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A Letter to A. C. Van Raalte from His Son, Ben

Ben Van Raalte

Clarence Jalving

Nella Kennedy

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Camp 25th Mich. Near Atlanta, Ga., July 26, 1864

A letter to A. C. Van Raalte from his son, Ben, reporting on the battle
for Atlanta.

Original in the Archives of the Netherlands Museum.

Translated by Clarence Jalving.

*Transcribed and re-translated
by Nella Kennedy, Dec., 2008*

Camp 25th Mich., near Atlanta, Georgia
July 25, 1864

Loving Father,

We are situated now directly in front of the city, which the Rebs have strongly fortified. Yesterday we advanced about a mile, but the fighting was very heavy. The Rebs made terrific charges and the firing was intense. They made three charges and in one of them Gen. McPherson was killed which is a heavy loss. The Rebs drove us back and took our cannon and many prisoners. Soon after that we were reinforced by other [soldiers] of our Corps, and others besides, and we made a charge, recapturing all the cannon and the prisoners

[2]

which they had taken from us, besides taking two thousand of them prisoners. The dead and wounded all fell into our hands. I do not think General Hood gained anything yesterday with his charges. They apparently also made a charge against [General] Hooker with heavy losses evidently. There was activity all along the line yesterday. I thought that they wanted to try us as well, but nothing came of that. We could see them forming but they didn't dare to risk it. This morning a deserter came to us, who told us that they had received orders three times to charge, but the first time the officers could not agree. When they did come to an agreement the privates didn't dare or didn't want to charge. Cannonading was heavy yesterday. We shelled the city and the fortifications, but they shelled us heavily also. We had to build our breastworks under

[3]

heavy fire, with shell fragments flying about our ears. We have to play woodchuck in the ground these days. I am learning to be a good digger here. Yesterday morning Rinke De Vries was wounded lightly by a shell fragment. It didn't draw blood but became very swollen. But in a day or two he should be back on duty again. We have made our fortifications extra strong since the Rebs have very heavy artillery. I am expecting very heavy shelling to come since we lie directly in front of a Reb fort. We fire so many shells on them that it is a joy to behold.¹ Maybe they will get tired of it and then they may also throw over some of those "camp kettles." That is what the boys call those big shells. It is rumored that we took five-thousand prisoners to Marietta this morning.

[4]

[We also heard] that General Hardee² was wounded and taken to the hospital of the 16th Corps. That is good news, but it could well not be true. There is so much talk here.

Now I must finish, hoping that we may be spared and that Atlanta may soon be in our possession. Greet everyone from me.

Your loving

¹ ...dat het liefhebberij is....could also be translated that it has become a sport.

² General William Joseph Hardee (1815-1873)

B. Van Raalte

P.S. We get very few letters, I don't know why. Lieut. Kramer sends his regards. Yesterday we captured seven stands of colours.³ The Johnnies must be vanquished. Our boys are in good spirits. My headquarters at present is in the rifle pits, in case the Rebs start shelling.

[Translation: Clarence Jalving; revision: Nella Kennedy, April 2008]

³ Confederate Army Colours: streamer is divided with grey over blue.

Camp 25th Mich. Near Atlanta Ga:
July 25th/64

Liefhebbende Vader,

Wij liggen nu flak voor de stad, de Rebs zijn sterk gefortified. gisteren zij wij zo wat een mijl voor uit gegaan, er is gisteren zwaar gevochten. de Rebs: maakten ontzetende charges. het was een heevig geschiet. Zij maakten drie charges in een van de charges is Gen. McPherson gesnueveld, het welk een zwaar verlies is. de Rebs: dreeven de onzen terug en naamen onze kannonnen, en veel prisoners, daar op werden de onzen gouv gereinforced door een deel van onze Corps: en nog anderen, en maakten een charge hernaamen de grond, en alde kenonnen en gevangenen

[2]

die zij van ons genoomen hadden, en wij naamen nog twe duizend gevangenen de dooden en gewonden zijn allen in onze handen gevallen. Ik denk dat Gen: Hood gisteren niet veel heeft gemaakt met zijn chargen. op Hooker moeten zij ook een charge gemaakt [hebben] en daar moeten zij zwaar verlooren hebben. het was er gisteren overal te doen. Ik dacht dat zij ons ook nog wilden prombeeren, maar er is niet van gekoomen wij konden ze zien vormen, maar zij dorsten het niet waagen. Van morgen is er een deserter in gekoomen die zij dat zij drie keer orders kreegen om te chargen maar in het eerst konden de officieren het niet eens worden, en toen die het eens werden toen dorsten de privates niet of wilden niet. er is gisteren een zwaar gekannonneer geweest wij shelden de stad en hun fort en maar zij shelden ons ook zwaar wij moesten onze werken maaken onder

[3]

2 Een zwaar vuur. de sukken vloogen ons om de ooren. Wij moeten teegenwoordig woodchuck speelen in de grond. Ik zal het graaven hier nog leeren. Gisteren morgen is Rinke de Vries ligt gewond geworden, met een stuk shell. het trok geen bloed, maar zwol nog al op met een dag of wat dan zal hij wel weer duity doen. wij hebben onze werken nu heel sterk gemaakt want de Rebs: hebben hier ontzetende zwaare stukken. Ik verwacht hier nog heevig geshell, want wij liggen hier flak voor een Reb: fort en wij vuren [?] haar zoo veel bommen dat het liefhebberij is, en misschien zullen zij het wel moe worden en dan gaan zij ons ook nog goijen met van die campketels, zo noemen de jongens die groote shells. ze zeggen dat wij van morgen vijf duizend prisoners naar Marietta gestuurd hebben

[4]

en dat Gen: Hardie gewond en is het hospitaal is van het zestiende Corps: dat is goed news, maar het kon nog wel niet waar zijn, want er word zo veel gepraat.

nu moet ik eindigen hoopende dat wij bewaard moogen blijven en Atlanta gouv in bezint moogen hebben.

Groet allen van mij,
Uw Lief: B. Van Raalte

Wij krijgen zo weinig brieven hoe of het komt weet ik niet uw moeten de groetenis van Luit, Kraamer.

Wij hebben gisteren zeven stands of collers gecaptured. De Johnnies moeten er onder our boys are in good spirrit

Mijn Headquaters is teegen woordig in de rifel pits, als de Rebs: gaan shellen.

[Transcription: Nella Kennedy,
April 2008]

July 26, 1864

Dear Father:

We are ^{situated now} directly in front of the city and the Rebs have ^{which} very strong fortifications. Yesterday we ^{advanced} went ahead about a mile but the fighting was very heavy - the Rebs made terrific charges and the amount of firing was ^{heavy} deafening. They made three charges and in one of them Gen McPherson was killed which is a heavy loss. The Rebs drove us back and took ~~some~~ of our cannon and many prisoners. Soon after that we were reinforced by another ^{portion} group of our Corps and others, and we made a charge, recapturing all the cannon and the prisoners, ^{and} which they had taken from us, besides taking two thousand of them prisoner. The dead and wounded all fell into our hands. I do not think Gen Hood gained anything yesterday with his charges. They ^{apparently} also made a charge against Gen Hooker and ^{apparently} suffered very heavy losses. There was activity all along the line yesterday, ^{and} I guess they wanted to try us ^{out}. We could see them forming but I guess they didn't dare to risk it. This morning a deserter ^{who} came to us and told us that they had received orders three times to charge, but ^{the first time} the officers could not agree. When they did come to an agreement the privates didn't dare to or didn't want to charge. Cannonading was heavy yesterday - we shelled the city and the fortifications, but they shelled us heavily also. We had to build our breastworks under ^{in the ground} heavy fire, shell fragments flying about our ears. We have to play woodchuck ^{now-a-days}. I will become an expert shovel handler here. Yesterday morning Rinke De Vries was wounded lightly by a shell fragment. It didn't draw blood but became very swollen, but in a day or two he should be back on duty again. We have made our fortifications extra strong as the Rebs have very heavy artillery. I am expecting very heavy shelling as we lie directly in front of a Reb fort, but we can also ^{fire} dump so many shells on them that it will be a joy to behold. ^{of those} Maybe they will get tired of it, but they may also throw over some 'camp-kettles'. That's what the boys call those big shells. The story is that we took five thousand prisoners to Marietta this morning. Also that Gen Hardie ^{it could well be yet} was wounded and taken to the 16th Corps hospital. That is good news but maybe it isn't true. There is so much talk floating around.

Now I must finish, hoping that we may be spared and that Atlanta may soon be in our possession. Best regards to all.

Great everyone from me

Your loving

B. Van Raalte

P.S. We get very few letters - why, I don't know. Lieut. Kramer sends his regards. Yesterday we captured seven stands of ^{colours} Colours (?). The Johnnies must be vanquished. Our boys are in good spirits. My headquarters is at present in the rifle pits, in case the Rebs start shelling.

but nothing came off

** Got hat Lieffelsberg's*

perhaps colors? (log) [signature]

Gen. William Joseph Hardee (1815-1873)

Conf. Army Colors: steamer is divided w/ grey over blue

en dat Genl: Hardie, genood. en in
het Hospitaal is van het Destand Corps,
dat is goed nieuws, maar het kon
nog wel niet maar zijn, want er
wordt zo veel gepraet.

nu moet ik eindig hoopende
dat mij bemaand moogen blijven
en Atlanta gouw in besint moogen
hebben.

Groet allen van mij
Wm Lief: B. Van Raalte

Mij krygen zo minig lieven
hoe of het komt met ik oiet
Wm moet de groeten van
Luit Kramer.

Wij hebben gisteren seven stonds
of Colers gecaptured.

des Jokinies moeten
er onder. our boys are
in good spirit

mijn Headquaters is tegen moordig
in de rifel pits, als de Rebs: gaak Millen

29

Holland Historical Trust Collection
of the
Joint Archives of Holland

Camp 25, 1/2 Miles, New Atlanta Ga.
July 25/64

Liefhebber de Vader.

Mij liggen ouw
flats voor de stad, de Rebs zijn sterk
gefortified. gisteren zij mij zo met een
mijl voor uit gegaan, er is gisteren
draar gevochten, de Rebs: maakten
ontzettende charges, het was een hevig
gechicht. Zij maakten drie charges
in een van die charges is Genl: Sherman
gemueveld, het welk, een draar verten
is, de Rebs: dreeven de onsen terug
en naamen onse Rannonnen, en veel
prisoners, daar op merden de onsen
gouw gereinforced. door een deel
van onse Corps: en nog anderen, en
maakten, een charge hernaamen de
grond: en alde Rannonnen, en gevangenen

die zij van ons genoomen hadden, ~~en~~
mij naamen nog twee duizend gevangenen
de dooden en gewonden zijn allen in
onze handen gevallen. Ik denk dat
Genl Hoop gisteren niet veel heeft
gemaakt met zijn Chargen. op Hooker
moeten zij ook een Charge gemaakt
en daar moeten zij maar verlooven
hebben, het was er gisteren overal te doen
Ik dacht, dat zij ons ook nog wilden
prombeeren, maar er is niet van gekomen
mij worden ze bien vormen, maar zij
doosten het niet naagen. Van morgen is
er een deserter in gekomen die zij dat
zij drie keer orders kreeg om te
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die het eerst werden toen doosten de
privates niet of wilden niet. er is
gisteren een maar gekanonnerd geweest
mij schelden de stad en hun fort
maar zij schelden. ons ook maar mij
moesten onze merken maaken onder

een maar Vuur. de stukken vloogen
ons om de ooren. Mij moeten tegen
moedig. Woodstock Speelen in de
grond. Ik zal het graaven hier nog
leeren. Gisteren morgen is Rinke de
Vries. licht. gewond gemorden. met
een stuk shell. het trok geen
bloed. maar wel nog al op
met een dag of wat later zal hij wel
meer deuty. doen. mij hebben onze merken
~~hebben~~ nu heel sterk gemaakt. want
de Rebs: hebben hier ontetende maar
stukken. Ik verwacht hier nog
hevig geschell. want mij liggend hier
flak voor een Rebs: fort. en mij is een
haar zoo veel bommen. dat het
liepherry is. en misschien zullen zij
het wel moe worden en dan gaan
zij ons ook nog goijen met van
die Campketels. zo moeten de
jongens die groote shells. zo zeggen
dat mij van morgen vijf duizend.
prisoners ~~van~~ maar Marietta gestuurd hebben

July 26, 1864

Dear Father:

We are directly in front of the city and the Rebs have very strong fortifications. Yesterday we went ahead about a mile but the fighting was very heavy - the Rebs made terrific charges and the amount of firing was deafening. They made three charges and in one of them Gen McPherson was killed which is a heavy loss. The Rebs drove us back and took some of our cannon and many prisoners. Soon after that we were reinforced by another group of our Corps and others and we made a charge, recapturing all the cannon and the prisoners which they had taken from us besides taking two thousand of them prisoner. The dead and wounded all fell into our hands. I do not think Gen Hood gained anything yesterday with his charges. They also made a charge against Gen Hooker and suffered very heavy losses. There was activity all along the line yesterday and I guess they wanted to try us out. We could see them forming but I guess they didn't dare to risk it. This morning a deserter came to us and told us that they had received orders three times to charge but the officers could not agree. When they did come to an agreement the privates didn't dare to or didn't want to charge. Cannonading was heavy yesterday - we shelled the city and the fortifications but they shelled us heavily also. We had to build our breastworks under heavy fire, shell fragments flying about our ears. We have to play woodchuck now-a-days. I will become an expert shovel handler here. Yesterday morning Rinke De Vries was wounded lightly by a shell fragment. It didn't draw blood but became very swollen but in a day or two he should be back on duty again. We have made our fortifications extra strong as the Rebs have very heavy artillery. I am expecting very heavy shelling as we lie directly in front of a Reb fort but we can also dump so many shells on them that it will be a joy to behold. Maybe they will get tired of it but they may also throw over some 'camp-kettles'. That's what the boys call those big shells. The story is that we took five thousand prisoners to Marietta this morning. Also that Gen Hardie was wounded and taken to the 16th Corps hospital. That is good news but maybe it isn't true. There is so much talk floating around. Now I must finish, hoping that we may be spared and that Atlanta may soon be in our possession. Best regards to all.

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B. Van Raalte

P.S. We get very few letters - why, I don't know. Lieut. Kramer sends his regards. Yesterday we captured seven stands of Collers (?). The Johnnies must be vanquished. Our boys are in good spirits. My headquarters is at present in the rifle pits, in case the Rebs start shelling.

perhaps
Collers
flag
yes
EB