

Letter from a Son of Frederick Douglass.
ACCOUNT OF THE FIGHTING NEAR PETERSBURG
BY THE COLORED BOYS.

CAMP HAMILTON, CITY POINT, Va. }
18th Army Corps, 3d Division, Gen. Hincks, }
June 16, 1864. }

DEAR FATHER: Yesterday was a great day for me. About 10 o'clock on Tuesday evening I was awakened by the Major of my battalion (as I was then in command of the company, both Lieutenants being away, and Capt. Wulff has been relieved of the command of this company), and ordered to have two days' rations prepared immediately for my company. At 2 o'clock the next morning everything was ready for a march, which was soon ordered, and about 400 of our Regiment, the 5th Massachusetts, were soon into line, that being all we had left in camp, the rest of our regiment being on picket duty. Our brave Colonel took command of the battalion and we started out of camp.

We had gone but a short distance before we came upon the ambulance train; then I knew that some of us were not coming back again. Everything looked like a fight. We had a battery of colored artillery also. We marched on until we struck the Petersburg Road; then

proceeded on up the road until daylight, when we halted, being about five miles from Petersburg. Soon Gen. Butler's army began to come across the Appomattox and proceed forward toward Petersburg. Then I began to smell a very large-sized mice, and that was, that we were to make an attack on Petersburg. About 20,000 of the white troops crossed and moved off to the left of the colored troops. Gen. Butler and staff soon appeared and ordered the colored troops forward, of which there were the 23d Pennsylvania, 1st District of Columbia, 4th Maryland, 6th United States, 5th Ohio, and the 5th Massachusetts Cavalry (dismounted), and Battery B of the 1st Virginia Artillery.

We moved forward down the hill into a wheat-field; formed two lines of battle. Sending out skirmishers, we soon met the enemy's advanced picket, and drove them back through two pieces of woods. Our regiment was in the second line of battle. As we came through the second piece of woods, the enemy opened on us with solid shot and shell. We kept on, however, until we reached the next piece of woods. Then we were only about a quarter of a mile from the enemy, they being drawn up in line of battle behind their breastworks. All this time were under a withering fire from the Rebel batteries. The underbrush was so thick in the woods that we could not form a line of battle; but we got into line as soon as we could, and waited to see what the first line of battle would accomplish. We had not long to wait before the first line of battle fell back upon us under a galling fire, which killed several of our men in the second line.

Immediately after the first line fell back, we were ordered by our Colonel to fix bayonets and charge, which we did in good style, driving the enemy from behind their first line of breastworks, and capturing one piece of artillery from the Johnnies. There we had only twenty men from my company in the fight, and we were right in front of the line, a little to the left of the center. Col. Russell was just in front of me, about a couple of yards; he cried out, "Come on, brave boys of the 5th!" and soon he was struck in the shoulder by a rifle ball, merely taking off the shoulder straps. In an instant our men began to fall around us pretty fast, but we drove the enemy off the field, into the woods, on toward Petersburg. After we had started the Rebels, the white troops were ordered forward to keep them going. This was within about three miles of the city.

Col. Russell then ordered Lieut. Mallery, myself, and 50 men, to take the piece of artillery that we had captured, and proceed on to camp, where I now am at present, though our regiment is at the front yet. I kept close to the Colonel during the whole of the engagement, and when he was wounded, I went to gather him some currants. Although wounded, he could not be persuaded to leave the field until the Surgeon insisted upon it. Major Adams was struck in the side by a piece of shell, and it is said that it may prove fatal. Capt. Clark, the officer I had to report my company to, was hit on the knee-pan, and suffered considerable pain.

While I am writing, we have got orders to return to the front, to escort the bodies of officers that fell yesterday.

Before you receive this, you will no doubt hear of the fall of Petersburg, for our forces are at the last line of intrenchments, a quarter of a mile from the city. The colored troops last night captured Fort Clifton, and several hundred prisoners.

Gen. Grant is here; he passed our camp this morning with his staff and body-guard, on his way to the front. I saw him from my tent.

I will give you further particulars of the battle in my next letter. I am yet unhurt, but am much worn out; my shoulders are raw, from the straps of my cartridge-box, as I had forty rounds in my box, two days' rations, canteen, blankets, and musket. I can see red flags flying from every old church, barn, or house on the Point, and our wounded are coming in rapidly. Col. Russell and Major Adams are in the hospital. Sergeants Cook, Wormley, and myself are all right. I will write again soon; I am writing now in a hurry, just to let you know that I am unhurt as yet, although several of our company fell around me.

Your affectionate son,
C. R. DOUGLASS.

First Sergt., Co. 1, 5th Mass. Dismounted Cav.