

As soon as the day gave sufficient light, the battle opened fiercely, and all thought an engagement had commenced which was to prove the most desperate and terrible of the war.

General Fitz Lee's Division of cavalry, now under command of Brigadier-General Munford (General Fitz Lee being at the headquarters of the army), moved through Appomattox Court House, and formed in line of battle on the right of the road about half a mile beyond that place. The halt was brief, and it moved in column obliquely to the right and entered a heavy wood, where it soon came in contact with the enemy.

Throwing out skirmishers to engage them, General Munford moved again to the right oblique until they were again struck, when more skirmishers were thrown out, the first having fallen to the rear, and these movements were continued until he found a weaker place in the enemy's line, and made good his passage to the Lynchburg road.

Nothing was known positively. The sounds of a severe fight were plainly heard, and those movements of the cavalry excited much surprise and comment among the men and officers composing the division.

At first it was thought that the intention was to get in the enemy's rear and charge him while engaged in front with the infantry, which opinion was much strengthened by a near approach to a battery of the enemy's in full action against General Lee's infantry, but another detour proved its fallacy, and all were lost in conjecture until the Lynchburg road was reached, when it became evident that the immediate object of the movement was to reach that road, as the division at once halted and formed on each side. From this point the masses of Grant's army were plainly visible, standing as if on dress parade.

The firing had now ceased, and surprise at what seemed unaccountable movements gave place to alarm. Surrender of the army was whispered, but was heard with indignation by many who would not acknowledge their own fears to themselves, and all comment was unheeded, and by general consent it was determined to await events in silence. We could see, indeed, on the bronzed countenances of those veterans an anxiety too deep for words.

The First Maryland happened to be nearest to the road and to the enemy, the men dismounted, but standing to horse — the usual precaution of skirmishers in front having been, of course, observed. Everything was still. Not a sound betrayed the presence of the hosts of armed men in the vicinity, and but for the long lines of blue in sight upon the hills in front all might have been taken for a hideous dream.

Suddenly a heavy column of cavalry, moving rapidly along Munford's front and parallel to his line, was seen, about half a mile distant, marching toward the road, which they presently reached, and a part of the force, still in column,