

the broiling sun, the troops eagerly started at a double-quick in the direction of the sound of battle. They were almost hidden in a cloud of dust, and the heat grew more intense. Now they would slacken their swift pace to a walk, and again halt for a moment to cool their parched tongues and throats at a mud puddle ; and all the time, while the sky was blue, the far-off roll of thunder seemed to be in the air. But it was the boom of cannon answering cannon ; their defiant tones sounded more deeply at every step, and soon the rattle of musketry made a sharp staccato to the diapason from brazen throats. Then came the sight of wounded men moving slowly and painfully to the rear, first by twos and then in larger numbers, while the hurried and fragmentary story that they tried to tell as the troops passed on was not always one to brighten the eye or cause the pulse to beat proudly and joyfully.

From high overhead of the command there came a screaming sound. None of the troops had ever before heard such a strange sound, but, as if by intuition, all knew that it was a shell, and for the first time felt what was really meant. " Bang ! " " Bang ! " went two more, and then they came literally in showers. It seemed as if that little brigade was the target for all the artillery of the Union Army. Then it began to dawn upon the wondering men that the clouds of dust which they were raising on their march had told the Federals that Confederate reinforcements were moving to the front. And still General Smith rode grimly and sternly forward.

Now rifle balls begin to " zip " on every hand, and many a man who had sworn never to bow his head at the sound of a bullet found himself doing so involuntarily ; and there were some who, when they raised their faces in shame, expecting to meet the jibes and laughter of their comrades, found them all making a like obeisance.

And now came a critical moment. The First Maryland was on the right of the advancing column, with General Smith riding silently at its head, when suddenly, as it entered a strip of wood, a fierce volley of musketry was poured into it at short range. General Smith fell from his horse desperately wounded, and several of the men in the First Maryland were also injured. Sergeant John B. Berryman, of Company C, being shot in the groin and rendered a cripple for life.

This was the First Maryland's baptism of fire, but it never faltered. Instinctively, and as it seemed without an order, with steady precision, it calmly swung into line. At once Colonel Elzey assumed command, and quickly placed in position Colonel Gibbon's Tenth Virginia and Colonel Vaughn's Third Tennessee, A. P. Hill's Thirteenth Virginia, having been detached to Blackburn's Ford.

And now there happened something that helped to turn the tide of battle.