

CHAPTER VII.

For the next few days the battalion was engaged in skirmishing about Hanover Court House, the enemy occupying them there whilst his columns were crossing at Dabney's Ferry, and pressing on toward Richmond.

On the 1st of June, 1864, the enemy moved on the South Anna bridges, Johnson's small command of one hundred and fifty sabres and Griffin's Baltimore Light Artillery contesting every foot of ground in a fight lasting from daylight until 2 o'clock in the afternoon, when they were driven back by a brigade of the enemy's cavalry.

In this encounter the First Maryland Cavalry suffered an irreparable loss in the death of the noble Lieutenant-Colonel Ridgely Brown, who was killed by a stray bullet when all was comparatively calm, and no fighting going on. In many respects Ridgely Brown reminded one of the heroic and lamented Turner Ashby. A Christian gentleman, quiet, unassuming, dashing, brave, and, like all brave men, generous to a fault, Colonel Brown was the idol of his command, and his men never hesitated to follow his lead, it made no difference how desperate the undertaking. Like Ashby, after having survived a hundred fierce fights, though wounded time and again, he lost his life in a comparatively insignificant skirmish. In the death of Colonel Brown, Colonel Johnson lost an officer who had been invaluable to him, for to his sound judgment and advice that officer attributed much of his success in thwarting Kilpatrick and Dahlgren in their designs against Richmond.

In a general order issued on the 6th of June Colonel Johnson thus speaks of his death :

HEADQUARTERS MARYLAND LINE, June 6, 1864.

General Order No. 26.

Lieutenant-Colonel Ridgely Brown, commanding First Maryland Cavalry, fell in battle on the 1st instant, near the South Anna. He died, as a soldier prefers to die, leading his men in a victorious charge. As an officer, kind and careful ; as a soldier, brave and true ; as a gentleman, chivalrous ; as a Christian, gentle and modest ; no one in the Confederate Army surpassed him in the hold he had on the hearts of his men, and the place in the esteem of his superiors. Of the rich blood that Maryland has lavished on every battle-field, none is more precious than his, and that of our other brave comrades in arms who fell during the four days previous on the hillsides of Hanover. His command has lost a friend most steadfast, but his commanding officer is deprived of an assistant invaluable. To the first he was ever as careful as a father ; to the latter as true as a brother.