

of my answer. I received yours the 27<sup>th</sup> ult. day before yesterday: & one first  
also came safely to hand. I had been thinking of writing to you  
for some time, but our facilities for writing here are very poor, &  
until to day, I have hardly found time & convenient arrangements for  
writing a long & detailed account of any thing. Besides for a month all  
our correspondence has been under military surveillance  
& they open our letters without scruple: after the war, if some of us  
do not get killed, there will be some private war on this account.  
I hold the claim as against S. C. Volunteers to be insulting & infamous  
& I will shoot any man without scruple whom I have good reason  
to believe guilty of opening my correspondence, be his position that  
of President, General, or what not, when my service has ended  
& I can meet him as an equal. Of this hereafter.

You have by this time doubtless seen Capt. Evans, & read in the  
papers many accounts of the Battle. I will however give you a  
brief statement of what I know, & my opinions about what I  
have heard. There never will be any fair & just statement  
of the whole battle. No man living here can <sup>make</sup> it. There are many  
conflicting statements here & even as regards our own Regiment  
there are facts asserted & denied, about which I am entirely in doubt  
this day. The ground was broken: there was no position from  
which the whole could be seen & in <sup>some</sup> many cases Regiments were  
for hours without orders fighting on their own hook, I will  
give you now what I think to be the most probable story of the  
affair as I go along I will tell you the facts that I know. We were not  
at all engaged in the first battle: they cannonaded us & the balls  
fell <sup>ground</sup> on us occasionally that day, but no body was hurt. Capt.  
Harrington was on picket in a wood in front of our line on Saturday night,  
& when daylight dawns he sent in a man to Col. Cash to say that  
the enemy were retreating: that from one o'clock that morning the  
sound of their artillery & cannon going off had been heard. These  
you may see distinctly in the map. Col. Cash ordered me



every one were moving to attack the left, he on one guard at the attack  
might begin on our front. By eight o'clock they commenced  
firing all along our lines with their artillery, which we found  
afterwards to be only some pieces kept behind to deceive and pre-  
vent us from moving up to the left. Between eight & nine  
heavy cannonading began on our left in the direction of Stone  
Bridge & soon afterwards very heavy volleys of musquetry, this  
continued without intermission save for brief intervals all day,  
we lay in our trenches quietly. Between eleven & twelve Col. Cook  
sent me with a spy glass to a high hill in the rear of the Camp  
a mile to see if I report any thing of the Battle. I found there  
Beauregard, Barlow & their Staff. The sight was magnificent. We  
could not see the troops but the smoke indicated the position  
of the battalions & the whole length of the line. I staid there half  
an hour, & though I could not make out anything myself, a  
member of the Staff told me that the enemy had turned our flank  
& that our friends were giving back. I galloped back to Col.  
C. & as I arrived an aid came to order, Kerbow, Kemper & Cook to hurry  
forward to the battle. As I left the hill Beauregard's Staff galloped  
towards the battle. Barlow took to the right where another attack  
was expected, he immediately started under a terrible shower to the battle  
field at the double quick; it was a terrible thing to see four miles  
at midday. As we started two regiments of Cavalry dashed on before  
us & our own drums beat. This informed the enemy exactly of our  
position & they directed their batteries exactly at us. The balls  
fell all around us; many within four or five feet of our line,  
wonderful it was that no one was hurt. Several Passmore ran  
fell so close to me that the rushing whizz seemed to be felt against my  
chuck. Believe me it aint a pleasant feeling. The double quick soon  
gained us out of this. Within a mile or perhaps a mile and a half  
of the battle field we commenced meeting the wounded & the flying.  
One man wounded accompanied by four or five perfectly unharmed; we



but these Malcontents are respected as if nearly as many men as both  
Kearney & Cash's Regiments contained. Besides these cowards there  
were many along the way side wounded fatally, writhing in agony & uttering  
cries of agony. The effect of this upon the Regiment was not inspiring.  
As we came upon the field - or in sight of it - artillery at once opened  
fire upon us & soon afterwards musquetry. Asa Evans, Genl. Evans  
and told me next day that this was from our own friends, ordered  
by Beauregard. He mistook us for the enemy flanking. As a says  
he said "we shall have to retire from the field." They soon discov-  
ered who we were however - they knew the white Palmetto & an aid  
of Genl. Johnson dashed up to us to order us ~~to~~ to the left of the  
point where we had first been ordered. And now let me pause from  
my story of what I saw to tell you the history of what had happened up to this  
time, as I learn it from others. Genl. George Evans was in command at Stone  
Bridge with fourteen hundred men, as he states them; Stovall's Reg. & Heat's  
Bat. & some companies; he was drawn up on a high hill near Stone  
Bridge, expecting the attempt to cross there; with only two pieces of artillery,  
one of which was disabled before the action began. A few hundred men  
came up on the other side of the stream at the Bridge & commenced a  
heavy artillery fire; he forbade his piece to open at all but deployed  
a few skirmishers on the banks of the stream & waited. For more  
than an hour it went on thus; heavy artillery playing upon him,  
but without effect, & his line silent & waiting; but from the  
high hill where he was posted, he finally saw emerging from  
the wood in his rear & on his flank columns with the sunlight  
on their bayonets, a mile & half off; he knew his flank was turned;  
that the attack in front was but a feint to deceive him & that the battle  
was to begin in earnest now on a fair field & with no advantage  
of position on his side, with May, when he rode forward to select  
a position, lastly did so, changed his whole position & the battle  
began. The enemy in this column were twenty thousand strong  
at the lowest calculation; fourteen hundred was Evans' force,



now from the field in an hour & won the field. But they were  
afraid of masked batteries & opening their artillery their infantry  
kept well back. Evans sent to Gen. Locke for reinforcements;  
he refused telling Evans to fall back upon him. To do this would  
leave the Road to Manassas open & Evans refused to send an  
urgent message to Locke, but meantime Bee - I know not  
how - came upon the field. Slowly, cautiously & but steadily  
the enemy drove us back; the field - the dead - the path of the enemy  
showed this the next day; more than a mile our side had  
fallen back. Of what occurred during all this time read the papers  
& judge for yourself. Each Regiment claims all the glory of  
holding the field: let history decide; judge for yourself.  
But I presume my own story now. Soon after two, perhaps a little  
before two we came upon the field. Kershaw & ourselves formed  
in one line & advanced, obliquely to the left. All day the enemy had  
played this game, flanking continually: whenever the front was  
engaged new troops spread out beyond, & attempted to take us in  
flank & in rear: twas thus their numbers told. An march brought  
us into a thick wood: Kershaw kept on in old field & thus met  
the enemy before us opened fire: he changed his front at once  
bringing his Regiment at once at right angles to us thus  
the enemy pursuing his game came down Kershaw's line to the same <sup>Cash</sup> wood  
where we were advancing intending to go round Kershaw but met  
us & we gave him along our whole line one deadly shot of fire  
at about fifty yards distance before which they broke &  
ran like the devil. They were the N. J. Fire Zouaves & Kershaw  
himself who could see the effect of our fire better than we could  
ourselves says they fell before us thus in a hurry. We gave  
them another at a greater distance & a part of them a  
third, but by this time they had found shelter in another wood  
& were safe from us; they formed in this wood & came out upon a  
hill about 350 yds from us with two Regts of Volunteers



two hundred men is to me incomprehensible. To look at the  
traces as they lay even now ~~at the place we lay~~ & you would hardly  
believe that we lay there so long & lost so few men. The fire became  
galling finally & Col. Cash undertook to move us further down to the left  
thence... <sup>cash</sup> Cash desired to go down as I have dotted but the woods were  
thick, his orders were misunderstood, our Regiment fell into confusion for  
a brief while: meantime Kemper, glorious Kemper, was playing upon <sup>them</sup>  
with an rapid & deadly fire as ever flashed what music it was to us!  
& before we came out on the left <sup>thence</sup> ~~thence~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~Donners & Rangers~~  
whipped the volunteers concluded that they had no call to try it further  
& the day was won. Now in all this part of the field, King Smith  
nor any one else had any part of the fight, but Kurlan, Cash &  
Kemper; that they overrated in <sup>in</sup> any sure; that they fled as in a  
panic, I am sure for the Rangers & Donners, outnumbered as they  
were & if they had come boldly upon us we should have been  
very glad to see some help, but they fled. Jeff Davis came  
upon the field late that day & thence gave us the credit of winning  
the day. He has changed his opinion since they tell me.  
We were at once ordered to pursue & went onward. Kurlan,  
Cash, & Kemper, Col. Withers <sup>va. 1848</sup> was on the road as we went on  
& was asked to go on with us: he said he was ordered to stop  
at Stone Bridge & doubted if he went on & not a step did  
he go. But on we went & got faster before us went five or  
ten times our number. Finally we came up with the enemy  
& glorious Kemper opened once more: they staid not to the  
muskets, but abandoned to us every gun. Their waggons fled  
in one inglorious rush for safety. Yes! McDowell was there over-  
siring the retreat & his prisoners ran at the first fire of Kemper  
till the race although they utterly overvalued us in number, artillery.  
We did not know until the cavalry came in what a capture we  
had made; many thirty guns - among them that long ten foot -  
rifled thirty three powder, drawn by two horses, & guns, ammunition



champagne taste as sweet as the copious draughts of the evening  
stout that night. I was em'tly Lard had not time to poison  
them & I drank freely & joyously. But shall I tell you now  
of the battlefield? Of the dead hideous in every form of ghastly  
death: heads off - arms off - abdorm all protruding - every  
form of wound: low groans: sharp cries: shrieks for water  
& convulsive agonies as the soul took flight. It is useless to  
write. I know something of the power of words to paint & I tell you  
that a man must see all this to conceive it. One soon  
becomes callous, we were thirsty ourselves: a slight heuffat -  
a four miles run - the excitement of battle - the roar of artillery  
& burning thirst - all this harden the heart & before we left the  
field our men were gathering Colts Revolvers & Steep Papers  
from dying & wounded men with utter indifference to  
their bitter cries. Yet we gave them water when we could get it.  
On an acre square I saw sixty five dead men - near  
Sherman's battery - mostly Zouaves: how many times it was taken  
& retaken, Heaven knows, but when we came upon the field  
the Zouaves had it again, although it was not firing. Ker-  
shaw drove them from it & as they fell along his left intending  
to fall upon his flank they met us as I have told you already.  
I shall enclose you in another envelope Carver's Report, with his consent.  
Don't publish this, but he says you may give his report to the  
Southerner, not to publish but to compile a statement from it  
as from a witness. They may publish that. Do write me often.  
Tell me what you have heard at home about us all. If I were  
here to see <sup>you</sup>, I will tell you many things I cannot write.  
But then I say - if it please God, to stop this war, I will unfeignedly  
thank him. It wasn't the battle, but the next day - in a heavy rain  
these wounded & our wounded - lying in their agony - without  
food or care - nobody to help - nothing to eat & drink -  
this filled my heart with terror. I heard men imploring



proposed to buy him any more. Says the sergeant put down  
a minute & he will be dead & we won't have to come back! This  
is war!

Genl. Evans proposed to Beauregard (Evans told me himself)  
as soon as they left the field to take a Regiment, a battery & by  
a short country road dash ahead post himself in front  
while the whole army advanced on rear & cut them off. Beau-  
regard said "No! Our loss of life is great: I will not risk  
such soldiers as these." The feeling was noble, but it  
was a terrible mistake of judgment. If it had been  
done, not a man of that army would have escaped.  
Such an utter panic in an army is unknown in the  
history of two centuries. Our brigade could have driven  
every soldier of the Federal Army from our side of the  
Potomac.

Lewis is not the man for the next Presi-  
dent. Beauregard has implored for weeks & weeks  
most pitifully more troops. He has told them that he was  
crippled for men & during this very time Lewis has  
expected Regt. after Regt. because they would not  
volunteer for the war & because he had not appointed  
the Field Officers. He has been appealed to overlook  
his objections to take things as he could & he has let  
his temper overrule his judgment & risked all our  
lives. If they had a great General, I mean, had had a great  
General, our Regiment would not have brought  
a man away from Hanover Co. Va. on our first retreat.  
Fifteen thousand men deployed in one hundred  
& fifty yards of our Regiment alone, & but for  
a shower of per of masked batteries, not one man  
of us would have ever seen home again.

Again, there has not been any provision made for



service it is intolerable. I heard the day before the Battle  
an officer of intelligence say "well, when is wounded  
seriously, die, there has not been an army in Christendom  
during this century, whose provisions for the wounded  
was so entirely neglected." This was a man of intelligence  
who knew of what he was speaking.

I might say many other things to you of inefficiency  
& incapacity; of drunkenness, in high places at critical  
periods; of blunders & ignorance that would disgust you.  
But I will not close discouragingly. Let me say this,  
that with all this our army will win our triumph.  
They, <sup>our leaders</sup> may foolishly fling away many of our lives;  
our cause will triumph. The soldiers discriminate  
between the blunders & follies of our leaders & the  
cause itself, & by that they will stand. I hope some  
day to talk these things over with you; till then  
adieu.

Don't let my scurrillous get into the paper.  
You may show them to any discreet friend you  
choose, for but on no account let any word get  
to a newspaper. Beauregard's orders are stringent  
& a violation would expose me to trouble & danger.  
Perhaps you had better not show them at all.  
My regards to Mr. Mallory & your own if they are with  
you. Present my respectful remembrance to Miss  
Charles & believe me very truly yours  
Wm. D. Miller

W. D. Miller  
6 Aug 61  
Richmond  
Battle of Fredericksburg