

[SEE ROW SPACES.]
The Battle of Bull Run.

Personal Narrative of a San Franciscan—Col. John S. Ellis and his Four Brothers in Battle.

Col. John S. Ellis of the 1st Regiment of California State Militia, and Sheriff elect of San Francisco—who is now on a visit to the East—served as a volunteer (attached, for the nonce, to the 71st New York Regiment) during the battle of Bull Run. Four of his brothers were also members of the same regiment. Col. Ellis has written a private letter to a friend in this city, giving a graphic account of the battle, which we are permitted to publish. The narrative will be read with deep interest by the personal friends of the gallant Colonel, and the public at large. He writes as follows:

New York, August 2, 1861.

I have had such an exciting time of it since I arrived [24th June] that this is the first fair opportunity I have had to write a letter. * * *

I immediately proceeded to Washington in uniform, and took with me the flag which the National Guard commissioned me to present to the Massachusetts 1st. I found them encamped on Georgetown Heights. I fixed the 6th July, for the presentation to come off. The regiment formed a hollow square to receive my party and myself. We had four carriage loads. Among others, were Senators McDougal, Wilson of Massachusetts, Colonel Hooker, Judge Satterlee, and George Smiley. They had a fine band playing patriotic airs. McDougal made a speech; also Senator Wilson, and the Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment made a beautiful one. The regiment gave me nine cheers. In the evening we had a grand "blow-out" in Washington.

I was all through the battle of Bull Run as a volunteer, attached to the 71st Regiment, armed with a rifle and sabre-bayonet. All my brothers were there also—five of us. We started at 2 o'clock on Sunday morning; marched nine hours without resting three minutes at a time, and having in that

period traversed about 15 miles, went right into action without breakfast; fought until 6 o'clock, Sunday night; then retreated, marched all night and did not reach our camp till 9 o'clock Monday morning—all without anything for food except a hard, dry cracker, which I could not eat. We marched over 50 miles.

My brother Julius was shot in the foot while at the head of his company, waving his sword and cheering on his men. When he fell, I was with Gus on the howitzers. I heard the cry "Captain Ellis is killed!" and immediately rushed to the spot. The cannon balls were ploughing up the earth all around; shells were bursting and crashing through the trees directly in our rear, and the Minié balls were battering and humming in all directions. I immediately carried him off the field, and for nearly a quarter of a mile in direct range of the enemy's guns; but, through God's providence, our party were not hit. I finally found a doctor and ambulance, and put him in, and told my brother Sam not to leave him a moment. Fortunately I did so, as Sam did not allow him to remain at the hospital, but got him on the road. The hospital later in the day was shelled by the enemy and the wounded killed or taken prisoners.

I then went back to the fight and rejoined Gus, who was doing fearful execution with his 12-pounder howitzers. The 71st drove back the enemy three times, and completely cut up an Alabama regiment; and Sherman's battery on our right silenced one of the enemy's batteries until they got out of ammunition. We did our share; we drove back the enemy whenever he showed his face, and for a long time thought we had gained the victory. But, alas! how much were we mistaken! Other regiments were ordered to charge into the woods and were met by masked batteries which poured into their bosoms the most terrific fire. The enemy had planted his guns in every conceivable position on the very points our troops had to advance by. No one knew where these batteries were located, how many guns were mounted, nor in what force were the enemy. No men unsupported as we were could advance without being annihilated. The regiments of our brigade were withdrawn from that unenviable situation, and formed in a large field; when, over the distant hills, came the enemy in force—a line of battle a mile long—outflanking us in all directions, with other parallel lines of lesser length. Every blade of grass gleamed with a bayonet. This was too much for our unsupported troops, and they gave way. The 71st, however, was the last to leave the field, and retreated in line of battle, (with the enemy not 500 yards off,) until we reached the woods, when we flanked into the narrow road, and kept good order until the flying artillery came tearing through our ranks in full retreat. Their baggage wagons and ambulances so choked up the road that we could not keep the ranks for several miles. At Bull Run Crossing the enemy had allowed us to pass, and we never dreamed they had a masked battery there; but in the evening they shelled us, and a good many men were killed close to us (Gus and me). A shell exploded near us, and a spent fragment hit Gus under his arm and blackened it for nearly the whole length.

I cannot here relate all the scenes I saw, the horrible wounds inflicted, and all the incidents of this most shameful and unnecessary battle—for which the troops feel they were sacrificed by the stupidity of their generals. Suffice it to say our men fought bravely; and I can only account for the panic with which they were seized by the facts that the teamsters took fright and drove their wagons pell mell through them, and that many of the regiments had totally incompetent field and company officers—many of whom acted cowardly—and the most of whom didn't know what to do. We only had about 12,000 men engaged, and the enemy had all the way from 60,000 to 90,000—out of sight, behind masked batteries, and in the woods. As it is, we routed them whenever they came out, until their reinforcements came down upon us, as I have related.

My brother Ash, (Captain of Company K, 79th N. Y. S. T.,) just off a sick bed, was physically prostrated by the exertions of the day, and was carried into battle between two of his men, one of whom was shot dead. His Colonel was shot through the heart, and a majority of the Captains killed and wounded. He was hit by a spent ball which paralyzed his left leg. I subsequently met him on the road limping between two men, and got a seat for him in one of the Rhode Island wagons. I was not even scratched—a most wonderful escape, as men were knocked over in every direction. The hum of the shells and whiz of the Miniés filled my ears for the next 24 hours.

My father came down to the Navy Yard and he and I brought Julius home. The day before yesterday the Regiment returned here—so all our boys are now at home except Ash, who is in for three years. Julius has received a very severe wound near the tendon Achilles. I think a fragment of a shell must have struck him with its pointed end and passed on, as the surgeons cannot discover any foreign body lodged.

Remember me to all my good friends; you know very well I cannot write to them all, so when you meet them, say that I desired you to say that I am lively and hope to be among them before long.

Through the effects of this battle we have lost much of our prestige, but I think it is a lesson we may profit by. It has wonderfully raised the spirits of the Rebels, and men say they are preparing for an attack on Washington. If they should, and are repulsed, they would find it difficult to recover. We can lose battles and it only makes us mad—they cannot afford reverses.

By the way, I was also in Washington on the 4th of July and saw the parade of 23 New York regiments—a fine sight truly.

I leave for San Francisco on the 11th instant—
solus.

Your old friend,

JOHN S. ELLIS.