

else, as the picket stumbled upon was only a few yards from the main body, which appeared to be resting in a continuous line along and on both sides of the road.

Colonel Brown deployed at once, and advanced rapidly, the whole line keeping up a vigorous fire, which was made more effectual because, while being in the shadow themselves, the confused enemy was distinctly visible by the light of the fires they had built. This could be plainly seen, as in driving the enemy back they passed over the ground which had been held by them, and found many dead and wounded men and horses.

Still pressing the enemy back, Colonel Brown came to a skirt of woods, about half a mile from the point where he first met them, when a cavalry charge was made upon his thin line, which, however, was handsomely repulsed, and the enemy driven back in confusion. Passing through this woods, he found them posted in great strength on both sides of the road, in open fields, awaiting his attack. Upon observing this Colonel Brown slowly withdrew his command unmolested.

He now ascertained, from evidence before him and from prisoners taken, that instead of fighting, as he supposed, a small raiding party, he had engaged the advance of Sheridan's army of thirteen thousand men. Mounting his men, he held his ground until daylight, when a dispatch was received from General J. E. B. Stuart directing Colonel Brown to harrass and delay the enemy as long as possible, as he was in pursuit.

Accordingly, he at once advanced upon the enemy's pickets and drove them back, when they were reinforced, but again driven back several times in succession, until Sheridan pushed forward heavy reinforcements, when Colonel Brown deemed it advisable to retire a short distance, the enemy manifesting no disposition to pursue. Thus for some time the opposing forces watched each other in silence, when Brown moved his men some distance to the rear to feed the horses, but leaving a force of twenty men, under command of Lieutenant C. Irving Ditty, to observe their movements.

But a few minutes elapsed before the enemy became restive, and could be seen forming a strong column in the road, with heavy masses on each side of it, and clouds of mounted and dismounted skirmishers taking position in front. The fact was at once communicated to Colonel Brown. A bugle sound next announced the enemy's approach, and the heavy columns moved forward in imposing array upon Ditty's little force of twenty men. At this instant Brown came up at a gallop, and a spirited fight ensued. A dozen times did the column of mounted men attack, but a dozen times they were driven back in confusion, until the dismounted men moved through the woods on Brown's flank and compelled him to retire; and at last, about midday, they forced him back beyond the woods into the clear country, where Sheridan could see the insignificant force that had so many precious hours kept him in check. Then, and not until then, could his cavalry be brought to a charge, which