

Providence Evening Press
July 29, 1861
2^d R.I.

LETTER FROM THE SECOND REGIMENT.

FAIRFAX, VA., July 18.

To the Editors of the Evening Press:—Dear Sirs:—We left Camp Clark on Wednesday at 1 o'clock. The 2d regiment led the way, and the 1st R. I., 2d New Hampshire and 71st New York were met on Pennsylvania Avenue. There were large throngs of people lining the wayside, and hailed us with friendly and enthusiastic greetings. It was really quite an ovation, and is another evidence of the estimate in which our troops are held. We hardly paused at all in the city, and the march into Virginia over the Long Bridge commenced at once. This bridge is properly named, being more than a mile long, and like all the others I have seen in this region, in wretched repair. We marched steadily onward until night. The principal thing that excited our attention was the miserably cultivated and sterile condition of the soil. The better cultivation of the New England farms more than ever evinces the advantages which they have over us in soil and climate. At dark we turned aside into an open field, about twelve miles from Washington, and lay down for the night on the ground. This was new business to some of us and gave us a fine opportunity to study the moon, stars and the comet. The dew was heavy, but the night clear and we slept soundly.

It was a magnificent sight. The numberless camp-fires and noise of some forty thousand men comprising our whole division.

At daylight the line was again formed and all moved wearily forward, and that too with expectation of immediate conflict. Guns were loaded, flanking companies thrown out, and we looked constantly for the appearance of the enemy. The roads were an improvement upon yesterday, portions of the country better cultivated and the rest quite wilderness-like. The houses were generally closed and forsaken, showing the secession proclivities of the people. "The wicked flee," &c. All were on the alert, and every precaution taken to prevent surprise. Some four miles on, we found the road obstructed by fallen trees. This was repeated four times, but occasioned us trifling delay. Just before Fairfax extensive earth-works were thrown up, and we confidently expected to find batteries and thousands of men behind them ready to resist us. But in this we were disappointed, the enemy's forces having a full hour before taken to flight. Not only their fortifications, but much of their camp property, &c., were left. Bread, meat, &c., just ready for the oven; packages of blankets, partly burned; hospital and all its stores; table furniture, and things too numerous to mention, were among the spoils. It was curious to see the men busy among the letters and papers, whole bundles of which were left behind. Passing this we soon entered Fairfax in triumph, without resistance. The secession flag was still waving from the Court House, but was instantly torn down, and taken by our gallant Governor to the Colonel in command. This is a thriftless place when compared with a New England village, but will serve us very well for this night's quarters. The enemy had fled only an hour or two before our arrival. Fires at their quarters were hardly extinguished; water warm, &c. They have probably fled to Manassas, where we hope to follow them. The men are quite weary, the flanking duty, especially for miles in the woods on either side, being very fatiguing. All are well and in the best spirits, and a night's rest will make all right for fresh service to-morrow. The beautiful country about this town literally swarms with armed men, ready and eager for the fray. How the troops are officered you will learn from papers at Washington. Excuse the pencil, as I have no pen.

Yours, &c.,

Tockwold.

From the files of
John Hennessy

Providence Evening Press
July 22, 1861
Pre-Battle 2^d R. I.

FAIRFAX COURT HOUSE, Va., July 18.

I write this letter upon the ruins of a table in the late hospital of the Confederate army. I use a rebel pen, upon insurgent paper, and the thoughts of Canonius shall find conveyance in sassafras ink. The place is utterly deserted. The rebel troops are far away, and families have fled in terror. A small body of men from the 21 New Jersey regiment, who came as escort to the provision wagons, have stacked their guns over the way, and now loll up in the dirty piazzas of the deserted Farmers' Hotel. A squad of Ellsworth's Zouaves have strolled over this way from their encampment, and are roaming from house to house, clambering in at the windows, scaling fences, and otherwise exhibiting their red ferrets to much advantage. From them I learn that their regiment is hard at work upon the railroad, repairing the destructive ravages of the rebels. Burnside's brigade, with other troops of the centre column of the grand army under McDowell, left early this morning in pursuit of the flying (heh!) South Carolinians. They will be overtaken at Manassas. Long trains of wagons are slowly passing along the road, and I remain behind to send as brief an account as possible of our expedition so far, to anxious friends at home.

We never expected to leave Camp Sprague. Bets were offered at considerable odds that we wouldn't, but found few takers. So often had marching orders been issued and then countermanded, that our patience was exhausted, and we made up our minds to chew our rations to the last barrel, and then go home. Home! I hope that we all will again see the little State of Rhode Island, but I am afraid that many of our boys will fall upon Virginia soil.

We left Camp Sprague Tuesday afternoon with as little baggage as possible, and with three days' rations stored away in our haversacks. We joined the other regiments of the brigade on Pennsylvania avenue, to wit: the New York 71st and New Hampshire 21, and then marched over Long Bridge to take our position at the head of one of the columns of Gen. McDowell's army. The bands played Dixie as we marched over the lengthy fabric, and the structure shook under the hammer-like foot-falls of four thousand mud sills on their way into secession.

We touched the sacred soil, which looks not different from any other average quality of dirt, and passed through the solid gateways of strong picket fences, and under the shadow of Fort Stanton, and took the Columbia road. Pressing on steadily we left Falls Church and Arlington Mills behind. At intervals along the road we would pass the picket guards and exchange salutations with them. About ten miles from Washington we halted at Davis' Cross Roads, and made preparations to bivouack for the night. The men munched away on their unpalatable crackers and junk, and wrapping themselves in their blankets sought soft places on the turf and went to sleep. Strong guards were posted all around, and pickets sent out; and the men slept with their guns in grasping distance.

No alarm occurred during the night, and in the morning the men arose, and after watering the horses and filling their canteens, again they started.

We now went directly towards Fairfax Court House, with a column nearly 12,000 strong. At intervals along the road we would come to places where the enemy had filled up the pathway with solid trees. These obstacles were speedily cleared away by the sappers and miners of the regular army, and we, with our wagons and teams, kept on the even tenor of our way. One tree, an immense one, had been so placed that its butt rose high in the air. The rebels undoubtedly thought that it would present an insuperable obstacle for at least a while. We merely removed the fences at the roadside and marched around it, with no delay whatsoever.

From the files of
John Hennessy

As we neared the stronghold, we all expected to fight. The report had gone around that the picked regiments of the Southern army, (there were at least three from South Carolina) were strongly entrenched—that they numbered 8000 men, and had cannon in plenty, so planted as to take every conceivable avenue of approach. The Colonel—our own Burnside—rode in amongst us, told us to be cool, not flustered, and to obey every order of our officers. The men smiled grimly, and took a tighter clutch on their muskets. Two companies of the Second Rhode Island Regiment were sent out as scouts. The Rhode Island Regiments had the right of the column, and had there been an engagement must have suffered terribly. But we marched into Fairfax untroubled. As we approached along the road, and discerned the earth redoubts, and looking on either side would see the high embankments behind which we knew the most desperate resistance could be made, we could hardly credit the fact that the enemy had fled. Many even then thought that the empty redoubts were only a piece of strategy to lure us further on. The earthworks are about ten feet high, and were constructed of sand bags. It was doubtless the labor of many days to build them.

So precipitate had been the flight of the enemy that they left behind their camp equipage, large amounts of provisions and hospital stores, with which our men very speedily made free.

I must reserve for another time a fuller description of our entree, and conduct in the place. I write now in haste to send this back by a detachment on its return.

We lived well the night we halted in Fairfax. Yankee's stomach digested the dinners prepared for the chivalry, and Northerners lived as Southerners calculated to. Our dirty fingers were plunged into their jam pots, and we drank their whiskey, tea and coffee, ate their sardines and pickles with gusto, and hunted indefatigably for relics. In one yard a whole company threw away their knapsacks. Searching these, we appropriated whatever struck our fancy. We found pistols, Sharp's rifles and bowie knives, and the owners not being present to reclaim the same, we took care of them; and here I will advertise that if any South Carolina gentleman has lost a gridiron, with a label attached marked, "J. V., Quitman Guards, 21 Regt. S. C. V.," he can have it by applying to the undersigned, (if he can get it.) I picked it up in the road. It is handy to sling ty your knapsack on a march, and bully to broil pork by the camp fire.

The place, when we took possession, was utterly desolate. Every man, woman, chick and child had cleared out, and all that welcomed us were a few old darks, who verily thought it was the custom for "dem Norferners" to be addicted to cannibalism, and in the habit of satisfying the pangs of hunger with niggers, raw, roasted, and on the half shell.

The half of what I wish to say, I cannot write—I haven't time. The enemy have fled, and are

Correspondence of the Journal
On the Way to Manassas.
Four Miles West of Fairfax,
Friday, July 19, 1861.

Corresponding under difficulties certainly, with a cartridge box for a table, and forty-five drops of ink, all in the country, as the limit of my material, the drum likely to beat at any moment for an advance.

Tuesday at 1 p. m. we left Camp Sprague, marched through the city and over Long Bridge. I have no time to tell you of our fine appearance, or the enthusiasm which greeted our march. We went about 12 miles, and camped in a large field near Annandale, where we were presently joined by our old friends, the 71st New York and the 2d New Hampshire, the whole constituting Burnside's brigade of the 2d division, commanded by Col. Hunter of the regular cavalry. Next morning the column advanced, led by the 2d Rhode Island, who acted as skirmishers, scouring the woods for half a mile each side of the road. About three miles from Fairfax Court House we came upon the first barricade, consisting of large trees felled across the road for the distance of one hundred yards. Our axemen were ordered to the front, and soon removed the obstruction. We found two similar ones before reaching the town, but they were easily surmounted. Near the town was an earthwork, recently occupied by a battery of light artillery, which had been hurriedly removed. Behind it, at some distance from the road, were three camps. Paymaster Sisson, who was detailed with a party of carbineers to visit them, found much valuable booty, swords, pistols, muskets, clothing, and provisions of every sort. Their flight had evidently been most hurried. Indeed, our advance saw a small party at a distance making off as they entered the fort.

We immediately pushed forward, and entered the town without opposition. A secession flag flying from the top of the Court House was torn down in a twinkling and the stars and stripes substituted, followed by a violent ringing of the bell.

The troops were quartered about the town, and the stores and houses whence the secession owners had fled were thoroughly ransacked. Quantities of camp equipage and hospital stores, mostly marked "South Carolina," were found,—sabres and guns of the most fantastic and obsolete description. But it would be perfectly useless to attempt a description of the heterogeneous assortment of plunder with which every man who took the trouble to forage was adorned. To judge from the uniforms about the camp, we would seem to have many of the Palmetto Guard and other crack secession regiments in our midst. Articles of the most cumbrous and useless description were taken; only to be dropped by the way.

Later in the day sentinels were posted in front of all the houses, and the "loot" was confined to the rebels camps.

Our companies bivouacked in the yards and lanes about town. Yesterday morning we moved one mile west and remained till 4 p. m., after which we advanced to this point. On the way we found pots and kettles and all sorts of camp furniture, cast away by the rebels in their flight. They found time, though, to burn one or two houses on the way. On reaching here we learned that Gen. Tyler's division had suddenly come up on a masked battery which poured in a destructive fire of shot and shell, causing our men to retire. Many were killed and wounded, but you have much better information on the subject than we have. It is reported this morning that the enemy have retired from the battery. We expect to advance upon the Junction shortly. As I write, 12 secession prisoners, one of them a sergeant, are passing, guarded by a double file of soldiers. They are stuffy fellows. Some look defiant and some downcast. I understand the Fire Zouaves took them. Sherman's battery, the Massachusetts 1st and New York 12th took part in the engagement yesterday. I do not mention any of the thousand rumors afloat respecting the loss yesterday, or the next movement to be made, because no accurate information can be obtained, by me at least. One thing is certain, Manassas must be ours, and the Rhode Island men expect to do their part in its reduction. That done, we will return content. I have just been talking with the Quartermaster of the Massachusetts 1st. He thinks about 50 of his brigade are killed. A negro, escaped from the rebel camp this morning, reports dreadful slaughter done by Sherman's battery.

D&W.

Providence Journal

July, 22, 1861

15 + 2d R.I.

From the files of
John Hennessy

July 23, 1861

2d R.I.

LETTER FROM THE SECOND REGIMENT.

CENTREVILLE, July 19, 1861.

To the Editors of the Evening Press:—Dear Sirs—I had no time to mention in my last that on the march from Washington to Fairfax the 2d Rhode Island was the advance regiment, and through the whole day performed all the flank service. This is very tedious. The lines extending a great distance on either side, the men must with great labor make their way over fences, walls, ditches, &c., also through entangled forests, and soon become very weary. This was performed by our companies cheerfully, and all day. Remember, too, that we were in an enemy's country, and expected each moment to come upon a foe, still not a man wavered. Led by our brave and experienced Colonel, in whom we have even increasing confidence, the whole regiment marched steadily on, and the enemy fled before us until we entered Fairfax in triumph, and pulled down the traitor flag they had left floating there. Some excesses were indulged in by the men upon the property of those known to be acting with the rebels, but this was soon checked by the officers, and good order at once restored. I am happy to be able to say that I was not able to trace any excess to the members of the Second Regiment. Of course the men were allowed to distribute the property captured in the fort, &c., as they pleased.

The number of men in and about Fairfax could not have been much, if any, less than eight thousand, and such was the haste in which they left it on one side, as we entered it on the other, that they were compelled to leave not only much heavy camp property, but many of their tents and personal effects. We found munitions, provisions, &c., scattered along the road the next day. This confirms the accounts given to us, that many of the troops were in a very enfeebled condition. In several instances they left their sick behind them. The night was spent at Fairfax, and on the morning of the 18th all were fresh and ready for a new start.

The march commenced quite early and warm work was anticipated by all. In this we were disappointed. After an hours march a halt was ordered, and the men lay down in the woods through weary hours until late in the afternoon. We then marched on towards Centreville; we soon learned that the enemy had fled from that place also. This put an end to the thoughts of battle for that night. We are now in pleasant quarters just at the edge of Centreville, where we are awaiting orders to move on again. This is a fine situation, and the people though secessionists are getting quite accustomed to us and growing quite favorable, and vying with each other in good will and kind acts. Their rights and homes are all respected and they are forming quite a different opinion of Northern people. Beyond us a short distance last evening, several of the advance regiments were run into a masked battery and some loss was suffered, not very great, however.

Manassas Junction is about eight miles from this place. The enemy are in force there, and how soon we are to advance on them we do not know. It is now noon and we are waiting and all in readiness for the order to march. I passed carefully through the encampments of both regiments a few hours since, and I have never seen the men look so well nor appear in better spirits. You will doubtless hear from us again soon and we trust that the account will be satisfactory. The weather is fine and all things about us pleasant. My man made his way to us from Washington this morning and filled the whole camp with joy by bringing to us well-filled mail bags. I cannot spare more time from my welcome letters for this scroll. Yours, in haste,

TUCKER.

From the files of
John Hennessy

LETTERS FROM THE SECOND RHODE ISLAND REGIMENT.

CENTREVILLE, July 20, 1861.

Dear Sirs:—I do not wonder that Robinson Crusoe got so mixed with respect to time. We are almost as bad off already. The only way to find our whereabouts is to find the latest paper and then reckon up the day of the week and month. Our neat and picturesque collection of tents are like Turkish cities, where there are neither names to the streets, numbers to the houses, rules of trade, nor fixed time for anything. The only thing that we are held responsible for is to wait patiently for orders, and when they come, obey them cheerfully and promptly; both of these we are becoming quite experienced in. Yesterday our men turned to and provided themselves with shelter from the sun. Many and willing hands make quick work. Rails from the fences, and trees from the forest, furnished the materials. In a few moments (for it seemed hardly more than that) long rows of rail-framed and bough-covered houses sprung into view as if by magic. The fires scattered among these extended extempore dwellings made during the last evening a splendid picture. Think of the scores of thousands of armed bands seen in the same condition from the adjacent hill-top, and you can form some idea of the magnificence of the whole scene.

We are still at the side of Centreville where we arrived day before yesterday, and from which our enemies have also fled away, leaving not only their fortifications but some of their guns and other property behind them. This time they have not fled far. Their lines and batteries can easily be seen from the hills near us, as well as our own vast army scattered over the plain. We are now face to face with the enemy, and unless they run again, I suppose that the great battle must be on the morrow, and news of its results will come to you on the wings of the lightning. We hope that you will be careful about accepting the reports. Divine Providence permitting, some of us will give to you the earliest reliable accounts. We are pained to night to learn of rumors that are said to have reached and pained you—rumors of battle and wounds and slaughter. What friend it is who invents these I know not, but all know that as yet we have had no battle, and that there are no killed, no wounded nor seriously sick among us. I have spent much time yesterday and to-day among the officers and men, and have been impressed with the obvious good health and fine spirits of a Depend upon it, such men, led by such officers will not quail in the time of battle, nor turn back in their path from the face of the foe. We are favored with officers of rare intelligence and cultivation. Few, if any armies have ever been gathered having so much of these elements them. From the brave and experienced Colonels chosen, we have the most perfect confidence, and if they do not lead us to victory then you may be certain that it is because the God of battles has otherwise decreed.

Gen. McDowell and many others were present at our dress parades both last evening and this, and expressed themselves much pleased with the appearance of the troops and impressed with the attendant religious services in both regiments.

We were under orders to march this morning, but for unexplained cause the movement was delayed. Again the order came to march at 6 P. M., with two days rations—near that hour, this order, too, was revoked. It is now nearly ten and we are under orders to march at two in the morning. This, I think will be executed and tomorrow will be the decisive day. Deserters and prisoners are frequently passing through our lines, indicating weakness on the part of our foe, but I lay down with the anticipation of a dire conflict on the morrow. May the God of mercy, in whom I find confidence and peace in trusting, preside over the strife and guide it to a speedy and just issue.

The whole regiments in which you feel so deep an interest, have never seemed to me so well prepared for the contest. It is wonderful to behold the cheerfulness and to listen to the songs and hymns with which the groves and hills are resounding as I write. I must end my letter, and will lie down with the prayer that the God of the spirit of all flesh will inspire every one of them with a disposition to commit his life and leave all his interests both for time and eternity to the keeping of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have never so felt the blessedness of trust in Him for myself, nor so desired it as the greatest of all blessings for others. May God bless you all and have both you and us in His most gracious keeping.

Yours,
Tockwotton.

CAMP CLARK, July 22, 1 P. M., 1861.

To the Editors of the Evening Press:—Dear Sirs, I am oppressed with long fatigue and overwhelmed with grief, but cannot rest until I have written a few lines to you.

Perhaps the best thing that I can do is to give to you a simple narrative of what has transpired, so far as it has come under my own observation. According to orders issued the night before, we took our line of march yesterday morning at two o'clock. As in the advance upon Fairfax, the Second Regiment led the advance, under the command of General Hunter, who was constantly present to direct and to urge forward the Division. By a forced march of what could not have been less than eighteen miles, lasting from two until about nine o'clock, we reached, by a circuitous route through the wild-ness, the place of conflict—a place called Bull's Run. None of us had rested the night before, for more than an hour or two—some of us had not closed our eyes at all. All were greatly fatigued by the forced and lengthy march—during which we only halted a very few times, and then only for a moment or two. The Second Rhode Island Regiment not only led the advancing column, but, as before, performed all the flanking and skirmishing duty, their flanking lines extending for a great distance into the wilderness and the duties of it attended with great labor. About nine, as we were just coming to the edge of the woods through which we had been winding, the skirmishing commenced by our flanking companies, and word was brought to us that the enemy was waiting for us in force on the open space just beyond.

Without taking a moment to rest or to breathe; even without waiting for others in the rear to join them, the officers and men of the 21 regiment listened to a few sentences of stirring appeal from Gen. Hunter, and, led by their brave Colonel, rushed with a shout into the open space and found themselves face to face, and almost hand to hand, with a greatly superior force of the enemy. The battle commenced instantly and

**From the files of
John Hennessy**

Providence Evening Press

July 25, 1861

2d R.I.

decey. I can compare it to nothing but the mysterious storm spoken of in the Apocalypse, only every drop was a ball, which mowed, and smote, and cut, with the force of lightning. I did not see a man falter. Led by their officers, who shouted forward, and showed themselves as brave and true as steel, the companies rushed through the storm of death and drove the superior force of the enemy before them. In a few moments the battery, led by the brave Capt Reynolds, drove into the field, and wheeling, began to pour their death dealing missiles into the ranks of the foe. This seemed to me to be the most terrible moment of this terrific conflict. The enemy, close at hand, seemed to me to conceive the idea of driving our men back and taking the battery. The air seemed to grow dark and was rendered vocal with the storm of balls cutting through it and rending the trees in our rear. Still the officers, themselves among the foremost, shouted forward, and our men not only maintained the unequal conflict, but steadily drove the enemy before them. Perhaps it was not so long as that, but it seemed to me a full half hour before the other regiments came to our support and the enemy were repulsed and driven back. I supposed the day was gained, as I had not doubted but that it would be from the beginning. Of course there were dead and wounded on every side of us. Some of us had been constantly engaged in bearing them back into the edge of the wood and supporting and consoling them as best we could.

As soon as possible the carriages prepared for that purpose were brought up, and the wounded carried yet farther to the rear and placed in the charge of the surgeons. Our beloved Colonel fell gallantly leading on his regiment. He was

instantly borne to a house near at hand, and then to the hospital below, and every exertion made to revive him, but in vain. There was no consciousness, and he survived but a short time. I need not add that we are filled with the profoundest grief at his loss. May God bless and comfort his wife and mother and whole family!

Of the, to me perfectly mysterious, result of the general battle, I have neither time nor strength now to speak, nor of the retreat. I say result of the general battle, for our part of it was a victory. Our officers fought and fell like heroes, and the whole regiment has gained for itself and the State imperishable fame. Our beloved Governor has proved himself to be among the bravest of the brave. He was constantly in the front of the battle, and when his horse fell dead under him, he was instantly with drawn sword cheering on the men, and through the mercy of God he has escaped with only a scratch. The command of our regiment devolved upon the young and gallant Lieut. Col. Wheaton, son of our senior Surgeon, and he has in every way shown himself worthy to succeed Col. Slocum. I assure you he can ask no higher praise than this. By him and his officers our regiment was kept organized and controlled through nearly the entire retreat, while others were broken and scattered.

We know that we owe to him, and yet more to the cool and indefatigable exertions of our brave Governor, that the result of the conflict was not yet more disastrous. He was with us through the whole—forgetful of self—thoughtful only of the rest.

The beloved dead and wounded we were compelled to leave; not, however, until an arrangement had been made with a superior officer of the enemy who had fallen into our hands to have them most sacredly and tenderly cared for.

Of the extent of our loss I cannot now judge. In our regiment, of the dead and those who may be considered fatally wounded, the number I think will fall short of one hundred. This is all I have time to add. May God sanctify to us and the whole nation this great sorrow.

Yours, &c.,
Tockwotton.

Spang