

scouts, and they soon discovered it was a heavy column, indeed, and moving southward. The column crossed the Virginia Central Railroad at Frederick's Hall on Johnson's left, and took the road which led direct to Richmond.

This proved to be a force of thirty-five hundred men, commanded by General Judson Kilpatrick and Colonel Ulric Dahlgren, two daring Federal officers, who had conceived the bold, and, in part devilish, exploit of marching on Richmond, releasing the thousands of Federal prisoners confined on Belle Isle, burning Richmond, and giving it up to sack, and murdering President Davis and his Cabinet. The expedition was divided into two columns, that of Dahlgren moving rapidly across the railroad at Frederick's Hall and thence to Dover Mills, where he attempted to cross the James, about twenty miles above Richmond, but a freshet in the river made it unfordable at this point. Being thus foiled, Dahlgren rode rapidly down the river road toward the Capital.

In the meantime Kilpatrick had pressed down the Fredericksburg road in the direction of Richmond, and his route lay by Hanover Junction, the key to Lee's position, for by the railroad's passing this point General Lee was dependent for his supplies from the South and from the Valley of Virginia, and should the six bridges over the North and South Anna and Middle Rivers be destroyed Lee's position would be rendered untenable.

Colonel Johnson immediately ordered his pickets to destroy the boats on the Pamunkey, to cut off Kilpatrick's retreat in that direction, and with sixty men of the First Maryland Cavalry and two guns from the Baltimore Light Artillery — the only disposable force he had left after sending out his scouts to watch the enemy's movements — he followed in pursuit. A short distance outside of Taylorsville the enemy's pickets were encountered, driven in and pursued to Ashland. Here a large force was met on its way to destroy the railroad and buildings there. Johnson attacked this force with great vigor and drove it off.

Thence moving rapidly Colonel Johnson fell upon the enemy's flank at Yellow Tavern, and, posting his men, commenced to capture small parties that came along, among them a Sergeant with five men, who proved to be a bearer of dispatches from Dahlgren to Kilpatrick. Kilpatrick's guns were then thundering away at the outer defenses of Richmond, and Dahlgren's dispatch informed him that he would attack at dusk that evening on his road, and he looked for Kilpatrick to attack with vigor on his (Kilpatrick's) side of the city.

Colonel Johnson saw at once that he had destroyed the communication between the co-operating forces, and he prepared immediately to attack and harass Kilpatrick's rear. Taking care not to expose the number of his force, he attacked a picket in the rear of the centre of the line of battle drawn up in front of Richmond, and drove it in. This bold act conveyed the impression to Kilpatrick