

Col. Miller in private letters written in pencil before the the great battle, says :

ON THE RAIL ROAD
Near Manassas Junction,
July 17. 1861.

Just arrived here 12 or 13,000. strong at 4 P. M. this evening, and attempted to bring on a battle with the rebels

They exhibited their usual discretion; abandoned their fortress, burned 500 Bbls flour, fired six or eight R. R. Bridges and left for Manassas Junction just an hour before we came.

The junction is six miles ahead of us, and we expect to visit it very soon—and make good report.

This is the most cheerless, hopeless, waterless God-forsaken country I ever saw.

I would not give one acre of Minnesota soil for a thousand acres of this land.

We have twenty or thirty straggling prisoners picked up to day.

Truly Yours, STEPHEN MILLER.

HEAD QUR'S 1st MINN REG'T,
Camp near Centreville Va.,

July 19. 1861.

On yesterday at noon I was started with Capt. Wilkins and Capt. Downie and their two companies to examine a rebel camp 3 or 3½ miles below "Sangsters Station" where we were then encamped. I threw out scouts on either side of the road to prevent surprise—and with the reserve kept along the Rail road with spy-glass in hand—passed over the still smoking ruins of four burnt bridges, and, when about 2½ miles from camp Capt. Wilkin in the advance discovered the enemy in force upon an elevation about ¾ or one mile in advance of us. He went ahead with a few well chosen scouts. I concealed the main body of my men carefully, and then with the glass watched the

foe for an hour. They appeared to have about the same number of men as myself say 150 to 200—but by watching carefully I soon saw that they had cannon. In a little time I counted five of them—then six—then they loaded two and pointed them at the spot where I was standing; when I left; and blew the retreat for my scouts, in obedience to instructions. My rangers had crept up to within a few hundred yards of the Rebels and counted about 600 men, mostly behind trees.

The officers and men of both companies behaved with the coolness of veterans.

Near night when we got back to "Sangsters" and learned that one of our Generals had allowed himself to run upon a masked battery of Beauregards, and had lost a good many men and was retiring—and our Reg't with the entire column had gone to his support. I started after them upon a fleet pony, leaving my two companies in charge of Capt. Wilkin who brought them along at double quick time, and got here after dark in the midst of a thunder storm ready to do battle for the old flag. We are now laying within two

or three miles of the enemy. They have it is said 30,000, and we 35,000 men: what the result will be I do not know, or whether we shall fight or not I cannot say, but if we do, we shall try to do our whole duty.

We have for the time dispensed with tents &c, and last night with wet clothing and two blankets and a soft rail for a pillow I slept sweetly, and awoke in health.

40,000 men make quite a crowd—and are very hard to provision—but we are followed by teams with food &c, and are getting along pleasantly. Good water scarce, very scarce. STEPHEN MILLER.
