

CHAPTER V.

On October 12 the cavalry corps crossed the Rappahannock at Warrenton Springs and moved down the Warrenton and Alexandria pike, and breaking into several columns marched by different but nearly parallel roads in the direction of Centreville. Fitz Lee's Division moved toward Catlett's Station, on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. At a small place on Cedar Creek, called Auburn, Lomax's Brigade, to which the First Maryland was still attached, made a dash at the enemy's wagon train, then passing, but finding it protected by a large body of his infantry Lomax withdrew.

This affair, though brief and unsatisfactory, gave occasion for a complimentary order from General Lomax to the First Maryland which was well deserved, for by their gallant bearing they materially assisted in extricating that General from a most perilous position.

By this time Meade had divined the object of General Lee's movement, and his whole army was in retreat toward Washington, in order to prevent Lee from gaining his rear.

During this retreat the cavalry made several attacks upon his flank, in all of which the First Maryland was actively engaged. But little was effected, however, owing to the careful and compact order in which the enemy retired.

Finding his prey had escaped him, General Lee fell back to the line of the Rapidan, leaving the cavalry to guard his rear, which also fell back slowly, Hampton by the Warrenton pike and Fitz Lee by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, the two running parallel.

The enemy's cavalry under Kilpatrick, thinking retreat meant defeat, pressed after Hampton, and his advance and Hampton's rear soon became engaged. Hampton continued his retreat until he reached within two miles of Warrenton, when the trap he had prepared for Kilpatrick was sprung.

So eager was that officer to immortalize himself, and so confident was he of success, that he never stopped to think of the danger that might be lurking behind the range of hills on his left. Fitz Lee was there, and when Kilpatrick thought to crush Hampton at a blow and drive him into the Rappahannock, the sound of a few cannon on his rear and left suddenly put a new phase on affairs.

With the sound of these guns Hampton ceased his retreat, and turning charged the pursuing enemy, while at the same moment Fitz Lee struck him in flank at Buckland. The fight which ensued was short, bloody and decisive, and Kilpatrick's exultant pursuit was converted into a precipitate rout, and his troopers scattered over the country in all directions.