

## WAR CORRESPONDENCE.

LETTER FROM THE GALLANT FIFTH NEW HAMPSHIRE VOLS.

CAMP NEAR PETERSBURG, Sunday,  
July 27th, 1864.

*To the Editors of the Irish-American:*

Gentlemen— Since the date of my last letter we (the 2d Corps) have had another change of base by which, after a few hours march, on a very hot afternoon, in the month of July, we found ourselves some three miles nearer Petersburg. Pray God we may never see the place which we have just left again; a place of which I could never learn any more than that it was situate about three miles and a half to the south west of the doomed city. Oh, what a poverty of water was there; and what a continual drought haunted us. Moisten sand, as if for mortar purposes; then make a round hole in the centre; pour a quantity of water into it, and you will have a fair specimen of the kind of water on which we had to subsist. Sometimes, almost providentially, we met with water which looked a little more natural, but even that was insipid and unhealthy for use. In fact, very few of our men have escaped the natural result of such poisonous stuff, and I dread very much that we shall suffer for some time to come from the withering attendant of armies in time of war. Diarrhoea is doing severe mischief amongst us, and I am sorry to say that I have not escaped its ravages myself. Here we have very good water, and this fact of itself would make the change a delightful one. Here, too, we hear the heavy boom of the solemnly pealing long gun, as it belches forth its messenger of death, even as *Ætna* hurls on high, from out her womb, the terrific and desolating lava; and here the rolling volleys of musketry which at intervals "fill up the pause when harsher sounds are mute," fall nearer and more familiarly upon our ears. This position, too, bears many sad recollections for us. It was up yonder hill, which rises away to the right, that we charged upon the flying foe on the 16th of June; it was on the summit of that hill that we defied his worst and dared him to a contest which he dared not risk; it was there we lost many a brave comrade; it was there our gallant colonel got wounded; it was there we dug up pits with our hands and bayonets, and it was there we built a fort which still stands as a memento of valor and daring which have never been surpassed on any field. But let us leave the past to history, and talk about the present. My corps is now in reserve, and, consequently, we have a little more time to spare; but who can tell what a day may bring forth. In fact, gentlemen, we have become quite *en militaire*, and if we only had some blacking and brushes, and did not have so much of this buzzing and banging, we would fancy ourselves at a considerable distance from the field of slaughter.

Well, war is a strange thing, and will sometimes force us even to laugh at its horrors. Yesterday morning we went to work on the left attack, and I do not think I can ever forget the sight which I beheld there;—so full of awful grandeur;—so strikingly significant of what man is capable. Sauntering carelessly around, I got into our front line of defence, where the 5th Corps is doing picket duty, and seeing a number of persons standing on top of the breastworks, I also, through curiosity, ascended, and there, to my great astonishment, I beheld our pickets, about twenty yards in advance, walking around in broad daylight on the summit of the hill, while below them in the hollow, about thirty yards distant, the pickets of the enemy moved lazily along. On the top of his advance fort, which stands on the adjacent hill, about three hundred and fifty yards from ours, could also be seen large numbers of the enemy standing or sitting, and looking at us as leisurely and calmly as if a word in anger had never passed to break the harmony which should exist among friends. But what added to the picturesqueness of the scene, was the ceaseless pealing of musketry and hoarse roaring of cannon which broke on the ear at every moment from the right, and made a man almost doubt that we were not at war with two nations. I left the spot impressed with the wickedness of our nature, and retraced my steps to the trench where my regiment was at work. I learned from some of the men who do this kind of friendly picket, that they have not exchanged shots with the rebel pickets since the 9th of last month, and that this was a mutual understanding between them. The rebels would enter into no such contract with the 9th or 18th Corps on account of colored troops being among them, and this accounts for the constant fire which is kept up on the right of our lines.

The spirits of the men are very cheering, and they are anxiously awaiting the crisis. I will not, like some of your loyal correspondents for New York papers, say, that "they are eager for the fray," nor will I indulge in the very high sounding superlatives which are paraded in the *Herald*, for I would be ashamed to let the people of America know I was such a fool, as to think them foolish enough to believe all the trash with which that paper is lumbered. Sense and moderation are far more desirable evidences of patriotism than those dazzling flashes, which are only meant to "raise the wind." However, we laugh at them, and hope the well meaning people at home do the same.

I am sorry to have to say that my Regiment is a very sad type of many of the regiments in our Brigade, as far as numbers are concerned, as it has dwindled down to a mere unit in the scale of regiments. Both in officers and men we have lost heavily, and as I know that it would be gratifying to many of our sick and wounded who are scattered around in hospitals through the different States to know the names of the officers who still survive, I here give them for their satisfaction:—Major James E. Larkin, Capt. John S. Ricker, Capt. Augustus D. Sanborn, 1st Lieut. Charles Hale, Acting Adjutant; 2d Lieut. George S. Gove, 2d Lieut. Wendell R. Cook, 2d Lieut. A. H. Perkins, 2d Lieut. George P. Hersum, 2d Lieut. Daniel Libby, Acting 2d Lieut. Robt. H. Chace, Quartermaster J. W. Webber.

We had a good and blustery fall of rain on Sunday night, which, though it made us cool and wet for the time, was, nevertheless, welcome. We have had so much of drought lately, that rain is welcome now at any time. Events thicken around, but it would not do to speak too loudly just now. This is the calm which precedes a storm, and I do not think the storm can be far off. Gold goes up, but the rebellion must go down; and I do not think the day is far distant now. When the suffering men of our Regiment read the above list, I trust that they will not fail to think of their and the public's very humble servant,

JAMES McDONNELL,

Co. B, 5th N. H. Vols., 1st Division, 1st Brigade, 2d Corps.