


9-8-1862

Letter from John W.A. Gillespie to Sister

John W.A. Gillespie

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BOLIVAR, TEXAS, Sept. 8th, 1862.

DEAR SISTER:—Your letter of the 25th of Aug. came to 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 four miles from Bolivar, on the Grand Junction road. The fight commenced at 8 o'clock in the morning and heavy skirmishing continued until 2 o'clock P. M. when the rebels fell back, and fighting ceased. The 20th and 7th 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 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 regiment were engaged with the enemy during the fight; they fought and stood their ground nobly, and fought like heroes. The balance of the regiment was pushing forward through the corn fields 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 then hold 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 on 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 to kill, 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 day's battle. The rebel loss is estimated at 1500 killed and wounded. Our loss in killed and wounded is about 150. 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, Capt. Wiles, Lieut. McCarty and Lieut. Roberts with companies B and C, some very near being captured in the same way. Private Stephen of Co. H. of our regiment, was shot through the thigh, and not killed. Three men of the 20th were severely wounded, and 2 killed, two or three others were slightly wounded, Lieut. Col. Hogg of 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 and 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. Mason of the 78th. They assisted in making the attack and drove the enemy back a mile in the beginning of the fight. They deserve the greatest praise for their coolness and 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 in his skill and bravery as a true soldier and good officer. Capts. Chandler and Wiles, and Lieuts. McCarty and Roberts, also displayed great courage, as did every one of the men in their commands. The men loaded and fired their trusty Enfield rifles at the enemy 22 times each and did their work coolly 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.

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 La Grange. No more at present, from your affectionate brother,

JOHN W. A. GILLESPIE.

A Touching Story of the War.

We read of many touching scenes in the

September 26, 1862

Bolivar, Tenn. Sept 8th, 1862¹

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!!!! 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. They 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

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