

Letter From Freeman, Warren H. written Friday, October 3rd, 1862

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Soldier: Freeman, Warren H.

Allegiance: Union

Unit/Service Branch: 13th Infantry

Date Written: Friday, October 3rd, 1862

Location: Near Sharpsburg, MD.

Correspondence Type: Letter

Subjects: Combat Description, Commanders, Comrades, Eastern Theater, Enemy, Family, Hospital, Sickness, Weapons

DEAR FATHER, — I have not heard from home since I last wrote, and have received no paper — seen only the " Reporter " sent to Dorman, which is my latest news from Bridgton. I have not been well for the last two weeks ; have been troubled with headache, pain in my limbs, and am very weak ; am not confined to the camp hospital, though I have not been in the ranks lately.

We have changed our camp twice since I last wrote, so as to be nearer water ; we now have to go to the river for water, which is a quarter of a mile distant. I hope we shall not have to cross the Potomac again. The boys are about discouraged, I can assure you. I wish I may never set foot on " sacred soil " again ; we are now within eight miles of where we were last March.

Our division has gone out to be reviewed by President Lincoln. They went out yesterday, but the President did not make his appearance, so they have had to try it again this morning.

We have about 250 men in the regiment ; there are thirty-five in Company A. As to officers, we have but two captains and four lieutenants in the regiment ; one company is commanded by a corporal ; however, there is quite a number of officers and men that will return to the ranks when their health is recruited.

Monday, October 13. — Yesterday morning at one o'clock there was an alarm, and our division was routed out and marched off about a mile and a half, when we halted and lay in the road the rest of the night and rill near the close of the day, when we marched back to camp again. I suppose they expected a rebel raid, or something of that kind. My health is better and I have gone into the ranks again.

I have' recently received two letters from home, and I was right glad to get them. You ask if I could not send home some trophies of the Antietam battle-field. I could have picked up any number of guns, swords, knapsacks, cartridge-boxes, etc., but had no way to carry them. I found several rebel letters and brought them, away, but have lost them. All I have got is some flag-root which I took from a rebel knapsack. I have not been on the battle-field since we left it several weeks since. I was sick and not able to go with the boys, who have been there frequently. One of the boys, who was on the field a few days after the battle, told me that in the part he visited he saw eight or ten heaps of dead rebels that our men had gathered together to bury ; and he counted the bodies in one heap, and there were ISO.. Our men were engaged between four and five days in burying the dead of both armies and carrying

off the wounded. "When the rebels retreated from the Antietam battle-field they took all their wounded that they could carry, or that could hobble along on foot, and then left more than 4,000 for our army to take care of. You ask if any one was shot near me ? Yes, my file-leader, the man who stood directly in front, was shot in the head and fell heavily upon me. I supposed at first that he was killed, but he is living now. Samuel S. Gould stood within five feet of me when he was mortally wounded ; he had been in the company but four or five days. He was fresh from Harvard College, and I got quite well acquainted with him ; he was a wide-awake, noble fellow, about as tall as I am. He has relatives in West Cambridge. The color guard and colors were between our company and Company F, and as I am very near the right of the company I was quite near the colors. There were seven out of the eight color guard and one of the color bearers killed or wounded, they dropped pretty fast at one time. One of the color bearers was shot in three places ; he was a Belmont boy, named David Chenery. We had forty-one men in our company, twenty-one of whom were killed or wounded. My rifle was so hot that I could hardly touch the barrel with my hand, but it worked well ; that was the reason I was able to fire so many rounds. Some of the hoys only fired thirty times ; their rifles got foul, and it took a long time to load. After I had fired forty rounds I went to Gould and got some of his cartridges ; he was living, but not able to speak ; he died before the battle was over. During most of the day we were between 300 and 400 yards of the rebel lines — a good easy range for our rifles. I came out of the battle very well. Of course I had many narrow escapes from death during the day : a ball grazed me just below the temple, taking off the skin, drawing blood, and stunning me for some moments ; and I was struck on the shoulder by some hard substance, which whirled me round and lamed me for some days, but I never thought these casualties worth mentioning in my previous letter, and should not speak of them now, only as you wrote of Eastman's having a ball lodge in his blanket.

I felt quite cool and collected, and had no personal fear during the battle. The scenes of blood and strife that I have been called to pass through during the months that are passed, and my "baptism in blood," have nearly destroyed all the finer feelings of my nature.

We have a new brigadier named Taylor, in place of HartsuffT, who was badly wounded, as I have mentioned before. We are to have a brigade drill this afternoon, and as it is about time to be getting ready I must draw to a close.

October 25. — We have just received our new uniforms, blankets, etc. ; we needed them long since. I have not had a chance to write before for some days ; our new general keeps us drilling so much of the time that we have hardly an opportunity to cook our food. There is to be a division review this afternoon, but as I am on guard I get clear of it. I am pretty well, but this river water does not agree with the boys. We are to move into Virginia immediately, and then may fare better in this respect. I must bid you all farewell. WARREN.