

About 8 o'clock on the morning of the 3d I made my way to the right of the battalion to see how it was faring. Company A had suffered dreadfully, and I found Captain Murray much distressed over the slaughter of his men. The Third North Carolina, being still more exposed than Company A, was almost annihilated, and Colonel Parsley informed me he had but nineteen men left, and, as he spoke, one of them fell dead in Captain Murray's lap. "And now," said the gallant Parsley, "I have but eighteen."

To add to our difficulties, the men were almost out of ammunition, but a noble spirit promptly responded to their call, and Lieutenant R. H. McKim, aide to General Steuart, started off through the dreadful fire, and safely returned with the much-needed supply.

At the request of Captain Murray, I took the responsibility of allowing him to withdraw his men a short distance, and shelter them behind some rocks, for a few minutes' rest. He had not been gone over ten minutes when the gallant Captain George Williamson, acting Adjutant-General of the brigade, came up and ordered me to move my battalion by the left flank, file to the right, and unite with the right of the Virginians, formed in a strip of wood. I saw in an instant the object of the movement, and told Captain Williamson "it was nothing less than murder to send men into that slaughter-pen." Captain Williamson agreed with me, and, moreover, said that General Steuart strongly disapproved of it, but that the order from General Edward Johnson was imperative.

Sending for Captain Murray, I imparted the order to him, and directed him to take his place in line. Having great confidence in Captain Murray, and knowing the veteran material of which his company was largely composed, and he being the Senior Captain, I assigned him to the command of the right of the battalion, believing I could better control the comparatively raw companies on the left in our desperate undertaking; but, as subsequent events proved, the new men fought as gallantly as the veterans.

Filing to the left, and then to the right, all the companies of the battalion but two crossed a stone fence running parallel with the log breastworks, and about two hundred yards distant. The companies on the left of the stone fence formed on the edge of the woods, but on emerging from its cover had a field to cross without any shelter whatever, whilst the two companies on the right of the stone fence were sheltered by the woods throughout the whole charge. On our left were the three Virginia regiments and the First North Carolina.

The line being formed, I passed along the front of the battalion and observed the expression on many faces to see if the men realized the gravity of the situation. If they did they betrayed no weakness, but to the contrary seemed eager to be led forward. It was a dreadful moment, the moment before the order was to be given that would usher so many souls into eternity.