

IMPORTANT FROM ARKANSAS.

OPERATIONS ON THE WHITE RIVER.

Capture of St. Charles, Duval's Bluff and Des Arc.

Very Interesting Details of the Assault and Capture of Post of Arkansas.

Statement of Fort Hindman by Gen. McClernand's Army.

FIGHT AROUND THE REBEL WORKS.

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Rebel General Churchill and Seven Thousand Prisoners Captured.

THE DASH UP THE WHITE RIVER.

Telegram from Admiral Porter and Captain Penneck to the Secretary of the Navy.

THE POST OF ARKANSAS VICTORY.

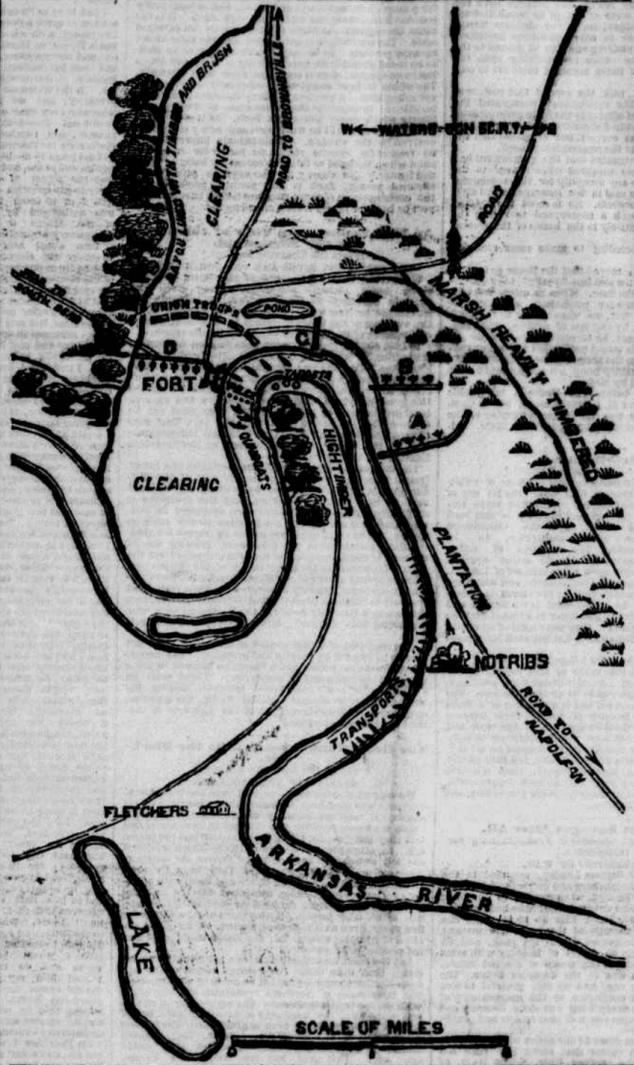
Special Report of the Operations of the Army and Navy.

THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER EXPEDITION.

THE REBELS' POSITION.

THE CAPTURE OF FORT HINDMAN.

The Combined Military and Naval Victory on the Arkansas River.



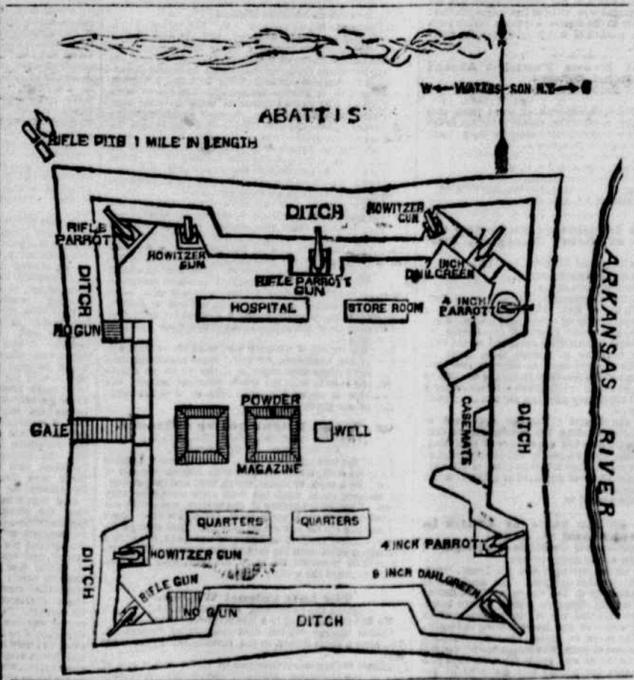
NOTES OF REFERENCE.

- 1-First line of works-artillery and rifle pits. 2-Second line of works-artillery and rifle pits. 3-Third line of works-rifle pits.

cut-off into the Arkansas river. Next to the Missouri the Arkansas is the largest adjacent of the Mississippi river. It has its source in the Rocky Mountains, near the boundary line between the Indian Territory and Utah, and after entering Arkansas flows through nearly the centre of the State, until it empties into the Mississippi. Its entire length exceeds two thousand miles. It is one of the wonderful rivers of the West. The water sometimes rises twenty-five feet. At such times all the surrounding lowlands for many miles are submerged, and the woods present the appearance of forests growing in a sea. During nine months in the year it is navigable for some seven or eight hundred miles from its mouth.

ON THE ARKANSAS. It was this river that we were now ascending. Soon on one of the banks we passed a shed that had been used as a rebel picket post, and saw a hawser which had been newly cut. Probably it belonged to the rebel steambark which departed so hastily on the previous afternoon, as the gunboat Conestoga now in sight. A short distance farther up the river we saw a squadron of rebel cavalry on shore.

INSIDE OF FORT HINDMAN.



Arrangements were immediately made for landing. The bank had to be cut away in front of all the boats, and roads made for the landing of the artillery and the troops. A small force was deployed in front of Skirmishers, and General McClernand and staff rode out to see the country. The pickets brought in an old negro, Uncle Tomby, seventy-seven years of age, who said that during the summer a large number of negroes had been employed in the construction of the fort, and that he had heard last Tuesday week that there were some eight thousand men at the Post. Evening was now at hand, and several hundred men were at work making roadways up the bank, so that the artillery, the wagons and the troops could be more easily detached. As the night advanced the work was continued. Torches were lighted. They glared from the shore and from the steamboats that covered that portion of the river, and, seen by the flashing light of these torches,

and rode out amongst them, and here and there spoke a few appropriate words, intended to inspire the troops for the expected assault upon the fort. To some of the Ohio troops he said: "I expect great things from this day and to-morrow." "We will follow you, General," was their reply. To some of the Illinois regiments he said: "Illinoismen, I want you to emulate the example already shown by the troops of your illustrious State." To the Fifty-fifth Illinois he said: "Soldiers, I expect you to add to the brilliant name won for yourselves at Shiloh." "We will do it, General," and then they cheered. Early in the afternoon the gunboats were firing an occasional shot whilst our troops were forming in the field. Snoring parties were sent out to examine the ground in front. It was ascertained that there were two runs of rifle embankments, having an interval of six hundred yards between them. They seemed to be abandoned. General Sherman directed General Starbuck to move with his division along the levee, parallel with the river, covering his front with a regiment of skirmishers, and if he found the works abandoned to enter quickly and display his colors to the gunboats. This was done, and the breastworks were found to be abandoned. About three o'clock the gunboats were ordered to move up the river, the rebel troops were observed in motion. I saw one large red flag (the signal for a battle) carried at the head of a body of troops at a double quick. It was borne along over the open ground until it disappeared inside the levee. It was supposed that the rebels were leaving the Post. Immediately upon the order the gunboats commenced firing. Soon after three o'clock Stuart's division, of Sherman's corps, was in position on the right, ready to open the attack; but Morgan's corps, which was to occupy the left, had not yet been deployed. It takes time to embark troops, form them on the field and deploy them in line, previous to an assault. General McClernand sent orders to Morgan to make haste, as the troops which had first departed were prepared to make the assault, and at the same time signalled the Admiral that he might advance with the gunboats and open fire. The gunboats then advanced, first the iron-clads, then the Admiral's flagship, and then the light draught gunboats, known as the "Mosquito Fleet." It had been previously arranged between the General and the Admiral that when the sound of the attack by the troops was heard the Admiral would open the terrific cannonading of the gunboats. It was at first supposed that the assault would be made, and perhaps the fort reduced, that day; but even at sundown the troops on the right had not worked round far enough so as to surround the fort—and, in truth, the troops were not in position to attack. It was soon apparent that we would be compelled to wait till next day (Sunday) to see an assault upon the fort.

THE FINAL ARRANGEMENTS. At half past nine o'clock General McClernand, accompanied by his staff, rode out and communicated with his corps commanders. He had previously signalled the Admiral, who was ready to move up and open with the gunboats. About ten o'clock the General took a position in the timber about the centre of the line, where he made his headquarters. It was a beautiful morning—the sky was clear and the weather warm. Everything seemed ready and every moment we expected to hear that the battle was opened. Half an hour afterwards General Sherman came to McClernand's headquarters in the field, accompanied by General Steele. Gen. Sherman said that his corps was in position, with Steele's division on the extreme right, within sight of the enemy's works, and confronted by a long line of rebels outside their works. Sherman had placed a battery of twenty pounder Parrotts, with instructions to the artillery that they were to be used only when they were sure of doing execution. General McClernand sent a signal officer to request the Admiral to advance and commence the cannonade with the gunboats. It was then arranged that when the gunboats opened, and a favorable opportunity offered, the line should be advanced, and Steele, on the right, would attack the enemy. It was supposed that he would send the rebels from the brush into the open prairie—as in the map—where the gunboats would shell them near the fort. The enemy fired an occasional shot before we opened the attack. Every one was waiting with the deepest interest the commencement of the battle. It was noon now, and we had not fired a shot. Time was precious; for if we expected to take the fort we must take it before sundown. On the morrow the enemy might have heavy reinforcements. An hour or two were not to be wasted, the General waiting for the gunboats to commence, and the Admiral for the army. At half past twelve the General received a communication from the Admiral requesting him to name the hour precisely that he wished him to commence the bombardment with the gunboats. The General replied that he wished him to open fire immediately. The signal officer went off at full gallop to the river, in order to communicate the message.

OPERATIONS OF THE NAVY.

In this simple narrative of the bombardment and investment of the fort, where the troops and the gunboats were blazing away at once, it is not so easy to separate distinctly the operations of the army waiting by, and at the same time preserve the chain of circumstances and incidents as they transpired on "the water and on land." But, as the gunboats commenced the fight, I will first allude to the operations of the navy.

It was five minutes past one when the gunboats, Rear Admiral Porter, Commodore and Louisville, all iron-clad, steamed up to within about three hundred yards of the fort, and opened fire upon it. Just as soon as the gunboats were in sight, and before they fired a shot, the rebels opened on them. On a sort of sandy beach, by the bank of the river, there were several batteries, which were in position to shell the gunboats. Three or four had also been placed in the river opposite the fort; but the high water had washed part of them away and left the channel open. The bombardment increased in rapidly as other vessels of the squadron came into position. It took some time to get good range of the camouflaged guns and the barbette gun of the fort. The Rear Admiral had orders from the Admiral to fire at the right hand casemate, the Louisville at the middle one, and the Cincinnati at the great nine-inch Dahlgren gun on the left. At half an hour after the bombardment commenced the gunboats were struck by the shell from the gunboats. When the range was obtained the shells from the gunboats struck the guns in the fort almost every shot, until every one was silenced and smashed. The Cincinnati fired shells at first and cleared the crew away from the nine-inch Dahlgren gun on the parapet, when the Rear Admiral broke off the muzzle with a touch-shot. The Louisville, light draught, Lieutenant Commander James W. Shick, moved up at two o'clock, and with her rifled guns struck the Parrott rifled guns in the fort, whilst the Battery, Lieutenant Commander Walter Smith, and the Gloucester, Lieutenant Commander Woodworth, threw in shells, and in company with the Rear Admiral, Commodore Porter, of the army, commanding, pushed up close to the fort. Each of the gunboats struck the gun in its effort to be struck to fire at about the same time. At twenty minutes past two all the heavy smooth bore and rifled guns in the fort were most effectually silenced. The Gloucester, Lieutenant Commander K. B. Brown, the Admiral's flagship, steamed up and took part in the fight. The Admiral himself, with his secretary, Dr. Hoop, was in the flag-ship, which was all the time screaming and discharging about the gunboats, directing and superintending the fight.

DETAILS OF THE FIGHT.

The Rear Admiral, more than any of the other iron-clads, perhaps, bore the brunt of the fight. This is the fourth or fifthth bombardment in which she has been engaged. She is the old St. Louis, her name having been recently changed to the Rear Admiral. To-day she lay right under the guns of the fort from the commencement of the battle to the close. One shell from the fort struck the gun on the port bow and broke the muzzle so as to render it useless, passed through the port-hole to the gun deck and exploded, smashing everything before it, killing two men and wounding others. Another shell struck the iron armor, two inches and a half in thickness, broke the plate, but did not penetrate the vessel. A third shell hit near the deck of another port-hole, carried away the bulkhead of the deck, destroyed the port-barrels of the gun carriage, but did not injure either the gun or a man, striking the gun, however, in glancing off to the right, flew the whole length of the gun deck, touched the cylinder chamber and passed out over the spar deck. A Parrott shot struck the pilot house and made quite an indentation in the iron. Another shot carried the bottom of the launch away and damaged some woodwork on the deck. The gunboats were in the fort almost every shot, by heavy shot, but the loss of the gun in the only serious injury she sustained. The Cincinnati lay close to the Rear Admiral. The Cincinnati fired shot and shrapnel at the gunners, and three grape-iron shot. She was struck some seven or ten times. One shell fell on her deck, went clear through the wheel down into the casement, and there it lodged. Nine shells struck the iron armor, but as the plate is generally graced, the balls glanced off without doing any damage. Nobody was hurt on board the Cincinnati. The Gloucester made some splendid shots at the fort. The Louisville did excellent service in the fight. She has more than a dozen scars. A shell entered through the middle port, struck the iron casement for the protection of the boiler, and there exploded, wounding several men. Another shell, going in on the port bow, killed one man instantly and wounded several severely. One shell struck the gunboat amidships on the port-side, and was away the railing on the deck. Another shell, on the starboard quarter, tore up the pyramet or mast, and there fell two men and wounding others. A shot from the gunboat went on the fort touching the Louisville, went through the woodwork between four broadside guns, struck the gun deck, exploded, and went into the scupper hole. The steam was cut off over the deck, the gunners stopped the steam, but the engine soon turned and was working again.

THE BATTLE.

Early in the morning another refugee came into camp. It seems that he was a Northern man, who had gone from Indiana to Texas two years ago, and was compelled, for self-protection, to join the rebel ranks. When the bombardment by the gunboats commenced, he fled before he, crossed the river on a log above the fort, and, falling into the hands of the brigade across the river, was conveyed within our lines. Although he was in the Northern army, the fact that he was a Northerner by birth caused him to be closely watched. He had been court-martialed on a charge of mutiny, without his knowledge, he said, had been condemned, and was under arrest at the time of his escape. He said that the fort was just two miles from the lower investment on the river, but there were two eight-inch Dahlgren guns mounted, one side-lock or barbette, and eight other guns and a regular battery of six pieces in the fort. The number of troops at the fort was about eight thousand, that one regiment of rebels had arrived from St. Charles, on the White River, before he left; that other reinforcements were constantly expected; that the troops were thriving