

Hd. Qs. 10th Ala Regt.
On Picket Line above
Fredericksburg Va.
May 9th 1863

My dear wife,

This is no truer adage than that after a storm a great calm succeeds. The roar of artillery and rattle of [musketing] have given way to the music of birds; the dark murky clouds gathered above us from the sulphurous smoke of the terrible battle field have disappeared and a bright May morn comes to cheer the hearts of those of us who have been graciously spared by a kind Providence.

Before you receive this you will have learned by telegraph & by letter that the Good One has again blessed me by his

protecting care, while hundreds of others better far by profession & practice have been cut down as grass before the sickle. I know your heart is full of thankfulness as mine is of gratitude to Him who holds the lives of all His creatures in His hands.

I have written to you in previous letters that there is nothing more difficult than to describe truthfully a battle. I shall not attempt it in this. I have neither the time nor space to tell you of the various marches & countermarches made by our troops since the enemy crossed the river on the 27th ult. In fact such details would not interest you, and as for the general result you will have learned already that our triumph has been great, our victory complete. I must not, however,

neglect to give you some idea of what was done by Wilcox's Brigade on Sunday the 4th inst. The enemy's forces had crossed at "United States Ford" some seven or eight miles above this point on the 27th April – the battle began there and had been raging heavily every day up to the 4th (Sunday). We had been left in our old position to guard the passage at Bank's Ford and had come to the conclusion that that the battle would end, and we would have no "place in the picture." But Sunday morning one Corps of the enemy, commanded by Gen Sedgwick succeeded in driving Barksdale's Miss. Brigade [Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade] from Fredericksburg to [Marye's Heights] above the town. This was a small Brigade and was supported by but one other Brigade no greater in numbers. It soon became evident that 4000 men could

not hold the position against the overwhelming numbers of the enemy 20,000 strong, backed as they were by some of the finest batteries they have in service. Gen. Barksdale sent a runner to Wilcox asking his aid – we got under arms immediately “double quicked” to the scene of conflict but alas too late – Barksdale & Hays with their Brigades had been driven back and the enemy came upon us so heavily that we were compelled to beat a retreat to save ourselves from capture or utter destruction.

The object of the enemy in this movement was to get upon the right flank and rear of Lee's army, and thus having Hooker with seventy-five thousand in his front, and Sedgwick with twenty thousand in rear, the destruction of our Virginia Army would be an easy matter. To prevent the circumstances of this designs, weak as we were in

numbers, it became absolutely necessary that we should make a stand and give battle till reinforcements should come down from above, so we formed line of battle at “Salem Church” – threw out our skirmishers – opened a battery upon their advancing columns – and awaited patiently the coming of the mighty shock of battle, which became more and more inevitable every moment. About 3 O’clock in the afternoon their batteries had silenced our little “one horse artillery” – their skirmishers had driven ours in – and their first line of battle came churning in a charge against us. They churned and charged right up to our lines – but then came the besom of destruction upon them – Wilcox's Brigade turned loose their deadly shots &

so galling and terrible was the fire that the yanks could not stand – the persuasions of officers and the flashing of swords could do no good, they broke in disorder & fled in confusion – our boys then charged with one of their peculiar whoops – on went “the pursuer & pursued” – their second line gave way – their rear line & batteries now opened up furiously upon those of us who were close upon the heels of their retreating fellows. By this time our ranks had become thinned & considerably scattered – we halted, reformed, [recouped] our first line and awaited the second coming of the “Blue Coats” – But they didn’t come. That night we were busily engaged collecting & caring for our own killed & wounded as also those of the enemy. In front of our Brigade there were found 316 dead Yankees.

over 100 wounded that couldn't get away – and from Sunday evening till Tuesday morning the Brigade captured over 1000 prisoners. Simms' Brigade & Mahone's [Mahone's Brigade] on our left did about as well.

So much for our part of the line – Wilcox's "independent fight" as it is called is regarded here as one of the most brilliant days work of the war – But for its success there is no telling what would have been the issue. The Yankees officers, many of whom were taken prisoners, pay great compliments to the Brigade – they say they never saw men fight so against such odds in their life. One of them had the impudence to say to me that he “was astonished that we fought so determinedly, when we had such poor resources.” I told him he was very much mistaken

that our resources were abundant and were being rapidly developed every day, and besides, that, since this war began, we had drawn largely enough upon them to supply all our wants: he laughed and said “that’s so.”

On Tuesday we were ordered up to Chancellorsville 10 miles above as all the yanks had recrossed the River at [Fredericksburg]. I thought Hooker would renew the fight on our left; but when we got there he had fled from that point also, leaving his dead uncared for and his wounded that could not be removed in the same condition. I thought the battle fields over which I have been before showed great destruction of human life and property – but certainly I have never witnessed such

[top margin] For the present good bye, my dear one and may the Good One soon give us the joy of another meeting & kiss & a warm embrace to you –
C.

as my eyes have seen upon the Rappahannock – Everywhere, right & left from here to Chancellorsville the ground is covered with dead Yankees, dead horses, exploded [Caissons], knapsacks, haversacks, blankets, overcoats & thousands upon thousands of muskets thrown down by the enemy in their hurried retreat. How their army can be otherwise than terribly demoralized I cannot conceive. The boys say Hooker is a better commissary than any we have got in our army for he gives them “eight days rations” at a time – They don’t care how often he comes over to issue his sugar & coffee & crackers & bacon. I cannot form any conception of their aggregate loss – it must have been terrible; we have

taken it is said about 8000 prisoners. Our loss has been pretty severe but small compared with theirs. But upon all these points the papers will inform you as accurately as I can.

I received your previous letter of the 25th of April & was rejoiced to find you so cheerful. Continue so, Mary, for nothing contributes more to health than cheerfulness. I hope I shall soon be able to see you rigged out in your new bonnet & [?] – but rest assured I would rather see your dear self than your new finery.

I hope [Mr. Stule's] health is not so bad as you think. The spring is setting in now – I think he will get rid of his rheumatism.

I am sorry, yea mortified to think that I have a sister who should so far lose her own self

respect, and slight a brother's love as to speak unkindly and untruthfully of a brother's wife. By so doing she has only damaged herself, she can never injure you in that community. And as for undeceiving Mother, that is a "two handed game." I intend it shall be my first duty when I return home, to give Mother & Frank a true history of her doings & sayings in [Jacksonville]. She'll never trouble you again.

You ask me to give you a correct account of my reception with the Regt. Candor compels me to say it was not cordial with those whose prospects are to brighten with my departure, but it was respectful and courteous. I say it without boasting I am well enough known in the Regt. for it never to be otherwise.

I have done nothing as yet. When I reached the Regt. there was every prospect of an early fight. I desired it most heartily. I never intended to leave it till I had been once more with them under fire of the enemy's guns. I had a desire to see how some of the brave gentlemen, who could take advantage of an officers absence to excite prejudice against him, would bear themselves in the hour of trial. My wish has been gratified and not one of the number will ever raise his voice against me as a Commanding officer in the day of battle. Roger Williams came to me after the fight and told me that some of those who had signed the petition for me to resign, had said to him, tight & strict as I was, they never wanted a truer or braver officer than their Lieut Col. This was gratifying to me

and a favorable indication that the prejudices excited were giving way. I would not mention such a compliment to anyone else but you, my dear one, and only to you to show you that when a man does his whole duty in battle, little vulgar prejudices vanish into nothing.

I intend in a day or two to answer their letter. – If they withdraw the petition, I intend as soon thereafter as prudent, to tender my resignation & go home.

I don't think Forney will stay with the Regt. His arm has healed up entirely but I think he will get position on a Military Court – this will take him from the field. When he and I leave it, God only knows what will become of the Regt. unless the officers who are entitled

Field positions change their course for the better. But that will be no fault of mine – I have endeavored to do my whole duty – Ambition has induced some of the subordinates to conspire against me – I intend to leave them and then the men will see whether my course has been proper or not.

I got [Walt's] letter with yours thank him for writing – tell him to write again – I'll write to him soon. If [Bob Wynne] has gone home and carried the jeans, hold on to it till I come.

Love to Mat & Kate – Kiss all the children for me. Tell Lucy I believe Ed loves pa better than she does. Tell Ed he & pa will have another fishing frolic before the summer is over.

I forget to tell you that my horse was lost while I was at home. I have to buy another. This will cut my funds pretty short, but you must let me know in your next letter if you need any money.