

The Tapp-Lockhart Company
Wholesale Hats and Caps
1206 Main Street
Columbia, South Carolina
December 21, 1906

My dear Jack,

Read with greatest interest clipping from "Cosmopolitan" — The wanton and unnecessary butchery at Franklin, has as far as I have read and studied, no parallel in history of the war, for time and numbers embraced — General Forrest pointed out to Hood, as does the author of the article above referred to, that by crossing the Harpeth river, he (Hood) could have turned the Federal left, and without the loss of 100 men accomplished all he did, by the dreadful sacrifice of life, in the course he pursued. The result would have been, a hasty retreat or capture, as the Federals were fighting with a river in their rear — a most dangerous position — Schofield merely halted at Franklin, to gain time in which to allow his troops and trains to close up, after their marvelous escape from capture at Spring Hill, and would have gladly withdrawn to Nashville, so soon as this was accomplished. But Hood, stung by his failure in not having bagged Schofield at Spring Hill, made such rapid pursuit, as to compel the latter to make a stand and fight. Smarting under his too late discovered, inexcusable blunder, Hood in attempting to retrieve his error, did not hesitate as to making a front attack, without artillery, where a dangerless one, on the flank, was

plainly practicable. The sickening carnage was the natural result. I have not at hand official records as to losses — below the grade of General officers — but some conception of these may be formed from the fact, that 1 Maj. General and 5 Brigadiers were killed outright — and 7 Generals wounded — a total casualty in this grade of 13 — all within the space of less than two hours. This record cannot be matched at Manassas, Gettysburg or Chickamauga. It has truly been said, that “Franklin was the grave of the Army of Tennessee”. Now where does the responsibility rest? I answer: with Hood primarily, and President Davis principally, when he removed their able General and unrivalled strategist, Joe Johnston, and placed the incompetent Hood in Command of the Army — after he had served inconspicuously, as Corp Commander less than six months. Promoting him over such true and tried officers, as Hardee, Stewart, Cheatham, Cleburne and others. The announcement of his appointment to command, caused outspoken expressions of dissatisfaction, almost mutinous from the troops, who were no mean Judges of military ability, but after the appointment was positively made, they loyally gave Hood support, as evidenced by their gallant conduct and losses, before Atlanta, Ezra Church, Jonesboro, Spring Hill, Franklin and Nashville.

When in New Orleans, last spring, I was a guest with General Govan, of George Williams (Govan’s, A.A.G.). The General is the sole surviving General officer of Cleburne’s division — He is quite infirm and not equal to the labor of writing at length. At the solicitation of George and myself, he made pencil notes of the Tennessee campaign — These I took home and from them, wrote an article, which I submitted to Govan, and it will appear in the “Confederate Veteran” — over his signature. This article will, I think, fully fix the responsibility for the shameful failure of Spring Hill, which had it been the success, easily in the grasp of Hood, Franklin and Nashville battles would not have occurred. Just think, discouraged troops, along the only road of safety open to them, in the face of 40,000 concentrated men, and so close did they defile by, it is said that they “lit their pipes at the Confederate camp files.” A strong skirmish line across the pike would have demoralized and thrown them into confusion, retarded and intercepted their retreat, and made them an easy prey with the coming of dawn — But nothing was done, although the Commander of the Army had full knowledge of the existing conditions and was less than a mile away. The Shame of it! My apology for inflicting this long communication upon you, is that I feel strongly upon these subjects, The active participants, and those possessed of facts, are becoming so few, perhaps it is well that one surviving should leave a record. My regret is that time and opportunity have not been mine to go into this and other matters, more fully. For your better understanding, will add, that Columbia — from which the initial move was made, on 27th November, is in round figures, ten or twelve miles from Spring Hill, and latter about same distance from Franklin — and also the same to Nashville — all in a direct northern line. In absence of map, these distances may vary a little, but are approxi-

mately correct. Having no time during the day, I've come down to the store to write this, and it is now 10:15 P.M.

It gratifies me beyond expression to learn of your improvement, which I hope and believe will be permanent, but be patient, until this is assured. I told Tapp that I was coming down to write you, and he asked to be most kindly remembered.

With a heart full of love and best wishes for a happy Xmas to all.

Affectionately yours,⁴

Irving

¹ A cousin of Lucy R. Buck of Bel Air.

² This letter reveals the desperate situation of the Southern people after the war.

³ Scott Roy married Mattie Cook.

⁴ This letter was found among Irving's war letters.