

Major Nathan Parker

58

KENTUCKY CAVALIERS IN DIXIE.

CHAPTER VII.

MAJOR NATHAN PARKER.

"Charge them, my brave boys!"

"Nor shall his glory be forgot
While Fame her record keeps;
Or Honor points the hallowed spot
Where Valor proudly sleeps."

ONE of the noblest duties of the living is to perpetuate the virtues and memories of the dead. In obedience to the impulse of this sacred sentiment, I now attempt to sketch a soldier whose attractive personality and superb martial bearing challenged the love and admiration of all men; a chieftain whose escutcheon was stainless as the robe of an angel in heaven; a cavalier whose every word and deed was absolutely beyond criticism—Major Nathan Parker. I can employ no language eulogistic of this lovable officer that will not awaken a responsive echo in the heart of every man who served in the Fourth Kentucky Cavalry. While the soldiers admired the cool, brave, imperturbable Giltner, and enthusiastically sang pæans in praise of the dashing, indomitable Pryor, they *loved* Parker, who, calm, kind, modest and courteous, readily won the unswerving fealty of all his companions in arms.

Tall and erect, well proportioned, but not very strong, rather dark complexion, jet-black hair and beard, fascinating dark eyes, soft and kind in expression, Major Parker was not only an attractive personage, but he was lovable. He was invariably neatly attired, wearing the uniform of a Confederate major. A truer patriot or knightlier soldier never fought nor ever died. He fought for the Confederacy, and for the Confederacy he died. He was the "Stonewall" of his regiment; yea, of the brigade. A soldier of great fortitude, he never murmured at any hardship, nor hesitated to obey an order that would carry him into the jaws of death.



MAJOR NATHAN PARKER.

When, amid the tempest of battle, men were falling about him and the lines wavering, Major Parker, cool and dauntless, was the last to retire, seemingly, like Stonewall Jackson, to love nothing so much as the whizzing of bullets, the shrieking of shells, the flash and roar, the clamor and din of battle. He was not only a commander, but a comrade, fighting with his men. If he had a crust of bread, he shared it with the humblest soldier. Though dignified in bearing, no soldier hesitated to approach him for advice or information. He was just as courteous to one of the boys in the trenches as to any officer with stars on his collar. In foregoing chapters I have had occasion to mention this model hero, and his name will hereafter frequently appear. He was by nature a military man, and no vocation in life would have suited him so well as that of a professional soldier. His deeds we honor, his death we mourn; and yet, it seemed eminently fitting that this officer should die on a battlefield. His was an ideal soldier's death, falling, as he did, in the uniform of the Southern Confederacy, amid her soldiers and advancing flags. He died unconquered, his last words being, "Charge them, my brave boys." This occurred near Wytheville, Va., in a battle between the Confederates under General John H. Morgan and the Federals under General Averill, May 10, 1864. The ball that killed Major Parker struck him immediately over the heart. It being a spent bullet, it merely discolored the skin, the concussion causing death, which was instantaneous. It may be that the major had heart trouble; I do not know. As he sank to the ground, he uttered the words, "Charge them, my brave boys," and the same words are inscribed on his tomb at Bedford, Ky., his home, where, after the war, the remains were brought from Virginia, and interred with imposing ceremonies. 'Tis well. 'Neath his parent turf his body rests, far from the gory field, where strange footfalls and tongues resound along the heedless air.

"The sunshine of his native sky
Smiles sadly on him here;
And kindred eyes and hearts watch by
The hero's sepulcher."

While I thus memorialize Major Parker, it must not be

forgotten that thousands of humbler soldiers died just as valorously for the "lost cause."

The South, God love her, has not forgotten her slain sons.

[*General Orders No. 52.*]

HEADQUARTERS FIRST BRIGADE MORGAN'S CAVALRY.

WYTHEVILLE, VA., May 11, 1864.

I. The remains of Major Nathan Parker, Fourth Regiment Kentucky Cavalry, will be buried by his own regiment, with military honors, to-day at 3 P. M.

II. Lieutenant-Colonel M. T. Pryor, Fourth Kentucky Cavalry, will superintend the military ceremonies, Rev. S. F. Cameron the religious ceremonies, commencing at 2:30 o'clock, at the Presbyterian Church.

These marks of respect are but outward testimonials of the reverence we owe the distinguished dead.

No token of grief can sufficiently express our deep sorrow at the loss of such a man, so open in his character, so noble in his action, so calm and heroic in his bearing. Few men have ever equaled and none have ever surpassed the singular and sublime integrity of his life.

To his bereaved family, in a distant State, his fall is an irreparable loss. His country had no purer patriot, no braver defender. The regiment of his constant care and affection will long feel his loss and mourn his fall.

It is only in our higher faith, that "All is for the best," we can find consolation in our grief at this unexpected stroke from the hand that "doeth all things well."

Though the grave shall hide forever from our view the noble form of that godlike man, his memory shall not perish from our hearts, nor his name be forgotten.

Soldiers, we can best testify our high appreciation of his character and our lasting affection for his kindness by imitating his example and following his pathway, which will ever shine with the unfading luster of his noble deeds.

Let his memory be our cynosure through life, and his last words, "Charge them, my brave boys," our rallying cry and song of victory.

By order,

COLONEL GILTNER,
Commanding Brigade.

EDWARD O. GUERRANT, *A. A. G.*