Camp Gosman July 23rd 1861

Dear Father,

I telegraphed yesterday immediately upon our arrival supposing you would feel uneasy upon hearing of the result of the action at Bull Run. I got in yesterday morning the Colonel with the rest of the Regiment proceeded to Washington and were stopped at Georgetown. I came on here and am in command of the camp. The night before the action I could not sleep as I had no blanket and the weather was very cold. We started at 2½ in the morning marched 15 miles to the battle field (I having a severe cramp in the stomach and a sprained knee) fought for several hours & then walked back here 40 miles by the next morning & I am now
as good as we. I walked at least 66 miles in 26 hours. The day was disastrous but as for myself personally in fact the Regiment is concerned I have nothing to regret. We were ordered to the support of Ricketts Battery but as we were passing around them & they were thundering their guns the Batteries of the enemy commenced playing upon them. Not fifteen minutes after Capt. Ricketts his 1st Lieut. about a 100 out of 120 men & the same number of horses were killed on the spot. Col. McIntyre the Commander of our Brigade rode up & said that he had ordered up a regiment & did not understand which which had refused to come up & ordered us up to a wood where a body of the enemy laycoiled into the wood & the skirmishing riflemen fired upon our left within 50 yards
of us. A large number of our men fell. But only 3 of mine were wounded. Beitzelman said then ordered us to fall back upon the woods but I did not hear the command. I supposed the regiment had got a panic. I had determined before I went into action that my Co. Should never retreat by my order. I gave the command "Bo I stand fast." Part of my first platoon stood fast but saw a Mississippi regiment on our left. We turned and fired upon them for some time knocking them down right and left. When it was said that they were our friends they were only about 75 yards from us. They raised their hands & said they were friends. I ordered the men to cease firing one of them came up & I went up & spoke to him & asked him if they were friends, he said they were. I asked what regiment & he said N.J. Some one said they wanted to deliver
themselves up, I again ordered the men to cease firing but shortly after one of my men fell by my side. When I told the men to fire away & I borrowed a musket & fired myself. The enemy retreated & I & a few of my men followed we fell in with Major of the Gonaves & some of his men & we went in together. I took one prisoner & sent him off after taking his gun. Shortly after two of the enemy jumped up & I fired from one of them, he fell dead. I met several wounded men whom the Gonaves wanted to kill but I ordered them off & called upon the Major to prevent them telling him his regiment would be disgraced by such conduct when he interfered. I took a loaded gun from one of the wounded & fired my last. I fired shortly after I think I hit only three times as I was obliged
to be constantly among the men giving them orders at length we came to a road & looking over the other side of the field beyond I saw a large body of cavalry thinking however they might be on our own side I ordered our men not to fire I felt totally certain they were the enemy & drew up to fire once but decided about that time there was heavy firing in our rear which I supposed came from our friends as we had chased the enemy ahead of us I called upon them to desist & told them they were firing upon their friends but the firing continued & I saw there was no chance to get through I then told the Adjutant Major that we had better follow up the road until we got beyond the line of firing he told me to go on first which I did but finding the fire hotter the further we went turned & went in the other direction where the firing was
less - after a while as I was going up a little hill I saw a large body of the enemy drawn up in line. I stepped back out of sight and followed a lane up a ravine and looked to see who were ahead, seeing a large body of men drawn up to the left and supposing them to be the same which had fired upon us in the woods. I walked up to them, passing a wounded officer of our army who begged me to help him off. I said to my poor man I would but you are heavy and I am not strong enough. But I will endeavor to get you help. I then called to the troops near by and told them they had been firing upon their friends. But just as I spoke I saw by their uniform they were enemies. I then turned leisurely to the right when I found another body I was hemmed in and had no recourse but to go through the gap which I did with
a cross fire upon me from both. I did not think it possible to escape the balls were falling around me like hail. I was much exhausted and soon laid down under cover of the bank of a little stream, between the enemy and a body of our men on the opposite hill. After resting a while I went a little further to where there were General Grubb's and General Michigan men who were firing one of them threw his canteen to the I took a drink. Our men retreated or pressed on when I got up and moved on a little further to the woods. Soon there was a general retreat. After awhile I saw Col. Hindman and told him. I did not know where the regiment was. I asked him if I could be of any service. He said no that he had picked our colors to the right. I went back & tried to find them but could not. We saved our colors. Our regiment was the furthest in advance.
I bore the most severe fire after they got mixed up in a ball and charged three times sustaining severe loss. I never saw such conduct as the men with me were perfectly cool and took deliberate aim killing great numbers of the enemy many of them smiling and laughing all the time. I had a good many hunters, trappers, scouts, but one officer along with me, Sgt. Welch, the rest of the few who rallied part of his men fought with me a braver cooler little fellow I never saw some of our men killed 3, 4, 5 or 6 of the enemy some of them as they fell would turn to me and say Captain, I dropped that fellow as I would turn to see them fall they must have killed or severely wounded most of them as they were good marksmen, took deliberate aim. In my shots I never took better aim at a bird some of the German in
the guns fired wild & I had constantly to caution them against shooting the own men in front. For Welsh I am afraid it gone he was wounded twice & I think must have been left he may be a prisoner. One of my men took the Lieut.-Col. of the 7th. he rode up supposing it to be a German. My gunners took a mounted man with his horse, pistols & sword. There is no doubt our regiment and the Grenades deserve more credit than any other troops in the field but we are Western men & won't get the credit. I never saw a Roman after we drew up at the woods. St. Col. Miller behaved nobly. As far as I can learn more credit is given to me than any other officer. But I yield to young Welch. It is generally said that after the first fire one becomes reckless & do not realize their danger.
but I did not get enough excited and felt my danger all the while. Whenever I could conveniently get a tree or other object between me and the enemy I did so and probably saved my life by it. A battle like that is a terrible affair. The firing of the artillery and musketry is perfectly fearful. As we fielded off from the road to support the battery a shell struck near one under the horses of one of the batteries. Going a little further a six pound ball passed close to my feet. Many of our men and officers had very narrow escapes many of them having several balls through their clothes. Lieutenant Capt. McElrue was killed at the first fire we did not know how many men and officers were lost a great many are missing. Most of my regiment are at Washington but I remain in our old camp in command with about 125. I have about 25 men missing, and among those present quite a number are wounded. Love to all. Yours truly, Alex.