Morgan and fears of losing prestige in Kentucky perhaps got the better of him. He marched his entire force to Mount Sterling to join Marshall. But George Morgan veered to the east and escaped across Licking River with Colonel John Morgan's cavalry nipping at his heels. The failure to stop the retreating Yankees was less serious than the consequences of Kirby Smith's move—he was now 101 miles east of Braxton Bragg. 39


The second failure of the grand strategy, Marshall's support in southeastern Kentucky, indicated something was seriously wrong with the scheme of co-operation. Humphrey Marshall had arrived late partly because of a long struggle among the Confederate high command as to whether he would be allowed to enter Kentucky. In March, Robert E. Lee had placed Marshall under Kirby Smith's direction should Kirby Smith desire to enter Kentucky. Kirby Smith, Bragg, and Marshall neglected to inform Richmond that Marshall was to be included in the Kentucky plan. After W. W. Loring, commander of the Department of Western Virginia, complained of the proposed move, Jefferson Davis on August 6 refused to allow Marshall to leave the department. Davis, ignorant of Kirby Smith's meeting with Marshall, assumed that Marshall desired to raid Kentucky in conjunction with John Morgan. It was not until August 14 that Richmond gave evidence of knowing Marshall was to participate in the invasion. 40

But Marshall's personality proved another problem. A prominent Kentuckian, Marshall had become embittered by his service in the rugged Department of Western Virginia, for he felt it was a long step down from what he merited by his reputation. He had become quarrelsome, quick to perceive an injustice, and fearful of losing authority. His near 300-pound frame caused him to move slowly in the mountains, and had he arrived sooner in East Kentucky he might have intercepted Morgan at some point south of Mount Sterling. But this unusual fellow,

reportedly a devout believer in spiritual seances, failed to provide the necessary support on the right flank. And Bragg had needed a general there—not a spiritualist.  

The third failure came on the left flank. Bragg had counted heavily on Van Dorn and Price to prevent Rosecrans from reinforcing Buell, and on September 4 and 12 had sent Price instructions to move on Nashville. But at Bardstown Bragg received news from Kirby Smith and other sources that indicated a failure on the left. The combined armies of Buell, Rosecrans, Grant, Samuel Curtis, and the new levies from Ohio and Indiana were reported at Louisville. Bragg was utterly disappointed at the apparent failure of Van Dorn and Price to stop Grant and Rosecrans. But although he lashed out at Van Dorn as being self-willed and weak minded, Bragg himself had made the error. He had failed to outline for Richmond what he desired of his Mississippi command. Van Dorn, who disagreed with Bragg over moving into Middle Tennessee, wanted Price to join him in a move through West Tennessee and West Kentucky. When Price refused, Van Dorn appealed to Richmond. Although Jefferson Davis admitted he was ignorant of Bragg's plans for Van Dorn and Price, he placed Van Dorn in command of Price's column. Bragg had intended for Van Dorn to command Price only when the two were joined for a thrust into Middle Tennessee. Van Dorn now took advantage of his authority, stopped Price on the eve of a march on Nashville, and prepared to accomplish an old ambition—

to attack Corinth, Mississippi. Not only did Bragg's left flank not threaten Middle Tennessee—it never crossed the Tennessee River. 42

The failure of Breckinridge to arrive proved a fourth disappointment. Again Bragg had counted heavily on a commander to accomplish a task without providing sufficient orders to insure its execution. Bragg never ordered Breckinridge to come, nor did he order Van Dorn to allow the Kentuckian to leave his district. Confusion ensued on August 25 when Breckinridge notified Bragg he would come to Chattanooga. That same day, Bragg had wired Van Dorn to push with Sterling Price to cut off reinforcements reported moving from Corinth to Nashville. As Bragg had not authorized Breckinridge's departure, Van Dorn refused to let him leave. Instead Van Dorn desired Breckinridge's support in his own move north. Van Dorn later relented, but Breckinridge had been seriously delayed. On October 2, at Lexington, Bragg would learn that Breckinridge had just arrived at Chattanooga, and for all purposes was out of the invasion. 43

And what had become of the attack on Louisville, the fifth part of Bragg's strategy? The Louisville myth would be almost as persistent as that of Munfordville, and Bragg would later be maligned for not moving on a city defended mainly by levies.


But what did Bragg know of Louisville? At Munfordville he knew Louisville was defended by a rapidly accumulating force of undetermined origin. At Bardstown he received information from Kirby Smith and others that five armies, including Buell's, were massed at Louisville, and that the much desired supplies in Buell's depot were already being transferred to the Indiana shore. Bragg's mistake was not in abandoning his Louisville plan but in his intention to go there at all. With the information he had, Louisville was clearly a trap. Had he marched direct from Green River, he would have been trapped in the angle of the Ohio and Salt Rivers, between Buell and the Louisville force, with three days' rations and the Federals in control of the opposite bank of the Ohio River. And if he had moved from Bardstown, he would have stood little chance against the force he believed there, as his army was extremely worn. Bragg realized only part of the danger. On September 23, he wrote Kirby Smith that he had actually contemplated marching direct on Louisville from Green River and abandoned the idea only for lack of supplies. Yet at Bardstown he evidently sensed Louisville was a trap, for he wrote Kirby Smith that the combined Confederate forces, much less Bragg's own army, could not successfully compete with those at Louisville.  

44 Bragg to Kirby Smith, Sept. 23, 1862, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 876. On Sept. 23, two days before Buell's lead division entered the city, Louisville was garrisoned by some 37,000 troops and an additional 4,000 to 5,000 citizen volunteers. Bragg was in error when he said Curtis, Grant, and Rosecrans were there. The only reinforcements from these armies sent to Louisville were five regiments under Gordon Granger. Grant had earlier sent Buell two divisions,
Bragg was disappointed that a move could not be made on Louisville, but the failure of Kentucky to respond to his invasion was even a more bitter blow. Bragg had chosen the same policy as had Kirby Smith in his treatment of Kentucky. At Glasgow Bragg had issued a proclamation similar to that issued at Lexington. Kentuckians must rise and earn their freedom; if they refuse, "show it by your frowns and we shall return whence we came." Yet Bragg's plea had fallen on lethargic ears, and one had gone into Kentucky with Buell. The Louisville entrenchments, manned by forty guns, were incomplete until September 28. Heavy guns were planted on the Indiana shore and gunboats with 11-inch guns were in the Ohio River. Two plans were considered by General William Nelson, commanding, and Granger, second in command, to combat Bragg's approach. Nelson favored holding the town as long as possible to allow Buell to come up, and then burning it, and escaping across two pontoon bridges that were already constructed. Granger's plan, which he presented to Nelson and department commander H. O. Wright was to abandon the town, move out and join Buell near the mouth of Salt River, allow Bragg to enter the town, and close the trap. Granger remarked, "I was in hopes by this movement to entice Bragg to move directly upon Louisville. Had he done so he would have found nothing in Louisville for his army. We had already shipped everything of value...." OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. I, p. 429. Granger also testified it was hoped Kirby Smith and Bragg would move together from Bardstown, as they would have been trapped between the Salt and Ohio Rivers, with their left flank exposed to Buell's advance. Granger said, "We were afraid that Smith would try to keep open the route to Frankfort, in order to make his own escape. Had Smith moved on Louisville and had the junction of our forces been completed the entire rebel army, including Bragg's and Smith's, would certainly have been bagged in the angle formed by the Kentucky and the Ohio. By Smith's remaining in Central Kentucky, he could have escaped at any time either by Pound Gap or Cumberland Gap, or as Bragg moved up he would have passed out of the State at New Haven."

Ibid., p. 450; see also Ibid., pp. 428-30, 449-50. By September 29, the last of Buell's own army, numbering some 43,000, entered Louisville. Ibid., p. 664. And had Nelson decided to make a stand at Louisville, Bragg's task would not have been as easy as historians would later represent. (Vandiver, "Jefferson Davis and Confederate Strategy," 25; Horn, Army of Tennessee, 176; Parks, Kirby Smith, 226; Duke, Reminiscences, 317.) On September 24, Nelson wrote Buell, "I have 35,000 men. I am entrenched and believe I can hold the city....When you have brought Bragg to bay then I will attack him. Only let me know the route and time. But I am ready to execute any order." Buell Papers.
and between Glasgow and Bardstown there was little visible support manifested for the gray column. Then at Bardstown Bragg received news that Kirby Smith had actually recruited scarcely a brigade, although he had boasted 25,000 Kentuckians would enlist. And as for Bragg himself—he had received no recruits.45

A similar situation had arisen in April of 1861 which Bragg and Kirby Smith should have remembered. Governor Beriah Magoffin wanted to lead Kentucky out of the Union, but feared a retaliatory invasion from across the Ohio. Through the interposition of Gideon Pillow, Magoffin tried to obtain arms from the Confederate government. Secretary of War Leroy Walker refused aid until Kentucky first joined the Confederacy, and so created a deadlock with the Southern Rights Party leaders in Kentucky who opposed a move out of the Union without Confederate protection. Fear of Union retaliation had proved stronger, and Magoffin’s desires were frustrated.46

But even if Bragg had realized that a military victory might have to be won before Kentucky joined the Confederates, he had little choice but to adhere to the policy already established. There could be no victory now, Bragg believed, unless 50,000 recruits from Tennessee and Kentucky joined his ranks. The information of the Yankee strength at Louisville was awe-

45 Seitz, Braxton Bragg, 173; OR. I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 376; Bragg to Davis, Oct. 2, 1862, West Point; Bragg to Kirby Smith, Sept. 23, 1862, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve. From Bardstown Colonel Winchester wrote "In our march since we left Glasgow we have not been cordially met, but a strong Union feeling has predominated largely." Winchester diary, Tennessee Archives.

46 E. Merton Coulter, Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky, 84.
some, and Bragg felt he needed support if he were to hold his position. It had not come through pleas to the citizenry, so Bragg decided to adopt a harder line. Several Kentuckians had assured him that many wanted to join Bragg's army but feared confiscation of their property should the Confederates retreat. If Bragg proclaimed a conscription act, Kentuckians who joined the Rebels would stand less chance of punishment should the Federals return. This made sense to Bragg, and by October 2 he decided to speed the inauguration of Richard Hawes as governor so that the conscription act would appear completely legal. Bragg would later be criticized for abandoning his campaign to engage in "puppet government," but the reported Federal superiority gave him little choice. On October 2 he reviewed the lethargy of the Kentucky people in a letter to Jefferson Davis, and added that

> In this condition I see no hope but in the conscript act and I propose to enforce it immediately after installation of the provisional civil government on Saturday the 4th.\(^47\)

Bragg felt this was his last chance. If Kentucky failed him now, the state could no longer be held. To implement the civil government would necessitate a cessation of the campaign until the sorely needed recruits could be gathered. Thus Bragg must temporarily at least hold a defensive line in the Bluegrass.

Such a line appealed to Bragg, for he understood defensive warfare. Schooled in the Confederate doctrine of territorial defense, Bragg had adopted the Jomini principles of

\(^{47}\) Bragg to Davis, Oct. 2, 1862, West Point; see also OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 876.
defense. Fix the enemy's position, force him to commit his reserves, and then strike a hard and decisive blow. Awaiting Buell in the Bluegrass would be in accord with the defensive-offensive, which Jefferson Davis favored. An army could await the enemy on a prepared field, with the advantages of resources and terrain, and strike when an opportunity presented itself. That part of the Bluegrass east of Bardstown and west of the Kentucky River appeared an excellent place to utilize this strategy. Kirby Smith had accumulated ample stores at Lexington. Should Bragg be too hard pressed by Buell, the Confederates could move to the east bank of the Kentucky and Dick's Rivers, and operate on the interior line between the Lexington and Bryantsville depots.

Bragg could scarcely be blamed for adopting the defensive. His plan had so far failed, and the Confederates needed time to revise their strategy if something were to be salvaged of the invasion. Yet Bragg's defensive plan threatened to carry the seeds of its own failure. The offensive had stumbled to a halt because the forces were not co-ordinated and had no single director. The failures of Van Dorn, Price, Breckinridge, and Kirby Smith should have taught Bragg a lesson—yet he had failed to grow with the campaign. His defensive strategy contained the same points which had brought him grief on the

48 J. D. Hittle (ed.). Jomini and His Summary of the Art of War (Harrisburg, Pa., 1952), 69, 101, 104; Vandiver, "Jefferson Davis and Confederate Strategy," 21n.; Jones, Confederate Strategy from Shiloh to Vicksburg, 18-23; Frank E. Vandiver, Rebel brass, The Confederate Command System (Baton Rouge, 1956), 16-17; Bragg to Kirby Smith, Sept. 23, 27, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.
offensive. He expected Van Dorn and Price to move into Middle Tennessee. Breckinridge was still expected in Kentucky, and Kirby Smith was accepted in good faith. Kentucky must still first join the gray ranks, and additional men and supplies must come from Tennessee. Each of these things had so far shown little promise. Yet Bragg, partly through necessity, partly because his rigid strategical mind admitted few revisions, clung to his points of strategy as firm prerequisites to his remaining in Kentucky. Could the piecemeal strategy hold Kentucky? As Bragg wrote Samuel Cooper, "a few weeks will decide the question." If the strategy succeeded, Bragg and Kirby Smith might yet unite on the Ohio. If the plan failed, the road led south to Tennessee.

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49 Bragg to Samuel Cooper, Sept. 25, 1862, *OR*, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 876. On September 25 Bragg wrote Van Dorn to push his columns to Bragg's support, sweep through Nashville and push to the Ohio, and added, "we shall confidently expect a diversion in our favor against the overwhelming force now concentrating in our front." *Ibid.*, Vol. XVII, pt. 2, p. 713. By an error in transmission Van Dorn did not receive the dispatch until November 2. See endorsement, *Ibid*. Bragg was misled as to the force at Louisville. Rosecrans was still at Corinth, and three of Grant's five divisions were on the Mississippi line. By the time Bragg wrote Cooper on Sept. 25 that he hoped Price and Van Dorn could still open Middle Tennessee, they had been defeated at Corinth. *OR*, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 876; see also Bragg to Jefferson Davis, Oct. 2, 1862, West Point; Horn, *Army of Tennessee*, 174-75.
The defensive strategy of territorial occupation may have been a political necessity, but it lost the Rebels the advantage of geography. Bragg never understood the Kentucky terrain. The disappointments of the proposed Albany route, of the lack of forage at Glasgow and Green River, and of the near trap at Louisville indicated Bragg lacked respect for map and compass. And now Bragg made another error. After assuming command of Kirby Smith's army on October 2, Bragg dispersed his forces in what amounted to a hollow square on the fertile plain between the Muldraugh Hills and the Kentucky River. Leonidas Polk with the Army of the Mississippi held the southwest corner at Bardstown; Cleburne and Preston Smith the northwest corner at Shelbyville, forty-five miles north of Bardstown; Harry Heth the northeast corner, forty miles east of Shelbyville at Georgetown; and Carter Stevenson the southeast corner at Danville.¹

Bragg's mistake was not in dispersing his troops but in the manner of dispersion. His troop dispositions would hamper any chance to anticipate Buell should he move out of Louisville. From Louisville a number of roads branched out into Central Kentucky. Once Buell's force cleared the Muldraugh Hill range it could easily maneuver and extend its lines in the Bluegrass plain. Buell's superior numbers would be less of a threat while moving on the narrow roads out of Louisville.

¹Hammond, "Kirby Smith's Campgian," SHSP, IX (1881), 456-7; Polk, Leonidas Polk, II, 135-136.
If Bragg had placed the bulk of his forces on the western edge of the Bluegrass, Buell's move could be contested before the Yankee lines were extended. A strong position along the Bardstown-Shelbysville line could perhaps anticipate Buell's advance and compensate for Bragg's failure to learn Buell's intentions. Gray spies had been unsuccessful in determining which route Buell would take, should he move east to attack Bragg. Bragg's cavalry commands--Forrest's, Wharton's, and Wheeler's--had been operating loosely, with no unity of purpose. Bragg had sent Forrest back to Tennessee, and Wharton and Wheeler alone were unable to discern Buell's strength or intentions. There appeared no other way to prevent Buell from spreading his forces on the Bluegrass plain than to await the Federals on a line near Louisville.²

But Bragg hesitated to place a sufficient force on the Bardstown-Shelbyville line. Failing again to profit by past mistakes, he underestimated what Buell could accomplish. Just as Bragg had not expected Buell to move against him from Bowling Green, he was now confident the Yankees would remain in Louisville for several weeks. Had not Cleburne written on September 26 that no activity was observed west of Shelbyville? Did not Polk write Bragg on the 30th that news from Wharton's position at Mount Washington indicated great demoralization in Buell's army at Louisville? So confident was Bragg that Buell

would remain inactive that on September 28 he left Polk with the army at Bardstown and toured the Bluegrass.  

Bragg also refused to relocate his command because any line he drew would cost the Rebels some advantage. His old fear of making a final commitment returned. Confused, he advocated concentration at a half dozen places. On September 23 he suggested to Kirby Smith that Danville might be a rallying point; four days later he suggested the troops join at Bryantsville. To Stoddard Johnston, Bragg at Bardstown hinted a retreat into Tennessee, but he wrote to Jefferson Davis of advancing beyond the Ohio.

Bragg's defensive strategy had placed him in a serious dilemma, and he stood to lose wherever he concentrated. If the line were drawn between Bardstown and Shelbyville, Buell's maneuverability would suffer—but Bragg also would suffer. The force at Cincinnati, represented by Kirby Smith as formidable, would threaten the route of retreat through Cumberland Gap and Bragg's supply bases at Bryantsville and Lexington. Bragg proposed to Kirby Smith they await Buell along a line from Frankfort south to Danville. True this position would put Bragg near his supplies. Yet it would concede to Buell a strip forty-six miles wide between Bardstown and Danville in which to unlimber his heavy force. Bragg and Kirby Smith would have the Kentucky and Dick's Rivers at their back and a

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force in their front capable of outflanking them or forcing them to weaken their lines by extension. Bragg mused over another line—along the eastern bank of the Kentucky and Dick's Rivers, with headquarters at Bryantsville. Bragg liked this position and had ordered Polk to withdraw there if severely attacked at Bardstown. The position was impressive enough. To the west Dick’s River flowed north to join the Kentucky near Harrodsburg. Dick’s River was fordable at only four places in the area—near Bryantsville, Danville, Lancaster, and Stanford. The eastern bank with its towering rock bluffs was an impregnable artillery position. Five miles north of Bryantsville the Kentucky River guarded the right flank. Fed by Troublesome, Laurel, and Hell-fer-Sartain, the river poured into a deep gorge west of Bryantsville, picked up Dick’s River, and then veered north on its way to the Ohio. On the left flank lay the route of Bragg’s escape, if escape became necessary, by the Lexington pike through Cumberland Gap. But even this position had serious flaws. If Bragg chose to defend Lexington, an important supply depot, his army would be cut in two by the Kentucky River. The oncoming fall rains would swell the mountain streams which fed the Kentucky. A sudden rise of the river might completely sever the army in two. Nor were the crossings of Dick’s River totally secure. If the Yankees swung to the south and crossed, they would both flank Bragg and sever his line of retreat through the Gap. Moreover, a stand at Dick’s River would concede Frankfort, capital and symbol of Rebel power in the Bluegrass. Such a loss might nullify any political gains
achieved among the people.\textsuperscript{5}

Unable to commit himself to a defensive position, Bragg decided to postpone the problem until after he had inaugurated Richard Hawes. On October 2 Bragg met with Kirby Smith and Hawes at Lexington. The three agreed to hasten the event so that the conscription act might be proclaimed. Bragg was justified in planning the Frankfort inauguration, for the question of Kentucky's loyalty did need to be resolved. His error was in preparation. Again he had failed to profit by past mistakes. When he left Chattanooga there were many elements in the grand strategy, such as the support of Breckinridge, which Bragg counted on to succeed. Yet the orders he had given were inadequate to insure success. Now he did little to guard against a surprise move by Buell while the high command was busy with erecting a civil government.

The only disposition Bragg made was half-hearted. He ordered Polk to move forward to hold an arc from Elizabethtown on the Bowling Green pike to Shelbyville on the Frankfort road. It was an important order, for such a move might anticipate Buell's column should it move out of Louisville. Yet Bragg made it discretionary, not mandatory, subject to favorable reconnoitering of the ground in Polk's front.

The lack of vigor in the lone order issued to Polk indicated something was wrong in the high command. Bragg seemed overcome with his new responsibilities as commander of the

joint columns. Unfamiliar with directing such a large-scale operation, he was having trouble convincing himself he was in command. Bragg, because of past experience with Polk, had only contempt for the Bishop's abilities. Yet he now trusted Polk with a crucial discretionary order. Perhaps Bragg had again failed to grow as a leader during the campaign. He still magnified problems out of proportion to their importance. Hawes' inauguration was necessary, but should Buell slip by the thin Bardstown line there would be little need for a Confederate governor. Yet Bragg, again underestimating the opposition, did not expect Buell to make a sudden move. And what if Buell did attack prematurely? Bragg still possessed that simple Confederate faith that a fellow soldier, even a personal enemy, would accomplish an important task. Polk was such a personal enemy, yet as Bragg prepared for the inauguration, he would rely heavily on the Bishop.

But on October 2 Bragg received news at Lexington which indicated Polk had failed. Colonel W. G. McDavis at Frankfort telegraphed that John Scott's cavalry had run into a large Yankee horse column west of Shelbyville. McDavis reported the cavalry was believed to be the advance of a considerable infantry force, and that Cleburne was preparing to fall back from Shelbyville on Frankfort. At first Bragg took the message lightly, for he still doubted Buell could move so early. Polk was ordered to hold in readiness to strike the mysterious

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force on flank if he ascertained the column was large. Then came another telegram from McDavis which struck home. The Federals had taken Shelbyville and were already within twenty-one miles of Frankfort, driving hard for the capital. Cleburne, the hard hitter of Shiloh who never jumped at shadows, was falling back swiftly. Already his lead column was within five miles of Frankfort. The situation was grave. If the Yankees broke through at Frankfort, Bragg's force would be cut in half, the depots would fall, and the road to the Gap would be cut.  

At the crucial hour Bragg shirked the responsibility that was rightfully his. Unwilling to depart from the rigid scheme devised at Bardstown, he determined that Hawes' inauguration must still receive his own first consideration. He left to his subordinates the task of repulsing the enemy force. The causes of Bragg's lack of personal attention were probably flaws in his personality—an inability to do more than one thing at a time, and an unjustified trust that a subordinate would accomplish a difficult task though precise instructions were lacking. While he busied himself with preparations for the festivities in Frankfort, he devised a hasty but ill-organized plan. McDavis was ordered to pull in Heth, Stevenson, and Humphrey Marshall—who still had not arrived—and to hold fast at Frankfort. Polk would move north by way of the Bloomfield pike and strike the Yankees on the flank as they were strung along the road to Frankfort. The plan

was bold and smacked of Lee and Jackson at Second Manassas. But it was unrealistic, for Bragg knew nothing of the situation on Polk's front, fifty-three miles to the west. Yet he counted heavily on the Bishop to execute another vague order. Bragg also gambled that Kirby Smith's forces could get into Frankfort before the Federals drove through and isolated Polk. He gambled that the Union column, reported twenty-one miles from the capital, would delay until Polk and Kirby Smith could swing into position. Yet he was unwilling to take the responsibility of making certain that the strategy would succeed. Unable to provide for substitutions in his strategy, he proceeded to Frankfort to inaugurate Richard Hawes. Only after that would he "personally seek out the enemy."  

To the westward, at Bardstown, the enemy was seeking out Bragg. On October 1 Polk had received Bragg's instructions to push his force forward. He never had the chance. Late that night John Wharton reported from Mount Washington. His Texans had been hit hard at Wilsonville, Shepherdsville, and in front of Mount Washington. Polk's right flank was crumbling, and Wharton could not hold much longer. Surprised, Polk ordered Wharton to fall back to Bardstown. Wheeler was called in from near Elizabethtown, and Polk waited through the night to see "whether the enemy is merely feeling us or intends an attack

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3Bragg to McDavis, Oct. 2, 1862; Bragg to Polk, Oct. 2, 1862; Johnston diary, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve; Col. George Brent of Bragg's staff recorded on the 3rd at Lexington that "The impression strongly prevails that the great battle will be fought in this vicinity." Diary of Colonel George Brent, Ibid.
The Federal advance continued to develop. By 10 on the morning of the 2nd, the blue columns were reported in strong force on the three main routes to Bardstown, via Shepherdsville, Mount Washington, and Taylorsville. By early morning of the 3rd, the situation was grave. Taylorsville and Shepherdsville had fallen. The Yankee advance on the Mount Washington road had driven to within twelve miles of Bardstown, and a heavy force in line of battle was pushing up the Shepherdsville road. A note from Cleburne reported the Rebel right at Shelbyville had been swept away.

While the Bardstown line tottered, Polk received Bragg's order to make the flank attack. It was obvious that Bragg did not understand the situation. How could Polk move north via Bloomfield to strike the Yankees when the blue line lay squarely across the road at Taylorsville? Even if Polk tried to dislodge the Federals, the forces moving on the Shepherdsville and Mount Washington roads would get in his rear. Then Polk would be trapped between the Frankfort pike and Bardstown. Polk considered Bragg's request impossible, and called a council of war to bolster his position.

The council was only a formality, for Polk went into the meeting determined to disobey the order. He read Bragg's letter to the wing and division commanders, and hammered away

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that Bragg could not have had the "lights" before him when the order was issued. Some dissension arose for fear that Kirby Smith would be endangered if Polk did not support him. Although unsure, Polk stated he did not think Kirby Smith would move until he heard from Polk. Then, determined to win his case, Polk polled the generals on the question of what would be done if Bragg had not sent the order. The answer was unanimous—follow Bragg's original instructions and fall back to Bryantsville. Polk agreed, and hurriedly wrote Bragg that the army was retreating.12

The importance of the Bardstown council would be greatly exaggerated. Polk's decision was a necessary one. His position at Bardstown was collapsing, and he certainly could not move north as requested. The Bishop's mistake was in the way he reported the decision to Bragg. The problem was one which indicated a command sickness in the army. Bragg and Polk did not know how to talk to each other. Bragg's order had been vague, and he had failed to specify what Kirby Smith would do while Polk struck the flank. Polk replied with an equally vague explanation of his disobedience at a time when Bragg needed to be apprised of the situation. The necessity for the disobedience was excusable, but Polk's and Hardee's aloofness toward Bragg at this critical time had little excuse.

12 Patton Anderson to Bragg, April 15, 1863; S.A.M. Wood to Bragg, April 13, 1863; Cheatham to Bragg, April 20, 1863; Bragg to Anderson, April 21, 1863; St. John Liddell to Bragg, April 16, 1863; Bushrod Johnson to Bragg, April 17, 1863; Bragg Papers, Western Reserve. Polk wrote that since Bragg said to move with his available force, that technically Polk had no available force to move; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, pp. 1101-1103.
Although they might not respect Bragg, he was still commander and deserved to know what had gone wrong. Polk did not tell him. Instead he wrote a clouded note stating that

The last twenty-four hours have developed a condition of things on my front and left flank which I shadowed forth in my last note to you, which makes compliance with this order not only eminently inexpedient but impracticable. I have called a council of wing and division commanders to whom I have submitted the matter, and find that they unanimously indorse my views of what is demanded.13

The only information Polk had supplied Bragg prior to this note were two notes he sent Bragg in the morning and evening of October 2nd, in which Polk reported an enemy advance on Bardstown. Even if this sketchy information were considered a fair appraisal of what was happening, Bragg must still have been confused. When Polk sent the afternoon note, Hardee included a private letter to Bragg giving his own views:

I believe the enemy is advancing in force on Lexington with the view, in its present defenseless condition, of capturing it. A demonstration will be made on this command, but the real attack may be expected on the other line.14

The two commanders were being unfair to Bragg. Neither Polk nor Hardee explained the circumstances that forced a retreat from Bardstown. Bragg was left with only two bits of information on which to rely. The main Federal force was probably threatening the right flank at Frankfort, and, for some reason not fully explained, Polk was in retreat.15

13 Ibid., p. 901.
14 Hardee to Bragg, Oct. 2, 1862, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.
15 Bragg later wrote Patton Anderson that "You will be surprised to learn I have a note from Genl Hardee at Bardstown on the 2nd of October advising the very order given by me to Gen. Polk." April 21, 1862, Ibid.
At Frankfort Bragg seemed disinterested in all reports of a Federal advance. His peculiar attitude was probably due to his tendency to form an entire plan upon the basis of the latest rumor received, without careful investigation. When he arrived at Frankfort on the night of the 3rd, excitement had died down. He received Polk's note of the afternoon of the 2nd which included Hardee's private letter warning of a move against Kirby Smith. But the Federal column between Frankfort and Shelbyville was inactive, and Kirby Smith's 20,000 troops seemed enough protection. Bragg was lulled into a sense of security and countermanded the order for Polk's flank assault. On the morning of the 4th Bragg received Polk's note advising the retreat. Polk was not ordered to report at Frankfort or censured for disobedience but instead was simply ordered to concentrate his force at Harrodsburg. Later in the morning Bragg received Polk's note of the morning of the 2nd. Bragg still did not take seriously the Federal advance on either Polk or Kirby Smith. Had not the reported move on Frankfort proved a feint? Clearly the Federal army had disappeared, and Bragg admitted to Polk on the 4th that he was unsure whether it was moving against Frankfort or against Polk's position. Moreover, Bragg seemed unworried. Perhaps it was again his inability to grasp what was of the most immediate importance in a situation. Hawes' inauguration, though important, would be useless should the Rebels be defeated. Bragg needed the recruits a civil government might bring—but his first duty was to secure the army he already had. But his rigid policies admitted no alterations, and he determined that
nothing would stop the inauguration.16

A murky, drizzly rain almost hid the Confederate flag flying above the capital on the 4th. This was the day Bragg had waited for, and he was determined the inauguration should be done with grand style. A large crowd lined the streets to catch a glimpse of Bragg, Kirby Smith, and local boys like Buckner who had made good in the Gray ranks. Unfortunately, Humphrey Marshall, marching from Owingsville, had not arrived and was unable to visit the capital that once put a price on his head. Despite pouring rain, the crowd packed the hall of the House of Representatives and another waited in the rotunda to get a glimpse of the man who had come to be their governor. Shortly after noon, Bragg stepped to the podium and introduced Richard C. Hawes.17

Bragg began innocently enough—"Citizens of the Commonwealth of Kentucky...." He explained his mission was to install the provisional governor and to "transfer to the Civil Authoritys all the privileges which pertain to the magistrate of a free people." However, he did not mention his plans for the conscription act. Then Bragg accused Lincoln's government of decreeing that Kentucky should join

16 Though Bragg wrote Patton Anderson that Polk's disobedience meant "my whole plan of operations had to be changed and I am satisfied at a sacrifice of important results" (April 13, 1863, Ibid.), and to Cooper that Polk's move "necessitated an entire change in my plans, the abandonment of the capital, and the partial uncovering and ultimate loss of our stores at Lexington" (OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p. 1091), Bragg had countermanded the order the night before he received news of the retreat. OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 903.

17 Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," Filson; Johnston and Brent diaries, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.
in a war for "the confiscation of property, the excitement of
servile insurrections, and the desolation of your homes." Not
so with the Confederates: "respecting the civil magistrate of
this state, we wish only to support his rightful authority,
and limit our own power."

There was something pathetic, hopeful, and even amusing
about Bragg's introductory remarks. He had summarized the
whole Confederate philosophy of Kentucky. Kentucky had re-
mained in the Union against her will. The Confederates had
come to restore her to the cause for which she yearned. To
insure the restoration, Bragg had brought along his own governor.
It was a test case, and Bragg knew it. While his plans did not
call for bayonet rule, he would give himself every benefit of
doubt in deciding if Kentucky desired to join the Confederacy.
"Irrespective of past opinions...," which probably meant the
voting record on secession, Bragg proposed to "obtain the
expression of the public will...on those points which have
unfortunately divided the people." Of course this could not
be done immediately, but "as soon as greater tranquility is
restored...." Meanwhile, Bragg promised to respect private
citizens' rights, yield "appropriate deference to the civil
authorities...," and "defend your honor and your territory...."
Like it or not, Kentucky had a redeemer, and with a final
flourish he introduced his prophet, "your powerful Chief
Magistrate, His Excellency, Governor Hawes." ¹⁸

¹⁸Manuscript of Bragg's address, West Point.
while the pro-Confederate crowd went wild. He slowly delivered his speech amidst more cheering. Outside, cannon began to boom, and the crowd continued to cheer. Hawes finished, and cries went up for more speeches. A few hardy souls in the rear of the chamber called for Humphrey Marshall. Fortunately for the crowd, Marshall remained absent.

There were to be no more speeches. Couriers hastened through the crowd as the cannon continued to boom. The Federals were across the Kentucky River in force and were shelling the town. Bragg, who knew he had been fooled once, now thought he had been tricked again. Perhaps Cleburne and Hardee had been right—the main Federal column was approaching. His plans upset, Bragg lost his sense of balance. He should have reconnoitered the Yankee force but instead assumed it was too strong for him to resist by remaining in Frankfort. On the afternoon of the 4th, Bragg hastily ordered the Kentucky River bridges destroyed and prepared to fall back to Harrodsburg for a junction with Polk. 19

The collapse of the Bardstown-Shelbyville line and the

19Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," Filson; Hammond, "Kirby Smith's Campaign," SHSP, IX (1881), 458-60; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 905. On October 1, Buell moved out of Louisville. His plan was to turn Bragg's left and cut a retreat from Cumberland Gap. Buell massed his force on the right as he expected Bragg would concentrate at Danville. Alexander McCook's, C. C. Gilbert's, and T. L. Crittenden's corps moved with 58,000 against Polk at Bardstown. Joshua Sill's division, 8,000 strong, feinted at Frankfort. Buell left in Louisville some 45,000 raw recruits from which Ebenezer Dumont would organize four brigades to reinforce Sill. McCook marched direct on Harrodsburg via Taylorsville; Gilbert marched on Danville via Bardstown; Crittenden marched on Danville via Lebanon. Buell did not expect resistance until the three corps concentrated near Danville. Buell to Halleck, Oct. 3, 1862; Buell to Thomas, March 2, 1862; Buell to H.C. Wright, Oct. 5, 1862, Buell Papers; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, pp. 660, 1024.
fall of Frankfort indicated a lack of solidity in the Rebel strategy. Bragg had delayed too long in drawing a firm defense line. Buell had not been anticipated, and his destination was still unknown. The Rebel force was divided, almost completely out of communication, and threatened with destruction in detail. Bragg had accomplished only one objective—he had put his governor in power. He considered this a strong prerequisite to remaining in Kentucky and had expected the measure would gain civil support. Even this support was now doubtful. Bragg was yet to quell the fears of the people by a show of force against the Yankees. Instead he was falling back, and the inauguration of a provisional governor was small compensation for the Rebels' loss of territory. The reaction was swift in Frankfort. Jubilation turned to despair among the pro-Confederates as flames licked at the river bridge west of town. Many wished their sentiments had been displayed with less passion, and Richard Hawes suddenly decided the best place for the Kentucky capital was the eastern part of the state. Meanwhile Bragg sought to gather his far-flung forces for a stand at Harrodsburg—if he could find them.20

To the south, Polk's army was blindly falling back toward Danville. Nothing seemed to go right for the Bishop. Upon leaving Bardstown, he had neglected to inform John Wharton at Mount Washington that the town was being evacuated. Wharton

20Brent and Johnston diaries, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve; Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," Filson; Hammond, "Kirby Smith's Campaign, SHSP, IX (1881), 459-60.
was surrounded by Yankee cavalry, and only a courageous charge by the Texans saved the entire cavalry force of Polk's right wing. The column was slowed when Hardee, moving on the Glenville pike, found the road slippery and rocky. His wing was forced to detour to the Springfield pike and follow Polk toward Danville, while the Yankee cavalry pressed behind. On the 5th Polk finally received word from Bragg that he knew Polk was in retreat. Although Polk promised to move to Harrodsburg instead of Danville, he, perhaps a little stubborn, determined that at least part of his force would move toward Danville. On October 5 he sent John Wharton's entire command to gather supplies at the small Lebanon depot, and picket the flank near Danville. Wharton reached Lebanon on the 6th, loaded his wagons, and started for Perryville, a small village on the road between Bardstown and Harrodsburg. Wharton had gone scarcely four miles when a private war began between Bragg and Polk over the place where Wharton should concentrate. Polk, overlooking the need for reconnaissance, ordered Wharton to remain at Lebanon until further orders. Wharton returned to Lebanon and unsaddled. Then he received an order from Bragg to move to Harrodsburg. Wharton, now confused, wrote Hardee for orders. Hardee had none and referred the note to Bragg. Bragg set matters straight by ordering the Texan to report to Hardee at Perryville. But the damage was done, for Polk had ridden Wharton almost out of the campaign. Wharton would not arrive at Perryville until the night of the 7th. In Wharton's absence, Wheeler was forced to double as rearguard and scout. The result was that on
October 5-7, Bragg had no effective cavalry reconnaissance in the country west of Harrodsburg.

Bragg, who arrived at Harrodsburg on the 5th, had the difficult problem of locating the Federal advance. He must rely on secondhand information from his generals, for Scott, Wheeler, and Wharton were reporting directly to Kirby Smith, Polk, and Hardee. On the 5th information pointed to a threat against Kirby Smith. Kirby Smith, who had planned to move to Harrodsburg, sent a note from Versailles, thirty miles north and across the Kentucky River. He admitted the retreat from Lexington was premature. A scout had informed him that the only force on the Louisville-Frankfort road was Joshua Sill's division. But Kirby Smith reported a new threat. Rousseau was reported at Taylorsville and McCook was placed at some point between Taylorsville and Shelbyville. A Yankee force at Taylorsville could move northeast on Frankfort or southeast on Harrodsburg. Kirby Smith implied the threat was against his sector. He requested Bragg to allow him to remain north of the Kentucky River, for "the moment I cross the river Lexington...will be endangered."22

Bragg again leaned heavily on sparse information. His


22 Kirby Smith to Bragg, Oct. 5, 1862, 10 a.m. Brent and Johnston diaries, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.
mistake was not in believing Kirby Smith's report, but in
acting without further information. Although Polk was yet
to report from his front, Bragg revised his plan to concen-
trate at Harrodsburg. Instead, Kirby Smith would hold his
divisions north of the Kentucky River: Stevenson, with
11,000 men at Versailles, Heth's and Churchill's with 7,000
troops at McCown's Ferry on the Kentucky, and Marshall's
with 4,500 men at Lexington. Bragg would do more. He would
uncover his base at Bryantsville and his line of retreat to
the Gap and march north with Polk's army to meet the threat
Kirby Smith had reported. With no word yet from Polk, Bragg
was firmly dedicated to the new plan. To Kirby Smith he
wrote, "It is my intention to move on the enemy whether at
Shelbyville or Frankfort as soon as my force arrives here." 23

Intelligence from Kirby Smith on October 6 fortified
Bragg's new strategy. Kirby Smith had sent several dispatches
which Colonel George Brent of Bragg's staff termed as
"announcing the concentration of enemy's forces, evidently
with a design on Frankfort and Lexington, and begging for
help." 24 But north of the Kentucky River, Kirby Smith was
giving Bragg little help. Although he was baffled as to the
enemy's position, Kirby Smith was also determined to maintain
some independence north of the river. His dispatches were so
urgent that Bragg could scarcely ignore them. Yet they con-
tained so little actual information that it was evident Kirby

23 Bragg to Kirby Smith, Oct. 5, 1862, Ibid.; Hammond, "Kirby
Smith's Campaign," SHSP, IX (1881), 458-59.
24 Brent diary, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.
Smith had no clear knowledge of the situation. On the night of the 5th Kirby Smith reported again that the pressure against Frankfort had eased. But he warned Bragg that the position of Heth and Churchill, who had moved across the river to Salvisa, "seems somewhat critical." He feared that Carter Stevenson, still at Versailles, would be cut off should the reported force at Taylorsville move east. By the night of the 6th Kirby Smith had found a new threat. John Scott, picketing at Frankfort, reported Yankees in heavy force were shelling the town. Kirby Smith relayed the news to Bragg and added that Carter Stevenson would attack if the Yankees advanced across the river. Bragg, who had received no definite news from Polk, was convinced that Kirby Smith's information was correct. He ordered Jones Withers, who had just arrived at Harrodsburg, to move his division to Kirby Smith's support. Cheatham would also be sent when his division arrived.25

On the night of the 6th Bragg's plan was sustained by news, or rather a lack of news, from Polk's army. Polk's own divisions, Withers' and Cheatham's, moved into Harrodsburg during the night. Hardee's wing lagged behind. Patton Anderson camped at Salt River, between Perryville and Harrodsburg, while Hardee with Buckner's division halted at Perryville. Hardee did not stop at Perryville because he was hard pressed and knew he must fight a battle. He halted there in order to water. Water was scarce in the summer drought.

There was a little water in the bed of Doctor's Fork, a small stream that ran across the Springfield road two and a half miles west of Perryville. Buckner's division was halted at Perryville to use this supply, and Patton Anderson's division was sent ahead to Salt River. Hardee planned to continue his march to Harrodsburg the following day.

On the night of the 6th Hardee was confused as to the force pursuing him. He had expected the main thrust to be against the Frankfort position, but the column on the Springfield road irritated him. Wheeler had found out little, and Wharton was still absent. Although he did not take the Yankee threat seriously, Hardee disliked the thought of marching north to Harrodsburg from Perryville with the blue column on his left flank. At 8 in the evening he requested Polk to send back Anderson's division and Cleburne's brigade. Hardee gave no reason. He merely suggested that if Anderson did come he should start early in the morning. Polk, who had offered little information, forwarded the note to Bragg later that night. He sent along a note of his own, with the only statement of strength that Polk had or would give of the force on the Perryville front. Of the force threatening Hardee, Polk wrote that he "cannot think it large."


27 Wheeler to T.B. Roy, Oct. 6, 1862, 7 p.m., with endorsement, Hardee to Polk, 8 p.m., Bragg Papers, Western Reserve; Polk to Bragg, Oct. 6, 1862, 11 p.m., OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p. 1095. Brent recorded that "Genl Hardee remained at Perryville in consequence of a larger force opposing him than he had at first supposed. We expect to move tomorrow on the enemy towards Lawrenceburg." Brent diary, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve;
Since Polk and Hardee had given no hint of a large Federal force on their front, Bragg, on the night of the 6th, expressed his intentions of moving the next day to oppose the Yankees on Kirby Smith's front. Bragg believed the best place to oppose the column threatening Frankfort would be at Versailles, thirty miles north of Harrodsburg and thirteen miles west of Lexington. On the morning of the 7th he completed his plan. Cheatham would move that night to join Withers on the east bank of the Kentucky opposite Salvisa. Both divisions would then march east to reinforce Stevenson at Versailles. Kirby Smith would move on the inner line from McCown's Ferry and come into Versailles from the south. Hardee would brush away the annoying force at Perryville and follow "as circumstances allow...." Based upon the intelligence sent from Kirby Smith, Bragg's plan seemed foolproof. The Louisianian regained the offensive spark, showed a map of the country to his staff, and remarked that at Versailles would occur the great battle for Kentucky.

During the afternoon of the 7th, Bragg received more information to sustain his move. Colonel Benjamin Allston, reconnoitering in advance of Lawrenceburg, supported Bragg's fears for the safety of the right flank. Allston reported two Yankee divisions under Thomas and Robert Mitchell were moving from Bardstown on the Lexington road. A Federal column under Rousseau and McCook was moving from Taylorsville on Lawrenceburg, twenty-three miles west of Lexington. A third column under

Polk, Leonidas Polk, II, 149.

T. L. Crittenden and Sill was advancing on Frankfort.
Allston added that "from the nature of the information I think it's highly probable that it is correct in the main."\(^29\) This information would jibe with what was already feared of the Taylorsville column which lapped around Polk's right flank at Bardstown. The main Federal force was not moving southeast towards Perryville and Harrodsburg, but east and northeast against Kirby Smith. If the Yankees crossed the river at Lawrenceburg, the armies would be cut in half.

Bragg's fear that the Taylorsville force was the bulk of Buell's army was strengthened by more word from Kirby Smith. John Scott had reported 20,000 infantry crossing at Frankfort. Already the Rebel pickets were being pushed from the river.
Humphrey Marshall, still on his way to Lexington, was ordered to hurry. Heth was to be rushed to aid Stevenson lest Versailles fall and Lexington be lost. Kirby Smith, who had regained much of his independence, outlined his plan. He would concentrate at Versailles, and strike the force at Frankfort. If the Yankee threat proved another feint, Kirby Smith would cross the Kentucky River and cut the enemy center in the Taylorsville-Lawrenceburg area.\(^30\)

On the 7th Polk and Hardee reported little that indicated a major threat on their flank. At 9:30 in the morning Hardee did forward a dispatch from Wheeler. Wheeler's troopers had fought all morning for the waterholes at Doctor's Fork. The

\(^29\) Allston to George Brent, Oct. 7, 1862, 12 noon, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.

cavalryman reported long lines of Yankee infantry with colors flying approaching Perryville. Prisoners boasted that Buell commanded and that Rousseau led the van. Yet Hardee made no comment on the reliability of their statements save that he had not seen the prisoners. Moreover, Bragg had consistently received information that Rousseau was advancing on Frankfort. The afternoon wore on. Finally Hardee sent a dispatch at 3:20 in the afternoon that was later to be misunderstood. After the campaign Hardee contended that he "informed General Bragg... that the enemy was moving in heavy force against my position." Hardee claimed he "urged the concentration of our whole army at Perryville." Yet this is not what Hardee wrote. He reported Wheeler and the enemy were engaged in a sharp cannonade, and that a fight could be expected on the 8th. But his note was not urgent. He gave no estimate of the size of the Yankee column. Hardee only suggested that Bragg should send reinforcements, take command in person, and wipe the Federals out. But even this request was conditional. Hardee asked for support only if Bragg were not "pressed in another direction...." All reports had indicated Bragg was hard pressed on the Lexington line.31

Yet the Yankee force near Perryville irritated Bragg, since it delayed his plan of concentration. Determined to dispose of it, he ordered Polk at 5:40 in the afternoon to move Cheatham's division back to Perryville, rout the enemy immediately, and "then move to our support at Versailles."

Polk had made no further statements about danger on his front, Hardee's letter had been non-committal, and Kirby Smith pressed for aid on his front. Bragg then had reason to expect the battle on the right. Two hours after he sent Polk the order, he received more support for his move. A citizen of Cornishville, a village five miles northwest of Harrodsburg, came to Bragg's headquarters with an interesting tale. He reported McCook's corps was at Mackville, twenty-seven miles west of Harrodsburg. The Yankees were apparently marching from Taylorsville to the Kentucky River, moving north around Harrodsburg. Bragg hastily sent Stoddard Johnston with a patrol to confirm the report. Johnston probed at Cornishville, and reported McCook was at Mackville. Moreover, the Yankee pickets pushed out on the Salvisa road to Cornishville had been withdrawn before the Rebel patrol arrived. Bragg was pleased. Stoddard Johnston's report had confirmed Kirby Smith's fears of an attempt to isolate the Rebel right. Yet Bragg revealed his consistent lack of appreciation of geography. Earlier reports had placed McCook at Taylorsville and then farther south at Chaplaintown. Could it be that the Yankees were moving on the road that ran from Taylorsville to Harrodsburg and Perryville by way of Chaplaintown and Mackville? If Bragg feared such a move, he gave no indication. He was trusting that Kirby Smith's reports were correct, and that Polk and Hardee were reporting fully to their commander. Confident of success, he retired, after remarking that the great struggle for Kentucky would take place north on the Kentucky River. The following morning, he would move to
Situation on Night of Oct. 7, 1862

Confederate Positions
Union Advance

Scale: 1 inch = 10 miles
join Kirby Smith. 32

At dawn on the 8th, there was consternation among the high command at Perryville. Polk held a council of war with Hardee, Cheatham, and the division commanders. In the dim light he laid before them Bragg's order to give battle immediately. Polk and Hardee, like Bragg, had not taken the Perryville force seriously. But the blue columns were now swelling. Wheeler had come in the night before with disturbing news. His troopers had fought into the night out on the Springfield road for the precious water. Then a mass of blue infantry in division force smashed into the Rebel cavalry. Under the eerie moonlight Wheeler had seen more infantry coming up behind. Skirmish fire was now flaring up south of Perryville on the Lebanon road. West of town St. John Liddell's advance infantry brigade was in trouble. A wave of infantry with reinforcements coming all the time pounded away at Liddell's Arkansans. Cavalry hit Liddell on

32 Ibid., p. 1096; Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," Filson; The Cornishville affair was one of the most peculiar incidents of the campaign. McCook actually was at Mackville, and was marching on Harrodsburg via the Taylorsville road. But at 7 p.m. the skirmishing in the front caused Buell to order a concentration at Perryville, where he had not previously expected resistance. At 2:30 a.m., Oct. 8, McCook received Buell's order and turned south to Perryville. Had Buell not stopped him, McCook would unknowingly have split Bragg's forces. What Johnston thought was McCook's advance picket was merely a flank guard thrown out. Buell planned to attack the morning of the 8th but the delay in McCook's and Crittenden's receipt of the order caused him to postpone the attack until the morning of the 9th. Buell believed the Confederates were in strong force at Perryville, but felt the position could be carried. Ironically, the same water shortage that halted Hardee at Perryville was a cause for the delay of the Federal attack planned for the 8th. OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt.1, pp. 1024-25, 1038; James Fry to George Thomas, Oct.7, 1862; Thomas to Buell, Oct. 7, 1862, Buell Papers.
the flank, and canister raked the Rebels until they were pushed back into Perryville. Polk and Hardee were still unsure of the Yankee strength, but they determined to be cautious. They agreed to adopt a defensive-offensive, and await the enemy from the ridge east of Chaplain's Fork, a small stream flowing north on the west side of Perryville.33

Yet Hardee and Polk, just as at Bardstown, were not being fair with their commander. After the campaign Polk claimed the order to attack was disobeyed because he considered a "great disparity..." of numbers to exist. Yet Hardee and Polk expressed no concern to Bragg over the Perryville situation, on the night of the 7th and the following morning. During the night Hardee had sent Bragg a private letter giving his views of the situation. Hardee did not write that Buell was before him. Nor did Hardee hint that he considered the Yankee force before him any stronger than that before Kirby Smith. Hardee's was an appeal to Bragg's military training. He urged Bragg not to divide the force but to strike "the fractions of the enemy." Hardee would later contend he "earnestly urged upon General Bragg the necessity of massing his forces on that important point." But this is not what Hardee wrote on the night of the 7th. Instead he suggested that if Bragg desired to move to Versailles, he should take the entire force there and strike. If he wished to strike at Perryville, do it then "with a force which will make success certain." Hardee only advised striking first at

Perryville because the Bryantsville depot was nearby. He gave no intimation of a superior force on the Perryville front. If Hardee thought Buell was near, he was not telling Bragg. ³⁴

Polk was again not confiding in his commander. After the council of war Polk sent Bragg a dispatch which explained little of the situation. Polk expressed no alarm, asked for no reinforcements, and gave no estimate of the Federal strength. Instead he only promised to give the enemy battle "vigorously" and, if successful, to join Kirby Smith. Nothing Polk wrote Bragg indicated he felt he was outnumbered. Yet if he felt, as he later wrote, such "a disparity of numbers...," why did he not tell Bragg? Bragg had ordered an attack, yet Polk did not even tell him the troops had gone on the defensive—nor even that a council of war had been called. The evidence appears that Polk was unsure of what was in his front. Yet he failed to inform Bragg of the things of which he was sure, such as the decision of the defensive-offensive. Moreover, if Polk did believe the main Federal body was before him, as he later claimed, then his failure to inform Bragg is inexcusable.³⁵

Polk's aloofness was another indication that the Confederates were beating themselves by failing to co-operate. Kirby Smith's independent move and subsequent indifference toward Bragg had frustrated a united effort. Polk's silence


³⁵ Ibid., pp. 1096, 1110.
at Bardstown left his commander puzzled over the threat on the Confederate left. Hardee's letters from Perryville had not clarified the extent of danger on his front. Bragg was also at fault. His failure to give specific orders left too much discretion to subordinates who did not respect him. True, he was a man difficult to respect—irritable and fault-finding—but he was still commander. Bragg had made a mistake in Kentucky that would be difficult to repair. He had given leeway to his lieutenants unmerited by personal relations and past experience. The result was that the cohesion of Bragg's high command in Kentucky had become dependent on respect for Bragg. But this respect seemed to be lacking among the generals of the armies. Kirby Smith had already shown little interest in Bragg's welfare, or better said, a deep interest in his own. Bragg's failure to secure better co-operation with Kirby Smith might be chalked off to Bragg's lack of experience and acquaintance with the young commander. The same could not be said for the veteran officers of the Second Department. Van Dorn's reputation as an ambitious, un-cooperative leader was already established when Bragg left him with discretionary authority in Mississippi. And Polk, though a gallant officer, had a reputation for stubbornness. Yet Bragg had entrusted Polk with the Army of the Mississippi. And now Polk's aloofness had led him to hold back explanations for disobedience at Bardstown and Perryville which jeopardized the safety of that army. This is not to say that Polk understood the situation that was developing on his front at
Perryville. But Bragg had a right to know what Polk knew—and Polk had not been telling him.  

Of Polk, Bragg wrote Jefferson Davis "With all his ability, energy and zeal, General Polk, by education and habit, is unfitted for executing the orders of others. He will convince himself his own views are better, and will follow them without reflecting on the consequences." Bragg to Jefferson Davis, May 22, 1863, Braxton Bragg Papers, Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina.
Although Bragg had planned to leave early on October 8th to join Kirby Smith, he rode south to Perryville instead. He was irritated by information from Polk's front. He had received Hardee's letter during the night and decided the Yankee force at Perryville might require his personal attention. Early the following morning, when Polk's guns were not heard, Bragg rode south to dispose of the force that was delaying his master plan. When Bragg reached Perryville at 10 in the morning, he was surprised and angry to find Polk drawn back in a defensive line behind Chaplain's Fork. Anxious to crush the Federals and move north, Bragg decided to attack. But to move from its present position and reach the blue line the army must cross Chaplain's Fork, move across the rolling pasture to Doctor's Fork, and then ascend the bluffs on the west side. The Federals were in position on the ridge west of Doctor's Fork and were extending their line north to outflank Bragg's right. Although it would cause further delay, Bragg must adjust his front.¹

Bragg massed his troops to break the Union left and center north of the Springfield road. The Rebel army moved forward onto the rolling ground between the two creeks. On the far left only Wheeler's cavalry picketed the Danville and Lebanon pikes, as neither Bragg nor Polk expected serious trouble there. To Wheeler's right, two brigades of Anderson's division,

Dan Adams' and Sam Powell's, were placed across the Springfield road. Buckner's division held the Rebel center between the Springfield and Old Mackville roads, while Cheatham held the line north across the New Mackville pike. To insure a heavy blow on the Yankee left, Bragg threw in two brigades from Anderson's division and a reserve brigade from Buckner's to fill a small gap between Buckner and Cheatham.

Shortly before noon the last of Cheatham's men filed into position, and Bragg outlined his plan of attack to Polk and Hardee. At one o'clock, Polk, who would command the right, was to hurl Cheatham's division, en echelon from the right, against the ridge. Hardee, commanding the left and center, would press the assault when Cheatham's guns opened. Satisfied with his dispositions, Bragg rode to the rear and waited for Cheatham to move. Noon—artillery opened on the right. Had Cheatham advanced so soon? Bragg ascertained the motion. A Federal battery on the ridge overlooking Doctor's Fork was dueling with Carnes's battery of smoothbores. Cheatham pushed up a battery of rifled guns in support, and the artillery thundered across the valley. One o'clock—still Cheatham had not moved. Bragg, anxious to join Kirby Smith, sent a staff officer to ascertain the delay and order an immediate attack. By one-thirty the artillery duel ceased. The field was silent except for a strong wind that scattered twigs and dust into the waiting gray line. Why had Cheatham not attacked? Fretful, Bragg rode to the right and found Polk in conversation with

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2 Cheatham to Marcus Wright, Official Report, Nov. 18, 1862, Ms. Palmer, Western Reserve; Brent diary, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve; Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," Filson.
MAP OF
THE BATTLEFIELD OF
PERRYVILLE, KY.
October 8th 1862

FROM JOHNSON AND BUEL (EDS.),
Wharton, who was covering the flank. Polk had decided to postpone the attack until a Federal column, approaching on the New Mackville pike, was in position. Should he move now, the blue line would take him in flank. Bragg rode back to the rear and nervously waited. Two o'clock—the restless wind buffeted the silent gray columns. Why did Cheatham not advance?  

At last Cheatham moved forward. As though they were back on the old ground at Tupelo, the Tennesseans moved forward in dress parade toward Doctor's Fork. For them this would be the redemption for the humiliations of Fishing Creek, Donelson, Shiloh, and for the long, hot walk to Kentucky where Bragg had promised them a fight for everyone's altars. Cheatham's men dropped off into the hollow of Doctor's Fork and disappeared. Suddenly Donelson's brigade rose out of nowhere onto the steep bluffs across the creek and fell on a Union water detachment. Gray figures were everywhere scrambling out of the creek bed. They paused to adjust their lines, moved forward, and the battle for Kentucky was on. Yankee artillery atop the ridge found the range, and Donelson's brigade was cut to pieces. Still Donelson pushed his three regiments forward. The Federals were in position in a cornfield a half mile from the creek. Donelson's exhausted troops staggered into a small woods on the east side of the field to await reinforcements. A Yankee advance battery scarcely a hundred yards to the front raked the thicket with cannister.

and grape, and Donelson lost a third of his command.  

Cheatham saw Donelson's plight and threw in George Maney's brigade on the right. Maney's Tennesseans also reached the thicket but ran headlong into a high rail fence dividing the woods from the open ground. The Union advance battery of eight Napoleons took advantage of Maney's plight to sear the thicket. For the second time, Cheatham's attack threatened to collapse.  

Maney rode into the woods and ordered the line forward. With a cheer the Tennesseans climbed the fence and poured into the field. The advance battery fell, and Cheatham's men charged up the slope. The Yankee division defending the ridge broke and ran, leaving its commander, James Jackson, dead on the field. A mile to the rear the Federals made another stand, but A. P. Stewart's brigade and Donelson's reserve regiments hurled the line back. By sunset the Yankees had re-formed on a ridge three-fourths of a mile west. Cheatham, his reserves all committed, was unable to break the line. The weary Rebels surged against the slope but were pushed back by a fresh Union brigade. Donelson was fought out, Stewart was out of ammunition, and Maney had lost heavily. Still the Rebels kept up desultory skirmish fire until in the evening; then finally fell back several miles.  


5 Ibid.; George Maney to Marcus Wright, Official Report, Oct. 29, 1862, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve. Cheatham termed the fight at the rail fence as some of the most desperate he had ever seen. Official Report, Palmer, Western Reserve.
hundred yards. Bragg's plan to crush the Union left had succeeded. He had wrecked the Yankee left and had driven it back almost two miles. 6

When Cheatham's guns opened Hardee concentrated his attack in the center against the Federal line where it crossed the Old Mackville pike. Here the Federal line formed an obtuse angle and, if it was broken, the Yankee left and center would be divided. Determined to gain the position, Hardee massed seven of the eight brigades on the left and center to break the line. The task would be difficult, for the Federals had a great advantage in terrain. As the Rebels advanced down the slope to Doctor's Fork, they would be in full view of the Union artillery on the ridge west of the creek. They realized that the crossing must then be forced, for they could see blue patches behind rock and rail fences along both banks of the creek, and in the yard of the Henry Bottom farmhouse on the west bank, and on

6Ibid.; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, pp. 1110-11. The Union line that broke was the extreme left of McCook's corps, which formed Buell's left wing. The far left attacked by Cheatham was Brigadier General William Terrill's brigade of Brigadier General James Jackson's division. Jackson, was killed in the first line defense of Parson's battery which Cheatham captured. The second line was composed of the remnants of Terrill's brigade and a fresh brigade, Colonel John Starkweather's, of Rousseau's division. When Cheatham broke the second line, Terrill was killed, and Starkweather fell back to the third line. Meanwhile, Jackson's other brigade commander, Colonel George Webster, was killed in Hardee's attack on McCook's right. According to report, Jackson, Terrill, and Webster, on the night before they were killed, discussed the chances of being hit in battle and concluded that the chances of any one person being killed were so slim as not to concern. See Charles C. Gilbert, "On the Field of Perryville," Battles and Leaders, III, 57n.; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, pp. 1040-41, 1155-56; Tapp, "Battle of Perryville," 169, 172-73; Cheatham's, Donelson's Official Reports, Palmer, Western Reserve; Maney's Official Report, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve; A.P. Stewart to Marcus Wright, Official Report, Oct. 28, 1862, Ms. Ibid.
the ridge slope beyond. Hardee ordered the key attack along the Old Mackville pike to be made by Bushrod Johnson and Pat Cleburne. When Cheatham's guns were heard, Johnson moved forward with Cleburne in support. 7

For over an hour Johnson struggled to get a footing in the creek bottom, as the fight raged around the farmhouse. At last the Yankees were pushed back up the slope to a second line at the crest of the ridge. Cleburne took up the attack, moved up the slope in dress parade, and smashed into the Union line on the ridge. The Federals were driven back into the open ground before the Russell farmhouse, and with artillery attempted desperately to drive Cleburne back to the creek. Cleburne, John C. Brown, and Sterling Wood were wounded, and Buckner's division lost heavily. Then the Rebels brought up their own artillery from the creek bottom and pounded the Union position. The blue line disintegrated, and the fragments fell back to the rear of the Russell farmhouse. 8

On Cleburne's right Sterling Wood's troops rushed past the farmhouse in an attempt to seize the vital road intersection of the Dicksville-Springfield and Perryville-Mackville roads. If this intersection were taken, the Yankees opposing

Cheatham and Buckner would be cut in half. The Federals staked all on defending the position and placed two brigades and a battery in a small thicket in advance of the intersection. Dusk fell as Wood's men came through the timber only to be thrown back by blue artillery firing point blank. Again and again the Rebels came through the woods as the smoke and sunset created a weird aura. Although the Confederate dead and wounded were stacked before the cannon, the line held. Blue reserves came in from near the Springfield pike, and Wood's men fell back to join Cleburne, who had been stopped short of the Russell house.9

Bragg's plan to crush the center had succeeded, for the Federals had been driven back two miles and were badly disorganized. The last fragment of the Yankee left and center was thrown back shortly after dusk. Hardee sent St. John Liddell's brigade, his last reserve, with discretionary orders to go where the firing was hottest. Liddell, after a conference with Cheatham, smashed into an isolated strip of the Yankee line that Buckner and Cheatham had bypassed. The last of the Union line melted, and Liddell's men gathered up the spoils of the field—prisoners, arms, and colors. This routine scavenger also netted something that would greatly interest Braxton Bragg—the baggage and papers of Major General Alexander McCook, commanding First Corps, Army of the Ohio.10

Wood had attacked reserves rushed from C. C. Gilbert's corps, which together with Pinney's Fifth Wisconsin battery, held the intersection. OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, pp. 1041, 1080; Tapp, "Battle of Perryville," 176-77; Buck, Cleburne and His Command, 113-14.

That night Bragg, Polk, and Hardee at last learned that their 15,000 men were facing Buell's entire army. An indication of this startling news had been the lack of Confederate success on the left flank. Bragg had expected no real opposition on the left. Only Wheeler's cavalry guarded the Danville and Lebanon pikes, and Dan Adams' and Sam Powell's brigades were the only Rebel infantry sent into action on the Springfield pike. But Adams and Powell ran into an entire Union corps and were roughly handled. Bragg's left was so weak that a lone Yankee brigade had driven Powell back that evening and had fought its way through the Perryville streets before being driven out. Meanwhile a new threat arose on the far left. The Rebel cavalry reported a strong enemy column moving toward Perryville on the Lebanon road. Bragg had nothing to send to the left except Preston Smith's brigade, and this force would be insufficient should the unexpected Federal column attack. And now prisoners assured Bragg that Buell's army lay in the darkness outside Perryville. The prisoners' identification substantiated their boasts. Liddell had captured McCook's chief of artillery, as well as the General's papers and Kirby Smith's cavalry had placed McCook moving on Frankfort! Prisoners were taken from Rousseau's division--Rousseau was also supposedly moving on Frankfort. The prisoner list read like an organizational chart of Buell's army--captives from Gilbert's corps, Sheridan's division, Mitchell's division. And what of the column yet to arrive on the far left? It was rumored to be a fresh corps commanded by T. L. Crittenden. 11

11 Powell's brigade had attacked C. C. Gilbert's entire corps
Bragg, Polk, and Hardee discussed what they must do. Obviously they could not stay at Perryville. Preliminary reports listed thirty per cent casualties for the 15,000-man force. The valley of Doctor's Fork was already a sea of bobbing lanterns as the wounded and dead were sought out. At Green River Bragg had feared Buell's army was twice the size of his own. The disparity of numbers had been increased at Bardstown by reports of heavy additions to the Yankee column. Bragg and his generals agreed that the small Rebel force could not survive an attack on the morrow against such odds. The army must be saved, and the solution appeared to be a retreat to Harrodsburg, where Bragg hoped a junction could be made with Withers and Kirby Smith. Orders were issued immediately, and early on the 9th the victorious but battered Rebel army fell back to

before being thrown back by Colonel William Carlin's brigade of Brigadier General Robert B. Mitchell's division. Tapp, "Battle of Perryville," 175-76. Earlier in the afternoon, Bragg had received what Stoddard Johnston termed as "ominous rumors" (Johnston diary, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve) that a strong Federal force was coming up on the left, and sent Preston Smith's brigade to hold the road junction south of town. Preston Smith to Marcus Wright, Official Report, Oct. 23, 1862, Ms. Palmer, Western Reserve. The Federal force moving on the left was Major General T. L. Crittenden's corps commanded by Major General George Thomas, Buell's second-in-command. Ironically, while Bragg did not know Buell's main force was on the field, Buell, at his headquarters on the Springfield road with General Gilbert, did not so much as know a battle was in progress. An "acoustical shadow" caused by the wind and topography obscured the sound of battle until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Consequently Gilbert's absence delayed the sending of reserves to McCook. Gilbert, Battles and Leaders, III, 57-58. Bragg's chief of orders, Stoddard Johnston, wrote that prisoner interviews convinced the Confederates they were opposed by Buell's main force ("Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," Filson) and commented in his diary the night of the battle that the Federals were reported receiving reinforcements. Johnston diary, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.
Harrodsburg. 12

The myths surrounding Bragg's brief stay at Harrodsburg, like those of Munfordville, would persist. Historians would portray Bragg at Harrodsburg as undecided about future moves and would accuse him of losing his nerve for not remaining there and fighting Buell. Yet there is no evidence that Bragg intended to halt at Harrodsburg. On the contrary, by the time he reached there at noon on the 9th, he had already issued orders for a retreat across Dick's River to Bryantsville. On the night of the 9th, Kirby Smith replied to a note sent by Bragg earlier in the day, "your note advising me of your intention to fall back to Dick's River via [Kirby Smith's italics] Harrodsburg is just received." 13

Bragg moved to Harrodsburg because he had little choice—not because he planned to fight Buell there. The only other line of retreat from Perryville to Bryantsville was by way of Danville. The Danville route would have required only an eighteen-mile march to strike the Cumberland Gap road across Dick's River. Yet if Bragg had chosen this route, he would have jeopardized his army's safety. Bragg's and Kirby Smith's

12 Brent and Johnston diaries, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve; Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," Filson; Polk, Leonidas Polk, II, 159; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p. 1093. Bragg's retreat was wise. Buell had ordered an advance the next morning at 6, expecting Bragg, whom Buell thought now to have his main body of troops at Perryville, to make a fight. When Buell observed the Confederate retreat, he mistook it for a flanking attempt on McCook and ordered Thomas to attack and seize Perryville. Thomas found an empty town, and it was not until 10:30 a.m. that the Confederate retreat was discovered. Buell to Thomas, March 2, 1864; Col. James Fry to Thomas, Oct. 9, 1862; C.C. Gilbert to Buell, Oct. 9, 1862; Buell to Halleck, Oct. 9, 1862, Buell Papers; OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, pp. 115-16.

SITUATION ON MORNING OF OCT 9, 1862

- CONFEDERATE TROOPS
- UNION TROOPS

SCALE: 1 INCH = 5 MILES
armies were divided in 320 square miles of Bluegrass from Perryville to near Lexington. If Bragg had moved east by way of Danville, Harrodsburg would have fallen to Buell, and the two Confederate forces would have been cut off from each other. Jefferson Davis' instructions above all, to save the army, did not admit of such a risk.\textsuperscript{14}

Bragg's decision not to remain at Harrodsburg was wise, for he knew the position was a trap. On the 8th Wheeler reported that the Yankees had swung southeast of Perryville to outflank Bragg and cut him off from Cumberland Gap. Wheeler further reported that Mitchellsburg, only fourteen miles west of Danville, had already fallen. Blue cavalry were smashing Wheeler's advance near Danville. If Danville fell, the Yankees would be only eight miles from the Cumberland Gap road and only ten from Bragg's depot at Bryantsville. A loss of Bryantsville would leave Bragg without a base, since the necessary withdrawal of Kirby Smith from north of the Kentucky would surrender the Lexington depot. Moreover, Bragg's back would be to the Kentucky River and to the Federal column at Covington and Cincinnati. Bragg, determined to avoid such perils, ordered Polk, on the 9th, to begin moving across Dick's River at King's Mill Ford even before Kirby Smith had arrived at Harrodsburg.\textsuperscript{15}

What then, is the basis for the criticism that Bragg first decided to fight at Harrodsburg and then panicked and retreated? On the morning of the 10th, as the rear of Polk's column disap-

\textsuperscript{14} Hammond, "Kirby Smith's Campaign," \textit{SHSP}, X (1882), 72-73.

\textsuperscript{15} Wheeler to Hardee, Oct. 8, 1862, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve; \textit{OR}, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p. 898; Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," \textit{Filson"}. 
peared down the King's Mill road, Kirby Smith arrived at Harrodsburg with the head of his column. Bragg, who had remained at Harrodsburg to hurry along the column, met Kirby Smith, and the two conferred on future plans. Their conversation was interrupted by a message from John Wharton, who was on the picket line south of Harrodsburg on the Perryville road. Wharton reported the Federals were approaching Harrodsburg as if to give battle. Bragg had little choice but to halt the rear of Polk's column and to move Kirby Smith's troops out to Salt River to form a strong battle line. If Wharton's message had gone unheeded, and the Federals had attacked Harrodsburg, Bragg's column would have been cut in half. Hardee was already across Dick's River, and the rear of Kirby Smith's force had not yet reached Harrodsburg. Moreover, if the warning had been ignored, Kirby Smith's troops might have been struck on their right flank as they moved toward King's Mill Ford. Although he had not planned to fight, Bragg had little choice but to deploy a line of battle.16

Bragg would be criticized, even by Kirby Smith, for abandoning the line on the night of the 10th and continuing his retreat to Bryantsville. Yet such criticism does not take into account the information Bragg received on the 10th, indicating Harrodsburg was a far more dangerous trap than it had been on the 9th. After Bragg placed Kirby Smith's troops in line south of Harrodsburg, there was no further Federal activity on the

Perryville road. Bragg grew suspicious. On the night of the 10th Wheeler sent a dispatch from Danville which apparently answered the question about what had happened to Buell. The Federals had veered off the road to Harrodsburg and were moving on Danville. Wheeler's troopers had been driven back into the town by infantry in division strength, as well as by cavalry. The Yankees were only four miles outside Danville, and Wheeler was desperately trying to hold the town. The situation was grave. If Buell took Danville, he would be only eight miles from the Cumberland Gap road. From Harrodsburg Kirby Smith's troops would have to march fourteen miles to strike the Gap road, and still would be five miles north of the point where Buell's column would intersect the road. Almost simultaneously, bad news came from the north. Brigadier General Ebenezer Dumont's Federal brigade was reported advancing southeast from Frankfort on the Versailles road and threatening to cross the Kentucky River in Bragg's rear. If Dumont seized the Kentucky River bridge on the Cumberland Gap road five miles north of Bryantsville, Bragg's northern line of retreat would be cut. Moreover, Dumont could move south, block Kirby Smith from crossing Dick's River, and cut the Confederate army in two. If Bragg remained at Harrodsburg, his army would be caught in a pincer. Bragg realized his danger. He ordered Wheeler to hold Danville as long as possible, while Humphrey Marshall, still on his way from Lexington, was to hold the Kentucky River bridge "to the last & at all hazards." At daylight on the 11th, Kirby Smith started moving his troops across Dick's
Kirby Smith contended later that he objected to retreating from Harrodsburg. After the war he asserted that upon reaching Harrodsburg, he was surprised to find Bragg's column in retreat and urged that "for God's sake General, let us fight here." Yet Kirby Smith knew as early as the night of the 9th that Bragg was not to stay at Harrodsburg. Nor did Kirby Smith object to the move but only remarked, "I will try to see you at Harrodsburg before you leave there in the morning." Moreover, Kirby Smith planned his march from Salvisa so that only Carter Stevenson's division would pass through Harrodsburg. Until the news was received from Wharton on the 10th, Kirby Smith did not intend for Withers and Heth even to pass through the town. Instead, they were to swing east, cross the Kentucky River twice, and come into Bryantsville from the north.

17 *OR*, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p. 898, pt. 2, p. 930; Wheeler to George Brent, Oct. 11, 1862, before daylight; Johnston and Brent diaries; George Brent to Humphrey Marshall, Oct. 10, 1862, 7 p.m., Bragg Papers, Western Reserve; Johnston, "Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky," Filson. Buell, who expected Bragg and Kirby Smith to fight at Harrodsburg, moved his force, reduced by casualties to 53,000 men, slightly north from Perryville to await the arrival of Sill's division from Frankfort. McCook was across the Harrodsburg-Dicksville road, Gilbert in the center across the Harrodsburg-Perryville road, and Crittenden's lines extended on the east to within four miles of Danville. Buell did not actually attempt to cut Bragg off from Dick's River until the morning of the 12th. The force that threatened Wheeler on the 10th was an extension of Crittenden's corps; on the 11th, Buell pushed out infantry and cavalry toward Harrodsburg and Danville to reconnoiter. It was the Danville reconnaissance force that drove Wheeler out of the town on the 11th. Meanwhile Harrodsburg force found Harrodsburg evacuated. Only when Buell learned Bragg had left Harrodsburg did he pivot his army on Danville to turn Bragg's flank. But on the 12th, he learned Bragg had escaped across Dick's River. *OR*, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, pp. 52-54, 152, 1028, 1036; Buell to Thomas, March 2, 1864; Buell to Halleck, Oct. 13, 1862, Buell Papers; Buell to William Polk, June 24, 1879, in Polk, *Leonidas Polk*, II, 169.

18 Kirby Smith, "Kentucky Campaign," Kirby Smith Papers, North
Although a gallant officer, Kirby Smith, by his criticism of Bragg's evacuation of Harrodsburg, seemed to be compensating for his own mistakes made north of the Kentucky River. It had been partly on Kirby Smith's word that Bragg had thrown 30,000 troops into the line to hold Lexington while leaving only 15,000 at Perryville. Kirby Smith appeared as misled as Bragg, Hardee, and Polk as to the whereabouts of Buell's main army. Not only did Kirby Smith send consistent pleas for aid on the three days before the fight at Perryville, but he still thought on October 8 that Buell was in his front. On the morning of the 8th, after rushing his troops to Versailles to meet an advance from Frankfort, he had found that the force was not crossing the river at Frankfort but was moving down the west bank toward Lawrenceburg. It was not until 9 that evening, after rushing back down the east bank of the river, that Kirby Smith discovered he was opposed by only Joshua Sill's 10,000-man brigade. Still Kirby Smith failed to employ his 30,000 men with success. In the early morning of the 9th, his advance engaged Sill in the battle of Dog Walk, which also had the more businesslike names of Dry Ridge and Chesser's Store. Yet Sill slipped away and joined Buell, and Kirby Smith ruefully wrote Bragg that "my plan of attack was not Carolina; Kirby Smith to Bragg, Oct. 9, 1862, 8 p.m., Bragg Papers, Western Reserve. Although Buell did not try to cut Bragg off from the Dick's River crossing until October 12, Wheeler's information on the night of the 10th was not entirely incorrect. Thomas had placed Crittenden's entire corps on or near the Perryville-Danville pike, had thrown William Smith's infantry division against Wheeler before Danville, and had sent Colonel Dan McCook's infantry brigade to seize the Harrodsburg-Danville pike and cut Wheeler off from Bragg. Thomas to James Fry, Oct. 10, 1862, 3 p.m., Buell Papers.
successful." Perhaps Dog Walk, with reported casualties numbering twenty-seven, would prove the decisive battle of the campaign. The battle was an uninspiring finish to Kirby Smith's attempt at independent command in Kentucky, even after Bragg was officially in command. Unfortunately, Kirby Smith had taken advantage of Bragg's hesitancy in giving an order, and had continued to maintain an almost independent position. North of the Kentucky River, as at Perryville, the Confederates had hurt themselves by failing to lay aside personal ambition and temperament for the necessities of the hour. 19

The failures of the campaign lay heavily upon the camp at Bryantsville. On October 12 Bragg called a council of war. While the fall rain poured down, Bragg, Kirby Smith, Polk, Cheatham, Hardee, and Humphrey Marshall—who had at last arrived—met to discuss a retreat from Kentucky. When he revised his strategy at Bardstown, Bragg had set up several rigid prerequisites to his remaining in Kentucky. At Bryantsville he was finally convinced his plan had failed. He had expected Price and Van Dorn to provide support in Middle Tennessee, but now news trickled in that the two generals had been crushed at Corinth. Bragg, whose rigid mind was not conditioned to failure, was severely jolted. Price's and Van Dorn's defeat meant that Bragg's own army was the only strong force in the field between the Appalachians and the Mississippi to oppose a Yankee invasion into the Deep South. Bragg now could not chance his army's defeat, and must look to the rear lest his

Chattanooga base be overrun. While romanticists overly full of Bluegrass would criticize his abandoning Kentucky, Bragg felt he was only doing what Jefferson Davis desired—saving the army. Partly for this reason Bragg had chosen not to follow Buell to Nashville, had not pursued to Louisville, and had retreated from Harrodsburg. More self-conscious than most, Bragg had an unusually strong fear of making a mistake. This fear led him on occasion to be over-cautious and dilatory. And now that Price and Van Dorn had failed, he felt the pressure of responsibility even more strongly.

Bragg had also expected aid from John C. Breckinridge. Although he was probably overrating what the Kentuckian could do, his appearance was a rigid requirement in Bragg's plan. Breckinridge had not arrived, and Bragg had learned that a conflict between his own request and Van Dorn's desire to retain Breckinridge had produced a fatal delay.

Both Stoddard Johnston and George Brent commented on the air of defeat which hung over the camp, even before the decision to retreat was made. Johnston and Brent diaries, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve. When Bragg learned of the Corinth defeat, Johnston wrote, "His mind was immediately made up," as to a retreat. Johnston, "Memoranda of Facts," Filson. Bragg reportedly told Kirby Smith privately before the council of war that his instructions from Davis did not allow his risking a loss of his army, and Bragg later reported this in the council of war. Kirby Smith to J. Stoddard Johnston, Oct. 31, 1866; Johnston, "Memoranda of Facts," Filson. Johnston argued the fear of destroying his army was a factor in Bragg's decision to bypass Nashville. Johnston, "Memoranda of Facts," Filson. Bragg later wrote, "should I remain [at Bryantsville]...and meet with a reverse the army would be lost." OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p. 1093.

Of Bragg's disappointment at Breckinridge's delay, Stoddard Johnston wrote "how anxiously he looked for intelligence from him and, ignorant of the true cause of his detention, how bitter was his disappointment, all who were with him can attest." "Memoranda of Facts," Filson. See also OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt.2, pp. 995-1003; Sam Jones to Bragg, Sept. 10,17,20,1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, II-231; Jones to Bragg, Sept. 29, 1862, Ibid., II-51.
And what of the succor Bragg expected from Tennessee?
On September 23 he had written Samuel Cooper that it would take 50,000 recruits to hold Tennessee and Kentucky. When Bragg left Chattanooga, he put Sam Jones in charge of the army's base. Jones was to send forward all men and supplies that he could scrape together. The situation which occurred behind the lines in Bragg's absence was indicative of the faults of the interdepartmental scheme. Just as Kirby Smith was communicating directly with Richmond, so too, were the commanders that Kirby Smith and Bragg left behind to tend the store. John McCown, whom Kirby Smith had left in command of the East Tennessee Department, was supposed to watch George Morgan by maintaining Stevenson's division south of Cumberland Gap, sending forward recruits to Kirby Smith, and guarding the other mountain passes through which the department's army had just passed. Instead of detaching part of Stevenson's oversized command to guard the passes, McCown went straight to the Secretary of War, asking him to countermand orders which both Kirby Smith and Bragg had sent requesting Colonel Sumner Smith's Legion to move to Kentucky. In fact McCown defied the order on September 10 when he wrote Stevenson that though Bragg had ordered the Legion to Kirby Smith, Stevenson could use it if emergency required to open up Big Creek and Rogers' Gaps—which McCown had allowed the Federals to seize. Then on September 14 McCown went further—he asked Randolph to countermand not only the orders for the Legion, but also for some 1,800 convalescents and some 1,000 recruits which Kirby Smith had wanted in Kentucky, and even asked Randolph to order two or three
regiments from Bragg's own department to aid in opening the Gaps.

It was not what McCown managed to do that hurt Bragg, for he failed to stop Smith's Legion, but it was what he failed to do, for he made no further effort to send Kirby Smith any reinforcements, nor did he reopen the Gaps. Instead he gave up on the idea and wrote Bragg on September 14 that his command had now become "an Army of Observation"—which meant it would sit and watch Morgan at Cumberland Gap. But he managed to keep busy in other areas. He successfully started a feud with Sam Jones at Chattanooga over which department would conscript in East Tennessee, and demanded that Jones halt conscription in the area, "until we confer." Then to liven up things behind the lines, McCown and Jones feuded over which department controlled the cornfields on the east side of the Hiwassee River, that Jones' quartermaster had impressed so that corn might be sent forward to Bragg. McCown argued the corn belonged to his Army of Observation. 23

Bragg was as ignorant of this activity as he was of what would follow. On September 20, Jones received a telegram from Randolph that directed him to assume command of the Department of East Tennessee while McCown would move to join Kirby Smith. Not only was Bragg not informed that his base commander had been transferred to another department, but no provisions were

22 John McCown to Randolph, Sept. 3, 14, 1862; McCown to Cooper, Sept. 8, 12, 14, 1862; McCown to Carter Stevenson, Sept. 10, 1862; McCown to Sam Jones, Sept. 10, 11, 1862; McCown to Bragg, Sept. 14, 1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, II-51.

23 McCown to Bragg, Sept. 14, 1862; McCown to Sam Jones, Sept. 12, 1862, Ibid.
made for the sending of supplies and recruits to Bragg in Jones' absence. Oblivious of this change of command, Bragg, on September 27, assigned Jones to command the District of Middle Tennessee of Department Number Two, move his headquarters to Murfreesboro, forward all recruits and conscripts available, and try to capture Nashville. But by the time Bragg had penned this order, McCown was on his way to Kirby Smith, and Jones was operating another department. No one in Richmond bothered to inform the commanding general.24

Once Sam Jones took over at Knoxville, the situation became ridiculous. Jones, although an enthusiastic commander, relished authority, and so without informing Bragg, wrote Samuel Cooper and requested the District of Middle Tennessee in Department Number Two be added to his own department. Without Bragg's knowledge, this request was granted. Jones now went further. Bragg had requested Jones to hurry Breckinridge's command, which included about 2,000 exchanged prisoners, to Kentucky. But Jones became interested in keeping part of these in his new department. Without consulting Bragg, he asked Cooper for authority to retain the Tennessee troops. On October 11 he received this authority, as well as authority to retain a larger part of Breckinridge's division "if necessary for operations in Middle Tennessee." Jones immediately ordered Breckinridge to send him the Tennessee regiment. Not until

24 Sam Jones to Bragg, Sept. 20, 1862, National Archives, Confederate Records, II-233; McCown to Jones, Sept. 20, 1862, Ibid., II-51; General Orders No. 130, Dept. No. 2, Sept. 27, 1862, Ibid., VIII-342; Jones to Cooper, Oct. 5, 1862; Jones to Bragg, Oct. 12, 1862, Ibid., II-51.
October 12, sixteen days after Bragg, hopeful of support, assigned Jones to the Middle Tennessee command, did Jones inform him that Middle Tennessee was no longer in Bragg's department and that the Tennessee troops had been retained. If it were any solace, Jones cheerfully added that Bragg could rely on his department's "most zealous support & co-operation." Thus Jones bowed out of the plan to succor Kentucky. 25

Just as the handful of regiments which drifted into Kentucky indicated a lack of support on the home front, Bragg now realized that a fourth part of his plan, to supply his army in Kentucky, had also failed. At Bardstown he had specified that ample supplies must be gathered if the army were to remain in the state, and he had ordered that the supplies gathered at Lexington and Danville be moved to Bryantsville for safety. But the commissary officers were slow in moving the supplies out of Lexington, the city fell when Kirby Smith moved to join Bragg, and Bragg's only supply of breadstuffs was lost. And now at Bryantsville the army was backed into a less fertile region with only four days' rations on hand. 26

A persistent myth would arise that Bragg's army departed from Kentucky with full stomachs, and after the war Kirby Smith would say that his troops at Harrodsburg "had supplies and provisions...." 2

25 Sam Jones to Cooper, Oct. 10, 1862; Jones to Breckinridge, Oct. 11, 1862; Jones to Bragg, Oct. 12, 1862, Ibid., II-51.


Yet on October 22 he complained to Bragg from Cumberland Gap that 10,000 of his command were scattered over the country searching for "something upon which to live." And on October 25 he described his command to his wife as being "famished, sick, worn out and exhausted."28 Historians would contend that the army departed from Kentucky laden with "a huge wagon train filled with supplies...."29 But the supplies were arms, not food. Bragg would bring from Kentucky the 20,000 rifles he had carried into the state to arm volunteers, as well as some 15,000 captured rifles. And even the quantity of arms Bragg captured at the Federal depots was not so large as has been supposed. The capture of the Kentucky State Arsenal at Frankfort netted little; the most valuable stores were 200 horse pistols and five unmounted cannon.30

And what of the primary object of the campaign—to bring Kentucky back into the Southern fold? On October 12 at Bryantsville, Stoddard Johnston glumly commented that "the primary object of the invasion of Kentucky has failed...."31


29 Tapp, "Battle of Perryville," 177.

30 Report of Captain Issac Scherck, Oct. 7, 1862, (Bragg Papers, Western Reserve), listed the Bryantsville stores as containing 33,000 pounds of hardbread, 400 beef cattle, 3,000 barrels of pork, 250 barrels of flour, and 10,000 pounds of bacon—a meager supply for an army of 45,000. The stores captured at Frankfort were slim indeed. George W. Finnell to Buell, February 20, 1863, "List of Property Captured at the State Arsenal, Frankfort, Kentucky, August, 1862" (Buell Papers), listed the heaviest losses as 100 horse pistols altered for flint lock, thirty boxes of fixed ammunition, and five unmounted cannon.

31 Johnston diary, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.
Both Kirby Smith and Bragg had attempted to rationalize the lethargy of Kentucky. When he first reached Lexington, Kirby Smith had been jubilant. "The Kentuckians are rising.... My entrance into the blue grass has been a perfect ovation...." He admitted few had volunteered, but "if the arms were here we could arm 20,000 men in a few days." The captured arms from Richmond arrived, but Kentucky did not respond. Kirby Smith groped for reasons. If Breckinridge had come, "his regiments would have been filled up immediately...." Still they did not enlist, as "wealth, property and Yankee intercourse have had their corrupting influence...." And then, curiously, from the man who had been advocating territorial occupation before defeating the Federal army, "the defeat of Buell would rally the whole of Kentucky to our cause...."

Bragg, too, had been disappointed in Kentucky's response and had sought a reason. He saw no sympathy manifested for his gray army until it reached Bardstown. Even then, the sympathy was restrained, and the visible response gave no evidence that Kentucky was flocking to the Rebel standard as Kirby Smith had promised. Although he had received no recruits, while Kirby Smith had netted only 1,500, Bragg at Bardstown

32 Kirby Smith to wife, Sept. 6, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.
34 Kirby Smith to Bragg, Sept. 18, 1862, Ibid., p. 846; Kirby Smith to wife, Sept. 16, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.
35 Kirby Smith to wife, Sept. 20, 1862, Ibid.
rationalized that the Kentuckians feared to volunteer but would willingly be conscripted. He determined that his proposed conscription act would be the last call for Kentucky support. If the state did not respond, he would leave, for he wrote Kirby Smith that "without the help of the men of this country it will be impossible for us to move on or even to stay."\textsuperscript{37} The fortunes of the campaign did not give Bragg his opportunity to test the state's sentiment. Yet at Bryantsville he was convinced it would be useless to try. He had suffered some 4,200 casualties at Munfordville, Richmond, and Perryville, and by October 12 only 2,500 Kentuckians had volunteered to replace them. Discouraged, Bragg wrote Cooper on October 12 that while the Kentucky people had been given every opportunity "to assert their independence," "there is little or no disposition to avail of it."\textsuperscript{38}

But even if Bragg had been given the opportunity of proclaiming a conscription act, would it have succeeded? Bragg and the Kentucky people did not understand each other. The men of the Bluegrass and the Green River country did not understand the reasoning that demanded they express Confederate sentiment before the Federals would be driven out. And Bragg, Kirby Smith, and Jefferson Davis did not understand Kentuckians. The Kentucky man was a strange breed, and "Kentuckyism" a way of life separate from that of either North or South; Kentuckians were a curious

\textsuperscript{37}Bragg to Kirby Smith, Sept. 23, 1862, Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.

\textsuperscript{38}Bragg to Cooper, Oct. 12, 1862, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p.1088. These casualties do not contain some 2,000 sick, part of which were captured at Harrodsburg, nor the casualties from minor engagements and skirmishes amounting to another 1,000. See Hammond, "Kirby Smith's Campaign," SHSP, X(1882), 72n.; OR, I, Vol.XVI, pt.I, pp. 936, 982, 1108.
mixture of intense support for state rights combined with a fierce devotion to the Union and the Constitution. State rights in Kentucky had come out of a long period of frontier struggle, when Kentucky had borne the brunt of the Revolution and the War of 1812 west of the Alleghenies. The long period of almost standing alone had convinced the men of the Great Meadow that their destiny was their own. They had grown to love their sovereign rights and to protect them by constitutional preciseness. Although slavery, by the time of the war, was dying out in Kentucky, where only seventy people owned over fifty slaves, the institution was defended even by non-slavers. The argument was that a state should be allowed to exercise every power delegated by the Federal constitution. There was little disagreement among Kentuckians on this point. The same pro-Union legislature which had protested Leonidas Polk's march on Columbus, Kentucky, in 1861, would nullify Lincoln's preliminary emancipation proclamation. The reason was the same—Kentucky, conditioned to individuality, disliked outside interference from any direction. 39

Yet Kentucky was strongly for a continued Union, for in it she saw a protection for her peculiar way of life. Drained by the Mississippi, Kentucky also lay in the Ohio valley. Populated by Southerners, Kentucky also had a large immigrant influx and close ties of kinship with Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana. A trading center for Pennsylvania iron, the Bloody Ground also bought Alabama corn. To maintain this balance Kentucky sought

39Coulter, Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky, 7-8, 160-63.
shelter in the Union and stood for neither North nor South—but Kentucky. Southern sympathy was strong, especially in the watering places of the Bluegrass. But when Kentucky's livelihood was at stake, bonds of sectionalism were less important. She rejected nullification, voted against the South on the 1828 tariff issue in hopes of sustaining her own hemp production, and supported measures for internal improvements because she was interested in developing her manufacturing potential. Kentucky sought to take no side, for her livelihood depended upon harmony with both sections.  

When war broke out, Kentucky was in a dilemma—sentiment held with the South, but economics demanded a preservation of the Union, and the North stood for that preservation. Kentucky's choice was less a question of ideals than of economics. By 1860 the North had weaned away Kentucky's trade. The state's imports and exports were no longer moving along Old Man River to New Orleans but over the Appalachians in the east, along the Ohio, or by the Great Lakes route. Southern railroad builders, content with linking Seaboard and Delta, had not forseen this. On the eve of the war, the Louisville & Nashville was the only railroad connecting Central Kentucky with the South. The only other railroad that ran south, the Mobile & Ohio, barely skirted the western edge of the state. But the East, realizing the South's advantage in geographical ties with Kentucky, sought to surmount its own trade barrier with Kentucky—the Appalachian Mountains.

During the great railroad boom from 1840 to 1860 the East pushed twelve railroads to the north bank of the Ohio to draw Kentucky trade that could not overcome the mountain roads and unnavigable waters of the Appalachians. Shipments of pork, corn, flour, and wheat were thus diverted eastward. The southern route, down the Mississippi to New Orleans, was not feasible; it was too much subject to climactic change and price fluctuation, too time-consuming, and too expensive. The waters of the Licking, the Kentucky, and the Big Sandy raced north to the Ohio, where the goods produced by Central and East Kentucky were pushed up river by boat or across land by rail. Kentucky also came to rely on the East for imports. Salt, railroad iron, furniture, and hardware were shipped almost entirely from the East, and the only important foreign product that was still procured from the southern route was coffee. Kentucky could not afford to break her commercial ties with the East, or even with the South; therefore she strove to preserve—and then to restore the Union.  

Another important feature of the Kentucky character, which the Confederates seemed unable to understand, was a peculiar border state complex. The people of the state had a fear of being caught in the middle and of being a buffer in a war. It had happened too many times, from the time Lord Dunmore's War sent the first meager settlement packing back across Cumberland Gap, until the War of 1812. There were still gray-haired men

41 Coulter, Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky, 9-10; Fish, "Decision of the Ohio Valley," 158-61; Eighth Census of the United States, III, cxiiv-cxlix.
in Kentucky who remembered St. Clair's defeat, Thames, and River Raisin. This subconscious block had lain dormant for fifty years, but with the outbreak of the Civil War it reappeared. Kentuckians feared a mass invasion from across the Ohio should the state secede. Richmond did not understand this in 1861 when Governor Magoffin was promised support only if the state first joined the Confederacy. Even in the Bluegrass, the supposed bastion of Southern support that contained over fifty per cent of the state's slaves, the Ohio River proved too near for comfort. If the state seceded, an invasion might sweep away the slave investment. And the slaveholders did not consider secession adequate compensation for a loss of the protection of the Fugitive Slave Law which turned runaways back from the promised land on the Ohio and Indiana shores. The triumph of pocketbook over sentiment in the Bluegrass was amply illustrated in the 1860 elections, where the popular John C. Breckinridge carried fourteen Bluegrass counties while secessionist candidates for Congress won only four. Perhaps the Confederates had misjudged the strength of Southern sentiment in the Bluegrass. 42

The center of Confederate sentiment, the Bluegrass, not only feared an invasion and the loss of the Fugitive Slave Law, but felt itself isolated from other Confederate areas. To the east lay the pro-Union mountain regions; to the north lay the Ohio River; and to the southwest lay the Green and Barren River.

42 For a discussion of the border state complex, see N. S. Shaler, Kentucky: A Pioneer Commonwealth 255-56; Coulter, Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky, 11-12; See also Fish, "Decision of the Ohio Valley," 163.
country, where slaves were few and where the pro-Union congressional candidates consistently swept the districts by margins of four and five to one. The only other slave areas of any size were fifty to one hundred miles to the southwest in the Cumberland and Tennessee valleys. Even if these areas had been willing to support the Confederates openly, they were too isolated. Commercial ties with the East were too strong in too many places. The only large group still concerned with trade down the Mississippi were the tobacco growers—who were also the slaveholders. The groups in sympathy with the South simply could not muster enough support for the Confederacy. And even in these scattered groups of slaveholders, sympathy and secession were not the same, for there was too much to lose by leaving the Union.\footnote{Kirby Smith, Bragg, and Davis had placed confidence in John Morgan's promise of 30,000 eager volunteers. But had not the Confederates misinterpreted popular sentiment for Morgan as desire to join the Confederacy? The 30,000 had never come—only 2,500, most of whom were young men who desired to be "Morgan's men." Bragg and Kirby Smith had counted heavily on John C. Breckinridge to whip up Confederate sentiment. Breckinridge was immensely popular in Kentucky. But was popular feeling for Breckinridge identical with sentiment for the Confederacy? Even twenty-three of the most staunch Union counties in eastern Kentucky had voted for Breckinridge in 1860—but only one elected a secession candidate for Congress. And had the Confederates not misjudged the general unrest among}

\footnote{Thomas Speed, The Union Cause in Kentucky, 1860-1865 (New York, 1907), 173, 177.
the Kentucky people observable in the summer of 1862? There was widespread protest against the Federal army's control of elections and the judiciary, against wholesale arrests of suspected Southern loyalists, and against intimidation at the polls. But this unrest was probably resentment against the way Union military occupation was conducted—not against the Union. Kentucky's reaction was not against the Constitution but against the infringement of rights they felt were preserved by the Constitution. And to a Kentuckian, constitutional rights were safe only within the Federal Union. 44

But suppose Kentucky had been willing to rise to the call of Bragg and Kirby Smith when they entered the state. Did not Bragg's and Kirby Smith's requirement that the state must earn its own freedom make a favorable reaction difficult? Bragg and Kirby Smith had not remembered the lesson of 1861, when Magoffin tried to lead his people into the Southern camp. Because they operated on the defensive, the Confederates had passed the initiative to the Federals, who had won a bout of psychological warfare in the Bluegrass. The pro-Confederate sympathizers were cowed, and feared Union reprisals if Rebel sentiment became overt. Bragg partially understood this fear, but failed to appreciate its deeper meaning when he wrote his

wife on November 9:

Why then should I stay with my handful of brave Southern men to fight for cowards who sulked about in the dark to say to us "We are with you; only whip these fellows out of our country, and let us see you can protect us, and we will join you."\(^5\)

Their point was well taken. But Bragg, who had not expected to find a people whose ideas and problems were neither Northern nor Southern but more their own, set a rigid standard that Kentuckians must first join him and then help earn their "freedom."

Kirby Smith at first held the same philosophy. At Lexington he urged the Kentuckians to join him and throw back the "Northern hordes." Yet by the end of September he apparently sensed that Kentucky could not be secured unless Buell were first defeated. On September 20 he wrote his wife that "the defeat of Buell would rally the whole of Kentucky to our cause...\(^6\) and on September 23 wrote Bragg:

\[
\text{I regard the defeat of Buell before he effects a junction with the force at Louisville as a military necessity, for Buell's army has always been the great bugbear to these people, and until defeated we cannot hope for much addition to our ranks from Kentucky.}^{7}\]

Why then, did Kirby Smith not co-operate in a move against Buell's army? After the war he admitted his move to Lexington

\(^5\)Bragg to wife, Nov. 9, 1862, Seitz, \textit{Braxton Bragg}, 207.

\(^6\)Kirby Smith to wife, Sept. 20, 1862, Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina.

was a violation of the Chattanooga agreement to march against Buell in Middle Tennessee. Once he arrived at Lexington, he gave Bragg no help. He failed to send aid when Bragg and Buell were moving toward Green River. He did not so much as try to divert troops from Louisville by threatening Cincinnati, even though he knew that Bragg at Green River had a strong force in his rear at Louisville. Moreover, Kirby Smith made no attempt to keep the Louisville force occupied so that it could not move out against Bragg while he was at Green River. After the war Kirby Smith attempted to explain his failure. He said:

The occupation of Cincinnati or Louisville might have endangered our concentration—whilst our concentration effected Buell's defeat was certain & not only Louisville & Cincinnati but the North would be the fruits of victory.48

Yet Kirby Smith did not encourage a concentration. On the contrary, he worked against it. On September 19 he wrote Bragg that he felt his force should remain at Lexington instead of concentrating with Bragg. On September 21 he protested a junction with Bragg below Louisville as injurious to recruiting and gathering of stores at Lexington. And on September 23, in the same letter in which he said that Buell first must be defeated, he wrote Bragg that "I will be in supporting distance of you in your operations against Buell."49 Although Kirby Smith seemed to realize by the end of September what must be done if Kentucky support were to be gained, he

was too unwilling to sacrifice independent command to make Buell's defeat a possibility. He had shown daring and gallantry, but he had failed the most severe test—self-sacrifice.

Lack of planning and of agreement so evident in the campaign was probably the cause of the confusion as to how Kentucky was to be treated. Although Jefferson Davis suggested before the campaign that Buell first be defeated, he gave this as opinion, not as an order. But Davis was not consistent. He never clarified to Bragg and Kirby Smith whether the sample proclamation he gave them was to apply to Kentucky. Bragg and Kirby Smith assumed it did not. In their Glasgow, Bardstown, and Lexington proclamations, they did not speak of invading the state to carry the war to the country occupied by the enemy. Instead Bragg and Kirby Smith asked the Kentuckians for support to drive out the Federals and told the Kentucky people that if the support did not come, the Confederates would leave the state. The only use of Davis' proclamation made in the campaign was at Bardstown, where Bragg vaguely issued it "To the People of the Northwest," with no mention of Kentucky. Davis not only failed to clarify the policy to be followed, but in the midst of the campaign he evidently changed his own mind. On September 4, in a dispatch which was captured by the Federals at Glasgow, and which evidently referred to Kirby Smith's move away from Buell into Kentucky, Davis wrote Bragg that he approved "of your alternative in relation to General Smith, and hope you will be able to execute the movement in time." The lack of a definite policy for Kentucky crippled the invasion, and the final responsibility
seems to rest with Jefferson Davis. 50

But even if Bragg, Kirby Smith, and Davis had previously agreed on the methods to secure Kentucky, the problems of interdepartmental command would have made any policy difficult to execute. Richmond followed a strange dualistic policy in the treatment of command in Kentucky. Davis and Secretary of War George Randolph left Bragg and Kirby Smith to work out the problem and only expressed hope for "cordial co-operation" between the two generals. The result was a divided command. From Bragg's and Kirby Smith's July 31 meeting at Chattanooga until they met again at Lexington on October 2, the Kentucky invasion had no one commander. Though senior officer, Bragg had no authority to order Kirby Smith until the commands were united, and he surrendered the initiative for the campaign's planning to the junior commander who longed for an independent move. Thus by the time Bragg assumed command at Lexington, many of the campaign's mistakes had already been made, leaving him to bear the responsibility. 51


51 Davis to Bragg, Aug. 5, 1862, Rowland, Jefferson Davis, V, 313; Bragg to Cooper, Aug. 1, 1862, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 2, p. 741. Kirby Smith, finally seeing the fault of the command structure, wrote his wife on November 23 that "We need some one controlling mind who can direct operations over an extended sphere and so combine the movements of our different armies as best to meet the pressure which is fast coming upon us in every direction." Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina. Davis wrote Theophilus Holmes on October 21 that "the future is to be viewed by the light of our late experience." Rowland, Jefferson Davis, V, 356. On October 29 Davis wrote Kirby Smith that "we must deal with the future..." and use the past "as a teacher..." Kirby Smith Papers, North Carolina. Joseph E. Johnston would soon be called back as commander of the resurrected Department of the West.
Yet Richmond, though apathetic toward the vital problems of purpose and command, attempted a half-way control of the campaign from behind the scenes. On September 19 Davis admitted he did not know of Bragg's plans for Tennessee and was "at a loss to know how to remedy evils without damaging your plans." But Richmond tried to help anyway—and damaged Bragg's plans. His supply and recruiting system in Tennessee were damaged by Randolph's manipulations with John McCown and Sam Jones. In Mississippi, Davis and Randolph gave Van Dorn command of Price's force, although Bragg had desired separate command until the two generals were ready for an assault on Middle Tennessee. Nor did Richmond even know that Van Dorn, Price, and Breckinridge were to be a part of the invasion column. The fault was partly Bragg's, for he had failed to specify the importance of the Mississippi column. The result of Bragg's failure to clarify and of Richmond's attempts to be helpful was the collapse of support in Mississippi.

The failure of Bragg's defensive plan, clearly evident at Danville, was caused by the same lack of planning, co-operation, and timing which had brought grief to Bragg's offensive plan. Even though he had seen his strategy falling apart at Bardstown, Bragg had clung to the strategy when he went on the defensive.

53 On September 19 Randolph wrote Van Dorn that "We fear a serious misunderstanding exists with reference to the movements of Price, Breckinridge, and yourself. General Bragg, we are informed, expected Breckinridge to follow Kirby Smith with 7,000 men, and that Price and yourself should act in concert." Ibid., p. 707; Horn, Army of Tennessee, 172-74.
Unable to revise, he had expected too much of the piecemeal strategy and was severely jolted at Danville when he finally realized that it had failed. Van Dorn's rumored defeat, the lack of support from Tennessee, Breckinridge's absence, the lack of subsistence, and Kentucky's lethargy left little to expect in the state. Even had Bragg devised a new plan, he probably would not have remained. Bragg, in the best Confederate defensive tradition, now saw no need to remain in country that had now shown itself Confederate. 54

Even if Bragg had desired to give Kentucky another chance, it was evident at Danville that success could not be retrieved. Instead of plans for occupying Louisville, the generals must now talk of means to save their armies. The Dick's River line had become a trap. Wheeler's exhausted troopers had already been driven from Danville, and the Federals were only eight miles from the Gap road. Buell was reported everywhere—swinging south to cross Dick's River near Stanford and Lancaster to outflank Bragg, pushing directly through Danville to the Gap road, and moving north to King's Mill ford, where Kirby Smith's troops were still crossing. Dumont was still rumored as approaching from Frankfort, and news had been received of a third Federal force moving out of Cincinnati. If Buell did turn Bragg's left, the Confederates would be trapped between Buell and the force moving south to the Kentucky River.

54 Bragg bitterly wrote Cooper of the Kentuckians that, "willing perhaps to accept their independence, they are neither disposed nor willing to risk their lives or their property in its achievement." Bragg to Cooper, Oct. 12, 1862, OR, I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, p. 1088.
SITUATION ON DICK'S RIVER, Oct. 12, 1862

- UNION TROOPS
- CONFEDERATE TROOPS

SCALE: 1" = 5 mi.
The Federals appeared to be closing in like a giant pair of tongs. Bragg explained the situation to his generals. Only four days' rations were left, and the mills west of Dick's River were captured. Van Dorn was defeated. Kentucky had failed. The fall rains would soon make the roads over the Cumberland Mountains impassable, and a defeat then would make a retreat impossible. Davis had urged Bragg above all to save the army. Buell was reported moving as far south as Crab Orchard to cut the Confederates off from Cumberland Gap. It was enough. Polk, Cheatham, Hardee, and Kirby Smith voted to retreat. Humphrey Marshall, who had just arrived after touring East Kentucky with his troops, voted to remain in the Bluegrass and then retreat into Virginia. Marshall was granted his request—the other two armies would retreat south at daylight. The plans were made quickly. Kirby Smith would take the left fork at...
Lancaster and move by way of Big Hill, and Bragg would move on the right fork by way of a Crab Orchard. Wheeler, newly appointed chief of cavalry of the Second Department, would direct the rear guard. The meeting closed, and the generals went out into the murky night. Perhaps the state had not been their old Kentucky home after all.\textsuperscript{56}

Seven days later Braxton Bragg stood on the summit of Cumberland Gap and watched Polk's lead column ascend the slope. Hardee and Cheatham would be sent to Chattanooga, even while Kirby Smith trailed far in the rear near London. Although Bragg had left Chattanooga fifty-four days earlier for a concentration with Kirby Smith, the two armies were never together at the same place during the campaign. The sun came out the next morning as Bragg urged his horse to the southern rim of the Gap. Below lay the valley of the Clinch River, and off to the southwest stretched the massive Cumberland Mountain range. Far over the mountains, too far to be seen from Cumberland Gap, lay the town of Murfreesboro, where the old Indian war trail stretched southward to Chattanooga and across Chickamauga Creek to the military depot at Atlanta, Georgia.

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