

Battle Reports Of The Irish Brigade At Fredericksburg December 1862

THE IRISH BRIGADE (2d Brigade, 1st Division, 2d Corps) at Fredericksburg (Dec 1862)

Report of Brig. Gen. Thomas F. Meagher, U.S. Army, commanding Second Brigade.

Report of Col. Richard Byrnes, 28th MA Infantry.

Report of Lieut. Col. Richard C. Bentley, 63rd NY Infantry.

Report of Capt. Patrick J. Condon, 63rd NY Infantry.

Report of Capt. James Saunders, 69th NY Infantry.

Report of Col. Patrick Kelly, 88th NY Infantry.

Report of Capt. John Teed, 116th PA Infantry.

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Report of Brig. Gen. Thomas F. Meagher, U.S. Army, commanding Second Brigade.  
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Hdqrs. Irish Brig. (Second Brig.), Hancock's Div., In Camp before Fredericksburg, Va.,  
December 20, 1862

I have the honor to report through you to the brigadier-general commanding the division the part taken by the brigade I have the honor to command in the action of Saturday, the 13th instant. On the Thursday morning previous, December 11, at 7 o'clock precisely, the brigade left the camp from which this report is dated, and proceeded toward the pontoon bridge over the Rappahannock, which it was arranged the division should cross. The brigade never was in finer spirits and condition. The arms and accouterments were in perfect order. The required amount of ammunition was on hand. Both officers and men were comfortably clad; and it would be difficult to say whether those who were to be led, or those who were to lead, were the better prepared or the more eager to discharge their duty.

Arriving within a few hundred paces of the headquarters of Major-General Sumner, commanding the right grand division of the Army of the Potomac, the brigade was halted, by order of Brigadier-General Hancock, in a well sheltered valley, where we stacked arms and bivouacked from 9 o'clock until 4:30p.m. The fire of our batteries and those of the enemy, incessant and terrible as it was, taught every man of the brigade to prepare himself equably and sternly for a desperate conflict.

A few minutes after 4 o'clock, word was conveyed to me that a body of daring volunteers had crossed the river in boats, and taken possession of the city of Fredericksburg. The State of Michigan will fairly reserve to herself the largest measure of pride justified by this achievement. Immediately after this word was brought to me, an order reached me from Brigadier General Hancock to march forward my brigade and take up position nearer the river. At 7 o'clock the following morning the brigade was under arms, and in less than two hours the head of the brigade presented itself on the opposite bank of the river. The order of the advance of our division on this occasion was as follows: Colonel Zook,

commanding French's old brigade, led the way; the Irish Brigade came next, and the Brigadier-General Caldwell's brought up the rear.

Passing along the south bank of the Rappahannock to the lower crossing communicating with the city, the brigade halted, counter-marched, stacked arms, and in this position, ankle-deep in mud, and with little or nothing to contribute to their comfort, in complete subordination and good heart awaited further orders. All this time, and until night came on, the batteries of the enemy continued their fire; at one time, especially, so operating that an entire division, crossing immediately on our left flank, was compelled to fall back and wait for the approaching night to conceal and protect its advance. An order was issued by Major-General Couch, commanding the corps, that no fires should be lit after nightfall. This order was uncomplainingly and manfully obeyed by my brigade. Officers and men lay down and slept that night in the mud and frost, and, without a murmur, with heroic hearts composed themselves as best as they could for the eventualities of the coming day.

I do not wish to introduce into an official report, where facts alone should be narrated, any expression of personal feeling; but it would be doing an injustice to my brigade if I did not say that the fortitude and endurance with which the hardships of that night were borne were such as to affect me deeply. I shall also digress from the strict line of an official report, in vindication of the honor and humanity of the brigade, to state that during the occupation of the city of Fredericksburg, previous to as well as after the advance of our forces on the batteries of the enemy, the Irish Brigade scrupulously abstained from any act of depredation.

On the morning of Saturday, the 13th instant, we were ordered under arms. The order was delivered to me at 8a.m. Having formed the brigade, I addressed to every regiment separately a few words, reminding them of their duty, and exhorting them to do it bravely and nobly. Immediately after, the column moved up the street, headed by Col. Robert Nugent and his veteran regiment, being exposed during the march to a continuous fire of shot and shell, several men falling from the effects of each. Even while I was addressing the Sixty-ninth, which was on the right of the brigade, 3 men of the Sixty-third were knocked over, and before I had spoken the last word of encouragement the mangled remains - mere masses of blood and rags - were borne along the line.

Advancing up the street, at the front of which the right of the brigade in line had rested, and worried by shell and shot and rifle balls every step we took, we crossed, the mill-race immediately outside of the city, which water course may be described as the first defense of the enemy. The entire brigade, consisting of 1,200 men, at that moment had to cross a single bridge, and, passing to the right, deploy into line of battle. This movement necessarily took some time to execute. The Sixty-ninth, being on the right, was compelled to stand its ground until the rest of the brigade came up and formed. ordeal it had to endure for fully half an hour. I myself, accompanied by Lieutenant Emmet, of the staff, crossed over on foot from the head of the street through which the brigade had approached the battle-field. It was not, however, more than thirty minutes after the head of the column had reached the right of the line, on which the brigade was to form

preparatory to its advance, that the other regiments of the brigade, unbroken and undismayed by the terrific fire which poured down upon them, dashing came up.

Reaching the head of my column, accompanied, as I have said, by Lieutenant Emmet, and having crossed the mill-race with the assistance of two wounded soldiers, I found that Colonel Nugent had just halted his regiment. Remaining here in conversation for a few minutes with the colonel, Lieutenant Miller, of Brigadier-General Hancock's staff, late of Major-General Richardson's rode up and delivered me further instructions, in obedience to which I directed Colonel Nugent to throw out two companies of his regiment as skirmishers on the right flank. I had hardly done so before the Eighty-eighth, Sixty-third, Twenty-eighth, and One hundred and sixteenth, coming up, and deploying themselves in line of battle, drew down upon the brigade a still more terrific fire. The line, however, was beautifully and rapidly formed, and then boldly advanced, Colonel Nugent leading the Sixty-ninth on the right, Col. Patrick Kelly, commanding the Eighty-eighth, being next in position, and both displaying a courageous soldiership which I have no words, with all my partiality for them, adequately to describe. Maj. Joseph O'Neill, commanding the Sixty-third, was as true that day as he has ever been. His position was on the left of the center of the line.

The center was assigned by me to the Twenty-eighth Massachusetts Volunteers, commanded by Col. R. Byrnes (this regiment carrying the only green flag under which the Irish Brigade this day had the proud privilege to do its duty, the old colors having been sent to New York several days before, and the new ones not having as yet arrived). The Twenty-eighth was originally destined for the brigade; it was raised especially for it. Its ranks were filled under the impression it would be one of the first regiments of the brigade. Under that impression hundreds of good and true men enrolled themselves in it, but, owing to some blunder, the Twenty-eighth was ordered to Port Royal, and it was not until the other day that, through the friendly interposition of General Sumner, it renewed its associations with the Irish Brigade. On the left of the line was the One hundred and sixteenth Pennsylvania Volunteers, a new regiment; it had but very recently joined the brigade, but in its conduct from Bolivar Heights, where I had the satisfaction of welcoming it to our camp, down to the present moment, when its headlong gallantry is placed on record, it has proved itself worthy of the cause into which with so much enthusiasm it had thrown itself.

Thus formed, under the unabating tempest of shot and shell, the Irish Brigade advanced at the double-quick against the rifle-pits, the breastworks, and batteries of the enemy. I myself ordered the advance, encouraged the line, and urged it on; but, owing to a most painful ulcer in the knee joint, which I had concealed and borne up against for days, I was compelled, with a view to be of any further service to the brigade that day, to return over the plowed field over which we had advanced from the mill-race. I did so to get my horse, which had been left at the head of the street from which our column had debouched, in care of my orderlies, along with the other horses of the field and staff officers of the brigade, Brigadier-General Hancock having suggested that it would be advisable for all such officers to act on foot. On going for the horse on the left of the line,

I met Captain Hart, the acting assistant adjutant-general of the brigade, who was moving up from the left to the right with the perfect coolness and intelligent bravery, forming and steadying the men for attack. Halting a moment on the left, I gave the word, and instantly saw the brigade impetuously advance. Passing down the slope, and through crowds of slain and wounded, I reached the spot where I had left my horse and mounted him.

Having mounted, I started with one of the orderlies to rejoin the brigade on the right, and with that view took the street across which the two companies of the Sixty-ninth, under Capt. James Saunders, a staunch and fearless officer, has been deployed as skirmishers. I had not proceeded many paces up this street before I met the remnant of the Sixty-third, bearing the regimental colors, coming toward me, under the command of Captain Gleeson, one of the bravest and most reliable officers of the brigade. With these few survivors of the Sixty-third were a portion of the Sixty-ninth. Fearing that the enemy might break through our lines, which had begun to waver under those torrents from the musketry and artillery of the enemy that seemed every instant to increase in fury, I halted this handful of the brigade on the street parallel with the mill-race. Here I remained, by order of Brigadier-General Hancock, who personally communicated with me at the time, gathering in the fragments of my brigade, until finally I was ordered by him, through one of his aides, to fall back and concentrate on the street from which we had commenced our approach to the battle-field. In this street the hospitals of the brigade had been established, and to it, consequently, all the officers and men of the brigade instinctively returned. I was, therefore, enabled, after three or four hours, to ascertain pretty accurately the available force that remained of the brigade. But while the fragments of the brigade were thus being reconcentrated, I had every reason to become convinced that the hospitals were dangerously, if not fatally, exposed; consequently I sent two of my aides, Captains Hart and Lieutenant Blake, of the Eighty-eighth, to Brigadier-General Hancock, to request of him that he would be so good as to authorize me to take what was left of the brigade across the river, the request for such authority being based on the fact that while there were not over 300 of the brigade, maimed and serviceable, who had reported themselves up to that time, the badly disabled were so numerous as to require the assistance of all those who were unhurt. Even while I was waiting for Captain Hart and Lieutenant Blake to return, several discharges of shells and rifle-balls broke through and over the hospitals of the Sixty-ninth and Sixty-third, and Eighty-eighth.

All this time, however, the officers and men of the brigade obeyed my orders and conducted themselves with perfect calmness and cheerfulness. Captain Hart, upon his return, having given me to understand that I had a conditional authorization to remove the brigade from the city, under the circumstances mentioned, I assumed the responsibility of doing so. I did so under the impression that Brigadier-General Hancock had given me such authorization for the purpose, which impression, a few hours later, I discovered was erroneous. I should not, however, have brought my command to the opposite side of the river, nor have dreamed of asking permission to do so, but for the horrible accidents to which the wounded of the brigade were exposed. That I myself did not wish to retire out of range of the rifle-pits and batteries of the enemy; that I was

solely actuated by an affectionate and intense concern for the wounded officers and soldiers of my command, it will suffice for me to refer to Brigadier-General Butterfield, who, on questioning me regarding the brigade the afternoon of the assault, at the headquarters of General Willcox, and in the presence of other officers, was told by me that I feared the Irish Brigade was no more; that out of 1,200 men I had led into action that morning about 250 alone had reported to me under arms from the field, and added that, were I left without a command, it would gratify me to act as one of his aides. This I did at the time, not knowing that Brigadier-General Hancock had been deprived of most of his staff.

It was late in the afternoon when I learned that Lieutenant Miller, Lieutenant Parker, and Lieutenant Rorty, three of his active and gallant staff, were wounded and disabled. Had I been sooner made aware of the loss he sustained in these intelligent and brave young officers, I should have cheerfully volunteered my services in the contingency I had mentioned to Brigadier-General Butterfield - my services on the staff of a general who so well deserves all the support he can receive. Having placed, with the assistance of their more fortunate comrades, our wounded in the encampment we left the night before, I rode up to the quarters of Major-General Sumner to report myself and my action in the matter to him. He was not there; none of his staff were there; but General Burnside, coming in a few minutes after I had arrived, I communicated to him what I have here stated. He did not appear at all dissatisfied with the course I had taken, and with marked cordiality inquired after the brigade. Shortly afterward Major-General Sumner entering with this staff, I repeated to him what I had stated to General Burnside, adding, however, that my principal object had been, after reporting to him and explaining the reason of my crossing the river, to procure rations and ammunition for my men. The rations had been flung away as the brigade advanced to the assault. The ammunition had been exhausted in the field. Having seen my wounded and disabled men as comfortably encamped as it was possible for them to be under the circumstances, I recrossed the Rappahannock, and between 11 and 12 o'clock at night reported to Brigadier-General Hancock. On the way, however, I stopped at the houses that had been taken as hospitals for the brigade that morning, and in them found many officers and privates who had been brought in from the field since I transferred the brigade to the opposite side of the river. Most of them were in great agony, not having had anything to sustain or soothe them since they received their wounds. Lieutenant Emmet, who accompanied me from where I had left the brigade, returned at once to bring our surgical and medical assistance. Dr. Powel promptly obeyed the order.

Next day, a little after daybreak, every officer and private of the brigade able to again take the field, by order of Brigadier-General Hancock, recrossed the Rappahannock and appeared upon the ground they occupied the day before, previous to their marching to the battle-field, all of them prepared and eager, notwithstanding their exhausted numbers and condition, to support the Ninth Corps in the renewal of the assault of the previous day, that renewal having been determined on by the commander-in-chief commanding the Army of the Potomac. Two hundred and eighty men only appeared under arms to represent the Irish Brigade. This little band, unswerved and undeterred, still full of heart, inspired by a bright sense

of duty, sorrowful for their comrades, but prouder and still more emboldened that such men had fallen bravely as they did, awaited the word that was once again to precipitate them against the batteries and defenses of the enemy.

I close this report by acknowledging the gallantry and practical ability and the confirmed steadiness of the officers of the brigade, and in making this acknowledgment have sincerely to deplore the loss of such men as Major Horgan, of the Eighty-eighth New York Volunteers, than whom a better and braver soldier I have never known.

Col. Robert Nugent, commanding the Sixty-ninth New York Volunteers, acted with signal bravery, leading as he did the column into the field with a brilliancy of bearing worthy of the military reputation of his family name. His demeanor and the spirit he displayed, his words and looks, all were such as could not possibly fail, as they did not fail, to encourage and incite his men that day. He bore from the field a wound which will long be an honorable testimony to his daring. Maj. James Cavanaugh, also of the Sixty-ninth, most ably and with utter fearlessness supporting his colonel, fell severely wounded, but I trust not fatally, for never was there a truer heart; never was there a bolder arm; never was there a brighter brain. But it would be out of place in this report to enumerate, in the terms of affectionate appreciation I desire, the loss which the Irish Brigade has incurred.

Hereafter, should an opportunity be afforded me, I shall speak and write of such men as Lieutenants Birmingham and Buckley, men who so worthily supplied the place of the officers who fell on the battle-field before Richmond and in the great repulse of the enemy at Antietam. Looking along the ranks of the Eighty-eighth, as I did, with a mournful pride the day after the assault, I missed others besides Maj. William Horgan. I missed Lieutenants Murphy, McCarthy, and Young, the intelligent and diligent adjutant of the regiment. In the contemplation of these losses some consolation arises from the fact that men like Col. Patrick Kelly, Lieut. Col. Quinlan, Capt. Patrick K. Horgan, Capt. John Smith, Captain Nagle, Captain Clarke, Lieut. James B. Turner, and other intelligent and brave officers like them are still to the work.

In the Sixty-third New York Volunteers I have lost, for some time at all events, the services of Maj. Joseph O'Neill, services ever most promptly and liberally rendered wherever his military obligations of patriotism required them.

Had I time it would be indeed a truly pleasing duty for me to speak, in connection with the Sixty-third, of such officers as Captain Gleeson, Captain Condon, Lieutenants Moore and Brady, and others whom it is now difficult to mention, not having the leisure to speak of them in terms of adequate commendation.

Within the last two months two regiments were incorporated in the brigade. Pennsylvania contributed the One hundred and sixteenth Volunteer Regiment of that state; Massachusetts contributed the Twenty eighth Volunteer Regiment of the Old

Commonwealth. The fact that Colonel Heenan and Lieutenant-Colonel Mulholland, of the former regiment, were badly wounded, speaks sufficiently for the intrepidity and metal of the men of which it is composed. When there are such officers there must be staunch men.

The Twenty-eighth Massachusetts Volunteers, as I have already mentioned, was raised for the brigade, but, owing to some mistake, was kept aloof from it until, by a most fortunate vicissitude of the war, it was restored to us two weeks ago. It is a substantial and splendid accession to the Irish Brigade. It has sinew, heart, and soul. It is commanded by an officer (Col. R. Byrnes) than whom it would be difficult to find one superior aptitude for such a command, combining as he does the practical experience and matured capacity of a soldier of some years' standing with the natural qualities which enable one to figure successfully in military life. I have not a word, other than that of unqualified commendation, to bestow on this well-regulated and admirably disciplined regiment. Major Caraher, one of the best of its excellent officers, was wounded in the head.

The chaplains and surgeons of the brigade could not be excelled in their devotion to the wounded. Their services were unremitting and most zealously rendered. Drs. Francis Reynolds, [J.] Pascal Smith, and Laurence Reynolds, with their assistant surgeons, behaved nobly. The first-named officer vindicated the brilliant reputation he brought with him from the Crimea, and his conduct is all the more deserving of eulogy and gratitude, as a day or two before the battle he had obtained leave of absence, but, greatly to his inconvenience, remained with the brigade rather than be absent from his post at such a time. A correct return of the killed, wounded, and missing of the brigade has been forwarded to the headquarters of the division.\* I close with especially recommending to the most favorable notice of the brigadier-general commanding the division every member of my staff. Capt. W.G. Hart, of the Eighty-eighth New York Volunteers, the acting assistant adjutant-general of the brigade, was active, fearless, and indefatigable throughout the action. Lieut. John J. Blake, of the same regiment, was not less distinguished for his courage and his energy; but in displaying these qualities on the day referred to, he displayed the courage and energy which distinguished him in every battle in which the brigade has been engaged. Lieut. Richard Emmet, also of the Eighty-eighth, astonished all who were witnesses of his conduct, by the bright intelligence and fearlessness which carried him through the thickest of the fight, with laurels which an older brow might proudly wear.

In enumerating the members of my staff, I cannot omit Capt. Malachi Martin, the able and indefatigable quartermaster of the brigade, who has on several occasions stood the enemy's fire with me, and rendered at every risk important services to me in gallant style. I have the honor to be, most faithfully, your obedient servant,

THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER,  
Brigadier-General, Commanding

The Assistant Adjutant-General of the Division

P.S. -- For individual instances of courage and good conduct during the action in the enemy's works, and for more minute details and incidents during the advance on the first line of the enemy's works, I refer you to the reports of the commandants of the different regiments.

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\* Embodied in revised statement.

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Report of Col. Richard Byrnes, Twenty-eighth Massachusetts Infantry.

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Near Falmouth, Va., December 21, 1862

SIR: In compliance with instructions from division headquarters, I have the honor to transmit herewith the following report of the operations of this command during the late battle before Fredericksburg, Va.: The regiment broke up camp on the morning of the 11th instant, and proceeded with the brigade, by Stafford Court-House road, to the ravine in rear of General Sumner's headquarters, where it formed in column of battalion, and rested behind its stacks during the day.

At 5p.m. it moved to a skirt of wood on a road to the right of General Sumner's headquarters, where it bivouacked for the night. At 8a.m. on the 12th instant resumed the march, and crossed the Rappahannock by the right or upper pontoon bridge to Fredericksburg, and, effecting our crossing without loss, moved to the left along the road fronting the river until we arrived almost opposite the lower pontoon bridge, where the line halted and stacked arms in column of battalion, left in front. We remained in this position until 12p.m. on the 13th instant, when, with the remainder of the brigade, the line was formed, this regiment being in the center, and marched back in the direction of the upper pontoon bridge, halting at the railroad. Here we remained two hours, exposed to the fire from the enemy's batteries, and losing 4 men, wounded by shells. The line was then moved through the streets to the plain opposite the enemy's works, being all the time exposed to a heavy shot and shell fire, and suffering severely. Following the direction of the column, we crossed the canal by the flank (files undoubled), and reformed line of battle on opposite side, where we remained lying on the ground for ten minutes, when the order was given to advance in line, and we marched to the crest of the hill, directly in front of grape, canister, and musketry.



On arriving at the crest of the hill, the firing was so severe and concentrated that the men were compelled to take shelter by lying down and many endeavored to hold their position by piling wood, to form a barricade, in rear of a brick house on our right, behind which they did good execution, until ordered to retire with remainder of the brigade, which we did in good order, and halted in our former position by the railroad, where we remained until dark, when we were ordered to recross the pontoon bridge and bring over all our wounded, which we accomplished successfully, and encamped for the night on the ground occupied by us on the night of the 11th instant.

On the morning of the 14th instant, we recrossed the river by the lower pontoon bridge, and occupied the position held by us on the 12th instant. Here ammunition was distributed to the men sufficient to make up the original complement of 60 rounds per man.

We remained in this place until the night of the 15th instant, when, with the remainder of the troops, we evacuated the city under the cover of the darkness, crossing by the upper pontoon bridge, and marched directly to our camping grounds near Falmouth, Va., occupied by us previous to the morning of the 11th instant.

In justice to the brave men who have fallen, I cannot refrain from bearing testimony to their gallant conduct, and have also to express my gratification at the behavior of the whole regiment throughout the action.

The number of casualties incurred by the regiment was as follows:

Killed, 11; wounded, 116; missing, 30; total 157\*

I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient servant,

RICHARD BYRNES  
Colonel, Commanding.

Lieut. John J. Blake, Acting Assistant Adjutant- General

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\*see Revised Statement

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Report of Lieut. Col. Richard C. Bentley, Sixty-third New York Infantry.

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Camp near Falmouth, Va., December 21, 1862

In compliance with circular of this date, I have the honor to report that at midnight of the 10th instant I was called by a messenger, and, immediately waiting upon Brigadier-General Meagher, was directed to cause reveille to be sounded at 4a.m. of the 11th, and be ready to move in light marching order, with three days' rations, at 6.30 o'clock.

Accordingly my command was prepared as directed. I had not since my return from the North (whither I went wounded from the battle of Antietam) been able to mount or perform more than executive and ordinary camp duties. Reported the command at brigade headquarters, and, by the advice of my surgeon, myself, as unable to accompany them, and, by direction, yielded command to Maj. Joseph O'Neill.

Leaving camp, the regiment proceeded to the heights near Phillips house, remaining until evening; then falling to the rear a short distance, bivouacked for the night. In the morning (Friday) resumed the position of the day before, and at about 9a.m. proceeded to cross the Rappahannock, and, moving along the river bank to the lower end of the city of Fredericksburg, rested on arms until the morning, then taking position in an adjoining street within the town. Here line of battle was formed with 48 files and color-guard and 18 commissioned officers; the Sixty-ninth and Eighty-eighth New York and Twenty-eighth Massachusetts Volunteers upon the right and the One hundred and sixteenth Pennsylvania on the left. Remained in this position some length of time, the enemy shelling briskly, wounding 3 men of the regiment seriously. Brigadier-General Meagher, commanding the brigade, here directed the formation to be changed, placing the Sixty-third Regiment on the extreme left.

At near 1 o'clock moved by the flank up the street, and, filing to the left, came upon the narrow bridge crossing the mill-race under a severe and destructive fire from the enemy's artillery. A portion of the regiment crossed the bridge, but with difficulty, and to save time (under so heavy a fire) a goodly part of the officers and men forded the race and clambered up the bank, and lying, rested a few minutes to allow all to cross and come upon the line. Then advancing double-quick about 50 yards, came upon a line of troops lying upon the ground, considerably obstructing the advance, but moved forward over them at a run encountering an unfinished and abandoned earthwork, dividing the right and left wings, which, however, after passing, reunited, the left moving by the flank, continuing the advance in line to and passing the advanced line of skirmishers near the crest of the slope, when the infantry of the enemy appeared within short range, covered by a stone wall and earthworks. The line was halted, fired and lying down, continued the fire until relieved by the Eighty-first Pennsylvania Volunteers. During this time the regiment was constantly under a heavy fire from the enemy's artillery, their sharpshooters from every cover within range, and the infantry in front. From reports from reliable officers, I am pleased to say the officers and men behaved with coolness and bravery under trying circumstances and obeyed orders with

promptness. While passing the abandoned work, or immediately thereafter, Maj. Joseph O'Neill, then in command, received a serious wound in the right arm, and, leaving the field, the command devolved to upon Capt. P.J. Condon, who conducted the regiment with skill. After being relieved regularly, the remnant of the regiment, with the colors, came off the field, halting, by order of General Meagher, at the heads of the streets of the city where the brigade rallied and marched to the street from which it moved in the morning, near the hospitals of the brigade. During this march Capt. John Sullivan received a wound in the thigh from a round shot, from which he died on Monday night, the only officer killed. The loss in this regiment (a list \* of which has been forwarded) was 1 officer and 1 enlisted man killed, 6 officers and 32 enlisted men wounded, and 4 enlisted men missing. One of the latter has since returned, having been taken prisoner and paroled.

Unable as I was to be present with the regiment (as I have ever before been with it, and wish always to be), my report may be meager; but having submitted it to several officers, I am assured that in the main it is correct. To attempt to speak of and enumerate the officers would be fulsome, as they have all distinguished themselves on other fields in my presence and received honorable mention therefor. In Major O'Neill I lose for a time the services of a brave and valuable assistant in the field. No braver or cooler heart and head could there be in so terrible a place. Capt. R.P. Moore, too, is one of our oldest, and most valuable officers; while in Lieutenant McDonald, acting adjutant, I lose a good soldier, and so well acquainted with the details of the office I scarce know how to replace him.

My thanks are due to Captains Condon, Cartwright, and Gleeson and Lieutenant Dwyer, more fortunate than their comrades, for the conspicuous part they performed in conducting the regiment through and out of so severe a contest.

With much regard, I am, very respectfully,

R.C. BENTLEY,  
Lieutenant-Colonel, Commanding Regiment.

Lieut. John J. Blake,  
Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

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\*Embodied in Revised Statement.

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Report of Capt. Patrick J. Condon, Sixty-third New York Infantry.

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Near Falmouth, Va., December 24, 1862.

SIR: In compliance with a verbal request from division headquarters (Hancock's), I have the honor to report, as accurately as my memory and the very few notes I penciled at the time furnishes me, with the action of my regiment in the battle of Fredericksburg, December 13.

We leave camp at about 9a.m. Thursday, December 11, under command of Maj. Joseph O'Neill, Colonel Fowler being yet, I believe, in hospital from the effects of a wound received at the battle of Antietam, and Lieutenant-Colonel Bentley, who was also wounded at Antietam, and recently returned, suffering from indisposition, remaining sick in camp. We bivouac for the night, with the other regiments of the brigade on a small hillock, surrounded by trees, about 1 mile this side of the river.

Friday, December 12, cross on pontoon bridge early this morning, without loss or accident, the regiments of the brigade in the following order, viz: Sixty-ninth New York Volunteers, Eighty-eighth New York Volunteers, Twenty-eighth Massachusetts, Sixty-third New York Volunteers, and the One Hundred Sixteenth Pennsylvania Volunteers. Arriving in Fredericksburg, the head of the column file to the left along the southern bank of the river, and form by battalion closed in mass on the dock, where we stack arms for the night without fire.

Saturday, December 13, all quiet, until 9.30 o'clock this morning, when heavy cannonading is heard on our left. At 10a.m. my regiment is ordered by General Meagher to exchange positions with the One hundred and sixteenth Pennsylvania, and bring up the left or rear of the brigade. This movement was effected while we were drawn up in line of battle on the first regular street next and parallel to the river, immediately after losing 2 men, where the center of our regiment halted on a cross street. Between 11a.m. and noon the brigade is ordered into action. We are addressed by General Meagher, who informs us we are to support French's division. A few minutes after, the brigade moved by the left flank, filing to the right and left around half a dozen streets, until we top over the crest of a hill under a heavy cannonade along the right-hand sidewalk to the mill-race or canal. The fire on us here is galling and destructive.

I see General Hancock riding along on the left-hand sidewalk opposite me, hunting up stragglers (4 or 5), who were sheltering themselves by a house on the left. We cross the canal, some dashing through, up to their hips in water, the three temporary planks thrown across it not affording sufficient accommodation under such a heavy fire as we experienced. Immediately on the south side of the canal, and while yet on the double-quick, we formed into line of battle, and marched, I should think about 50 yards, up another slope, and lay down behind a regiment of French's division, to breath and collect the scattered. One minute or so sufficed, when we again took up the line of battle, marching over the recumbent bodies of the last regiment alluded to.

The Sixty-third, after a few paces' march, met with an obstacle which divided its center,

causing the right wing to oblique to the right and the left wing to the left. The obstacle passed, I took charge of the left wing and marched it by the right flank, or, more properly, a right oblique, in a run, to form in line with the right wing. Passed by General Meagher here, waving his sword and closing us in. By the time the junction was formed, we were in hot contest with the enemy, the skirmishers, who were in advance, joining in our ranks. The firing and loading, as far as my eye could detect, was executed kneeling and lying along our line after the first volley.

After being engaged, I think, three-quarters of an hour, I saw Caldwell's brigade advancing to our relief in a perfect line of battle; the two regiments of his brigade on the left that struck my eye were advancing nobly in our rear, and, when arrived on our line, some few lay down amongst our thinned ranks and commenced firing over our heads, but were immediately ordered to cross over our line, which they did, only to fall back again in less than two minutes. I looked around and saw General Caldwell about 4 paces in my rear, ineffectually endeavoring to rally his brigade. A sergeant of the regiment pointed out to me our flag falling back. Two of my company were wounded alongside of me, one of whom I tucked under my arm and consigned the other to the care of another member of my company. With 7 men and these 2 wounded, I retired, meeting the colonel of the Twenty-eighth Massachusetts, with about 10 men of his regiment and one flag. We shook hands, he (Colonel Byrnes) remarking our brigade was gone, meaning cut up. I recrossed the mill-race, still bearing this wounded man with me, and followed by the other men of our regiment, under a fusilading fire from cannon and sharpshooters, and marched up the street on the sidewalk, then the right-hand one of the road we traveled about 500 yards; and on a cross-road, to the right from the canal, we overtook our colors, in the hands of Sergeant Chambers, of Company I. Captains Sullivan and Gleeson and Lieutenants Dwyer, Quirk, Higgins, Flynn, and Daidy were there with 11 men. General Meagher was there on horseback, and said that this should be the rallying point of the brigade. In two or three minutes this place became too hot for us, so we marched down the street toward the position we occupied in the lower part of the city before going into action. On our march down, at the very place we had lost the 2 men in the morning, a solid shot came bounding over the hill and struck Captain Sullivan in the thigh (from the effects of which he since died), throwing me down, who was at his left elbow, marching a few paces at the head of the remnant of the regiment.

Major O'Neill was wounded, as near as I can learn, about the time I was rectifying the division of our regiment in the center, caused by the obstacle mentioned in my remarks, convenient to where we crossed French's line. Of this I am not certain, as nobody told me until we were relieved by Caldwell's brigade and falling back. Allow me to state that the loss of our gallant major was felt by all, and by no one more so than myself, for, indeed, he was a gallant and intrepid soldier, ever prompt and brave, exacting, but kind and generous with all. The unavoidable absence of Colonel Fowler and Lieutenant-Colonel Bentley at such a time was, I am sure, as much regretted by them as by us, for they are and have proved themselves as

true and valiant soldiers as we can desire. Poor Captain Sullivan is gone, but his name and deeds in connection with his regiment and brigade will live in history. Of the other officers and men of the regiment I will not speak, as they all have done their part and nobly, and even the humblest private may be styled a hero. One hour after returning to the dock the report of the regiment stood thus: Thirty muskets and 8 commissioned officers present; 1 commissioned officer killed and 7 wounded; 1 enlisted man killed and 32 wounded. I counted fifty files, including corporals, going into action. We crossed the pontoon bridge during the night with our wounded, bivouacking where we had spent the night of the 11th, on this side of the river.

Sunday, December 14, 9a.m., cross over to Fredericksburg again. Remain there until midnight, December 15, when we retreat over the bridge, and march to our former and present camp.

December 16, Lieutenant-Colonel Bentley came to camp, and I resigned the command to him.

Very respectfully,

P.J. CONDON

Captain, Company G, Sixty-third New York Vols., Irish Brigade

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Report of Capt. James Saunders, Sixty-ninth New York Infantry.

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CIRCULAR. Camp near Falmouth, December 22, 1862

In compliance with general orders received December 21, I hereby certify that the Sixty-ninth Regiment New York Volunteers entered the battle of Fredericksburg, on December 13, 1862, commanded by Col. Robert Nugent, and 18 commissioned officers and 210 rank and file, in which the above numbered regiment lost 16 commissioned officers and 160 rank and file, leaving Capt.

James Saunders, Lieutenant Milliken, and Lieut. L. Brennan to bring the remnant of the regiment off the battle-field.

JAMES SAUNDERS

Captain, Comdg. Sixth-ninth Regiment New York Volunteers.

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Report of Col. Patrick Kelly, Eighty-eighth New York Infantry.

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Camp near Falmouth, Va., December 20, 1862.

CAPTAIN: In accordance with orders from headquarters right grand division, Army of the Potomac, the Eighty-eighth New York Volunteers left camp on the morning of the 11th, and proceeded toward the pontoon bridge, arriving in the vicinity of General Sumner's headquarters about 10a.m., where they were halted, with the rest of Hancock's division, and remained there until about 4p.m., when, by order of General Meagher, they advanced about 1 mile, where they bivouacked for the night in a wood.

Early next morning we again resumed our line of march toward the pontoon bridge, which we crossed, arriving in Fredericksburg without an accident, and took up a position in the street next the river, where we remained that day and night. At nightfall an order was received from General Couch that no fires should be lighted, which order was willingly and uncomplainingly complied with by my men.

Again, on Saturday morning, the men were under arms, and marched about a half a mile to the right of the position they occupied the night previous, where they formed line of battle, in connection with the other regiments of the brigade, between the hours of 10 and 11a.m., as near as I can judge. We marched by the right flank, crossing the mill-race on a single bridge, where we filed to the right and reformed the line of battle under a terrific enfilading artillery fire from the enemy. We then advanced in line of battle under a most galling and destructive infantry fire, crossed two fences, and proceeded as far as the third fence, where my men maintained their position until their ammunition was exhausted, and more than one-half of the regiment killed and wounded. At this fence Colonel Byrnes, of the Twenty-eighth Massachusetts Volunteers, and myself agreed to go over the field and collect the remnants of our regiments, which we did, meeting in the valley near the mill-race. Marching from thence to the street from which we started, we reported with our regiments and colors to Brigadier-General Meagher. He (General Meagher) being under the impression he had permission to remove his wounded to the other side of the river, so as to avoid the fire of the enemy, ordered those men of his brigade who were still unhurt to convey their wounded comrades over, which they did, and bivouacked there for the night.

Early the next morning, in accordance with orders from General Hancock, we recrossed the river and took up the position we occupied the night previous, holding the same until the night of December 15, when we recrossed the river and proceeded to the camp which we left Thursday, December 11, where we now are.

I cannot close this report without saying a few words with regard to the officers and men of my regiment. That the officers did their duty is fully evident from their loss,

having 4 killed and 8 wounded. The gallantry and bravery of the men is too plainly visible in their now shattered and broken ranks having lost on that day about 111 killed and wounded.\* I am, colonel. most respectfully, yours,

P. KELLY  
Colonel Eighty-eighth New York Vols., Meagher's Irish Brigade

Capt. William G. Hart,  
Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

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\* See Revised Statement

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Report of Capt. John Teed, One hundred and sixteenth Pennsylvania Infantry.

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December 21, 1862

SIR: In accordance with orders just received, I have the honor to report as follows the part this regiment took in the engagement at Fredericksburg:

We left camp on the morning of the 11th, and marched to the immediate rear of General Sumner's headquarters. After remaining a few hours, the regiment advanced a few hundred yards. On the morning of the 12th, we crossed the Rappahannock River on a pontoon bridge, under cover of our artillery and encamped on the river bank. The regiment remained there during the night. On the morning of the 13th, about 7 o'clock, we received orders to march to the battle-field. We moved with the brigade to support French's division. About 12m. we entered the battle-field, holding a position on the extreme left of the brigade, directly opposite one of the enemy's batteries. After one hour's hard fighting, during which the regiment received orders to charge the enemy's works, which they did with the courage and bravery of veterans, they were withdrawn with the brigade from the field. The regiment then received orders from the commanding general to take the wounded and recross the river, and encamped for the night in the rear of General Sumner's headquarters.

On Sunday morning the remnant of the regiment again marched to Fredericksburg, with the expectation of again attacking the enemy. We remained in the town till Monday night, when the regiment, with the brigade, marched back to their old camps near Falmouth. The officers and men behaved with great gallantry and coolness during the



whole of the action.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN TEED,  
Captain, Commanding Regiment.

Col. P. Kelly,  
Commanding Brigade