

Camp Hamiltons Crossing,
May 8th/63

Dear Ones at Home:

I suppose that you think that it is time I was writing, if in the land of the living, but after I give you an account of my wanderings for the last ten or twelve days I think you will acquit me of any intentional delay.

We left our old camp on Tuesday the 28th of April, marched to Hamiltons Crossing and stayed all night, and the next day and night under the shelling of the enemies cannon stationed on Stafford Heights. Soon on the morning of the 30th we left Hamiltons in a dense fog, which concealed our movements, moved up the river (Rhapahanock) ten or twelve miles, driving the enemy slowly before us, camped that night in an open field, all feeling that on the morrow, we would have to engage the enemies of our country and mankind. On the morning of the 1st of May, we moved slowly up the road, shelling occasionally to find out the position of the enemy. About twelve o'clock we had driven in all their pickets and found the main body of the enemy stationed behind formidable breastworks, their front defended by _____ of felled trees, which, I suppose our Generals thought

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too strong to attack, so Gen. Jackson taking a column commenced a flank movement to their right through a dense pine forest, Gen. Stuart clearing the road as we advanced. After three or four hours we found our division a mile in the rear of the enemies line, which extended across the Orange and Fredericksburg plank road forming in line of battle, Gen. A.P. Hill on the left, our division (commanded by Gen. Colston) on the right. We advanced down the plank road, our line being three or four miles in length, presently the sharp rattle of the musket told plainly that the pickets had commenced the engagement, which was to be the greatest defeat the Federal army ever had and which was to cost us so many valuable lives. We came out of the woods, which had been concealing our movements, into an open field expecting every moment to engage the enemy, but they were so much taken by surprise that our pickets had driven their whole line, capturing one battery and about five hundred prisoners, also killing one Brigadier (Gen. Berry), we continued driving their rear until nine o'clock at night, having crossed one line of breastworks which the

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Enemy had hastily thrown up. After we got in their rear, lying down behind their breastworks, we intended waiting until morning to renew the fight but the enemy thinking to retrieve himself made a night attack which they partially succeeded in capturing one of our batteries, but soon we were in line again and recaptured our battery together with quite a number of prisoners. Twas in this fight that Gen. Jackson lost his arm but no one knew it until afterwards, as the old hero calmly sat upon his horse all the time, though his arm was almost shot off. The next morning (Sunday) every one knew that the most terrible battle of the war must begin. We marched slowly down the road, all the time under fire of several batteries of the enemy. We at first went on the left of the plank road, thinking that the main body of the enemy were posted there but soon we found out from the pressure on our right that it was the enemies strongest point so we had to cross the road covered by the enemies cannon, here many a noble Southron fell to rise no more, among them Gen. Paxton who was shot in the heart from which he died

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shortly afterwards. A piece of shell struck my knapsack, but was too spent to hurt me. We went about a quarter of a mile to the left and took position behind the front line of the enemies breastworks from which they had just before been driven. As soon as we were in line, our guns primed and bayonets fixed, Gen. Stuart, he being in command of the Corps, Gens. Jackson and Hill both wounded, called out for the Old Stonewall to follow. We went over the breastworks with a yell which was answered by a shower of leaden hail. Feeling that perhaps at that time prayers were going up at home for our protection, I became almost unconscious of danger though men were falling thick and fast all around me. We halted and commenced firing at the enemy about a hundred yards distant, we stood and fired until almost every man was killed or wounded; the force of the enemy being so much greater than ours, Major Terry, commanding our regiment, gave the orders to fall back, but I was totally unconscious of what was going on and tried to rally the men, when Major Terry came up to me and ordered me to fall back as nearly all his regiment were killed or wounded.

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This letter is already too long and I could write more if I had time but the mail leaves soon.

Good bye
Ted