

But severe as was the first day's fight on the Weldon Railroad, the little battalion was to go through a still more trying ordeal the next day, when more of the heroic band, already reduced to a handful of brave men, were to disappear from its ranks, alas ! many of them forever.

On that day (August 19) General Lee determined to make another attempt to regain possession of the Weldon Railroad. Again it was a portion of A. P. Hill's Corps that was ordered to the attack. The route taken on the 19th was the same as that of the day before, and through a drenching rain the troops moved steadily to meet the enemy. Line of battle was formed just as it had been on the 18th, and upon nearly the same ground. Breastworks more numerous now, even, and stronger than the day before, were to be stormed. The ground was unfavorable for attack, and it was apparent to all that the day was to see some hard fighting, with but little prospect that success would crown the Confederate arms.

Skirmishers were thrown out and the heavy line of battle moved forward to meet the enemy. It was not long before the irregular fire of the skirmishers in front gave warning that the work had been cut out. "Forward, double-quick !" was the command, and the line of battle swept on with beautiful precision, and the enemy in heavy masses were met on the edge of the wood. The spattering fire of the skirmish line had now changed to one continuous roar of musketry, and brave men on both sides fell by hundreds. The enemy was driven back, and the first line of works were soon in the hands of the Confederates. Archer's Brigade, to which was attached the Second Maryland, captured the second and afterward the main line of works, but the supports on the left were unable, or, through someone's blundering, did not get to the breastworks where the little brigade was battling with an overwhelming force. For an hour this unequal contest was waged, when Colonel Christian in command of the troops in possession of the fort ordered the Second Maryland to be thrown obliquely to the right and form line, which movement had hardly been performed when the enemy came on in heavy force, with bayonets fixed and not firing a shot. The battalion poured a heavy fire into them, which staggered them for an instant, but they still pressed on until they had reached the fort. Here a hand-to-hand conflict ensued, the Confederates on the inside trying to retain, and the Federals on the outside trying to regain possession of the fort. But this unequal contest could not long continue, for the Federals soon swarmed into the works, where for awhile the fight was continued, the survivors then trying to fight their way out. Some succeeded, but one-third of that gallant band of Marylanders lay dead and wounded or were prisoners in the hands of the enemy.

Many were the noble spirits who fell in those two days of desperate fighting, among them Adjutant J. Winder Laird. Thus a comrade speaks of him :

"On that day, too, J. Winder Laird, our heroic Adjutant, tall and handsome