

The Herkimer County Journal, 8/8/61

The Zouaves in Battle.

We are kindly permitted to publish the following letter from a well known member of the Fire Zouaves to his father in this village:

New York, July 30, 1861.

DEAR FATHER:

You will be as much surprised at knowing I am in N. Y. as mother was when I rushed in upon her. I wish I had time to run up, and see you, but it is impossible as my absence would be noticed if I remain away over a certain time. In the confusion many of us took the opportunity to run home a day, before reporting ourselves at headquarters, knowing our services would not be wanted immediately. For I tell you, although the papers talk so much of our defeat, the secessionists got as much fight as they can bear for a time to come, and if they dare to attack here at Washington you will hear of such a fight as you have never before heard of—ours was bad enough.

The papers gave you a better description of the battle than I could, but I can tell you my feelings: One has no thought of danger and death while fighting. It is a load, aim and fire with a "take that" every time you fire. We made three attacks capturing a battery, but we had no support, or not enough, or we never would have been driven back while a man of us could stand. The sixty ninth fought with us like tigers, and the 1st Rhode Island was the gallant courageous men that led us. We would not talk defeat now; no, it would be victory, victory which *shall* be the next time. Well, we were driven back and then comes scenes that make the heart sick, crawling, limping, running over dead lying, wounded men and horses, upse wagons, broken down carriages, musket arms of all kinds, knapsacks, clothing that the men pulled off and threw away—such a sight! It is impossible to describe it. I carried every thing back with me, besides a bayonet, and two pistols that I took from a rebel soldier on the field, and our Col's cap, which I picked up and wore back as proudly as though I was the Col myself. My coming back to the boys with his cap made a good deal of fun for them, but we lost so many of our brave comrades that I can assure you there was real grief among us. I helped two of our boys carry our surgeon nearly two miles to the first hospital, and when within a short distance the enemy pressed us so close I begged us to drop him and save ourselves. At that moment one of their shells hit the old building used as a hospital, and for of our poor soldiers, and blew it to pieces. Many died from fatigue on the way before they got back to Washington. Curse the dishonest, avaricious politicians that rule the Union! One thing I can tell them they can appoint as many commanders as they please, the men are not going to battle again unless they themselves are satisfied with their leaders.

I should never stop writing if I attempted to relate all I saw and experienced. I shall save it until I get back from the war and we meet peace restored by the union of the United States. God grant this may be the result, yet I can tell you we will have to fight for it; the Southerners can fight as well as we. It is no use to undertake these. This is one reason of our late defeat.

I must close. With much love and respect,
I am your Son,
H. M. Lusk