

Rev. Peter Cooney, C. S. C.

His birth and early education — His connection with Notre Dame, Indiana, — The order of the Holy Cross — He joins the 35th Indiana as Chaplain — His popularity with the troops — He saves a man from being shot — His missions of mercy — Carrying funds for the soldiers under difficulties — A perilous trip to Nashville — Luck and humor — The march — Its trials dangers and hardships — Gallant Charge of the 35th Indiana — Father Cooney's conduct in the camp, the hospital and the field —

Among the many Catholic Chaplains, who had distinguished themselves by their zeal and devotion in the discharge of their duties during the war, few more equally distinguished themselves than the subject of this sketch.

He was cool and brave and never intimidated by fear or danger from the faithful discharge of his duties to the sick, the dying and the wounded.

Father Cooney was born in the County Wick, Ireland,

Ireland, in the year 1832; consequently he is now in the thirty-second year of his age. He emigrated with his parents to this country at the early age of four years. His parents settled near Monroe, Michigan. This place was the scene of Father Cooney's school boy days. Here it was he prepared to enter college; and in the beginning of 1851 he matriculated at the University of Notre Dame, near the town of South Bend, Indiana. In this institution he remained three years, prosecuting his studies vigorously. At the end of these three years he sought the shadows of the theological seminary of St. Mary's, Baltimore, Maryland, where he remained and completed his literary and theological studies, returning to Notre Dame, Indiana, in 1859. He was ordained a Priest in July first, 1859, and at once joined the order of the Holy Cross — an order similar to the Jesuits — whose chief aim is to teach and preach. Immediately after his ordination he was sent to Chicago, where he filled the honorable and important position of Vice-President of the University of St. Mary's of the Lake. He continued for two years in this position, when, on learning that an Irish regiment was being organized in Indiana, and of Gov. Morton's application for a Priest as Chaplain, Father Cooney tendered his services to the country, and was commissioned as Chaplain of the Irish regiment on the fourth of October, 1861.

"This sketch is mainly taken from a work entitled 'Heroes of Honor'."

The work began which we quote says

Notwithstanding he left his native land at an early age, he loves and cherishes with affection the memories of Ireland. The flutter of the "Green Flag" for the sweet strains of "Patrick's Day" or "Garryowen" arouses his Irish blood, and for a moment he forgets he is a Priest and thinks himself a soldier. United to a kind heart, he has a deep fund of wit and humor and many an hour is pleasantly passed in listening to his native wit and visible anecdotes. He knows human nature thoroughly, looks leniently upon the frailties of mankind, mildly censuring the misconduct of the men, and zealously urging them to a faithful performance of their duty to God and country. To say that he is much respected

by the men of The regiment, is saying too little; he is loved by them. To illustrate this we will relate an incident.

Around a blazing camp fire sat a few comrades smoking their shudeens (short pipes) and discussing strategy with all the intensity of controversialists. Father Cooney came hurriedly along, evidently bent on a visit to some sick soldier. The little squad instantly rose to their feet with the hand to the cap. "Good evening boys" said the Father with one of his pleasant smiles, hurried towards the hospital. "There he goes" said one of the group "he's always where he does good and never idle. The likes of him, God bless him, is not to be found betwixt here and the giant's Causeway". "Shure for you, Div. by gorra; his match could not be found in ge traveled from Dan to Barsheeba" said his comrade. "He'll be saying his ^{Prayers} ~~Prayers~~ among the stars, when many of his Collin will be huntin a drop of water in a very hot climate. This last remark was received with a hearty acquiescence by the entire group. Rough and witty as it was, it expressed the feelings of The Soldier for the Chaplain.

On the discharge of his duties, Father Cooney

does not confine himself to his own regiment. Wherever and when ever his services ^{are} required there and there are they freely bestowed. This gives him a reputation co-extensive with the army of the Cumberland, and makes his friends of the Thirty-Fifth Indiana that much the more proud of him. A short time after the battle of Stone River, while the regiment was at Murfreesboro, an incident occurred, which showed the kind heart of the Chaplain.

Michael Nash, a private in the Sixty-Fifth regiment Ohio volunteers, was sentenced to be shot to death at Nashville, on the Fifteenth of June 1863. The sentence was to take effect between the hours of two and four P. M. Father Cooney, hearing of the affair, started for Nashville, to be present at the execution, and administer the rites of his church to the condemned man. Having prepared the unfortunate soldier for his final march, the Chaplain made enquiries respecting his case. The facts were these: on the morning of the thirty first of December, when Johnsons division

was surprised, and McCook hurled from his position by a superior force, the Sixty-Fifth was thrown into momentary confusion. Nash, being separated from his command, fell into the tide of fugitives who were retreating towards Nashville. By the irresistible current of panic-stricken soldiers, he was carried back to Lavergne. Here he was arrested. From the evidence it appeared that Nash did not intend to desert. He might have been brave as those, who stood the galling fire; but having been caught by the rushing current of a panic, he was swept from the field. It was now half past twelve, M. If the unfortunate man be saved, no time must be lost in communicating with the General. Without making known his intentions to any one, Father Cooney telegraphed to Gen. Rosecrans, at Murfreesboro.

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the facts of the case, and the circumstances supporting them, and concluded by saying:

"Were I under the impression that he intentionally deserted, I would not say a word in his behalf; the good of the service would require his death. But I am convinced of the contrary. I respectfully beg, therefore, for him some other punishment than death.

"Signed,

P. P. COONEY,
"Chaplain Thirty-Fifth Ind. Vols."

Two o'clock arrived, but brought no answer to the dispatch. The detail to fire upon Nash assembled; their guns were loaded; the ground for his execution was selected, and about three thousand persons were assembled to witness the tragedy. The open coffin awaited its victim, and an artisan unfastens the heavy shackles from the culprit's limbs, that he may take his last march on the great highway which leads from Time to Eternity. A messenger enters the cell and hands to the jailor one of those "yellow covered" communications. "His death warrant," whispered some one, and all was still as death. The jailor broke the seal and read aloud:

"Michael Nash, sentenced to be shot to-day, is reprieved.

"By order of

MAJ. GEN. ROSECRANS."

The prisoner, heretofore calm and collected, now became pale and agitated. Instantly those around him rushed forward and clasped his hands in hearty congratulation. The prisoner, looking intently on Father Cooney, knew the source of all his mercy. Tears of joy rolled down his manly cheeks. But another trouble. Nash under the direction of his confessor, had written a farewell letter to his mother, informing her of his sad fate, and saying his last farewell. That letter had gone, carrying news which would break her heart. "Got a bit of it."

Father Cooney, keeping his secret, had that letter in his pocket. Nothing now remained to complete the Soldier's happiness; he walked from his prison a free man — thankful to God and the good Father, and grateful to his General, whom he now knew to be merciful as well as just and brave. A Chaplain has more than one duty to perform

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to the men of his regiment. Whilst the spiritual welfare of the men is of primary importance, he is not at liberty to neglect the soldiers temporal comfort and happiness. To the duties of the priest, Father Cooney adds the kindness of Father and friend.

On every pay day he receives money from the soldiers and becomes banker without fee or discount. It is a difficult work faithfully and honestly to discharge the duties of banker to a regiment.

A certain amount is ordered to be sent to the "dear ones at home", a few dollars ~~to be~~ kept to be drawn at will for a "bit of tobacco" or may be a "drop of the drink to warm the heart." Of this latter commodity the good chaplain is extremely jealous.

He has often declared that this same "drop of drink" is the curse of Irishmen, and in order to guard against its badeful influence, Father Cooney has organized a temperance society, of which he is the President. This society does not embrace all the members of the regiment, nor are its members "life members." The pledge is generally taken for six months or a year, and to their credit be it said, it is rarely if ever violated.

Through the practice of temperance and economy, the Irish regiment, on three different occasions, has sent home by the hands of Father Cooney alone the round sum of forty

thousand dollars. To be the custodian and messenger to carry such sums of money is at once a responsible and perilous position.

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In November, 1862, the regiment lay in camp at Silver Spring, eighteen miles from Nashville. It was after the severe campaign of Buell versus Bragg and Bragg versus Buell, when each in turn, to use the phrase of Emil Shalk, "had recourse to the offensive-defensive strategy." During the repose at Silver Spring the Paymaster visited the troops, and the Thirty-Fifth Indiana placed in the hands of Father Cooney the snug sum of twenty-three thousand dollars, to be carried home and distributed to their friends. The road between Silver Spring and Nashville was thronged with guerrillas, and many a blue jacket, unconscious or careless of the danger, was taken prisoner. Col. Mullen having business at Nashville—where Gen. Rosecrans then had his headquarters—placed an ambulance at the disposal of Father Cooney to carry himself, companions and treasure to Nashville. The party, consisting of Col. Mullen, Father Cooney, the Colonel's Orderly, and a Mr. Korbly, formerly sutler of the regiment, expecting to overtake Gen. Crittenden and escort, boldly pushed forward. After going four miles it was ascertained that Gen. Crittenden and escort were not on the road. Then came the question, "Shall we go back or go on?" "We'll go on," said the Colonel. And away the party dashed, believing there was safety in speed. On the road were courier posts about three miles apart, but this gave no security to our travelers. Our party, with fresh caps on their pistols, moved forward. Duck river, hemmed in by bluffs, was to be crossed. The enemy had destroyed every bridge; and the party was compelled to "take water." They met and overcame every difficulty—for the stream had to be crossed many times on the route—until they arrived at the last ford. In crossing the river the ford was missed, and a steep bank presented itself. Jimmy Welch, the driver of the ambulance, was bold of heart and had unbounded confidence in his team. He "made a run on the bank"—"the bank broke,"—Jimmy and his team rolled gently back to the river; his horses, that "couldn't be matched either at Doncaster or a circus,"

wouldn't pull a pound. Night was fast approaching. What was to be done. "Arrah, give them their wind and they'll come out o' that like a daisy," said the ever confident Jimmy. A few moments were allowed the beasts to rest, all put their shoulder to the wheels, but the off horse would not move. Jimmy applied the whip and the party yelled, but the "off horse" still refused. The sun was setting, the party had yet to travel eleven miles, and carry twenty three thousand dollars, which were locked up in Father Cooney's trunk.

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"Holloa, gentlemen," said a ^{our} ~~carrier~~, dashing up, "you must get out of here; there is a party of fifty or seventy guerrillas a short distance over here, and you'll go up." Just then a sharp rifle crack added to the persuasive speech of the dragoon. A council of war was called. "Father booney" said the colonel divide your money among us four, and we will run when we can and fight when we must." This did not meet with favor only as a ~~last~~ ^{last} resort. Two or three other propositions were made, all in quite an unparliamentary manner, when the spattering picket firing, in the rear and on the flank of the road, suddenly broke up the council of war. Emergencies develop men's genius. A small mill being near, the long rope which had been used for ~~day~~ the purpose of dragging logs from the river, was pressed into service, likewise two yoke of oxen. One end of the long rope was fastened to the tongue of the ambulance; the oxen were hitched to the rope; up came the wagon and its treasure. Bang! Bang! soon again went the rifles of the guerrillas. "Come jummy hurry up now and let's be off" "Dont be hasty said jummy, drawing his pipe out of his mouth and coolly throwing over his nose a column of smoke. "Go easy I'll take yees to Nashville inside our hour, or I'll not leave hide enough on the horse to make a pair of brogues for a tinker."

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And Jimmy kept his word. Within the hour the party were safe within inside the lines at Nashville. Was there really any danger? The post in the rear was attacked and driven in; the whole line was broken up, and the army moved and concentrated at Nashville.

These sketches and incidents are given to show the reader what is necessary to make up, in detail, a campaign, and we

take those of the Irish regiment because of its "peculiar institutions." With its

"Fighting and marching,
Pipe-claying and starching."

MARCHING

The sorest trials and severest sufferings of the soldier are on the march. Toiling beneath a burning sun, dust shoe-mouth deep, water scarce, the soldier marches and suffers. A battle to him is a thousand times preferable to tramping and marching. Sometimes he presses through the choking dust, his lips and tongue being dry and parched and crisped. Again he struggles through the tenacious mud, with knapsack on his back, and forty rounds of ball cartridge in his box—"arms at will—route step." With all the fatigues of the march, there are many little occurrences which give life and spirit to the troops. The light hearted members of the Irish regiment will cheerfully respond to the enthusiastic calls for a song—a merry, rhyming, chiming lilt, that raises Irish blood to boiling heat—and the response is received, as usual, with a cheer.

"Come Dennis, ye sowl, give us a song."

"Oh the bad luck to the one iv me can sing a bit. Shure me throat is as dhry as a magazine," was Dennis' reply, as he evidently wanted "coaxin."

"Can Dennis sing?" asked another. The question was propounded only to provoke discussion.

"Is it him? he sings like a Mavish; (Mavis) he has a voice that would brake up a female boardin school or a nunnery," was the reply. This last superb compliment caused Dennis to clear his throat. After a few coughs, shifting his musket to the opposite shoulder, he gave to his comrades a history of Irish courtship in verse. At the end of every verse, there was loud applause, but when that which recounted the fair one's shyness and coquetry, as,

"Arrah Paddy, says she, don't ye bother me,
Arrah Paddy, says she, don't ye taise me,
Arrah Paddy, says she, would ye smudther me;
Oh the devil go wid ye be aisy."

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The applause was "tremendous" shaking the column from company A to the rear guard of the regiment. Such occurrences as the one narrated frequently occur — They lighten the heart and quicken the steps of the soldier.

It is astonishing the number of miles traveled by Indiana regiments since the opening of the war. As an example the Irish regiment marched from January the twelfth to December first 1862 eleven hundred and forty-five miles. On the twenty-second of May 1862, the Thirty-Fifth and Sixty First and Second Irish regiments — were consolidated. Col. Mullen of the Sixty First, became Lieutenant Colonel of the Thirty-Fifth. Soon after the consolidation. Col. Walker resigned, and was succeeded by Lieut. Col. Mullen.

~~Skirmishing~~

The march from McMinnville, Tennessee, to Unionville Kentucky, was the most severe the regiment ever experienced. The weather was extremely hot; no water could be obtained, save from stagnant pools. The men were on half rations. Officers and men exhibited great stamina, and heroic endurance.

At Franklin, Tennessee, the enemy appeared on the flank, and frequent skirmishing was the result. As the "flanker" opened fire, the column came to a halt, ready to deploy into a

line of battle. A few rattles of musketry, interspersed with the hoarse barking of a howitzer, settled the affair; and along the line was heard the soul stirring command "forward".

At Louisville the Irish regiment was in the brigade commanded by Col Stanley Matthews* — Vanclerc's division and Crittenden's corps. From Louisville to Wild Cat the march of the army met with continued resistance. At Perryville the enemy gave battle. The Thirty-Fifth was not seriously engaged.

On the morning of the eighth of October, heavy skirmishing on the left and front gave evidence that the enemy intended to stand. The occasional rattle of musketry was drowned by rapid battery explosions. All doubts were now removed.

The gallant Crittenden pushed his corps rapidly forward. Nearer and nearer sounded the rattling musketry and the heavy reporting howitzer. The men cheered and pushed forward.

"Steady, boys, steady, you'll get enough of it directly," said the Colonel.

"Be the holy pokers, thin, it'll take enough o' that same to go round the Thirty-Fifth," replied one of its members.

"Where's Col. Mullen?" asked a staff officer, dashing up, his horse reeking with foam.

"Here he is, sir," replied the Colonel.

"Colonel, you will occupy the extreme left of your brigade. There is the line on the crest of that hill"—pointing with his sword. "Now look out; the enemy is about turning McCook's right. Be ready to change front on tenth company," and away he dashed.

The men heard the orders, and were in the best possible spirits. Jokes passed freely among the dauntless, light-hearted Irishmen. "All were eager for the fray." A little incident here occurred which we must relate.

At Munfordsville some of the men took "a dhrop too much;" and while the regiment was resting in column by companies, a difficulty occurred between the officer of the guard and those who had been drinking. The guard was about being overpowered—the mutineers cocked their rifles to fire. Col. Mullen, seeing the guard in peril, and discipline violated, drew his sabre, and dashed into the midst of the mutineers. The guard fired, killing the ringleader, and wounding one of his followers. A mutineer, who aimed his

* Now one of the justices of the U. S. Supreme Court.

musket at the Colonel, was promptly arrested. This man (Daley) was tried by court-martial; but his sentence had to be approved—which led to the opinion that the sentence was death—before it could be made public. He was handcuffed, and ordered to march in the rear of the regiment. As the orders to get into line of battle at Perryville were given, the Colonel rode from front to rear of his regiment. Daley was ironed and surrounded by the guard. "Lieutenant," said the Colonel to the officer of the guard, "take those irons off the prisoner." The order was promptly obeyed. "How do

your wrists feel, my man?" asked the Colonel. "Pretty well sir" replied Daley. "Can you shoot with them?" "I think I could sir if I had a gun," "Orderly bring this man a musket, and equipments, and forty rounds of cartridge."

"Now Daley" said the Colonel "you have been tried by a court martial for mutiny and attempting to take the life of your superior officer. I don't know what that sentence is; you can judge as well as I. Take that musket and on the field a head of us, wipe out that sentence, and, by the blessing of God, I'll help you to do it." The poor fellow rushed forward, and, seizing the hand of his officer, covered it with tears. "There, there, now go. You are a free man and a soldier once more". Daley has since proved himself, on more than one occasion, to be a soldier.

Forward the Thirty-Fifth!" and away went the regiment to its position. The battle raged furiously. The line of the third brigade was formed, and ready for the enemy, or for orders to go to him. From two o'clock until five P.M., the storm of battle raged. All our left were engaged. Mc Cook, Gilbert, Jackson, Rousseau, and the Lytle, and the gallant Starkweather, were there.

Here comes a staff officer. "Send forward two companies of your regiment as skirmishers, and clear that underbrush, Gen Woods division is coming up to occupy your left." Said an officer of Colonel Matthews staff. Co. D, under Lieut Fasson, and Co. B, under Lieut O'Brien, were ordered to that duty. Major Duffiey commanded this battalion of skirmishers. He kept his eye well to the front, and marched upon the enemy's deployed line. The enemy fell back making but a feeble resistance. Wood approached in fine style, and entered the conflict; but it was too late. The sun had gone down, and hostilities ceased.

"Night threw her mantle o'er the earth
And pinned it with a star"

The next morning the enemy fled, and were pursued by the victorious Union army. Crittenden in advance.

Nothing of importance occurred until the Thirty-Fifth approached the little town of Crab Orchard. Here it was reported the enemy would make a stand. It was three.

o'clock, A. M. The round full moon made everything light as day. Vandev's division is ordered to march and dislodge the enemy, who is said to be three miles ahead. Skirmishers are thrown out, and the column moves. "Bang, bang!" The enemy is found. The fire of the platoons in reserve is instantly answered by three rapid shots from the enemy's artillery, posted beyond a creek. The Seventh Indiana battery, in the rear of the first line, replies, but their shot and shell whiz over the Thirty-Fifth, and fall a few yards in advance. The contending batteries wax warm, and the road is literally plowed up.

"Did you see that?" said Father Cooney, as a shell burst immediately in front of him. "I think I did," replied the Colonel. "This must be stopped," said the Chaplain, refer-

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ring to the Indiana battery's bad range. "That what's I am going to do," said the Colonel, referring to the enemy; "if I can only get across that narrow bridge." Orders were received to cross the bridge, and take position. "Now, every mother's son of you keep your mouths shut until we cross the bridge, when you may yell till your hearts content," said the Colonel. "Fix bayonets and forward," and away they go. A short turn in the road saves the regiment, the enemy shelling the road. The Thirty-Fifth debouches to the left, until the creek is reached. Instantly they rush to the right for the bridge. The head of the column is over. "Double quick," and with deafening yells the Thirty-Fifth, closely followed by the Fifty-First Ohio, rush for the battery. The artillery fly at their approach, leaving two artillerymen, and a few infantry skirmishers, in the hands of the assailants. Not a man of the Thirty-Fifth was injured in this little affair.

From this time till Gen. Rosecrans assumed command of the army, nothing of special interest occurred.

LAVERGNE.

On the ninth of December, 1862, Col. Matthews, commanding the third brigade, consisting of the Twenty-First and Eighth Kentucky, Fifty-First Ohio, and Thirty-Fifth Indiana, with a section of Swallow's Seventh Indiana battery,