

the advance on Chattanooga, the gateway to the beautiful plains of Alabama and Georgia.

In the evening a scout brought the news that the Confederates, under General Bragg, had evacuated the town and fallen back to Lafayette, on the south road from Chattanooga, fronting the east slope of Lookout Mountain.

This movement the Federal forces construed as a retreat, but the real object of the manœuvre was to form a junction with the reinforcements that were expected daily. Longstreet's corps was on its way from Virginia, and with these combined forces the Confederates expected to fall upon the Union army when it emerged from the mountain gorges.

Acting under the delusion that Bragg's army was in actual retreat, General Rosecrans ordered a portion of Parke's corps of Burnside's army to move down from Knoxville, while several regiments of infantry were sent to reinforce General Thomas's corps, which was then moving towards McLemore's Cove. To this latter division Father Dan's regiment was assigned, and a hot and tire-some march under a blazing sun, with dust ankle deep, was their first taste of real campaigning.

But while the Confederates were preparing to attack in force and outflank General Thomas's army, that general discovered his mistake, and retreated to the mountain pass, thus rescuing the Federal centre from its perilous and much-exposed position.

Meanwhile the Confederates changed their plans, and on the 15th September their combined armies forded the Chickamauga and moved towards Lee and Gordon's mills, where the supposed the Federal troops would be found. Crossing the river north of the mills they hoped to cut off the Federal retreat, but while they prepared for this movement their right wing, under General Walker, was attacked by General Thomas's corps, with a scathing artillery fire. The Confederates held their ground with great gallantry, and for a while the battle raged with uncertain success on either side. Father Dan's regiment was held in reserve on a knoll behind the artillery, at the right of the battle lines. Shortly after the action commenced a messenger handed Father Dan a long yellow envelope. The priest read the message it contained and then placed it in his blouse. A cloud of smoke obscured the battlefield, and after a little while the men on the knoll could see nothing of the scene of strife. The suspense was terrible, and as the horrible din of the battle increased they grew nervous with expectation. Still the expected order to advance did not come, and the colonel realised that a horrible blunder or accident had taken place.

There had come a sudden rift in the cloud of smoke and to their horror they saw advancing towards them four regiments of Confederate infantry. Apparently their retreat was cut off for Cheatham's brigade was engaging the main body of their troops to their left. Someone had blundered, and they had to pay the penalty.

'Courage, men!' shouted the colonel. 'Courage! I have sent for reinforcements.'

Closer and closer came the mass of grey in ominous silence. Mindful of the volleys that the little band poured into them they steadily advanced until they were but a few dozen rods distant. Then they paused for an instant, and the men on the knoll could hear distinctly the command, 'Fire!' With the word the air seemed to be filled with molten flame, while the slaughter was dreadful. The brave colonel urging the men to close up their ranks and stand firmly together was shot through the head and fell lifeless. A second volley came and nearly all of the officers who exposed themselves were picked off. It was not in human nature to stand such carnage, and when the long crescent of men in grey began to advance at a double quick, with fixed bayonets, the pitiable remains of the regiment, bereft of officers and wholly in confusion, broke and fled to the rear.

During the action, Father Dan never lost his presence of mind. He had often wondered how he would feel under fire, but after the firing commenced he seemed to have entirely forgotten his own peril. When the captain of his company was shot down and the lieutenant wounded, it was Father Dan who stepped to the front and commanded the company. When the regiment faltered and began to retire in confusion, he managed to keep the men of his company together and to conduct their retreat in good order.

'Come on, men!' he shouted, 'Follow me! There's a stone wall up here on our left, and we can hold it until we are relieved. Don't go to the rear; the enemy may be there.'

Already the first of the fleeing fugitives had learned that their retreat was stopped by a portion of Cheatham's brigade, and they stood, a surging mob, without leaders, fearfully conscious of their terrible predicament. They had already determined to make the last stand where they were, when Father Dan appeared.

'Come on, men!' he thundered above the din of the musketry. 'To the stone wall; there's a chance there! Form your companies and close up ranks! Double quick march!'

Those who heard his voice obeyed and formed in rank. The others followed through the contagious instinct or impulse that seems to possess disorganised bodies of men. There was a faint cheer that grew in volume as the column approached their refuge, and when the Confederates reached the top of the knoll, with a disdainful disregard of danger from what they considered a vanished foe, they were thrown into confusion by a sharp volley from the stone wall that inflicted severe damage.

The Confederates returned the fire, but found that they could not hurt the men behind the stone bulwark. Again they charged, but the men under Father Dan fought like demons, and the Confederates were beaten back at each new attempt. At last they massed for the final effort and with the impact of a cannon ball, they hurled themselves over the wall at the courageous men in blue. Hand to hand they fought, and then seeing that resistance was useless, the defenders began their second retreat.

Again they stopped, for the sound of a bugle told them that there were troops in their rear. A few minutes later their fear was turned to joy, for the troops in their rear were not their enemy,

but the column that had been sent to their relief, and had been intercepted by Cheatham's men. After a sharp struggle they had pierced Cheatham's centre, and now they proceeded to occupy the position that the little force had defended so gallantly.

But where was Father Dan? One of the men had seen him fall in the last charge at the stone wall, where he remained after the rest of the regiment had been pressed back, dealing deadening blows with his clubbed musket. There was little time to think of him and the enemy now occupied the ground where he had fallen. Presently the attack was renewed, and the battle raged until night-fall.

The next day the bloody action of Chickamauga was continued. That night the broken Union army retreated to Chattanooga, and in the report that was sent to the northern papers the name of Daniel O'Rourke was included among the missing.

Father Dan was the hero of the hour. The men grieved at his loss more than they did for any of the other good and true men that had fallen. Accustomed though they were to the trials of war, some of them could not keep back the tears when they learned that he had fallen.

Pat Moran repeated again and again the story of the envelope which the priest received at the moment of the battle. 'When he got it,' said Pat, 'he read it and turned to me. "Pat," sez he, "do you know what I have here?"'

'No, yer reverence,' says I, 'for I always gave him his title you know.'

'Well,' says he, with a strange bit of a smile, 'it's a discharge from the army signed by the President.'

'Ye'll be glad to get back,' says I.

'I will,' says he putting the paper in his pocket. 'But Pat,' says he, 'I've been with the boys so far, an' I'm not goin' to turn back now. I could surrender myself as a non-combatant, but I would rather be shot a thousand times than lave ye all in this tight place. But if it's God's will that I live through this battle, I'll go back with no shame on myself or the regiment.'

'He saved our lives,' said Sergeant Price, lighting his pipe from the glowing embers of the camp fire.

'He did all of that an' more,' said Pat, solemnly. 'He saved our honor, too.'

One day when the southern prisons belched forth a party of white faces, wasted men, the name of Daniel O'Rourke appeared in the list of those who were to be exchanged.

It was a great day in Mount Vernon when Father Dan returned, for they had long mourned him as dead. The town was gaily decorated, and the band played 'See the conquering hero come,' and there were speeches by the town authorities, in which Father Dan was referred to as 'our distinguished and gallant townsman.'

In simple words he told them how he was wounded and captured and of his year in the prison. Then he produced his blood-stained discharge, and a great ringing cheer went up—a cheer of thanksgiving and praise that he never forgot.

'And,' to use the words of the orator of the day, in his concluding speech, 'having covered himself with glory on the bloody field of Chickamauga, he modestly laid aside the sword and donned the surplice—he withdrew from the battlefield of physical strife, and renewed, as a parish priest, his warfare against sin.'—Exchange.

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