

interesting description of this most brilliant achievement of Colonel Johnson and his handful of gallant Maryland boys :

The first information reached him just before midnight of February 29 that a body of cavalry had passed the right of the army, accompanied by orders to find it without delay, ascertain its force and the direction it was moving, and its intentions and object, fight it if possible, and to save the bridges at all hazards. He immediately sent orders to his pickets to destroy the boats on the Pamunkey, between Hanover Court House and the White House, in order to prevent the escape of the enemy in that direction, and at the same time sent out an expanding circle of scouting parties to the north and west to ascertain the movements of the enemy. It was soon ascertained that they were moving on Hanover Junction, and that there was a large force. The extended pickets and necessary scouts had only left about sixty men of the First Maryland Cavalry present for duty, and these, with the infantry and artillery, were prepared to receive the expected attack. Moving out with the cavalry and two pieces of the Baltimore Light Artillery, just before light, on March 1, Johnson struck a force of the enemy near Taylorsville, two miles from the junction, and drove them off. Pushing on, he found that the main body had moved rapidly on Richmond, and were at least an hour ahead of him. He followed quickly on their line of march, and at the Yellow Tavern, five miles from Richmond, found them, under Kilpatrick, in line of battle a mile beyond him, preparing to attack the city, upon whose outworks they had already opened with artillery. Just then a straggler was captured, and finding there were forces in the rear, Johnson drew his squadron off on the side of the road, and posted a picket in Federal uniform on the road itself. In a few minutes a squad of five men rode into the ambush, who proved to be the guard of a bearer of a dispatch from Dahlgren to Kilpatrick.

It was a verbal one, but the officer who bore it was forced to give it up. It was information that Dahlgren had failed in his attempt to cross the James, but would charge into the city by the river road at dark, and asking Kilpatrick's co-operation in a joint attack at that time. Immediately on getting this information, Colonel Johnson charged Kilpatrick's picket and rear guard, which he had left behind him on the Brook turnpike, and drove them in on the main body. Whereupon Kilpatrick at once desisted from this attack, took horse and drew off his troops in the direction of the Peninsula, evidently aiming to escape over the Pamunkey, or down toward Williamsburg. Colonel Johnson with his sixty men followed close on his heels, and that night Kilpatrick camped on the eastern side of the Chickahominy, only four miles from Richmond, with Johnson on the other side of that river, between him and Richmond. During the night Hampton came on Kilpatrick's camp and drove him from it with loss in prisoners and horses.

At daylight on the 2d the Confederates were again on his track, and for the whole day kept harrassing him, constantly driving in his rear guard, and never losing sight of him, until he eventually escaped by joining an infantry force which was sent from Williamsburg to Tunstall's Station, on the York River Railroad, to rescue him.