

WASHINGTON CITY, July 24th, 1861.

LETTER FROM ONE OF THE MASSACHUSETTS FIFTH. *Dear Brother:* The great battle has been fought, and our forces have retreated, but are not conquered. On the evening of the 20th we received three days' rations, and at 2 A. M. were called into line, but it was half-past 5 before we got fairly started. After a long and tedious march we reached the position assigned us. Throwing off our superfluous equipments, Colonel Lawrence in a few words cautioned us not to take orders from any one but himself, and above all things to keep perfectly cool. Our station was on the brow of a hill where a perfect storm of shot and shell was being directed. Lying down on our faces to avoid its effect, the order soon came—"commence firing" Ours, the first company, fired and went to the rear, loading on our backs; the second company followed suit, and so on. We fired into their rifle pits and batteries, and could not see what execution we done.

Soon the Fire Zouaves were called upon to make a charge, and we were directed to support them. Instantly forming into double files "double quick" was the word, and away we dashed off the hill, down the road, through the Run, nearly to our waists in water, and took our position in their rear. Here the fire was terrific, but too high to harm us. The charge was made and most nobly was it done, but our unseen foes were as yet too much for us. At this point our Colonel was wounded, exclaiming as he fell, Don't mind me, boys, go back and fight; but all our fighting for the day as a regiment was at an end. By the cowardly retreat of a cavalry corps who were to support us, the companies were separated beyond hope of reorganization. Some of them rallied under their captains and others under their lieutenants. Our old hero, Capt. Brastow, led us until he was trampled under foot by the flying cavalry, when he was obliged to retire. After this we linked our fortunes with the Fire Zouaves, and fought with them the rest of the

Zouaves, and fought with them the rest of the day until the retreat. Here was a scene past all description, which even now makes my heart sick to think of.

Our *brave* army officers were not anywhere to be found, and we were left to act for ourselves. Joining Gov. Sprague we slowly retreated. After we got some two miles, the enemy's cavalry charged upon us, but were repulsed; soon they opened a battery, throwing shell into us very lively. Getting out of the range of that we made good our retreat to Centreville. Here we made preparations to remain for the night, when orders came for a retreat toward Washington. Much against our inclination at half past 10 P. M. we started, and I trust that such another scene may never be witnessed by mortal man; one wild confusion of baggage wagons, ambulances filled with the wounded, and broken and discouraged troops dragging their weary feet along. The retreat at this point was without any order whatever, and it was with great difficulty the men could be forced along.

Our regiment, again organized, made a short halt at Alexandria, and then received orders to proceed to Washington. As if to add to our suffering, a cold, drenching rain storm here commenced, which soaked us to the skin. At last we found rest for our weary bones, having marched from fifty to sixty miles, and fought five hours, in less than forty-eight hours. The Massachusetts Fifth answered all my expectations, and did as much as could be hoped from them under the circumstances. It is impossible to ascertain the exact number of our killed. There are in all, killed, wounded, and missing, about fifty. But one missing from our company—Somerville Light Infantry. I think we shall soon be at home,