

### **First Assault at Spotsylvania, or Battle of Laurel Hill.**

Instead of that, came the startling command: "Battalions Forward! Guide Center!" The men responded with a hearty cheer and at the word "March!" stepped off with life, with no music but that of their own voices. There were ringing yells of defiance from the works as the enemy's picket line drew in. Most of the field and staff hastily dismounted as the movement began, and left their horses behind. General Robinson led his division; that is, he rode abreast of the front rank of the Maryland brigade on its right, followed by Colonel Denison, also mounted.

The enemy opened with shell, followed by canister and then double canister, from the cross-fire guns on their right. Kershaw's veterans, behind the works, lost no time in proceeding to business. Their fire increased in intensity as the attack advanced. In addition to the advantage of position, they were in better shape physically than their assailants. It is true they also had made a hard night march, but it was a peaceable one, and the delay interposed by Fitz Lee, as already stated, had enabled them not only to get in ahead, but had given them margin enough for what breakfast they had and a good rest, while the jaded Federals were expending what little energy they had left in more marching and fighting. They had even found their breast works ready made for them. The shooting, however, of the defendants was not as good as might have been expected under the circumstances. The best shots had been carefully picked out for the battalions of sharpshooters attached to Kershaw's division. The sharpshooters had done extra work all night in flanking the exposed left of Anderson's column, and were late in reaching the battle-ground. Still, it must be admitted that the shooting, although not ideal, was good enough practically, and the other side have no right to complain. Had those sharpshooters been present, it is probable that this particular narrative would not have appeared. (Kershaw's Chief of Staff, Col. E. L. Costin.)

There was, of course, no skirmish line in advance of the assaulting columns, as has been erroneously stated. (Humphrey's Va. Campaign, 60, an incorrect account from a very high authority.) The men had not been required to remove caps from the nipples of their pieces, no caution against firing had been given.

Naturally enough, the front rank was goaded into a return fire; individual progress was as naturally retarded by the act of aiming and reloading; men from the rear pressed impatiently forward to repeat the process. In this way, ranks and regiments soon became intermingled, straggling was made easy, the time of exposure was fatally prolonged. The Seventh, which was in the rear when the movement commenced, soon found itself working up to the front, but in a rather mixed condition. The rattle and crash were such that no commands could be heard, and this mischievous return fire, which was helping that of the enemy to destroy the impetus and solidity of the charge, could not be stopped.

### **Fall of Commanders.**

At the distance of about fifty yards from the works General Robinson was shot from his horse and borne from the field, with the loss of a leg. Many years after, in 1895, he received a "medal of honor" from the War Department for conspicuous gallantry on this occasion.

Colonel Denison, commanding the Maryland brigade, was about the same time shot from his horse, and assisted to the rear with the loss of his right arm. He was