

Before daylight in the morning of May 25 the First Maryland was ordered forward by General Ewell to open the battle in his front. Colonel Johnson deployed a portion of his regiment as skirmishers, and steadily they moved through the darkness toward Winchester. But as the day dawned a fog arose so dense that objects could be seen only a few feet away. Not knowing where he was, and fearing that he might run into a superior force of the enemy, Colonel Johnson wisely assembled his men and ordered them to lie down in an orchard. And it was well he did, for when the fog lifted in a measure right in front of him, not over two hundred yards away, lay a large body of the enemy behind a stone fence. It would have been folly for Colonel Johnson to have attacked them with his little command, for it would have meant their destruction.

But the spattering fire of musketry was heard on the left, and it was evident that Jackson was moving forward to the attack. Suddenly the fog disappeared entirely, and the sight that met the gaze of the Maryland boys was, indeed, inspiring, although for the moment they were compelled to hug the ground closely for fear of being seen by the enemy, for they were completely isolated from the remainder of Ewell's command. In front of them, and off to their left was a long line of Federal troops drawn up on the outskirts of Winchester. Their skirmishers were falling back before those of Jackson. Suddenly there emerged from the woods a long line of Confederates. They moved with the most beautiful precision, although their trail was marked by dead and wounded men at every step. It was General Dick Taylor's glorious Louisiana brigade and the Tenth and Twenty-third Virginia.

Beautifully the line advanced upon the doomed Federals, and as the right of Taylor's Brigade brushed by the First Maryland, Colonel Johnson could remain a passive spectator no longer, and he led his Marylanders in the headlong charge along with the men from Louisiana and Virginia. The enemy could not withstand the attack, but broke and fled through the streets of Winchester in dire confusion, closely pursued by the victorious Confederates.

But on the right Ewell was too slow, and had he pushed forward at the moment that Colonel Johnson left him, but a small number of Banks' army would have recrossed the Potomac.

In his official report of this battle General Jackson said :

"With the First Maryland on his left and Trimble's Brigade on his right, General Ewell now moved toward the eastern outskirts of the town. That advance was made about the time that Taylor's Brigade was so gallantly crossing the hill and charging toward the western side of the town."

But in this General Jackson is in error, as far as the First Maryland is concerned. That command entered Winchester on the western side and reached the eastern side almost before Ewell had put his troops in motion.