

Alfred W. Bell Letter

Corpus of American Civil War Letters

Source: (#417) Alfred W. Bell Papers,
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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.

Shelbyville Ten Jan 11th 1862 [1863]

My Dear Wife

I again seat myself this nice Sunday morning to write you againe [sic]. Well a history of our ups and downs propoly [sic] Would interest you at this time more than anything elce [sic] at present and to know that I am Safe and The most of the boys. I wrote you from Loudon that we was ordered to Murfreesboro. We landed thare [sic] the night of the 28th Dec. Was ordered next morning to the Battlefield and Would be held as reserve. on starting Capt [sic] Crawford [editor's note: Capt. James G. Crawford of Co. I] and co was detailed to Remaine [sic] and load some Wagons of Amunition [sic]. the rest of us was marched at doble [sic] and quick time to the field 2 miles off We was marched to the right of the center devision [sic]. unatached [sic] to any brigade. on our approached [sic] to a fence the yanks had Shelled us on our way and had wounded Several W G Thomas of my Co [editor's note: Washington G. Thomas of Co. B] was one. at the fence they give us a voley [sic] of minie balls Wounded several Will Roane [editor's note: Wilburn F. Roane of Co. B] Thompson of my Co. [editor's note: there were two Thompsons in Co. B] here Col Coleman was wounded We pitched inn [sic] Our little Regt and the 16 Ten [sic] with not many more men than we had the yankees [sic] played on us with 2 Batterys [sic] and had 2 Ky leagons [sic] and 2 Indiana Regt clost [sic] to us and about 6 or 8 thousand line of battle some 8 hundred yds from us. We comenced [sic] our fight at 1/2 after 10 oclock [sic] and fought untill [sic] 4 PM We was reinforced about 2 oclock [sic] they gave way about 1/2 after 3. the 16 Ten [sic] then fell back and of coers [sic] ours then fell back to the ditches about 4 hundred yds. Col davidson [sic] [editor's note: Lt. Col. H.H. Davidson] was wounded about 1 oclock. [sic] and of coers [sic] I had to take the command Col Coleman [editor's note: Col. David Coleman] was wounded in the right leg about the top of the boot on the out side missing the bone. passed directy [sic] through his leg. quite a sever [sic] wound minnie [sic] ball. Col Davidson wounded in right Elbo [sic] and rangin [sic] down about 1/2 way to the bone Coleman has gone to Knoxville [sic] and proboly [sic] will go home. Davidson took fevor [sic] and could not be moved. was lefted [sic] at Murphreesboro [sic] and I reckon the yanks got him prisnor [sic] I had 16 wounded 4 taken prisnors [sic]. Wood owens Lesh McConnel K Gudger and Thos West [editor's note: Elisha McConnell and Kempsey Gudger of Co. B] theas [sic] are missing and I am satisfed [sic] they was taken

prisoners [sic] for when we fell back they did not come out and I sent back for them when the yanks fell back and could not find them. some of the boys was there hid and say they saw Owens [sic] and McConnell taken I only had 5 severely wounded or needed [sic] medical aid. Thomas W G left shoulder [sic] piece of a shell flesh wound Roane Will left thigh minie ball flesh wound. Gregory J T [editor's note: Jesse T. Gregory] right Elbow bone injured minie ball Thompson in head flesh wound shell John Guy left leg brooke [sic] Lt Anderson [editor's note: William T. Anderson of Co. B] right shoulder [sic] flesh wound the others are slight wounds. Capt [sic] 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 and broke [sic] it. it was taken off next day and he died the same evening [sic] We had 2 men killed dead on the field Lt John Ray of Co F Cherokee [sic] Co. and Sgt [sic] Whitaker [sic] [editor's note: John W. Rhea of Cherokee County, NC; Sgt. John Whitaker] of Co (D) Buncombe Co. We had 50 killed wounded and missing my Co had more wounded than any other it being the largest. I had 50 men and myself [sic] and 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 bullets [sic] hailed the shells sung and the grape rattled. I want in no more [sic] battles. the last day of 1862 will long be remembered by many of us. we lay in the ditches and behind breast works and in cedar thickets until [sic] Saturday night the grape and shell rattling [sic] all around and over us day and night Thursday [sic] Friday [sic] and Saturday [sic] the enemy's [sic] left was driven 5 or 6 miles many prisoners [sic] and 40 odd cannon captured We drove them to a strong position by nature and they had fortified [sic] it was a desperate [sic] rainy [sic] cold time. We were nearly worn out and Genl [sic] Bragg on Saturday night ordered [sic] a fall back to Winchester. We left about 1 o'clock [sic] at night and marched here by night following 30 miles through mud and rain [sic] we rested here a day and then traveled 2 days and got to Arizona [sic] and rested there [sic] one day and started back for this place some 25 miles got here last night I gave out after our fight and fell out of ranks and rested until [sic] morning and joined my command the night we retreated I took bilious [sic] chills [sic] but come on to this place that day I have not been well since I suffer with pains [sic] and bowel complaint I am still unwell. I have got the Maj's horse to ride or I could not have made the [missing]. I hope the Maj [sic] will come soon and take his command [sic]. I don't [sic] know how long we will stay here reports say several weeks I suppose [sic] the yanks are at Murfreesboro [sic]. We don't [sic] know anything [sic] here We get no papers or letters I am anxious [sic] to hear from home. this is the first opportunity [sic] 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 yanks [sic] some places that I could walk on them in some places from 50 to 100 would be lying close together our wounded was carried [sic] off the field as fast as they were wounded. our dead was buried. I saw but few of our dead. I sent a burial [sic] party to the place we fought to bury Lt Ray and Sgt [sic] Whitaker [sic] they say they saw the dead yankies [sic] as thick where we fought them as any place they had been I took several lying down shots at them and several rest shots by trees. our boys appeared to take good aim [sic] all the time We certainly [sic] whipped [sic] them bad. but they were reinforced [sic] and I think it was good policy in Bragg to fall back. we got all our

captured property and prisnors [sic] safe and all the wounded that was abel [sic] to be moved was sent to chatanooga [sic] 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 [sic] 4th Brigade, Withers [sic] Division, Polks [sic] Corpse [sic] Direct to this place and proboly [sic] I will git [sic] it. I dont [sic] know of anything elce [sic] to write at present. I think the boys at home that belongs to Co B. ought to come back now as they are neaded [sic]. I hardely [sic] think it nesary [sic] for you to try to send me any clothing as I have as much as I can get along with. I want my hat that I left at home as my cap is about gone. give my love to all our relations and friends. kiss my sweat [sic] babes often for me, I am so tired and worn out that I must quit. John Moores [sic] Brigade went to Miss I know nothing of M. Abe Enlow was in the fight come out safe. I dont [sic] know when I will come home I hope before long Should we be ordered back to Ten [sic] I know I will. ever believe me your devoted Loving husband
A. W. Bell

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