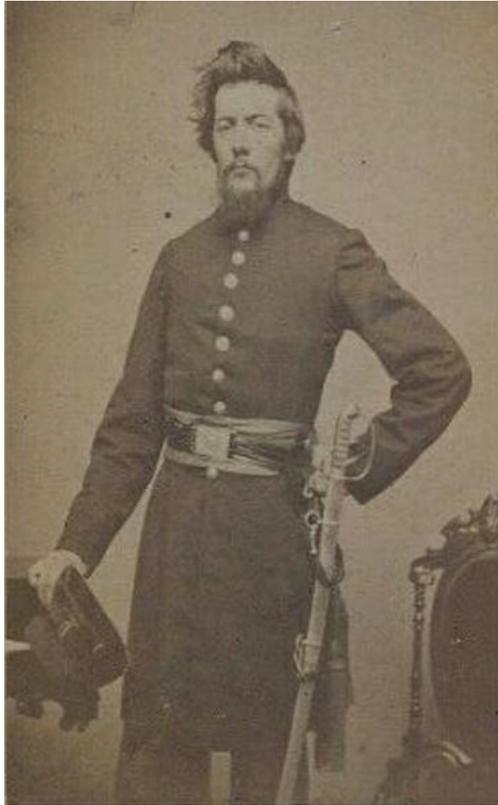


***On the Peninsula with Berdan's Sharpshooters:  
The Peninsula Campaign Letters of Adjutant J. Brown Smith, 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Sharpshooters  
From the pages of the Yates County (N.Y.) Chronicle  
Transcribed by Daniel A. Masters, October-November 2017***



**Adjutant J. Smith Brown, 1<sup>st</sup> U.S.S.S.**

Sunday, May 11, 1862  
Near New Kent Courthouse, Virginia  
Hancock's Brigade, Smith's Division, V Corps  
*Yates County Chronicle, May 22, 1862, pg. 2*

I intended to have written you a long account of operations from the time of leaving Washington, but the daily papers publish everything necessary. Besides events progress so rapidly that no one wishes to go backwards. So I will simply state that on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April General Smith sent for two companies of our regiment and Colonel Berdan sent Co. A, the company I am in, and Co. C. Company A are Swiss riflemen from the armies of the old world and trained soldiers. That was the reason I chose this company; only one or two of them speak English. In addition, I was the only lieutenant who could speak German. Co. C is from Michigan. Captain Isler commands Co. A and Captain Guinox commands Co. C. The detachment was under charge of Major Casper Trepp, formerly captain of Co. A. Co. A are armed with Colt's Revolving Rifles and Co. C with target rifles, globe sights, etc.

In connection with the Colt's rifles I will state that one day at Yorktown General Porter wished a Rebel officer killed or driven away from some engineering he was pursuing. A staff officer rode up to our men on picket

and pointed out the man. Corporal Bunker of Vermont killed him on the fourth shot- the first three being too low, distance 1,400 yards.

We were on picket at the dam near Lee's Mills when the Vermonters were led across. There we were only 200 yards from the enemy's rifle pit- and they had two or three as good marksmen as any of us- one, the best, was an amateur and had a darkey load for him. He killed one of our best men by shooting through an aperture 3 inches in diameter. We had four holes through the top of a rifle pit and he would shoot through the first time, the second time, the third and fourth. Then do it again and keep doing it. He was so well protected we could not reach him. After two days I got tired of that and as I run one or two narrow chances myself I went to Captain (Thaddeus P.) Mott (3<sup>rd</sup> New York Battery) and pointed out the rifleman's stronghold. He sighted his gun, fired, and a six inch shell exploded in his pit; sand bags, timber, gun, and man were only a mass of ruins. It was hardly fair perhaps. They forced the Negroes to load their cannon, and we shot them if they did. So the poor darkies had a hard time rather.

Let no one pity these darkies. They work willingly when their lives are not in danger. I myself saw seven Negro soldiers cutting up a wounded Union soldier. (I am happy to be able to state that these gentlemen will not have a great deal of time in this world to enjoy that pleasant occupation. They are now in the region of that wholesale dealer in brimstone immortalized by Milton.) Passing by all our adventures, scouting, and picketing, I come up to Sunday morning May 4<sup>th</sup>. I went on picket before daylight; everything was unusually still; I saw no signs and could not understand it. At 5 o'clock, the captain of the picket (from the 5<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin) started to reconnoiter, keeping on till he arrived in the Rebel works. They were silent as the grave. In an hour, our brigade (Hancock's) was in full pursuit and here begins the advance on Richmond.

Upon crossing the dam, the first thing we saw were bodies of our soldiers drowned in the fight of April 16<sup>th</sup> now become visible as the water was let out. The next thing I saw was a bowie knife, the handle of which was made of a man's wrist bone. Torpedoes were placed in the road; we dug up seven; one exploded and killed one man and wounded nine. McClellan made our prisoners dig up the rest. Steadily we pressed on after the enemy taking no rest. We had no food; no time could be lost to cook rations. It was very warm and we were marched almost double quick. But no one cared; we were really on the road to Richmond and the enemy only seven miles ahead. In the afternoon our cavalry charged the Rebel rear guard, but were drawn within range of a masked battery and we lost in killed and wounded more than 50. I know these figures are correct, the New York papers to the contrary notwithstanding. The papers never tell our real losses.

We halted in time of battle and lay down to sleep in a large wheat field tired and hungry to sleep as best we might awaiting the morrow and the coming battle. At 2 A.M. it began to rain hard. At daylight we were formed and slowly advanced to the Battle of Williamsburg. Of this battle I shall only say a little, as I saw the reporters have 100 pages of manuscript. I will say a word about Hancock's brigade though as the 33<sup>rd</sup> were with it that day and our detachment. We had 155 of our riflemen out- Captain Guinox commanded the Michigan boys and Captain Isler the Swiss riflemen. A heavy rain was falling and a mist covered the battlefield like a cloud. The men were hungry and tired but now forgot all their troubles. The battleground was a beautiful wheat field about two miles long and 200 rods wide. Numerous forts were scattered along, the one on our left being the target- it was Fort Magruder. They had not mounted their heavy guns else we would have had a terrible struggle. Behind Fort Magruder a series of works reached to Williamsburg, one protecting the other.

We lay on our arms in the cold rain till 4:30 P.M. before the raging tide of battle surged toward us. The Sharpshooters were in the edge of the woods on the left of Hancock's brigade, and the 5<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin on the extreme right, forming a wall across the narrow valley. The wheat high and we were cold and wet, shaking as if we had the ague. I saw William Long riding about the battlefield but no order came for us. We began to fear we would take no part when suddenly from the woods on our right came out the Rebels advancing in lines parallel with ours. Their colonel headed them waving his sword right gallantly, but in a minute he fell dead. A word now as to our situation. General Hooker was on our left and there the battle began in the morning. We were 900 yards

from the enemy's left, with the two deserted forts behind us. The artillery played over us, so we lay down in the grass and mud, thereby being benumbed with the inaction.

The enemy advanced at double quick at 4:30 from the woods on our right, the 5<sup>th</sup> North Carolina of General Early's brigade leading about 100 yards distance and parallel to Co. G's (5<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin) skirmishers, by whom they were received in the most gallant manner. Captain Bugh managed admirably. He had passed by a few rods when he fell mortally wounded. He is from Berlin, Wisconsin. He remained on the field till night as the enemy pressed too hard for us to recover him. The Rebel soldiers attempted to bayonet him, but he fought with his sword. Luckily a Rebel major approached and drove away his men. That major was killed a few minutes afterwards.

The enemy charged in splendid style. I never saw a finer sight. Three times advanced yelling like demons crying out 'Bull Run' 'Ball's Bluff' Eight rods in front of us was a rail fence. Only one man, a captain, crossed it. He fell dead. All that were left of the 5<sup>th</sup> North Carolina, 23<sup>rd</sup> North Carolina, and 24<sup>th</sup> Virginia were taken prisoner, many by the 33<sup>rd</sup> New York reserve. General Hancock was ordered to retreat, but held his ground and to that alone we owe the day. Our Sharpshooters were rather between both on the left and did good service. Of the three regiments named above, only 140 were left and these prisoners. The next morning I visited the battlefield. I never before had seen death in such a shape. In one place I counted 75 dead; in another 46; the eyes open, staring horribly; hands clenched, body convulsed by the last strong agony, tongues protruding, yet some lay quietly as if sleeping. It was an awful sight. In one pile lay 300 dead Rebels; one Rebel and one Union soldier lay together each impaled on the others' bayonet.

Tuesday was clear and beautiful. In a barn we found 106 wounded Rebels. Two Rebel surgeons remained with them. It was a horrible place. Fourteen legs lay in one pile. All day Tuesday we were burying the dead. Our loss in killed, wounded, and missing was 2,000; the Rebels lost about 2,500. It was obstinately contested and dearly won. All day Tuesday we got nothing to eat and lay down on the hard ground tired and hungry. Since Sunday morning I had not tasted a mouthful. It was bright moonlight and the bands were playing 'Auld Lang Syne.' That beautiful tune awakened memories of the Auld Lang Syne when Virginians were loyal as well as brave- when this beautiful state furnished men who stood shoulder to shoulder with the patriots of 1776. The repeal of the law of primogeniture was just, but American never again will see such scenes of social grandeur. It is hard to believe that these dirty prisoners are the descendants of the Virginia chivalry.

All around were graves of friend and foe. The game for them was played out. The balance struck. The squirrel may gambol in the boughs above and the partridge whistle in the long grass beneath. They are where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Wednesday morning I was nearly starved. I had eaten nothing since Sunday morning save six crackers my servant George went seven miles and bought for 50 cents from a sutler. Bread was 50 cents per load and a wagon load was sold at that price in five minutes. While wandering wearily along I met William Long who gave me breakfast. I never enjoyed a meal so before in the world. Towards night I got some provisions enough to last till Thursday noon. Thursday we received marching orders and Friday morning at 3 A.M. without any breakfast we again started for Richmond. We are bound to go to Richmond anyway.

An army on a march is a grand spectacle; enough to excite enthusiasm in the dullest, and rouse the passions of any beholder. Miles and miles of gleaming bayonets and dark masses of men, far away as the eye could reach. All the old stories were here vividly reproduced. No pen could do the scene justice. The country was beautiful, a good deal like a travel from Penn Yan to Rochester and we were marching with the same interest a Southern army would feel in marching through New York State. But I began seriously to calculate how long I could march on hard bread alone, half-starved already. The Germans say 'Happiness is well grounded hope.' I had no hope; we were marching away from provisions. All day I had bread enough but only bread. We encamped at night in James City town. I cannot more precisely indicate the locality. I lay down tired and hungry and would have given a dollar a pint for coffee. Coffee is as necessary for soldiers as everything else beside. Saturday May 10<sup>th</sup> we were

off at 3:30 A.M. without any breakfast and marched to near new Kent Courthouse 33 miles from Richmond. Very hot and dusty-all day no food only bread. This bread is only flour and water baked.

Friday morning I stopped to visit the old Custis place. It was a ruin. The marble tombs of Daniel Parke Custis and family were defaced and broken. It was here, if I mistake not, George Washington did his courting. Major Larrabee of the 5<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin copied the inscriptions and gave it to the reporters. The place, the scene before me, an army against an army, all descendants of George Washington's own men. It was suggestive. Sunday morning I concluded I could go little farther without more than bread. The other brigades had short rations but that was something. Yesterday, I got a little piece of beef from Captain Root of Co. I, 33<sup>rd</sup> New York so I was not quite dead. As we belonged to no brigade they would give us nothing. The major told General Smith we could go no farther. The whole army halted and sent for food. Lieutenant Colonel Emery and Major Larabee of the 5<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin invited me to breakfast with them. I am firmly convinced that this is all that saved my life as I was beginning to feel as the cow did when the locomotive knocked her off the track-discouraged.

As soon as the teams started for provisions I sat down to write to you. As to the future we only know that we are going to Richmond and no earthly power can prevent us. A week ago last Sunday I was promoted to be staff officer on General Charles S. Hamilton's staff. He commands Heintzelman's old division.<sup>1</sup> But McClellan refused to let me leave my regiment because I belonged to Porter's division; consequently my confidence in the general is impaired. That is as good a reason as many of his enemies have for traducing him. Just wait. Before this letter sees the light of your columns, Richmond will be ours.

Pamunkey River, Cumberland Landing, Virginia

May 14, 1862, 9 A.M.

*Yates County Chronicle, May 29, 1862, pg. 1*

Monday morning Co. A marched over to Porter's Division 12 miles and exchanged their Colt's Revolving Rifles for Sharps' improved target rifles- double triggers with globe sights- the finest gun ever made in the world. I saw all the Yates County boys- all well. I have had a chance to buy a small ham from a sutler from Geneva, New York who, as a great favor, let me have it for \$5. The first meat I had had in a week with one exception. We started back but when we had gone 8 miles were ordered by McClellan to return to our regiment. This we were very sorry to see as we were held in high esteem in General Smith's division and were ahead. General Porter's division is always behind. So we turned into a field and without any overcoats or blankets, for we had not calculated on being gone all night, lay down to sleep, supperless and cold.

Tuesday morning we awoke chilled and wet with the heavy dews of this country and prepared to march but we found that Porter's division was coming, so we waited and fell in, marching all day again with nothing to eat. At sundown we came to Cumberland Landing; here the road ran along a ridge and descended in a plain. As we came over the hill, the most beautiful sight I ever have seen in Virginia yet met my view. Fancy yourself on an eminence looking over a broad valley. Far away were the blue hills around Richmond and the fine rolling country for miles visible and the beautiful river with its wooded banks running through, bearing on its bosom the old familiar New York boats and the dark, grim gun boats. The plain for miles was covered with a vast army. Thousands of acres of horses, artillery, battalions, tents, wagons, and all the paraphernalia of war were before me, in one view, reminding one of the old stories of Xerxes and Philip. There is an undercurrent as it were in war, a march, that is never to be. It requires too much detail and more facility of description than most men have- no mere words can convey any idea of a grand army at rest or in motion. It must be seen and felt.

Tuesday night we again lay down to sleep, tired and hungry, no amount of hard bread can satisfy a man's hunger. It does not fill up. I offered a sutler 80 cents for a pint cup full of butter but he refused. Cheese is at 40

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<sup>1</sup> Hamilton's command was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of the III Corps.

cents per lbs, eggs 5 cents; bread 50 cents for a small loaf, ham at \$3-5 and little to be had. Pies are 25 cents each for small ones. I tried mince and ate 12 shillings worth but not like mince, baked a month ago. You would be astonished at our appetites when we get a chance to eat-one eats as much at once as an ordinary family would have on a supper table.

The officers carry no guns save a few who have private rifles- an officer carried his sword, a revolver, his blankets, a haversack, canteen, etc., which makes a pretty good load. Revolvers are very plenty and very useless; not one in a thousand are ever used. Many people refuse to take our treasury notes and openly argue their side. It looks curious; fancy us doing that in Davis' army. They crowd up to hear our splendid bands and to see the great army wind its way silently along toward their vaunted strongholds. The route of our army is marked by clothing. It is so hot that the soldiers throw away overcoats, blankets, knapsacks, everything they can. They will suffer when it comes on for to rain.

I will describe as near as I can, in detail, one day's march as soon as I have time and one day is about like another where we have no fighting. The farm we are encamped on is a Mr. Tuller's. He is Union; his wife owns the property, a violent secessionist. Our right is lying on a blackberry patch of several acres, all in bloom. It is a very pretty place. The darkies of this country could all follow us but don't seem to care much. They are too lazy. Those we have ran away from the Rebel army because they had to work. Those remaining on the plantations are better off far than those who have run away north to starve and be kicked around. Six of them here do not do the proper day's work of one man. A curse to the soil and owner. They have done all the work for the Rebels and should do ours. Fully one quarter of our army is doing work Negroes should do and easily could do. The regular infantry regiments do not average 500 men for fighting. So much work to be done; roads to be built, bridges ditto, teams driven (we have more than 20,000 wagons here; Smith's division had 16,000 wagons following, and nothing is carried but what is absolutely necessary-mostly provisions) trenches are to be dug, and every variety of work a man can imagine. The most of which Negroes can easily do.

10 A.M. - the right was just ordered to fall in for a fight but the order was countermanded. A heavy rain has set in and it is very cheerless and uncomfortable. If we were going ahead we could well endure anything, but as usual, this division is behind. An article in your paper was shown me a few moments ago that contains an error; however it is apparent that the typos committed it. Instead of being behind that tree two hours it was not two minutes. It was too warm a place. I do not know where you got that information for I never write much of myself. As it is alluded to, I will tell the whole story as it was a curious episode. Soon after we reached Yorktown, we discovered that the Rebels had sharpshooters also and I will give them credit of having as good shots as I ever saw and some better than I want to see again. When we went to General Smith's division, we found the pickets only about 10 rods apart in a dense swamp. They kept firing at each other all day, but no one was ever shot. I have as good eyes as anyone and I could not see any Rebels. They fancied they saw lots of them. Co. A's ground was on the left of the dam when the Vermonters made their fruitless charge; on our right was an apple orchard, on our left woods; we were in the edge of the woods. The Rebel rifle pit could be plainly seen diagonally across on the right, but we could not see straight across at all. We could not see five rods out in the orchard, even two picket posts. The first was a tee, with rails at that time only piled up loosely about 18 inches from the ground. The second, farther out, had rails piled up four feet.

The day before, a flag of truce was sent over to have firing suspended so as to allow them to pick up their dead, who were lying outside their works and to pick up our dead Vermont boys. It was agreed to. They would not let us come across the dam, but sent us the bodies. We recovered in one place four horse wagon loads of Vermont men. I counted the steps of the officer returning so as to approximate the distance and sight our rifles for it rained so much we could not see our balls strike. It was 185 steps from our lines to his first works. It was also agreed to raise a flag of truce at 10 A.M. the next day and stop firing. At the time we suspended in good faith, and a Rebel officer came out with some 8 or 10 men, one of them bearing a white flag. He did not hold it up exactly, yet I supposed all right and stepped out to post No. 1. They fired, the balls going about two feet over me, and I jumped

behind this tree and all fired. Seven balls hit the tree. I dropped on the ground. Two of our men lay there- Schortan and Welcher. The Rebels then fired at us and every ball came straight to one place-all struck within a ten inch ring. Some came through three oak rails and three passed through Welcher's overcoat. Soon all ceased firing but one and I quickly became satisfied that I had no ordinary man to deal with. Schortan tried to look out. A ball passed within an inch of his head and he ducked double quick. This sharpshooter kept us still half a day. We could do nothing- for trees are no cover against rifle pits. That night I dig a rifle pit and just at daylight this same gun sent a ball that flattened the corner of my cap down on my head. I dropped to avoid a second. He yelled out, but I answered so that he would not mark down any more Yankees than he was entitled to.

Lieutenant Faulstich went into his rifle pit that morning with eight men. The pit was 26 feet long and four holes in, each three inches in diameter to shoot from. It was below the Rebel as his pit was on an elevation. He had a set behind the works and was protected by timber and sand bags and was perfectly safe as far as rifle balls were concerned. He shot into hole No. 1, then hole No.2, then 3, then 4, then did it again, this time killing Sergeant Saver, one of our best men. In short, not a man could look out of a hole nor fire. This showed me that he had a telescope rifle and could see whence his balls struck. Those balls went through a bank 33 inches thick and buried themselves in the ground beyond so deep we could not find them. The remainder of the story I told in my first. He shot leisurely, having a Negro load his gun so that he would not get tired. He seemed to be an amateur. Captain Mott threw a shell exactly into his place. That night we sent to our regiment and got four telescopic rifles but his gun has never been fired since. Requiescat in pace.

Narrow escapes are of no account, they are so common. We are all, when on duty, liable to instant death. I saw a ball strike an oak sapling not an inch thick and glance square in front of Major Larrabee's face. His nose was within three inches of the tree. He winked. Excuse this long digression. You might inquire if one feels afraid when about to face an enemy's fire? I know not what others may say but I confess I do. I regard a shell as a thing one should entertain a wholesome dread of. Only a brute can hear the bullets whistling around and men dead and dying without fear. But understand me. I do not wish this fear to lead a man to shirk his duty. Knowing, conscious of his danger, fearing death, yet the brave man presses on. Napoleon saw a man marching by to charge a battery turn pale. He said, "That is a brave man. He knows his danger but he does not terror." The worst time is just before the first gun is fired. As soon as the battle begins, men grow regardless, except the inevitable skulkers who are found in every regiment.

The Pamunkey River is a very pretty stream. Vessels drawing 15 feet are up here and beyond. When we move, I know not; probably tomorrow morning as three days' rations have been ordered and two more days to be taken, so in five days we may be in Richmond. One hundred fifty thousand men are reported ahead. They swear that w or they must go under in utter ruin. Well, the opinion here is, as far as I can learn, that they mean to fight. Undoubtedly, the Norfolk army has gone, and every man in the whole country than can get there. They will choose a position out of reach of our gunboats and fight it out. They fight well. The charge of General Early's brigade at Williamsburg was a magnificent sight. They were ploughed through with Wheeler's guns but formed a coolly as if upon parade, and advanced three quarters of a mile under fire to charge General Hancock. No one ever saw better work and so finely performed. If we move tomorrow I will write from our next halting place if I can possibly get time.

On the river, White House, Virginia

Friday, May 16, 1862

*Yates County Chronicle, May 29, 1862, pg. 2*

Wednesday afternoon, just as I had finished my last, we were ordered to fall in and supposed we were in for a fight. But it was only to be reviewed by the dignitaries now visiting the army, President Lincoln, Secretary of State Seward, etc. The evening set in, raining more furiously than ever and so it continued all night. Thursday we

were aroused at 4 A.M. and hastily fell in, and then our troubles began. We were behind the wagons. Before we had left camp one wagon got stuck fast in the mud and we stood in the road three hours before we moved another inch. It was raining hard and very muddy. It rained all day. We marched through mud all day, stopping to build corduroy roads. When we came to a hill we had to take a long rope and pull the heavily laden wagons up. We fell in at 4 A.M. and at half past 3 P.M. we had not gone three miles. At 4 P.M. we left the teams and pushed ahead to this place, five miles from Cumberland Landing. Here we turned aside into a field of luxuriant clover to pass the night as well we might.

To attempt to describe our situation would simply be a waste of words to the uninitiated. If you wish to try it, put some raw pork and hard bread and a little ground coffee in your pocket and start out at daylight, walk in the rain and deep mud until dark, then turn off into a field of long grass and do as you please until morning. Then you will know how I feel this morning. We took our 'shellin tents' which 'sift' the water so only clear water runs on you and put two together. These 'tents' are pieces of cloth five feet square. Then we hang it over a pole supported by two sticks. It makes a little A tent. We then proceeded to General Lee's fence for we are on his splendid farm and taking rails; we built a fire and gathered around, a wet, hungry, churly set. Soon we get some muddy water out of a roadside ditch and putting it in a pint cup, boil it and then put in ground coffee if you have any. That is of more good than anything else. We could not live without it. In our knapsack tins we fry a little pork and thus eventually get pork, coffee, and hard bread. The question then arises, how to sleep? Some get rails and one or two boards. I reflected and concluded that I was as wet as I could be, therefore I could not very well be much wetter. Acting on this, I considered it was extra trouble and would not pay to hunt up boards so I pulled clover, pressed the water out, and soon had enough for a soft bed; piled it into a little tents occupied by Welmer and Welcher and then lay down to sleep. Soon I was sound asleep. But the rain began to run down my neck through the aforesaid tent and I awoke. First, I thought I would move, but decided not to as I had no place to move to. Besides I had already warmed the water I lay in and if I moved into water of a different temperature I would catch cold surely; so I went to sleep again, thinking how mother would worry if she knew the water was running down my neck.

This morning (Friday) was warm and pleasant and I started out to visit Mr. Lee's mansion. A prettier place I have not seen in Virginia. His name is William Lee and I believe he is a son of the Lee of Arlington Heights whose house General McDowell occupied all winter. The house is situated on the river bank just below the railroad bridge and is surrounded by fine old trees. The place contains 4,000 acres and appears to be under fine cultivation. What a lovely place to leave! I wandered around the spacious grounds and finally sat down in a summer house by the riverside. Innumerable birds in the grand old trees filled the air with songs. Upon the river were out steamboats and gunboats and the proud owner of this plantation was affording store room for our provisions in his spacious barns. No white person was left here, but plenty of slaves, about 400. No furniture was left in the house. The garden is in fine order; the peas are about a foot and a half high and I got some young onions to eat. There were also some fine imported cattle on his place and a great deal of machinery for various purposes. Much tobacco seems to be raised. An efficient guard prevents the slightest injury being done to his place, while the owner is in Richmond laboring with all his vast resources to accomplish our destruction.

There are about 1,500 acres cleared right by the mansion. Here our army is encamped. There are many persons along with an army who experience none of the discomforts of camp life. They are clerks, agents, and all the hundred and one places around the headquarters of generals and quartermasters. They live well, have no marching to do, no picket or guard duty, and no fighting or danger to their precious persons; yet to hear them talk and see their letters you would fancy them heroes indeed. One of the most discouraging things of this war is the great number of friends the South possesses in the North. The brave army fights and toils night and day, yields life and limb, while their enemy is succored by Northern leniency. No leader has been hung. They catch spies and hang them. Spies innumerable are detected in our camp and I never heard of one of them suffering any injury. We captured one spy warming himself before General Porter's tent at a good fire. He had crawled up on one of our

pickets, murdered him, and put on his uniform, and then came to General Porter's fire to dry himself and overhear all he could. What was Andrew hung for?

I wish some friends of the South in Penn Yan even had to go into the rifle pits all day with us in rain and mud, and draw wagons uphill, and see their friends lying wounded in battle and when overtaken by our 'Southern brethren' have their throats cut as at West Point. They would get over their sympathy. The Rebels had 4,000 Negroes at Yorktown. They are 12 miles from us now with thousands and thousands of Negroes hard at work. Negroes could be made available by us while our men must march and shovel all night and fight all day, and when in camp stand guard over Secesh vegetable gardens as we do today; and if we pull up an onion we are court-martialed. The army has only salt pork and hard bread to eat, yet one whole company has to protect Lee's onion bed and he a colonel in the Rebel army and waiting to kill us. It destroys our courage. These Rebel leaders will all be lecturing in the Cooper Institute next winter and I would not much care if we had a rebellion every election till the government can treat enemies as enemies. If we could only see some severity exhibited we would fight with more spirit, but as it looks now, it discourages one. These Rebel leaders are held in higher estimation than ever, as their beautiful plantations are traveled over. Truly, money is power; and the gay, dashing Rebels are of more account than the more humble but honest and loyal Northerners. Sad but true.

The sun has set and the camp becoming still, save our fine bands which are the life of the army- we get lonely and would like to see friends at home. In the daytime we find repose in business, consolation in a crowd, but when it comes night, many a one wishes to see those behind. A captain at Williamsburg showed me the miniature of a little girl. 'Oh,' said he, 'how I do want to see her today.' In an hour he was a corpse. His little girl will never see her Pa again in this world. We have about 1,000 craft here and the boats pass to and fro quite animated. It is curious that here is a river with an average of 15 feet of water to this place and 20 miles beyond and yet not a village nor even a mill on either bank; and in Yorktown not a house has been built hardly since the War of Independence. What a waste of water privileges! This house is the identical one where George Washington first saw his future wife. He overstayed his time three days. He was married in a church close by and ate his wedding dinner here.

Early this morning McClellan's staff officers pitched their tents in the yard and McClellan intended to make his headquarters there, and a flag waved from a pole on the end of the house. But he changed his mind and moved his officers out and lives in a tent. He did not wish, he said, 'to desecrate it.' How would McClellan desecrate it? Does Lee's treason desecrate it? The *Herald* says this town was burned; there was never but one house here.

New York papers sell here for 25 cents each. Rather steep. Will write soon again.

Headquarters, Army of the Potomac,  
White House Landing, Virginia, May 18, 1862  
*Yates County Chronicle, June 5, 1862, pg. 1*

The time is coming when a battle at home must be fought between union who would yet be free- and those miserable fragments of party politics that are now being noised up for use when the proper time arrives. I have never yet been more disgusted with any set of men than on a recent trip to Ohio in company with some prisoners of war, not with the Rebel officers under my charge, for most of them were gentlemen commanding my respect, compared with the diverse politicians at every stopping place who button-holed my prisoners and consoled with them over the unfortunate state of affairs that they had always tried to avoid, 'hoped that it soon would be over and that we should be friends and brothers again.' 'I stuck out to the last.' 'If it had not been for the damned abolitionists we never would have had this war.'

The above from the Cincinnati Commercial I fully endorse. It is applicable here as there. The government does not punish traitors and our own leading men, in too many cases, are busy again courting the favor of all the

Southerners they can lay hands on. Our government does precisely what I was told South a year ago we would do, said a gentleman in St. Louis, now a surgeon in the Rebel army. "We abuse you, use you as tools, then throw you away and fight you, and you humbly crowd around to be taken again into favor." And I fear there is much truth in it. As I saw this vast army toiling through mud and rain, working in hunger and thirst, I could not but wish their hands could be held up by some moral aid from the government. If they could see one traitor spy hung- one detected murderer strung up as they string up our wounded prisoners, it would be worth thousands of men to our cause. One week ago today I saw out gallant men who were inhumanly butchered by the enemy at New Kent Courthouse. They were prisoners and wounded. The enemy was hard pressed and as they could not carry them away (for fear that they would inform is of their force) they cut their throats. It was all very nice for us to prate of our 'magnanimous government.' Eight men were surprised at Williamsburg in the act of killing one wounded Union soldier two weeks ago today. We charged them, killed all. Soon after we captured a lieutenant colonel. He was wounded and begged for mercy. But our men had surprised his men in the act. Their comrade's corpse lay there with a hundred wounds while the lieutenant colonel was shrieking for quarter they slew him. "What, take him prisoner and he take the oath? No that's played out." I don't blame them. The men have no confidence in his every receiving any punishment from the government, neither would he. So they closed his little account then and there- *and that was not the only one.*

Sunday evening, May 18, 1862

Two weeks ago this was a wilderness; now the sun shines on 75,000 bayonets in this little field. It is the hour for evening parade, and the solid battalions are drawn up to hear a few words from their chaplains on their duties and responsibilities, and as I listened, I could easily account for the vast influence the clergy have always possessed over the warriors of every age and clime. And here Prentice truly says that no class has done more to excite undying hatred, especially in the breasts of women, than the clergymen of the South. To see our whole army out on parade is a grand sight, worth a journey here to see. We have already a post office, express office, a daguerrean galley, news depot, and eating house. Newspapers have fallen to 10 cents for the dailies. When we move I know not; maybe tonight, maybe not in a week. We are landing a vast quantity of every conceivable kind of army stores and equipments. Lowe's balloon is here. Our advance is some miles ahead. It is very hot and I hope our marches will henceforth be made in the night. The heat has already begun to send the soldiers to the hospitals and soon the mortality must be great. All the Yates County boys are well. We have now a feverish impatience to be led against Davis and his army. We want him to head his army, choose his position, and wait for us, and soon you would hear of our being at the gates of the proud Rebel capital. But McClellan will bide his time. The present week may show.

In camp, 19 miles from Richmond, Virginia

9 A.M., Tuesday, May 20, 1862

*Yates County Chronicle, June 5, 1862, pg. 2*

In 15 minutes after I finished my letter Sunday evening we received our marching orders and gladly set about the few preparations we had to make, for "We fold our tents like the Arab, and as silently steal away." Early Monday morning the vast camp was in commotion, like the writhings of a serpent's folds, and soon the anaconda slowly unwound itself and stretched away toward Richmond, a body five miles long, the sun flashing on banner and bayonet. I made up my mind that if such a force was after me, you could play dominoes on my coat tail as I went around the corner (or rather you couldn't not for Sunday I cut off the tails of my coat to mend my pantaloons with). Of course, it soon began to rain, but I was glad of it, otherwise the sun would have been overpowering. Being officer of the guard, I brought up the rear; we went around about way through the woods and a pleasanter march I never made. All day we moved along under grand old trees and by the side of running brooks.

A little before sunset we came out upon a cleared space where our army was encamped. The railroad station house was marked 'Tunstall's Station No. 20.' As we approached the Rebel capital we came into a beautiful farming country. The scenes grow finer every day. We are encamped in a vast amphitheater, surrounded by sloping hills and ridges. The valley has a stream running through it and the ground is covered with fine fields of wheat. The fences are woven like our gabions are made. Everything evinces a high state of cultivation. This wheat is all headed. The sloping hills are covered with houses, orchards, and barns, and now the pretty white tents, the whole forming indeed a pleasing landscape, resembling the prettiest parts of New York.

In the evening just as the sun was setting, I went up on the hill where McClellan's headquarters were. In the valley under my feet, the army was drawn up in evening parade. Only a painter could do the scene justice. The valley and wood, the deep green of the luxuriant foliage dotted with white tents and dark masses of men- the sun shining on all, formed one of the splendid and imposing pageants only witnessed by one of a grand army on a march. But we could not linger, much had to be done, for tomorrow we move, tightening the coils, slowly but surely.

Wednesday, May 21, 1862

At 3 A.M. we were aroused and at daylight were on the way. It was a misty, rainy day and very sultry. We marched through a still finer country than ever before; the Rebel army never passed over this road, every farm was in the best order, fences all woven or interlaced, wheat and oats headed, corn up finely and large oak trees in the groves instead of the everlasting pine. I have never seen a better cultivated region in this country. Starving the Rebels is pure nonsense. We have passed grain enough today for an army. Colonel Lee, who had 7,000 bushels of wheat at White House, is the Colonel Lee who commands Stuart's cavalry and who shot our wounded prisoners at New Kent Courthouse because he could not retreat fast enough with them. He did not have time to remove all his Negroes and they with plenty more are going North on a dog trot. We came five miles today. It was the warmest day yet. Most intensely hot after the sun came out. This warm weather will trouble us. Even now we should begin to march nights. We are encamped on the edge of a fine piece of oak openings. The men immediately cut small trees and plant one before each tent, forming a picturesque view, looking as if the camp had been sown in a grove of bushes and was just coming up. The march of a grand army presents man views that will live forever in the memory of those fortunate enough to see them. To one at all gifted with an imaginative mind, this panorama possesses peculiar charms. From childhood up to so recently, we rarely if ever had seen a soldier, hardly knew the difference between a haversack and a howitzer. In a moment, as it were, the scene changed- our stories and dreams were realities. A grander army than Napoleon's is marching through the land. We have read of Waterloo- we have seen Corinth- we have read of ghastly wounds, of the far more to be dreaded disease and hospital. Noe every Northern bound boat carried a wasted suffering load. A few politicians wanted more power, more fame, 'hinc illae, lach rymae.' And will these leaders and authors go free? Will our government never punish them? Have they still too many friends in power to be convicted and hung up before high heaven if caught? If so, in her next hour of peril, and it will surely come, let God help our country, for on earth so would look in vain.

Thursday, May 22, 1862

At 5 A.M. we were off again on our road to Richmond. Fine ripe strawberries were in the gardens, looking tantalizingly at us, tired and hot, but not one we could get. Some officers get a few at 25 cents per quart- cheap! We marched 14-15 miles in 14-15 different directions, the last miles our course being southeast. At night we were only 4 ½ miles nearer Richmond than we were in the morning. We are encamped in the fields at no particular place. We are on the road now that leads to New Bridge, and are only 13 miles from Richmond. This is the warmest day yet, and many dropped, exhausted. If the Rebels run from Richmond we are in a fix. I saw a late Richmond paper today. It is filled with the most infernal lies you ever read. Can they believe that they really whipped us at Lee's Mills, Williamsburg, and those places? If so, how do they explain our close pursuit? The country is fine, same

as I wrote yesterday. We turn in, pretty tired tonight. I think we will lie still tomorrow. Soon I hope to chronicle more stirring events. I could write much more now than I do, but I know that the daily press is ahead of me. Yesterday the reporters were all sent to the rear. We have not received a mail for a week. I bought a *Herald* of the 20<sup>th</sup> this morning for 25 cents. It tells very little of what we are doing. The soldiers did not even pick the roses from the bushes inside the fences along the road and we cannot take a rail to cook a meal with. I went into a house to buy milk if possible. I have not had a taste of milk since February. He had none; he had sold it all for 50 cents a quart to our men. I asked for potatoes. He said he had taken them to Richmond yesterday for the Rebel army and sold them for \$3 a bushel, Confederate money, and we have four men and an officer guarding his strawberry bed, all he has left. All his male relations are in the army. All the slaves here were taught to believe and did believe that they were to be sold to Cuba by us to pay our war expenses. But I am tired. Good night.

9 A.M., Friday, May 23, 1862

Our divisions does not march today, it is very hot. If a person sits down in the woods or tries to sleep a little under a tree he is all covered soon with various representations of the reptile world. The annoyance is sometimes unendurable. We are impatient to be off. Within 13 miles and resting so long is provoking. It is hard work to write a descriptive letter. We see about the same kind things we always did, the same kind of houses, fences, barns, etc. We are opening no new countries, visiting no new nations. As for what people that were here, they ain't here now. Fancy going through New York State and every man gone! No wonder they have a big army. On the same plan, how many men could we raise?

Saturday, May 24, 1862

Our advance must be about five or six miles only from Richmond today; they were yesterday I guess. I do not write much of this kind of news for the dailies tell all, and it would be old before this reaches you. We can get no milk today for the general ahead engaged all the milk and forbade it to be sold to the men. By far the best letters concerning our army are in the *New York Tribune* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and you know I would not praise the *Tribune* if I could help it.

As to the confiscation bill I have only one remark to make, and it embraces the whole question. Should loyal men pay the whole expense of war? That's all there is to say on that point. People at home do not understand why there should such a necessity exist for the employment of Negroes for some kinds of work. Now let me tell them some things they do not know, or never thought sufficiently of. Let an army of 100,000 fighting men go into the field and in one month the general will not have 75,000. Our infantry companies do not average 60 men. Many regiments do not go into battle with 400 men each. Where are the men? Let us look at one company. Suppose it had 100 men on the start, and not one quarter of companies have that many; eight or ten will get sick, two or three run away home. There are thousands of deserters now at home. Soon three or four more will get sick, at every camping ground many are left behind. Some do not like their officers and play sick and get discharged. Some are detailed for the hospital, some for orderlies, some for teamsters, four or five are company cooks, many get into the Quartermaster's Department, some stay behind with the baggage, some are discharged for disability, some temporarily are tired out. So you see how they go. Negroes could be nurses, drive teams, cook, and all such things and more than all, dig the entrenchments, thus leaving the soldiers to march and fight. The rebels fight and their Negroes work the farms at home, cook for the soldiers, throw up their entrenchments, so their soldiers can sleep nights and come fresh into battle. The Negroes should do the work. A company rarely brings one half its men into battle, many times only one third. Think of that when you reckon up in round numbers our large forces. It rains hard today, we do not march. Have no food. We had nothing to eat yesterday and nothing so far today. It is all very fine poetry to talk about "McClellan's hurling his legions on the retreating foe," but if you had to march in the heat and sand carrying a knapsack and gun and nothing to eat, you would not enjoy the poetry

so vividly. However, we would go the next 13 miles anyway if he would say "Forward!" 'For we are sworn to Bothwell Hill, and maun either gae or dee.'

The 44<sup>th</sup> New York (Ellsworth's Avengers) has turned out poorly. There were not 300 men fit for duty left in the regiment. At Yorktown 200 went to the hospital at Hampton. They were left behind when we advanced. The strong country men, men who can chop cords or wood or mow acres over in a day are no so capable of enduring camp life as those who never did a day's work in their lives. Clerks, bookkeepers, and that class are by far the hardiest and can do the most work. I saw in the Herald that one of Elmendorf's recruits died in the hospital at New York. He was sent from Yorktown. His name was Franklin Elwood from Barrington. John and David Gannon have been sent back sick. John Gannon arrived in New York, perhaps David also. John Philbrooks was discharged sick from Fortress Monroe. All of these were from Potter. William Simmons, Lewis Gage, Gideon B. Draper, and Nelson Rector, all four from Benton, were sent away from Yorktown sick; where they are I know not. They were left in the hospital department. Eugene Paris was discharged also Aaron Gregory, both for disability; James Drake was left at White House in hospital; William J. Huie was sent away from Yorktown to hospital; Levi Ketchum was left at Washington sick. Two or three more will soon be obliged to drop out and go home. The exposure, privations, and trials incident to a campaign are terrible. No one can appreciate this that has not actually passed through this. That a man passed through is prima facie evidence of tremendous strength. Lieutenant Elmendorf is suffering acute rheumatism and has been for a week but keeps up bravely, determined to press on. The western men are all getting the ague and the regiment is suffering a great deal. This swamp land is using all the men up. If we go beyond Richmond, it will be with very few men. We have now eleven companies; the eleventh company if from Minnesota. They joined us at West Point. These last companies are not acclimated and sink down quickly. The 101<sup>st</sup> New York is all used up and will be consolidated with some other soon. Our marches so far have been made principally from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M., the sun shining with intense heat. We would prefer to march at night. But anyway to get to Richmond...

Saturday night closes in with the rain pouring down terribly and the wind blowing a gale. In your houses you are comfortable, and while the rain dashes against your windows and the blast howls without, bestow a thought on the soldiers who, cold and shivering, are crouching in their kennels, waiting for the sun once more to shine. Sunday morning will soon come, but as to what the coming week will seek, who can tell? Many now rejoicing in health and anticipation will never pass over the next thirteen miles. Before this reaches the eyes of your readers, the die will be cast.

Peake's Station, Virginia

6 A.M., Thursday, May 29, 1862

*Yates County Chronicle, June 12, 1862, pg. 2*

I am writing in an old house near Peake's Station, on a railroad that runs north from Richmond and about 15 miles from that city and that is all I know of where I am. Some call it eleven miles from Richmond and others range it all the way up to 18 miles. As I am not a general, I don't know a thing. The Southerners say we are a very vulgar set, to which Prentice observed that we were getting very low down, especially in the West. But we seem to be going in another direction. I never was so utterly exhausted and tired-completely played out as I was last night and I am not much better now. Double quicking, marching, fighting, etc. for so long and not a mouthful to eat. But let me resume my narrative.

Sunday night we received orders to march at 3 A.M. on Monday May 26<sup>th</sup>. We were aroused at 2 A.M. and prepared to start. At daylight we moved and at 3 P.M. encamped within seven miles of Richmond. A heavy rain began to fall, of course, and the evening closed in bidding fair to be a terrible night. This afternoon I had been very sick, the first afternoon for a long time. Want of food comes hard. Will cannot keep one up always. I lay down at dark determined to go on the sick list although I had prided myself on never having been off duty a minute since I

enlisted. I had scarcely fallen asleep when the order came to march with two days' rations at 3 A.M., and preparations had to be instantly made. The rain was falling in torrents, almost putting out camp fires. Before daylight we were off.

On Tuesday May 27<sup>th</sup>; slowly in the mud and rain we plodded along. We had no knapsacks, but had 60 extra rounds of cartridges which betokened business. We all supposed the hour had come and I inwardly speculated on my probably whereabouts at dark that day for we all knew we were within seven miles, and seven miles are soon passed over. Soon, however, I perceived that we were going too far north and then I knew we were bound for the Fredericksburg Railroad. For 16 miles we plodded on; the rain poured down and it was very warm. At 11 o'clock we reached a large wheat field near the railroad and immediately formed in line of battle. The field was one of those old-fashioned Virginia wheat fields, but it would be impossible to convey a correct idea without a map. The 25<sup>th</sup> New York was ordered ahead by General John H. Martindale (First Brigade, First Division (Morell), V Corps (Porter) and Berdan's Sharpshooters close behind on the left flank, and marching farther to the left, the left wing being on one side of the road and the right wing being on the other. Just ahead in the middle of a wheat field was the Confederate force with brass howitzers.

To describe all the events of the day would take a book. I can only give an incident or two. The 25<sup>th</sup> New York charged on the enemy, but were repulsed and lost many killed, wounded, and prisoners. Our cannon engaged the Rebel cannon, but not one gun in ten of ours was in action and the Rebels had it all their own way. The bullets fell around us like a hailstorm and the dead and wounded began to drop. The Rebels in plain view by a barn cheered, displayed their flag, and enjoyed themselves a good deal. But soon we got our force up and then the fun began. The left wing of the regiment was in the edge of the woods 500 yards in front of the brass howitzers, and they tried to drive us out with grape. Several from the Albany company and the Vermont company were killed and wounded, but we did not stir. Trees were cut down by shells and fell on us. Every few moments a man by your side would sink down in that painful way wounded men have-and the ball was fairly opened.

But the Rebels were driven away by our cannon and we advanced. The dead and dying were scattered everywhere in the field; most were from the 25<sup>th</sup> New York who were first into action. All the Rebels were North Carolina troops. I ran up to the barn; fine brass cannon was left. A wounded Rebel rose up and with a Springfield rifle fired at Bennett of Branchport. Bennett captured the unregenerate cuss and brought him into the shade where he soon after died. Before he died he gave Bennett his watch, and bade him an affecting goodbye. I could not stop, but ordered Bennett and others to collect our wounded and take them to a house close by. I went into the yard; there on the green grass lay many a corpse. A lieutenant of the 25<sup>th</sup> was peacefully sleeping his last sleep-on entering the house, I found two wounded soldiers and one dead, a Negro. I inquired if any more Rebels were there- they said no. I had not time to stop, but Bennett went upstairs and in a room found three soldiers. They had seven Springfield rifles and one double-barreled shotgun. These rifles they had captured from the 25<sup>th</sup> New York. One said he was sick, another begged for mercy. They were taken care of.

We advanced up the road driving the enemy before us. I passed a beautiful house belonging to B. Winston, the finest house I have seen in Virginia. Most beautiful flowers were in the garden, but not a soldier entered the yard. Here we rested about half an hour. Our hardest work was soon to come. We lay under the trees so tired we could hardly move. It was intensely hot and was about 3 P.M. We had no water and had been fighting three hours and more. Suddenly sharp firing was heard in our rear and we knew the enemy had come up from Richmond. 'Fall in, fall in, right face, forward, double quick, march!' and away we went for a mile, and with other regiments charged into the woods we ourselves occupied only an hour before. Here the firing was tremendous. Our batteries played on the enemy and the shells crashing through the tree tops. The roar of the musketry, the cries of the wounded, the rush and noise formed a pandemonium indeed. The Rebels fought well but they could not keep the field. They retreated into a wheat field and here our cannon had full play and made dreadful havoc. After the battle, the woods presented a terrible sight. The dead and wounded were nearly as thick as the trees. Rebel baggage of whole companies was everywhere strewn. I picked up some seal skin blankets to sleep on, having

lost mine. They belonged to a North Carolina colonel but he will never need them more. W.T. Nicholson was embroidered on them. (Adjutant William T. Nicholson of the 37<sup>th</sup> North Carolina- he was killed April 2, 1865 at Five Forks) We lay down to sleep in the field of battle. In this delectable country dews are as heavy as rain and the hotter the day, the colder the night.

I was so tired I could not sleep. I had given away all my blankets but one and a lieutenant and myself tried to make it do for two, consequently both were nearly frozen. As I lay there I speculated on our position. Jeff Davis' whole army was between us and our main body- and at any moment he could precipitate an overwhelming force upon us. At 3 o'clock, I got up and sat on the fence looking down the railroad. That was the time I was expecting the attack, but none came. We remained all day in camp but had not a mouthful to eat. It was very hot. We buried the dead. The 44<sup>th</sup> New York (Ellsworth's Avengers) had come on from Yorktown and they lost a number 0 but the daily papers will give all particulars. The reporters were along in the thickest of the fray.

Friday morning we drew some rations but before we had time to eat, were ordered to 'fall in to meet the enemy.' We remained under arms till 3 P.M. and then received orders to march back to camp, which place we reached at midnight completely worn out.

Near New Bridge Camp, seven miles from Richmond, Virginia  
Saturday, May 31, 1862

After I finished my last letter yesterday, a furious storm burst upon us, excelled only by the storm in St. Louis last May. It continued all night and it is raining today. As I have no news to write that would not be anticipated by the dailies, I will fill up with a few incidents of our late march and battle. We are no favorites with General Martindale of Rochester so when we almost reached the ground, the 25<sup>th</sup> New York was ordered ahead and into the position where they were so badly cut up. I have seen no account in any New York paper yet, but know what I saw. An officer almost rode up to the Rebel army by mistake. (I myself could not tell for a few moments whether they were our own men or not. But in a minute they unfurled a large, splendid banner and with tremendous cheers charged bravely. They had their batteries for once in an open field and it was a fair fight at that period.) This officer had ridden within 100 yards of the Rebels when he perceived his error and turning, put the spurs to his horse. They fired and 25 balls struck the horse. The rider leaned over the side and patted his horse on the head and talked to him. The gallant animal galloped across the wheat field watched by both armies. The Rebels redoubled their fire. They fired by platoons but it was no use. The horse reached out lines and fell dead. He was completely riddled by balls.

Their letter paper was of the very coarsest brown paper. Poetry was printed on the sheets, one verse ending with "and the flag of freedom forever shall wave, o'er the Southerner's home and the Southerner's grave." In this poor fellow's case it waved over his grave with 24 of his brave companions (and they were brave); he sleeps under the old oaks of Virginia. He left his journal in his knapsack and some letters from his mother and 'Dear Bertie.' Bertie was a sister, I reckon; anyway she was not in love for it was a very sensible letter. They wrote how pretty their home was. The flowers in bloom, the berries ripe and longed to be as they were. When will they be 'as they were' again?

When we were in camp the next morning, two of our men went into a house to get some meal baked and found three old Negro women cooking. They refused to bake meal for the men, saying their mistress would have them whipped, although she made them bake for the C.S.A. But our men coaxed them to put some bread in the oven for them. When sure enough, the lady of the house sent her son, a boy of ten years of age, to whip those three old women. That is a fine business to set a boy at. Whipping women 60 years old! One of our men took the little varmint and used his own whip over him until he was quite satisfied to run into the house. Fine effect such education must have on children.

The Rebels refuse to allow our sick and wounded soldiers to enter their houses. I have seen soldiers dying with fever on the wet grass and comfortable houses within a stone's throw. Our generals will not take forcible possession of any house when the owner objects. It is folly to underrate these Rebels and disparage their preparations. They are Americans. They have able officers. I hope I am mistaken, but I am apprehensive. No one seems to think we could be beaten. The war is not near its end. It is only begun. A little success gives them thousands. I hope I am mistaken; I hope I know nothing about it, but I place my humble opinion on record. I have seen no Union men yet. They curse and revile us. Our government has shown no power has been too lenient. What has been done that any Rebel between here at Fortress Monroe should be afraid? They have been protected- not one punished! Negroes caught in the rear of our army have been forced to dig their own graves; then shot and tumbled in, all for following us. I state only what I know; I have heard much worse. Day before yesterday after the fight, men who lived near the battleground told our officers, in my presence, that they had belonged to Jeff Davis' army and they knew they would be beaten tomorrow, and that they hoped we would be whipped, etc. and yet they had guards over their houses. Are we so sure of conquering that we can allow those fortifications at Yorktown to remain? Why are not the Rebel prisoners leveling them? I could ask a good many more questions. The end is not yet.

I saw a beautiful little country church. A pretty little grove surrounded the house and 33 magnificent oak trees afforded grateful shade. What a change. Cavalry horses pick and feed under the trees, troopers stationed in the house, camp songs sung in the place which would have been sacred to "Old Hundred." I picked up an old music book lying under the bench and as I marched along, tore out the old familiar tunes and put them in my haversack to sing when I had a chance. I have them yet.

Camp near New Bridge, Virginia

Tuesday, June 3, 1862

*Yates County Chronicle, June 19, 1862, pg. 2*

If a person had been in our camp this evening he would have been filled with patriotism and joy. The whole army was drawn up in companies, each company in its own street, to hear McClellan's address. Cheers upon cheers resounded through the evening air and the hearts of the Rebels would have fallen within them could they have known the reason. As I read this stirring appeal to our regiment, company by company, the blood flowed faster in our veins, and our hearts beat quicker, and one and all swore a solemn oath to do or die. We expect soon, very soon, to go into battle. We give each other little messages to execute, little errands to be done, in case we do not survive. At taps, I retired prepared to fall in at a moment's notice but soon a terrible rain set in and it continued all night.

Wednesday, June 4, 1862

It rained very hard until 8 o'clock this morning then slackened. Heavy firing is heard on our left and we hold ourselves in readiness. As I have a moment's time, I will just here answer one or two questions I have seen in the papers. First, as to the great temptations to vice camp life affords. There is a great deal of fear on the part of parents that the "temptations of camp life" will spoil their sons. I have lived in cities and villages, in the lonely country and the busy metropolis, have been on long sea voyages and now a year nearly in camp, and I never could see much if any difference in the temptation. The same ones who play poker here today would do it in a corner grocery in Penn Yan or at any four corners in Yates County. My opinion is that if a young man wishes to engage in any kind of vice, he can always, under any circumstances, find plenty of companions and if he wishes to be decent, he can generally be afforded a striking opportunity. There is a good deal of gammon about this plea, 'I was tempted by my associates.' If I do wrong I only can honestly say that I did it of my own accord. Young men know well enough what they can ask their companions to do and what they can't. And as to liquor drinking it cannot be

obtained in the field by privates, so that is all there is of that. The government gives out a little once in a while. Sutlers sell whiskey here at three and a half dollars a pint, and not much at that price to be had.

One curious fact I will state and others may give the reason. Here is as fine a farming country as I ever saw, none better save a little of central New York. A railroad runs through, a fine river close by, yet New York farms, not a bit better, in any respect; bring readily from \$80 to \$100- these from \$10 to \$30. What makes the difference, such a serious difference, when the extent of the state is considered?

During the fight at Hanover, the roar of musketry was tremendous. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Maine, 400 men, fired 18,000 rounds in one hour. One of the prisoners told me that they fired to scare as a sort of moral effect experiment. In the thickest of the battle I thought of what Squire Franklin told me. "Ah Brown," said he, "you would make a good soldier if it was not for the guns." We received our payday, for which we are truly thankful. We are now paid up to May 1<sup>st</sup>. Sentry duty here is indeed hard. A young man marches off on picket, uncertain as to whether he will ever return. We keep in our lines but they crawl up and assassinate us. Come with me for a walk. We pursue our way along the beautiful path under the shade of noble oaks and by murmuring streams for this is a beautiful country. It is hot, and perchance 60 rods ahead cooling shades invite you to repose. The woods look as quiet and peaceful as a farmer's kitchen in Yates County this afternoon. But while you gaze on those groves in front, a hundred eyes are gazing on you with tiger-like ferocity. You feel that a powerful glass is critically scanning your every move. The woods warm with foes more crafty, subtle, and cruel than the Mingo, and soon comes a deadly Minie, with its devilish singing, and happy are you if you hear it, for unless it passes you will never hear it in this world. And at night they steal up and murder us on our lonely beats. The following extract from a writer in the Crimea is almost applicable here, but I have never heard of any such serious consequences as this relates. Ours are not that kind of men: "Sentry Duty in the Crimea: Several of our younger soldiers became imbecile, and it was believed that this affliction was often caused by fright; not that they were cowards on the field of battle; it was the effect of outpost duty. A young fellow, fresh from his own fireside, it taken in his turn by the guard and left for many hours to pace alone in the gloom, three hundred yards in advance of the trench and of his companions; knowing at the same time that he is between them and the enemy whose approach it is difficult to detect until close upon him- as the Russians crawled rather than walked in their gray garments noiselessly upon the snow, and whose object was in the first place to dispatch him. These advanced sentries, when suspecting danger, were not supposed to make a retreat until they had fired their musket, the report of which would cause all to be on the alert; when he reached the trench those within would expect an explanation and woe to him if he had roused those worn-out men causelessly. Experience of an English Sister of Mercy, by Margaret Goodman."

Thursday, June 5, 1862

Cold rainy day. Smith's division moved at daybreak. One company of 77 men sent home today \$1,700. We expected a summons, but it came not, and the day passed wearily along in perfect quiet. Army life is in one sense a lazy life. When off duty one must rest, and don't feel like reading anything but papers or letters. Three years in the army would spoil a man for any other business. Garrison and camp life is intolerable.

Friday, June 7, 1862

A cold weary morning and as there is nothing new, I will take this opportunity of saying a word in behalf of sick and wounded soldiers in our hospitals. It is hard to be sick at home and when one has care from pitying friends and nourishing food and a bed. Would you move a sick father from your house where he is carefully watched, even from a slight draft of air, into a barn or pig pen, on to the hard boards, and only one thin blanket for both bed and covering? Yet that would be comfortable compared with the situation of too many, which were up to yesterday, as it were, enjoying the comforts of home, which they cheerfully resigned that you might always enjoy your pleasant firesides.

In your sick room no sound is heard but the low tone of friend- here, coarse jokes and oaths fill the air night and day. Of course a good deal of privation is necessary, but it is sad that too little care is shown the unfortunate sick. Happy are they who can get north to the hospitals. The dread of being sick is the fear of the soldier. "No one ships for a nurse." Happy the man who has a friend that will get him a mouthful to eat, and minister to his wants. Too often the sick are avoided, shunned by fair weather friends. It is true that some cowards feign illness to escape a fight or a march and often the really sick are obliged to suffer under such imputations. Surgeons are too often careless and unfeeling. One only word more and I wish every person in the loyal states could hear it and would act. Find out who are authorized agents of our hospitals and send supplies. Send anything- bed clothes, food, jelly, lemons- anything to tempt the appetite or make a bed- and then you can credit yourself with having done well.

If you had been at White House a day or two ago you would have seen 4,000 wounded soldiers shipped to Northern hospitals in one day. The large steamers *Elm City*, *Knickerbocker*, *Spaulding*, *Daniel Webster*, and the steamships the *Commodore*, the *Vanderbilt*, and *State of Maine*; all first class boats and all crowded with such a pitiful crowd. The *Commodore* had 700 on board. The North has done pretty well, but not one tenth of what it should do.

Camp near New Bridge, Virginia

June 8, 1862

*Yates County Chronicle, June 26, 1862, pg. 1*

A correspondent asks me how it is we have trouble in procuring provisions when the army is so abundantly supplied. I will explain. Officers are obliged to pay cash for everything they buy. If an officer has no money, he must beg or starve. The privates have food often when their officers have none; for if there are not full rations, what there is, is divided between the privates and the officers must go without. Officers are now allowed to sponge their living from the men's rations, though many do. In our regiment and especially when on detached service, the officers suffer for the brigade commissaries say, "I can't sell to you, you don't belong to our own brigade." And unless there is a special order issued, we must go without; and if the order is issued, sometimes we have a good deal of trouble because we are an independent regiment and the brigade commissaries favor their own brigades. When we are in camp, for a time, we do not have so much trouble for there is more regularity. Even at the best, one gets tired of always hard bread and pork and coffee. We long for a little change- a pickle or some vegetables or a little bread.

Our hospital is close by on Dr. Gaines' farm, a beautiful place, overlooking the valley, the river and the ridge beyond on which are now the Rebel batteries. Two Rebel surgeons are there, also General (James Johnston) Pettigrew. This morning two North Carolina men died, and our chaplain offered to officiate the burial. The Rebel surgeons declined, one saying their friends would probably not care to have a Yankee chaplain bury their dead! These surgeons are furnished with new bread, fresh meat, potatoes, lemons, etc., better than anything we ever had. Our surgeon is a prisoner in Richmond- I hope he lives as well.

I did intend to say more, but the following from the New York Times covers the whole ground and is a fair specimen of the whole campaign: "The nearer we approach Richmond the more violent and bitter is the feeling exhibited toward the North. Dr. Gaines, the owner of the grounds upon which our camp is located, is the most unblushing and defiant Rebel that we have yet encountered. His residence, surrounded by choice fruit and ornamental trees with a magnificent flower garden between it and the avenue, is one of the most attractive that can be found in the state. His lands extend over a large area comprising hundreds of acres, and at his beck and call he has nearly 150 slaves, who however at the present time are more willing to serve the Union soldiers than obey his own commands. In his storehouses we found a large quantity of corn and wheat, which we appropriated to our own use. In payment the commissary tendered him a receipt, but he refused to accept it, declaring it was

worthless paper and he would not be encumbered with it. He was informed, by order of General Stoneman, that unless he took the receipt he need never expect to be recompensed by the government for the property taken. He persisted in his refusal and will justly lose the whole of his grain.”

“Notwithstanding Dr. Gaines’ rank secession proclivities, a strong guard has been stationed all around his property and now no one is allowed to injure it in the least. For this humane act the traitor is exceedingly ungrateful and indulges in the most insulting expressions, not hesitating to proclaim that we are vandals and vampires, and cherishes the hope that not a man of us will ever leave Virginia soil alive. A man named Hogan, who lives in a house adjoining that of the doctor’s, and who has five sons in the Rebel army, entertains views no less favorable to the Rebels. In payment for some commodity, one of our soldiers offered him Treasury notes, which he declined to take, and pushed them aside in the most offensive manner. By chance the soldier had in his possession about \$50 in value (according to Rebel reckoning) of Secesh notes, which he purchased for a trifling sum, a portion of which he gave to Hogan, who accepted it and returned the change in the same kind of money.”

“Why it is that these and other Rebel traitors receive the protection of the government, their property carefully guarded, and everything avoided that would be liable to injure their most delicate feeling, while they themselves are unrestricted in their conversation and we may almost say actions, is certainly a mystery. It is unmistakably true that if a private in our ranks should be guilty of such unjustifiable conduct, he would be court-martialed, and, if the law was carried out, be sentenced to be shot.”

These Rebel surgeons denied that the governor of North Carolina had recalled his troops and gave a very different account, however too long for me to publish. It was very plausible. Saturday and Sunday passed very quietly. Our Minnesota company has gone to Sedgwick’s division. Company A, the Swiss riflemen, and Company I from Michigan have gone to Smith’s division and Company C (Michigan) and Company G (Wisconsin), have gone to Slocum’s; so we are in four divisions.

Monday, June 9, 1862

I am glad to hear of so many young women volunteering as nurses. A man has too many elbows. A man nursing is like an elephant taking care of chickens; the tenderer he is, the more awfully they get squashed. An affecting instance came under my notice a while ago, i.e. I read of it. A very pretty girl volunteered as a nurse in the Park Barracks, New York. A wounded soldier attracted her notice. The attraction was mutual. She tried to be of service, alleviate his suffering, but of no use. As the story goes, she tried many expedients but his was no physical pain, I quote the finale: “She offered him some sponge cake, a glass of lemonade; again he thanked her kindly, but she felt afraid. O, let me give you something, well if you must, what is it? He gazed upon her beautiful face; give me your cart de wissit”

Today was one of our gala days- one of the few bright days of service in the field. Our corps was reviewed by General Juan Prim, now on a visit to see our army with his own eyes. He stopped before our regiment, saying in French, “Are these the sharpshooters who were on the right at Hanover?” To which Prince de Joinville replied, “Yes,” and they rode on. General Prim never saw a finer body of men. The very flower of our army is in this corps. Sykes’ brigade of regulars, Duryea’s Zouaves, the brigades of General Martindale, General Dan Butterfield, and Colonel McQuade, and our regiment, together with a large body of cavalry and artillery. We had a beautiful field, surrounded by woods, forming a fine background and strong relief in gay uniforms and gleaming bayonets. Twenty thousand men stood in solid column, forming a picture you would love to see. Fancy every blade of grass turned into shining steel reflecting the rays of the sun from millions of flashing points, relieved by our beautiful glorious old flag, the most inspiring of all sights to a true hearted man. A burst of trumpets, a clanking of sabers and the sound of galloping horses and General Prim, the French princes, Prince de Joinville, our generals and staffs, were before us. I gazed upon the pale Castilian, and wondered what thoughts passed through his mind as he surveyed an army whose physique he had never seen excelled? Did he think of Cuba and Mexico? What will he tell his Royal Mistress of us and our forces? It is a good thing to have such men see us- see for themselves what we can make

out of raw material. It produces respect. (General Prim commanded the Spanish expeditionary army in Mexico in 1862 and was prime minister of Spain when he was assassinated in 1870 at age 56. Francois d'Orleans, Prince of Joinville, was attached to General McClellan's staff at this time.)

The review ended and the earth echoed the tread of a might host, while the bands filled the air with our stirring national melodies, that the Rebels themselves could hear. The artillery and cavalry thundered by to resume their stations in the approaching conflict- and as we slowly filed away, each one felt stronger for that display of power. Our only regret was that we could not have been led forth to do battle in earnest for our country. The time will come. We must have reinforcements. They are slowly coming. If the politicians had let our general alone, Richmond would now be ours. But we have encamped under the walls of this city and it must fall. The struggle will be bloody and many of us never will see the sun set on the eve of that day. Yet it will be a proud moment for all and a moment in which every bosom in the world will anxiously beat, when our young general shall marshal us in battle array and pointing toward the proud capital, gives the long-wished-for order, "Forward march!"

Camp near New Bridge, Virginia

Tuesday, June 10, 1862

*Yates County Chronicle, June 26, 1862, pg. 2*

I am sorry to be obliged to say that I have lost faith in the letters written by professional correspondents. I do not except any paper, and the New York dailies are the worst. These correspondents are not men of overwhelming genius. They stay around headquarters and curry favor, beg dinners, and write the donors down as heroes, heroes by the side of whom Alexander and Caesar are very much appreciated. The account in the *Times* of the battle at Hanover, and the account in the *Herald* of the Battle of Fair Oaks are all untrue, and besides are specimens of gross adulation. Washington crossing the Delaware was nothing compared to McClellan's crossing the Chickahominy- water two feet deep!

Whenever you read of "gallant and intrepid conduct" and "bravely remaining under a galling fire for four hours, one man killed," and "brilliant bayonet charges" just quietly calculate how many dinners paid for that. I am sorry to shake your faith but the above is too true as far as accounts of particular men and regiments are concerned. Besides in writing each correspondent ventilates his personal and political views, and private opinions on things that he knows nothing about, he has friends to praise and foes to damn. When the *Herald's* account of the Battle of Hanover reached here, the colonel of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Maine (Colonel Charles W. Roberts) said, "My God, we ain't even mentioned." Hence the *Times's* article. From that you would imagine the 2<sup>nd</sup> Maine did it all. I came along the road and saw the 2<sup>nd</sup> Maine firing most tremendous volleys. I concluded the C.S.A. was all killed, wounded, or missing. They were lying down and firing without taking aim. 400 men fired 18,000 rounds without stirring and our men were *standing up, resting on their guns looking over their heads and trying to see what the 2<sup>nd</sup> Maine was firing at!* One person can only see very little of a battle and no two persons can agree on many things. These correspondents favor their friends; consequently, most of the accounts are unreliable. Officers themselves do not believe these reports. They despise their own tools. All wish for an independent press, yet each one on the shy 'tends up' some reporter.

In a letter which I received from a young lady a few days ago occurred the following sentence. "I know many in that regiment, but the war is taking so many of our gentlemen away and many of those who stay at home we call cowards." Think of that ye young men who in white kids make your evening calls. The very young ladies you fancy are so struck by you, your fascinating appearance, are struck but by your cowardice, the worst word that can be applied to a man. There never was a time when men were so urgently needed as the present. Young ladies and old ladies, communities, ought to look every able-bodied young man in the face and say "Why are you supinely laying here idle when our unhappy land needs every son?"

It is hard to leave a young wife and prattling child. It is hard to give up your luxurious habits, and rich food. It is hard to exchange broad cloth for a coarser but honest uniform. It is hard to bid good bye to father, and mother and sister and brother, wife and child, and go forth to hard manual labor, in the parching heat of a Southern sun and the freezing dews of night, to have only the ground for a bed and the heavens for a covering. It is hard to suffer from actual want of food and sleep, something you never before in your lives dreamed of and it is hard, instead of returning to a grateful community and gladdened friends, to fall by a deadly Minie, be mangled by a shell, or far worse, become the prey of loathsome camp diseases, and alone on a hard board, surrounded by careless men, breathe out your life and be thrown into a ditch. This is hard, but it is war. War that you at the north do not yet even realize and have not yet begun to comprehend. You never saw a wounded soldier laying on the field of battle till the wounds in his head become fly blown, and maggots crawled in and out of his mouth, and he had been eleven days in that state! Horrible but true!

“Do you nice young men think that no one here has lefty a profitable business, friends, and home? Has no young wife made any sacrifices in this war? Has no young man as tenderly reared and carefully protected from every draft of wind as yourself, yet gone forth to work and die? Ask yourselves one question: Why should I be an exception? That’s it, why? Let the community answer it. You deem yourselves too good, too far above to associate with the rank and file. Know then that the rank and file despises those who can come and do not.

Around every camp fire in the evening you hear men talking of those who stay at home. They ask, “Why does not A come? Oh, he is afraid. Why did B never enlist? What B? He come? No, not he. He only talks, etc.” Every man is canvassed and judgment passed. Drafting would be more equitable. But understand that these men do not complain. They are satisfied, their conscience is clear, and everyone looks forward to the joyful time when he shall return. Night and day he dreams of home and of the welcome awaiting him. As to those who remain at home they only say “Well, if they can stay at home in such times as these, let them. They must settle it with their own conscience and community, not with us.” But in his innermost mind, each soldier feels in regard to such men, “they are afraid.”

We have 682,000 men on the muster rolls but I defy anyone to count up 450,000 fighting men and I do not believe there are 400,000. Some say “Oh, the war is most over.” How do you know it is most over? It is “most over” here at Richmond, but still we have five miles to go. I do not believe this war is so near its end. I hope it is. Have these young men no aspirations, no patriotism? I wonder they can face their own sisters and mothers? These same wives and mothers and sister must by their looks inquire “who are fighting for us?” Who are our defenders? And you afraid? But enough, if the spectacle of our country distracted and torn cannot move them; it is in vain to look elsewhere.

Thursday, June 12, 1862

An unnatural quiet prevails. I have not heard a gun fired in two or three days. It is too quiet. We cannot realize the magnitude of the approaching conflict on which so much depends. That within four miles is encamped hundreds of thousands of men, waiting only the signal to commence death and carnage that will desolate so many fair homes, even we here cannot comprehend. The sun shines as usual, the birds sing in the trees, and every man pursues his avocations as though no foe were in existence. But it must come; the hospitals are ordered to be ready tomorrow night, and that is grimly significant. On going into battle one is always accompanied by stretchers, litters, and ambulances, a sight of those cheerful objects is very inspiring. You may hear from me in Richmond. It may be decreed otherwise. But let us not anticipate. Everything on our side points towards a sanguinary conflict in which our whole force will be engaged.

Camp near New Bridge, Virginia

June 17, 1862

The eyes of the whole civilized world are at this time strained upon Richmond. The Southern army has retreated till it will retreat no longer and now, face to face, stand two of the mightiest armies the world has ever seen; a force, which if united, would present a front that the world might dash against in vain. Let us look for a moment at the situation. A hundred thousand Union soldiers, flushed with victory, eager with anticipation, firm in their belief of the justness of their cause, await only the signal from their chieftain to put a finishing stroke to this accursed rebellion. Better clothed, paid, and fed than any army that ever before took the field; they certainly have every material advantage.

But the Southern army has shown qualities in this war that make us respect them, and proved that they are our own race and blood. Without money and with very slight hope of ever having any, they persevere in unequal struggle. Would our men fight as well as they do, and keep up their enthusiasm if they had received no pay and no prospect of ever getting any? The Southerners have no coffee rations, insufficient clothing, poor arms, and yet they bravely press on. The destitution of the people of the South is awful. No one can imagine it. General Halleck sent to St. Louis for food to supply the people around Corinth. In New Orleans, in Norfolk, masses are starving. In some places they seem to have enough. Deserters who arrive from Richmond every day report the Rebel army on half rations. They own their case to be hopeless, but swear that though they are despairing and sinking, they will fight and I honestly believe it. Will not this be one of the decisive battles of the world?

Matters have settled into a regular siege. The same old Yorktown experiences. Planting batteries, digging rifle pits, throwing up works. They do not seem to have the tremendous fortifications that we had to encounter at Yorktown, but our preparations denote the expectation of serious work ahead. "We shall see what we shall see." The army is in fine spirits- the sick and weak are pretty well weeded out. Those left form now the finest body of men the world ever saw. They are acclimated and endure without any detriment privations, exposure, and toil that would kill new troops.

In a space not wider than from Penn Yan to Benton Centre are encamped 200,000 men who by birth, education, and conviction ought to be brothers, but who are now sworn enemies and only awaiting the signal to fall upon each other with the ferocity of war. Can you realize it? I confess that I can't, even here with all the dread preparations going on in my sight. I lay in my tent this afternoon looking out on the peaceful landscape, hearing only the hum of insects and in vain, endeavored to comprehend that in a moment we might be called into the deadly fray. It seemed so much as it always had, that I could not really feel that I might have to lay down my book and go out, perhaps never to come back. It is a curious feeling to wonder every night when the sun sets if you will ever see it rise, and to wonder every day if you will ever see it set. But soldiers soon get tired of thinking, grow careless, and to an ordinary observer, seem only intent on getting food and sleep. It is much better so. Once for all make up your mind that the path lies open before you-duty calls you on, let the result be what it may.

By recent orders three officers from each regiment who are "disabled and whose cases are so bad that they cannot be treated in camp" are allowed to go home to recruit, and can take a non-commissioned officer with them. Lieutenant Elmendorf was one who left our regiment, he being totally unfit for duty by reason of acute rheumatism and having been off duty for nearly a month. Camp life is too severe upon those who are so far reduced and it is to be hoped that a few months quiet and rest in a comfortable home will restore those who go home sick for the country needs her every son. The men in this regiment have a far easier time than other regiments for they have no fatigue work to do day or night, not even picket duty to do at night. In this respect they are greatly favored.

We now do not anticipate any action for some time- of course we cannot tell what our generals' plans are, but appearances look like a protracted siege.

Camp near New Bridge, Virginia

Tuesday, June 18, 1862

*Yates County Chronicle, July 3, 1862, pg. 2*

The other evening persons came running into camp saying that the enemy's cavalry were in our rear, having come up from Hanover and had captured numberless soldiers, wagons, mules, killed several soldiers and sutlers, driven off herds of cattle, burned railroad bridges, etc. Each one added a little till at 9 P.M. White House was taken, stores and ships burned, and the devil to pay generally; one detachment recaptured Mrs. Lee, and the rest went clear around our army and reached Richmond in safety, having crossed the Chickahominy. So many rumors in circulation that only today have I learned the facts and lay them before you. It forms an interesting and suggestive episode.

When the Southern army retreated to Richmond they left along in every house cavalry to act as spies, scouts, etc. These were men of intelligence, men who were acquainted with the whole country, knew every bypath and ravine that could afford shelter, or facilities for a quick advance or an easy retreat. When our army marched up, these men were at home quiet, dressed in civilian's clothes and many of them Union men, forced into service, etc. A guard was immediately put over their property and on we came. They kept up and still keep up, constant communication with the enemy, informing them of everything. When we went to Hanover we cut off a company of 52 of these spies who were in King Williams County, and they, not being able to get to Richmond, were forced to keep quiet; but last Friday morning they crossed the Pamunkey at Piping Tree Ferry and coming up to Tunstall Station, concealed themselves in the woods and awaited the train bound east. When it came along, they fired into it, creating great consternation every way. The Rebels burned a culvert, tore up a hundred yards of the track and drove off the horses and mules belonging to 35 wagons, first burning the wagons. General George A. McCall fortunately had his division (Third Division, V Corps, known as the Pennsylvania Reserves) at White House which was all that saved it. We lost about \$50,000 worth of property.

The cavalry retired as quickly as they came and dispersed, each one going to his own home as a peaceful citizen. Some of them were captured and owned up. I have not, however, heard of any action ever having been taken! These spies have fine horses that can jump any fence or creek and are of great speed and endurance. That such men have a rendezvous north of the Pamunkey and within four miles of our railroad is certainly curious. White House with all its immense stores and shipping would have been burned had not McCall by mere chance been there that day. It was a brave and daring act and one worthy of a better cause. Fifty-two men braved a whole army and rode merrily away to their homes. How they must have laughed and joked as they galloped through the green wood. It was, indeed, a dashing episode. If they had had a larger force. Ah, if.

And now let me say one word while I have got time. There are some things that should be done in this grand army. It is an undeniable fact that we have some officers who are cowards and it is not strange considering the number that some might have mistaken their calling. These should be weeded out. They contemplate resigning when we get to Richmond. Now is the time; a few such men might ruin our army. Again, no men should be allowed to carry the wounded to the rear. Wounded men are no better off in the rear than anywhere else and cowards always sneak away, take their comrades to the rear, and with charming solicitude remain with them hours after they have gone into the hands of the surgeon. They never come back again. I saw, on one occasion, eleven men going to the rear with one wounded man and even he could walk. That was an extra case, but generally two or three go. Anyone can calculate the loss an army thus sustains in action. There is an organized body of men specially detailed for this business including the band. In addition, the wounded are, in a majority of cases, just as well off where they are. Again: every officer ought instantly to kill any man who starts for the rear. A few thus flying can so infect a whole brigade; in a critical moment, and that moment will come, our whole army might be whipped. Remember Bull Run.

Between here and Richmond there is no great sweep of country. It is a succession of wheat fields, woods, ravines, etc., a good deal like any well wooded farming country and the smoothbores of the Rebels are as destructive as our long range rifles. They shoot the old buck and ball cartridge which at these short ranges produces dreadful havoc. There will be no battle for a while. McClellan has not enough men to risk it, or by

overwhelming force carry everything before him. If any legacy ever came over to us from Napoleon, it was that success depends on concentration. If we had men enough, as many as we might have had, no pause would have been here. But the spade and shovel can only take us up to their lines, and a battle will sooner or later be fought here such as you never yet dreamed of. Let every man, woman, and child in the Northern and Southern states prepare their minds for hearing tales of blood and suffering to which that has been is but an idle tale. The Rebels will fight. In the dark recesses of these woods, they are planting batteries night and day. No such formidable works loom up before us as at Yorktown. They profess to be tired of digging because their efforts have proved hitherto so futile.

Lying on their arms in the shadow of their capital, they grimly await us. Death's preparations are masked by smiling fields and sweet groves. They are resisting what they firmly believe is invasion. How would we fight in such a case? You at home cannot comprehend the sacrifices these soldiers are making. Your poorest houses, your coarsest food are luxuries comparatively. Already the funerals come to your own doors.

Charles City County, Virginia

Harrison's Landing, James River

July 4, 1862

*Yates County Chronicle, July 17, 1862, pg. 2*

Here, 23 miles from Richmond by land and 45 by the river, does the Fourth of July 1862 find us. Instead of being a joyous crowd, reveling at the capital of the Southern Confederacy, exulting in victory, we are lying in the mud, tired, exhausted with eight days of marching, fighting, and starving. We have not tasted meat for nine days; we have not had a night's rest in that time, but only toil, danger, and death. I shall not attempt to give in detail our trials and work; a hundred Chronicles would not hold it. Neither could I ever make you understand or appreciate it in the least. What do you know of eight days of hunger, you who never went two hours hungry; you at home can no more understand what a deprivation of food and rest for so long a time really is than a man who has never lost a limb can appreciate the loss of his right arm.

For several days I had been quite sick and felt weak and had no energy. Many of the men were sick in consequence of the extreme hot weather, and a general languor pervaded everybody. Thursday evening June 26<sup>th</sup> we were on our way to the Battle of Mechanicsville, Lieutenant Colonel William Y.W. Ripley being in command; here we joined General Charles Griffin's brigade (late Colonel McQuade's; it was Morell's old brigade; Second Brigade, First Division, V Corps). We reached the ground at 5 P.M. and with the Bucktail Rifles supported a battery. The Rebels shelled us. How the shells did fly through the woods. It was soon dark and each shell came in a blaze of light, like a rocket, crashing and thundering like a thousand locomotives in the tops of the trees. We lay all night, but at daylight on Friday June 27<sup>th</sup> retreated to our camp. On the way I noticed the burning of all commissary stores which first gave me the idea that we were to leave for good.

We took a hasty cup of coffee and burned up all clothes, tents, stores, etc. that we could not quickly carry away and falling back a mile, halted. Our regiment was thrown out as pickets, and in great suspense we awaited the coming of the Rebels. A deep ravine was in front of our army; behind the hill sloped to the Chickahominy. Our right was high ground; our left very low. I rode my horse off to the left of our picket line and looked long and anxiously for the advance guard. I could see our old camp on the left but our right was dense woods. The 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts was on our right as pickets. After about an hour a single horseman came out into the opening and dismounting, reconnoitered our position. Apparently satisfied he retired, and soon their skirmishers began to file into the woods on our right. A little firing and the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts (Irish) retreated pell-mell through our lines, nearly throwing us down. Then came a solemn silence; we could not hear a footstep, not even a twig crack. Yet directly in front, in those still groves, 75,000 men were forming in battle array. Soon the advance appeared on our right, but the fire of the sharpshooters drove them back twice. Then came the second stillness; not the least sound

could be heard till all at once, making one start by its very suddenness rang out in the still air, "Forward, double quick, march!" A yell like a thousand demons, a rush like the wind, a gleaming of bayonets, a roar like Niagara, and the death struggle has commenced.

It was then between one and two and the battle continued without intermission till nine o'clock. The papers have long ere this given you the particulars, and I only propose to relate a little that fell under my personal observation. For three hours the roar of musketry was continuous. It never wavered nor slackened. 'Twas perfectly awful; the ear ached with the sound. With intense listening I could not distinguish any pause or cessation. A large oat field was out front, running close up to the ravine. My horse was shot under me, but luckily I got another as good as the first one.

Long before sundown the field began to fill with stragglers and cowards. They increased till at least 10,000 were rushing to the rear to get across the river. Nothing could stop them and a stampede worse than Bull Run seemed to be inevitable. But the brave men in front held their ground, and saved us the disgrace. In the night we retreated, leaving many of our wounded, yielding the field to the Rebels. We came across and lay in the woods; the whole army nearly a mob. I found John Cooley and he and I slept under a tree together. Saturday morning we were collected and a little order restored. We could get nothing to eat, and soon took up our weary line of march. It was intensely hot; hunger made us ravenous. I found a piece of fat pork, frying in the sun, in the bottom of an ambulance, seized it, and the lieutenant colonel and I ate it ravenously.

On we went till after dark and then lie down on the ground and instantly fell asleep. It soon began to rain, but no one cared and in a short time we were thoroughly wet, knapsacks, blankets, etc. having been lost on Friday by being obliged to give up the field. Sunday we marched at daylight; no breakfast for we had nothing to eat. It has stopped raining, but was sultry, and intensely hot; about nine o'clock the sun came out and then it did seem as if we would melt. At one P.M. we halted, but not to rest, for the heat was so great that no comfort could be had. At four P.M. we again started. McCall's Pennsylvania Reserves being ahead; we marched all night; at about midnight we turned and came back a few miles and then struck off straight for the James River. That was an awful night almost as hot as in the day; exhausted by having no food since Thursday save hard bread, and a very little coffee. But our greatest trouble arose from having no water; our throats were parched, and tongues were dry, no water all night; I heard 'water, water,' but no water was to be had. So we slowly, wearily, plodded along, and at daybreak halted and began a cautious reconnoitering.

Companies E and K of Berdan's U.S. Sharpshooters were thrown out as flankers on the right, and companies S (Brown has S in letter- likely incorrect), F, and D on the left. We now came into the most beautiful farming country I have ever yet seen in Virginia. I galloped along through the fields ahead of the left flankers and rode into the yard of a Dr. Turner, who had left for Richmond. Some well-dressed house servants were in the yard and appeared to be glad to see us. I asked them if they could give me some milk. "Oh yes," they answered and I accompanied them to the milk house where was cool milk and rich cream, the first milk I had seen since last February; I drank as if I could never drink enough, and engaging them to get me some dinner, rode on, determined to come back and get it. How little we know what a day will bring forth. We passed on and soon after, descending a steep hill, encamped on the James River. No one can tell the relief I experienced when from the hill I saw those welcome gunboats. I feared we never would see them again. A large field of wheat and oats all cut and bound, was at once appropriated for the horses, and beds for the exhausted men. The men sank right down on the ground; nothing yet to eat, and today was Monday, the fourth day without food.

But we were doomed; no sooner had we fallen asleep, than the order came to fall in and the booming cannon told us what was wanted. Wearily we climbed that steep, hot hill with the sun's rays darting so fiercely upon us, and at 3:30 were again in battle array. The battle progressed furiously till dark, when we lay again, the third time within four days on the battlefield. The nights are very cold here and we were almost frozen and so hungry.

Just at dark I rode up to Dr. Turner's. How terrible is war! That pleasant house was completely ruined, the cheery trees cut down to get the fruit, the servants fled in fear, and only a ruin left. From the yard, I had a fine view all up and down the James River. Splendid farms lay beneath me, in the highest state of cultivation. But I could not see into the morrow. Little did I dream of the sanguinary contest that the next day would see on that very place where I was then so moodily reflecting. At daylight we were called up from our bed of down to go into battle, we were posted on picket in front of Dr. Turner's, our right resting in some woods, our left in a cornfield, in front of another house of Dr. Turner's. He had two fine houses on his large plantation. This morning was intensely hot, by far the warmest day we had yet experienced.

The men, as you may imagine, were about played out. No meat or coffee for five days; marching in the hot sun, no rest at night and now again in the front. I myself, while standing up talking with the lieutenant colonel about a battery the Rebels were planting, fell asleep and would have fallen down had I not recovered myself quickly. The morning passed wearily along about 10 o'clock, I saw a Rebel slowly coming up on our left; at first I was going to shoot him, but concluded to watch him. He came slowly on and I took him prisoner. He was from the 20<sup>th</sup> Georgia. Soon one of the men reported that the Rebels were coming up on the right; after two attempts they drove in Captain Austin's company E (the New Hampshire company) killing two and wounded three. That was the first time I had ever seen the Rebels skirmish in the open fields. They did it well. The bullets came rather close. Our line then was a semicircle and for a short time there was perfect silence, awfully ominous of what was to come. We lay in a cornfield, a large plain or open field, on our right was woods, and back of us was rolling country towards the river. And on the left the field sank down abruptly about 60 feet, then was level for about 200 yards, and then came dense woods. Thus on our left the Rebels had quite a hill to cover their movements. On the knoll, on the left we had some of our men. About 11 o'clock one of my men reported that the Rebels were taking down rails from the fence in the edge of the woods in the front. Then I knew that they were planting a battery. I rode quickly back and reported to the captains of our batteries and to General Morell and then turned to my post. I was on the left and Lieutenant Colonel Ripley on the right.

We had not long to wait. In a moment as it were, every leaf seemed turned into a gray coat and three regiments charged on us and drove us in. We came in slowly, firing our Sharps rifles with great rapidity. We had a solid mass to fire in, and every shot told, while we lost only six. We formed behind the left battery and the Rebels retired being hurried up by a little grape and canister of 24 cannon. The Rebel cannon then began to thunder along the whole line, and the ball was opened. On the right I soon heard the volleys of musketry, showing that the infantry had found each other. On our side the shelling was awful. These infernal missiles roared and shrieked and crashed, and the shells with flanges gathered the air around them and thundered through as like infernal demons. Horses and men piled in heaps beside us. General Griffin, happening to ride in front of us, the enemy turned all their cannon on him and poured in a hurricane of grape and canister. It did not hurt the general but many of us were killed.

I now had the good fortune to witness one of the grandest sights in the whole war, and if I live a hundred years I may never see another such. On our right a brigade of Rebels advanced from the woods about 2,000 feet in front of our batteries. They came on with yells and cheers to capture the batteries. In a moment eight Parrott guns and four brass howitzers sent their deadly charges through their ranks. The shell and shot, grape and canister mowed them down like grass before the scythe but when the dust cleared away there was the same line, closed up, advancing steadily as before. Faster and faster came the murderous grape, but louder and louder they echoed their yells. It was grand! It was noble! No troops on earth could have done better. Twelve cannon belching ruin and death and yet they were as cool and calm of the oldest veterans of Napoleon. I swung my hat and cheered. I could not help it. It was so brave. Slowly they came on and now not five hundred feet remained to be passed over. I cried out that our guns were lost. Not one half of the rebels were left but there were enough to capture the batteries. Their officers waved their swords and springing on with renewed energy seemed certain of success, when lo, up from the long grass where they had lain concealed rose two regiments of our brave boys who poured into the

faces of the astounded rebels infernal volleys and then with a cheer that rose far above the din of arms charged bayonets. Human nature could stand it no longer. They broke and fled and our regiments threw themselves on their face while the cannon hurled doubled-shotted canister and grape into the retreating mass. In that charge the Rebels must have lost more than 1,000 men.

There was now an ominous lull. It was almost sundown and from experience we knew the rebels were preparing to charge the whole line. It was all important that we should know where to expect the first blow. So Lieutenant Colonel Ripley sent me with twelve men around the base of the hill on the left to see what I could see. Crawling up within 2,000 feet of the woods, we took to a ditch and slowly went on. Soon I heard the rumbling of artillery and a cloud of dust began to rise in the woods. I sent back men to report and remained where I was, although the Rebels saw us and tried to dislodge us with musketry. In a few minutes I heard the order distinctly given, the "forward, close up" and the head of an immense column filed quickly around the base of the hill. Had we not been posted there it would have been a complete surprise. At the foot of the hill they halted, formed, and charged with their usual yells. Think I, you will get out of breath if you yell that way by the time you reach the top of the hill. But the yells only increased till they attained the summit, when they were met by the 4<sup>th</sup> Michigan and Berdan's Sharpshooters. Then came the grand battle. No pen on earth can do justice to the clash of arms, the roar of musketry, the thunder of cannon, the yells of combatants, the shrieking of shell, the whistling of grape, the singing of bullets, the cheers of the victors and the groans of the wounded where thousands of men were struggling in the last deadly conflict. As the sun went down, obscured blood red by the smoke of the battlefield, the very devils of hell must have rejoiced at the scenes of carnage now veiled from our view. Once I remember, as a momentary lull took place, I heard all over the field, heart-rending groans and shrieks. It was terrible.

So far the Rebels far outnumbered us, as they usually do and our Lieutenant Colonel Ripley, seeing that regiments could not withstand the fire of brigades, galloped back to the rear and plead for reinforcements, assuring the general that our left wing would soon be turned and the battle lost unless speedily strengthened. He got the 12<sup>th</sup> New York and brought it back, but the 4<sup>th</sup> Michigan were then out of ammunition, and so we only had one regiment yet. Back through the volleys, rode Colonel Ripley brought them up just in time as one of the regiments, broke and run like sheep. Here Lieutenant Colonel Ripley was wounded and his horse killed. Captain Drew of Buffalo (Co. G) was killed. Captain Austin and Lieutenant Jones were wounded; Lieutenant Seaton wounded; Lieutenant Peet killed, and many more non-commissioned officers and men wounded and dead.

The battle lasted until 9 P.M. The Rebels broke and ran down the Williamsburg road while our Parrott guns played into the dense masses causing awful havoc. We could hear the wounded crying 'Help, oh help!' but there was no help for them. I lay down on the field to sleep but I could not; I had no overcoat or blanket. In the fight the heat was so intense that I had dashed water all over me, and now my wet clothes were very cold, my ears rang with volleys of musketry and the yells of the men. Slowly and silently at 2 A.M. we moved away. It was terrible to leave so many wounded in the hands of the enemy. We left our wounded on Friday's battlefield, and now left the most of them again. I passed about 400 of the poor fellows lying on the ground near an old brick house. 'Oh lieutenant,' they exclaimed, 'can we not hold the ground? Are we going to be left? Oh no,' I said, 'you are all right' and passed on. I was powerless to help and knew that in an hour the Rebels would have them. How they did plead to be carried along.

The rain began to fall in torrents and soon I was completely wet through. I had sent my horse to the rear the day before and he was lost. I was as near dead as anyone could be and live. No food but hard bread since Thursday and now it was Wednesday. I knew not where we were bound for, neither did I care. As day broke a miserable spectacle met our view. The whole army was only a mob. I only saw one regiment, the 5<sup>th</sup> New York that marched in order. For seven or eight miles the road was full of soldiers and pushing ahead each one on his own hook. Oh the misery of that day, words can never tell it. Hungry tired, almost dead, the famished soldiery wearily pressed on. Soon the men began to fall out. Men lie down in the mud and fell fast asleep in a moment in the pitiless rain. When the artillery got stuck in the mud, the horses lay down exhausted. The mud rapidly increased;

100 men were hitched to a 30 pounder Parrott gun. I sucked leaves to alleviate my thirst, and finally I lie down in the mud and rank from the muddy water under the feet of the cavalry. The horsemen slept in saddles; men fell down in the mud and could not rise. But there is no use in writing, you never can understand it. After a march of twelve miles we came out on a plain about a mile square where stands the house General Harrison was born in. This vast field was soon covered by a crowd of men and every man was inquiring of every other man if he knew of any other one of his regiment. It was Babel a hundred times personified. This field was soon covered a foot deep with mud and then our misery was complete. It rained harder and harder at night; we all sank exhausted and lay in the mud that long, long night. Some of the first that arrived got some wheat and had a comparatively a dry bed. But it rained as ever, and the Rebels had our tents and knapsacks.

The next morning (Thursday July 3) we moved our camp to Dir. Minge's farm. He married a sister of General Harrison. I had a long talk with him. He is gentlemanly, but a genuine Rebel. However, the Rebels shelled us out of our camp, and through that awful mud we wearily took our way for a mile or so to a safer place. We got only bread all day to eat. The men looked ghastly like corpses. They lay on the ground like dead men and so passed July 3<sup>rd</sup>. The glorious Fourth came and brought with it sunshine and pork so we are happy again. The whole regiment is unfit for duty, and is as yet hardly together. Other regiments are just as we are, all are sick. But with a few days of rest they will come out right, and our past troubles will be forgotten.

This letter is too long yet I have only alluded to our past eight days' experience. The dailies will give particulars, yet they suppress the truth. In the future I hope I shall never hear that the Rebels will not stand up in fight. They came out boldly and with only their small arms attacked our infantry, cavalry, and cannon. They fight as well as we do. They are as brave as any nation on earth, and why shouldn't they be? Are they not of our blood? It disgusts me to see the wholesale depreciation of Southern bravery. If we can so easily whip them and take Richmond, why don't we do it? 300,000 more men are called for, we need them. Hard fighting is ahead of us. God only knows the end.

We are not discouraged; all we ask is a little rest and a little perk. Then we fall in and again go forward. No soldier is downhearted; we are as eager as ever. Bigger battles are to come, more of us are to die, more homes must be forever desolate, many more hearts to be broken. McClellan should have had these men before. It is not yet too late. No man should now stay at home. The country needs everyone. Nerve your hearts to hear of more conflicts, death and suffering, but finally victory and peace will come, and this distracted land be again a happy home for all who live. The true loss you never know. Papers do not publish it. But you will know enough-more than enough.

Charles City County, Virginia

July 6, 1862

*Yates County Chronicle, July 24, 1862, pg. 1*

In my hasty letter of the 4<sup>th</sup>, I could only allude cursorily to the events that were crowded into the previous eight days. A thousand things remain and will remain untold after volumes are written, and only a Heady or an Abbott could do justice to the thrilling scenes that filled the experience of the grand Army of the Potomac in that eventful period. The marches, the sanguinary conflicts, the deeds of daring on either side require an artist's pen faithfully to portray, and even after all is said that can be, no one but the actual participant can ever realize the hardships of the march, the crash of opposing enemies and the exultation of victory. Numberless instances of personal daring and courage, the theme of many a future tale, rise before me as I review the past few days. To relate them would fill a volume.

When we were ordered to march to Mechanicsville, we had only four companies in camp, the rest being on detached service. Some of the sick who were in camp recovered as if by magic. Among the rest I noticed John Cooley of Company H from Penn Yan. Although he had been sick a long time, he joined Company D and fought and

marched with the rest clear up to this point and is now as well as any of us. It looked hard to see so many valuable stores burned, but we were forced to; the Rebels were in plain view and rushing rapidly on, confident of victory. Coffee, sugar, pork, coats, pants, shovels, axes, cartridges, tents, tools, wagons, and a thousand other articles were committed to the flames, and in many instances wagons were set on fire, the horses and mules shot, but the poor brutes were burned alive while dying with their wounds, not being unharnessed from the wagons.

#### Exploits of Company G of Wisconsin

Company G, Captain E. Drew of Buffalo was detached with Company C (Michigan) and were with McCall's Pennsylvania Reserves. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June they were with the Bucktails and were attacked by an overpowering force. They were badly handled and lost many. At length they got an opportunity each to seek a tree and then they did dreadful execution. The Rebels turned their left flank and fired on the 10<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Reserves, who ran as fast as they could. Parker was shot, then poor Captain Drew, by far our best captain, then Staples, all good men. At this time it was dark and Companies G and C found out to their alarm that they were literally surrounded by Rebels. This was in White Oak Swamp. Lieutenant Sheppard of Company G lay beside the road when a Rebel lay down beside him. Sheppard whispered, "Which regiment do you belong to?" "Louisiana Battalion." Instantly Sheppard struck him a powerful blow with his fist, stunning him, and took him prisoner. Old California Joe served a second in the same way. Henry Leye, bugler, had a prisoner when he saw a lieutenant colonel coming along the road. He made his prisoner sit still, halted the lieutenant colonel, took his pistol away and carried them in triumph to the rear. The Rebels had a peculiar kind of whistle, which our men answered and thus got some prisoners. One of Company G's men joined an infantry regiment and excited great astonishment by the rapidity of the firing. The officers sung 'Who is that? What are you doing? What kind of gun you got?' All crowded around to see the Sharps' hair trigger rifle. The weather was intensely hot. A July sun in Virginia is not as cool as it might be. If you do not believe it, come and see.

If Senator Wilson, who wants to reduce our army by 10,000 men, had been in command of our rear guard, I think he would have modified his opinion a little. The Rebels swarmed all around every tree, every bush concealed a deadly foe. Sunday night the 29<sup>th</sup> we left the main road and entered a narrow country road. It was as dark as Erebus, and the trees and underbrush dense in every direction. After an hour's march the road degenerated into a path and the ambulances had to drop behind. Near midnight we halted and soon turned around to come back. After coming a few rods we again halted. The wind sighed mournfully through the wood and everything betokened a coming storm. I dismounted and placing my ear on the ground listened long and anxiously. We could hear footsteps in the woods on every side and they were not our men. We were surrounded by scouts and as I rode along, bringing up the extreme rear, I expected every minute to be shot. Detection would have been impossible in those tangled, dark forests and swamps.

When we came out of the woods to Turner's plantation, a scene of unrivalled beauty presented itself to our view. We were on the top of a long ridge that sunk away into the James River three miles distant. It was the finest farming country I had as yet seen. The grain was out and bound in sheaves, and stacked in small stacks. Hundreds of acres of wheat and oats were at once appropriated for food for the horses, and beds for the men. So the brutes were fed, even if the men were starving. In ten minutes all the grain on a farm would be destroyed. I heard one general say to some soldiers, "Hurry up boys, when you get all there is I want to put a guard there." It was right. Should our horses starve, and thousands of bushels of oats literally under their feet? We didn't see it. In one day smiling farms were despoiled, houses sacked, fruit trees all cut down for a little fruit, and ruin everywhere. But the men were starving. Consider eight days without food.

Monday we encamped at 11:30 A.M., but at 3 P.M. were called to go out to battle again, for little rest was worse than none. No food since Thursday save hard bread and a very little coffee. There were hundreds of wagons all around us loaded with all kinds of provisions that day, but we had no time to get any. In marching, an army stretches over many miles and we cannot run to the train for food, besides in this case we did not stop anywhere

long enough for our wagons to come to us. As we slowly toiled back up the hill, the wagons were coming down on the run, urged by the cavalry to double quick, the whole forming a scene of indescribable confusion. I rode up to a house in front and found it full of ladies from the neighboring houses. They were almost frantic with fear, and besought me to take them to a safe place. I did so very willingly for there were some very pretty girls among the lot. I don't wonder they were scared at having shells burst in their door yard. They did not have to claim to be Union at all. I have never seen a Union man yet. A correspondent of the New York Herald who tents with me was all summer with Burnside and he says he never met with one Union man in North Carolina; that all the statements of Union feeling there are false and written to deceive the North, etc. The people of North Carolina do not love Jeff Davis, but they hate us, and for all I can see or learn I am sadly forced to conclude that the Union feeling in the South is a myth. But of course you must remember that my sphere of observation is comparatively very small, but I hear a good deal.

In fact by reading the New York dailies I have been grossly deceived, and so has the whole North. We were told of the great numbers of Union men here ready to welcome our old flag. Where is on, even one? We were told the Rebels would not fight. We advanced to Richmond as if going to a picnic. The Rebels retreated until they were ready to fight, and then didn't they fight? It requires more courage to make an attack than to oppose one, and you will never call these Rebels cowards again when you remember that, leaving their cannon and cavalry in the rear, they boldly formed and coming out into a plain open field, marched up to the muzzles of 44 cannon, hurling shot and shell, canister and grape and charged our steady columns, obstinately contesting every inch, though they fell by the thousands, till night closed the scene. No troops on earth ever did more. Hereafter never say the Rebels won't fight. They far surpass us in obstinacy, in ferocity, in spirit. And the quicker they are recognized as a most dangerous foe, the better for us. We need 300,000 more men, not only to conquer speedily, but to conquer at all.

I will not state, for you would not believe me, the loss the army that left Yorktown has sustained. The Bucktails have 54 left out of 600. That's a strong case. You would not be far wrong were you to consider our loss by sickness, desertion and death as one half. One great auxiliary which the Rebels have found to aid them is the censorship of our press and the secrecy of their movements. How large is the Rebel army? Where is Beauregard? Has anything been done to strengthen us? Here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century we know no more of Beauregard than we do of Japan. The public has been engaged with stupendous falsehood, and Beauregard will turn up where least expected.

Lieutenant Colonel Ripley

To our Lieutenant Colonel Ripley belongs the honor of saving the left wing and the day on Tuesday. Seeing that we, a regiment, could not withstand a whole brigade, he rode back to General Martindale, whose brigade was not in action, and urged that a regiment might be given him. "Well," said the general very calmly, "you may take the 12<sup>th</sup> New York. Break it into division by column this way. Let the left center left wheel, and..." "Never mind, said Ripley, "give me the regiment and I'll get it through." He did just in time to save the day, but the 4<sup>th</sup> Michigan was then out of ammunition, so we still had only one regiment. Lieutenant Colonel Ripley then rode back and brought Colonel McQuade up with the gallant 14<sup>th</sup> New York. I expected to see the lieutenant colonel fall dead every minute, but he escaped with having a bad wound in the leg and having his horse killed with four balls. Honor such men.

Captain E. Drew, who was killed, was from Buffalo. He was our best-drilled captain and one of the best in the whole army. He was a pleasant man, never fond of showing off his great talents. He was a great loss. Lieutenant Peet had just received an appointment in the Marines at Washington, and was to leave that day. He was a fine young fellow, of good family, and was an officer and a gentleman. He was shot in the lungs and died in great agony. Out of 38 officers, we lost 24 in killed, wounded, and missing. We were in six different divisions and in every fight in the whole retreat.

The night after the battle of Tuesday we lay down utterly exhausted, and even those words convey no idea of the state of Porter's corps. No food since last Thursday, save a little hard bread and less coffee. I lay down, but a grape shot fell close by me from the distant side fight. I moved a little, when with an infernal whiz came a solid shot weighing 100 lbs from our gunboats, and indeed all that day they done us more hurt than good. However, we lay there; soon the intense heat of day gave way to the equally intense cold of the night, a peculiarity of this beautiful climate. So hungry, cold, and tired, wearily we waited for the dawn and coming battle, for our foe was triumphant and were pressing onward to our supposed certain defeat. At 2 A.M. the retreat began and now came a renewal of the horrid scenes on the Chickahominy, i.e. abandoning the wounded. As soon as they saw we were going, they set up a most miserable cry. They wept and prayed, swore, yelled, and blasphemed. "Oh do not leave us. Can't we hold this ground," they piteously exclaimed. But the parting moment soon came, and falling in we marched away leaving a thousand men crying and praying. Some were delirious for want of water. All were feverish and needed the outmost care. Every variety of wound and mutilation lay there. Acres and acres of abandoned humanity. Those terrible fields will live in my memory till the end of all time. Can any of you imagine the despair of those brave hearts as our retreating columns disappeared from their view? Lost, lost-forever! Oh, this terrible war!

The retreat was a rout. A heavy rain was now falling, and the mud deepening every moment. The cavalry slept riding. Yet even here a little incident occurred that shows the spirit of brave men. McClellan had ten Parrott guns that were our especial delight from the way they were used to argue and use moral suasion. Twelve mules drew each one; they were 30-pounders and weighed 56,012 lbs each. The mules belonging to one gave out. The gun must be lost. It seemed inevitable. But no. A hundred soldiers, that were a moment before too tired to drag themselves along almost, seized a battery rope and harnessing themselves to the ponderous gun drew it for miles through that mud to camp. Leave that gun to the Rebels? Never!

I have already tried to convey a faint idea of the scene this vast plain presented upon the arrival of our army that eventful 2<sup>nd</sup> of July. Twenty thousand men, hungry, tired, covered with mud, clothes ringing wet, each one totally ignorant of the whereabouts of his comrades, and the rain still falling so steadily. Night set on a forlorn army indeed. Every soldier sank down in the deep mud, thankful to get even sleep. The next day it was not better. Still rain, still the awful mud, still no food, still hard work. Now we are more cheerful. The mud has dried up under the intense heat. The James River here resembles Crooked Lake at one end. The sloping banks, the woods, with occasional heaving fields of grain, all remind of home.

We are not discouraged. The enemy did not drive us from a single field while the battle raged. Their loss is far greater than ours, yet many of our regiments are almost annihilated. You never will see our loss in print. The Rebels lost so many because they rushed so boldly on our cannon. Ah, they fought nobly, nobly. When we stopped recruiting, Jeff Davis knew exactly what he had to contend against; consequently he urged the conscription through and outnumbered us. Do you see? But we must conquer, we shall conquer, many, many of us never to see our pleasant homes again. The recent battles give us a glimpse of what is ahead. We have got to kill this Southern army. Do you understand what that means? Live or die, some of us must, and will go to Richmond. That is decreed. But an awful struggle is impending.

Camp near Harrison's Landing, James River, Virginia

July 16, 1862

*Yates County Chronicle, July 31, 1862, pg. 2*

The *Petersburgh Express* (Va.) of July 9<sup>th</sup> says: "It is a matter of congratulation with every friend of freedom and the South to know that the present position of McClellan's army is one of the hottest, perhaps, on the soil of Virginia. Prisoners residing in Petersburg, entirely familiar with the locality, say that out of Tophet, there

is no place to compare with it. There is but little sympathy hereabouts for the invaders; and if the sun could roast the rascals to a crisp, no tears would be shed in the South at their fate."

I can certify to that. For once the Rebels have told the honest truth. The thermometer for the days was 100, 98, and 99 degrees, and not a great deal less at any time day or night. You can't imagine how such extreme, long, continued heat enervates and depresses. No cool breeze at night or morning. The serene steady blaze and only poor, warm, surface warm to drink. Just here, let me say that in all my letters, whenever I speak of hunger, heat, cold, thirst, or toil, I am not complaining or whining. These physical troubles are severe and serious, but I never hear the soldiers fretting or murmuring. I only aim to present to you things as they are; to give an idea, poor though it may be, of our camp life and a homely picture of the life of a soldier in the Army of the Potomac. I hear the men lamenting the distracted state of the country, night and day, but I hear no real grumbling over our privations. They did not enlist for a grand picnic, and every man who expects to put his shoulder to the wheel, do his part well, and earn the honor a volunteer is entitled to and yet suffer none had better quietly stay at home and be content with reading about it and pitying us. Look a moment. A brave and well-appointed army left the city of Washington on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, one-third of a year since. They lay on the ground in the swamps of Yorktown, toiled in the earth, raising massive works, built miles of corduroy roads, did picket duty in rain and cold, marched up the Peninsula, hundreds falling out and dying alone and uncared for, marched six days on three days' rations, encamped in the swamps of the Chickahominy, stood picket for a month in water from six inches to three feet deep. And a burning sun beating on their heads (127 men were shot on picket in Gen. Smith's division alone in 21 days). Who honors the brave picket, whose duty is a continual lonely battle of 24 hours durations, not even the magnetic touch of a comrade's elbow to cheer and inspire! "One man shot on picket." Dead, and not even noticed.

Sleeping on ground, drinking warm swamp surface water, and finally eight terrible days of struggling for life and liberty, wrestling not only with a cruel foe, but imperious nature, contending again man and hunger. Be assured that we invite the recruit to no child's play, yet, if this appalls him, if the curtain partially lifted discloses a view which halts him, let him stay at home. Through fire and blood and famine and thirst and untold misery and suffering, the Union must be restored and he, who would claim a share of the honor, must prepare to meet and endure the toil.

The *Herald* blows about the danger its correspondents brave, claims that they are in the front, as much under fire as any officer and all such bosh. They are never in the fight. They make up their letters from hearsay and our official reports at headquarters. The chief of staff of the *New York Press* left Gaines' Mills just as the battle began, and the rest ran away off at 4 P.M. over the upper bridge, and the terrible fighting was done after 4 P.M. In conversing with these correspondents I find that they don't know a tenth part as much as any private who was in front could tell.

The Mexican battles loom up grandly. You esteem them to be terrible conflicts, yet compare the loss with ours. We lost in over seven days fighting killed, wounded, and missing, 15,207. At the great battle before Fort Brown we lost 39. Fight all day and 39 killed! Child's play. At Monterey we lost 158 killed, 368 wounded. The Mexicans about 1,000. I was just reading these losses in *Harper's* for July. They appear very trifling and insignificant to us. We firmly believe that we killed and wounded nearly 20,000 Rebels at Gaines' Mills. Monday they were slaughtered like sheep and on Tuesday I think we had the best chance at them of any day. We shot down whole brigades. They charged desperately, never did men fight better. But our cannon were merciless. We have 15,000 killed and wounded, but we have 20,000 sick besides. Rather more than less.

Saturday July 19, 1862

No one has greater respect for clergymen than I have, yet I am compelled to admit the truth of the following taken from the *Herald* of the 17<sup>th</sup> and even add that the article does not come up to the reality still. I have seen very few chaplains to know them well. I have never seen anywhere in our regiment or any order any Sunday exercises since last December, with one or two exceptions. I have never seen a chaplain with the sick and

wounded after any of these battles. They do nothing, and receive the pay of captain of cavalry, draw pay for three horses that are allowed them, but they never have any. Of course there must be many honorable exceptions, but I never saw any:

This has been an unusually quiet Sabbath in camp. All necessary labor has been suspended and opportunity afforded to observe the day as a day of rest and religious observance. I have not, however, been able to discern many indications of religious services, Notwithstanding I have visited a number a regiments; in only one place did I observe any of the customary divine services to be held. The facts is that the chaplains have made themselves, as a general thing, very scarce since the late severe fighting and dangers experienced by the army. In truth, the chaplains generally seem to have a much greater regard for their own comfort and safety than for the religious welfare of the soldiers.

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#### My Box

The other day I was made happy by receiving from friends in Penn Yan a box of all the good things the imagination of man can conceive of. To properly appreciate such a present, one should live on hard bread and pork four months, as we have. Spiritually, I take them by the hand and bless them. Bodily, I fall to and eat.

#### Weather

The last two days have been actually cold; wear our overcoats. Oh, this beautiful climate.

#### Who Should Officer the New Troops?

Who better than the veterans of a year's service? They are practically familiar with the duties of a soldier. New troop require drilling. What better drill masters than those who have drilled so long? There are thousands of intelligent men in the ranks who are deserving of promotion. To enable the new levies to be quickly ready, tried men should be placed in command; not officer, who must first themselves learn. Time it too precious for that. At first we had to put up with such officers. Now these new troops should have the best kind of officers, and can have. It would reward meritorious conduct. Let this be once practically understood and others will be encouraged to worthy deeds. Too little real merit is rewarded in our army. Too much favoritism is shown. Many men are in the ranks that are more qualified than their officers. Napoleon rewarded merit on the field, thus his men were incited to deeds of daring.