

Corpus of American Civil War Letters

**Source: (# 417) Alfred W. Bell Papers,
Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.**

Alfred W. Bell (b. ca. 1830) was a Macon County, North Carolina dentist and served as a captain in command of Co. D, 39th North Carolina Infantry.

Transcribed by Michael Ellis, January 2010

Shelbivill Ten Jan 11th 1862 [1863]

My Dear Wife

I again seat my self
this nice Sunday morning to write you a
gaine. Well a history of our ups & downs
propoly Would interest you at this time
more than any thing elce at present & to
know that I am Safe & The most of my
boys. I wrote you from Loudon that we was ordered
to Murfreesboro. We landed thare the night of
the 28th Dec. Was ordered next morning to the Battlefie
ld & Would be held as reserve. on starting Capt
Crawford & co was detailed to Remaine & load some [Capt. James G. Crawford of Co. I]
Wagons of Amunition. the rest of us was marched
at doble & quick time to the field 2 miles off
We was marched to the right of the center devis
ion. unatached to any brigade. on our approached
to a fence the yanks had Shelled us on our
way & had wounded Several W G Thomas of my [Washington G. Thomas of Co. B]
Co was one. at the fence they give us a voley of
minie balls Wounded several Will Roane [Wilburn F. Roane of Co. B]
Thompson of my Co. here Col Coleman was wounded [there were two Thompsons in Co. B]
We pitched inn Our little Regt & the 16 <Ten?> with
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not many more men than we had the
yankees played on us with 2 Batterys & had
2 Ky leagons and 2 Indiana Regt clost to us & about
6 or 8 thousand <in?> line of battle some 8 hundred
yds form us. We comenced our fight at ½ after
10 oclock & fought untill 4 PM We was
reinforced about 2 oclock they gave way
about ½ after 3. the 16 <Ten?> then fell back & of
coers ours then fell back to the ditches about
4 hundred yds. Col davidson was wounded about [Lt. Col. H. H. Davidson]

1 o'clock. & of coers I had to take the command
 Col Coleman was wounded in the right leg [Col. David Coleman]
 about the top of the boot on the out side
 missing the bone. passed direct[ly] through his
 leg. quite a sever wound [by a?] minnie ball.
 Col Davidson wounded in right Elbo &
 rangin down about ½ way to the bone
 Coleman has gone to Knoxville & proboly
 will go home. Davidson took fevor & could
 not be moved. was lefted at Murphreesboro
 & I reckon the yanks got him prisnor
 I had 16 wounded 4 taken prisnors. Wood owens [prob. George W. Owens of Co. E]
 Lesh McConnel K Gudger & Thos West theas are [Elisha McConnell and Kempsey Gudger of
 missing & I am satisfied they was taken prisnors Co. B, poss. William T. West of Co. B]
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 for when we fell back they did not come out
 & I sent back for them when the yanks fell back
 & could not find them. some of the boys was there
 hid & say they saw owens & McConnel taken
 I only had 5 Severely wounded or neaded medical
 aid. Thomas W G left sholder piece of a shell flesh wound
 Roane Will left thigh minie ball flesh wound. Gregory J T right Elbow [Jesse T. Gregory]
 bone injured minie ball Thompson in head flesh wound shell
 John Guy left leg brooke
 Lt Anderson right sholder flesh wound the others [William T. Anderson of Co. B]
 are Slight wounds. Capt Crawford Joined us after we
 fell back to our ditches he came to the field soon
 after we did but could not find us he was
 under a heavy Shelling all day but one of his
 boys was wounded Ervin Moore poor fellow a
 piece of shell struck his arm & brook it. it was
 taken off next day & he died the same evning
 We had 2 men killed dead on the field Lt
 John Ray of Co F Cherokee Co. & Sergt Whitker [John W. Rhea of Cherokee County, NC]
 of Co (D) Buncombe Co. We had 50 killed wounded [Sgt. John Whitaker]
 & missing my Co had more wounded than any
 other it being the largest. I had 50 men & my self
 & Lt. Anderson all of my boys with but little
 exception acted bravely. I must confess that I
 am not as brave as I thought I was. I never wanted
 out of a place as bad in my life the balles hailed
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 the shells sung & the grape rattled. I want
 in nomore Battles. the last day of 1862
 will long be remembered by many of us. we
 lay in the ditches & behind breast works & in

Cedar thickets untill Saturday night the
grape & Shell ratteling all around & over us
day & night thursday friday & saturday the
enemys left was drove 5 or 6 miles many
prisoners & 40 odd cannon captured We drove them
to a strong position by nature & they had fortyfied
it was a deaspart rainy cold time. We was nearly
worn out & Genl Bragg on Saturday night orderd
a fall back to Winchester. We left about 1 oclock
at night & marched here by night following
30 miles through mud & raine we rested here
a day & then traveled 2 days & got to Arisona &
rested thare one 1 day & started back for this
place some 25 miles got here last night
I gave out after our fight & fell out of ranks
& rested untill morning & Joined my Comd
the night we retreated I took billious choleck
but come on to this place that day I have not been
well since I Suffer with paines & bowel complaint
I am still unwell. I have got the Maj's horse to ride or
I could not have made the <???

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5 I hope the maj will come soon & take his
comand. I dont know how long we will stay
here report say several weeks I sopose the
yanks are at Murphreesboro. We dont know any
thing here We get no papers or letters I am
ancious to hear from home. this is the
first oportunity I have had to write you
since writing from Loudon. we have had the
hardest times that we have ever had we slept
but little for 5 nights, I saw hundreds of dead yankes
some places that I could walk on them in some
places from 50 to 100 would be lying close together
our wounded was caried off the field as fast
as they was wounded. our dead was buried. I saw
but few of our dead. I sent a buriel party
to the place we fought to Bury Lt Ray & Sergt Whiteker
they say they saw the dead yankies as thick
where we fought them as any place they had
been I took several lying down shots at
them & several rest shots by trees. our boys
appeared to take good aime all the time
We cirtanly whiped them bad. but they was
reinforced & I think it was good policy in
Bragg to fall back. we got all our captured

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property & prisnors safe & all the wounded
that was abel to be moved was sent to chatanooga
you will see the report in the papers. So I will
quit the battle subject by saying I had rather
not be in any more big Battles.

We are now attached to Col. Manigaults 4th
Brigade, Withers Division, Polks Corpse
Direct to this place & proboly I will git
it. I dont know of any thing elce to write
at present I think the boys at home that
belongs to Co B. ought to come back now
as they are neaded. I hardely think it nesary
for you to try to send me any clothing as I have as
much as I can git along with. I want my hat that I left at home
as my cap is about gone. give my love to all
our relations & friends. kiss my sweat babes
often for me, I am so tired & worn out that I
must quit. John Moores Brigade went to Miss
I know nothing of M<???.>. Abe Enlow was
in the fight come out safe. I dont know
when I will come home I hope before long
Should we be orderd back to <Ten?> I know I will.
ever believe me your devoted Loving jusband

A..W..Bell

excuse this bad composed & written
letter for I am tired & sick