GENERAL PATTON'S WEATHER PRAYER

In the spring of 1945 I was in Luxemburg shortly after Bastogne and the reduction of the Bulge. From Chaplain (Col.) James O'Neil, one of the finest chaplains and truest Christians in the service, I received his personal copy of Patton's much discussed prayer, not for rain, but for the rain to stop—the Patton prayer for battle weather.

The circumstances surrounding the writing of that prayer were characteristic. O'Neil, the Third Army Senior Chaplain, was called to Headquarters, and with all the General's characteristic "fervor," ordered to write and circulate a prayer for a cessation of the rains that had reduced visibility to zero, made aerial observation of enemy movements impossible, and generally threatened the entire Third Army front. "Jimmy" O'Neil obeyed orders. A quarter of a million copies of the prayer were circulated and Army presses ran day and night to get out the little cards with the prayer on one side and George S. Patton's Christmas greetings to his soldiers on the other. An attractive card it is. Every man in the Third Army's active theater had one, and I have carried mine ever since. The prayer reads:

"Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee, that armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory and crush the opposition and wickedness of our enemies, and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen."

The General's greeting read:

"To each officer and soldier in the Third United States Army I wish a Merry Christmas. I have full confidence in your courage, dedication to duty, and skill in battle. We march in our might to complete victory. May God's blessing rest upon each of you on this Christmas Day.

(signed) G. S. Patton, Jr.
Lieutenant General
Commanding Third United States Army"

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General Patton On His Knees

That prayer and greeting were typically Patton. They were from the Old Testament rather than the New and had the ring of Joshua and David at their militant best. They were not written for a soft time but for their occasion; they were words to make men strong—and they did.

I wrote from Luxemburg that at home we may no longer believe that God sends rain in answer to prayer; but that along the Rhine I found 250,000 men who believed—firmly believed—that God stopped the rain in answer to their prayers. Everywhere I went, men told me the story and showed me the cards. The only doubters seemed to be among the officers, especially a few chaplains; but there were no doubters at Patton's headquarters!

At any rate the rains stopped. They began to subside the morning after that prayer went to press on the evening before. "Battle weather" came and stayed for an unprecedented ten days, during which General Patton's army swept the enemy back to the river and presently beyond.

The Patton Prayer is history now and has in this book only the place of history, but something strangely impressive for me inheres in the incident as it relates to a remarkable human I shall not fully understand until I meet him again, just around the corner. A former member of his staff whom I saw in an old barracks camp in England said, "When he gets to the Gate, if there is any delay, St. Peter will get the shock of his long career—but don't worry, George will go through!"

FAITH IS POWER FOR YOU

DANIEL A. POLING

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