A CONFEDERATE ACCOUNT OF THE LATE BATTLES BEFORE RICHMOND.

We (*Charleston Daily Courier*) have been favoured with the following letter, descriptive of the late battles near Richmond, from the pen of a gallant young captain, not yet of age, in Kershaw's brigade:—

"Camp on James River,
Thursday Morning, July 3, 1862.

"Dear Father,—I take the advantage of this, my first opportunity, of penning a few lines to let you know that I am quite well, and, with the exception of a few bruises, am, by the mercy of God, still on my feet, and ready for another round. But I will endeavour, in my limited time and space, to give you a few details of our experience since I wrote you on last Thursday. On the night day our regiment was sent down to make a demonstration in front of the enemy's batteries, to attract their attention from Jackson's forces, who were moving in their rear. After waiting until the afternoon, the regiment was drawn up in line of battle, and my company and Manchon's thrown out as skirmishers. We advanced in front of our picketts, and encountered those of the enemy in a very thick wood, where they waited our coming, and opened on us with a heavy fire of rifles, which killed Albert Milne, and wounded two of Manson's men. I received a shot through the breast of my jacket, but none of my men were hurt. We drove the picket to the reserve, and the reserve to the regiments in rear, when the enemy opened on us a terrible fire of grape and shell, which wounded several men in the regiments in our rear. Having discovered the enemy's position, and accomplished our object, we fell back, and were much complimented on our little action. This having been the first time our men had been under musketry or fired a gun, I was much pleased with the gallantry manner in which they stood their ground. Night closing in soon after, we returned to camp, where we spent the next day in resting. On Sunday morning about 2 o'clock we were roused with orders to cook rations and prepare to march, as the enemy were falling back from their position in our front. About 5 o'clock the regiment was formed, and the brigade moved on towards the Chickahominy. About 8 o'clock we passed through the enemy's fortifications, and came upon the rear of their column. As soon as we came in sight our brigade was formed into line of battle, skirmishers thrown out, and in excellently after their artillery opened upon us. We advanced slowly through some terrible swamps in which we often sunk waist deep in mud and water. About seventeen we came upon their position, just beyond a skirt of thick woods, upon reaching which they opened on us with a very heavy fire of grape shot and shell, which cut down the bushes and trees on every side of us. For a while we had shelter in the bushes, when a volley cutting down many of our men, and falling off both legs of Sergeant Tom Hill (a particular friend of Boo's and mine), and a volley poured into us by a line of infantry just in our front, proving too hot, we rose and charged about a quarter of a mile, driving back the enemy's line about 300 yards, and coming within about 40 yards of a brigade of infantry, which was formed just in front of our regiment; here we halted under a terrible fire, and began to return volley for volley, our men coolly loading and firing, and making every shot tell. During the fight the right and left wings became separated, and I took command of the left wing. Just then the fire was most deadly, and our men were falling on every side, but not one qualled. As I passed down the line encouraging the men, a grapeshot struck me on the left thigh, and brought me to my knees, but, concealing the pain, I moved down to the rear of my company, and took my position where I could watch them. Just then Ben Taylor, who was carrying his gun alongside of his brother, turned his head to the rear rank, and said, 'Give it to them, boys,' and put his gun to his shoulder to fire, when a ball struck him in the head, and he fell upon his face dead. He never spoke again. Poor Jim, I felt so sorry for him; he laid down his gun, turned Ben over, and gazed upon him in mute sorrow. Stepping up to him, I put my hand upon his shoulder, and said, 'Jim, I have no consolation to offer you except that Ben has fallen at his post; there he lies, revenge is the enemy, avenge him.' He picked up his gun, and turning his pale, quivering face to me, he said, 'Captain, I can fight them now,' and he did fight them right gallantly. About the same time Dolphus Johnson was shot in the thigh, the ball ranging upwards and lodging in his groin. Bill Garman, shot through the lower part of the ankle. Sergeant West through the arm just above the wrist, and Corporal R. Reardon through the arm above the elbow. Not a muscle of them uttered a groan, but coolly crawled to the rear.

When Johnson was shot I took his rifle and cartridge an used them until we retired. During the fight Union Hinna was shot through the arm, and I was left Lieutenant Colonel, and Sanford was shot through the ear. While loading, a Minié ball took off the top of the second knuckle of my first finger, and a second struck me in the breast, the first brought the blood pretty freely, but the second striking just upon a Yankee Bible, rotten, and bullet mouldy, which I had picked up and stuck in my pocket, just spoed my whole side for some time, and knocked me over, as was much the more painful. From after we were ordered to retire, as our friends in the rear were firing into us, and had killed several of our men. This we did, falling back in excellent order, and being highly complimented by General Kershaw. We fell back to the skirt of woods from which we had advanced, and the firing having ceased we threw out pickets upon the battle ground, and started to bring in our wounded. By this time night had closed in, and a heavy rain was falling. Worn out, the men lay down in the water and slept until morning, except when awakened by the cries of some poor wounded fellow, who was suffering, waiting, watching, and praying for the appearance of daylight and relief. Thus the night passed and the morning dawned, and the sun came out; but the enemy, under cover of night, had left, having a line of ghastly dead and wounded Yankees, to mark the spot where the conflict had raged hottest. In the engagement, out of 300 men, we lost 120 killed and wounded. The 3d Regiment lost 130 out of 350, and the 2d and 8th lost heavily. The enemy fought desperately, but unavailingly, and left the ground strewn with men from the 5th and 6th Vermont and some regiments of regulars, with which forces our regiment had to contend. We were employed during the early portion of the day in burying our dead and caring for our wounded, and about 10 o'clock, being relieved by Stonewall Jackson, we marched to the supported Longstreet, who was trying to cut the Federals off from the river. We pushed on all day, and after a weary march of 20 miles, by a very circuitous route, over a rocky road, where my shoes were actually torn off my feet (I performing the latter part of the march barefooted), we reached the ground (where our forces had fought terribly for several hours, and from which they had finally driven the enemy) about 5 o'clock p.m., footsore, weary, and exhausted. Moving in front of Longstreet's lines, our division formed in line of battle, just as the grey dawn broke in the east, and discovered to us piles of dead and wounded, who were thickly strewn over the fields and woods as far as the eye could reach. Here was where vengeance and the enemy had met in the shock of battle, and where they had fallen thickest, and there we lay down to rest and wait until we could see sufficiently well to make another attack. What the reflections of men were, who, worn out, dispirited, and scarcely whom lay all the scenes of carnage which characterise a battle field under those circumstances, you may imagine, but I cannot describe. About sunset we advanced upon what we supposed the enemy's position, but not a gun opened upon us. Scores of dead men, whose glazed and open eyes stared ghastly at the sun, and whose blood stained the grass, showed where they had been. Dismounted guns, shattered caissons, dead horses, and mangled limbs and trunks showed where they had fought, and a line of baggage, knapsacks, coats, guns, &c., showed the direction in which they had fled, and in that direction we pursued, marching often through swamps that seemed almost too thick for a bird to penetrate, and again across fields and down lanes where we were almost stifled with dust, and forced to yield to the power of the sun. At length, about 5 o'clock p.m., the enemy were reported occupying a very strong position just in our front, whom they had fortified. Our artillery was ordered out to open on the enemy, and a brigade of Georgians and Alabamians to support it. No sooner had our guns opened than they were dismounted, their caissons torn to atoms, and the horses and men piled and mangled together. Other batteries were ordered out with the same success, and the few men and horses who were left came dashing back, panic-stricken, and sought refuge in flight. Then we saw what was coming. Our brigade was ordered to the front, to support the one already sent out, and, forming in line, we marched to the skirt of woods, which separated us from the open ground, where the enemy had formed to receive us. His position could not have been better selected. Upon a hill, about half a mile in our front, were planted 30 siege guns and 20 light batteries, manned by United States regulars, while in front the ground descended gradually to our position, midway between which and their batteries was a line of 20,000 of their best troops, who were selected to cover their retreat to their gunboats, two miles distant. Upon this line and their batteries we advanced. For the first half mile of the hills and a half we marched the shells burst around us inconceivably. After that, just as we got into the woods, the gunboats opened upon us with their broadsides of rifled guns, the shells from which came hurtling through the woods, crashing and bursting, and tearing down numbers of the largest trees in their course. Then came the grape and canister from the batteries in our front, and soon the musketry opened, actually sweeping down whole lines of men in our front and from our own ranks, and making our path one vast dead and dying mass. We passed over four lines of men, who, sent out before us, were unable to stand the fire, and lay close to the ground, from which no threats or persuasion could move them. Our men trampled them into the mud like logs, and moved on in an unwavering line, perfectly regardless of the numbers who were falling around them. It was just here that Arthur Parker, who had been quite sick, said, 'Boys, I am almost done; but I'll go as close to them as I can.' Scarcely had he spoken when a ball passed through his bowels. He did not speak; only passed his hand to his side and turned round, when a second ball passed through his head, and he fell dead. Keeslie was shot through below the knee, at the same time, and Lieutenant Burckhalter through the head, while Ebby Butler and Sergeant Miles were both killed instantaneously by grapeshot passing through their breasts, and Warren Rhodes was struck in the leg by a ball. But we pushed on until we found the line we were to support within 600 yards of the battery, and there we halted under cover of a hedgerow, and lay down to rest. The line in front of us, unable to stand up in front of the fire, had laid down, while the troops in our rear poured several volleys into us, wounding and killing many men. Finding the place untenable between friend and foe, General Kershaw proposed to the General in our front to charge the battery, and let us support him. This he refused to do. Kershaw then offered to charge it with our brigade if they would support him after he took it. This they also refused, and, as the Georgians and Louisianans on our right were moving up, we could not fire without injuring them, and we could do no good where we were, we were directed to fall back to our original position and re-form line of battle. I held our position with the left wing until the right was beyond range, and then directed the left to retire, I keeping some distance in their rear and falling back very slowly. No sooner had our men retired when here came a portion of the Confederate soldiery, casting past our position, and huddled together like sheep, presenting elegant marks for the grape and canister balls which cut paths through them, and hurled them, writhing and digging, into the mud and water of the swamp. One man, in his haste to get out of danger, shoved me on one side, and just as I was about to exercise the butt of my rifle, and spattered my face with his blood and brains. As you may suppose, I was not much vexed at his impoliteness. On our way out we passed over the ground which we travelled in going in, and found men lying dead in every direction. Upon reaching the rear we were assembled into a skirt of woods to rest for the night, the fight having now closed, and the enemy ceased firing. When morning dawned they were gone again, having reached James River, and being safely under cover of their gunboats. Early in the morning I rode over the battle ground, our brigade having been marched up to occupy it, and the sight which was there presented beggars description. Entering the field at the point where our artillery had been posted, I came upon numbers of dead and dying horses, who, with the drivers and gunners, lay in a pile together, their several dismantled guns, their caissons, forced down by the enemy's balls, all presenting an aspect of desolation and ruin. Then came the point at which our infantry lines advanced through the open fields and engaged that of the enemy. For a mile the ground was thickly strewn with the mangled and dying, showing with what desperate energy our men had advanced, and with what energy they were repulsed. Men, mangled in every conceivable manner, to the number of 10,000, were strewn around in all directions. The painful details of our own wounded I will spare you; but I will pass on to the enemy's side of the field, where one-half of the number lay; there were men with their arms, legs, and hands, shot off, bodies torn with their arms, legs, and hands, shot off, bodies torn up, features disfigured and blackened. All this I could see with indifference, but I could not but pity the wounded; there one poor devil, with his back broken, was trying to pull himself along by his hands, dragging his legs after him, to get out of the open area, which the last night's rain had filled with water; here another, with both legs shot off, was trying to steady the mangled trunk against a gun-stock in the ground; there a fair-haired Yankee boy, of 16, was lying with both legs broken, half of his body submerged in water, with his teeth clinched, his fingers buried in the flesh, and his whole body quivering with agony and benumbed with cold. In this case my pity got the better of my resentment, and I dismounted, pulled him out of the water, and wrapped him in a blanket, for which he seemed very grateful. One of the most touching things I saw, were a couple of brothers (boys) both wounded, who had crawled together, and one of them in the act of arranging a bandage for the other, with a blanket, had fallen, and they had died with their arms around one another and their cheeks together. But your heart will sicken at these details, as mine did at seeing them, and I will cease."