

CHAPTER XI.

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In November, 1864, the First Maryland, now in General Davidson's Brigade of Lomax's Division, crossed the mountain and encamped near Washington, in Rappahannock County, in order to obtain supplies, which were now exceedingly scarce. For days at a time the only food was apples and bread made of corn meal of such miserable quality as to be utterly inedible except under pressure of the direst necessity. Coffee and sugar had long before disappeared — so long that it was a real effort of memory to recall their flavor — and the taste of meat was now a matter of rare occurrence, and then often obtained by the capture of a bewildered squirrel or rabbit, or the accidental falling of a tree on some luckless hog, which happened oftener than people would suppose or believe who are unacquainted with the pertinacity with which that animal will haunt a cavalry camp to steal from the horses, and at which they have often been known to be killed by a kick. Apples were, however, in abundance and excellent, and assisted greatly in keeping up the commissariat. Supplies of all kinds, however, were exhausted in two or three weeks, and the battalion moved back to the neighborhood of Madison Court House. Here it remained until December, when General Davidson was relieved by General Jackson, the former General having been only temporarily in command during the absence, while wounded, of the latter, the proper commander of the brigade.

At this time the enemy made a simultaneous advance upon Madison Court House, Staunton and Charlottesville, at which latter place Custer's division of cavalry was fought by Breathed's battery of horse artillery, composed mainly of Marylanders, without support of any kind, and so bold and vigorous was their defense that Custer retired with loss, under the impression that a large force confronted him.

The column advancing upon Madison Court House, consisting of two divisions, was engaged and held in check nearly a day by Jackson's Brigade, the fight having begun in the morning and lasting until 9 P. M. The battle was closed by a charge of the First Maryland upon the left flank of the enemy, which flank was most advanced. The charge was made less effective by reason of the leading squadron's stumbling into a deep and wide ditch, which, owing to the darkness, could not be seen until too late to prevent the horses from falling. But, although not damaging the enemy to the extent hoped for, it had the effect to break and scatter his line in confusion, and keep him quiet for the balance of the night.

After waiting for some time for further demonstrations from the enemy, and there being none, General Jackson quietly withdrew his brigade a few miles,