

Was this what they had crossed the wheat field to meet? It was man to man now, it was strength against strength. And lo! as they gasped and wondered, that long blue line grew dim. Were their eyes failing them; was the angel of death smiling on them? Fainter grew the blue; it seemed to dissolve; it melted away like the baseless fabric of a vision; it blended with the blue sky; it disappeared in the woods behind the hill.

Halting the column upon the position just held by the now vanished enemy, Elzey re-formed his troops, and then pressed forward in pursuit. Through the thick pines he went, until he reached the open country. What a sight met the gaze of his victorious command! Thousands of men struggling frantically with each other in their wild flight to reach the rear, and others less fortunate surrendering themselves prisoners at every step. The victors were exhausted, and their commander had to halt them for a rest.

It was during this pursuit that President Davis and Generals Johnston and Beauregard rode up to Colonel Elzey, the former with much emotion, and with extended hand exclaiming: "*General Elzey, you are the Blucher of the day!*"

General Joseph E. Johnston, in his official report of the battle of Manassas, says:

"About 3 o'clock, while the enemy seemed to be striving to outflank and drive back our left, and thus separate us from Manassas, General E. K. Smith arrived with three regiments of Elzey's Brigade. He was instructed to attack the right flank of the enemy now exposed to us. Before the movement was completed he fell, severely wounded. Colonel Elzey, at once taking command, executed it with great promptitude and vigor. General Beauregard rapidly seized the opportunity thus afforded him and threw forward his whole line. The enemy was driven back from the long-contested hill, and victory was no longer doubtful."

General Irvin McDowell, in his official report of this battle, says:

"It was at this time that the enemy's reinforcements came to his aid from the railroad trains (understood to have just arrived from the valley with the residue of Johnston's army). They threw themselves in the woods on our right, and opened a fire of musketry on our men, which caused them to break and retire down the hillside. This soon degenerated into disorder, for which there was no remedy. Every effort was made to rally them, even beyond the reach of the enemy's fire, but in vain. . . . The plain was covered with retreating groups, and they seemed to infect those with whom they came in contact. The retreat soon became a rout, and this soon degenerated still further into a panic. . . . In the panic the horses hauling the caissons and ammunition were cut from their places by persons to escape with, and in this way much confusion was caused, the panic aggravated, and the road encumbered. Not only were pieces of artillery lost, but also many of the ambulances carrying the wounded."