

In the latter part of May, Lee fell back before Grant, and made Hanover Junction a point of defense. Sending for Colonel Johnson, he directed him to take Brown's battalion and pass around Grant and see what he was doing, and especially his base of supplies. The little command crossed the North Anna below Lee's right and pursued its way to Penola Station, on the Fredericksburg Railroad, where Colonel Johnson discovered a heavy column moving down from Bowling Green, and at the same time ascertained that the enemy drew his supplies from Tappahannock. Turning to retrace his steps, he found the whole of Sheridan's cavalry moving up through King William, in his rear, and all the fords on the lower Anna in his possession. This compelled him to cross higher up, which was effected by throwing the horses into the stream from a high bank. Johnson finally reached the main body in safety, having captured several couriers, from whom it was ascertained that Sheridan was coming up and Burnside moving down from Bowling Green.

For the signal service rendered upon this occasion, Colonel Johnson and his command were highly complimented by General Lee.

On the 27th of May, Colonel Johnson was ordered to report with his cavalry to General Fitz Lee, who was then at Hanover Court House. A short time after his arrival the enemy crossed at Dabney's Ferry, when by order of General Lomax he was ordered to go down and drive them back. Upon his arrival he found Colonel Baker, of the Fifth North Carolina, in command of Gordon's old brigade, skirmishing with a force not far from the ferry. Believing it to be a small body, it was arranged that Baker should hold them where they were whilst Johnson passed around to their flank, by which movement it was hoped they would capture the whole of them. Taking a side road, he had not gone more than a mile before he encountered Baker's pickets retiring in good order, followed by the enemy. Before he could deploy his men on some open ground on the side of the road, a stand was made for some twenty minutes under a fierce fire, when the enemy moved upon him in overwhelming force, and Johnson was forced to retire. His horse was killed. The greater part of the battalion had unfortunately just passed through a gate in to a field when the enemy charged. A dreadful hand-to-hand fight ensued, and before the gate could be opened for them to retreat many were killed and wounded, among the latter the gallant Brown by several sabre cuts over the head. It was soon perceived that the enemy were wrapping around the little battalion, and threatening it with destruction, when the order was given to retreat. This was conducted for a time in an orderly manner, but the enemy pressed them so hard that command was given for every man to look out for himself.

The First Maryland lost in this unfortunate affair at Pollard's farm between fifty and sixty men in killed, wounded and prisoners, among the latter Captain