

Leaving my small party, I passed the Virginia regiment and saw a long column of Federal cavalry approaching by the turnpike, and about half a mile away. I urged Colonel Davis to meet their charge by a counter-charge, and under no circumstances to attempt to check them by remaining in position. He did not give any orders at all, and as it was apparent the enemy were going to charge I took a look at his regiment and saw that indescribable tremor run through it, which convinced me they would not, under the circumstances, withstand the charge.

I hastened back to my little command and resolved to wheel about by fours, turn down the first side street, the length of my column, then wheel to the front again, and when the Virginians were driven by me to dash out between them and the Federals and endeavor to check them and save the wagons. The wheel-about by fours was made, but before we reached a side street Davis' command swarmed around us, fleeing in the wildest panic. Every soldier knows the contagion of such a rout, but to the honor of our glorious old State each and every one of these gallant forty-six men moved as a machine, and the column was as solid as a rock. The enemy was immediately on the heels of the fleeing Confederates, and as soon as our rear (soon to become the front) was uncovered the order was: "Fours Right-about! Charge!" It was a tremendous struggle for the sections of fours to force their way around, crowded and pressed as they were by largely superior numbers, and the sections farthest from the enemy were much longer making the wheel than those who were first released from the pressure, and as each man dashed at full speed at the enemy the moment that he could face them the charge was made nearly in single file. Immediately that the enemy perceived that they had a force in their front that meant to stay, for awhile at least, they checked their pursuit and halted in a confused mass in the street, except one or two whose horses carried them into our midst, and they were promptly shot down. Sergeant Hammond Dorsey was the first man who dashed into the enemy's lines, and began to hew right and left. George Lechluder followed him closely, and almost immediately the enemy broke and ran, and was hotly pursued to their main body by the entire company. Five men fell under Sergeant Dorsey's sabre, the last one of them being a bugler. As the fellow in full flight leaned over his horse's neck his brass bugle protected his head, and it required repeated blows to disable him. The enemy made no counter-charge, and the wagon train was saved. General Ewell was an eye-witness to the whole affair, and he afterward declared it to be the neatest thing of the kind he had ever seen, and had undoubtedly saved his wagon train.*

Flushed with victory, we retired to our side of the town, where we were soon joined by reinforcements, and two pieces of artillery were added to my command. The enemy dismounted his sharpshooters and skirmished on the left of the town, but, dismounting a few men, we drove them back. In doing this Soper Childs and his brother Buck displayed conspicuous courage.

* In this fight the Federal advance was commanded by Colonel Ulric Dahlgren, who lost a leg by a shot from the pistol of Captain Bond, and was killed the following year in a bold attempt to liberate the prisoners on Belle Isle, assassinate President Davis and his Cabinet, and burn Richmond.