

## THE ARMY CHAPLAIN OF 1863.

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THE army chaplain is recognized the world over as having a place in any well-ordered military establishment. This is not because the soldier is, by reason of his trade, any more devout than another man or more desirous of spiritual counsel or given to observances. It is rather the church holding out a hand to the army. The nation accepts it and the soldier, whatever his religious attitude, finds certain emergencies in his career, such as sickness, wounds, and death, in view of which a friend is not only tolerated but desired.

One Sunday afternoon in May, 1861, I was at a recruiting station in this city at the Assembly Rooms, so called, on Broadway near Grand Street. Men were being enrolled for the first two regiments of the Excelsior Brigade and some five hundred were paraded by companies. Their commander, General Sickles, said to them, "Men, I have called you up to present your chaplains who now stand before you, the Rev. Dr. Buckley of the first regiment and the Rev. Dr. Twichell of the second. They represent," he said, "the great Commander. Respect them. They are good men and they will do you good. You will do well to heed their teachings." Each chaplain, thus introduced, spoke in a few short ringing sentences holding up the fear of God as presenting a soldierly ideal which, when attained, would make it quite unnecessary to fear either man or devil.

The name chaplain is significant. He is the *chapel* man. He does not need a church. Gothic arches, pulpits, robes, high altars, choirs, responses are without meaning in his work. He is a man who can take with him a great consciousness of the divine presence and speak and act in view of that in any place and in any emergency. It is of the essence of his service that he is always there and always ready. Moving with the column, exposed to heat and storm, sharing every privation, not very far from the battle line, wherever a man, with hurt or pain, may chance to need his help, that spot is his chapel and there he must minister.

In the first order issued by the Adjutant-General of New York, April 18, 1861, naming the officers of volunteers, chaplains are not mentioned. An order of May 1st says that a chaplain shall be appointed for each regiment by the Commander-in-Chief, that is, by the governor, on nomination by the field-officers. An order of the United States War Department, May 4, 1861, gives the full plan for organizing the volunteer force. The chaplain is not named among the regimental officers, but in a memorandum dealing with miscellaneous matters such as musicians and a sutler, etc., the order adds, "There shall be allowed to each regiment one chaplain appointed by the regimental commander on vote of the field-officers and company commanders . . . who shall be a regularly ordained minister of some Christian denomination." This language, for substance, was copied afterwards in state orders. It fixes the standing of the chaplain as an "allowance." The War Department, July 13, 1861, ordered that "Chaplains of volunteers be duly mustered into the service in the same manner as prescribed for commissioned officers." This implies that they were not officers and might not be commissioned; although they certainly were commissioned afterward.

An Act of Congress, approved July 22, 1861, repeats the above provisions for appointment, provides that a chaplain's pay shall be that of a captain of cavalry, bringing then about \$1400 a year, and adds this as to his duties. "He shall be required to report to the Colonel commanding, at the end

of each quarter, the moral and religious condition of the regiment" (a truly serious task) "and such suggestions as may conduce to the social happiness and moral improvement of the troops." This provision of the law explains, with reasonable clearness, the popular impression of the purpose of a chaplain to promote "social happiness and moral improvement."

The chaplain's uniform of plain black "without ornament" was prescribed by an order of November 25, 1861. The appointment of hospital chaplains by the President was authorized by Act of May 20, 1862. After July 17, 1862, a chaplain could not be mustered without credentials and recommendation from an ecclesiastical body or from five ministers in good standing. In an order of July 26, 1862, we read this: "The principle being recognized that chaplains should not be held as prisoners of war, it is hereby ordered that all chaplains so held be immediately and unconditionally discharged." This defines the character of a chaplain as a non-combatant, entitled to the privileges and subject to the obligations of such a position.

It was not strange that in the general confusion of the first few months of recruiting, some regiments were accompanied to the field by theological students not yet ordained or even by nominal chaplains, friends of the colonel, who did not even profess to be religious men. But, with duties undefined it was left to each to make the most of his opportunity. And what more could any man ask?

Colonel Higginson, in writing a memorial of Chaplain Fuller, says that the position of chaplain is one in which "the majority of clergymen fail," and he adds, "In a little world of the most accurate order, where every man's duties and position are absolutely prescribed the chaplain alone has no definite position and no prescribed duties. In a sphere where everything is concentrated on one sole end, he alone finds himself of no direct use towards that end and apparently superfluous." He cannot succeed without both "moral energy and tact." And he puts it even more strongly in saying that "nine out of ten are useless."

Without regard to the regulations, there were certain qualifications for the chaplaincy of a most vital sort. It called for a *man*,—of a manly sort; of a kindly sympathetic spirit but not weak, of all things not weak, for that would be failure from the beginning; an intelligent man, but with an eye to read men as well as books, able to know a man when he saw him, whatever his clothes or his rank; a shrewd, discriminating, fair man; one to be trusted; having positive convictions but broad-minded, a man of faith with an enthusiasm for people in this world, laying more emphasis on life than doctrine; not lazy, but energetic and, withal, a man of an adventurous spirit, buoyant, cheerful, careless of hardship, a true comrade ready to stand by and to serve to the uttermost. For this is a place where personality alone will count.

The men who offered themselves for this service differed greatly in age, temperament, and power of adaptation as well as in church connections. Some were pastors expecting a short campaign; some I suppose were men out of a place seeking employment; some were students and some were assigned by their ecclesiastical superiors. Before many months had passed chaplains began to resign. The life was rough. The older men found it too hard. The tangible results were slight. In January, 1863, when I first knew the Army of the Potomac, half of the regiments had no chaplains and it was also true that nobody was very much concerned about it. As campaign followed campaign the regiments grew still smaller and one or two chaplains to a brigade were enough.

Now it was obviously impossible for any man to organize in any regiment a religious body who would look to him as their leader. A regiment with three fourths Roman Catholics was not unlikely to have a Protestant chaplain. A Methodist or a Baptist or an Episcopalian would be in camp with men who were decidedly not of his way of thinking. He might recite a collect on dress parade, but compulsory public worship was out of the question. He might invite the men to a Sunday service but who cared to come? He

might bring around him a handful of men for Bible study and occasional worship, but they were few. So he was obliged to fall back upon a common humanity broader than denomination and look about to do kindnesses to individual men. It was his business, as it was his pleasure, to be on terms of cordial sympathy with them all. Received among officers as an equal, he was no less a friend of the humblest private. Any one had the right to claim his attention. Sometimes they would try to take advantage of him. I remember one fellow of a rather hard reputation who took occasion for a week or two to visit my tent daily and there bewail his many sins, falling upon his knees and praying the Lord to forgive him, and, of course, I kept hoping that this was real until he finally revealed his true purpose by saying that he needed a furlough and he thought that I could help him—if properly approached.

The chaplain would frequent the hospital, talk with the sick and write letters for them and get them delicacies from the Sanitary or Christian Commissions. When the paymaster came, the chaplain had express envelopes in which to send money home for the men. Any such office of kindness naturally fell to him.

At the same time preaching and prayer were not forgotten. On Sunday mornings a few men, twenty or thirty sometimes, would come to the Cook tent for service. On Sunday evenings a crowd would gather around a fire to sing hymns.

In the winter of '63 to '64, the Christian Commission lent a large canvas to cover any log chapel that might be built and there were several brigade chapels that winter near Brandy Station, each seating more than a hundred men. The men of the New York Engineer regiment built an elaborate and artistic log church in the works before Petersburg. These chapels were occupied night after night not only for religious services, but also for lectures and entertainments. Visiting clergymen from the North often found sympathetic and deeply interested audiences.

The men who learned the church-going habit under camp conditions showed an uncommon earnestness. A church

fellowship that looked forward to certain decimation in the first week of the coming campaign took their religion seriously. I recall one evening on which our chapel service had been led by a pastor well known in New York. Half an hour later I took him with me to a prayer-meeting in one of the company streets. The men were living in huts under shelter tents. Six men crowded a hut. Twenty more were packed close around the entrance. We went behind the tent and listened. The language of the prayers betrayed a rather rude simplicity, but they fairly burned with a flame of blood earnestness and my companion said to me, "If I could hear my Fifth Avenue saints praying like that, I should know that a great revival was coming in New York."

Of course there were occasions of a public character such as a holiday celebration or a flag raising when the chaplain would come to the front to speak, but usually he was in the background with a small following, waiting for the time when he would be wanted. That time came when the army marched and the battle was on. He was distinctly not a fighter and his place was not on the firing line; although I knew a chaplain who once was caught unexpectedly by an attack of the enemy while visiting his men, and deemed it better to stay behind a good breastwork than to retire; and then so far forgot his place as to busy himself in loading rifles for the men, and singing "Rally round the flag, boys!" at the top of his voice.

But in battle, the chaplain had no orders and went where he could do the most good. He seemed naturally to belong with the doctors. He could render intelligent help in bandaging wounds and at the operating table, and his opportunity of service to individual sufferers was absolutely without limit. It was his hour of duty. Some of the surgeons were posted well up toward the front to give first aid. More of them were in the large field hospitals of division in more secure places at the rear. The chaplain might be at either place or at both by turns. Some made a point of watching for any wounded man who might come staggering back, who perhaps could be helped up into the saddle and ride back to

the hospital. When the demand for help became urgent the chaplains were nurses. As the rows of wounded men grew longer, chaplains went from man to man to see what could be done to relieve their pain, perhaps to take a message or write a letter. All day and far into the night this work would continue. A drink of water, a loosened bandage on a swollen limb, a question answered, a surgeon summoned, a whispered word of comfort marked their course. While surgeons and nurses were busy and weary, the chaplains gleaned after them. Each night at sundown the men who had died during the day were buried, with a short prayer, side by side in one shallow common grave, each in his uniform with canvas wrapped about his face and a strip of paper giving his name and regiment in a bottle buttoned under his blouse.

It was my fortune, one week after the fight at Chancellorsville, to go back to that field under a flag of truce with a considerable company of surgeons and nurses, taking a wagon load of medical stores. We had left 1200 wounded in the hands of the enemy who had no means to care for them properly. When each disabled prisoner had given his parole, the other army were as glad to give them back to us as we were to take them. Such a week as the wounded had passed had brought on that condition of neglect, suffering, and despair which gives to war one of its peculiar horrors. A few of our surgeons were among the prisoners, but they lacked supplies. One chaplain, Ambrose of the 12th New Hampshire, had chanced to be caught and left within the enemy's lines and had been busy, day and night, to the limit of his strength, in nursing, preparing food, comforting, and serving in every conceivable way. For six days we were all busy in the same fashion. At Dowdall's Tavern, where Colonel Stevens of my own regiment died, the floors of every room in the house were covered over with wounded men. They were as closely laid on the piazzas, in the barns, sheds and out-buildings and on the grass of the door yard. Raw corn meal and bacon were the only rations which had been furnished. They needed not only surgery and medicine,

but food and washing and clean shirts. The basin and towel became again the Christian symbol. At length a more decent degree of bodily comfort inspired new hope to some of them and our ambulances came to carry the survivors across the river to their friends.

Many names occur to me of individual chaplains of whom it would be pleasant to speak at length, did time permit: such as John Adams of Maine, Alonzo Quint of Massachusetts, Henry Hopkins, President of Williams College, Henry Clay Trumbull of Connecticut, who served his country in several Confederate prisons, Charles McCabe of Ohio, captured at Winchester and confined four months in Libby; who, to the end of his earnest life, wore the popular and honorable title of Chaplain McCabe and we must not forget John Ireland, the great archbishop of Minnesota.

But permit me to take a moment to speak of one who fell on the skirmish line. Arthur Buckminster Fuller, Chaplain of the 16th Massachusetts, came from a family distinguished in the literary circles of Cambridge and Concord, in which his older sister, Margaret Fuller, had been a brilliant light. He was a scholar as well as a preacher. His courage, enthusiasm, and sympathy for the men of his regiment had greatly endeared him to them.

He was older in years than the most of us, and the exposures of the field brought on a severe sickness which kept him three months at home in the summer of 1862. Twice he rejoined his regiment only to be sent back as an invalid. President Lincoln promised to appoint him chaplain of a hospital and he resigned his place in the regiment. Having received his discharge on the 10th of December and carrying the paper on his person he went down to the river where the first attempts to cross over into Fredericksburg were in progress. The sharpshooters were making it impossible to lay a bridge and a call was made for volunteers to cross in the pontoon boats. It came to him as one last chance to serve his country. True, he was no longer in the service. If taken prisoner, he was not liable to exchange; if he fell, his widow could claim no pension. He was unattached, but

he was free. He found a rifle and cartridges and stepped into the boat. He passed the river, joined in the rush up the farther bank, and took his place in the skirmish line on the third street from the river. Captain Dunn of the 19th Massachusetts, who was in command of the line says, "He saluted me saying, 'I must do something for my country, what shall I do?' I replied that there was never a better time than the present and assigned him a place on my left. I thought that he could render valuable aid because he was perfectly cool and collected. I have seldom seen a person on the field so calm and mild in his demeanor, evidently not acting from impulse or mortal rage." It was but a few minutes before the bullet found its mark and he fell lifeless. He had borne his testimony. When the line was forced back, his body was left, and when later recovered all his valuables had been stolen. Congress afterward gave a special pension to his widow.

There were chaplains of all denominations, and the spirit of oneness among them would have seemed rather remarkable at home. When there were revivals and men wanted to join the Church they were taken into a Christian Brotherhood, leaving out for the time the ordinance of baptism, but partaking of the Lord's Supper together. I have the register of our Brigade Brotherhood now where I read the roll of seventy-eight men, some of whom fell upon the field within a month after they had in their full vigor signed their names to that agreement. We, who were Protestants, used to think that the Roman Catholic chaplains had some advantage in the firm grip they had upon their men. While I was calling one day on Father O'Hagan of the 4th Excelsior (my regiment was the 3d), a couple of my men came to his door to arrange for confession. He made an appointment for the next morning and dismissed them with this plain message, "Tell your fellows in the 3d regiment that if they don't come over for their Easter I shall be after them with a stick." This vigorous way with men was used to good purpose by Father Corby of the 88th New York at Gettysburg when, just as the Irish brigade, what was left of them,

formed in six companies, was ordered into action, the good priest appeared before the line, motioned them to their knees and, in one tense moment of devotion, pronounced absolution and the blessing of the holy church upon such as should fall. Then they sprang to their feet and drove home their impetuous charge. Whenever a sick man in the regimental hospital asked for a priest, any chaplain would do his best to bring him, and often Catholic and Protestant rode side by side at funerals. During the battle at Spottsylvania I found in the field hospital a dying man who was anxious to see a priest. Father O'Hagan was not with us then and I rode two miles before I found Father Corby and urged him to return with me. "But," said he, "there are fifty right here whose souls may be passing. I cannot leave them." "Then what shall we do?" I asked. "Tell him to confess to you," was the priest's answer, "and tell him that I said so and that whatever you say to him or do for him is right." With this sacred commission I rode back in haste and was in time to give the message as I kneeled upon the grass beside the dying boy, listened to what he had to say, offered such comfort and hope as was given me, and commended him in prayer into the keeping of our gracious Lord. He seemed to be satisfied and presently the light faded from his eyes and he was gone.

One can hardly fail to hear in the memory of such times the echo of that fine classic of Miles O'Reilly:

"By communion of the banner  
Battle scarred but victor banner  
By the baptism of the banner  
Brothers of one church are we."

Chaplain Twichell tells a story of Father O'Hagan and himself. During the first battle of Fredericksburg, when the wounded were being brought into hospital in great numbers, they had been occupied all day and far into the night in their hard and loving work. After midnight, when exhausted nature demanded an hour of rest, these two lay down to

sleep. It was December and bitter cold. Presently there came a call out of O'Hagan's blanket, "Joseph," and the answer was "Well, Joseph." Their first names were alike. "I'm cold," said one and "I'm cold," said the other. "Then let's put our two blankets together." And so they did, lying close with blankets doubled. Presently there was a movement as of one struggling with suppressed laughter. "What are you laughing at?" demanded Twichell. "At this condition of things," was the reply. "What? at all this horrible distress?" "No! No! but at you and me; a Jesuit priest and a New England Puritan minister—of the worst sort—spooned close together under the same blanket. I wonder what the angels think." And, a moment after, he added, "I think they like it."

On long winter evenings when other topics failed, a favorite point of controversy between these two inseparable Josephs was as to the religious views of their commander of brigade, and of division and of corps, for one man had been all three. This was General Sickles and both the chaplains claimed him. When the general was hurt at Gettysburg the news reached Twichell at the field hospital behind Round Top whither he had just conveyed a wounded man. Springing to the saddle, the chaplain put spurs to his horse and dashed out toward the Trostle house, to get to his commander. Meeting an ambulance on the road, he called out, "Where's the general?" And the driver answered, "Inside."

Instantly checking his horse and turning back as soon as he could, he overtook the ambulance at last and, without ceasing his trot, lifted the curtain. Inside, in fact, lay the prostrate form of the general and another man, a figure in black was also there, kneeling beside him. It was Father O'Hagan in the act of administering the last rites of the Church. Within the hour these friends stood side by side at the operating table, each with folded towel and by turns giving chloroform to the general while his leg was being cut away by the surgeons, and it was there that they noted from his lips the word that was thought at the time to be his

dying message, that "in such a conflict, one man's life is not very much to give."

One evening, not long after, we were resting from the engrossing labors of the field hospital and to while away the time Twichell, O'Hagan, and I fell to talking over our pipes of the bright days when the war should be over. "I'll tell you," said Twichell, turning to me, "in about ten years from now you and I will step from the railway train, one bright summer afternoon, at a pretty village in central New York. Passing up the shady street we will ask where the Presbyterian minister lives, and will find a handsome cottage with a broad porch covered with vines and flowers and out on the lawn in front, two or three sweet little children will be playing. When we ring at the door there will come to meet us a tidy young woman with bright eyes, just the nicest that you can imagine, and I will say to her, "Good afternoon, Mrs. O'Hagan, is the Father at home?"

And O'Hagan cried out, "Tut, tut, boys, now you are *tempting me.*"

He was a delightful companion and a true man. He held many positions of honor and importance after the war. Like another chaplain in the same brigade, he came to be a college president. He was at Holy Cross in Worcester. He has long since passed to his eternal reward.

But I must not dwell on personal recollections, though they may serve in one way or another to illustrate the lights and shadows of army life.

In one word, the significance of the chaplaincy was this: that the government offered to each regiment one man to be a friend to every man. While other officers might be good friends, this man was to make a business of kindness. Not a commander, not a fighter, not hemmed in by any rules or any rank; left to himself to reach men by their hearts if he touched them at all, and by their hearts to make them better soldiers; a man to be sought in the hour of need; to stand for truth, purity, and all righteousness; for honorable living and hopeful dying; and having done all to stand by, in the spirit of service, according to the pattern of

the Master. Many regiments did not understand and did not care; many commanders found it impossible to secure the man they would gladly have welcomed to such a post; many men who undertook the service fell short, perhaps far short of their opportunities; but many also gained for themselves much love and a good name and a share in the final triumph.