

From Early History of the last Year of the War. **BATTLE OF WINCHESTER**

On the morning of the 19th of May, our cavalry pickets at the crossing of the Opequan on the Berryville road were driven in, and information having been sent me of that fact, I immediately ordered all the troops at my disposal to be in readiness to move in the direction given for Gordon, who had arrived from Bunker Hill, to attack at once, but by some mistake our orders were not delivered to Gen. Breckinridge or Gordon. I rode at once to Ramseur's position, and found his troops in the Berryville road, skirmishing with the enemy. Before reaching this point, I had ascertained that Gordon was not moving, and sent back for him, now discovering that the enemy's advance was a real one and in heavy force, I sent orders for Breckinridge and Rodde to move up as rapidly as possible. The position occupied by Ramseur was about one mile and a half out from Winchester, on an elevated plateau between Abraham's Creek and Red Bud Run. Abraham's Creek crosses the Valley Pike on the south of Winchester, and then crosses the Front Royal road about the same distance Southeast of the town, and running Eastward, on the Southern side of the Berryville road, crosses that road a short distance before it empties into the Opequan. Red Bud Run crosses the Martinsburg road about a mile and a half north of Winchester, and runs eastward, on the northern side of the Berryville road, to the Opequan. Ramseur was, therefore, in the obtuse angle formed by the Martinsburg and Front Royal roads. In front of and to the right of him, for some distance the country was open. Abraham's creek runs through a deep valley, and beyond it, on the right, is high open ground, at the intersection of the Front Royal and Martinsburg roads. To Ramseur's left the country sloped off to the Red Bud, and there were some patches of wood which afforded cover for troops. To the north of the Red Bud, the country is very open, affording facilities for the movement of any kind of troops. Towards the Opequan, on the front the Berryville road runs through a ravine with hills and woods on each side, which enabled the enemy to move his troops under cover, and mask them out of range of artillery. Nelson's artillery was posted on Ramseur's line, covering the approaches as far as practicable; and Lomax, with Jackson's cavalry and part of Johnson's, was on the right, watching the valley of Abraham's creek and the Front Royal road beyond, while Fitz Lee was on the left, across the Red Bud, with his cavalry and a battery of horse artillery, and a detachment of Johnson's cavalry watched the interval between Ramseur's left and the Red Bud. These troops held the enemy's main force in check until Gordon's and Rodde's Divisions arrived from Stephenson's depot.

thrown into great confusion and driven from the field. This attacking force of the enemy proved to be the 6th and 19th corps, and it was a grand sight to see this immense body hurled back in utter disorder before my two divisions, numbering very little over 5,000 muskets. Ramseur's division had received the shock of the enemy's attack, and then been forced back a little, but soon recovered itself. Lomax, on the right, had held the enemy's cavalry in check, and with a part of his force had made a gallant charge against a body of infantry, when Ramseur's line was being forced back, thus aiding the latter in recovering from the momentary disorder. Fitz Lee on the left, from across the Red Bud, had poured a galling fire into the enemy's columns with his sharpshooters and horse artillery, while Nelson's and Braxton's batteries had performed wonders. This affair occurred about 11 A. M., and a splendid victory had been gained. The ground in front was strewn with the enemy's dead and wounded, and some prisoners had been taken. But on our side Major Gen. Rodde had been killed, in the very moment of triumph, while conducting the attack of his division with gallantry and skill and this was all a heavy blow to me. Brigadier Gen. Godwin of Ramseur's division had been killed, and Brigadier Gen. York of Gordon's division had lost an arm. Other brave men and officers had fallen, and we could ill bear the loss of any of them. Had I then had a body of fresh troops to push our victory, the day would have been ours, but in this action, in the early part of the day, I had present about 7,000 muskets, about 2,000 cavalry, and two battalions of artillery with about 30 guns; and they had all been engaged. Wharton's division and King's artillery had not arrived, and Imboden's cavalry under Col. Smith, and McCausland's under Col. Ferguson, were watching the enemy's cavalry on the left, on the Martinsburg road and the Opequan. The enemy had a fresh corps which had not been engaged, and there remained his heavy force of cavalry. Our lines were now formed across from Abraham's Creek to Red Bud, and were very attenuated. The enemy was still to be seen in front in formidable force, and away to our right, across Abraham's Creek, at the junction of the Front Royal and Martinsburg roads, he had massed a division of cavalry with some artillery, over lapping us at least a mile, while the country was open between this force and the Valley Pike, and the Cedar Creek Pike back of the latter; which roads furnished my only means of retreat in the event of disaster. My line did not reach the Front Royal road on the right, or the Martinsburg road on the left.

had been made just outside of Winchester during the first year of the war, and with the aid of artillery, which was brought back to this position, the progress of the enemy's infantry was arrested. Wharton's division maintained its organization on the left, and Ramseur fell back in good order on the right. Wickham's brigade of cavalry had been brought from the right and was in position on Fort Hill just outside of Winchester on the west. Just after the advance of the enemy's infantry was checked by our artillery, it was reported to me that the enemy had got around on our right flank, and as I knew this was perfectly practicable and was expecting such a movement from the cavalry on the Front Royal road, I gave the order to retire, but instantly discovering that the supposed force of the enemy was Ramseur's division, which had merely moved back to keep in line with the other troops, I gave the order for the latter to return to the works before they had moved twenty paces. This order was obeyed by Wharton's division, but not so well by the others. The enemy's cavalry force, however, was too large for us, and having the advantage of open ground, it again succeeded in getting around our left, producing great confusion, for which there was no remedy. Nothing was now left for us but to retire through Winchester, and Ramseur's division, which had maintained its organization, was moved on the east of the town to the south side of it, and put in position, forming the basis for a new line, while the other troops moved back through the town. Wickham's brigade, with some pieces of horse artillery on Fort Hill, covered this movement and checked the pursuit of the enemy's cavalry. When the new line was formed, the enemy's advance was checked until night-fall, and we then retired to Newtown without serious molestation. Lomax had hid the enemy's cavalry on the Front Royal road in check, and a feeble attempt at pursuit was repulsed near Ramseur near Kernstown.

As soon as our reverse began, orders had been sent for the removal of the trains, stores, and sick and wounded in the hospitals, to Fisher's Hill, over the Cedar Run Creek Pike and the Back Road. This was done with safety, and all the wounded, except such as were not in a condition to be moved and those which had not been brought from the field, were carried to the rear. This battle, beginning with the skirmish in Ramseur's front, had lasted from daylight until dark, and at the close of it, we had been forced back two miles, after having repulsed the enemy's first attack with great slaughter to him, and subsequently contested every inch of ground with unsurpassed obstinacy. We deserved the victory, and would have had it, but for the enemy's immense superiority in cavalry, which alone gave it to him. Three pieces of King's artillery, from which the horses were shot, and which, therefore, could not be brought off, were lost, but the enemy claimed five, and if he captured that number, two were lost by the cavalry and not reported to me. My loss in killed, wounded, and prisoners was severe for the size of my force, but it was only a fraction of that claimed by the enemy. Owing to its obedience to orders in returning to the works, the heaviest loss of prisoners was in Wharton's division. Among the killed were Major Gen. Rodde and Brigadier General Godwin. Col. G. W. Patton, commanding a brigade, was mortally wounded and fell into the hands of the enemy. Major General Fitz Lee was severely wounded, and Brig. General York lost an arm. In Maj. Gen. Rodde, I had to regret the loss, not only of a most accomplished, skillful and gallant officer, upon whom I placed great reliance, but also of a personal friend, whose counsels had been of great service to me in the trying circumstances with which I had found myself surrounded. He fell at his post, doing a soldier's and patriot's duty to his country, and his memory will long be cherished by his comrades. General Godwin and Colonel Patton were both most gallant and efficient officers, and their loss was deeply felt, as was that of all the brave officers and men who fell in this battle. The enemy's loss in killed and wounded was very heavy, and some prisoners fell into our hands. A skillful and energetic commander of the enemy's forces would have crushed Ramseur before any assistance could have reached him, and thus ensured the destruction of my force; and later in the day, when the battle had turned against us with the immense superiority in cavalry which Sheridan had, and the advantage of the open country, would have destroyed my whole force and captured everything I had. As it was considering the immense disparity in numbers and equipment, the enemy had very little to boast of. I had lost a few pieces of artillery and some very valuable officers and men, but the main part of my force, and all my trains had been saved, and the enemy's loss in killed and wounded was far greater than mine. When I look back to this battle, I can but attribute my escape from a utter annihilation to the capacity of my opponent.

The Tarboro' Southerner states that the number of suits brought at the late term of Edgecombe Superior Court was 775. Of this number 300 paid the one-cent, and 30 settled in full. About 40 judgments by default were taken, and in the remainder pleas of every description were entered, thus staving off judgment for twelve months.

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