Head Quarters 2d Maine Vols.
Fields near Gettysburg, Pa.
July 6th, 1863

Sirs,

In compliance with orders from Brigade H. S. Cdr. I have the honor to submit the following Report of the part taken by the 20th Regt. Maine Vols. in the action of July 2d and 3d near Gettysburg, Pa.

On reaching the field at about 4 P.M. July 2d, Col. Vincent commanding the Brigade, placing me on the left of the Brigade and consequently on the extreme left of our entire line of battle, instructed me that the enemy were expected shortly to make a desperate attempt to turn our left flank, and that the position assigned to me must be held at every hazard.

I established my line on the crest of a small spur of a rocky and wooded hill, and sent out at once a company of skirmishers on my left to guard against surprise on that unprotected flank. These dispositions were scarcely made when the attack commenced, and the right of the Regt. found itself at once hotly engaged. Almost at the same moment, from a high rock which gave me a
full view of the enemy, I perceived a heavy force in rear of their principal line, moving almost but stealthily toward our left, with the intention, as I judged, of gaining our rear unperceived. Without betraying our hand to any but one or two officers, I had the right wing move by the left flank, taking intervals of a pace or two, according to the shelter afforded by rocks or trees, extending so as to cover the whole front then engaged; and at the same time moved the left wing to the left and rear, making a large angle at the color, which was now brought to the front where our left had first rested.

This hazardous maneuver was so admirably executed by any men that our fire was not materially blackened in front, and the enemy gained no advan-
tage there, while the left wing in the mean time had formed a solid and steady line in a direction to meet the expected assault. We were not a mo-
ment too soon, for the enemy having gained their desired front of attack came to a front, and rushed forward with an inflexibility which shewed their
glaucous expectations. Their astonishment however was evident, when emerging from their cover, they met instead of an unsuspecting flank, a
form and ready front. A strong fire shone at once from both sides, and with great effect, the enemy still advancing until they came within ten yards of our line, where our steady and telling volleys brought them to a stand. From that moment began a struggle fierce and bloody beyond any that I have witnessed, and which lasted in all its fury, a full hour. The two lines met, and broke and mingled in the shock. At times I saw around me more of the enemy than of my own men. The edge of conflict swung to and fro—now one and now the other party holding the contested ground. Three times our line was forced back, but only to rally and repulse the enemy. At often as the enemy's line was broken and routed, a new line was unmasked, which advanced with fresh vigor: our "thirty rounds" were rapidly reduced. I sent several messengers to the rear for ammunition, and also for reinforcements. In the mean time we seized the opportunity of a lull, to gather ammunition and more serviceable arms, from the dead and dying on the field. With these we met the enemy's last and fiercest assault. Their own rifles and their own bullets were turned against them. In the midst of this struggle, our am-
munition utterly failed. The enemy were close upon us with a fresh line, pouring on us a terrible fire. Half the left wing already lay on the field. Although I had brought two companies from the right to its support, it was now scarcely more than a skirmish line. The heroic energy of my officers could avail no more. Our gallant line with its shrill before the fire it could not repel. It was too evident that we could maintain the defensive no longer. As a last, desperate resort, I ordered a charge. The word "fix bayonets" flew from man to man. The click of the steel seemed to give new zeal to all. The men dashed forward with a shout. The two wings came into one line again, and extending to the left, and at the same time wheeling to the right, the whole regiment described nearly a half circle, the left passing over the space of half a mile, while the right kept within the support of the 83d Pennsylvania. Thus leaving no chance of escape to the enemy except to climb the steep side of the mountain or to pass by the whole front of the 83d Pennsylvania. The enemy's first line scarcely tried to run. They stood amazed, threw down their loaded arms and surrendered in whole companies. Those in their rear had more time.
and gave us more trouble. My skirmishing company threw itself upon the enemy's flank behind a stone wall, and their effective fire added to the enemy's confusion. In this charge we captured three hundred and sixty-eight prisoners, many of them officers, and took three hundred stand of arms. The prisoners were from four different regiments, and admitted that they had attacked with a Brigade.

At this time Col. Rice commanding the Brigade (Col. Vincent having been mortally wounded) brought up a strong support from Genl. Crawford's command, and 3000 rounds of ammunition. The prisoners and the prisoners were now sent to the rear, and our dead gathered and laid side by side.

Shortly after Col. Rice desired me to advance and take the high steep hill, called "Wolf Hill" or "Round Top" half a mile or more to our left and front, where the enemy had assembled on their extreme position which commanded ours in case the assault should be renewed.

It was then dusk. The men were worn out, and heated and thirsty—almost beyond endurance. Many had sunk down and fallen asleep the instant the halt was ordered. But at the command they cheerfully
formed their line once more, and the little band
of men went up the hill, scarcely expecting ever to return. In order not to disclose our num-
er as I had now but two hundred guns - and to avoid bringing on an engagement in which I was sure to be overpowered, I forbade my men to fire, and trusted to the bayonet alone. Throwing out two small detachments on each flank, we pushed straight up the hill. The dark vines formed us, concealing our face and preventing the enemy from getting range so that their volleys went over our heads, while they deemed it prudent to retire before us. Just at the crest we found more serious difficulty, and were obliged to fall back for a short time. We advanced again with new energy, which the knowledge of our isolated and per-
dious position renders perhaps desperate, and carried the desired point. We took twenty five prisoners in this movement, among them some of the staff of General
Davis. From these officers I learned that Hood's whole division was massed but a short distance in front, that she had just prepared to advance and take posse-
in of the heights, and was only waiting to ascertain the number and position of our force. I posted my command among the rocks along the crest in line of battle,
and sent two companies in charge of judicious officers to reconnoitre the ground in front. They reported a large body of the enemy in a ravine not more than two or three hundred yards distant. I therefore kept these two companies out, with orders to watch the enemy, while our main line, kept on the alert by occasional volleys from below, held its position among the rocks throughout the night. In the meantime the 83d Penna. and the 5th and 12th Penna. Reserves came up and formed as a support.

The next day at noon we were relieved by the 1st Brigade. We were engaged with Law's Brigade, Hood's Div. The prisoners represented themselves as from the 15th and 47th Alabama and the 4th and 5th Texas Regts. The whole number of prisoners taken by us is three hundred and ninety-three. Of arms captured three hundred pistols. At least one hundred and fifty of the enemy killed and wounded were found in front of our first line of battle.

We went into the fight with three hundred and fifty-eight guns. Every pioneer and musician who could carry a musket was armed and engaged. Our loss is one hundred and thirty-six. Thirty killed, one hundred and nine wounded. Many mortally and one taken prisoner in the night advance. Often as our line was broken...
and pierced by the enemy, there is not a man to be reported "missing."

I have to regret the loss of a most gallant young officer, Capt. W. L. Kendall, who fell in the charge, also Capt. C. W. Billings mortally wounded early in the action, and Lieut. George C. Scott mortally wounded on the crest of "Hole Hill." Our advantage was dearly bought with the loss of such admirable officers as these.

As for the conduct of my officers and men, I will let the result speak for them. If I were to mention any, I might do injustice by omitting some equally deserving. Our roll of honor is the three hundred and sixty officers and men who fought at Betsyburg.

My thanks are due the 8th Penna., Capt. Woodward's company, for their steady and gallant support, and I most particularly acknowledge the services of Adjt. Gifford of that Regt., who exposed himself to the severest fire to render me aid.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servt.

[Signature]

St. Geo. B. Herendeen, Col. 28th Maine Vol.

act. asst. adjt. genl.

3d Brigade 3d Div. 5th Corps.