

Sheet 1

Extracts from Walters letters.

1862

June 6 - We have not had any fighting since
the ~~battle of~~ taking of Hanover Courthouse
but the enemy are determined to make a despe-
rate stand on the other side of the Chickahominy
Creek, and we will have to fight hard to drive
them from their strong hold. We can do it in
a short time however, but a great deal of
blood will of course be spilt, and we
expect it and are ready to do our best,
and if need be, lay our lives upon the
Altar of our Country, subdue the traitors
who have put such a dark stain upon
its fair name. At Richmond they will
gain or lose all they have been fighting
for, and I am confident they will lose,
although they will fight with desperation
as it is their last & only chance. My arm
is strong & I am ready to go in again for
better or worse, as it may be. Our little
Regiment only numbers about three hundred
fighting men, and we are expected to do as
much as a full Regiment of a thousand men.
We can do it by hard fighting I suppose, but
it seems hard to us

Jan 7. I find my name in the papers as
one of the wounded of our Regiment. I was
~~very~~ slightly wounded in the left arm near
the shoulder, but not so as to have to leave the
battlefield - We mowed the Rebels down in
rows, and took a great many prisoners.
Rebel Captains suffered greatly - I fired forty
five rounds from my rifle - We had just
got our rifles when we had orders to march
in fighting order - Col^d Roberts would call out
to us while we were fighting, "Give it to them
Boys. They don't know the second Maine
has rifles - That's what's the matter" Our
Orderly Sergeant, a noble fellow, was shot dead
on the field and four of us (our Company) wound-
ed - I shall be able to go into the fight on
the other side of the Chickahominy, it will
take place in a few days and will be a
grand battle, & probably the last one in
Virginia - I have received letters from all my
sisters since they heard of my being wounded,
I hope they have received my letters written
just after the fight, for they seem to feel
quite anxious about me - I also received
an ^{urgent} invitation from Uncle Hodge to come
there. Luckily my wound was not serious enough
to put me in need of a furlough, so I thanked
him heartily for the invitation which I

may avail myself of on some future occasion,
but I shall have to get a worse wound
than this before I ask for a furlough - ~~that~~
It is almost more death to enter a hospital
here, I shall not do it if I can possibly
avoid it. Don't fret, nor let others do so
on my account, for I shall write after every
battle, and if I can get along nicely even if
wounded, for I have many kind friends
^{here} who will look out for me

June 8. ^{AW^{ms}} I had a letter from Esther yesterday, she
wants me to come to Boston. I shall have to get
a worse wound than this before I leave the
Regiment in this time of peril. When we
first got into the field (Hanover) where the
battle was fought we could see no enemy
but our little Regt. formed a line of battle,
and in a few minutes two Regts of Rebels
came out of the woods and formed a
line of battle only two hundred yards
from us. We gave them a volley and they
returned the compliment, killing & wounding
only two or three of our men. We then gave
them a charge or two of Canister & they
skedaddled. We were then ordered into
the road & just as we got there we received
a raking fire from a strong flanking

party who were in the woods a few rods
from us. We stood and gave fight, & the
bullets whistled around us thick as hail.
It was at that time I rec. My wound,
after I had fired ten rounds, I kept
on ~~firing~~ ^{firing}, however, at every grey coat
I could see in the woods, & the next mor-
ning I went to see the dead rebels lying in
the woods where we had poured in our
fire. In some places they were actually
piled up, where ~~they~~ they had taken
refuge behind trees & had been killed by
our Cross fire. I saw a Rebel captain lying
there, very young & the most beautiful man
I ever saw, But hand down Men must die
as surely as plain ones & are no more to
be pitied. The Rebels were almost every
one shot through the head, our men were
shot through the legs mostly. They had
muskets, while we had rifles, so we had
a great advantage over them in the
long range of our guns. Well, it takes
nerve to make a man stand up as
a target for a thousand Rebels to
fire at, & Warren Arcot had not the nerve
poor boy

Sheet 2

I had been trying to get him dis'choig'd
when the battle ~~was~~ of Hanover was
fought & he wrote me June 10 -

Before this you must have received my
letter written just after the battle of
Hanover, & know that my wound was
of no account. Don't fret for me, dear
Father, I guess every thing will come out
right - I am tough & hearty, now, and
not at all homesick, and if we get
to Richmond in safety, I do not think
we shall see much fighting afterwards.

Of course I would rather be at home
than here, but as we are situated, just on
the eve of battle, it looks like cowardice, for
a man to leave his regiment, and I had
far rather meet my death on the battlefield
than be stigmatized as a coward, but I
don't think my fate is to die on the battle
field, for it seems to me that if it were so,
I should have met it at Hanover, but
if my country needs the sacrifice I am
ready and willing to make it. - The war
must end some time, and then we can see
all our dear friends, and enjoy them the
more for the separation, & the dangers we
may have passed through - There have been
twelve hundred and eighty ⁴ ~~four~~ men (1284)

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Enlisted for this Regt. And now we can hardly
muster three hundred & thirty to fight.

Now dear father dont worry about
me, nor go to any more trouble to get
me home, for it is an impossibility —
~~Still~~

His letter of the 4th July giving an account of the
retreat is long & full of patriotic sentiments, written in
pencil on an old dirty leaf of an account book.

July 13 - to Pitt. - I wrote home as soon as I could after we
got here (Harrison's Landing) and the Mail Depot
was established, to put a stop to any anxiety on
my account, as we had done pretty well
fighting, & I knew you would be anxious —
~~My account~~ until you heard from me.
I did not think dear father, that you for a
moment wished me to commit such an act
as to leave my Regiment as it was then, and
is now situated. I am sorry if I wrote so, for
I did not intend to, Indeed your next letter
would have put me at ease on that score if
I had thought so. We have had some hard
fighting & I want to see more before I go
home, for I ^{know} we can "give them fits" the next
time we get at them - I want a glance at
Richmond before I go home, and even then I
should want to ~~wait~~ and go home with the frag-
ments of our Noble Regiment.

I did not think you were such a good prophet when you wrote me some time ago that in your estimation McClellans Army was in the most perilous situation of any - The operations of the past three weeks show that you were perfectly correct. It is a wonder that he saved so many of his troops as he did in getting them here - We lost every thing, but the few clothes we had on, at Gains Hill - It is impossible to describe the scene when we started on our retreat, it was awful, and I hope I shall never see another retreat commenced by the Union Army.