

OUR ARMY CORRESPONDENCE.

The Massachusetts Fifth in the Fight.
The following is an extract from a letter from a member of the 5th Massachusetts Regiment, and gives an interesting account of the gallant conduct of that regiment in the recent fight:

WASHINGTON, July 26 1861
"It will be impossible for me to give you a description of the battle of Sunday, as I saw it in a different light from others close beside me. I can, however, tell you the part our regiment took in the battle. We, as you know, were in Heintzelman's division and in Franklin's brigade. Our brigade consisted of the 1st Minnesota Regiment, 5th of Massachusetts and 11th of Massachusetts, and we marched in that order. We left the Centreville camp at about daylight, with three or four brigades in advance of us. The battle opened about two hours before we reached the field. On arriving there the 1st Minnesota took a position out of our sight. We were told to go to the support of one of our batteries, playing on the rebels. We at once started on the double quick, and halted on the top of the hill, directly in front of the enemy's batteries. We were flanked by the 11th Massachusetts on the left. Col. Franklin ordered us to charge down the valley, on to the enemy's batteries. Col. Lawrence told us to wait for his orders; we did. He then ordered us to charge to the brow of the hill by companies, fire and retreat to the rear of the regiment, load and wait our fire. Before the entire regiment had time to follow his instructions, we were ordered to cross the ravine and support the Zouaves, who then were in the thickest of the fight. In as good order as any double quick movement was ever made, did our regiment counter-march and form on the left flank of the Zouaves, who, according to all accounts, were subject to a killing fire. We did this, then halted for the word of command, which did not come. Col. Lawrence had fallen while we were changing positions. After a few moments delay we rushed to the support of the Zouaves, and held our ground as well as any regiment on the field, three several times we charged and only retreated when the whole field in our rear was crowded with flying and firing, cavalry, artillery and infantry. We were utterly astounded at the sight of those in our rear, and even while the Zouaves were hurrying from the field the men cried loudly for their officers to lead them forward. I tried to do my duty during the fight. I walked off the field slower than I ever walked down a street.

Our regiment formed under Capt. Brastow and held in the rear of the Rhode Island brigade, and marched in good order to our old camp at Centreville. We had been there an hour or more when Col. Franklin ordered us to retreat instantly to Washington. I have no doubt to praise our regiment. I know that the Zouaves say we were the only regiment who supported them well. Adjutant Fairbanks said to him, "I know, too, Captain Brastow that our regiment stood their ground as well as any regiment on the field, that if others had done as well we could have held our ground."

The New York and other regiments were pressed very highly, but they did not lose as many men in proportion to numbers as we did. We had 31 fighting men on the field and lost 217 nine, which is over ten per cent. So you see we must have had some work to do. In reference to our colors, the State flag was brought from the field by our sergeant Major, the stars and stripes by the Color Corporal. Our defeat was caused by the want of a proper and prompt reinforcement. We lost the field and it was for the reason to keep it. The regiments facing the batteries did not retreat until the forces in our rear were entirely and completely broken up. In changing our position we were subject to a terrific fire directed toward the road.

In our charges the balls flew around us like hail stones, and God only knows how we ever escaped as we did. The army officers could not stand the fire but hastened from the field. There was no order or regularity displayed by any one. I saw a whole regiment refuse to obey the order to support the Zouaves. We did our best, that is all I have to say. The Washington papers speak well of us. The men rallied around the colors and stuck to them to the last. Every man of the Fifth would have preferred to have died there and there than to have returned to Massachusetts without our colors. We expect to return within a few days. The boys would like another charge of the rebels and I think most of them will re-enlist after a rest home.

Capt. Brastow is recovering from his bruises. I thought we had lost the old hero at one time, when he was thrown down and rolled in the dust by a charge from the cavalry, but he was on his feet and at our head sooner than you can read this. He inspired us all. The army is nearly organized, but few stragglers can be seen. The Zouaves are nearly all in shape. Our regiment could be called out in thirty minutes.

The following letter is from another member of the Massachusetts Fifth:

Our brigade, under Col. Franklin, consisting of the First Minnesota, Fifth Massachusetts and Fourth Pennsylvania Regiments, with a battery of six guns and a company of cavalry, left Alexandria on Tuesday morning, 15th inst., and arrived at Centreville on Friday night. We bivouacked in an oat field until Sunday morning at two o'clock, when we formed and stood in the road until five, at which time the column moved on. While we were at Centreville we were allowed but three hard bread a day, or one for each meal. True, we had some fresh beef on Saturday morning, but it was eaten so soon after being butchered that it made the men sick, and was thrown away. Green water could hardly be obtained, and a guard was stationed at the two or three miserable puddles to allow the men but one dipperful at a time. In consequence of this, two-thirds of the men starved for the battle field without any water in their canteens. The men from the first had slept upon the ground and had been half started—not only our own brigade but the entire division—and were more fit to be marched to the hospital than the battle field. Hungry and thirsty we marched until 12 o'clock, at which time we reached the field. The last two miles were traveled on the "double quick." About half a mile before reaching the field a halt was made for a moment, and we divided ourselves into our haversacks and blankets, and advanced with full company front, close columns.

The 11th Massachusetts, who had been ahead on the march, here halted while we passed, but followed and took their position on our left, being the extreme left of the line of battle, the 5th being next. To our right were the Zouaves, who we supported. The position of the 5th was in the thickest of the fight, as was also the 11th. To the left of the 11th was a piece of woods, from which stray bullets from rebel skirmishers were fired into the ranks of the 11th. The 5th was ordered to halt upon the side of a hill, and lie down upon their faces. No sooner was this order obeyed than a shower of bullets came whistling over the heads of the men, but no one was hurt. Col. Lawrence gave the order for the first company to fire and then fall to the rear and load, while the second company was to fire and fall to the rear. After several volleys had been fired in this way, the enemy retreated from their position. The first man injured in the 5th was by a cannon ball, which injured two men in the Charleston City Guard.

Col. Franklin rode up and asked, "What regiment is that thing on the hill?" Walcott told that were the 5th Massachusetts, he replied, "I thought you were regulars you say so still?" He then said to the Colonel, "Can you take that house? If you can the day is ours." The Colonel shouted that we could, and we immediately fell into "ranks of fours" and proceeded to a road at a short distance, which led to the house referred to be held which was a large force of rebels. The 5th and 11th had almost reached the house, passing through a dreadful fire to reach it, when the reckless horses attached to Hickett's battery came dashing down upon us, the Zouaves following and the United States Cavalry following them. For a time a fearful confusion prevailed, and the 5th were obliged to halt, and received our own cavalry at the point of the bayonet to prevent them from running over the men who were advancing. At that time Col. Lawrence was wounded and carried from the field. The command then devolved upon the Lieutenant Colonel, but as he was not to be seen, the men were rallied by Sergeant Major Quincy, and Lieutenant Everett of the Charlestown City Guard, Lieutenant Lobble of the Charlestown Artillery also exerted himself to the utmost to rally the men. After the cavalry had passed and left the field, the Fifth then rallied around the colors and reached the top of the hill, supporting the Zouaves, whose numbers were fast being diminished. A few moments after reaching the top of the hill, Color Sergeant Lawrence was shot through the breast by two bullets, another bullet passing through his head. Corporal Wallace, who carried the State banner, threw it on the ground and raised the stars and stripes again. Sergeant Major Quincy picked up the State flag and bore it aloft until the retreat had sounded. On his way he met a civilian on horseback, who he requested to take it for safe keeping and carry it to Centreville. He did so, but when he reached Centreville he had come to the conclusion that he had rescued the flag from the enemy and made himself a hero, and told his story accordingly.

After the retreat had commenced, the Fifth rallied several times in squads of three or more, and were the last to leave the field, retiring with the Zouaves, 11th Massachusetts, and one other, in as good order as the confusion of the different regiments would admit. For the last half hour of the battle every man in most of the regiments was fighting "on his own hook," firing wherever a rebel showed his head or his heels.

There were many men who deserve particular mention. Capt. Wardwell was very brave and cool, as was Adjutant Chambers, who was smoking a pipe during a part of the engagement. Sergeant Major Quincy deserves great praise for rallying the men when the field officers could not be found. Col. Lawrence was brave even to rashness, during the action, and did everything in his power to save the lives of his men by good management and care that one company should not be run into the others, as was unfortunately the case with many other regiments.

From the files of John Hennessy