American Civil War Letter- Battle of Williamsburg, 1862

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On the Battle field of Williamsburg
Wednesday May 7 1862

Well, my own wife, I am writing this on the field of battle yesterday & day before and I wish I could half describe all I have seen of the fight & of the dead & dying around me. I cannot begin to describe all we have done since I left camp. We left on Sunday & have been on the march since then. We passed through the Rebel fortifications near us shortly after leaving our camp & on our way a shell which they set as a trap hurt & killed one man & wounded six. We passed through them & advanced rapidly into the country & met everywhere signs of the rapid retreat of the Rebels' fires lighted & meat in the plates. That night we rested on the field about 15 miles from where we started. Next morning we advanced again & heard heavy firing ahead & in the aft we met Gen McClellan.
who ordered us on at double quick so on we went for four miles. It had been raining hard all day long & the rain really poured down upon us & the roads were terrible so you can imagine the state of our men. We arrived at last on the battle field & got just in time as Hookers division was repulsed 10,000 men against 50,000 Rebels & our Brigade turned the tide of war and the Rebels ran. The fields & woods were strewed with the dead & wounded & the prisoners were brought in by hundreds. I got four & took them to Genl Keyes headquarters. They were miserably clothed & a hard looking set of men. We now "slept" in the battle fields & such a night I pray God I may never have again. It rained hard was bitter cold, we had nothing to eat all day & nothing now & could not light any fires. I sat on my saddle all night & at 1 am I had to walk up and down in the rain & mud to keep warm.

It was a terrible night of suffering as the groans of the sick & wounded sounded around. Next morn I went over the field & saw the dead lying in winrows as they fell, killed by all kinds of wounds & the wounded carried off to be operated upon. My God Amen it was awful to see the poor remains of what were once men lying all around in all kinds of attitudes, dying in in the act of doing something. I saw a Lieut Col shot right through the forehead, dead. Artillery horses were lying dead & dying around & it was a terrible sight. Dr Kittinger was all day yesterday assisting. It was a splendid victory but we have had great losses. The Excelsior Brigade that we went to help is all cut to pieces. I could have got lots of trophies but cant carry them. I have got some small things such as buttons which I cut from the dead. I hope this will reach you blessed one but everything is in confusion & I dont know how they will send letters. I got one from Sis today but none from you. I hope you wont be anxious about me & dont mind if I dont write for this is my last piece of paper & envelope & my baggage is all lost. I am very well dear one, have not a scratch & am hearty as a buck & have seen a battle. God Almighty bless my darlings Annie & Robby. Please write to mother & tell her I am well & happy as I fear the papers will lie about us. Your own [[Rentz?]]
The Rebels are all cut off & I don't believe we can have a chance at them again
Envelope
MORSE'S AMERICAN TELE (3 cent stamp covering last letters)
Postmarked: Troy N.Y. Jul 10 1862
New York, Albany and Buffalo Line.
Office, 249 River Street, Troy,
OPEN DAY AND NIGHT.
No. __________________

W.N. Chadwick
Cohoes NY

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