

Camp Chickahomina [Chickahominy] Virginia, May 11th, 1862

Dear Mother,

You have no doubt heard that we have evacuated Yorktown, and you will see by this that it is so. We got orders on Friday the 2nd to be ready to march that afternoon. We afterwards received orders to remain in our position until 7 o'clock P.M. of the following day, at which time we took up our line of march to the rear. We marched through Williamsburg on Sunday morning and camped three miles this side, where we remained until the next morning. The enemy attacked our rear guard very early on Monday, and our Brigade was sent back to engage them. We double-quicked five miles through mud knee deep and the consequence was we were not in a condition to to [*sic*] go into an engagement. But our gallant and brave colonel [George Tallifierro Ward] ordered a charge and we followed him, but not long was he allowed to lead us (and we would have followed him through thick and thin) for at an evil hour (and when we needed him most) a ball struck him under the left shoulder and came out on the right breast—killing him instantly, he never spoke. The whole regiment was confused and every one of us mourn his loss. I only regret that we could not bury him. Capt. Brevard [Theodore Washington Brevard, Jr.], Eddie Houston [Sgt. Major Edward Houston], Cousin Mack and myself, with four others, took him from the field and carried him in a blanket to Williamsburg, a distance of two miles, and were until two o'clock trying to get his body in some friend's house. But I say, with the utmost contempt of the people of the town, that we could not find one house that would take his remains in. We finally took him into one and laid him out, and put a card on his breast telling who he was and asking them to bury him. Our regiment lost fifty-three or four in killed, wounded and missing. Our Company, one corporal killed and two privates wounded. Our loss in killed, wounded and missing can not be less than fifteen hundred. The loss of the enemy must be much greater—we took four hundred prisoners, and I hear that Gen. Sickles is among them. Gen. Johnston intends making a stand on this (Chickahomina) [Chickahominy] Creek, and we are expecting a fight daily. The regiment was reorganized this morning and the following officers were elected: Capt. Perry [Edward Aylesworth Perry], Col; Maj. Pyles [Lewis G.Pyles], Lt. Col.; Capt. Call [George W. Call] Major; Capt. Brevard [Theodore Washington Brevard, Jr.] ran for Lt. Colonel but was defeated and leaves us tomorrow. Our Company officers are of the lowest kind, so much so that Lieut. Saunders [George W. Sanders] (who was elected 1st Lieut.) will not remain with them. A man by the name of Musgrove [M.J.C. Musgrove] is Captain. I think that father has seen him for he was at Wynn's Mill some time. One of the last things our poor Colonel and Capt. Brevard did for us was to get us transferred to any company we wanted to be in, so we are out of this disgraced Co. Capt. Brevard has been very kind to us, and now since he has left us I want to leave the regiment. Our boys are all well and in good spirit. I must now close. I have not time to [illegible.] We had a pretty hard time on the road and lived on parched corn and fat pork for two days. I hated to leave Yorktown but it was a necessity for we could not hold it after their gunboats had gotten in our rear, and they were certain to do that. Give my love to all friends and relations and accept the same from

Your affectionate son,
D.E. Maxwell

Direct your letters to Richmond in care of Col. Perry, Captain Mosely's Company 2nd
Fla. Vols.

Transcribed by Christopher A. Baker, University of Florida, 2008.