

and the streets filled with anxious crowds of soldiers and citizens eagerly seeking and discussing the army news. Already many painful rumors were rife betokening disaster, but resolutely refusing to doubt the success of the cause in which their very souls were embarked, the little band of Marylanders — now reduced to less than one hundred in the saddle — pushed on, followed by the regrets and blessings of their paroled brothers, whose obligations forbade them, as yet, to take part in the stirring events then occurring. As the lines at Petersburg were approached, it was inexpressibly cheering to see everything calm, and the army apparently as confident and defiant as ever.

It was well known that the odds against General Lee were immense, but all Confederate victories had been won against such advantages, and an abiding faith in the justice of their cause and genius of their great chief kept up the spirits of Colonel Dorsey's command, in spite of all drawbacks. When, therefore, bodies of troops of greater or less force were seen in motion on or near the Petersburg road, in perfect order, and advancing toward the sound of the firing, which had all day been heard in their front, the Maryland boys took these facts as perfect confirmation of their pre-entertained opinion that all the news which had given rise to such distressing rumors were, instead of a retreat of the Army of Northern Virginia, only a strategic device on the part of General Lee to bring Grant out from behind his breastworks in order to attack and destroy him. Nor was this idea weakened at all when, after reaching Petersburg about dark, they found everything prepared for motion, and heard that General Lee's lines had been broken. The heavy batteries in front were in full action, and it naturally seemed that so much firing must indicate stout resistance.

Failing to find any orders from General Fitz Lee at this point, who had before this left Stony Creek, for some point to him unknown, Colonel Dorsey availed himself of such shelter as the ground afforded to rest and feed man and horse, and to await information or orders.

Here there was abundance of food and forage, for which there was not transportation, and orders had been issued for its destruction. Colonel Dorsey was therefore permitted to take as much of both for his command as could be carried, which was not much, as the horses were too weak, on account of long marches and insufficient food, to bear any considerable increase of burden. Horses and men, however, had one full meal, and it being the soldier's philosophy to let each day take care of itself, all were soon stretched upon the ground to catch such repose as might be vouchsafed them.

The enemy's fire seemed to increase in violence, and shot and shell soon began to pass over the encampment, and far in its rear, but did no damage, as the intervening hill gave full protection. In this situation, heedless of all the noises, exhausted nature demanded rest, and the First Maryland slept.