9-8-1862

Letter from John W.A. Gillespie to Sister

John W.A. Gillespie

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.owu.edu/harvey-newspapers

Part of the Military History Commons, Social History Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.owu.edu/harvey-newspapers/13

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Paula B. and Thomas W. Harvey Collection of Civil War Letters at Digital Commons @ OWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Harvey Collection Newspapers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ OWU. For more information, please contact earutigl@owu.edu.
Dear Sister:—Your letter of the 25th of Aug. came in hand nearly half a century ago, and I am to tell you that all is well with me. We had another battle yesterday, and there were many brave men who fought bravely. The battle was fought at a place called Rock the morning of the 25th. The 21st and 7th Ohio regiments were present, and the attack was made by the rebels. We put up a strong defense, and the battle lasted for several hours. The rebels were finally driven back, and we held our position. We lost some men, but we are all well.

The enemy were led by a man named Hargrave. He had a large force with him, but we were able to hold our own. The battle was fought in a field where we had our artillery. Only two companies of the 7th regiment were engaged, and they fought bravely. The silence of the regiment was kept by the constant fire of our guns.

About 75 men of the 21st were annihilated by a large force of rebel cavalry. The regiment was in a weak state, and the Private Stephen of Co. H., my comrade, was shot through the thigh, and he died a day later. The men of the 21st were almost all wounded, and three killed. Col. Leggatt, our commanding officer, was near him when he fell, and made a narrow escape himself. Several of the men were taken prisoners.

Col. Hogg, our captain, was brave and gallant. He was always in the front, and led his men by example. They deserve the greatest praise for their boldness and bravery under the heavy fire of the enemy.

We are now awaiting another attack, but we are prepared. Our men have been well instructed in the art of war. We went out from Bolivar 22 miles expecting to meet the enemy last Friday, but we got back safely. We are now on a defensive position, and we are ready to meet any attack.

John W. Gillespie

A touching story of the War.

We are told of many touching scenes in the War.
Bolivar, Tenn. Sept 8th, 1862

Dear Sister: Your letter of the 25th of Aug. came in hand night before last and found me well. I was glad to hear that you were all well. On last Saturday a week we had another fight with the rebels two miles from Bolivar on the Grand Junction road. The fight commenced at 8 o’clock in the morning and continued until 2 o’clock P.M. when the rebels fell back, and fighting ceased. The 20th and 78th Ohio regiments with some cavalry, and two pieces of artillery was the only force engaged with the enemy during the day. The rebels were six or seven thousand strong, but our little force drove them back three different times. Then we in turn were compelled to fall back a mile, where we took a position on an elevated piece of ground and held it until the rebels were again driven back and routed by the heavy and terrific firing of our artillery. Only two companies of the 78th were engaged with the enemy during the fight, they fought and stood their ground, and fought like heroes. The balance of the regiment was pushing forward through the corn field and woods to take part in the fight, and expected every moment to meet the enemy face to face when an order came from Col. Leggett commanding the brigade to fall back to a safer position, and held it until reinforcements (which were on the road) could reach us. We fell back as ordered and took our position (the battery on the left of the road, the 78th to the right of the battery, the 20th on the left and the cavalry in the rear, there we stood in position (as before mentioned) every man determined to do or die, and as the rebels advanced in full, we all felt that the contest was soon to be renewed. On they came nearer and nearer when all at once boom! boom!! boom!!! boom!!!!! went our big guns in rapid succession carrying death and dismay into the rebel ranks they turned and fled and thus ended the days battle. The rebel loss is estimated at 150 killed and wounded. Our loss in killed and wounded is about 15. About 75 men of the 20th were surrounded by a large force of rebel cavalry, and taken prisoners. There are four officers among the number Capt. Chandler, Cap. Wiles, Lieut McCarty, and Lieut Roberts with companies _____ and C came very near being captured in the same way. Private Stephen of Company H of our regiment was shot through was shot through the thigh and none killed. Three men of the 20th were severely wounded, and 2 killed, two or three others were slightly wounded. Lieut. Col. Hogg od the 2nd Illinois Cavalry, in attempting to charge the enemy fell, pierced by six or eight rifle balls. Col. Leggett was near him when he fell, and made a narrow escape himself. Several of the cavalry were killed or wounded in this charge. Lieut. Col. Hogg was a brave and gallant officer and his death is much lamented by his entire command. Our Brigade of (mule) cavalry did noble service during the fight. This cavalry is composed of men from both regiments mounted on mules and commanded by Lieut. Ayers of the 20th and Lieut. Munson of the 78th. The assisted in making the attack and rove the enemy back a mile in the beginning of the fight. They deserve the greatest praise for their bravery under the heavy fire of the enemy. Col. Leggett was in the front during the entire fight, and by his undaunted courage, inspired his entire command with fresh confidence of his skill and bravery as a true soldier and good officer. Capts. Chandler and Wiles say Lieuts McCarty and Roberts, also displayed great courage as did every one of the men in their command. The men loaded and fired their trusty Enfield rifles at the enemy 22 time each and did their work cooly and deliberately. When they ceased firing, their gun bands were so hot from the constant firing that they had to carry them for several minutes by the strap. Every man engaged did his work well. In fact, he could not have done better.

---

1 Zanesville Daily Courier, September 26, 1862, p. 2
We are now awaiting another attack, but cannot tell of course when it will come. Our brigade went out from Bolivar 22 miles expecting to meet the enemy on last Friday, but we got back 2 o’clock Sunday morning without having met any rebels except a party of ten cavalry, whom we captured and brought back with us.

Tuesday morning, Sept. the 9th. – We have just received orders to move from this place. Other troops are coming to take our place. The whole division is going to move, I do not know where to, but I have an idea that Grant’s army is to be concentrated at some point below, for a forward movement, perhaps at Grand Junction or LaGrange. No more at present, from your affectionate brother.

JOHN W.A. GILLESPIE