

With the quick and keen instinct of a soldier, Elzey, finding himself too far to the right, moved obliquely to the left through the strip of woods until he approached its edge. Then a strange sight greeted the eyes of his men. On a ridge across the wheat field in their front, and as far down to their right as the eye could reach, was an unbroken line of blue, from which came volumes of smoke, except in the brigade's immediate front. Colonel Elzey had reached a position by which he had outflanked the enemy and made its standpoint untenable, unless it could prolong its line. All this General Elzey saw at a glance, and felt, too, that not a moment must be lost. He knew that his presence had not yet been discovered, but he determined to make it known. Swiftly moving his column forward to the very edge of the woods, he opened fire. That long, sinuous line of blue showed its surprise, but it quickly returned the fire, and from the woods and the ridge the bullets flew thick and fast. The fire from the Confederate side was effective, and here and there breaks could be seen in the blue line, but as Elzey's column had the advantage of the position in the woods, the casualties on its side were comparatively few, the only man killed in the First Maryland being Private John Swisher, of Company A, who was shot in the head, and died instantly.

For some time the fierce duel continued, but with no evidence of weakness on either side. Then Elzey determined to make the attack. Riding along the line he stirred the hearts of his men by words of praise and encouragement, and then, when every man was quivering and throbbing under the tension to which he had been subjected, and felt like a swift horse under the bridle, or a fleet greyhound held back by the leash, the command "Forward!" came from the gallant soldier's lips like a clarion blast. The men answered with a will. Leaping over the fence that separated the woods from the wheat field, they dashed forward with a yell. The fate of the Confederate Army was in their hands that day, for all along the line the gallant boys in gray had been driven back or mowed down. Would the charge succeed? There was no hope that it would, for the enemy held a strong position and Elzey's men had three hundred yards to cross over an open field. But the gray line swept on. One hundred yards were passed, and still their ringing cheers were heard, while the echoes floated back and died away in the sombre woods. Two hundred yards, and the pace began to tell. Would they ever reach the goal? The fire of the enemy grew fiercer; that blue line with the baleful and vengeful light that flashed from its steady front seemed to mock the peaceful cerulean of the summer sky. Three hundred yards, and the ridge was reached. Panting and gasping, they pull themselves upward; their vision expanded. That blue line was made up of men, stern and fierce men, each with a gun in his hands. They could tell the color of his eyes; they could count the buttons on his coat. Was this what they had seen from the woods?