

It was now nearly dark, the gallant Claybrooke marched his Regiment and prisoners a few hundred yards to the rear, where he received orders to rejoin his brigade nearly half a mile west in the cedar glade, which he did, and in rejoining the brigade we were ordered at once to furnish a detail of forty men from the regiment to go on picket. I was detailed as the officer of the pickets, and reported at once there in the cedars and darkness to a staff officer who led us through the thick cedars here Cheatham with his Tennesseans had fought over during the day, and the ground was strewn with the dead and wounded.

We were placed on the picket line in front of Preston's brigade, with instructions that no one was in front of us but the Yankees and they only about one hundred yards away. My line being established, it was my duty as an officer to visit the different picket posts at intervals during the night. The night was cold and clear, the ground frozen to the depth of about one inch.

While I was making my rounds, about one o'clock a. m., I heard quite a halloahing and moaning some fifty yards in the rear of my picket line. I told my picket to keep a sharp lookout and I would go back and see what that noise was. I crept back up a little rocky ravine until I was within a few yards of the noise and discovered, as I had expected, a wounded soldier.

I asked "To what command do you belong?" He said -Eighteenth Regulars and that he was badly wounded and had been left here, and was nearly frozen to death." He asked me to make him a fire at his feet. I told him that I was a Confederate and on picket just in front of him, and by making a fire would draw the picket fire from the Yankee's pickets. He begged me so pitifully and as he was down in a ravine, I took the chances, and searched around among the rocks and got some cedar limbs and made him a fire and gave him some water, placed his head on his knapsack and made him as comfortable as possible.

He said to me that "the Eighteenth Regulars had fought some Tennessee Volunteers in this cedar brake that day, and they fought more like regulars than any volunteers that he ever saw." He further said, that they had killed and wounded nearly all of his regiment.

The poor fellow had bled and laid on the cold ground until life was nearly gone. When I left him I told him if my line was not attacked or ordered away, that I would come back before day and look after him. I went back in about two hours, but he had crossed over and was sleeping the soldier's sleep and I could do no more for him.

I returned to my duty, and next day as I was on the picket line for a while near this spot, I counted seventeen minnie balls in one cedar tree not over twelve inches in diameter up six feet high, and twenty-two dead Federals within fifty feet of this tree.

From  
History of the Twentieth Tennessee  
Regiment Volunteer Infantry

C.S.A.

by

W.J. McMurray, M.D.