

FEELINGS HOWEVER WERE STYMIED AS SUDDENLY ROUNDSHOT BUZZED BY OUR HEADS LIKE HORNETS, ALL WAS CONFUSION, WE COULD NOT FIGHT, FOR WE COULD NOT SEE, WE COULD ONLY DIE, FOR A HORRIBLE AMOUNT OF TIME, WE HEARD THE RATTLE OF MUSKETRY ALL AROUND US, SMOKE SEETHED FROM THE WOODS IN THE DISTANCE AND THE INHUMAN SHRIEK OF SHELLS SENT SHIVERS DOWN OUR BACKS. COL T WARD WAS KILLED BY A SHELL SPLINTER AND THUDDERED TO THE GROUND FROM HIS TERRIFIED HORSE, OUR ADJUTANT LIEUTENANT FLEMING WAS BADLY WOUNDED AND A MAN BEHIND ME TOPPLED WITH A SHARD OF SHRAPNEL IN HIS HEART WHICH CUT HIS MUSKET IN TWO BEFORE ENDING HIM, THIS PIECE OF METAL WAS THE MISSILE THAT CUT MY KNAPSACK STRAP, HOW EERIE TO THINK HOW CLOSE I CAME TO OBLIVION, AND I CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER WHAT MADE ME MORE SPECIAL THAN THAT OTHER POOR MAN?

AT ABOUT 5.PM GENERAL HILL CAME UP AND ASSESSING THE DIRE SITUATION ORDERED GENERAL EARLY'S DIVISION OUT. AS DARKNESS FELL OUR BATTALION HAD SUFFERED ABOUT FOUR KILLED AND THIRTY WOUNDED, MOSTLY BY ARTILLERY. FOR THE LIFE OF ME I CAN NOT FATHOM WHY WE WERE NOT DESTROYED AT WILLIAMSBURG, SINCE OUR LEFT HAD BEEN COMPLETELY TURNED, BUT THE YANKEES MUST HAVE DITHERED AND THUS THE ARMY AGAIN ESCAPED. NOW WE CONTINUE TO RETREAT, MORAL I CAN TELL YOU IS NOT HIGH AS MANY HAVE COMMENTED THAT WE SHOULD TURN AND DEFEND RICHMOND INSTEAD OF RUNNING TO HIDE BEHIND IT, IT IS AS EVER RAINING, AND WE TRY EVER DESPERATELY TO KEEP OUR POWDER DRY, THE FUTURE SEEMS SO UNCERTAIN, AND THINGS ARE GROWING DIM, THE RUMOURS ARE BACK AND THEY ARE FULL OF FUNK, ONE THING IS CERTAIN IF GENERAL JOHNSON DOES NOT STOP THEM, OUR WHOLE CAUSE MIGHT COLLAPSE, THOUGH AS ONE OF THE IMMIGRANTS IN OUR COMPANY SAYS " LOSING A CAPITOL REALLY MAKES NO MATTER TO YOU AMERICANS" AND THINKING BACK TO MY OLD HISTORY LESSONS I THINK HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH.

IN ANY EVENT A BLOW IS STILL A BLOW AND A RETREATING ARMY MAY LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY BUT RETREATS DONT WIN WARS AND WHICH DAY WILL WE FIGHT, NO ONE KNOWS AND NOW HERE ALONE WITH ONLY THE SOUNDS OF A MARCHING ARMY CONSUMING ME IN THE NIGHT WITH THE RAIN SPITTING DOWN THROUGH THE PINES I CANNOT HELP BUT THINK, COULD THIS BE OUR DARKEST HOUR?

I REMAIN WELL AND SO DOES BILLY.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE SON
J D PROVAN

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