

**THE FIRST VIRGINIA CAVALRY.**

Copy of a letter from a member of Col. Stuart's 1st Virginia Cavalry Volunteers, to his friend on James river, after the battle of Bull's Run, on 21st July, in which he was engaged :

"FAIRFAX STATION, CAMP LEE, }  
FAIRFAX C. H., VA., 26th July 1861 }

*My Dear Sir:* It has occurred to me to-day (the first day of any thing like rest, we have had for several weeks,) that I could not do better than to try and entertain my friends with some account of the battle of "Bull's Run," the grandest blow, probably, ever struck for freedom, and certainly the most complete, which had ever been achieved on the American continent. If no one else, your little sons, who, I understand, are training themselves for the field of some future day, will surely be interested in knowing about the great and bloody struggle, by which the liberties of their country were preserved and secured to them forever. I say preserved, for the effect of this battle has certainly been to demoralize throughout the armies of the invader, and to change the public opinion of the North; perhaps, also, to win the sympathy of the great powers of Europe. You and the ladies must also have looked to the issue of that day, with anxious hearts, for many of your friends were there—all to share in the glory—and some to give their blood in our holy cause. And still others, though I trust few, to yield their lives, to protect the homes, and the mothers, and the little ones there.

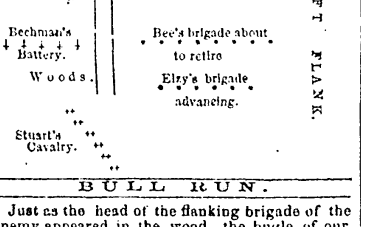
Friday, 19th July, was a stirring day in the camp at Winchester, occupied as you know, by the army of the Shenandoah, under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. At 4 A. M. the division was put in motion, 25,000 strong, with our Cavalry 720 strong, under Col. J. E. B. Stuart at the head of the column.

The roll of the drums, and the sound of the bugles, awoke the whole town; and as the solid columns moved rapidly away, the astonishment and consternation of the people were plainly perceptible—for not one, civilian or soldier, knew the meaning of that sudden movement.

Gen. Patterson, with 30,000 men, was within twelve miles of the city, which was thus to be left to its fate, unprotected, save by a few thousand new troops. What could it mean? The end will show the consummate generalship which planned, and the patriotic zeal which perfect the manœuvre. For at that very moment, Patterson was marching for Harper's Ferry, there to embark on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad for Washington—there to unite with McDowell, crush Beauregard at Manassas, and advance to Richmond. Johnston saw through it all, and hastened by a forced march, to join Beauregard, before Patterson could reach Washington, and there crush McDowell, and hurl his broken columns back on the Federal city. This he did. On Saturday night, Beauregard and Johnston had united—and that night the troops intended for the engagement, 35,000 in number, slept on their arms, on the North side of Bull's Run, three miles North of Manassas Junction. Many thousand of the Confederate troops, who were to be in action, were detained by railroad collision, caused by the criminal conduct of a treacherous conductor, who was shot by order of the Commanding General.

On the following day, Sunday July 21, at 6 A. M., the troops were formed in line of battle, in the shape of the letter V, the apex toward the enemy. Gen. Beauregard took command of the right wing, Gen. Johnston of the left, and late in the day, President Davis, in person, took charge of the centre. He rode a splendid grey charger, and inspired the troops to almost frenzied enthusiasm, by his noble bearing and stirring words of encouragement. At 9 1/2 A. M. precisely, the first gun was fired by the enemy from a 32-pounder upon our right. The enemy were in three divisions, the right and left of 15,000 each, and the centre of 25,000 men. Gen. Scott himself was at Centreville, four miles off; and nearer in view of the battle field, were many members of the Northern Cabinet and Congress, and large numbers of ladies from Washington, who had driven out in elegant equipages to witness the demolition of the rebels, as one would look upon a game of chess.

The battle opened with artillery on both sides, commencing on our right and spreading rapidly to the distance of over three miles, from wing to wing. In about an hour the infantry were in position, and Jackson's brigade fired the first volley. The cavalry was stationed on the wings. Our cavalry, 1st Regiment, under Col. Stuart, in rear of the left, and Col. Radford's Regiment in rear of the right. We were then placed, and ordered to dismount and stand by our horses until needed. The battle commenced raging, with deadly ferocity, all along the lines—the roar of artillery and the rattle of musketry being almost deafening. By the large number of wounded and dead, brought by the ambulances to the rear, it was evident that the enemy were fighting well. For five hours, the storm of shot and shell raged, column after column being hurled in vain against our intrepid young heroes—so largely outnumbered and out disciplined, as they were, they never for a moment faltered or retreated. At half-past 2 o'clock it was rumored that the enemy was defeated on the right by Beauregard—not so, however, on the left, where, it is conceded, the hardest fighting was done. General Johnston saw that his division was being terribly mutilated, and was about to be surrounded by the New York Zouaves, and the New York 5th Regiment, with several other regiments of Regulars, etc. At 3, P. M., Johnston saw that he must withdraw his exhausted troops, for the enemy were, even then, deploying far over to the left, to surround and cut them to pieces. Then it was that he sent for Elzy's brigade, consisting of the Maryland Regiment, the 1st Tennessee, and the 17th Virginia, and one Louisiana Infantry, Beckman's small battery of artillery and Stuart's Regiment of cavalry. He told the officers that the day would be decided in 15 minutes, and they could turn the scale. The devoted column, in whose hands rested the great issues of the conflict, moved rapidly forward. Regiment after regiment, mutilated and exhausted, passed us with mingled looks of despair and hope. Not even the piles of dead and rows of wounded on the way, made one of those young spirits quail or fall from the ranks. As we approached the field, the victorious shouts of the enemy were heard behind the woods. The arrangement was as follows: To first break the column of flanking troops, by a cavalry charge, and thus give the infantry and artillery time to form—the first in front, and the last on the left flank. The brigade which we were about to relieve, was fighting on a wooded ridge, on the side of which, and running at right angles to our lines and the enemy's was a lane through the woods, and emerging therefrom on the enemy's right flank. Along this road, four regiments, headed by Ellsworth's Zouaves, were deploying successfully, thus:



**BULL RUN.**

Just as the head of the flanking brigade of the enemy appeared in the wood, the bugle of our cavalry sounded "to the charge," and on we dashed, with the heroic Stuart at our head. As we emerged from the woods, Sherman's battery opened on us with grape, killing at the first fire 19 horses and 11 men, and wounding many. But there was no stopping, nor did the bugle sound "to the rear," until we had completely broken the enemy's lines.

The Brigade of Elzy then formed on the hill, in the place of the noble Bee's, and the artillery opened with terrible execution on the extreme left. Ten minutes more, and Gen. Johnston said the day was decided, the enemy routed, and one of the most precipitate and terror-stricken flights began, to be found in the history of warfare. The pursuit was conducted by Gen. Cockey's Brigade with the entire body of cavalry, piously called by the Yankees, "those infernal hell-hounds," and Beckman's artillery. We pursued eight miles on the left flank. We cut off an immense number of prisoners, and found scattered along the line of the retreat, cannon, flags, arms, wagons, ambulances, provisions, haversacks, horses, saddles, &c., in any quantity. All the roads from Bull Run to Fairfax Court House, and beyond, were lined with articles thrown away by the panic-stricken enemy.

At the latter place we captured several hundred stands of arms, and several loads of ammunition. They were at the depot, destined for Richmond. In fact, most of the prisoners say that they expected to go directly through to Richmond.

The lines of our army now extend from Fairfax Court House, off to the right and left, to a great distance. What the next move will be, nobody knows, but all agree that if Lincoln determines on prosecuting the war, the next battle will be fierce and more bloody than the last. \* \* \*

Last Sunday I was on the battle field where we fought so hard, as Sergeant of an escort for Gen. Beauregard. All the great chiefs of the Revolution were there to pay their respects to the comparatively young hero of the day. You have heard our Generals described so often, that I will not undertake a further description. I reviewed with mournful awe the hushed and peaceful fields which so lately re-echoed to the deadly roar of battle. I stood where the terrible Sherman battery stood and surrendered. I paused by the graves of many a dear, young and cherished friend, with its modest slab of wood and its simple inscription. I rode through the silent lane, down which Stuart's terrible charge of light cavalry was made. I saw the mangled horses—and the graves of those who so heroically fell at the head of the column. And as I witnessed all this in the peaceful sunlight of the Sabbath, I could not restrain those tears which God has granted to relieve the pent up sorrow of human bosoms. Oh! this cruel war, those desolate hearth stones; those weeping mothers! where, where will it end? The glow of our victory is great—the lustre of our arms shines forth before the world; but I would give my right hand to-day if God would dry the weeping eyes of mothers and sisters, by permitting the war to cease.

W. Z. MEAD.