

Chapter XIII.Rev. C. L. Egan D.P.

His mission to the army - Prepares men
under sentence of death - He is appointed
Chaplain - His School of Logic - He
visits the Fifth Corps and exhorts the men
to attend to their duty - Father Egan at the
Bellevue - The South suffered a dreadful
loss - The Soldier great at his post -
Mustered out with the Regiment -

On the 25th of August 1863. A messenger from
the War department called on Father Egan at
St Dominics church Washington, handing him
a note from Col James Hardie, requesting him
to call at the Secretary of War's office. According
-ly he went up in the afternoon of the same day.

Col Hardie handed him the following dispatch
which he was after receiving from General
Williamsd adj General of the army of the
Potomac

United States Military Telegraph
Dated Aug 25th 1863

To Col J. D. Hardie A.D. G.

Two of the five soldiers of the 15th Corps sentenced
to be shot tomorrow, but the execution of whose sent-
ence has been suspended until Saturday next
are Roman Catholics; and are exceedingly anxious
to have the services of a Priest. so far as I can
learn there is no Roman Catholic Priest with this
army at the present. Cannot you ask one of the
Priests of your acquaintance in Washington to
come down and see these unfortunate men and
prepare them as far as may be for the solemn
event that awaits them? I am sure the visit would
be one of mercy. If the Priest comes please
let him telegraph the time of his departure
from Washington to Rev W. & O. Neill Chaplain
Gen. H. who will meet him at

Rappahannock station to which place he should proceed on the cars. The trains leave Alexandria at 8 & 11 A.M. and 2 & 4 P.M. and are about four hours in reaching Rappahannock station. You would have to provide the pass in Washington. Please answer S. Williams

A. A. G.

After reading the above despatch Father Egan told ~~him~~ ^{the messenger that} he would very willingly go on that mission. So he procured a ~~pass for him~~ and he started on the next morning, and arrived in the afternoon in the camp of the 118th Penn Vol. ~~Let~~ The Colonel introduced him to the prisoners who were under guard and handcuffed in a tent. The prisoners under sentence of death, were two Italians (Catholics) and three Germans two of whom were protestants, and one a Jew. On being introduced to the prisoners, one of the Catholics shaking him by the hand very affectionately remarked that now he was not afraid to die since he had a Priest with him. A tent was put up for him within the enclosure of the guard. so that he could be free to talk to the two unfortunate men. After exhorting them to go about the work of their salvation, that there was no hope for them but to turn their thoughts to another world, and make their peace with God. The poor fellows complied with his exhortation, made their confessions, and went to Holy Communion on the morning of the day

(210)

207

of their execution in the tent where he celebrated mass for them. These five men were shot on the 28th of August 1863.

The crime of which they were accused was desertion from the Regiment.

Immediately after the execution Father Egan was requested by Col. Guiney to come visit the camp of the Ninth Regiment at Beverly Ford to hear confessions, etc., having had no regular chaplain since the final departure of Father Pearly. The Rev. Father joyfully complied with the request and remained with the Regiment about a week, when he remarked to the Colonel and other officers that he liked camp life.

better than the easier &
 but sedentary life of a 'Tutor',
 and intimated that he
 would ~~be glad~~ to become
 Chaplain of the Regiment -
 if he could get the app-
 pointment. Col. Guiney
 was overjoyed at the
 offer, and forwarded the
 nomination to the war
 department, and in due
 time Father Egan was
~~soon~~ installed as Chap-
 lain. He soon soon
 won the respect and af-
 fection of the officers &
 men by his zeal and in-
 terest in their behalf.

He organized a school
 of logic for such officers
 who were not versed in
 that branch of study &
 in a short time made
 his school one of the most
 interesting features of

Camp life. Nathan Egan⁴ was peculiarly fitted for the career he had so strongly adopted; genial and confident in disposition; dignified yet familiar with officers and men - possessing a fund of anecdote and inexhaustible good humor, it would be strange indeed if our boys did not reverence and love him.

The winter of '63 and the spring of '64 found the Regiment at Bealton, Va. at which place Nathan Egan visited all the Regiment of the Fifth Corps exhorting all the members of the Catholic faith, and showing them the necessity of attending to their religious duties and begging of them to visit the camps of the

(2/3)

210

ninth at any and all⁵ times, more particularly on Sundays as the Regiment had erected a large log house for the purpose of relieving services. The effects of his labors in this direction were shortly afterwards seen, for crowds of soldiers of other Regiments thronged the Chapel Sunday after Sunday, and to his efforts in a great degree was due the excellent discipline of the 5th Corps ~~there~~. From this camp the Regiment moved in May to take part in the campaign which culminated so far as the 9th was concerned in the memorable battle of the

(214)

211

wilderness. In this battle
nearly thirty of the officers
of the 9th were placed
hors de combat - and
a fresh number of ~~new~~
gallant men. This was
the more to be deplored
as the 9th had but
about half a dozen more
days to serve out the
full term of their en-
listment - three years.

In those bloody days
Father ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~seen~~ ^{seen} ~~proceed~~
a ministering Angel. On
the field and off the
field - amid the hiss
of bullets and the crack
of shells - amid the
groans of the wounded
& the sighs of the dying
calm cool and con-
soling.

he performed the duty
of the Soldier's Priest!
He remained to the last
with the Regiment &
on Boston Common was
mustered out with it.

Father Egan arrived
in Kentucky from Ireland
a poor boy and was
taken in by the Dominican
Friars and educated
in the institution at
that place; after four
years study he was pre-
pared for college and
finally ordained a priest
~~of the Holy Religion~~. A
branch of the same
institution was estab-
lished in Washington
during the war at which
place Father Egan
was transferred and

from which place &
he happily came to
the 9th Regiment.

The soldiers of the old
9th hold his name
and kindly deeds in
the most affectionate
remembrance. We wish
that space would allow
us to dwell more at length
upon the life works of this
true good man; but
wherever he may be, the
warmest wishes of those
he served so well will
be ever with him!