

**From among Islanders at Fairfax.**

We have the pleasure of printing a part of a private letter from an officer in Company C, 1st regiment. How noble the spirit which it breathes! Rhode Island may well be proud of her sons, when they go forth to fight the battles of the country with such pure and lofty purposes.

FAIRFAX COURT HOUSE, }  
Wednesday noon, July 17. }

We are safe and well at this place, which we reached about noon this day, having left Camp Sprague yesterday at one o'clock.

We had a hot, hard march of about twelve miles, bivouacked for the night, which was pleasant, but with a heavy dew.

The last hour's marching was very slow and cautious—picket guard thrown out in front and each flank—but we moved steadily, firmly forward—every face stern, with a purpose in it.

We found breastworks all along for a mile or more, which could have been easily defended, but the rebels ran from there as from all points, fleeing in such cowardly haste as to leave everything behind,—knapsacks, blankets, even the medical stores in their hospital. Had a brigade, which was to meet us here on another road, arrived in time, the enemy would have been taken in their own camp. As it was, Rhode Island was "ahead of time," came in alone, and the rebels were off, giving us only the usual chance of seeing their heels. The movement of so large a body as this is much less free and easy than a smaller one. An army, or even a brigade, is more unwieldy than our two noble regiments, who moved as one man, to the inspiring voice of their Colonel.

Some of our troops (in other brigades) have helped themselves lawlessly to everything portable. There is the old law and order feeling among us, which respects even the rights of an enemy, and I do not share the enthusiasm for "spoils." I was sorry for any trespass, which brings reproach to our army without discrimination of parties.

I have only time to add that this Fairfax justifies the general reputation of southern towns. Its dilapidated houses and primitive court house being no exception to the Virginia style.

Add to this the empty streets, the homeless negroes, the miserable jail and empty post office, with all the decay and dirt of a southern hamlet, and you have "Fairfax Court House," the famous bug-bear of the secessionists. The rebels having fled, of course there was neither attack nor defence of the place, nor victory in our possession; but it is firm and final so far. We "play for keeps" in this great game of war.

What our next move will be I cannot advise you, for we are a small item in the grand army, though I know to Rhode Island hearts our two regiments seem an army in itself. God keep them, and us—those who await us in our far-off homes. I know old soldiers who will stand fire better than they can talk of home to-day. You know as well as I what we are here for. It is no time for words. A few hours may tell the story of life or death for some of us. But we are cheerful and hopeful to a man. I confess to the spoils of war so far as the writing on confederate letter paper goes. This sheet was taken from the running quartermaster's desk. When and where my next may be written I cannot tell, but you must wait with courage and patience.

We bivouac here to-night. Rations rather hard—but a soldier's life is no holiday, and his real wants are so few that there is no just cause for complaint. There is only one movement for the north to make, and that is *Forward!*

We are favored with the following extracts from a private letter written by a member of Company C, 1st regiment.

FAIRFAX COURT HOUSE, }  
July 17th, 1861. }

Here we are in Fairfax Court House, without a gun having been fired. We only marched five or six miles, but it was an awfully tedious march, for the retreating rebels had cut down trees and stopped up the road (in one place so bad that we had to make a new road), and it was necessary to wait till the axe men had cut down the trees before we could march. In about every 15 minutes there would be a halt, and then we would creep along slowly until another halt was made for the same purpose. The last part of the march was very exciting. The enemy had an extensive earthwork thrown up to protect the road, and we supposed they would make a stand there, but about an hour and a half before we got there they retreated and carried off their cannon. Then we hurried after them. Our advance guard got a good breakfast in the entrenchment that the rebels first evacuated. It had been prepared, I suppose, for the officers. Then we marched into town, and our two regiments are now encamped right about the Court House. The town is a God-forsaken looking place. You cannot find a white woman in the place, so complete has been the exodus.

We found a quantity of hospital stores and camp equipage here, mostly marked S. C. 2d and 3d regiments. I myself have a cup and some other things that the rebel troops left. When we move from here is more than I know, though the U. S. cavalry have gone in pursuit, and I should not be surprised if we were to follow them right on to Manassas, where, perhaps, though I doubt it, they will make a stand.

There are three divisions in all moving on towards Manassas. We are the centre, with another brigade. In our brigade we have 12 pieces of artillery and about 300 cavalry. Gen. McDowell is with us, though he commands the whole movement.

Mr. Joseph P. Manton, who accompanied the first regiment to the battle as a volunteer, has returned, and says that our men did their duty like heroes. Not a man flinched. They went to the field, wearied by a heavy march and after living for two days on hard biscuit, but they fought heroically until their ammunition was exhausted, and the enemy were reinforced by overwhelming numbers, and then they withdrew in order.

Col. Burnside intended that they should act as a reserve force. But on reaching the field it became at once necessary for them to go into action. They did it with a will. Advancing to the brow of a hill they fired in good order and most effectively, retiring to load, and then advancing again. The shells of the battery did fearful execution among the enemy, as could be plainly seen.

The rebels fired chiefly solid shot, which were far less injurious. The officers were at their posts, encouraging and cheering on their men, and Rev. Mr. Woodbury as active as any. Our brigade thought once that the victory was won, as indeed it was. But suddenly immense reinforcements of fresh troops appeared against them, and as the ammunition was exhausted, they could do nothing but retire.

Fearing the attack of cavalry, they attempted to form in squares to resist it. This they were partially successful in accomplishing, but they were so overcome with fugitives from other regiments that they were much embarrassed in their movements. But the cavalry did not reach them.

Jesse Comstock, who was wounded in the leg, was riding in the ambulance, when a horse in a wagon ahead caught his foot in a bridge, and while the ambulance was stopped, a shell burst under it, blowing it and poor Comstock into the air. He was of course instantly killed.

So great was the pressure of disorganized soldiers who joined them on the retreat, that it was impossible for the companies to keep entirely together. Mr. Manton himself was separated from his company for some time. But they came over Long Bridge in line, with Col. Burnside and Gov. Sprague at their head. The Colonel, on a jaded horse, saw them well into their old camp before he sought rest for himself.

The regiments began their march at 1 o'clock Sunday morning before breakfast, went 13 miles to the field, fought five hours, and marched back 38 miles to Washington without rest or food.

George E. Goulding of this city, reported killed, is safe in Washington.

Major Sullivan Ballou was wounded by a cannon ball, which passed through his horse and struck his leg. He died during the amputation in the hospital.

Capt. Tower was shot early in the action, a ball hitting him in the throat.

Lieut. Prescott fell with his men. Mr. Manton and some of his comrades brought off his body about half a mile under a hot fire, but they were obliged to drop it.

James Dougherty, of the Mechanic Rifles, first regiment, was killed. He last worked in this city for Daniel C. Grimwood. His father resides in Fall River.

James P. Dockray was wounded by a shot through the elbow.

Col. Siocum was shot in the breast and in the leg. Mr. Manton saw him half reclining in a farm house, very pale, and apparently about to die.

Lieut. Col. Frank Wheaton, Captain of Cavalry, U. S. A., commanded the second regiment after Col. Siocum was wounded. He discharged his duties finely. Our men formed under fire. The first regiment was stationed on the left, the second to their right, and the battery on the extreme right. A farm house and barn and hay stacks were on our left. Woods partially protected the centre. The New York 71st was on the left of our first regiment. The enemy had a battery at the extremity of each wing, and their infantry were in a semi-circle on the brow of a hill between the batteries. They once or twice attempted to charge across the valley between them and our men, but the well directed volleys of our regiments drove them back. They resorted also to the disgraceful and cowardly expedient of attempting to decoy our men by sending out bands with our flag, and shouting that we were firing on our own men. But they did not succeed in this trick. Mr. Manton thinks that the infantry fired at a distance of about a hundred yards from the enemy, and that the battery fired at about five hundred yards. He says that after the first five minutes the peculiar sensation incident to the first experience under fire passes entirely away. Almost all our men were killed by musket shots. The shell and cannon balls of the enemy did but little execution.

After Col. Hunter, who was in command of the division, was wounded, Col. Burnside took his place. Gov. Sprague and Rev. Mr. Woodbury rendered most valuable service aiding him. At 4 o'clock our men believed that they had completely won the battle, as the batteries of the enemy were silenced. But the ammunition of our battery failed, and some fresh troops were brought up on the other side. It therefore became necessary to retreat. The manner in which the retreat was conducted we have referred to above. Our men expected to be pursued by cavalry, but were not. Some artillery followed them, and at a creek two or three miles beyond Centerville they came within range of our column, which was impeded by an accident at the bridge. It was there that Comstock was killed, and that the battery were obliged to leave some of their guns.

It is only four or five miles by the direct road from the position occupied by the forces opposed to our regiments to a point in the road near Centerville, where our men must pass, while by the circuitous route they had to take the distance to Centerville is thirteen miles. If the enemy had sent cavalry and artillery across to that place, our brigade must have been fearfully cut up. But they had not the courage or the strength to do it. Some of our wounded men evinced an almost superhuman resolution in dragging along and making their way to Washington. For it was only by the greatest power of endurance and of will that those who were well were able to accomplish the terrible journey after the fearful work of the day. Those who arrived in Washington early only showed that they had more resolution and strength than those who lagged behind.

Correspondence of the Journal.  
The Rhode Island Regiments in the Battle.

WASHINGTON, July 23, 1861.

I had no heart to write yesterday. I have not much to write to-day. It is an ungrateful task to describe a defeat, but I have no choice.

At 2½ o'clock on the morning of Sunday, the 21st, our two regiments were roused from their brief sleep, and commenced the march towards Manassas, said to be ten miles distant. Seven miles brought us to a stream 40 feet wide and waist deep, which by reason of subsequent events we shall be likely to remember to our lives' end. We crossed it by a bridge, and half a mile beyond, turned off to the right into the woods, about 10,000 men of us, while another division pushed the main road, and still another made a detour to the south. At 10 a. m. we heard the reports of cannon to the west. We made a circuit of five or six miles through the woods, making about 14 miles from camp, coming out about 10 o'clock upon open ground, near an old railroad embankment, half a mile to the west of Ball Run, about 3 miles north east of the Junction, around which was grouped the enemy's batteries, of whose strength and number we knew nothing.

As we did so, we saw the R. I. Second drawn up to the right of a piece of woods, with their battery, and immediately formed in line with the 71st on our left.

Meanwhile the enemy had opened on our 2d with shot, shell and musketry, which was returned with great spirit by them and Capt. Reynolds's battery, causing them to retreat from the brow of the hill. The 1st and 71st were now advanced into the grove, and told to wait for orders. Meanwhile the enemy had altered their range, so that the shot and shells which had been bursting harmlessly over our heads, began to fall thick and fast among us. This was the most trying time of all; this forced inaction, while our men were dropping here and there, mangled and dying, was dreadful. This was the moment which, more than any after one, no matter how fugacious the conflict, puts a man's nerve to the test. The sight of the first dead man, especially if he be one of your own, causes a sickening feeling, not experienced afterwards on the field covered with the wrecks of war. Yet not a man flinched that I saw. Presently came Col. Burnside, God bless him! riding into the woods, and gave the order: "Forward, First Rhode Island!" We moved out of the woods to the brow of the hill, the 71st in front, passing on the way the dead body of Capt. Tower of our 2d, and many others. Then came the order, "Lie down, 71st, and let Rhode Island pass to the front!"

Providence Journal  
July 25, 1861  
1st R. I. (2 Letters)

From the files of  
John Hennessy

They did so most unwillingly, and we marched through and over them with a front almost as straight and steady as on dress parade. Arrived at the edge of the hill we were greeted by a storm of musket balls from a large body of men, Alabama troops, drawn up in a corn field in front, which whistled past our ears, every minute drapping one of our brave fellows, for about half an hour, though I cannot speak with any certainty of the lapse of time. We returned it with interest, every man advancing to the front, firing and falling back to load as quick as possible. The 71st were now brought forward and fought well and bravely by our side. Presently some one cried, "Hold! we are firing on our own men!" This slackened our fire for a moment, when the Colonel rode up and told us to keep up the fire. At the same moment the Adjutant ordered our standard advanced. A tremendous fire was at once concentrated upon it, and Sergeant Becherer who bore it fell; shot through the arm; another man seized it instantly and waved it defiantly to the foe three or four times, when he, too, was led off with a shattered arm. The flag fell for a moment, but a third man sprang forward, raised it without letting go his musket, and continued to bear it through the action. It seems pretty certain that our crafty adversaries raised a United States flag at one time, which started the report that we were firing on our friends, and caused us to slacken our fire.

I cannot here particularize instances of personal coolness and bravery, but I will say with perfect truth that I did not see a Rhode Island man quail through that terrible half hour, though of course many were too excited to take deliberate aim, often endangering their comrades fighting beside and in front of them, and throwing away a vast amount of lead. The coolest thing I heard was from an officer of the 1st, who walked quietly along the front of his company, remarking, "Boys, it takes 700 pounds of lead to kill one of you, so go in, and give them one for me!" meaning, no doubt 700 rounds, but the mistake was excusable. The enemy fought with determined courage, but our fire grew too hot for them at last—the rattling storm of Minnie balls fell less thickly among us, and they began to retire. At this moment Gov. Sprague, who had just had his horse shot under him, seized a musket and offered to lead a charge. But Col. Burnside would not permit it, a column of regulars was brought up, who drove the retreating back to their batteries. Thus was the attempt to outflank us on the left frustrated, and so far as the Rhode Island 1st and 2d and the 71st was concerned it was a complete victory. We were withdrawn in perfect order to the grove, except our gallant battery, which continued to keep up a hot fire upon the masked batteries upon the hill.

We retired in the fond delusion that the day was ours, and that the fresh regiments coming up had only to drive from the field a defeated foe.

How woefully we were mistaken, and the story of our disastrous retreat must be told in another letter. Fifty miles marching and a hard fight in 32 hours upon a diet of crackers and water gives tired nature an indisputable claim to rest. Our hearts are sad for Siocum, Ballou, Tower, Smith, Prescott and many other gallant men—our consolation is that they and all of us have done our duty.

D.W.

Excuse

The Rhode Islanders in Battle—  
RETRACT FROM A PRIVATE LETTER OF AN OFFICER  
IN COMPANY C.

CAMP SPRAGUE, July 23.

At the risk of repeating what the papers have already told you, I send a brief sketch of the battle as I witnessed it. But first let me gratefully record the safety of my men. As far as I know at this writing, none were killed, and the five missing is reduced to three by the return of Lieut. Warner and one other member. The men come in languid and late, exhausted with their hardship, and I find they have struggled along the road and been reported among the missing. But there is great reason for hope that they will all be in camp before we leave,—and my desire above all things is, that company C may return with full ranks, and I may hear every man's voice answer "Here" to the roll call. I do not consider that the valor of an army, or a regiment, or a company, consists in its list of dead and wounded, but in having done its whole duty, and living to do it over again,—and that some of us must do that is very plain.

This is not a good time to talk of one's self. I think all personalities are insignificant in the importance of the mighty cause. But I may say that I thank God to-day I am a Rhode Island man. My pride in her is all satisfied, and you must take a soldier's testimony that her sons did their duty. Our régiments had expected to be a reserve, but were called into immediate action. The 2d regiment, with their splendid light battery, were the first that took position for the fight. They formed under full fire, and marched past the confederate battery as coolly as they did on a dress parade.

Our 1st regiment went into the fire with perfect courage and calmness, standing the death-dealing shot and shell like veterans. We broke the right wing of their army and drove it in. It was said to be commanded by Beauregard in person. After two hours' fight we were allowed to stack arms for a brief rest. Then the ambulances and ammunition wagons began to pass us with the wounded—a ghastly procession. At that time the firing ceased, and a shout went up, and we claimed the victory; but it was only a pause in the work of death, for the enemy, largely reinforced, opened a steady and fatal fire again.

Our troops saw the reinforcement—and outnumbered and exhausted themselves, they took a universal panic, succeeded by an irresistible stampede, which resulted in a general retreat. I claim for our Rhode Island régiments that they left the field in perfect order, bravely resisting the contagion of fear and flight—bravely waiting the orders of their Colonel for retreat. Then came the voice we loved and obeyed, clear and calm—(no defeat in that)—and Rhode Island, unconquerable in her courage as in her pride, marched from the field she had defended with her best blood. And I contest the victory now. Outnumbered three to one—and ten to one if you realize the advantage of entrenched position—our famished, exhausted men could do no more than die. No tongue can tell the bravery of our troops. It will yet make the north invincible—and the final triumph is only a question of time. This battle is not lost if it teaches a clamorous people patience. I am proverbially a "slow man." I know "the race is not to the swift." Let the counsellors who urged us to battle before were we "strong" contemplate the result.

It is too late for regrets, the time given to contemplating our losses is better spent in redeeming them. Better pens than mine have told the scene of confusion—the wild flight of men and horses—the deserted wagons—the loss of provisions we were suffering for—the storm of shot and shell that followed our fleeing army,—death on the right, death on the left, and in front. Our only safety was that the enemy had neither courage nor strength for pursuit of our exhausted troops, else I might not be the one to tell the story. So we came on and on that dreadful day, and such as could reach their camp in Washington. But many a brave fellow, lifted in blankets or by generous hands, laid down his life by the roadside. Humanity had done its best and yielded to death and danger. Exhausted by hunger and sleeplessness, even a victory could hardly have aroused us and the retreat to Washington was made in pain and sorrow. Nothing less than God's care preserved us as we went. A rally was hopeless if we had been attacked. But we are all here now, and we await our missing comrades hopefully.

I saw instances of great personal courage. Some of our friends were unconscious heroes, and it was the proudest day of my life when I saw my noble boys stand shoulder to shoulder to meet their fate. Not a man flinched, and their tread was as steady as in their old armory. And when I contemplate their sacrifices, what they risked, and what they fought for, my words of praise fall far short of justice. The names of Gov. Sprague, Col. Burnside, Major Balch and Major Goddard are widely known for their bravery in the field. These names are known from their position and prominence, but there was no distinction where all did their duty. There were some heroes in the splendid rank and file of the Rhode Island régiments. Of myself it is enough to add I am alive and well, ready and, I trust, willing for any duty late and the future assign me. As for "home," you may expect us when you see us. God bless Rhode Island. She is making history hand over hand.

The following is an extract from a private letter of a member of company C, 1st regiment:

CAMP SPRAGUE, July 22.

Yesterday was the most terrible day of my life. I can give you no idea of it. We had orders to move at 3 o'clock Sunday morning, so at that time, with hard crackers and a canteen of water for rations, we started from our camp near Fairfax. It was a beautiful sight, as our immense column moved to the right to make a flank movement.— We had marched about ten miles, and McDowell and staff passed. As he passed he said, "in a few moments you will be in action." Soon we deployed in a field, followed by the 71st and New Hampshire régiments. We had hardly taken our posts on the plain, when the pickets met and the firing of small arms began, the balls striking all around us. Then up came our battery at the rear, and disappeared. In a very few moments the shell came whizzing through the air over our heads, and next we heard our pieces speaking in rapid succession. On the right we saw our 2d regiment deploying in good order to the right, and delivering their fire. We had not much time to look, for we heard Burnside's voice summoning us to "forward," and into the woods we marched.— When we reached the woods we were halted. How the shell and shot did crash through the trees.— One ball struck in front of our first platoon, and bounded over their heads; another struck in front of our platoon, and covered us with dust. Soon from the hill above we saw Burnside beckoning to us "forward, over the fence." To the fence we

went. How the shot did drop around us. We passed Major Ballou lying wounded by the fence. We found when we reached the top of the hill the 71st lying on their stomachs. Over them we went, and just below the hill, within a hundred rods of us, the rebels were blazing away at us. We opened upon them, when the cry was raised that we were killing our own men. We then turned to the left and directed our fire to the bushes. The 71st finding we were mistaken about those in front being our friends, took our old position, and together we drove them down the hill, and concealed in the bushes they blew away at us, who, exposed on the summit of the hill, returned the fire. I was standing on the top of the hill waiting for the cowards to show themselves, when I felt a commotion between my legs, and a man was deliberately blowing away, using my legs as a port hole. Poor ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> man, while standing there encouraging his men, received a shot in the head; clasping his hands over it, he exclaimed "Boys, I am going," and fell. We cannot mourn for him, for he has gone to his reward, one of the noblest men and best of Christians I ever saw. His men cannot speak of him with dry eyes. He was universally beloved.

Soon we seemed to have silenced them, and the order was given for us to retire and fall into our ranks. Some places were vacant which a few moments before were filled. The rear rank stepped to the front and took their place, and we filed off the field into the woods, thinking the battle won. I sat down to write you, and had hardly finished, when our batteries ceased firing, and we were ordered to fall in to cover the retreat, and in a few moments horsemen and footmen came running over the

From the files of  
John Hennessy

Retreat  
Aids in full retreat. We moved off quietly, picking our way through heaps of knapsacks, canteens, blankets and accoutrements, and in a confused mass the whole column was pouring down the road. I think I never felt so badly in my life.— After awhile the Rhode Islanders got into to cover the retreat, and we all pressed backward toward Centreville. The ammunition had given out, the position of the rebels was too strong, and their force too large. Thus began one of the most rapid and perfect retreats I ever heard of. As we came out of the woods one of their batteries played upon us, and into the woods we went. We forded a stream which came up almost to our waists, and tired and wet, we pressed on for our old camp.— The bridge was barricaded so that our battery had to leave their pieces behind them. Baggage wagons were all about the fields, the drivers mounting the horses and pressing on. Our only hope was to reach our camp before we were cut off. Tired as we were, we could not stop, we had to leave our dead and wounded to the mercy of the enemy. It was awful. When we reached our camp the order was given, "on, to Fairfax," and picking our way amid baggage wagons, cavalry, and impediments of all kinds, having eaten nothing but dry crackers, and drunk nothing but dirty water, we pressed on. We reached Fairfax, and found to our joy that they had not cut off our retreat. "On, to Washington" was the cry then. We reached Arlington Heights this morning, having marched at least ten miles, fought a battle, and retreated, marching forty-one miles, with nothing but our rations of crackers and water to sustain us. God alone gave me strength to do it.

Good Retreat Quote

From the files of John Hennessy

A Volunteer's Narrative.

The following letter from a member of the First Regiment to his mother has been kindly placed in our hands. It gives a very vivid picture of some of the terrible scenes enacted on the last Sabbath, and its graphic frankness gives it a peculiar charm:—

CAMP SPRAGUE, July 22, 1861.

Dear Mother:—Ere this you must have heard of the dreadful battle that took place Sunday. \* \* \* I am perfectly well and unhurt, with the exception of a few bruises. The destruction of human life has been fearful to contemplate, but that you may get a connected idea of the battle, I will begin at the beginning.

Sunday morning at half after two, we set off for "Ball's Run," and to escape a masked battery, made a circuit of about fifteen miles. Just as we approached the "Run,"—about 8 o'clock, we heard the sound of heavy cannon, by which we knew the fight was commenced. So we hurried on, although Col. Burnside said we would not be called upon until the last, but we found this to be a mistake. As for the first time I approached a battle field, my feelings can be imagined better than described. The first thing of note was a shell whistling through the air, and "bang" went a bomb almost at our feet, and covered us with dust. We could hardly help flinching and bobbing our heads as we heard the whirr of these missiles of death.

We, instead of being kept back as a reserve, were formed directly after our arrival into a line of battle, and marched upon the enemy. Now the scene became awfully thrilling and dangerous. Every few minutes a shower of bullets would come among us, and some were sure to fall beneath their deadly force. We had to climb over a fence, and then proceeding to the brow of the hill, we fired upon the enemy below. The balls whistled around my head like hailstones; one knocked my musket out of my hand, while another just grazed my thumb joint. I fired eleven times and loaded lying down. The scene was dreadful. The first shot fired at us, hit our beloved Lieutenant, Henry A. Prescott, in the forehead, and he dropped instantly; and they kept stinging and bleeding and dying before our faces, but we merely kept loading and firing. We had to sustain ourselves for nearly half an hour, when some regulars came to our assistance and charged the enemy.

The battle lasted all day, and the slaughter was dreadful. \* \* \* We were safe nowhere. The cannon balls would come whizzing over our heads every few minutes, generally killing some one in their progress. We drove the enemy back into their batteries several times, when suddenly a panic seized the troops. It was said that the rebels had captured all our artillery and were making a charge: 40,000 men set off on the run, leaving muskets, blankets, wagons of provisions, and the dead and dying all lying on the field. Ours was the only brigade that retreated in any sort of order. \* \* \*

The scene was terrible. Shells were exploding and cannon roaring made such a noise that the cry of the wounded could not be heard. Cavalry, infantry and artillery, in one confused mass, hurried away as fast as possible. Some seized their arms, others not. One of the terrible scenes was just as we were retreating, the men were grabbing their muskets, which were loaded and capped, when one suddenly went off, wounding Jesse Comstock, a fine fellow of my age and a great friend of mine. He cried "Oh, dear, I'm shot! Don't leave me here!" So we placed the poor fellow in an ambulance, but had hardly done so when a shell came tearing through the trees and landed directly in the ambulance, blowing at once to atoms one of our dearest companions in arms. But so we lost him—had it seemed after his escaping the chances of battle, to so fearfully lose his life.

We were obliged to retreat the same way we came, by making a long and tedious circuit. On the way, not a drop of water could be procured, yet in spite of that, we marched fifteen miles without a single rest. It was a sad march, too, for we knew that our retreat would be cut off by the enemy, and true enough, just as our army, scattered as it was, reached the straight road, the rebels opened fire upon us with their artillery. The grape shot came pouring and whizzing by me, and we all began to run. Our artillery had strived to gain a post on an opposite hill, but before our arrival the rebels had effectually barricaded the bridge, so that it was impossible to get anything over it. Ambulances, cannon, men and horses were piled in one confused mass, and to add to the horror of the scene, the enemy commenced firing solid shot and shell directly at the bridge, blowing up the living and the dying.

I leaped over the fence, and had hardly done so when I heard a loud crash and looking back I beheld (horrible death!) the upper half of a soldier's body flying up the hill. He had been cut in twain by a solid ball. At this almost barbarous cruelty,—that is, firing upon an almost unarmed and entirely unopposing force, a cry of mortal terror arose among the flying soldiers, and they followed me into the wood. This of course led the fire to be turned in my direction, and I quickly found the balls coming close to me. I dodged several; for if not crowded, you can dodge a cannon ball. I came within an ace of being killed by one of the flying missiles. I saw it coming directly towards me, and sprang into a gully close by, and the ball whizzed past close by my head, ploughing up the earth each side of me.

I ran three miles to where we were to encamp, and found what was left of our regiment starting for Washington. We arrived here this noon, after a march of fifty-six miles in two days, and a hard battle thrown in. \* \* \*

I never shall pass such a dreadful Sunday, I trust and pray. I have seen war, and seen enough, and I only hope I shall never hear the din of cannon and the rattle of musketry, while I again live. How I escaped is almost miraculous. We have to be thankful that all our relations were preserved to us. We come home within three days, with a regiment stripped of many of its brightest ornaments. \* \* \* We shall return with a train of mourners, and a flag shattered with bullets. \* \* \*

Give my best love to all and my kindest sympathy to sorrowing friends."



Letter from Lieut. Warner.

We are gratified to be able to print this afternoon the following extracts from a private letter received last evening from Lieut. L. C. Warner, of Company C, First Regiment. He gives a graphic and evidently truthful account of Rhode Island's participation in the fight of last Sunday, and the intelligent reader will readily glean from its perusal a confirmation of a remark made to Mr. Wm. E. Hamlin by one of the soldiers after the battle, that Lieut. Warner was one of the bravest men on the field.

CAMP SPRAGUE, }  
WASHINGTON, D. C., July 24, 1861. }

Lewis Pierce has just called on me with sad news from you, and brings a paper recording my death first and afterwards a prisoner. My first duty after arriving at Washington was to telegraph you of my safety. I went to the office and immediately sent a despatch. Our company supposed I was lost, until I came into camp. After we came off the field of battle our company stacked arms near a piece of woods. There were two of our men missing, one of whom I knew was wounded. I started to find them, also to fill my canteen with water at a house near the battle field which contained the wounded. I stayed longer than I was aware of, helping to attend the dying and suffering, also in getting Capt. Prescott's body off the field, not thinking of any retreat being ordered, as we were victorious on our part of the field.

I was absent about an hour, and then started to join our Regiment, but when I got down to where we stacked our muskets, they were all gone, and the rebels were firing shells and grape after them as they were retreating. I started after them upon the run, running nearly two miles. I got sight of the Regiment, and renewed my exertions to overtake them, but I was so exhausted I could not, and getting over a fence which adjoined a piece of woods, I stumbled and fell, completely exhausted and nearly melted. I could not arise but lay there fully one hour. I then started alone through the woods, not knowing where I should get to, but I found one path on which we came, before it got to be too dark, and followed on. I picked up a Sharpe's rifle, cartridge box, balls, &c. which some poor tired soldier had left, loading the same, determined to defend myself when I came out of the seven miles long woods. I saw several soldiers of other regiments, and continually overtaking them all along, until we had a party of about thirty. When near Bull's Run Bridge we were fired upon by some of the rebel scouts and one of our men killed. We returned their fire with deadly effect, for we saw three of their number fall. The bridge was covered with dead men, horses, teams, &c. in one mass, so much so that we could not cross where the rebels shelled our forces on their retreat.

We waded across the river waist deep. After going half a mile we came upon several hundred men of ours resting. Hardly had I reached them before the shells began to come again from the rebels from a high hill on our right. The men fired and then began to retreat in confusion again. I was alone until I reached Centreville. Here some three regiments who were held in reserve were drawn up in line of battle to meet the enemy if they advanced. They made all they could of our retreating ones join them. Finding I was an officer they mounted me on a horse and I rallied the broken columns all I could, and had some four or five hundred soon in line. I talked, begged and plead with them to make a stand and give the rebels one more volley. Did not have to wait long before the shells came, but it was so dark they fell short of us. After firing a few times they ceased, when all of a sudden, from the woods on our left, came the Black Cavalry. When near enough we poured three volleys into them which must have killed many for they fled in haste. Then came the shells again, one of which exploded near me killing my horse, and I fell headlong but without a hurt excepting a slight scratch. It was a narrow chance. They now ceased firing, so I concluded to press forward.

I still clung to my rifle and started again. I had not gone but a short distance before I had a chance to use it upon one of their horsemen who fired at me on the run. He tumbled off dead, I think. I had hardly time to load again before another one dashed at me. I made him bite the dust. He uttered a fearful oath as he fell. I looked at him as he lay with the moon shining upon him, and he looked more like a devil than a human being.

I tried for some time to catch his horse, so as to ride, but I was too tired to run. He was a noble animal, but I think rather wild. Again I trudged along, taking to the woods all I could, then cross lots, keeping near the road for my guide, until I came to Fairfax Court House. Here there were several thousands of our soldiers resting. We left this place well guarded. Here I met one of the Band, and we started together for Washington. Clinging to my rifle, I travelled all night long, resting only twice to eat three crackers which I had in my knapsack, the first food I had put into my mouth since the evening before.

Day broke at last, when our journey was not accomplished. My feet swelled so that I had to take off my shoes and walked over ten miles barefoot. At 20 minutes past 11 o'clock I reached Fort Corcoran, on Arlington Heights, completely used up. It began to rain at 6 A. M., and I was wet through. I had to throw away my blanket and coat in order to carry my rifle. Col. Baker at the Fort took me to his tent, and gave me dry clothes, refreshments, &c. Then I sought rest and did not awake till after dark, I could not cross the river then and therefore remained. I returned yesterday morning and as I remarked in my letter of this morning, immediately called at the telegraph office to apprise you of my safety, although I was so lame it was most impossible for me to walk.

This all seems like fiction, as I wrote you this morning, but it's true. Our men were glad enough to see me, and the officers, too, for they thought me lost, as I was a whole day behind them. I am now getting along nicely.

This truth is prominent: We (the R. I. troops) were the first in the field; first in the fight, and the last to retreat. Tell everybody of this, for it's so.

From the files of  
John Hennessy