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SOLDIERING WITH THE SECOND FLORIDA INFANTRY REGIMENT

edited by JOHN P. INGLE, JR.*

SIXTEEN of Francis P. Fleming's letters were published in the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, July and October 1949, and January 1950.¹ The letter edited here was a gift to the Florida Historical Society by Elizabeth (Fleming) Hamilton Ingle, granddaughter of Francis Philip Fleming. Fleming (1841-1908) was an attorney, editor, governor of Florida (1889-1893), and third president of the Florida Historical Society. Born in Panama (now a section of Jacksonville), Florida, he was educated privately, and at the outbreak of the Civil War, at age nineteen, he enlisted as a private in the St. Augustine Rifles. This unit later became part of Company H, Second Florida Infantry Regiment of the famous Florida Brigade, commanded by General Edward A. Perry. The Florida Second served as part of the Army of Northern Virginia. Fleming's war record was a brilliant one. He participated in the battles of Peach Orchard, Williamsburg, Seven Pines, Second Manassas, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Harper's Ferry, the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, the Seven Days Fight around Richmond, Antietam, and Gettysburg. In July 1863 he was transferred to the western army as first lieutenant of Company D, first Cavalry (Dismounted) and took part in eleven more battles. He returned to Jacksonville at the close of the war to study and practice law. Fleming's letter is published as it was originally written without changes in spelling or punctuation.

* * * * *

Camp 2d Fla. Infty
Near Richmond July 28th 1862

My dear Aunt Tilly,²

I have had the pleasure of securing both of your kind letters

* Mr. Ingle is vice-president of the Jacksonville Historical Society and a retired manager for Eastern Airlines.

1. Francis P. Fleming letters, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXVIII (July 1949, 38-52; October 1949, 143-55; January 1950, 204-10).
2. Miss Matilda Seton of Fernandina, sister of his mother Margaret Seton Fleming who lived at Hibernia, Florida, twenty-five miles south of

since writing you and ought to have answered them sooner, but until about two weeks ago we have been in such a commotion that I have scarcely thought of answering letters; and the weather has been so warm lately, as to completely enervate one, and to almost deprive one of energy enough to write a letter.

I presume that anything that I might mention of the recent battles around Richmond would be rather stale news.³ You have probably long ere this heard of the defeat of [George B.] McClellan's grand army that was to make its triumphal march into Richmond by the 4th of July, instead of which, on that memorable day it seeking protection of its gunboats, on the banks of the James river, having been driven a distance of thirty miles, by our army. The battle commenced on Thursday, the 26 of June and continued on every ensuing day until the following Tuesday evening, when the last battle was fought.⁴ Our Regiment was engaged in the most severe conflict of Friday-the storming of the batteries on Gains [*sic*] farm-our forces greatly inferior to that of the enemy charged him in his entrenchments, and drove him from them. We suffered greatly in the attack, as we had no protection, while the enemy were protected by his breastworks from which he poured into our advancing columns perfect hailstorms of grape, shell & musketballs, but our forces still charged on and succeeded in driving them from their position and thoroughly routing them when the slaughter on their side became terrible. Our men shot them down in great numbers, as they fled before them throwing away (the Yankees) everything that encumbered their flight-arms, knapsacks, Blankets and accouterments of every description. I afterwards rode over the field; it was literally strewed with dead Yankees-Most of our men had been buried. It was a sight that I never shall forget! Men and horses stretched on the ground in every conceivable shape and to see the hundreds of wounded, at the depot es-

Jacksonville on the west side of the St. Johns River. Matilda's father was Charles Seton from Philadelphia and New York. He was the first American mayor of Fernandina. Her mother was Matilda Sibbald Seton.

3. The reference is to the battles of Seven Pines, May 31, 1862; Ellison's Mill and Gaines's farm, June 26-27, 1862; and Frazier's farm, June 30, 1862. Francis P. Fleming, *The Florida Troops in Virginia-A Memoir of Captain C. Seton Fleming* (Jacksonville, 1884), 112-16, appendix B-D (list of casualties).
4. Battle of Gaines's farm.

tablished for them adjacent to the battlefields. I thought, at one time, that such sights would be more than I could bear to look upon but seeing so many men shot and cut to pieces, one soon becomes accustomed to it, as it were, and such a sight as would in ordinary times be shocking in the extreme makes but a slight impression on a callous mind. Our Regiment was also engaged in the the [*sic*] severe fight of the following Monday, suffered very much in proportion to its size which by the recent battles, including the battle of "Seven Pines" is very much reduced, in the engagement of Friday we lost sixty five men, killed & wounded, among the former the lamented Capt Parkhill, his loss is greatly felt by the regt.⁵ Edward L'Engle was wounded slightly on the shoulder by the fragment of a shell, he volunteered to command a company that was without a commissioned officer during the conflicts.⁶ Dave Dunham was also wounded slightly by a piece of a shell but the wounds of each were so slight that they were on duty again next day.⁷ Poor Dave though was wounded severely on the head during the Sunday fight, by a piece of a shell which fractured the skull-he has since gone to Florida on a furlough-our loss in the Regt, on that occasion was about seventy five. The whole loss of the Regiment since the retreat from Yorktown including the battle of Williamsburg is over four hundred in killed & wounded. Col Perry was wounded during the battle Monday and the Regiment now under the command of Capt Moseley of our Company.⁸ Our loss during the five days of fighting was great being estimated at about *fifteen thousand* but that of the enemy is much greater probably twice as great, besides

5. Captain George W. Parkhill, Company M (Howell Guards), Second Florida Infantry from Leon County, Florida, was killed at Gaines's farm, June 1862. *Soldiers of Florida* (Jacksonville, 1901), 98.

6. Captain Edward McCrady L'Engle, commanding Company G. was a cousin of Francis Fleming. Fleming, *A Memoir*, 115 (appendix); Gertrude N. L'Engle, *Our Family*, 2 vols. (Jacksonville, 1951), I, 48, 49, 80, 83, and 141. "In Memoriam," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, II (April 1909), 3-4.

7. Sergeant David Lewis Dunham, Company H, was also a cousin of Francis Fleming. L'Engle *Our Family*, I, 75; Fleming, *A Memoir*, 113. He was later appointed first lieutenant, was captured at Gettysburg and was sent to Johnson's Island. *Soldiers of Florida*, 91.

8. Colonel Edward A. Perry later was promoted to brigadier general and commanded the Florida Brigade. He served as governor of Florida, 1885-1889. *Soldiers of Florida*, 91. Captain Alexander Moseley was the son of former governor William D. Moseley. He later was a major in the Second Florida Infantry Regiment. Fleming, *A Memoir*, 25.

the loss of millions of dollars worth of his property captured and destroyed. We also captured about fifty pieces of artillery and about six thousand prisoners.

McClellan is very quietly lying under the guns of his Gunboats on the banks of the James about thirty miles from Richmond. In an address to his troops he makes a declaration that he will take Richmond "cost what it will of time treasure and blood."

I have heard nothing from Seton but six weeks ago I saw one of our surgeons who remained in Williamsburg with the wounded and was, when I saw him, just from there, who told me that he was getting well, was in no danger at all from the effects of his wound, that he was well taken care of etc in the house of a private citizen.⁹ We are proceeding with the exchange of prisoners and I hope that he will soon be released.

I understand that the 8th Fla left the state for Virginia nearly two weeks ago but they have not arrived yet. I hope that we will soon have Fla troops enough here to form a Florida Brigade as I understand the 5th Regt will probably come on and also the 9th.

Mrs. Reid, formerly of St. Augustine, arrived at Richmond a few days ago for the purpose of assisting in the establishment of a hospital for the Florida troops.¹⁰ It is something that we very much need and should have been attended to long ago. Our sick & wounded are scattered all over the city, and unless you accidentally know in what hospital a man is, it is almost an impossibility to find one.

Do you know that Com. Wilkes is in Command of the James River Squadron.¹¹ What state is he from? I believe from Mary-

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9. Lieutenant Charles Seton Fleming of Hibernia, Florida, was the brother of Francis P. Fleming. Wounded in battle, Seton was captured by Union forces and was eventually released in a prisoner exchange. He was then appointed captain of Company G, Second Florida Infantry Regiment and later commanded the entire regiment, but he was killed leading his men into action on June 3, 1864, near Gaines's farm. Fleming, *A Memoir*, 103-07.
 10. Martha M. Reid was the widow of Territorial Governor Robert Raymond Reid. She helped establish the Florida Hospital at Richmond. Her only son, Lieutenant Raymond J. Reid, adjutant of the Second Florida, was killed in the Battle of the Wilderness. Fleming, *A Memoir*, 94. Edward C. Williamson, "Francis P. Fleming in the War of Southern Independence: Letters From the Front," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXVIII (July 1949), 44.
 11. Commodore Charles Wilkes was the noted naval officer, explorer, and writer for whom Wilkes Land on the coast of Antarctica was named. In

land. I wonder what has become of our old friends Miss Tiernan and Piper in the melee. I presume Mr. P is holding on with the state of Maryland to see which side is victorious.¹²

The latest news is that Col John Morgan has penetrated far into Kentucky capturing eleven towns & cities and quantities of army stores.¹³

Please write soon. You can say to his relations & friends that Mr. Maxwell is quite well.¹⁴ I believe that both of the Messrs Burroughs have gone home on furlough.¹⁵

Your affc nephew

/s/ F. P. Fleming

1861, as commander of the Union frigate *San Jacinto*, he stopped the British mail steamer *Trent* at sea and removed the Confederate commissioners to Great Britain and France.

12. Undoubtedly referring to the family of his friend Mr. Tiernan of Baltimore who had been active in supporting the Confederate cause, and had wintered in east Florida several years previous to the war, Williamson, "Letters From the Front," 45-46.
13. Colonel John Hunt Morgan raided Federal forces in Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio. He was shot by the Federals while reconnoitering near Greenville, Tennessee.
14. Corporal D. Elwell Maxwell, Company H, Second Florida Infantry Regiment, was transferred to the Florida Cavalry (Dismounted) where he served as captain, Company D. *Soldiers of Florida*, 92.
15. Sergeant B. Maxwell Burroughs and Corporal Eben W. Burroughs, enlisted men of Company H. Fleming, *A Memoir*, 36, 113, and 116.