

Numbers 6. Report of Colonel John Kurtz, Twenty-third Massachusetts Infantry.

HEADQUARTERS TWENTY-THIRD MASS. VOLS.,
New Berne, March 15, 1862.

DEAR SIR: I have the honor to report that at 8 o'clock in the morning of the 13th instant I received the order to disembark my regiment and land upon the shore, 16 miles below this post. Having but five small boats, and one of my vessels being 3 or more miles from shore, it was not completed until near 3 o'clock in the afternoon. My regiment marched forward with a 12-pounder howitzer as soon as possible after landing, and arrived at the bivouac of this brigade at 8 o'clock in the evening, where we slept as comfortably as possible during a night of drenching rain. At 7 o'clock on the morning of the 14th I was ordered by General Foster to take up the line of march and follow him. In the course of half an hour I received an order from him to file into the woods and form my regiment in line upon the left of the Twenty-seventh Massachusetts, in front of the enemy's breastwork, and immediately open fire upon him. The order was promptly executed. The fire was incessant for one and a half hours within 150 yards of the enemy's work, &c. My ammunition (40 rounds) was expended. I immediately sent word to the general of my position and condition, and was assured that a regiment would be sent to my relief. Accordingly in a few moments the **Eleventh Connecticut** reported to me. I immediately ordered them to form of my line, and I fell back ten paces in good order, fixed bayonets, and lay down ready to support the line in front of me. After remaining in this position about thirty minutes a general charge was made along the whole front, and we had carried the work and our glorious old flag floated over it, and we gave nine rousing cheers.

I was immediately ordered by the general to send forward one company as advance guard, and to follow with my regiment and feel my way toward the enemy, now in full retreat, and to capture all belligerents or enemies. We examined the woods, houses, and forts. We took Dr. West, who reports himself a native of New Rochelle, New York State, and a surgeon in the Confederate Army. I sent him to headquarters. In the course of an hour we joined General Foster with the Twenty-fifth Massachusetts at the railroad, about 2 miles from this post, and marched along the road until we arrived at the bridge across the Trent, which was on fire and entirely destroyed. After a rest of an hour we embarked, crossed the river, and at 5 o'clock occupied the camp of the "chivalry," which appeared to have been left very hastily, and which was being plundered by the negroes. I stopped the plundering, took possession, and made myself as comfortable as possible for the night. The officers and men of my regiment behaved in the most gallant manner, and I take great pleasure in saying that Captains Brewster, Martin, Center, Howland, Whipple, Raymond, Sawyer, with their officers and men, particularly so Captain E. g. Dayton, of the schooner Highlander, volunteered to command the 12-pounder howitzer, and the persevering manner in which he and his men drew the gun through the mud, in

many places knee-deep, and the very gallant manner in which they served it within a hundred yards of the enemy's line, met my warmest approbation. They made every shot tell, and had nearly or quite fired their last charge before they received any support. My adjutant, Lieutenant John G. Chambers, rendered me the most efficient aid by the prompt and gallant manner in which he carried and executed my orders, as well as by the alacrity in which he urged the men at the most necessary points of the line. He comprehends without profuse explanation my commands, and is a very efficient and gallant officer.

It is with the most sincere regret that I have to report the death of Lieutenant-Colonel Merritt, who was killed early in the engagement while urging his men into the line in the most brave and gallant manner. His loss will be severely felt by the regiment. He was the kindest-hearted man I ever met with, and I am sensibly affected at his loss.

Captain Sawyer, of Company H, had his left leg taken off by a round shot. Major Elwell behaved in the most gallant manner, and is a most capital and efficient officer, and performs his duty without ostentation, and can be depended upon.

Annexed please find a list of my killed and wounded.*

Very respectfully,

JOHN KURTZ,

Colonel, Commanding Twenty-Third Massachusetts.

Captain SOUTHARD HOFFMAN, A. A. G., First Brigadier, Coast Division.