

CHARGING MISSIONARY RIDGE.

Instinct of Self-preservation Moved the Soldiers, Says Division Officer.

A stranger at Chattanooga, Tenn., strolling over the battle-field of Missionary Ridge, cannot help but notice, from time to time, the name of Gen. Absalom Baird on the various markers and monuments planted here and there to indicate the position of troops during that memorable battle. From these he will learn that in that engagement Gen. Baird played a part which for conspicuous gallantry and courage is worthy of emulation by future generations of American soldiers. Speaking recently to some friends of the battle of Missionary Ridge, and of the peculiar circumstances under which the Federals won the victory in that fight—circumstances somewhat similar to what occurred at Bull Run, though with far different results—Gen. Baird said:

"The charge up the slope of Missionary Ridge, in which battle I commanded one of the divisions, was like the retreat at Bull Run in the respect that neither was ordered. Some have wondered what it was that prompted the Federal soldiers to make this charge against orders, and the general opinion has been that it was because they had no difficulty in taking the first line of works and supposed that things would be about the same on the top of the hill. From what I know and saw during this battle, I think that view is a mistake.

"We had orders, it is true, to take the first line of works running along the base of the ridge, and there to stop, pending further orders. When we did this we found ourselves in an extremely uncomfortable position for the reason that we were raked by the guns of the Confederates on the summit of the hill. In fact, I don't remember having ever been in a more exposed and dangerous place in my life. The men felt the discomfort from the first. They hesitated some few minutes after driving the rebels out of their trenches, some of them throwing up shelters of earth and stones with their hands and bayonets (using the latter for both pick and shovel), others making haste to cut down trees, and others still throwing up little miniature forts of fence rails and earth, but the majority had their thinking caps on, trying to divine some means of getting out of the difficulty; and getting out of it quickly. They, as well as the officers, saw that to fall back meant about the same thing as going forward, if not worse, and before the men even realized it themselves the entire column was moving up the slope, a little slow at first, but getting faster every minute, until the men broke forth in cheers and a bayonet charge was in full swing.

"The movement was largely instinctive. In other words, the instinct of self-preservation moved the men to quick decision and prompt action. The officers did not try very hard to arrest the charge, for they, as well as the men, saw that our position at the foot of the ridge was untenable.

"The charge was made somewhat in short rushes. The men would hasten up the ridge for a few minutes, and then



FILLING THE BIG BARREL.

drop behind trees or whatever afforded shelter, until they finally reached the top and drove the rebels from their guns. Bragg's line was not more than two deep at any point along his line of works, he having scattered his army out along the ridge top for a distance of ten or twelve miles."