

Camp near Richmond, Virginia, May 20th [18]62

Dear Mother,

You will see by this that we are encamped near Richmond, and did not make a stand at Chickahomina [Chickahominy] Creek as General Johnston had first intended for he saw that the enemies, gunboats could ascend far enough up the James River to throw troops in our rear. I believe that Genl. Johnston will make a stand here and defend the city at all hazard and we are confident that we can whip McClellan's army, now that we are out of reach of their water forces. I doubt whether they will attack us here until July or August. We went into the fight at Williamsburg very much exhausted. So much so, that a great many had to fall out of ranks when we made the first charge. We were placed in rather a bad fix as we were in the edge of the woods, within sixty yards of the enemy and the Ninth Ala. Regiment in front of us, so we could not fire without shooting our friends, and at the same time getting the full force of the enemies' fire, (which, by the way beat anything I ever imagined). Co. Ward [George Tallifierro Ward] was in the act of giving the command to advance on a line with the 9th Ala. when he was shot. This threw our Regt. in confusion, and an Aid saying that we were flanked caused both regiments to fall back some two-hundred yards. We soon rallied and took our former position, but the 9th Ala. never did. Cousin Mack, Eddie, Frank B., Eb, John Cameron [John P. Cameron], Henry Damon [Henry G. Damon], James Wilson and myself were the only boys from Tallahassee that were in the fight. Louis Gamble was in neither this nor the peach orchard fight. The enemy acknowledge [acknowledged] a loss of 1,000 killed, 2,500 wounded and 600 taken prisoners and yet they claim a great victory. It was certainly a glorious victory for us. Our object in fighting them was to check their advance guard which we did, for they did not advance beyond that point. They say that they had 30,000 men engaged and that we had fifty thousand. Now this is false, for Longstreet's Division (15,000 men) and one Brigade (ours) from Hill's Division were the only troops engaged. The enemy took their position just before daylight and planted their cannon in a field about three hundred yards from the woods, they also got possession of a—Redoubt on the extreme left. The 5th N. C. and the 18th Va. Regts charged this redoubt three times across a piece of ploughed ground, but could not take it; they lost a great many. The Ala., Georgia, and Va. troops made several charges that were irresistible, and took several of their best batteries. It was certainly a complete victory for us, for they had possession of the field in the morning and at night after eight hours hard fighting we had undisputed possession of the entire field. Troops that were at the battle of Manassas say this was a harder fought battle than that was. We have heard by surgeons that remained with our wounded at Williamsburg, that Colonel Ward's remains were buried in the cemetery. We have lost everything except a change of clothes and a blanket apiece. We are getting along finely in our new Company. I wish that I could get a transfer to the Fifth Regt. for I am sick and tired of this one. Tell Brother that he must not wait for me to answer his letters for have not time to [write] more than one letter. Capt. Brevard and Col. Rogers [Samuel St. George Rogers] are in Richmond trying to get away. Col. R. is a gallant and brave officer and it was a most ungrateful thing in our not electing him Colonel of this Regt. Cousin Mack, Eb and myself were the only ones in the Sixth Company that voted for him. My friends have left us and I want to get away from Virginia as soon as possible. I am tired of Va. mud and want to go to Corinth. Beauregard and Price are my favorite

Gen's and would like to fight under them. I have written all the news and will now close. Excuse the writing for I have very poor accommodations. Give my love to all friends and relations. The boys are well and unite with me in love to you all.

Your affectionate son,
D.E. Maxwell

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