

June 15, 1863

Colonel Kevin Burton  
Headquarters, Army of the Willamette

Colonel: I have the honor to submit the following report of the 69<sup>th</sup> New York from May 19-20 inclusive.

On the afternoon of May 20 my company was marching near Camp Sherman when a hysterical civilian woman approached me and told me that Fighting Chaplain Cameron of our battalion and a number of women who had gathered for a service had been molested by a group of Confederate soldiers. I had no sooner reported this to you when we heard several shots, followed by the piercing screams of women and exclamations of Oh my God, they shot Donny! You bastards!

We marched in haste to the site, but by the time we arrived, the rebels had skedaddled. We came upon a small cabin and could hear whimpering and sounds of general displeasure coming from inside. I sent a group of men to check, and my first sergeant reported that the women along with a wounded chaplain were inside. I checked and confirmed the report-I feared the chaplain had taken a horrifying wound, but realized it was just his face.

No sooner had we arrived than a Confederate unit-which I estimated to be in brigade strength-came onto the field. We had no choice but to leave the women and chaplain for fear of certain slaughter. As the Confederate brigade deployed, I received orders to retrieve the women and chaplain. I sent a squad of my most able men, but they fell like corn before the scythe. They had no chance. At this point I valiantly commanded my understrength company forward to begin engaging the multitude of Johnnies. We exchanged fire for quite some time and the bullets fell like hailstones. We were supported elements of the 79<sup>th</sup> New York on our right and Second Division came on the field-finally-and we started to push the Johnnies back. The Rebels could not stand up to the devastating musketry delivered by my company and they began to break. I had noticed near this point you were down-I was uncertain if due to drunkenness or having suffered a wound-and spoke with you briefly. As I recall your words were to "Shoot them down like the damn dirty dogs they are, especially the women and children." I rejoined my command and saw that the rebels now compromised about half a platoon strength and that they were rallying around their flag and the notorious pirate Colonel Stanovich. I ordered my company to fire at will despite the insistence of some in my command who believe I should use the farby term independent fire.

I will admit at this point I may have been caught up in the heat of the battle, and I continued encouraging my men to fire. At one point I saw their Colonel fall, and the rest fell soon after. At the very end of this action only their bugler remained standing and seeing the immediate threat he presented to my men, I ordered a volley in which he was not standing after it was delivered.

The gallant Major ~~Baker~~ Leaton generously allowed our men to assist the wounded Johnnies. It was at this point I noticed there was a white flag or handkerchief tied to the sword of the pirate Stanovich. I noted to myself he may have been attempting to surrender at the time we gunned

him down. I believe one of my corporals did in fact mention seeing the flag but he had failed to alert me. So, Sir, if any ill will or news that may reflect poorly on the battalion or army as a result of this action it is the fault of Corporal Patrick Barrett, not I.

I am happy to report the chaplain is recovering well from his wound, though the surgeon could do nothing about his face. The women appear to be mending as well, though they were accosted severely by the Johnnies. It is reported that some were forced to show their ankles.

In closing, Sir, I would like to commend the conduct of my men in this action. Especially First Sergeant Napier who was grievously wounded while attempting to rescue the chaplain and ladies. I believe him to be the best first sergeant in the army, even if he didn't know a sentinel is allowed to let the Officer of the Guard to inspect their weapon. I would also like to commend my own bravery and courage. It is leadership like mine that will inspire our army to victory. I expect my actions alone will result in commission to major general.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Capt. Robert J Heenan  
Cmdg, 69<sup>th</sup> New York, Co. K