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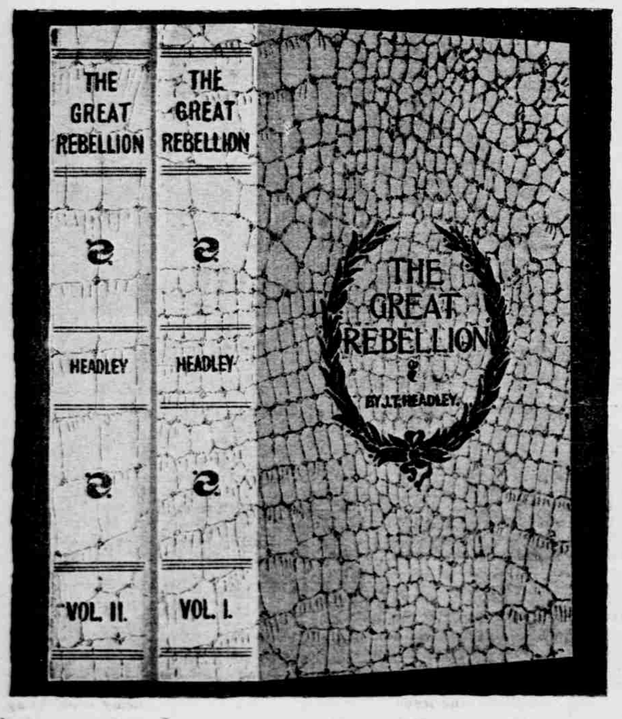

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THE GREAT REBELLION.

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Author of Napoleon and his Marshals; Washington and his Generals, etc.

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WE HAVE LONG DESIRED TO PROCURE for our subscribers a complete general history of the war from start to finish. This has been difficult to accomplish because there are but two or three such works in existence written in popular style, at the same time involving a reasonable degree of accuracy and completeness.

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GEN. LYON'S CHARGE AT THE BATTLE OF WILSON'S CREEK.
From Headley's "Great Rebellion."

FORT DONELSON.

The Assault and Capture of the Works by Gen. Grant's Army.

[From "The Great Rebellion," by J. T. Headley.]

About 3 o'clock, Grant rode on to the field, and fired at this attempt of the rebels to force his lines and their well nigh success, determined at once to move with his entire army on their works. McClernand was directed to storm them on the right up the river, and Col. Smith, of the Regular Army, on the left below. McClernand asked Wallace to lead the assault with his division. He consented, and immediately formed his plan of attack.

Selecting two brigades, Cruft's and one composed of two regiments under Col. Smith, of the 8th Mo., and giving them the simple directions to march up the hill in columns of regiments, and act as circumstances should suggest, he set the columns in motion. Knowing well it was a desperate mission on which these brave troops were going, he showed his confidence in them by telling them so.

But this announcement, which was made to the regiments as they moved past him, instead of discouraging them, filled them with delight,—they answered with deafening cheers, shouting "Forward, Forward!" "Forward, then, it is," cried Wallace, rising in his stirrups.

The two brigades then moved swiftly forward till they came to the foot of the hill, on the summit of which the enemy stood in strong force. It was full three hundred steps from here to the top, yet Smith as he reached it never waited for Cruft, but boldly began the ascent—the 8th Mo. leading.

The hill was bare in front, though rough with out-cropping ledges of rocks, but farther on, where Cruft was to mount, it was covered with trees, with here and there openings of oak bushes. Here took place the most terrible fighting around Fort Donelson. The men, aware of the desperate undertaking before them, nerved themselves to it, and it was evident at a glance that nothing but annihilation would keep them from reaching the summit of that hill.

When about a quarter of the way up, a line of fire ran along its crest, and the plunging volleys tore through their ranks with frightful mortality. But the living stepped into the places of the dead and pressed fiercely on and up. At times, when the deluge of fire rolled in an unbroken sheet down the slope, they fell on their faces, and then, as it subsided, rose, clearing large intervals in their rush.

Cruft's Division, in the woods, advanced more like Indians, dodging from tree to tree—the combatants often fighting for the same cover. The woods crackled with the musketry as though a fire was raging amid the withered branches.

But nothing could stop the resolute advance of Smith, and closing nearer and nearer on the enemy, his two regiments finally cleared the hill with a shout, and charging after the discomfited rebels chased them to within a hundred and fifty yards of their intrenchments.

This was the ground that had been occupied by McClernand in the morning, and from which his division had been driven by the fierce onslaught of Pillow. It was covered with the dead and wounded who had fallen there in the vain attempt to stem the overpowering tide, and amid them stood our captured guns.

Darkness was now settling over the mournful field, and the fighting ceased. The night was bitter cold, yet those brave men, though hungry and exhausted, spent it in bringing in the wounded and in ministering to their wants.

While this success was being gained on our right, Smith, on the left, performed a still more brilliant exploit. A little after 3 o'clock he was ready to storm the enemy's works at that point. The hill on which they stood was high and very precipitous and strongly defended. Sending Cook's and Lauman's Brigade to the right, as if about to move in force on them from that point, he took three picked regiments, the 2d and 7th Iowa and the 52d Ind., as the storming force, and riding at their head, led them round to the left, and began swiftly to ascend the steep sides of the hill.

The enemy seeing the storm that was ready to burst upon them, opened a terrible fire on the advancing regiments. But not a shot was returned—the gaps made by it were instantly closed, and shoulder to shoulder, like a dark, resistless wave, the undaunted column swept upward. Their march was silent and terrible as death, and the solid earth shook under their measured tread. In front, towering unhurt amid the tempest of balls, rode Smith—his cap on the point of his sword, guiding them to victory.

Breasting the descending torrent of fire that drifted like wintry hail adown their ranks, they kept their eye on that strange pennon, and with unfaltering step, and waving banners, climbed higher and higher. Not when the chivalry of France pressed after the white plume of Henry of Navarre, tossing "amid the ranks of war," did braver hearts crowd to the portals of death, than there on that wintry evening strained up the slippery hights.

Inch by inch they won their terrible way, grim and silent as fate, till at length the hights were reached. Then, with one loud and thundering cheer—one swift, tremendous volley into the closely-packed ranks below, they flung themselves forward with the bayonet. The astonished enemy recoiled before the descending avalanche, and turning fled to the inner works.

The next moment the Stars and Stripes swung out in the wind above the ramparts, and amid the hurrahs that greeted it floated forth the exultant strains of the "Star Spangled Banner." Guns and supports were immediately brought forward, and the commanding position made secure against any force the enemy could bring against it. From this point, the whole of the rebel strong works could be enfiladed.

Thus ended the day, and the cold, long night came on, in which no cheerful campfires lighted the gloom or warmed the stiffened limbs of the weary soldiers.

In the morning, the grand assault all along the lines was to be made, and as soon as the first gray streaks illuminated the eastern horizon, the drum called Wallace's heroes to their post. Though hungry and chill, they swiftly closed their ranks on the blood-stained snow, while not a heart beat faint.

No sublimer spectacle was ever witnessed than those gallant men presented on that Sabbath morning, as they took their position for the final assault. Marching from Fort Henry without tents or rations except such as they could carry in their haversacks—exposed for three days and nights without shelter or fire, and two out of the three to driving snow or piercing cold, all the time under fire, and compelled to bivouac on the field of battle with their arms in their hands, they yet with undaunted, fearless hearts, closed up their ranks in the early dawn, eager for the order "forward," to launch themselves on the frowning defenses before them.

Below, Smith was at the same hour training his guns on the devoted garrison, and all was ready for the final struggle. At that moment, Col. Lauman heard the clear, shrill strains of a bugle from within the enemy's works, pealing forth neither the reveille nor the rally.

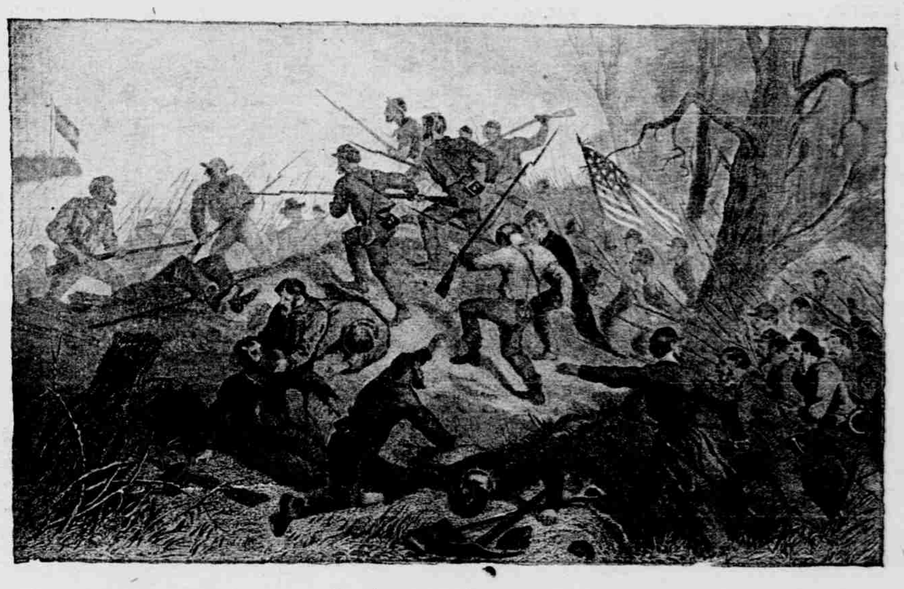
Attracted by the strange sound, he turned his eye thither, and lo, a white flag was dimly seen waving in the wind. The fort had surrendered. Then there went up a long, loud shout, which, taken up by regiment after regiment, as the exciting news traveled round the line, shook the heavens, till at last it reached the division of Wallace on the extreme right, just ready to move forward to the assault.

In a moment their caps were in the air, and cheer after cheer swept down their line-of-battle, and the bands struck up inspiring airs till the whole atmosphere was alive with notes of exultation.

The night before, the rebel Generals had held a consultation, in which it was decided that Floyd should hand over the command to Pillow, and he to Buckner, who should surrender the place, while the former made their escape by night, with a brigade, up the river.

About fifteen thousand men, with all their arms and stores, etc., fell into our hands. It was a great victory in itself, but important chiefly because it broke the rebel line of defense in the center, and opened the gate to Nashville.

[The above is a brief extract from the complete history of "The Great Rebellion," by J. T. Headley, two volumes, which we give away, post-paid, to every subscriber, whose subscription is received between now and April 30, unless the announcement of the withdrawal of the offer be made before that date.]



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