

So persistent and vigorous was the pursuit, so sharp and incessant the charges of the Marylanders, that at Old Church, sixteen miles from Richmond, General Kilpatrick was forced to go into line of battle and offer to fight his adversary. He displayed three thousand picked cavalry and a battery of six guns, prepared to resist the onslaught of the sixty hornets who had been stinging, exasperating and alarming him for nearly twenty-four hours.

Such an invitation was, of course, declined, but a regiment of the Union troops charged them and drove the Marylanders back to Old Church, with loss of one man.

As soon as the Federal regiment retired, however, the Marylanders went at them again, and while thus engaged were themselves charged in rear by a force of four hundred men, part of Dahlgren's command, who were seeking to unite with Kilpatrick. With three thousand men in front and four hundred in rear, the Marylanders, undismayed, opened their ranks, let them through, and actually closed in on their flanks, and brought off many prisoners, besides inflicting severe loss in killed and wounded.

In these whole series of fights Colonel Johnson's loss was comparatively trifling. Captain George M. Emack, of Company B, was slightly wounded; Lieutenant C. Irving Ditty, of Company F, seriously through the thigh; Private George T. Parker, Company B, sabre cuts over the head; Private R. K. King, sabre cuts over head and shoulders, and Private Richard H. Key, Company B, sabre cuts, and a prisoner by his horse being killed.

Colonel Johnson captured more than twice as many of the enemy as he had men in his command, besides inflicting heavy loss upon them in killed and wounded.

The daring and skill displayed by Colonel Johnson in this affair was not excelled by any achievements during the war, and he was justly called the savior of the Confederate Capital. In commemoration of his services General Elzey, in command of the defenses of Richmond, issued a general order complimenting the command, and General Hampton, in his report to General Lee distinctly gave the credit of saving Richmond to the First Maryland and their gallant leader, and at the same time he presented Colonel Johnson with a sabre, which is now in the relic room at the Confederate Soldiers' Home at Pikesville.

EXTRACT FROM HAMPTON'S REPORT, MARCH 6, 1864.

War Records, General No. 60, page 190.

In the first place, my observation convinced me that the enemy could have taken Richmond, and in all probability would have done so but for the fact that Colonel Johnson intercepted a dispatch from Dahlgren to Kilpatrick, asking what hour the latter had fixed for an attack on the city, so that both attacks might be simultaneous.