

THE IRISH BRIGADE.

HEAD QUARTERS IRISH BRIGADE, N. Y.,
PETERSBURG, VA., June 22, 1864. }

To the Editors of the Irish-American:

Assuring you that I avail myself of the earliest possible opportunity to drop you a very few lines, I must solicit your forgiveness for not sending, according to promise, the complete list of casualties amongst the non-commissioned officers and privates of the various regiments constituting the Irish Brigade. I was, in truth, having it made out for you, when the oft-repeated order came "to change base" from the Chickahominy to the James River; and, in the breaking up of our camp, many of our papers got so irretrievably deranged, that now, at the first breathing spell, I find, the completion of the work, for the present at least, an actual impossibility.

Of course you know that in crossing to the James River we met with no interference from the Confederates, and that immediately on our reaching it, we were at once pushed up to the intrenchments before Petersburg, against which we, of the old Second Corps, have been kept charging and storming, till it is apparently found, after cruel losses, in which our best and bravest are out down, that the continuance of such havoc would result in, not the capture of Petersburg and Richmond, or the "driving of Lee to the last ditch," but the utter annihilation of the grand veteran army of the Potomac. While I say this, and though I may appear to write to-day in a gloomy mood, your readers must not think that we of the old Second Corps acknowledge defeat. No! though admitting the gallantry and skill of our enemies, we know that we have never yet met them in a fair, stand up fight, that they were not routed. But yet, there is no denying that to-day we are sad indeed, for very many of the most splendid of our comrades lie cold in death; and while we continue to be poor human nature—invested with its frailties as well as its aspirations—our hearts of course must be in some way depressed at the depleted state of our lines.

If this be so, as one takes a general view of a large army or corps—a view in which we only notice the general loss, and the fact that it has been sustained without any commensurate success—what must be the feelings of your correspondent who, to-day, mourns his military father and brothers? Col. Patrick Kelly, Capt. Blake, Lieut. J. Byrnes, of the 88th; Capt. O'Neill, 69th; Adjt. McDonald, 63d; and other braves who were of the recent killed; while amongst the maimed and shattered, perhaps for life, are Capts. O'Shea and Driscoll, and Lieut. O'Connor, of the 88th; Lieut. Col. McGee, Lieuts. Brennan and Sweeney and Sergeant-Major Murphy, of the 69th; Lieut. Kelleher and others of the 63d. For our dead comrades, especially Col. Patrick Kelly, the profoundest regrets are uttered. Over his lifeless body, on its being brought from under fire, by order of Capt. Maurice W. Wall, commanding the 69th Regt., strong old veteran soldiers wept like children, and wrung their hands in frenzy. At this or any other exhibition of deep grief, you, who knew for years and years the sterling virtues of him whose beaming dark-brown eye never flashed brighter than in that last fatal charge which he led with almost unrivalled gallantry—his trusty, unsheathed sword being held above his head till the instant when the rebel bullet pierced his brain—at our grief and prevailing sadness, I say, you will not wonder. In truth, from the organization of the Brigade to the hour of his death, there never was a more unblemished soul in it than honest Colonel Patrick Kelly. This is the common feeling with us all here—especially the few remaining of his old comrades in the New York regiments of the Brigade.

But I grieve to tell you, that it is a Brigade no longer; and, as was said to me, yesterday, by one of our truest "Faug-a-Ballagh's"—a gallant little officer who first served under and fought by the side of the heroic Captain Clooney—"without the protection of Providence, the remnant of our heroic little Brigade will lose what it has won; for all that now remains of it is the recollection of its services and sufferings."

I cannot prolong painful reflections; neither, just now, am I able to attempt any eulogy of our gallant dead. This, however, you in New York will faithfully attend to. Give but the records, and they alone will be the tribute most honorable to the memory of the virtues and gallantry which, with "Pat Kelly's" death, became eclipsed.

Of camp gossip, you may be sure, I have to-day very little; and that nearly is comprised in the fact, that Capt. John C. Foley has been, after much delay, mustered into the service as first lieutenant in the company of Capt. Maurice W. Wall, 69th Regt. It is too bad that one of our oldest and truest officers, such as Capt. Foley has proved himself, should be thus wronged of his rank, after the raising of a company. I hope, however, he will soon meet with promotion.

I must close, for orders have just come to "fall into line of battle" in anticipation of an attack from the enemy.

Faithfully yours,

MAURICE OF THE FAUG-A-BALLAGHS.