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BATTLE
OF
BIG BETHEL

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BATTLE OF BIG BETHEL

A CONFEDERATE NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT.

(Richmond Paper.)

The following account of the battle of Big Bethel is given by one who participated in the defense:

YORKTOWN, June 11, 1861.

An engagement lasting four hours took place yesterday (Monday) between five regiments of the troops from Old Point and 1,100 Confederate troops, consisting of Virginians and North Carolinians under Gen. Magruder, at Bethel Church, York County. Before telling you of the battle, I will give you some circumstances preceding it. About two weeks ago a party of 300 Yankees came up from Hampton and occupied Bethel Church, which position they held a day or two and then retired, leaving written on the walls of the church several inscriptions, such as "Death to the Traitors," "Down With the Rebels," etc. To nearly all these the names of the writers were defiantly signed, and all of the penmen signed themselves as from New York, except one, who was from Boston, Mass., U. S. To these excursions into the interior, of which this was the boldest, Gen. Magruder determined to put a stop, and accordingly filled the place after the Yankees left with a few companies of his own troops. In addition to this, he determined to carry the war into the enemy's country, and on Wednesday last Stanard's battery of the Howitzer Battalion was ordered down to the church, where it was soon joined by a portion of Brown's battery of the same corps. The North Carolina Regiment, under Col. Hill, was also there, making in all about 1100 men and seven howitzer guns. On Saturday last the first excursion of considerable importance was made. A detachment of 200 infantry and a howitzer gun under Major Randolph, and one of the 7th Infantry and another howitzer under Maj. Lane, of the North Carolina Regiment, started different routes to cut off a party which had left Hampton. The party was seen and fired at by Major Randolph's detachment, but made such fast time that they escaped. The troops under Major Lane passed within sight of Hampton, and as they turned up the road to return to Bethel, encountered the Yankees, numbering about 90, who were intrenched behind a fence in the field, protected by a high bank. Our advance guard fired on them, and in another moment the North Carolinians were dashing over the fence in regular French (not New York) Zouave style, firing at them in real squirrel-hunting style. The Yankees fled for their lives after firing for about three minutes without effect, leaving behind them

three dead and a prisoner. The fellow was a stout, ugly fellow from Troy, N. Y. He said he had nothing against the South, but somebody must be soldiers, and he thought he had as well enlist. None of our men were hurt. This bold excursion, under the very guns of the enemy, determined the authorities at Old Point to put a stop to it, and clear us out from Bethel. This determination was conveyed to us from persons who came from the neighborhood of the enemy. On Monday morning 600 infantry and two guns, under General Magruder, left the camp and proceeded towards Hampton, but after advancing a mile or two received information that the Yankees were coming in large force. We then retired, and after reaching camp the guns were placed in battery and the infantry took their places behind their breastwork. Everybody was cool, and all were anxious to give the invaders a good reception. About 9 o'clock the glittering bayonets of the enemy appeared on the hill opposite, and above them waved the Star Spangled Banner. The moment the head of the column advanced far enough to show one or two companies, the Parrett gun of the Howitzer Battery opened on them, throwing a shell right into their midst. Their ranks broke in confusion, and the column, or as much of it as we could see, retreated behind two small farm houses. From their position a fire was opened on us, which was replied to by our battery, which commanded the route of their approach. Our firing was excellent, and the shells scattered in all directions when they burst. They could hardly approach the guns which they were firing for the shells which came from our battery. Within our encampment fell a perfect hail-storm of canister-shot, bullets and balls. Remarkable to say, not one of our men was killed inside of our encampment. Several horses were slain by the shells and bullets. Finding that bombardment would not answer, the enemy, about 11 o'clock, tried to carry the position by assault, but met a terrible repulse at the hands of the infantry as he tried to scale the breastworks. The men disregarded sometimes the defenses erected for them, and, leaping on the embankment, stood and fired at the Yankees, cutting them down as they came up. One company of the New York Seventh Regiment, under Capt. Winthrop, attempted to take the redoubt on the left. The marsh they crossed was strewn with their bodies. Their captain, a fine-looking man, reached the fence, and, leaping on a log, waved his sword, crying, "Come on, boys; one charge and the day is ours." The words were his last, for a Carolina rifle ended his life the next moment, and his men fled in terror back. At the redoubt on the right, a company of about 300 New York Zouaves charged one of our guns, but could not stand the fire of the infantry, and retreated precipitately. During these charges the main body of the enemy on the hill were attempting to concentrate for a general assault, but the shells from the Howitzer Battery prevented them. As one regiment would give up the effort, another would be marched to the position, but with no better success, for a shell would scatter them like chaff. The men did not seem able to stand fire at all. About one o'clock their guns were silenced, and a few moments after their infantry retreated precipitately down the road to Hampton, our cavalry, numbering three companies, went in pursuit, and harassed them down to the edge of Hampton. As they retreated many of the wounded fell along the road and died, and the whole road to Hampton was strewn with haversacks, overcoats, can-

teens, muskets, etc., which the men had thrown off in their retreat. After the battle, I visited the position they held. The houses behind which they had been hid had been burned by our troops. Around the yard were the dead bodies of the men who had been killed by our cannon, mangled in the most frightful manner by the shells. The uniforms on their bodies were very different, and many of them are like those of the Virginia soldiery. A little further on we came to the point to which they had carried some of their wounded, who had since died. The gay-looking uniforms of the New York Zouaves contrasted greatly with the paled, fixed faces of their dead owners. Going to the swamp through which they attempted to pass to assault our lines, presented another bloody scene. Bodies dotted the black morass from one end to the other. I saw one boyish, delicate-looking fellow lying on the mud, with a bullet-hole through his breast. His hand was pressed on the wound from which his life blood had poured, and the other was clenched in the grass that grew near him. Lying on the ground was a Testament which had fallen from his pocket, dabbed with blood. On opening the cover I found the printed inscription: "Presented to the Defenders of their Country by the New York Bible Society." A United States flag was also stamped on the title page. Among the haversacks picked up along the route were many letters from the Northern States, asking if they liked the Southern farms, and if the Southern barbarians had been whipped out yet. The force of the enemy brought against us was 4000, according to the statement of the six prisoners we took. Ours was 1100. Their loss in killed and wounded must be nearly 200. Our loss is one killed and three wounded. The fatal case was that of a North Carolinian who volunteered to fire one of the houses behind which they were stationed. He started from the breastwork to accomplish it, but was shot in the head. He died this morning in the hospital. The wounded are Harry Shook, of Richmond, of Brown's battery, shot in the wrist; John Werth, of Richmond, of the same battery, shot in the leg, and Lieut. Hudnall, of the same battery, shot in the foot. None of the wounds are serious. The Louisiana Regiment arrived about one hour after the fight was over. They are a fine-looking set of fellows. As there was force enough at Old Point to send up to Bethel and surround us, we took up the line of march, and came up to Yorktown, where we now are. I hear today that troops from Old Point are now marching up to attack us, but cannot say whether it is so or not.

THE BATTLE AT GREAT BETHEL.

The attack on Great Bethel, it appears, was planned by the late Major Winthrop. The correspondent of the Boston Journal writes from Fortress Monroe:

This literal copy of a private memorandum made by Theodore Winthrop early on the day preceding the fight, and from which, with very trifling alteration of form, the official plan was (as I am informed) drawn up, is a sufficient answer to the whole. I violate no confidence in sending you these

NOTES OF THE PLAN OF ATTACK,

By two detachments, upon Little Bethel and Big Bethel.

A regiment or a battalion to march from Newport News, and a regiment to be supported by sufficient reserves, under arms, in camp, and with advanced guards on the road of march.

Duryea to push out two pickets at 10 p.m., one two and a half miles beyond Hampton, on the county road, but not so far as to alarm the enemy. This is important. Second picket half as far as the first. Both pickets to keep as much out of sight as possible. No one whatever to be allowed to pass out through their lines. Persons to be allowed to pass inward towards Hampton, unless it appear that they intend to go round about and dodge through to the front.

At 12, midnight, Col. Duryea will march his regiment with fifteen rounds cartridges, on the county road toward Little Bethel. Scows will be provided to ferry them across Hampton Creek. March will be rapid, *but not hurried.*

A howitzer with canister and shrapnel to go.

A wagon with planks and materials to repair the New Market bridge.

Duryea to have the 200 rifles (Sharpe's rifles, purchased the day previous, are alluded to). He will pick the men to whom to intrust them. Rocket to be thrown up from Newport News.

Notify Commodore Prendergast (flag officer) of this, to prevent general alarm.

Newport News movement to be made somewhat later than this, as the distance is less. If we find and surprise them we will fire one volley, if desirable, *not reload*, and go ahead with the bayonet.

As the attack is to be by night, or dusk of morning, and in detachments, our people should have some token, say a white rag on the left arm.

Perhaps the detachments which are to do the job should be smaller than a regiment: 300 or 500 on the right and left of the attack would be more easily handled.

If we bag the Little Bethel men push on to Big Bethel and similarly bag them. Burn both the Bethels, or blow up if brick.

To protect our rear, in case we take the field pieces and the enemy should march his main body (if he has any) to recover them, it would be well to have a squad of competent artillerists, regular or other, to handle the captured guns on the retirement of our main body.

Also, to spike them if retaken.

George Scott (colored guide) to have a shooting iron.

Perhaps Duryea's men would be awkward with a new arm in a night or early dawn attack, where there will be little marksman duty to perform. Most of the work will be done with the bayonet, and they are already handy with the old ones.

This private memorandum formed the basis of the official plan. To the white badge was added the watchword "Boston". The two field pieces which it was hoped would be captured are the same which you will find reported, in a letter written the day before the battle, as being sta-

tioned at Little Bethel. The purpose of the expedition was to caution the rebels to cease their predatory attacks upon our pickets. To accomplish this object it was proposed to surprise, and if possible to capture, the small force at Little Bethel. If that should be successfully accomplished, the battery at Big Bethel was to be reconnoitered, and if desirable it was to be attacked—but it was not to be attacked unless success was positively assured. This was the last instruction, as I happen to know, having been present at the time, given by Gen. Butler to Mr. Winthrop. "Be brave as you please," said the General, "but run no risk."

"BE BOLD! BE BOLD! BUT BE NOT TOO BOLD!"

shall be our motto," responded Winthrop. And upon instructions, of which these are the substance, the two expeditions started. The object of a surprise was totally defeated by Colonel Bendix's blunder; yet in defiance of all the rules of war of which I have ever heard, they kept on; they destroyed the Little Bethel, and then, as it seems to me, somebody, entirely upon his own responsibility, decided to proceed to attack Big Bethel. But even this would seem to be scarcely improper. After reading the criticisms of various partisan newspapers, after hearing the stories of many persons who were engaged in the affair in one capacity and another, after hearing a detailed statement, reported by reliable authority, of a conversation with Colonel Bankhead Magruder, the commandant of the rebel forces, and after having had a personal interview with Captain Levy, of Louisiana, — whose appearance had, without previous acquaintance, sufficiently assured me that he is a truth-telling gentleman, and who had excellent opportunities for understanding the whole affair, since he was present in the rebel battery during the entire skirmish, and his corps was at Yorktown, and as he is moreover a competent judge, having seen much service, I am able to say this: I have yet to meet an intelligent and competent officer, present at the skirmish, and engaged upon either side, who does not believe that the place might easily have been taken. This might have been accomplished, first, by turning it upon our right, as Mr. Winthrop was attempting to do when he fell. That attempt might have succeeded; to use the language of Captain Levy, as nearly as I remember it: "Had you had a hundred men as brave as Winthrop, and one to lead when he fell, I would be in Fortress Monroe a prisoner of war to-night." It might have been accomplished, second, with much less difficulty upon the left; Captain Haggerty had discovered this, had suggested it to General Pierce, had after some difficulty secured Colonel Townsend's cooperation, when this plan was defeated by the gross blunder of whoever was in command of Townsend's left—a captain, I believe—in allowing three companies to become detached from the main body by a thicket. From this circumstance Townsend, as he was proceeding to the attack, was led to believe, as he saw the bayonets of his own men glistening through the foliage, that he was outflanked. He retreated, and that was the end of the battle.

REPORT OF MAJOR GENERAL BUTLER.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA,

FORTRESS MONROE, JUNE 10, 1861.

General: Having learned that the enemy had established an outpost of some strength at a place called Little Bethel, a small church about eight miles from Newport News, and the same distance from Hampton, from whence they were accustomed nightly to advance both on Newport News and the picket guards of Hampton, to annoy them, and also from whence they had come down in small squads of cavalry and taken a number of Union men, some of whom had the safeguard and protection of the troops of the United States, and forced them into the rebel ranks, and that they were also gathering up the slaves of citizens who had moved away and left their farms in charge of their negroes, carrying them to work in intrenchments at Williamsburg and Yorktown, I had determined to send up a force to drive them back and destroy their camp, the headquarters of which was this small church.

I had also learned that a place a short distance farther on, on the road to Yorktown, was an outwork of the rebels on the Hampton side of a place called Big Bethel, a large church near the head of the north branch of Back River; that here was a very considerable rendezvous, with works of more or less strength in process of erection, and from this point the whole country was laid under contribution. Accordingly, I ordered General Pierce, who is in command of Camp Hamilton, at Hampton, to send Duryea's regiment of zouaves to be ferried over Hampton Creek at 1 o'clock this morning, and to march by the road up to New Market Bridge; thence, crossing the bridge, to go by a by-road, and thus put the regiment in the rear of the enemy and between Big Bethel and Little Bethel, in part for the purpose of cutting him off, and then to make an attack upon Little Bethel. I directed General Pierce to support him from Hampton with Colonel Townsend's regiment with two mounted howitzers, and to march about an hour later. At the same time I directed Colonel Phelps, commanding at Newport News, to send out a battalion composed of such companies of the regiments under his command as he thought best, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Washburn, in time to make a demonstration upon Little Bethel in front, and to have him supported by Colonel Bendix's regiment with two field pieces. Bendix's and Townsend's regiments should effect a junction at a fork of the road leading from Hampton to Newport News, something like a mile and a half from Little Bethel.

I directed the march to be so timed that the attack should be made just at daybreak, and that after the attack was made upon Little Bethel, Duryea's regiment and a regiment from Newport News should follow immediately upon the heels of the fugitives, if they were enabled to get off, and attack the battery on the road to Big Bethel while covered by the fugitives, or, if it was thought expedient by General Pierce, failing to surprise the camp at Little Bethel, they should attempt to take the

work near Big Bethel. To prevent the possibility of mistake in the darkness, I directed that no attack should be made until the watchword was shouted by the attacking regiment, and in case that, by any mistake in the march, the regiments that were to make the junction should unexpectedly meet, and be unknown to each other, also directed that the members of Colonel Townsend's regiment should be known, if in day-light, by something white worn on the arm.

The troops were accordingly put in motion as ordered, and the march was so timed that Colonel Duryea had got in the position noted upon the accompanying sketch, and Lieutenant-Colonel Washburn, in command of the regiment from Newport News, had got into the position indicated upon the sketch, and Bendix's regiment had been posted and ordered to hold the fork of the road with two pieces of artillery, and Townsend's regiment had got the place indicated just behind, and about to form a junction as the day dawned.

Up to this point the plan had been vigorously, accurately, and successfully carried out. But here, by some strange fatuity, and as yet unexplained blunder, without any word of notice, while Townsend was in column of route, and when the head of the column was within one hundred yards, Colonel Bendix's regiment opened fire with both artillery and musketry upon Townsend's column, which in the hurry and confusion was irregularly returned by some of Townsend's men, who feared that they had fallen into an ambuscade. Townsend's column immediately retreated to the eminence near by, and were not pursued by Bendix's men. By this almost criminal blunder two men of Townsend's regiment were killed, and eight (more or less) wounded. Hearing this cannonading and firing in his rear, Lieutenant-Colonel Washburn, not knowing but that his communication might be cut off, immediately reversed his march, as did Colonel Duryea, and marched back to form a junction with his reserves. General Pierce, who was with Townsend's regiment, fearing that the enemy had got notice of our approach and had posted himself in force on the line of march, and not getting any communications from Colonel Duryea, sent back to me for re-enforcements, and I immediately ordered Colonel Allen's regiment to be put in motion, and they reached Hampton about 7 o'clock. In the meantime, the true state of facts having been ascertained by General Pierce, the regiment effected a junction and resumed the line of march. At the moment of the firing of Bendix, Colonel Duryea had surprised a part of an outlying guard of the enemy, consisting of three persons, who have been brought in to me. Of course, by this firing, all hope of a surprise upon the camp at Little Bethel was lost, and upon marching upon it it was found to have been vacated, and the cavalry had pressed on toward Big Bethel. Colonel Duryea, however, destroyed the camp at Little Bethel, and advanced. General Pierce then, as he informs me, with the advice of his colonels, thought best to attempt to carry the works of the enemy at Big Bethel, and made dispositions to that effect.

The attack commenced, as I am informed (for I have not yet received any official reports) about half past 9 o'clock. At about 10 o'clock General Pierce sent a note to me, saying that there was a sharp engagement with the enemy, and that he thought he should be able to maintain his position until re-enforcements could come up. Acting upon this in-

formation, Colonel Carr's regiment, which had been ordered in the morning to proceed as far as New Market Bridge, was allowed to go forward. I received this information, for which I had sent a special messenger, about 12 o'clock.

I immediately made disposition from Newport News to have Colonel Phelps, from the four regiments there, to forward aid, if necessary. As soon as these orders could be sent forward I repaired to Hampton, for the purpose of having proper ambulances and wagons for the sick and wounded, intending to go forward and join the command. While the wagons were going forward a messenger came announcing that the engagement had terminated, and that the troops were retiring in good order to camp.

I remained upon the ground at Hampton, personally seeing the wounded put in boats and towed around to the hospital, and ordering forward Lieutenant Morris, with two boat howitzers, to cover the rear of the returning column in case it should be attacked. Having been informed that the ammunition of the artillery had been expended, and seeing the head of the column approach Hampton in good order, I waited for General Pierce to come up. I am informed by him that the dead and wounded had all been brought off, and that the return had been conducted in good order and without haste. I learned from him that the men behaved with great steadiness, with the exception of some few instances, and that the attack was made with propriety, vigor, and courage, but that the enemy were found to be supported by a battery variously estimated as of from fifteen to twenty pieces, some of which were rifled cannon, which were very well served, and protected from being readily turned by a creek in front.

Our loss is very considerable, amounting, perhaps, to forty or fifty, a quarter part of which, you will see, was from the unfortunate mistake, to call it by no worse name, of Colonel Bendix.

I will, as soon as official returns can be got, give a fuller detail of the affair; and will only add now that we have to regret especially the death of Lieutenant Greble, of the Second Artillery, who went out with Colonel Washburn from Newport News, and who very efficiently and gallantly fought his piece until he was struck by a cannon-shot.

I will endeavor to get accurate statements to forward by the next mail.

I think, in the unfortunate combination of circumstances and the result which we experienced, we have gained more than we have lost. Our troops have learned to have confidence in themselves under fire. The enemy have shown that they will not meet us in the open field. Our officers have learned wherein their organization and drill are inefficient.

While waiting for the official reports, I have the honor to submit thus far the information of which I am possessed.

* * * *

FORTRESS MONROE, JUNE 16, 1861.

General: Upon examination of the official reports of the officers commanding the various corps that were engaged in the skirmish at Big Bethel, I find nothing to add or correct in my former dispatch, in so far

as relates to the dispositions for the attack. It now turns out beyond controversy, as I deem, that the firing was commenced upon Colonel Townsend's by Colonel Bendix's men. It is not so certain whether Colonel Bendix gave the order to fire or not, although the evidence is strong upon the point that he did so. It was evidently a mistake, and in spite of the precaution that, before any order to fire was to be given in the dark, the watchword "Boston" should be shouted, and that Colonel Townsend's men should be distinguished by a white badge upon the arm, with which order Colonel Townsend complied. Lieutenant Greble, of the Second Artillery (regulars), whose loss as a gallant officer, thorough soldier, and amiable man we all must deplore, was with Colonel Bendix's command and participated in the mistake of Colonel Bendix, as I am informed by the colonel's report. Colonel Townsend has desired a court of inquiry for the purpose of investigating this transaction, with which request, as soon as the exigencies of the public service will permit, I shall comply.

As I stated in the former report, this attack was not intended to enable us to hold Big Bethel as a post, because it was not seriously in our way on any proposed road to Yorktown, and therefore there was never any intention of maintaining it, even if captured. The length of the road and the heat of the weather had caused great fatigue, as many of the troops, the previous night having been cool, had marched with their thickest clothing. I take leave to assure you that every precaution had been taken to prevent notice to the enemy of our approach. A picket guard had been sent out on the night before at 10 o'clock to prevent the egress of persons from our camp in the direction of Yorktown, but we have since learned that information had been communicated to the enemy of our approach, and we believe that we have under arrest the person who communicated the intelligence—a discharged soldier of the United States many years since, who resided in Hampton. If the evidence is satisfactory to a court-martial, he will be dealt with with such severity of punishment as will be a lesson to the many who surround us, and who are engaged in the same nefarious business.

From subsequent information I am certain that the force which was at first in Great Bethel did not exceed a regiment, and had the order been executed which I had given to General Pierce of attack, that, "if we find the enemy and surprise them, we will fire a volley if necessary, *not reload*, but go ahead with the bayonet," I have no doubt of the capture of the battery. But in attempting to obtain information upon the road as to the force in Big Bethel, the exaggerated statements of the inhabitants and the negroes as to the numbers intrenched were taken, instead of the estimates and information of the commanding general so that it was believed by the officers in command and by the men that there were 4,000 or 5,000 there in force. From the intelligence given the enemy, and the unfortunate occurrence of the morning, two regiments to re-enforce them were at last brought up, but not until about the time our troops retired. I made no doubt that the battery would have been taken but for another unfortunate mistake, as reported to me, wherein the colonel of a regiment mistook two companies of his own men, which had been separated from him by thicket, for a flanking party of the enemy, making a sortie from the battery, and because of that mistake

retired; so that it would seem that the skirmish was lost twice because our officers mistook their friends for their enemies. I am informed, and fully believe, that immediately upon the retiring of our troops, for the purpose, as was supposed by the enemy, of turning the flank of the battery, the battery was immediately evacuated, and remained so evacuated until the second day. If it was so done it would be a matter of no consequence, because, as General Scott had been informed, as I have already previously stated, it was no part of our intention to occupy it. The major part of the officers and men behaved with the greatest gallantry and good conduct, and I have to mention in terms of commendation the gallantry and courage of Colonel Townsend, the coolness and firmness of Lieutenant-Colonel Washburn, and the efficiency of Captain Haggerty, of my staff, who was acting as aid to General Pierce, a part of his own being sick.

The country has to deplore the loss of Maj. Theodore Winthrop, my acting military secretary, who led the advance corps with Colonel Dur-yea, and who the moment before his death had gone forward on the right with the detachment of Vermont and Massachusetts troops, under order of Lieutenant-Colonel Washburn, and who at the moment of his death was engaged in finding the best manner of entering the battery, when he fell mortally wounded. His conduct, his courage, his efficiency in the field, were spoken of in terms of praise by all who saw him.

Subsequent knowledge has shown beyond all question that if, at the time our troops retired, an advance had been ordered, the battery would have been taken; but this is the result of subsequent knowledge, and is not to be taken as evidence of the want of efficiency of those in command of our troops. It is a pleasure to be able to announce that our loss was much less even than was reported in my former dispatch, and appears by the official report furnished herewith. Our loss of those permanently injured is twenty-five. I have the honor again to inform you that we have gained much more than we have lost by the skirmish at Big Bethel, and while the advance upon the battery and the capture of it might have added *eclat* to the occasion, it would not have added to its substantial results. I have been very careful to procure an accurate account of the dead, wounded, and missing, in order that I may assure those friends who are anxious for the safety of our soldiers and an exact account may be given of all those injured. There is nothing to be gained by any concealment in this regard. The exact truth, which is to be stated at all times, if anything is stated, is especially necessary on such occasions. In this behalf I think we are not to take a lesson from our enemies. I am happy to add that upon sending a message to Yorktown I found that the courtesies of civilized warfare have been and are intended to be extended to us by the enemies of the country now in arms, which in this department at all times shall be fully reciprocated. I have omitted a detailed statement of the movements of the various corps in this attack, because, while it might be interesting, yet, without a map of the ground and details, would serve no useful purpose. I forward herewith the official reports of General Pierce and Colonels Bendix and Townsend, which contain all that may be material.

BATTLE OF BIG BETHEL

13

CASUALTIES IN THE UNITED STATES FORCES AT BIG BETHEL, JUNE 10, 1861.

Commands	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Aggregate	Remarks
Staff	1	1	Maj. Theodore Winthrop
Infantry					
Fourth Massachusetts	1	....	....	1
First New York	2	1	....	3
Second New York .....	....	2	1	3
Third New York	2	27	1	30	
Fifth New York	6	13	....	19
Seventh New York	3	7	2	12	
First Vermont	2	3	1	6	
Second U. S. Artillery	1	....	....	1
Total	18	53	5	76	Lieut. John T. Greble

GENERAL PIERCE'S LETTER.

CAMP HAMILTON, JUNE 12, 1861.

To the Editor of the Boston Journal:

Please correct the erroneous report set afloat by my enemies. There were but seven killed of the forces that went from this camp, in the expedition to Little and Great Bethel, on the 10th of this month, and Col. Townsend, of the Third Regiment New York Volunteers, who was formerly Adjutant-General of the State of New York, offers to certify that I gave my orders properly, and that under the circumstances the battle could not have been managed better.

This I write that the public may not judge me before I have time to be heard.

Captain Haggerty and Major Winthrop, of General Butler's Staff, were with me and advising me to do as I did. Gen. Butler has not intimated to me as yet that he blames me at all.

In haste, yours, etc.

GENERAL PIERCE'S REPORT.

CAMP HAMILTON, JUNE 12, 1861.

Sir: Sunday forenoon, June 9, 1861, I received an order requiring my attendance at your headquarters forthwith, where I arrived at about 11 o'clock, and found you and Colonel Duryea, of my command, consulting upon a plan of proposed attack upon places known as Big Bethel and Little Bethel, and received from Captain Butler, of your staff, the following plan of operations:

A regiment or battalion to march from Camp Hamilton (Duryea's), each to be supported by sufficient reserves, under arms in camp and in advance guard out on the line of march. Duryea to push out two pickets at 10 p. m., one also two and a half miles beyond Hampton, on the county road, but not so far as to alarm the enemy. This is important. Sec-

ond picket half as far as the first; both pickets as much out of sight as possible. No one, whomsoever, to be allowed to pass out through their lines. Persons to be allowed to pass inwards, unless it appeared they intend to go around about and dodge through the point. At 12 o'clock p. m. (midnight) Colonel Duryea will march his regiment, with twenty rounds cartridges, in the county road toward Little Bethel; scows to be provided to ferry them across Hampton Creek. *

March to be rapid but not hurried.

A howitzer, with canister and shrapnel, to go, and a wagon with planks and materials to repair New Market Bridge. Duryea to have the 200 rifles; he will pick the men to whom they are intrusted. Rockets to be thrown up from Newport News. Notify Commodore Pendergast of this, to prevent general alarm. Newport News movement to be made somewhat later, as the distance is somewhat less. If we find the enemy and surprise them, we will fire a volley if desirable, *not reload*, and go ahead with the bayonet. As the attack is to be made at night, or the gray of the morning, and in two detachments, our people should have some token, say a white rag, or nearest approach to white attainable, on the left arm. Perhaps the detachments who are engaged in the expedition should be smaller than a regiment.

If we capture the Little Bethel men, push on to Big Bethel and similarly capture them. Burn up both the Bethels. Blow up, if brick. To protect our rear in case we take either field pieces, and the enemy should march the main body, if there are any, to recover them, it would be well to have a party of competent artilleryists, regular or otherwise, to handle the captured guns on the retirement of our main body; also spikes to spike them. George Scott is to have a revolver. And in pursuance of these orders is issued the following order early Sunday evening:

GENERAL ORDERS,)

NO. 12.)

HEADQUARTERS, CAMP HAMILTON, JUNE 9, 1861.

A plan of attack to-night is herewith inclosed and forwarded to Colonel Duryea, commanding Fifth Regiment of New York State Volunteers, who will act accordingly. Colonel Townsend, commanding Third Regiment of New York State Volunteers, will march his command in support of Colonel Duryea. Colonel Carr, commanding the Second Regiment New York State Volunteers, will detach the artillery company of his regiment with their field pieces, and take their position at the burned bridge, near Hampton. Colonels Allen, Carr, and McChesney will hold their entire command in readiness, fully prepared to march at a moment's notice. All the troops will be supplied with one day's rations, and each man with twenty rounds of ball cartridges; and, that no mistake may be made, all the troops, as they charge, will shout "Boston." Colonels Allen, Carr, Townsend, Duryea, and McChesney will govern themselves accordingly.

By command of Brig. Gen. E. W. Pierce:

R. A. PIERCE, Brigade Major.

And, in compliance with this order, Colonel Duryea sent out two pickets at 10 o'clock p. m., two and one-half miles beyond Hampton, on the county road, with orders to keep out of sight as much as possible,

allowing persons to pass in, but none to pass out. At twenty minutes past 12 o'clock (midnight) Colonel Duryea passed the remainder of his command over the river at Hampton, and pushed on for Little Bethel, having now upon that side of the river some 850 men. He was followed about two hours after by the Third Regiment New York State Volunteers, Colonel Townsend, with 650 men, and a detachment from Colonel Carr's regiment, with two mountain howitzers, under the direction of a non-commissioned officer and four privates of the U. S. Army, accompanied by myself, with an aide-de-camp; and we had proceeded on about four miles, having taken the precaution to keep a mounted officer considerably in advance to reconnoiter the road until we had reached New Market Bridge, where we came up with a considerable number of Colonel Duryea's men, who were left to guard the bridge. Passing on myself, with aide-de-camp still being considerably in advance, we discovered a large body of armed men by the roadside, who appeared to be emerging from the woods and taking up their position on the road, and, believing them to be friends, we were passing on, when we suddenly discovered that they were occupying the road with a field piece, just ready to open fire upon us, and we were immediately saluted by a volley from their small-arms and a discharge from their field piece, quickly followed by an indiscriminate fire from Colonel Townsend's regiment. I rode back, ordered them to cease firing, charge bayonets, and shout *Boston*. Colonel Townsend's men fell to the right and left of the road in confusion, but in a few minutes rallied and reformed, by directions of myself and Colonel Townsend, under a very heavy fire. I then ordered the column to withdraw to a position about one-half a mile back across the bridge, on rising ground, where they could sustain themselves, destroying the bridge as we passed. This movement I caused to be made, hoping to draw the supposed enemy from their positions, and also to await re-enforcements, which I had sent for, from Hampton. When we found the supposed enemy advancing, I threw out skirmishers, who, to my surprise, I soon found uniting themselves with the supposed enemy, who in a few minutes proved to be friends, and a portion of the forces from Newport News, commanded by Colonel Bendix. The result of this fire upon us was, 2 mortally wounded (1 since dead); 3 dangerously; 4 officers and 12 privates slightly; making a total, 21.

Leaving the rest to collect the wounded and refresh the tired men, I had an interview with the commanding officers present — Colonels Townsend, Duryea, and Lieutenant-Colonel Washburn — and was strongly advised by Duryea and Washburn not to proceed, as the enemy, being now warned of our approach, would gain strength from Yorktown, and that the original design of surprise had now become fully frustrated. I decided that it was my duty to follow my written instructions, and in this decision was sustained by Major Winthrop and Captain Haggerty, your aides-de-camp.

In answer to the remonstrance of Colonel Duryea and Washburn, that re-enforcements would come from Yorktown, I replied that we had already sent for re-enforcements from Camp Hamilton, and I hoped that ours at least might equal theirs. We then marched on, being joined by the forces from Newport News; and in reply to the question from Colo-

nel Washburn, how are we to proceed, I said, follow the original design of General Butler to the extent of our several abilities.

Soon after arrived at Little Bethel. That we burned, finding no resistance, and halted the column, bringing the artillery to the front. We soon after obtained the testimony of a woman at a farm-house that Big Bethel was garrisoned by some 4,000 men, and from a negro obtained substantially a like information. When we arrived within a mile of County Bridge the column halted, and Captains Kilpatrick and Bartlett having discovered that the enemy were holding a strong position in battery at the head of the road, we now drew up in line of battle at the skirts of the wood, the artillery and howitzers being pushed some thirty rods up the road. Captains Winslow, Bartlett, and Kilpatrick having been ordered to advance as skirmishers, the regiment of Colonel Duryea was by my orders moved out to the right of the main road, the right flank resting behind a dense wood which skirted the road, where it remained in line of battle in an open field about 300 paces from the battery.

The forces from Newport News were brought into a second line of battle in the field to the left of the road, and were soon after moved by a flank so as to cross the road to cover the front, then being vacated by the Fifth Regiment, now being marched by a flank through and covered by the woods on the right, the Fifth Regiment being supported on the right by the forces from Newport News. The latter, being marched through the woods for that purpose, made several attempts to charge the batteries, but were prevented by creek. Meanwhile the artillery in the road was operated by the directions of Lieutenant Greble, who lost his life just at the close of the action.

While this was being done on the right, I directed Colonel Townsend, with his regiment, to advance and take a position in a lane at right angles to the main road leading to the battery, where he was directed to send out skirmishers to ascertain the strength of the enemy's right, and for that purpose detailed Captains John G. Butler and Edwin S. Jenny, with their companies, to cross the field immediately, and to so skirmish as to draw the enemy's fire, which was gallantly performed. The enemy's fire was delivered vigorously. Colonel Townsend now moved his regiment up to the point where the skirmishers were engaged — a movement which the regiment performed in line of battle as if on parade, in the face of a severe fire of artillery and small-arms, in a manner entirely satisfactory — and were joined by about one hundred of the Fifth Regiment as skirmishers on the right of Colonel Townsend's command.

By the time Colonel Townsend's regiment had arrived at its position it became apparent that the battery had been strongly re-enforced, and that any effort to take it was useless. Besides, a company of that regiment had been separated from the regiment by a thickly-hedged ditch, and as the regiment moved forward towards the skirmishers this company marched into the adjoining field in a line with the regiment. This was not known to Colonel Townsend, who supposed, when the regiment approached, that it was the entire regiment. Consequently, upon seeing among the breaks in the hedges the glistening of bayonets in the adjoining field (he) immediately concluded that the enemy were out-flanking him, (and) conceived it to be his duty to retire and repel their

advance, when by his order his regiment resumed their original position. Shortly after I directed all the forces to retire.

Colonel Duryea having said that his men were tired out, completely exhausted, and that they must be taken to the rear, Colonel Allen, of the First New York Regiment, advancing at this time, I immediately directed him to throw his regiment into the lane to the left of the main road leading to the battery, and the Second Regiment, Colonel Carr commanding, were by order promptly formed in line of battle, covering the ground lately occupied by the Fifth Regiment, with their field pieces, upon the left. I then ordered the killed and wounded picked up, placed in whatever vehicle could be procured for their conveyance, the regiments of Colonels Allen and Carr meanwhile keeping the enemy at bay. On the retreat the regiment of Colonel Duryea led the column, followed by that of Colonel Townsend and the forces from Newport News, the regiments of Colonels Allen and Carr forming the rear guard of the retreating column. Some difficulty was experienced in keeping the men in proper order during the retreat, the men being so exhausted by thirst as to rush out of the ranks wherever water was to be had.

For killed, wounded and missing please refer to my former report.

In closing this report, I wish to bear my testimony to the gallant and soldierlike conduct of Colonel Townsend, who was indefatigable in encouraging his men and leading them in the hottest scenes of the action. I also desire to acknowledge the valuable service rendered me by the lamented Major Winthrop and Captain Haggerty, of your staff, in carrying orders to posts of exposure and danger. Colonel Carr, in covering the retreat, showed himself a good soldier, ready and willing to do his duty. In the death of Lieutenant Greble, of U. S. Army, who bravely fell at his gun, I recognize the loss of an able and gallant officer, whose conduct in the battle is deserving of all praise, and whose memory should be perpetuated by a grateful country.

Respectfully yours,

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COLONEL DURYEA'S REPORT.

June 11, 1861.

Sir: In accordance with your instructions previously received, I proceeded, on the night of the 9th of June, at half-past eleven o'clock P. M., on the march to Bethel.

The first two miles to Hampton Bridge, we proceeded leisurely along, waiting for the howitzer, which should be placed at the head of the advancing column. Arriving at Hampton Creek, much delay was occasioned by the non-arrival of the surf-boats, which were to convey the regiment across the river, and it was ten o'clock before the column was formed, ready to push forward up the other side.

We now advanced rapidly, and soon came up with our two companies of skirmishers, under Captains Bartlett and Kilpatrick, who had been despatched ahead an hour and a half previous. Proceeding steadily on

without resting a moment, we came, about four o'clock in the morning to Little Bethel, a distance of about thirteen miles. At this point we discovered and surprised the picket guard of the enemy, and a mounted officer, with four or five foot, were taken prisoners. While pushing forward towards Big Bethel we suddenly heard a heavy fire of musketry and cannon in our rear, bespeaking a severe engagement. Supposing it to be an attempt of the enemy to cut off our reserve, we immediately countermarched in quick and double-quick time, when, having proceeded about five miles, we came upon two of our regiments, and learned that in the darkness of the night they had mistaken each other for enemies, and that an unfortunate engagement, accompanied with some losses, had taken place. We then by your command returned, and advanced upon Great Bethel, being supported by the Seventh Regiment, under Colonel Bendix, and the Third, under Col. Townsend.

Proceeding to within a mile of County Bridge, the column halted, Capts. Kilpatrick and Bartlett having discovered that the enemy were holding a strong position in the battery at the head of the road. We now drew up in line of battle on the right, at the skirts of the woods, and the artillery, two howitzers, and a brass six-pounder, were pushed some thirty rods up the road. At this point Lieut. Col. Warren rode into the field and assumed his position in the regiment, and, from his previous knowledge of the ground, proved of invaluable assistance.

Capt. Winslow, Bartlett, and Kilpatrick having been ordered to advance under Lieut. Col. Warren, as skirmishers, the regiment was formed on the left, from whence I led the column in person up the road toward the enemy's battery; but the fire proving very destructive, we marched in good order till we were covered by the woods on the right, where we halted for some time for rest, and in order to complete the preparations for charging the batteries in flank. In the mean time, Lieut.-Col. Warren made a reconnaissance and reported a plan of attack.

I then led off the troops to the left, in the open field, and also to the right, supported on the right by the German Rifles. After several attempts to charge the batteries, being prevented by the creek, we withdrew, by your command, to the rear, and having collected our killed and wounded, such as we could find, proceeded down the main road. Lieut.-Col. Warren, however, with a small detachment, remained and brought away the body of Lieut. Greble, with the field-piece he was serving with such effect at the time of his death. Our chaplain also remained to care for the wounded, but being cut off by a company of cavalry, he only escaped by taking to the woods, and escaping under cover of the night. We continued our march toward Hampton, and reached the bridge, having only four killed, twelve wounded, and two missing.

The following names deserve an honorable mention:— Lieut.-Col. Warren, for his aid in forming the plan of attack, and remaining among the last to bring away a brother officer; also Chaplain Winslow, for his many kind attentions to the wounded; also Captains Bartlett, Kilpatrick and Winslow for the effective manner in which they skirmished before the enemy's heavy fire; also, Lieut. J. Duryea, who led the charge up to the left flank of the batteries; also, Lieuts. York and Cambreling; Surgeon Gilbert for performing upon the field of battle successful amputations and for his continued attention to the suffering and wounded, not

only on the field, but afterward at the hospital, when almost exhausted; also, Lieut. Gouv. Carr, who was commanding Company B, his captain being ill, and Lieut. Geo. Duryea; also, Sergeants Agnes, Onderdonk, Allison, and Corporal Brunner.

Yet there was no flinching on the part of any officer or private, and I might mention many more with honor. In closing, I cannot but speak of Col. Townsend, of the Third, who, with his whole command, stood up nobly in my support, until compelled to retreat by the terrible fire.

Per order,

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CAPTAIN KILPATRICK'S REPORT.

JUNE 11, 1861.

Sir: In accordance with your orders, I have the honor to submit the following report of my command, acting as the Advance Guard, on the evening of the 9th, and a brief account of my command during the engagement on the following day, at the New County Bridge. I left camp with my command at 10 P. M., consisting of fifty men of Company H, one lieutenant, (Cambreling,) four sergeants, and four corporals; Company I, Capt. Bartlett, one lieutenant, (York,) four sergeants, and two corporals crossed the river at Hampton 10½ P. M.; reached Newmarket Bridge at 1 A. M., threw out scouts in all directions and waited for the main body, which arrived at 3 A. M. According to your orders, I advanced on the road to New County Bridge, the point where the enemy was reported to have made a stand. A little before daylight, when within a mile and a quarter of the bridge, we discovered the outlying picket guard of the enemy, and were challenged, "Who comes there?" I replied, "Who stands there?" A horseman attempted to leave. Corporal Ellerson, of Company H, sprang in advance, directing him to halt. I, supposing the enemy to be in force, gave the command to fire and charge. In a moment the affair was over, twenty or thirty shots had been given and exchanged; the officer of the guard was captured and disarmed. At this time, hearing firing in the rear, and supposing that our rear guard was attacked, I returned to follow the main body under Col. Duryea, who was advancing by forced march in the direction of the firing, only to discover that by mistake our own forces coming in different directions, and supposing each to be the enemy, had fired several shots before the mistake was discovered. I again advanced, and at 8 A. M. met with and drove in the picket guards of the enemy. I then detached a portion of my command, made an armed reconnaissance, and found the enemy with about from 3,000 to 5,000 men posted in a strong position on the opposite side of the bridge—three earthworks and a masked battery on the right and left; in advance of the stream thirty pieces of artillery and a large force of cavalry, all of which information I reported to you at once. I was ordered to advance and engage the enemy in throwing out skirmishers on the right and left of the road leading to the bridge. We rapidly advanced, supported by the Advance Guard of

Col. Duryea and three pieces of artillery under Lieut. Greble, of the First Regiment United States Artillery. The enemy soon opened fire on us from the rifled cannon in front. We answered his discharges by a cheer, and continued to advance, clearing all before us, till we reached a point just on the edge of the woods, where the fire was so hot and heavy that we were compelled to halt, and there we remained as directed by Lieut.-Col. Warren, till that gallant officer had made dispositions to turn their flanks. The enemy's fire at this time began to tell upon us with great effect; my men were falling one after another, as was the case of the rest of the command.

After remaining in this position about two hours, and our object having been accomplished, numbers of our men being killed and wounded, having received a grape shot through my thigh, which tore off a portion of the rectangle on Col. Duryea's left shoulder, passed through my leg and killed a soldier in the rear, I withdrew my men to the skirts of the wood. We managed to reach Lieut. Greble's battery and bring to his aid several of my men. The charge was then sounded, Lieut. Greble opened fire with grape and canister within two hundred yards of the enemy's lines. Capts. Winslow, Bartlett, and myself charged with our commands in front; Captain Denike and Lieut. Duryea, (son of Col. Duryea), and about two hundred of the Troy Rifles upon the right; Col. Townsend with his men to the left. The enemy were forced out of the first battery, all the forces were rapidly advancing, and every thing promised a speedy victory, when we were ordered to fall back. Where this order came from I do not know. We maintained our position till Col. Townsend began to retire with his whole command. Being left thus alone and no prospects of receiving aid, we ordered the men to fall back, which they did, and in good order, forming their line of battle about one hundred and fifty yards in the rear. A few minutes afterwards orders came from Gen. Pierce to cease firing and retire. It gives me great pleasure to mention the gallant conduct of Capt. Bartlett, who came up with the reserve, reinforcing my line, and who was ever at the point of danger, encouraging his men. Lieut. York, in command of my left, and Lieut. Cambreling, in command of my right, displayed the greatest bravery. Lieut. York's sword was broken by a grape shot, and he was slightly wounded in the leg.

I shall ever be grateful to Capt. Winslow, who rescued me after our forces had left. He came to my aid, assisted by Sergeants Onderdonk and Agnes, at the last moment, but in time to rescue me from the enemy.

I would also favorably mention Private Wood, who brought me valuable information, and who fired the first shot; Private John Dunn, whose arm was shattered by a cannon ball, and who bore himself with the greatest bravery, and who said to Surgeon Gilbert, while amputating his arm, that he could not have lost it in a nobler cause. The whole command, men and officers, did themselves the greatest credit, and I am satisfied can conquer any thing except impossibilities. Respectfully submitted,

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COLONEL ALLEN'S REPORT.

JUNE 11, 1861.

Major General B. F. Butler:—

Sir: I have the honor to report that, in accordance with orders received from General Pierce on the night of the 9th inst., my command was ordered under arms at eleven P. M., and marched to Hampton Creek to support Colonels Townsend and Duryea. I returned to this camp at four A. M., of the 10th inst., and was again ordered out at six A. M. to proceed forward to Big Bethel, where the enemy was reported to be stationed in force. After a rapid march of twelve miles I reached the ground and found the action going on. Upon reporting to General Pierce, he directed me to proceed to the front and deploy my regiment in front of the battery, which I did, and so remained for one hour and forty minutes under a heavy fire of at least twenty guns, some of them rifled and about four shell guns—the enemy deploying in my front with about 1,200 men and two guns, but made no advance. They, however, threw out two heavy flanking parties on my right and left, the former with two guns, and completely outflanked the entire brigade, at which time General Pierce deemed it proper to retire. From the most reliable information I am certain there were at least four thousand of the enemy on the ground, with constant reinforcements from Yorktown.

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COLONEL TOWNSEND'S REPORT. .

JUNE 12, 1861.

Sir: I have the honor to report, for the information of Brigadier General Pierce, that on the evening of Sunday, June 9, I received orders from him to have my command in readiness, with one day's rations, to move that night, to form part of a column composed of two regiments from Newport News and Colonel Duryea's and my own, intended to make a reconnoissance in force towards Yorktown. In obedience to these orders, with the concerted sign of a white badge upon our left arms, at midnight I marched my regiment to Hampton, where the general met the command and accompanied it.

On approaching a defile through a thick wood, about five or six miles from Hampton, a heavy and well-sustained fire of canister and small-arms was opened upon the regiment while it was marching in a narrow road upon the flank, in route step, and wholly unsuspecting of an enemy, inasmuch as we were ordered to re-inforce Colonel Duryea, who had preceded us by some two hours, and who had been ordered to throw out as he marched an advance guard two and a half miles from his regiment and a sustaining force half way between the advance and the regiment;

therefore, had Colonel Duryea been obliged to retreat upon us before we reached his locality, we should have heard distant firing or some of his regiment would have been seen retreating. The force which fired upon us was subsequently ascertained to be only the regiment of Colonel Bendix, through a portion of the Vermont and Fourth Massachusetts regiments were with it, having come down with two 6-pounder field pieces from Newport News to join the column. These regiments took up a masked position in the woods at the commencement of the defile. The result of the fire upon us was, two mortally wounded (one since dead), three dangerously, and four officers and twelve privates slightly, making a total of twenty-one.

At the commencement of the fire the general, Captain Chamberlain, his aide-de-camp, and two mountain howitzers, were about two hundred and fifty paces in advance of the regiment. The fire was opened upon them first by a discharge from small-arms, and immediately followed by a rapidly-sustained volley upon my regiment and the field pieces. My men then generally discharged their pieces and jumped on the right and left of the road and recommenced loading and firing. In a few minutes the regiment was reformed in the midst of this heavy fire, and by the general directions retired in a thoroughly military manner, in order to withdraw the supposed enemy from his position.

On ascertaining that the enemy were our friends, and providing for the wounded, we joined Colonel Duryea and Colonel Bendix, the former having returned, and proceeded on the reconnaissance at Big Bethel. Some seven or more miles on we found the enemy in force, well fortified, with a battery, said to be of twenty guns, in position, some of them rifle cannon. The information relative to the guns in position at the Bethel battery was given to me on the ground by Colonel Duryea, who informed me that he received it from a reconnoitering officer whom he had sent to the front to ascertain the position of things. On arriving at this point, in order to feel the enemy, battle was immediately given by the orders of the general. We were ordered to take up a position in a field about eight hundred paces from the battery. I was then directed by the general to advance to a position in a road at right angles to the main road leading to the battery, and about two hundred paces from it, on the left of Colonel Duryea. I was then directed to send out skirmishers to ascertain the strength of the enemy's right, for which purpose I detailed Capts. John G. Butler and Edwin S. Jenny, with their companies, to cross the field immediately in front of the right of the battery and so to skirmish as to draw the enemy's fire, which duty they gallantly performed. The enemy's fire was delivered vigorously almost immediately upon these companies entering the field. On crossing it myself, and considering that there might be a possibility of our capturing the battery, I moved the regiment up to the point where our skirmishers were engaged—a movement which the regiment performed in line of battle as if on parade, in face of a severe fire of artillery and small-arms, and in a manner entirely to my satisfaction.

By the time the regiment had arrived at its position it became evident that the right portion of the battery had been strongly re-enforced by men from the enemy's left, and that an effort to take the battery then was useless; besides, a company of my regiment had been separated from

the regiment by a thickly-hedged ditch, and as the regiment moved forward toward the skirmishers, this company marched in the adjoining field on a line with the regiment.

This was not known to me until after the engagement. I supposed when the regiment approached that it was the entire regiment. Consequently, upon seeing among the breaks in the hedge the glistening of bayonets in the adjoining field, I immediately concluded that the enemy were outflanking us, and conceived it to be my duty immediately to retire and repel that advance. I resumed, therefore, my original position on the left of Colonel Duryea. Shortly after all the forces were directed to retire, the design of the reconnaissance having been accomplished.

I of course forbear speaking of the movements of other corps, excepting as immediately connected with my regiment, and it were especially gratuitous, inasmuch as the general was upon the field and directed the movements of the various commands in person.

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COLONEL BENDIX'S REPORT.

JUNE 12, 1861.

Sir: On the evening of the 10th instant I proceeded, according to instructions, to the cross-roads, and took my position as reserve with one field piece. The advance, consisting of 300 men of the Vermont, 300 of the Massachusetts, and 150 men belonging to my regiment, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Washburn, of the Vermont regiment, had gone on with one field piece. I was taking my position when we saw what I supposed some cavalry. I asked the gunner if he was loaded. The answer was "No, sir." Then I directed him to load, but before this was done the firing commenced. Lieutenant Greble, of the U. S. Army, rode forward for assistance. The firing lasted some fifteen minutes—I am not certain which commenced the fire. I did not give the word to fire, but think likely my men fired first, and finding the fire returned, and not expecting friends from that quarter, I stopped the firing as soon as I could, and directed one company to guard the rear and one company to go out in the field on the right and find out where the enemy (as I supposed them to be) were situated. Then sent a squad down the road and found to my horror that there had been a sad mistake, having fired upon General Pierce and staff and Colonel Townsend's regiment. Our advance then returned to my assistance. Lieutenant-Colonel Kapff, on my right, then reported that he had taken two prisoners (citizens) with double barreled shot-guns in their hands. One of the pieces had one barrel discharged. The prisoners were sent to Fort Monroe. My men took one gold and one silver watch, with pocket-book, containing some silver and paper money, from them, which I have, subject to orders.

I was then ordered to bring up the rear of the column, and proceed to Big Bethel. We had marched some six or seven miles, when I was ordered to the front with the field piece, and before we had got ready or act on the enemy opened their fire upon us, striking one man down

by my side at the first shot. Not expecting this, it caused some confusion, and having received no orders, I did the best I could as skirmishers in the woods. I then looked for General Pierce, and by his direction took my position on the enemy's left flank with some two hundred Vermont and Massachusetts troops, and we were not strong enough to make an attack, and after firing some time, withdrew back into the woods. When we got into the woods I found the troops retiring, and followed. I then saw General Pierce, who told me to retire, which I did in the main column until we came to the cross-roads, when our detachment came to Newport News. x

x List of casualties, here omitted, is embraced in statement following General Butler's reports, p. 8.

COLONEL MAGRUDER'S REPORTS.

JUNE 10, 1861.

Sir: I have the honor to inform you that we were attacked by about 3,500 troops of the Federal Army, with several pieces of heavy artillery, firing grape shot, this morning at 10 o'clock, and at 12½ routed them completely, with considerable loss on their side. The prisoners report their force to be 5,000. It was certainly 3,500. Ours about 1,200 engaged; 1,400 in all.

Mr. George A. Magruder, Jr., a volunteer aide, who is as conspicuous for his gallantry as for his efficiency, will deliver this in person.

Thirty-five hundred men are on my right flank; 10,000 on my left. Please send reinforcements immediately. Yorktown and Williamsburg, in my rear, have troops quite insufficient in numbers to defend them.

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JUNE 10, 1861.

Sir: The enemy, thirty-five hundred strong, attacked us at our post, and after a very animated conflict of two hours and a half was repulsed at all points and totally routed. Four companies of cavalry are now in hot pursuit toward Newport News. I cannot speak too highly of the devotion of our troops, all of whom did their duty nobly, and whilst it might appear invidious to speak particularly of any regiment or corps where all behaved so well, I am compelled to express my great appreciation of the skill and gallantry of Major Randolph and his howitzer batteries, and Colonel Hill, the officers and men of the North Carolina regiment. As an instance of the latter I will merely mention that a gun under the gallant Captain Brown, of the howitzer battery, had been rendered unfit for service by the breaking of a priming wire in the vent, and not being defended by infantry from the small number we had at our command, Captain Brown threw it over a precipice, and the work was occupied for a moment by the enemy. Captain Bridgers,

of the North Carolina Regiment, in the most gallant manner retook it and held it until Captain Brown had replaced and put into position another piece, and then defended it with his infantry in the most gallant manner. Colonel Hill's judicious and determined action was worthy of his ancient glory, and Colonel Stuart, Major Montague, Major Cary, Captains Walker and Atkinson, with every officer and every man under their command, did good service in the front of the fight.

The able and efficient manner in which Captains Douthatt, Phillips and Jones, of the cavalry, performed the duties of infantry, and Lieutenant Chisman, of the Wythe Rifles, in protecting the rear of the position is deserving of high commendation.

There were many acts of personal gallantry, some under my own observation, and others which were reported to me, that I will take occasion to mention in a subsequent communication. At present I expect another attack, and have no time.

I am extremely indebted to the two brothers, Robert H. and William R. Vaughan, my acting commissary and quartermaster, for the most gallant and efficient services, no less than to my youthful aides, Mr.

George A. Magruder, Jr., and Hugh Stannard, who were always in the front of the fight, and upon whom I request the Government to bestow commissions, as they are desirous of entering the regular service.

In the hurry of this communication I may have omitted to mention many gallant men.

* * * *

Number of killed and wounded on our side—one killed and seven wounded. Enemy—ten dead bodies found, as reported to me, and perhaps fifty wounded. Three prisoners. Our force, all told, about one thousand two hundred men. Enemy—three thousand five hundred, with 18 and 24 pounder guns, besides light guns.

June 12, 1861.

Sir: I had the honor to transmit by Mr. Hugh Stannard a short account of a battle with the enemy at Bethel Bridge, on the 10th. This was written on the field, and I had not then had time to ascertain the number of killed and wounded on the other side. I think I reported 10 killed and many wounded. I have now to report that eighteen dead were found on the field, and I learn from reliable citizens living on the road that many dead as well as a great many wounded were carried in wagons to Hampton. I think I can safely report their loss at from twenty-five or thirty killed and one hundred and fifty wounded. I understand the enemy acknowledge 175 killed and wounded. It is a source of great gratification to me to be able to say that our own loss as far as heard from was only one killed and seven wounded, but too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the heroic soldier whom we lost.

He was one of four who volunteered to set fire to a house in our front which was thought to afford protection to our enemy, and advancing

alone between the two fires he fell midway, pierced in the forehead by a musket ball. Henry L. Wyatt is the name of this brave soldier and devoted patriot. He was a member of the brave and gallant North Carolina regiment.

I omitted to mention in my hurried dispatch of the 10th the name of Captain Jones, of ~~the~~ Cavalry, who rendered important service before and during the battle. I regret to say that one of his vedettes was cut off by the enemy, and is presumed to have been taken prisoner.

I cannot omit to again bring to the notice of the general commanding-in-chief the valuable services and gallant conduct of the First North Carolina Regiment, and Major Randolph, of the howitzer batteries. These officers were not only prompt and daring in the execution of their duties, but most industrious and energetic in the preparations for the conflict. The firing of the howitzer batteries was as perfect as the bearing of the men, which was entirely what it ought to have been. Captain Bridgers, of the North Carolina regiment, retook in the most daring manner, and at a critical period of the fight, the work from which Captain Brown, of the artillery, had withdrawn a disabled gun to prevent its falling into the hands of the enemy, and which work had been subsequently occupied by the enemy. This work was soon again occupied with another piece by Captain Brown, who resumed an effective fire. Captain Bridgers deserves the highest praise for this timely act of gallantry.

The Louisiana regiment arrived after the battle was over, having made a most extraordinary march. They returned to Yorktown the same night, making a distance of twenty-eight miles. It was not thought prudent to leave Yorktown exposed any longer. I therefore occupied the ground with cavalry, and marched the remainder of my forces to Yorktown. We took several prisoners, among them some wounded.

Our means of transportation were exceedingly limited, but the wounded enemy were carried with our own wounded to farm houses in our rear, where the good people, who have lost almost everything by this war, and who could see the smoking ruins of their neighbors' houses, destroyed by the enemy both in his advance and retreat, received them most kindly and bound up their wounds. I also ordered the humane Captain Brown to bury as many of the enemy's dead as could be found near our camp, which was done.

The cavalry pursued the enemy for five miles, but were stopped by the bridge across Black River at New Market, which was destroyed by the flying enemy after crossing it.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

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COLONEL HILL'S REPORTS

June 11, 1861.

Honorable J. W. Ellis, Governor of North Carolina:

Sir: I have the honor to report that eight hundred of my regiment and three hundred and sixty Virginians were engaged for five and a

half hours with four and a half regiments of the enemy, at Bethel Church, nine miles from Hampton.

The enemy made three distinct and well-sustained charges, but were repulsed with heavy loss. Our cavalry pursued them for six miles, when their retreat became a total rout. Fearing that heavy reinforcements would be sent up from Fortress Monroe, we fell back at nightfall upon our works at Yorktown. I regret to report the loss of one man killed—private Henry L. Wyatt, Edgecomb Guards—and seven wounded.

The loss of the enemy, by their own confession, was one hundred and fifty, but it may be safely estimated at two hundred and fifty.

Our regiment behaved most gallantly. Not a man shrunk from his post or showed symptoms of fear. When more at leisure I will give you a detailed report of the operations.

Our Heavenly Father has most wonderfully interposed to shield our hearts in the day of battle. Unto His Great Name be all the praise for our success.

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Sir: I have the honor to report that, in obedience to orders from the colonel commanding, I marched on the 6th instant, with my regiment and four pieces of Major Randolph's battery, from Yorktown, on the Hampton road, to Bethel Church, nine miles from Hampton. We reached there after dark on a wet night, and slept without tents. Early on the morning of the 7th I made a reconnoissance of the ground, preparatory to fortifying. I found a branch of Back River on our front, and encircling our right flank. On our left was a dense and almost impassable wood, except about one hundred and fifty yards of old field. The breadth of the road, a thick wood, and narrow cultivated field covered our rear. The nature of the ground determined me to make an enclosed work, and I had the invaluable aid of Lieutenant-Colonel Lee, of my regiment, in its plan and construction. Our position had the inherent defect of being commanded by an immense field immediately in front of it, upon which the masses of the enemy might be readily deployed. Presuming that an attempt would be made to carry the bridge across the stream, a battery was made for its especial protection, and Major Randolph placed his guns so as to sweep all the approaches to it. The occupation of two commanding eminences beyond the creek and on our right would have greatly strengthened our position, but our forces were too weak to admit of the occupation of more than one of them. A battery was laid out on it for one of Randolph's howitzers. We had only twenty-five spades, and six axes, and three picks, but these were busily plied all day and night of the 7th and all day on the 8th. On the afternoon of the 8th I learned that a marauding party of the enemy was within a few miles of us. I called for a party of thirty-four men to drive them back. Lieutenant Roberts, of Company F, of my regiment, promptly responded, and in five minutes his command was en route. I detached Major Randolph with one howitzer to join them, and Lieutenant-Colonel Lee, First Regiment North Carolina Volunteers, requested and was granted permission to take command of the whole. After a march of five miles they came across the marauders busy over the spoils

of a plundered house. A shell soon put the plunderers to flight, and they were chased over New Market Bridge, where our little force was halted, in consequence of the presence of a considerable body situated on the other side. Lieutenant-Colonel Lee brought in one prisoner. How many of the enemy were killed and wounded is not known. None of our command was hurt. Soon after Lieutenant-Colonel Lee left a citizen came dashing in with the information that seventy-five marauders were on the Back River road. I called for Capt. McDowell's company (E), of the First Regiment of North Carolina Volunteers, and in three minutes it was in hot pursuit. Lieutenant West, of the Howitzer Battalion, with one piece, was detached to join them, and Major Lane, of my regiment, volunteered to assume command of the whole. After a weary march they encountered, dispersed, and chased the wretches over the New Market Bridge—this being the second race on the same day over the New Market course, in both of which the Yankees reached the goal first. Major Lane brought in one prisoner. Reliable citizens reported that two cart loads and one buggy load of wounded were taken into Hampton. We had not a single man killed or wounded. Colonel Magruder came up that evening and assumed command.

On Sunday, the 9th, a fresh supply of tools enabled us to put more men to work, and, when not engaged in religious duties, the men worked vigorously on the intrenchments. We were aroused at 3 o'clock on Monday for a general advance upon the enemy, and marched three and a half miles, when we learned that the foe, in large force, was within a few hundred yards of us. We fell back hastily upon our entrenchments, and awaited the arrival of our invaders. Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart, of the Third Virginia Regiment, having come with some one hundred and eighty men, was stationed on the hill on the extreme right, beyond the creek, and Company G, of my regiment, was also thrown over the stream to protect the howitzer under Captain Brown. Captain Bridgers, of Company A., First North Carolina Regiment, took post in the dense woods beyond and to the left of the road. Major Montague, with three companies of his battalion, was ordered up from the rear, and took post on our right, beginning at the church and extending along the entire front on that side. This fine body of men and the gallant command of Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart worked with great rapidity, and in an hour had constructed temporary shelters against the enemy's fire. Just at 9 o'clock a. m. the heavy columns of the enemy were seen approaching rapidly and in good order, but when Randolph opened upon them at 9:15 their organization was completely broken up. The enemy promptly replied with his artillery, firing briskly but wildly. He made an attempt at deployment on our right of the road, under cover of some houses and a paling. He was, however, promptly driven back by our artillery, a Virginia company—the Life Guards—and Companies B and G of my regiment. The enemy attempted no deployment within musketry range during the day, except under cover of woods, fences, or paling. Under cover of the trees he moved a strong column to an old ford, some three-quarters of a mile below, where I placed a picket of some forty men. Colonel Magruder sent Captain Werth's company of Montague's command with one howitzer, under Sergeant Crane, to drive back this column, which was done by a single shot from a howitzer. Before

this a priming wire had been broken in the vent of the howitzer commanded by Captain Brown, and rendered it useless.

A force estimated at one thousand five hundred was now attempting to outflank us and get in the rear of Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart's small command. He was accordingly directed to fall back, and the whole of our advanced troops were withdrawn. At this critical moment I directed Lieutenant-Colonel Lee to call Captain Bridgers out of the swamp and ordered him to reoccupy the nearest advanced work, and I ordered Captain Ross, Company C, First Regiment North Carolina Volunteers, to the support of Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart. These two captains, with their companies, crossed over to Randolph's battery, under a most heavy fire, in a most gallant manner. As Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart had withdrawn, Captain Ross was detained at the church, near Randolph's battery. Captain Bridgers, however, crossed over and drove the zouaves out of the advanced howitzer battery, and reoccupied it. It is impossible to overestimate this service. It decided the action in our favor.

In obedience to orders from Colonel Magruder, Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart marched back, and, in spite of the presence of a foe ten times his superior in number, resumed in the most heroic manner possession of his intrenchments. A fresh howitzer was carried across and placed in the battery, and Captain Avery, of Company G, was directed to defend it at all hazards.

We were now as secure as at the beginning of the fight, and as yet had no man killed. The enemy, finding himself foiled on our right flank, next made his final demonstration on our left. A strong column, supposed to consist of volunteers from different regiments, and under command of Captain Winthrop, aide-de-camp to General Butler, crossed over the creek and appeared at the angle on our left. Those in advance had put on our distinctive badge of a white band around the cap, and they cried out repeatedly, "Don't fire." This ruse was practiced to enable the whole column to get over the creek and form in good order. They now began to cheer most lustily, thinking that our work was open at the gorge, and that they could get in by a sudden rush. Companies B and C, however, dispelled the illusion by a cool, deliberate and well-directed fire. Colonel Magruder sent over portions of Companies G, C, and H of my regiment to our support, and now began as cool firing on our side as was ever witnessed.

The three field officers of the regiment were present, and but few shots were fired without their permission, the men repeatedly saying, "May I fire?" "I think I can bring him." They were all in high glee, and seemed to enjoy it as much as boys do rabbit-shooting. Captain Winthrop, while most gallantly urging on his men, was shot through the heart, when all rushed back with the utmost precipitation. So far as my observation extended he was the only one of the enemy who exhibited even an approximation of courage during the whole day.

The fight at the angle lasted but twenty minutes. It completely discouraged the enemy, and he made no further effort at assault. The house in front, which had served as a hiding place for the enemy, was now fired by a shell from a howitzer, and the outhouses and palings were soon in a blaze. As all shelter was now taken from him, the enemy called in his troops, and started back for Hampton. As he had left sharp-

shooters behind him in the woods on our left, the dragoons could not advance until Captain Hoke, of Company K, First North Carolina Volunteers, had thoroughly explored them. As soon as he gave the assurance of the road being clear, Captain Douthatt, with some one hundred dragoons, in compliance with Colonel Magruder's orders, pursued. The enemy in his haste threw away hundreds of canteens, haversacks, overcoats, etc.; even the dead were thrown out of the wagons. The pursuit soon became a chase, and for the third time the enemy won the race over the New Market course. The bridge was torn up behind him and our dragoons returned to camp. There were not quite eight hundred of my regiment engaged in the fight, and not one-half of these drew trigger during the day. All remained manfully at the posts assigned them, and not a man in the regiment behaved badly. The companies not engaged were as much exposed and rendered equal service with those participating in the fight. They deserve equally the thanks of the country. In fact, it is the most trying ordeal to which soldiers can be subjected, to receive a fire which their orders forbid them to return. Had a single company left its post our works would have been exposed; and the constancy and discipline of the unengaged companies cannot be too highly commended. A detachment of fifteen cadets from the North Carolina Military Institute defended the howitzer under Lieutenant Hudnail, and acted with great coolness and determination.

I cannot speak in too high terms of my two field officers, Lieutenant-Colonel Lee and Major Lane. Their services have been of the highest importance since taking the field to the present moment. My thanks, too, are due, in an especial manner, to Lieut. J. M. Poteat, adjutant, and Lieut. J. W. Ratchford, aide, both of them cadets of the North Carolina Institute at Charlotte. The latter received a contusion in the forehead from a grape shot, which nearly cost him his life. Captain Bridgers' company, A; Lieutenant Owens, commanding Company B; Captain Ross, Company C; Captain Ashe, Company D; Captain McDowell, Company E; Captain Starr, Company F; Captain Avery, Company G; Captain Huske, Company H; Lieutenant Whittaker, commanding Company I; Captain Hoke, Company K, displayed great coolness, judgment, and efficiency. Lieutenant Gregory is highly spoken of by Major Lane for soldierly bearing on the 8th. Lieutenants Cook and McKethan, Company H, crossed over under a heavy fire to the assistance of the troops attacked on the left. So did Lieutenant Cohen, Company C. Lieutenant Hoke has shown great zeal, energy, and judgment as an engineer officer on various occasions.

Corporal George Williams, Privates Henry L. Wyatt, Thomas Falan, and John Thorpe, Company A, volunteered to burn the house which concealed the enemy. They behaved with great gallantry. Wyatt was killed and the other three were recalled.

Sergeant Thomas J. Stewart and Private William McDowell, Company A, reconnoitered the position of the enemy, and went far in advance of our troops. Private J. W. Potts, of Company B, is specially mentioned by his company commander; so are Sergeant William Elmo, Company C; Sergeants C. L. Watts, W. H. McDade, Company D; Sergeant J. M. Young, Corporal John Dingler, Privates G. H. A. Adams, R. V. Gudger, G. W. Werley, John C. Wright, T. Y. Little, J. F. Jenkins,

Company E; R. W. Stedman, M. E. Dye, H. E. Benton, J. B. Smith, Company F; G. W. Buhmann, James C. McRae, Company H.

Casualties.—Private Henry L. Wyatt, Company K, mortally wounded; Lieut. J. W. Ratchford, contusion; Private Council Rodgers, Company H, severely wounded; Private Charles Williams, Company H, severely wounded; Private S. Patterson, Company D, slightly wounded; Private William White, Company K, wounded; Private Peter Poteat, Company G, slightly wounded.

I cannot close this too elaborate report without speaking in the highest terms of admiration of the Howitzer Battery and its most accomplished commander, Major Randolph. He has no superior as an artilleryman in any country, and his men displayed the utmost skill and coolness. The left howitzer, under Lieutenant Hudnall, being nearest my works, came under my special notice. Their names are as follows:

Lieutenant Hudnall, commanding (wounded), Sergeant S. B. Hughes, G. H. Pendleton, R. P. Pleasants, William M. Caldwell, George W. Hobson, William McCarthy, H. C. Shook, (wounded), L. W. Timberlake, George P. Hughes, John Worth (wounded), D. B. Clark.

Permit me, in conclusion, to pay a well-deserved compliment to the First Regiment North Carolina Volunteers. Their patience under trial, perseverance under toil, and courage under fire have seldom been surpassed by veteran troops. Often working night and day—sometimes without tents and cooking utensils—a murmur has never escaped them to my knowledge. They have done a large portion of the work on the intrenchments at Yorktown, as well as those at Bethel. Had all of the regiments in the field worked with the same spirit, there would not be an assailable point in Virginia. After the battle they shook hands affectionately with the spades, calling them “clever fellows and good friends.”

The men are influenced by high moral and religious sentiments, and their conduct has furnished another example of the great truth that he who fears God will ever do his duty to his country.

The Confederates had in all about one thousand two hundred men in the action. The enemy had the regiments of Colonel Duryea (Zouaves), Colonel Carr, Colonel Allen, Colonel Bendix, and Colonel Wardrop (Massachusetts), from Old Point Comfort, and five companies of Phelps' regiment, from Newport News. We had never more than three hundred actively engaged at any one time. The Confederate loss was eleven wounded; of these, one mortally. The enemy must have lost some three hundred. I could not, without great disparagement of their courage, place their loss at a lower figure. It is inconceivable that five thousand men should make so precipitate a retreat without having sustained at least this much of a reverse. Let us devoutly thank the living God for His wonderful interposition in our favor, and evince our gratitude by the exemplariness of our lives.

With great respect,

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LIEUT. COL. STUART'S REPORT.

Sir: I have the honor to report that I took the position assigned me in the engagement of the 10th to the right and in front of the line of battle, and completed the slight breastwork erected to protect the command, consisting of three companies of my detachment, commanded by Captains Walker, Childrey, and Charters, numbering, rank and file, two hundred and eight men. The enemy deployed as skirmishers in the orchard, immediately in front and to our left, protected on the left by several frame buildings and sheds. Those in front were dispersed by a fire from the first platoon of Captain Walker's company, but we were annoyed by the fire from behind the buildings and the battery in the road to our left, but under cover of the breastworks the men remained unhurt. After the dispersion of the skirmishers a column of about fifteen hundred appeared in the road immediately in our front, extending from the left to right, with a battery of artillery in front, and advancing a line of skirmishers down the ravine on my right, protected from both view and fire, which fact was reported to me by scouts sent out for the purpose of observing their movements. The battery in front commenced advancing on the left of the ravine and immediately in our front. The battery supporting us on the left had been silenced and withdrawn some time before this. These facts being communicated to you, in obedience to your orders I retired in order through the swamp to the second position assigned me on the hill on the left of the church. Here one of my companies was detached and sent to the support of Captain Werth; another, under Captain Walker, was sent to Presson's, near the Warwick and York Bridge.

About this time Captain Atkinson's company had arrived on the field, and with this and a detachment of the Wythe Rifles I recrossed the swamp, advanced and regained my former position. I was supported at this time by a portion of Company G, of North Carolina Rifles, and with their aid again drove off some skirmishers advancing through the orchard. The firing, however, after I regained my position, was irregular on the part of the enemy, and I only permitted some few shots to be fired at a prominent position of their column and stragglers skulking behind the fences, owing to the enemy being much beyond rifle range.

Both officers and men under my command behaved with the greatest coolness throughout the whole engagement, and none were injured.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

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MAJOR RANDOLPH'S REPORT.

Yorktown, June 12, 1861.

Colonel: I have the honor to report that in the action of the 10th instant the Howitzer Battalion, under my command, fired eighteen solid

shots and eighty shells, spherical case and canister, and was injured in the following particulars: A lieutenant and two privates were wounded, one severely and two slightly; five horses and three mules were killed or disabled; the Parrott gun (iron rifled) had its linstock splintered, and a musket ball passed through the felloe of the left wheel; a musket ball pierced the corner plate and a partition of the limber chest of one of the howitzers and lodged against a shell; two poles of caissons, one set of swinglebars, one large pointing ring, a chain for a rammer, and several priming wires were broken, and one of the howitzers was spiked by the breaking of a priming wire in its vent. I have already made a requisition for ammunition enough to fill all the chests of the battalion, and will submit, as soon as practicable, requisitions for whatever else may be required.

As the position of the pieces was under your observation, it is only necessary to state that the Parrott gun and one howitzer were posted in the battery immediately on the right of the road leading to Hampon; that a howitzer was placed in the battery erected on the right beyond the ravine, through which a passway was made for the purpose of withdrawing the piece if necessary; a howitzer was posted near the bridge; the rifled howitzer was placed on the left of the road behind the right of the redoubt erected by the North Carolina regiment, and a howitzer was posted in the rear of the road leading from the Half-way House, a howitzer having been previously sent to the Half-way House under the command of Lieutenant Moseley.

Early in the action the howitzer in the battery on the right, having been spiked by the breaking of the priming wire, was withdrawn from its position, and the infantry supporting it fell back upon the church; but it was subsequently replaced by the howitzer of Lieutenant Moseley, which arrived at a later period of the action.

The ford on the left being threatened, the howitzer at the bridge was withdrawn and sent to that point, and the rifled howitzer was withdrawn from the left of the road and sent to assist in the protection of the rear. The same disposition was subsequently made of the howitzer at the main battery, situated immediately on the right of the road.

The enemy came in sight on the road leading from Hampton a few minutes before 9 o'clock a. m., and their advance guard halted at a house on the roadside about six hundred yards in front of our main battery. Fire, however, was not opened upon them for ten or fifteen minutes, when from the number of bayonets visible in the road we judged that a heavy column was within range. The action then commenced by a shot from the Parrott gun, aimed by myself, which struck the center of the road a short distance in front of their column, and probably did good execution in its ricochet. At no time could we see the bodies of the men in the column, and our fire was directed by their bayonets, their position being obscured by the shade of the woods on their right and two small houses on their left, and somewhat in advance of them. Our fire was immediately returned by a battery near the head of their column, but concealed by the woods and the houses so effectually, that we only ascertained its position by the flash of the pieces. The fire was maintained on our side for some time by the five pieces posted in front of our position; but, as already stated, one of them being spiked and another withdrawn to pro-

fect the ford early in the action, the fire was continued with three pieces, and at no time did we afterwards have more than three pieces playing upon the enemy. The fire on our part was deliberate, and was suspended whenever masses of the enemy were not within range, and the execution was good, as I afterward ascertained by a personal inspection of the principal position of the enemy. The cannonade lasted with intervals of suspension from a few minutes before 9 o'clock a. m. until 1½ o'clock p. m., and the fact that during this time but ninety-eight shot were fired by us tends to show that the firing was not too rapid. The earthworks thrown up by the battalion were struck several times by the cannon-shot of the enemy, but no injury was sustained. They fired upon us with shot, shell, spherical case, canister, and grape from 6 and 12-pounders, at a distance of about six hundred yards, but the only injury received from their artillery was the loss of a mule.

We found in front of our main battery, in and near the yard of the small house already mentioned, five killed and one mortally wounded by the fire of our artillery. We heard of two others killed at Cramdall's, about a mile from us, and have reason to believe there were many others. The injury done to our artillery was from the fire of musketry on our left flank the ground on that side between us and the enemy sinking down so as to expose us over the top of the breastwork erected by the North Carolina regiment.

After some intermission of the assault in front, a heavy column, apparently a re-enforcement or reserve, made its appearance on the Hampton road and pressed forward towards the bridge, carrying the U. S. flag near the head of the column. As the road had been clear for some time, and our flanks and rear had been threatened, the howitzer in the main battery had been sent to the rear, and our fire did not at first check them, I hurried a howitzer forward from the rear, loaded it with canister, and prepared to sweep the approach to the bridge, but the fire of the Parrott gun again drove them back. The howitzer brought from the Half-way House by Lieutenant Moseley arriving most opportunely, I carried it to the battery on the right to replace the disabled piece. On getting there I learned from the infantry that a small house in front was occupied by sharpshooters, and saw the body of a Carolinian lying thirty yards in front of the battery, who had been killed in a most gallant attempt to burn the house.

I opened upon the house with shell for the purpose of burning it, and the battery of the enemy in the Hampton road, being on the line with it, and supposing probably that the fire was at them, immediately returned it with solid shot. This disclosed their position and enabled me to fire at the house and at their battery at the same time. After an exchange of five or six shots a shell entered a window of the house, increased the fire already kindled until it soon broke out into a light blaze, and, as I have reason to believe, disabled one of the enemy's pieces. This was the last shot fired. They soon afterwards retreated, and we saw no more of them.

The action disclosed some serious defects in our ammunition and equipment, for which I earnestly recommended an immediate remedy. The shell of the Parrott gun had a fixed wooden fuse which cannot be extricated, the shortest being cut for four seconds. The consequence was

that the shells burst far in the rear of the enemy and served merely as solid shot. Had they been plugged and uncut fuses furnished, I think that our fire would have been much more effective. The power and precision of the piece, demonstrated by the thirty rounds fired from it, render it very desirable that all of its advantages should be made available. I therefore respectfully suggest that the shell be hereafter plugged and the fuses left uncut.

It is reported to me that the Borman fuse used by one of the howitzers were defective, the shells cut for five second exploding as soon as those cut for two.

The caissons of the Navy howitzers were made by placing ammunition chests upon the running gear of common wagons, and the play of the front axles is so limited that the caisson cannot be turned in the ordinary roads of this part of the country, and wherever the road is ditched or the woods impassable it cannot be reversed. There is also great danger of breaking the poles in turning the caissons quickly, as was shown in the action of the 10th instant. I'm aware that the expedient of using wagon bodies was resorted to in order to save time, but as it might lead to great disaster, I recommend that their places be supplied as speedily as possible with those made in the usual way.

The small size of the limber of the howitzers (Navy) renders it impossible to mount the men, and the pieces cannot move faster than the cannoneers can walk. In a recent skirmish with the enemy, in which we pursued them rapidly, we could only carry two men, and having got far ahead of the others, we had to unlimber and fire with only two cannoneers at the piece. The piece having only two horses, and the carriage being very light, it is hazardous to mount any person on the limber. I therefore recommend that four horses be furnished to each Navy howitzer, one for the chief and the other three for the men usually mounted on the limber.

We have succeeded since the action in unspiking the howitzer disabled by the breaking of the priming wire, but from the inferior metal used in making our priming wires we shall have to lay them aside altogether, and I must request that better ones be furnished. At present I can say nothing more of the conduct of the officers and men of the battalion than to express the high gratification afforded me by their courage, coolness, and precision, and to ask permission at a future time to call your attention to individual instances of gallantry and good conduct. I have requested the commandants of companies to furnish me with the names of such non-commissioned officers and privates as they think especially worthy of notice.

I am happy at having an opportunity to render my acknowledgments to Colonel Hill, the commandant of the North Carolina regiment, for the useful suggestions which his experience as an artillery officer enabled him to make to me during the action, and to bear testimony to the gallantry and discipline of that portion of his command with which I was associated. The untiring industry of his regiment in intrenching our position enabled us to defeat the enemy with a nominal loss on our side.

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MAJOR MONTAGUE'S REPORT.

On the morning of the 10th of June my command reported to Colonel Magruder at Bethel Church, according to orders. At —— in the morning information was received that the enemy in force were advancing upon us. Colonel Magruder immediately ordered me to throw up a redoubt fronting toward a ravine, over which it was supposed the enemy might attempt to turn our right flank. My men worked well, and had nearly finished the redoubt when the first gun from our batteries was fired, which took place at —— o'clock a. m. The enemy returned the fire with spirit, and the shell and shot flew thick and fast about my command, who were in a peculiarly exposed condition, my redoubt flanking towards and being nearly perpendicular to the points of attack. Fortunately for my command, however, the major part of the enemy's shot had sufficient elevation to pass over our heads, though many shell and solid shot fell within a few feet of our redoubt. One ball passed under my horse between his fore and hind feet, several others passed within a few feet of his head, and a few buried themselves in our breastwork. Had the enemy's guns been slightly depressed he must have raked my whole line with his enfilading fire. A very short time after the firing commenced I received an order to direct one of my companies, the Chatham Grays, under the command of Captain Werth, to defend a ford one mile below the bridge against the first battalion of the New York Zouave Regiment, and I saw no more of the company until after the fight.

About —— minutes after the fight, and after Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart had been compelled to fall back across the ravine and occupy my redoubt, Colonel Magruder ordered me to take my command about one and a quarter miles around to aid the Wythe Rifles, under the command of Lieutenant Chisman, in guarding a marsh, where he thought the enemy were attempting to turn our left flank. I immediately carried my command around to the point indicated at the double quick, joined the rifles, and deployed my whole command as skirmishers over a line of a quarter of a mile under cover of a dense foliage. We remained in this position until late in the evening, when we were ordered back by Colonel Magruder to the church. The enemy did not attempt to cross our line, and we remained quiet and inactive during the remainder of the fight.

We had no killed or wounded. Every man in my whole command, both officers and men, was perfectly cool, calm, and collected during the whole time which we were exposed to the enfilading fire from the enemy's battery and to diagonal fire of musketry from his left flank. I have no hesitancy in expressing my gratification at the manner in which my command, the Halifax Light Infantry, Captain Grammer; the Chatham Grays, Captain Werth; and the Old Dominion Rifles, Captain Dickerson, as well as the detachment of the North Carolina regiment, under my command, conducted themselves during the whole engagement.

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CAPTAIN WERTH'S REPORTS.

JUNE 12, 1861.

Sir: I beg leave very respectfully to make the following report of my scout:

On Sunday afternoon, the 9th of June, 1861, I procured the corn and oats on the Back River road as ordered, and had the wagons returning to camp in two hours and a quarter from the receipt of the order. I was then joined by one company of North Carolina Infantry, one piece of the howitzer battery, and a detachment of Captain Douthatt's cavalry, as I supposed, to assist me in making observations near Hampton, on the Back River. I approached New Market Bridge at 5 o'clock p. m., planted the howitzer so as to sweep the bridge, deployed my infantry in open order on my right flank in ambush, so that they could rake the road. The cavalry I posted in the rear, and threw out vendettes on each of my flanks to avoid a surprise.

In this position I waited for the appearance of the enemy. I of course had no idea of endangering my command by engaging the enemy if in force. I was too weak. In a few moments alarm guns were fired by a chain of sentinels extending from New Market Bridge to Fort Monroe. In a few moments a force advanced from Hampton (supposed to be a battalion of infantry, but marching in detached companies) whilst at the same time one or more companies approached by the road leading from Newport News. These forces were each advancing upon New Market Bridge from opposite directions, thinking I had crossed the bridge with my command. Upon observing their approach with a glass, I quietly retired from my position to a point in the rear three-quarters of a mile. The enemy approached the bridge, and when they suddenly came in sight of each other they (each mistaking the other for me) opened fire, and kept it up for some five minutes before they discovered their error. I was sitting on my horse near the bridge, and saw the firing plainly with my glass, but did not at the time know the cause, although I suspected it. At dusk I took up the march for Bethel Church, the enemy following me, and the next morning the fight opened.

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One of the prisoners taken, (since dead) stated that in this brush there were six killed and thirteen wounded, and corroborated all the above statements of my report.

JUNE 13, 1861.

I beg leave to make the following report of the movement of the troops under my command at the battle of Bethel Church on the 10th instant:

By the order of E. B. Montague, major of the Virginia battalion at

Bethel, my company, the Chatham Grays, was placed in the redoubt to the rear of the church, to defend the right wing in case of a discomfiture. From this point I was detailed, by your orders, to take position at the ford on the creek, about one mile below the bridge. I crossed my command over the open field under a shower of shell and canister, which the enemy poured into us from their battery, but sustained no damage.

A portion of the Fifth New York Zouave Regiment (three companies) was at this time advancing down the opposite bank of the stream for the purpose of crossing the ford, and thereby turn our left flank. I saw the movement, and at once took double quick and made the distance of over a mile in about nine minutes, beating the zouaves, and getting in position at the ford in time to cause them to halt. I obstructed the ford in all conceivable ways by felling trees, etc., and then placed my first platoon on the northwest side, under cover of an old mill-dam, whilst my second platoon I placed in ambush on the opposite side, where the road leading to the ford could have been raked for four hundred yards with deadly effect.

At 10.10 o'clock one naval howitzer, with a detachment from the Howitzer Battalion, reported to me for duty. I at once placed the gun in position one hundred and twenty yards up the creek from my infantry, where I had a beautiful range for grape or canister on a spot in the road on the opposite side of the stream over which the enemy would of necessity pass in attempting the passage of the ford. From this point I had the pleasure of getting one good shot at the enemy, which, from the sudden rout of the party at which it was aimed, must have done much damage. I also threw down all the fences on either side of the creek, and cleared all the undergrowth and large timber, so that after the enemy had passed the range of the howitzer from its first position, I could limber up and in two minutes have it in position to deliver its fire between my two platoons and immediately upon the ford.

At 10 to 11 a. m. the Southern Guard, Captain ———, reported to me for duty. I at once joined this command with my company, all entirely concealed from the enemy. At a little past 11 o'clock, so completely ambuscaded was my entire force, one of the enemy sent down to examine the ford came up to within twenty yards of my position, and did not suspect the presence of any force until I ordered him to ground arms, which he instantly did, and I had the pleasure of taking him prisoner. He had a fine minie musket, accoutrements, and forty-five rounds of cartridges. I placed him under guard, and afterwards forwarded him to headquarters. All the men under my command displayed a wonderful degree of coolness for troops who had never been under fire, and I am assured, if we had been so fortunate as to have been attacked by a force five times our strength, that the command would have made a desperate resistance.

At sundown I was ordered to withdraw.

This special report is rendered necessary by my being detached from Major Montague's battalion.

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