

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

1/19/63: 063

Historical Notes

Cyrus Hardaway's letter home of January 19, 1863 is the first letter in which he wrote his mother of his fears of imminent death. Preparing to engage in what historians have called the "Mud March," Hardaway discussed a fear of death not previously seen in any letter. For the relief of readers of these historical notes, Hardaway neither experiences battle nor death in the next campaign; he did, in fact, live to see the next century and was buried next to his mother in St Andrew's Cemetery in New Berlin, New York.

After his observations of the *Battle of Fredericksburg* from his reserve hilltop vantage point on the north side of the Rappahannock River, it is impossible to denigrate his fears and emotions. The useless slaughter of Federal troops at base of Marye's Heights horrified not only the public but also war hardened veterans. Given that Hardaway is about to engage what he believes will be the first major action since *Fredericksburg*, his fears are not only reasonable but justified. The removal of McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac, the ensuing carnage at the *Battle of Fredericksburg*, and the seeming unending incompetence of Union army leadership should have caused every member of the Army of the Potomac to experience similar forbodings.

Statistically the Civil War was among the deadliest wars in all of American history. The following comparisons of total casualties (dead and wounded) from each of the major American military engagements should cause somber reflection on the significance of the Civil War in American history.

Casualties in America's Wars

Conflict Total Casualties Killed in Action %

Revolutionary War 10,623 2.2

War of 1812 6,765 0.8

Mexican War 17,435 2.2

Civil War 970,227 3.9

Spanish American 4,108 0.1

World War I 320,710 1.1

World War II 1,078,162 1.8

Korean War 136,935 0.6

Vietnam War 211,471 0.5

Gulf War 760 0.0