

On the afternoon of the 5th of June, 1862, the rear guard of Jackson's command passed through the streets of Harrisonburg, and filing to the left a short distance below that town, took the road to Port Republic, Fremont's advance at the time being close up with Ashby's rear guard of cavalry. On the night of the 5th the troops went into camp about two miles from Harrisonburg. At reveille on the morning of the 6th the men were astir, and after partaking of a hasty breakfast the weary march was resumed. To many it was their last meal, for before the sun had disappeared in the western horizon the First Maryland had to mourn the loss of some of its best and bravest, who lay cold in the embrace of death, and the spirit of the chivalrous Ashby, the Bayard of the Confederate Army, had also winged its flight from earth. It was his error of judgment that brought about the disaster, and he paid the penalty with his life.

After laboriously advancing on their journey some four miles over a most wretched road, during which the wagons of the long train and the artillery were being constantly stuck in the mud, which greatly retarded the march of the infantry, a halt was ordered. Ashby and his cavalry were resting in a strip of wood, and a short distance beyond in a field was the First Maryland. Suddenly there was borne to the ears of the latter a yell, followed by the rattle of small arms. The enemy was upon Ashby, and that, too, most unexpectedly, for many of his troopers had unsaddled their horses.

For some minutes this firing and yelling continued. Colonel Johnson grasped the situation at once. Ashby had been attacked, but by what force? Hastily calling the First Maryland to "Attention!" Colonel Johnson led it in the direction of the wood from which these sounds of conflict emanated, but as the command advanced, the yelling and firing seemed to recede, until they were far away.

A dismounted prisoner was next seen coming to the rear under guard. He was a dashing-looking fellow, in a handsome, well-fitting uniform. He was nervously swinging one of his gauntlets in his hand, and seemed cast down and mortified at his ill fortune. At that moment the glorious, whole-souled Colonel Bob Wheat rode up. Springing from his horse he rushed up to the discomfited trooper. Their hands were extended simultaneously, for the recognition was mutual. "Why, Percy!" exclaimed Wheat; "why, Bob!" stammered the other, and then they sat down in a fence corner and talked of the good old times they had had together in Italy under Garibaldi. The Federal officer was Colonel Percy Wyndham, an Englishman, in command of the First New Jersey Cavalry. He had persistently followed Ashby for days, and Ashby had expressed his admiration for the daring cavalryman who had given him so much annoyance. But poor Wyndham had ventured too far and had met his Waterloo, for not only himself but sixty-three of his men were captured and many killed and wounded,