

**From Peter Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die: THE BATTLE OF STONES RIVER*
Pages 514-517**

At 10:00 Brigadier General Daniel Donelson led the last uncommitted Confederate brigade on the west side of Stones River into action. Donelson, at sixty-two the oldest troop commander in the army, and his Tennesseans began the day in reserve near Bragg's headquarters, moving forward at 9:00 to occupy the rifle pits abandoned by Chalmers. There they witnessed the Mississippians' attack on the Round Forest. "It soon became apparent to everyone that Chalmers's brigade was giving way," noted Lieutenant Colonel John Anderson of the Eighth Tennessee, "for it was with great difficulty that I could keep his men from running over my men; they came running back in squads and companies." As the last of the Mississippians cleared his front, Donelson gave the order to charge. The command echoed from company to company, the men raised a cheer, and the long Butternut line surged out of the rifle pits.

Donelson went down in the first volley, his horse shot out from under him. But the old Tennessean was unhurt. Rising to his feet, he led his men into the garden alongside the Cowan farmhouse, where they met scores of stragglers from Chalmers's brigade cowering among the outbuildings and behind the garden fence, squarely in their path. The Mississippians were too frightened to step aside, so the brigade split to keep its alignment: the Sixteenth Tennessee and three companies of the Fifty-first drifted north toward the Round Forest, while the Thirty-eighth, Eighth, and remaining companies of the Fifty-first drove west toward Cruft.

Watching the action from behind Cruft's position, John Palmer was moved by Donelson's well-dressed ranks, "advancing in solid lines and moving in admirable order. It was not easy to witness that magnificent array of Americans without emotion." Cruft may have agreed, but at the moment he was more concerned with throwing a little disorder into the Rebel ranks. To that end he sent the First Kentucky into the cotton field to meet the Tennesseans before they closed with the brigade. The Kentuckians complied, but they were too late. Planting their colors firmly in the ground beside the Cowan house, Colonel John Carter and his Thirty-eighth Tennessee opened a "murderous fire" on the First, forcing it into a precipitate retreat back to its original position.

The First Kentucky returned to find the brigade in imminent danger of collapse. A. P. Stewart's Tennesseans, rolling through the cedars in pursuit of Negley, had gained the rear of the Second Kentucky. Captain William Standart wheeled a section of his Battery B, First Ohio, to engage them, but their numbers were overwhelming. "We were now completely flanked," Cruft despaired. "Our own troops impeded our retreat. Cannons, caissons, artillery wagons, and bodies of men in wild retreat filled the road and woods to my rear, precluded everything like proper and orderly retreat." Nevertheless, the Second Kentucky held together well enough to drag off three of Standart's guns, while the Nineteenth Ohio rescued a fourth. For Standart retreat came not a moment too soon- only sixteen rounds remained in his caissons."

The withdrawal of Cruft, although a setback, posed no real danger to the army. Behind Cruft were several commands still largely intact: Captain Charles Parsons remained in his first position, a slight rise near the intersection of McFadden's Lane and the turn-pike, his guns trained toward the southwest, Grose lay nearby with four regiments, behind Grose, Shephard had rallied his regulars, still farther to the rear stood Milo Hascall's uncommitted brigade.

Thomas and Rosecrans responded to Cruft's withdrawal by sending the regulars back into the cedars to impede the advance of Stewart and Donelson and to afford Grose time to retire to a new position along the turnpike, perpendicular to Hazen. Thomas's instructions were simple: "Shephard, take your brigade there and stop the Rebels." The regulars hurried down the turnpike to comply. As the head of the column neared McFadden's Lane the brigade halted, formed line of battle, and disappeared into the timber. They halted after fifty yards to permit Cruft's men to clear its lines. Stewart's Butternuts were right behind, and within moments the regulars' predicament was critical. Extending only a quarter mile, the brigade front was easily outflanked by the more numerous Confederates-Donelson's Eighth Tennessee on the left, and Stewart on the right. The appearance of the Eighteenth Ohio and Eleventh Michigan, personally led into the fray by Rousseau, eased the pressure on the regulars' right momentarily. But the weight of numbers soon told, and Shephard, thinking "it proper to order a retreat, which was probably quite long enough deferred," began to extricate his battalions. By the time the final company cleared the wood, some four hundred regulars had fallen, including Major S. D. Carpenter of the Nineteenth United States, struck by six bullets as he directed his battalion's withdrawal.

But the regulars' heavy losses were not in vain. In twenty minutes of bitter fighting they decimated Stewart's brigade so completely that "Old Straight" was forced to halt at the edge of the cedars, and Maney and Anderson followed his lead. Only Donelson's Eighth and Thirty-eighth Tennessee, joined perhaps by the Nineteenth Tennessee, dared to confront the Federals on open ground. There, near the Round Forest, they found themselves quickly and hopelessly overwhelmed.

Finally, a little after 12:00, the Confederates broke contact. They had come within a few yards of the turnpike, but lacked the numbers to take it. The Eighth Tennessee had come closest, and their effort cost them dearly. Colonel W. I. Moore went down in the first volley to strike his regiment as it passed the Cowan house. Assuming Moore to be dead, Lieutenant Colonel John Anderson took command and led the Tennesseans toward Cruft. Within minutes a withering fire had engulfed the regiment; in their haste to close with the enemy, the Tennesseans had outdistanced the remainder of the brigade, and now found themselves facing Cruft alone. Anderson paused only long enough to permit his men to fix bayonets, then waded into the Federals. Shattering Cruft's first line with the impetuosity of their attack, the Tennesseans were preparing to move on when their colonel rejoined them on foot, still very much alive. Anderson happily returned command to Moore, only to see him fall, shot through the heart, moments later. In the meantime, Cruft had given way completely, and the Eighth pursued until it encountered Shephard's regulars. Again the Eighth gave battle, and again the Tennesseans swept their front clear

of Federals. Joined now by the Nineteenth Tennessee and one hundred men from the Fifty-first, Anderson pushed on into the cotton field. Here the slaughter was greatest. The regimental color sergeant collapsed badly wounded. He crawled forward, colors in hand, until a second bullet killed him. In Company D, eleven of twelve company-grade officers and noncommissioned officers fell. When Parsons and Estep opened a "perfect hail of grape and canister," Anderson knew the time had come to retreat. Falling back to the right of Stewart, Anderson redistributed ammunition and took stock of his command. Its losses were appalling-the heaviest suffered by a Confederate regiment in any single battle of the war. Of the four hundred forty men who went into action, forty-one were dead, another two hundred sixty wounded. In all, 68 percent of the regiment had been lost. To the credit of the Eighth, not a single man was reported missing."