

Confederate Veteran. Vol. IX

PRIVATE M'DEARMAN AT MURFREESBORO.

I give you my experience in the battle of Murfreesboro. I belonged to Company H, Twelfth Tennessee Regiment, Preston Smith's Brigade, Cheatham's Division. About dawn on the morning of December 30, 1862, the battle opened with the Alabama Brigade in our front. The Federals were on a hill in the woods. The Alabamians had to go through an open field to attack. The fighting was terrific for some time, and our men had to fall back. They were cut to pieces terribly when we were ordered forward to the edge of the field to lie down by an old hedgerow. The enemy cheered like a lot of little schoolboys. Cheatham gave orders for every man to be ready, and at the command "Attention" for each one to rise on his right knee and shoot under the smoke of the enemy's guns. Then we were to load and fire as we advanced. At the command every man was in his place. The enemy advanced downhill. We fired all at once, and rose yelling. Cheatham's and Pat Cleburne's men could beat the world on a yell. When we got to where they were when we fired on them there was a blue line of dead Yanks across the field. We kept as close to them as possible, firing as we advanced. I saw a large ash tree in the edge of the woods, and made for it. When I reached it I was so nearly exhausted that I could scarcely get my breath. I took a swallow of water, and then reloaded my gun. Soon the Yanks' battery at our front in the woods opened on us with grape and canister, and then their infantry too. That was a squally time. Our officers halloed: "Charge men! charge! Gen. Cheatham says that battery must be taken if it costs the life of every man." We raised a yell, sent a volley into their lines, started at them, and never stopped until we got the battery of six guns. Then our command turned some of those guns upon them.

The Yankees re-formed promptly, and charged us. Then orders came thick and fast, "Fire! fire! fire, men!" and we did. About that time eighteen guns of the Federal batteries in a cedar brake to our right drove an enfilading fire of canister down our lines, and we began to waver. It seemed that every tree and man there would be torn to pieces. The officers got guns and went to work with us, appealing to us to "Stand firm; retreat means death." About that time I saw an old "Reb" to my right take off his hat and yell: "We have got 'em! [sic] We have got 'em!" [sic]

Soon afterwards I saw eighteen of our guns coming, touching the ground only in high places. The wheels of the cannon hardly stopped rolling before our boys opened on the Yankee batteries in the cedar brake. The first round silenced about half of them. They gave them another volley and shut them up. Then the artillery bugle sounded: "Limber up." Every man was quickly in place, and with hat in hand went yelling like demons. We

raised a yell—those that were left of us—expecting to advance, but we were ordered to give way for Pat Cleburne's men. Those of us who survived unhurt were ordered to take the wounded back to our field hospital. We had suffered fearfully. We built fires that night and slept on the frozen ground.

About midnight another soldier and I got up to warm. The moon was shining brightly. He proposed that we go to the cedar brake and see why the Yankees stopped firing so quickly. We went, and such a sight I had never seen. The havoc our guns had made was appalling. The next day Bragg ordered Breckinridge to make a charge on the right, the result of which caused us to fall back to Shelbyville.

Trenton, Tenn., June 9, 1901.