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HEROES IN SADDLE.

REMARKABLE STORY OF THE FIRST MAINE CAVALRY.

Twice in the Breach to Save the Day for Kilpatrick—Riding on the Fatal Dahlgren Raid—Their Flag Covered with Battle Inscriptions.

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HICS the honors of war were distributed in March, 1863, and the First Maine cavalry was authorized to assemble on its regimental colors the names of twenty-nine battles in which it had "borne a northern part," most people in and out of the army believed that the limit of fighting had been reached and that a bloodless campaign or perhaps one knot-hole would end it. But during the month succeeding the regiment fought seven engagements, in one of which it lost more men killed than in any other of the thirty-six battles of its career. Thirty-six battles during three years of fighting! One battle for each month of the real work of the war; one battle a month where its service were territorious and conspicuous.

The First Maine was recruited in six weeks' time in the fall of 1861, the whole state being the mustering field. The officers had their pick of recruits, because it was the first call for troopers and the quota allowed but one cavalry regiment, so they took "none but sound, able-bodied men in all respects, between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five years, of correct moral and temperate habits, active, intelligent, free-born and hardy, weighing not less than 145 nor more than 165 pounds."

The first man to enlist was Jonathan P. Cilley, and he was also the first man wounded. The surgeons pronounced his wound fatal, but he lived to be the last commissioner of the regiment and led it in the last eight battles on the list.

The troopers flashed their sudden swords, but only figuratively, in the hills and rich campaign of the Shenandoah valley in the spring of 1862. They early met with one disaster that taught a useful lesson. In scouting Banks' retreat down the valley in May, one battalion, galloping in columns of fours along a narrow pike, ran full tilt into a Confederate battery. The leaders reined up in surprise and the rear ranks reared on the whole over a stillness, men and horses becoming involved in a hopeless and appalling wreck.

The next experience of the regiment was at Cedar mountain, on the Rapidan, where it stood in line for some hours under fire from artillery and passed the ordeal with cool clinching. In the other battles of that first year, Second Bull Run, Antietam and Fredericksburg, the regiment was alternately under fire with fatal results, and in the Chancellorsville campaign went with Gen. Pleasonton on his famous ride around Lee's army, meeting with stirring adventures and a lively brush now and then, by squadron, with the Confederate troopers in pursuit. But all of this was only practice for the serious work ahead, and it was an ideal cavalry corps that Gen. Pleasonton led out on June 9, 1863, to cross the Rappahannock river in the face of "Jeb" Stuart's gallant squadrons and find out what Lee was doing with his cavalry. The First Maine was in the division of Gen. Gregg, and had for its brigadier the dashing young Kilpatrick, a boy of twenty-one. No need to tell how the men of Buford crossed the river, met and drove back Stuart's best brigades under Gens. Jones, Hampton and Lee. It was the first genuine horseback fight of the war.

Gregg's division forded the river and seized Stuart's tavern, Brandy Station, headquarters and all, and Stuart, around to watch, turned his whole power upon Gregg's staring brigade of Col. Percy Wyndham that had dispelled his camp. Gregg was in danger of losing the fruits of his charge when Kilpatrick appeared, leading his command for the first time under fire. Coming to the field the brigade emerged from the wood on open ground and charged in column of squadrons. A Confederate battery, screened by shrubbery, welcomed the new arrival with shells, and a force of Confederate cavalry dashed upon the leading regiment, capturing its colonel and hurling it back. The second regiment fared even worse, and Kilpatrick rode to the First Maine, shouting, "Men of Maine, you must save the day!"

COL. CALVIN S. HOYT.
[Killed in a charge at Aldie.]

Making a slight detour to the right, the regiment struck the Confederate force in the flank, crushing all his squadrons then swept on up the hill into and over the battery, shooting and slashing right and left. In the melee the tanks were broken and the leader valued a few minutes to rally the survivors, the enemy meantime rallying in to close the gap behind their rear. The column reformed and rode straight for the battery again, then with a sudden swerve the flank wheeled it and galloped back to the brigade. Only 1 killed, 2 wounded and 10 captured were the casualties, but Kilpatrick told the boys on the spot that it was "one of the best charges ever made," and that it saved the division from defeat. Kilpatrick got a star for the exploit, and thanked the First Maine for winning it.

Eight days later Kilpatrick, at the head of a new division, met Stuart in front of Aldie gap, in the Blue Ridge, and was getting the worst of it when Gregg's reinforcements, with the First Maine leading, rushed to the fight. The Confederates had the advantage, with a shelter of hornbeams, a stone wall and a thick and tangled orchard, and Kilpatrick's regiments had been beaten up and driven back to their camps. Kilpatrick looked to the rear in despair, and his eye caught sight of the First Maine. Gathering up to the colonel he shouted, "Men of Maine, you saved the day at Brandy Station; save it again at Aldie!"

There were two battalions present and squadrons were hastily formed for the charge. Kilpatrick rode near by side with Col. Doubt, and riding three-mounting charge with waving sabers the cavalcade swept down on the line toward the victorious enemy. The field was cleared at the first dash and toward the Maine boys rode in excited pursuit and they struck a dismounted line behind a stone wall. At this point the Maine ranks suffered severely for a moment, but the impetus of the charge bore them through the Confederate line, which was routed and driven from the field.

Col. Doubt fell at the stone wall, pierced with two bullets. This affair took place and it wounded. Two days later, at Middleburg, the regiment charged a position screened by woods and a stone wall, and carried it, losing 3 officers and 8 men killed and 40 wounded.

In the Gettysburg battle the First Maine lost 40. In the battle of Gregg's cavalry division, the brigade changing places with Custer in the great combat of July 3. On the return march, however, at Shepherdstown, on the Potomac, July 16, it lost 4 killed and 17 wounded in an affair with the Confederate rear guard.

The campaign of 1863 in the Army of the Potomac was one of mutiny in the saddle for the cavalry. The mounted infantry there came late in the following year, but before that romance passed behind the First Maine had one more chance to win unique distinction for daring work. A detail of 500 was chosen by Kilpatrick to ride on the Dahlgren raid to Richmond in February, 1864. Later, when Kilpatrick and the rash Dahlgren divided forces, the companies of the Maine boys headed Dahlgren's little column of 500 which Dahlgren led with such fatal results against the works of the Confederate capital. This ride of unexampled wildness and bravery cost the regiment 7 deaths in battle and 6 wounded, besides 18 deaths in prison and 18 deserting captives.

Then followed the era of swift rides and sharp fights of dismounted cavalry.

On the 11th of May, 1864, in Stuart's Richmond raid, the First Maine was engaged when Stuart was defeated in Yellow Tavern. The Maine boys fought on foot and on horseback, and broke for the first time under the command of a whole brigade. The loss was 8 killed and 12 wounded.

The next fight of the regiment was as warm as any cavalry engagement on record, and Gregg's division seems honeycombed. This was at St. Mary's Church, Va., June 24, when Wade Hampton with a large mounted force attempted to cut off Grant's wagon train passing from the Pamunkey to the James river. The First Maine bears the brunt of the attack and when the troops saw that they cried out, "Fight today, boys, the First Maine's in the advance."

TWIN SERGEANTS OF COMPANY A.
[The brothers S. W. and P. H. Clark.]

Gregg dismounted his men and built rude breastworks, and then the Maine men opened the fight and ended it, taking both carbines and revolvers.

Though ordered to retire, the men did so slowly, turning at every ridge and fence and clump of trees for one more volley, for they held on till a battery came to their aid, and they helped to defeat that when it was cut of ammunition. Of the 300 men engaged 17 were killed and 39 wounded. Hampton was held up until the wagon train was beyond reach. Stuart's loss in the Army of the Potomac Aug. 1, 1864, but Gregg's division remained behind at Petersburg, following the fortunes of Hancock in his expeditions on the Confederate flanks. The regiment added four battles to its list during August, and in September was reorganized by which companies of Maine troops transferred from the First District of Columbia cavalry. The strength was about 500 with this increase. On Oct. 27, at Boydton Road, 8 were killed and 36 wounded in a savage fight with Wade Hampton's mounted forces.

The First Maine at that time belonged to a brigade commanded by Col. C. H. Smith, its former leader, who was a captain in the regiment in 1861. Cilley, the first recruit and the first man wounded, had graduated to the top and led the regiment.

The highest casualty list of all was at Dinwiddie Court House, March 31, the preliminary of Five Forks. Smith's cavalry was forced to give ground all day and at length Smith's brigade was called upon to defend a crack crossing against heavy odds. The First Maine dismounted and advanced in a dripping line to meet charging cavalry. They opened fire with Spencer and Henry rifles, 7 and 10 shooters, and the Confederate column trembled, wavered and parted right and left, some to melt away in a formless wreck of dead horses and men. In this fight the First Maine's loss was 27 killed and 40 wounded.

At Appomattox, Smith's brigade was placed in the last grip opened to Lee, the Lynchburg road. The fighting on Sunday, April 9, that ended in Lee's surrender, began on the front of the First Maine, and its last loss was 7 killed and 11 wounded.

The total loss of the regiment killed and mortally wounded was 51 officers and 156 men, the highest suffered by any cavalry regiment in the Union army.

The First Maine was organized and led throughout by volunteer officers. At the Dinwiddie Court House, March 31, the regiment suffered 7 officers killed in action. At no, May 9, the Church in question, lieutenant colonel and a major were wounded.

And all this noble record was made by average men. The twin sergeants, whose photos from Company A appear, during the war managed the church, which stood and still stands, in addition to attending to some of the Chinese and Dragoon Club pulls at Brooklyn, and Sunday, but they are typical of the Maine troopers for whom there can be no greater eulogy than the simple record of their personal courage. As a rule, they have stayed for the regiment was led by volunteers. Every in its career a good non-com of enthusiasm and intelligence, and the rank and file at headquarters. This may not sound exciting, but some men are made that way. It was not exciting in the fall when we marched down to the front, but it was exciting when we reached the front. It was exciting when we fought, and it was exciting when we fled. It was exciting when we charged, and it was exciting when we fled