

General Ewell did need the regiment, and took good care not to part from it during the Valley campaign, nor until after the battles before Richmond.

On the evening of May 22 Jackson's army, about 12,000 men, went into camp within an easy day's march of Front Royal, where it was expected the Federals would be first encountered, but in what force was mere conjecture.

Near noon on the 23d a halt was made some three miles from Front Royal, and whilst the men were resting themselves an aide rode up to Colonel Johnson, whose command was well in the rear, and handed him the following order :

Colonel Johnson will move the First Maryland to the front with all dispatch, and in conjunction with Wheat's battalion develop the enemy's position at Front Royal.

JACKSON.

Colonel Johnson read the order from General Jackson to the men, and proud of the distinction conferred upon them, the First Maryland moved to the front with an elasticity of step that elicited the admiration of the whole army.

Pushing rapidly forward, the commands of Johnson and Wheat, preceded by a small squad of cavalry, soon came in sight of Front Royal, within a mile of which a picket post was captured.

The surprise was complete, and in a few minutes the Confederates had full possession of the town, several of the enemy being captured in the streets. It was then learned that the infantry force in front of Johnson and Wheat was composed of the First Maryland Federal, two companies of the Twenty-ninth Pennsylvania, besides a detachment of the Fifth New York cavalry and two pieces of artillery, making, all told, 1,100 men, under command of Colonel John R. Kenly, of the First Maryland, a soldier of the Mexican War and known to be a gallant man. Johnson's force consisted of 275 men, Wheat's of 150 ; total, 425.

Drawing his forces up on a commanding ridge a short distance outside of the town, Kenly calmly awaited the attack.

Colonel Johnson quickly threw forward in skirmish line the companies of Captains Herbert, Nicholas and Goldsborough, all under command of Lieutenant-Colonel E. R. Dorsey, with Wheat on their left. These troops moved with admirable precision over the intervening bottom land under a heavy fire of musketry and artillery, until they reached a position that afforded them some shelter, from which their fire did much execution.

In the meantime the Confederate infantry were moving in considerable force to Kenly's left, whilst a large body of cavalry was crossing the river some distance to his right. Finding himself likely to be surrounded, Kenly was at last compelled to withdraw across the river and endeavor to effect his escape to Winchester. He had made a gallant fight, and had delayed Jackson's advance some hours, and this was precious time to Banks.