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THE BATTLE

— OF —



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Pea Ridge

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BY J. H. COOK.

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U. S. A. 3 Nov '14



DEDICATED TO
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PREFACE.

THE battle of Pea Ridge took place in Benton county, Arkansas, in March, 1862, between the Union forces, commanded by Brig. Gen. Samuel Curtis, consisting of 10,000 men, and the Confederate Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn, whose forces were estimated at 30,000*. This battle, so far as numbers are concerned, when compared with some of the engagements during the Rebellion, seems at first sight insignificant. But upon close examination it will be discovered that this was one of the most important victories for the Union cause, while on the other hand, it was one of the most damaging defeats to the Confederate cause. It at once deprived them of all hope of drawing into the Confederacy the vast territory comprehended between the Mississippi river and the Pacific ocean, as they had already instigated certain Indian tribes to take up arms against the government; and they further hoped to augment their ranks by extending their efforts. Not only did they hope to gain Indian aid but expected to entice, by bribes or flattery, into their service large numbers of whites who had

*Rebellion Record, vol. viii pp. 197 and 188.

settled in this vast region. The trans-Mississippi district was the keystone of the arch that supported the grandest hopes of the Southern Confederacy, and with it fell their cause along that line and they never were able to support it again.

In the poem I have kept the divisions commanded by General Sigel under special observation, on account of his peculiar military genius. His retreat on the sixth shows great skill in handling those few men. That he should have divided so small a force, to some might seem ruinous; but instead it was the means that saved him from capture; as with the force divided he could send one section in advance to select an advantageous position and there to plant its guns, and take a few minutes rest while the other section held in check the large force that was in pursuit. This manœuvre led the enemy to suspect that his force consisted of ten times its actual number, and caused them to be cautious in their approach. Again, his masterly attack, by drawing, as it were, a cordon about the enemy on the eighth, causing it to mass, when Sigel brought every gun to bear directly on the foe with fearful execution.

But I cannot express my sentiments better than to repeat the words of Colonel Dodge, "All did well and fought nobly and did their part in

winning a great victory." I wish farther to say of every man, officer and private as well, that each and every one who participated in winning that glorious victory deserves to be honored by the whole nation, for it was no mean foe that they had to deal with, but rather a brave and determined force led on by able Generals—brave, yet misled, being blinded by the peculiar institutions under which they lived.

I would acknowledge my obligation to Mr. Wm. Reynolds Co. E Third Iowa Cavalry, for valuable information relating both to the field and the various engagements, as he was a participant in all of those anxious days.

As regards the poem I have but very little to say as it will show for itself whether it is possible to describe a modern battle by means of the ancient Epic. That is, so far as the writer of this is concerned, but had I not believed that this is the only way in which a battle, ancient or modern, can be vividly shown I would not have made the attempt, and coupled with this idea I have the hopes of drawing out greater artists than myself in this most sublime phenomenon of human action.

THE AUTHOR.

THE BATTLE OF PEA RIDGE.

BOOK I.

ARGUMENT.

Nemesis at last beholding the misery engendered by human slavery sent Alecto to fire the souls of the leaders of the Southern States of the Union, in order to cause them to secede and declare war against the government of the United States, while Justice stands with poised scales to weigh the cause and pass judgment.

General Van Dorn leads his armies to battle and commands General Price to make the attack on General Sigel at Bentonville.

The scene lies between Bentonville and Pea Ridge. The time occupied in this book is twelve hours.

Relate, O Muse, what caused these dire alarms,
And led the nation to such deeds of arms;
What fury-god, or goddess, fired to rage,
And bade the nation in this war engage.
High in her realm the goddess Nemesis sate,
To scan the law and aid the hand of fate,
And looking downward o'er the earth, she saw
The nation break the universal law.

As man o'er man, with domineering might,
With lash in hand, is dead to sense of right,
He who dares question thus his sovereign sway,
On him the scourge descends, the debt to pay.

And from the blow huge aching tumors rise
And tears of anguish fill his pensive eyes,
But if he cries with pain down comes the thought
To ease the master's mind and right his wrong,
The angry goddess sees, with flashing eyes,
The outraged slave, and loud for justice cries.
She calls Alecto from the realms of night
To aid her cause and set the laws aright.
The sable power; in her realms below
The goddess hears, and stright prepares to go.
She grasps a dagger with her dexter hand,
And with her left a torch—a flaming brand;
Dark-visaged power about her brows she bound
In sinuous folds of hissing vipers round;
And thus equip'd, she sped with swiftest flight
To aid Nemesis to the realms of light.
With joy the goddess hail'd the darksome maid,
And with solemn mein thus to her she said:
“ Descend to earth and fire the Southern mind—
Of all their leaders, and their senses blind,
And bid them rise and scourge the land with fire,
To gorge their lust and work their fond desire,
To curse the slave and consummate their sin,
For his offence —and that's a sooty skin.
For whom the gods with vengeance would destroy
Their bosoms fill with rage, their souls annoy.”
The pest descends, prone to the nation's halls.
And on the congress there assembled falls;
The Southern members most receive her fire,
Whose bosoms glow with a terrific ire.
On Wigfall, Benjamin, and many more,
The virus falls, in deadly showers pour;
And loud they rave, for they are blind to fate
And urge their colleagues join them in debate.
They want no laws, except to chain the slave

In bonds more strong, their institutions save.
“ Repeal that law that holds the negro free,”
They cry with rage when north he flees to thee.
“ Break down the walls of State, let Slavery
spread

Broad as our land, on hill and valley tread.
This will suffice, dull North, and nothing less,
The right is ours and we the right will press.”
The North sat dumb, with anxious care and
thought,
For freedom’s cause their father’s blood had
bought,
Until that spirit moved, that moved to fill
The patriotic souls at Bunker Hill,
’Till Sumner glow’d with patriotic fire
And loudly cries, “ SHALL FREEDOM THEN EX
PIRE !

Shall we at Bunker Hill—freedom’s holy shrine,
The roll-call cry for slaves that may be thine?
Hark ! men of blood, to my prophetic voice—
You may rebel, *but Freedom shall rejoice.*”

So these to try by Fate’s unerring hand,
Stern Justice raised her scales by his command
On this side she placed sighs, and groans, and
tears,

On that the slaver’s gains for many years;
Enormous though the bulk, this upward flew,
While that, though seeming light, more pond-
rous grew,

Down sank the tears and Justice drew her
brand

To drive the heartless tyrant from the land.
And such is fate when nations sink to crime,
Oppress the poor who call for aid divine,

That vengeance rises to hastise the deed,
And innocence, with guilt, is doomed to bleed.
And this the cause, and more I will relate,
Who fought and bled to keep intact the State.
Calliope said, and then she strung her lyre
To martial strains to set the soul on fire;
Now sing, she said, and marshal numbers right,
Lead them in solid phalanx to the fight,
As at Thermopylæ Leonidas led
His Spartan heroes, with majestic tread,
To conquer or to die, as fate decide,
Or vict'ry turns her scales from side to side.
The cause as just, as when the Delphic god,
Whose mystic halls by sacred priests were trod,
Gave sign to Athens that she must depend
On wooden walls for safety and a friend.

Thus fate had weigh'd our cause by scale as just,
And bade us in the God of battle trust,
And fired brave Curtis and his noble band
To deeds of fame, to save a sinking land.
Behold the Chief! Ohio claims his birth;
A hero born, he is of sterling worth.
Who, like his native streams, that sweep before,
What'er obstructs their course with angry roar
See at Pea Ridge him with a father's care,
For coming contest, then the field prepare;
On Sugar Creek the stars and stripes unfurl'd—
The righteous ensign of the Western world.
The creek in front, a nat'ral barrier made,
This fring'd by trees, that served a palisade.
The hills are north of this meand'ring stream,
And Elkhorn tavern on the right is seen;
While to the left, perhaps three miles or more,
The road to Bentonville the hill pass'd o'er—

Within this space a widening plateau spreads,
Bound by steep hills that raise their shaggy
heads.

Here Davis first leads forth his Indiana's brave,
With martial tread, his country now to save
From traitor's hands already stained with gore,
Whose maddened fury loudly call'd for more.
He held the center by his chief's command
And view'd with critic eye his noble band,
Who, then like tigers crouching for their prey,
Were fearful, lest their foes should get away.
While to the left, Carr led his band at night,
And camp'd at Elkhorn tavern on the right;
Here this determined warrior halts, to wait
The hidden pleasure of the will of fate.
His battalions were from the land of maize
And grassy meads, where num'rous cattle graze,
Whose prairies vie in bloom with Sharon's rose,
And in their verdant vails the lily grows,
These sons of Iowa, as joyous and as free
As are their prairies, and brave in high degree,
In camp they rest, while pickets guard the way,
Unconscious of their fate, the coming day.

Such is the lot of man, ordained to tread
The mystic way, the regions of the dead;
As hope, deceptive, paints in colors bright
Delusive scenes, to cheer the human sight;
And like the moth that seeks the taper's fire,
They rush to catch the prize, like him expire,
So these to gain renown, or aid the state,
Will rise or fall, as suits the law of fate.
Thus Carr and Davis with their little bands,
This the center holds, that the left commands,
With Gen'ral Curtis to bar Van Dorn's way,

The right for Sigel, who was far away—
Sigel, the Baden hero, who sought to free
His Father-land from Austrian tyranny,
Whose mighty soul disdain'd the despots powers
Forsook his native land to dwell in ours.
Inbibing freedom from his native clime
He claim'd the right was sacred and divine;
And when the South, through passion, strove to
slay,
His cherished friend, he sought their hand to
stay.

And thus expectant Carr and Davis wait
For Sigel's corps, his safety they debate --
“ And where is Sigel?” ran from man to man,
And where is Sigel—tell us if you can.
“Sigel,” said the commander, “ is between
Bentonville and Leestown, close by the stream,
But if”—and here he stopp'd, as though afraid
His words to the corps had the truth convey'd.
The truth is this--that he had sent his corps,
Except six hundred, to Pea Ridge before.
Brave Asboth with Missourians led the way,
With Chapman's guns to hold the foe at bay.
The second train by Osterhause was led,
The cavalry by Jenks, with martial tread,
Escorts and guards to keep impact the throng
That mov'd, majestic, to their camp, along,
But Sigel waits to guard the lumb'ring train.
With stores, munitions, those to distance gain;
And like the oak, about whose trunk entwine
In num'rous folds, the loved, confiding vine,
Defies the storm, and angry winds that roar
About his brow, and on him torrents pour,
He stands majestic, rooted to the field,

Protects his friend, nor will he flee or yield.
Missouri's Twelfth and Ebert's flying train,
And Nemitt's cavalry with him remain,
'Till right and left, in front and on the rear,
McCulloch, McIntosh and Pike appear.
A host of hostile foes with deadly ire,
To slay these brave six hundred, now conspire,
To crush this little band, they had no doubt,
When Segil, thus—"Battalions, right about!
Let loose your battery, charge to left and right,
To break their ranks and then pursue your
flight."

No sooner said than from the guns a flash,
A bellowing sound and then a deadly crash;
The rebel columns stagger—when again
The battery pours forth a deadly flame,
The battalions charge, then wheel and fly,
The rebs amidst, behold their comrades die.
Now consternation reigns, where but of late
All was exultation—but such is fate—
That what great Jove but sanctions with a nod,
No art of man can turn, nor lesser god,
"But permanent and fixed as the pole,
Remains the purpose of his mighty soul."

But Mars descends and fires their souls with
rage,
And they again pursue, again engage
The retreating Sigel, with divided force,
Like a revolving wheel, keeps on its course—
This section wheels with flash and deadly roar
And now the rebel columns as before—
A mangled mass, wedged in a woody way,
Van Dorn's forces, by six hundred, held at bay.
Again the rebel Gen'ral views the field,

Again he wonders why his columns yield;
And stung with pride, Price rushes on again
With angry fury, o'er the sanguine plain,
He calls for Slack and Green to charge the right,
Bid Rains, with all his host, to urge the fight.
Eight batteries, six thousand men and more,
Charge on this little band and volleys pour:
Sigel views the masses in disorder roll,
To meet his fire, that moved his mighty soul:
He sees his vantage, with enkindling eyes,
And to his little band he loudly cries;
"Discharge your guns, full on that rolling mass!
Charge! Nemett, charge! and onward let us
pass."

The guns now blaze with one concentric glow,
And shot and shell plough furrows 'mong the
foe.

With fury, Nemett charges, sabers clash,
The battle thickens, and the pistols flash,
Musketeers one incessant volley pour,
And cannon to cannon answer roar for roar,
'Till couriers warn'd Asboth of the fray,
Who sent relief, and vict'ry crown'd the day.

Five mortal hours this little band sustain
These dread onslaughts, and press along the
plain.

As here and there the hostile squadrons fly,
To block their way the little band defy.
'Tis wond'rous this escap'd—that num'rous train
Of frantic warriors, and their camp should gain;
But such is war when justice leads the way,
That numbers fail, though valor they display.
'Tis God that rules and holds supernal pow'r,
And fosters good e'en in the darkest hour:

For conscious right is strong and will sustain
Man's vital power and lend him hope to gain.
It is that fortress, stronger far than brass—
A barrier fixed, injustice cannot pass,
So these sustain'd their onward course pursue,
'Till their destin'd camp meets their anxious
view.

This day of toil and strife at last is done,
As slowly sinks to rest the lurid sun,
And somber shades begin to float amain
O'er hill and dale, and lengthen on the plain,
While here and there a camp-fire sheds a ray
Of flickering light to the departing day,
'Till night advances, and darkening shades
Steal o'er the camp and ev'ry scene invade,
While Luna, now and then, emits a light
'Mong floating clouds, evanishing but bright,
The soldier rests with arms upon his breast,
And all except the guard is hush'd to rest.
Sleep, soldier, sleep, for ere to-morrow's sun
Shall sink beneath the western horizon,
Full many a brave, with torn and bleeding
breast,
Upon this field shall take his final rest;
Yet shall they live, a just and honored name,
Inscribed on columns, to historic fame.

BOOK II.

ARGUMENT.

General Van Dorn calls a council of war, in order to gain information of the surrounding country, and being informed of its topography he plans his night march and flanks the Union camp at Pea Ridge. He disposes his force in line of battle, General Price leading the left wing and General McCulloch the right. The surprise of the Union army on the following morning, and the coolness of the Union leaders. General Curtis reforms his army, changes front and prepares for battle. Colonel Carr commanded the right wing, and the center by Davis and Osterhaus, the left by Generals Sigel and Asboth. The desperate encounter on the right and center. Death of Generals McCulloch and McIntosh. Fearful havoc, terrific cannonading, charges and skirmishing. Night closes the second day's battle.

Lo! in his tent, as ev'ning shades descend,
Earl Van Dorn sat, and angry thoughts contend
Within his soul; for Price had lost the day,
To the Southern cause, and Sigel block'd his
way.

What next to do, was his most anxious care,
And how to strike his foe, and when, and where;
Himself at fault, and hence he calls his friends—
McCulloch, McIntosh—on these depends,
For they the country know, each hill and vale,
Where leads each road, and where each secret
trail.

The conference was short, decisive, plain,
These point the place, that place the chief would

gain;
Whence orders flew from corps to corps the
while,

In secret haste their foes they would beguile,
And thus each leader, in silent order stands,
With anxious care, and waits his chief's com-
mands.

The chief at once gives sign for Price to lead,
And McIntosh, McCulloch, to proceed,
Each with his train, along the destined way,
To flank the Union camp before 'twas day;
And like a panther, seeking to devour
Their luckless prey, the midnight forests scour,
So these, o'er hill and dale with stealthy tread,
To gain the destin'd field with vigor sped.

At length, with march and counter-march, again
They flank the Union camp and 'vantage gain;
The thick'ning army, like a deluge pours,
When floods descend and angry water roars,
They cover all the slopes and beat the ground,
Till hill to hill re echoes back the sound.

Van Dorn now views the scene with flashing
eyes,

Well pleased, no doubt, that he had wrought
surprise

Within the Union lines, and hoped to gain
An easy vict'ry, drive them from the plain;
And formed in line of battle to contend
For Southern rights, and slav'ry to defend.

As when the grim wolf, mindful of his prey,
Stol'n from the shepherd's fold at close of day,
If pursued by men and hounds, he stands at bay,
Unwilling to release the shepherd's right,
Will angry growl, and for the carcass fight;

So these, and Gen'ral Price his legions lead,
Where shortly death shall reign—the battle
bleed.

He, first of Missouri's wild seceding train
Spreads strife and discord, to ascendance gain
For slav'rie's pow'r, the bane of Southern life,
And that the cause of this inhuman strife.
Such is the will of fate, when wrong prevails,
That discord rules, the weaker mind assails,
And spreads confusion like a darksome pall
Before the eyes, and dooms the guilty fall.
So McCulloch, from Texas' flow'ry meads,
With pomp and pride the left to battle leads,
And McIntosh, with his excited braves,
Were marched in line to stronger bind the
slaves—

All active—brave, but blind to human right,
With sword in hand are ready for the fight.

“ Hark ! comrades, hark ! what means these dire
alarms ? ”

The chieftain cries, and calls his aids to arms;
When rushing to his tent a centry flies—

“ The foe ! the foe ! has flank'd our right, ” he
cries,

And scarce had this his adverse news conveyed,
When from their rear another one essayed,
In haste, and with stam'ring tongue, to tell
What at Crosstimber gorge had him befel.
By these he learns, the rebel columns pass'd
Far to the right, and in their rear had mass'd;
But this no panic wrought, though great sur-
prise,

As when some conjuror deceives our eyes,
Whose magic skill, deceptive wonder shows,

It is the trick, but not of that he knows.
That doth deceive, for secret most annoys,
But truth at once all mystery destroys.
So these when once the truth was brought to
view.

The wonder ceased, their labors they pursue.
Now comes the tug of war, when armies meet,
From front and rear, or inglorious retreat;
'Twas that the Union army now pursue.
And under fire it forms its ranks anew—
The right transform'd to left, the left to right,
And form in line of battle for th' fight.

Carr leads the right wing, with majestic tread,
To Elkhorn tavern and with haste he sped;
For Major Weston by Van Dorn was press'd,
Whose overwhelming force he now confess'd.
Davis and Osterhaus the center hold,
With Indiana's sons; both strong and bold,
While Illinoisans, from their fertile meads,
Assistance give, where thickest battle bleeds;
While Sigel led the left, with crushing might,
'Gainst General Price, who led the rebel right.
Such was the order of the Union force,
When sounds the bugle—Up! to horse! to horse!
Now Osterhaus, in haste, to Leetown flies,
With Bussey's cavalry, to meet surprise,
For here the rebel columns leave the plain,
Deploy into the woods to 'vantage gain;
But seeing no rebellious hords in sight,
He orders Trimble make detour to right;
Who onward sped, the road to cross -
When lo! McCulloch, McIntosh and Ross
In ambush lay, within the wooded dell,
With Indian aids, who up with horrid yell,

Led on by Pike, with scalping-knife in hand,
To mutilate the dead, a savage band;
With hoop and yell they charge, the muskets
flash,
And snot and shell, with more than thundering
crash
Tear through the forest with a deaf'ning sound,
Like earthquake shock, that rocks the solid
ground.

The Union columns stagger and retire,
Although each flank keep up a running fire.
And wounded, Colonel Trimble sinks to earth,
But saved by Wheeler, who reserved his worth,
This noble soldier risk'd his life, to save
His friend, and snatch'd him from a bloody
grave,

For 'twas here Pike his Indians onward led,
Who robbed both friend and foe, where battle
bled;

Who like infernal spirits taunt the slain,
And strip the bleeding scalp-lock from the brain.
For such is war; 'tis an inhuman strife,
A savage game— the prize a human life—
Where each combatant, like a hungry hound,
In frantic rage would tear his fellow down.
So these as McCulloch his squadrons led,
With flying colors, tramping o'er the dead;
His former charge had fill'd his soul with fire,
But he to greater deeds would now aspire.
It is now that the Union center heaves
Like some huge barque driven on the wind-
toss'd seas,

While loud and louder yet the winds do roar,
To force the ship upon some rock-bound shore;

But this the pilot, by a master hand,
'Scapes leeward, and sends away from land,
So this, McCulloch and McIntosh press,
Whose ponderous weight the Union force con-
fess.

And backward roll a in determin'd band,
And grasp their weapons with an iron hand,
They gain a sheltered place, reform once more,
And in turn, drive the rebels as before.
Here death and carnage hold their awful sway,
Each army doubtful of the bloody day.
Now cannon roar with a redoubled sound,
The forests tremble, rocks the solid ground;
The Eighteenth Indiana charge—a flash a roar,
And carnage reigns, as ne'er it reigned before.
Again the rebels turn, again they fly,
Whole ranks are swept away, in heaps they lie;
Disheartened, routed, it was all in vain,
The leaders strove to form their ranks again.
'Twas here Colonel McIntosh, fighting, fell.
And Ben McCulloch bid his ranks farewell;
Pierced by a minie, and borne from the plain,
No more to mix in mortal fray again,
Though loud he pleads for life 'tis him denied,
And with a frown, he turned his head and died.
Like some huge bullock that disdains the dart,
Till an unlucky shaft transpierce his heart,
Then bellowing, with a thundering sound,
Gives up the ghost, and prone falls on the
ground.

The rebels from the center now retire,
Though on the right, redoubled is their fire;
They mass, they swarm, in desperation led,

O'er prostrate steeds, the dying and the dead,
To force brave Carr away from well-earned field,
But mass in vain, the vet'ran will not yield.
He calls for aid, but naught but "persevere."
Now meets his sight, or breaks upon his ear;
While thick and thicker yet, the rebels mass,
Fill ev'ry avenue, and ev'ry pass.
Just now the brave Fourth Iowa cease to fire,
For lack of ammunition, and retire;
But ere they went, six charges they defy,
And heaps on heaps of death before them lie.
The Ninth Iowa, their position hold,
With Phelps's Missourians, both strong and bold,
The Twenty-fourth as well, Missouri's pride,
Firm as a rock, the rebel force defied:
Brave Carr the while, his bleeding columns
cheer,
And gives this talismanic slogan "Persevere."
Who like a lion caught within the toils,
Strains every nerve—his anger seethes and boils,
And roaring, furious bounds from side to side,
Till ev'ry cord and ev'ry loop is tried:
So this brave band 'till reinforcements came
To aid their comrades and the war maintain.
Now loud and louder yet, the cannon roar,
And shot and shell, incessant volleys pour;
The hissing minies bear their death along,
And whizzing missiles sing a dismal song.
Grim death stalks rampant o'er the bloody field,
Though neither army would the vantage yield;
The trembling hills re-echo to the sound
Of surging troops that tread the sanguine
ground,
Who wheel, advance, retreat, advance again,

And strew the field with heaps of ghastly slain;
As when the avalanch that rushes down
The mountain side with awful thundering sound
Accumulating strength, it drives before
Ev'ry impediment with angry roar,
And rushing, tumbling, to the plain below,
Buries whole cities at a single blow.
So raged the war, while Curtis views with care,
The surging strife, sends aid now here, now there,
Deploys, and skirmishes, there makes a stand,
And all is order, through the whole command;
While Price and Van Dorn, filled with pomp
and pride,
Had mass'd their force, the Union arms defied.

As when the panther, careless of his prey,
Finds a stern grizzly planted in his way,
With flashing eyes, he makes a single bound
To bruin's side, who strikes him to the ground;
And thus Van Dorn had guaged his strength too
great.

And with contempt defied the hand of fate.
Strong in his strength, he thought to trample
down
The Union force, and crush it with a frown,
When these, like lightning, rush on with a
bound,
And earth re-echoes to the thund'ring sound,
Cannon, opposed to cannon, belch their fire,
Whole squadrons, at one crash, sink and expire.
Roar succeeds roar, in one unbroken sound,
Rebells 'mong the hills and rocks the ground,
As when the trembling earth sways to and fro.
Heaved by internal force from depths below.
Still hoarse and hoarser yet the cannon roar,

And on each host an iron deluge pour;
The plateau trembles with a hollow sound,
As sweep battalions, charging o'er the ground,
That like a cyclone devastation spread,
And strews the ground with wounded and the
dead.

Thus raged the battle, 'till the shades of night
Shut out the field and closed the furious fight,
And the exhausted soldier sinks to sleep,
His arms upon his breast, a sentry keep,
While near him sleeps his comrade, ne'er again
To hear the bugle's call, or scour the plain,
And more, alas! with wounds are covered o'er,
Who drag themselves along, all stained with
gore.

A direful scene the field presents to view,
Beneath the camp-fire's pale, uncertain hue,
As comrade seeks for comrade o'er the plain,
And finds him dead or groaning in his pain,
Or kneels to pray among the silent dead,
Or rev'rant lifts a dying comrade's head
To catch the last dear accents of his voice,
Or that he lives, and they in hope rejoice,
Or here a veteran of many a field,
Who, to grim death, at last is forced to yield;
Or here a youth, late vigorous and strong,
Who cheered his home with pleasantry and song
But lured by fife and drum, he gave his name,
To be inscribed upon the roll of fame;
Or here a fair-haired boy, his mother's pride,
All ghastly with wounds, has lain him down
and died,
And hundreds wounded, bleeding, call for aid,
Lament their fate and curse the warrior's trade.

BOOK III.

ARGUMENT.

The despondency of the officers and the forlorn hope of the soldiers of the Union army at the close of the battle of the seventh (2nd day), was imminent. But somewhere within the camp Hope had remained true to her motive, and she held up her flowery offering as a free gift to him who dared to seize it. This spirit flames and spreads from officer to officer, and from man to man, until the whole camp is moved to action. The rallying and forming of the army, preparatory for battle, is commenced in the night and completed by seven o'clock in the morning of the eighth. Disposition of the forces.

Van Dorn anticipates an easy victory. The battle commences. Sigel's masterly disposition of his force and the concentration of his artillery. His slow but sure advance, and his final charge, sweeping the foe from the field.

Reunion of the Union forces after the battle under the stars and stripes. Scenes on the field after the battle.

A gloomy spirit seem'd to hover o'er
The battlefield, the Union arms deplore,
As though all was lost, no earthly pow'r could

stay

The rebel conquest on the coming day.
Here knots of soldiers talk with bated breath,
Of sure defeat, of capture, or of death;
And there in groups, the minor leaders stand,
Lament the prospect of their shattered band.
What hope have we to 'scape this field, they say,
To shun the battle of the coming day,
When ev'ry avenue and ev'ry pass,
The rebels hold, and in our front they mass;
But shall we then like slaves submissive yield;

Or shall we die on this ill-fated field?
No, on those high in rank, with patience wait,
And let them lead and trust our cause to fate.
This wise resolve at last concludes their care,
And they to their respective tents re-
pare;
Not so the chief that o'er the war presides,
But as the moon rules o'er the boundless tides,
And as she speeds along her destin'd way
The billows follow, and her pow'rs obey;
Thus constant as that orb, the master mind,
To save the Union cause, his cares confin'd,
When Hope—*propitious Hope*—with smiling mien
Withdrew the curtain from the rosy scene,
He sees the goddess' gift, with flashing eyes,
And anxious is to grasp the covet prize.
He Curtis seeks, and Dodge, of all the train,
Who hop'd for vict'ry and the war to gain,*
This trio fly from tent to tent, to show
What they had seen: the goddess, gift bestow.
When once in sight, propitious is the maid
To give relief, and ev'ry soul invade,
From high to low, through all the camp it ran,
Involving those, and spreads from man to man.
At once they rally; form their lines anew,
And Sigel from his fient his force withdrew,
Thence marching on in silence, takes his stand†
The left wing forms and with the chief's com-
mand.

Brave Osterhaus the first division led,
The second Asboth, whom the rebels dread;
These Sigel leads, to conquer or to die,
And all the rebel hosts they now defy.

A braver band, nor erst Leonidas led,

*Abbott's History of Rebellion, vol. 2, page 240.

†See Sigel's report to General Curtis, Rebellion Record, vol. 8

Nor braver band than this e're fought and bled;
Here Curtis, Dodge, and Davi- with brave Carr,
Well skilled in tactics, thunderbolts of war;
And here was Captain Black fam'd for his skill.
In all field evolutions and the drill.
And Bussey's legion, third Iowa's pride,
With sabers drawn, and fearlessly they ride,
And each impatient to commence the fight,
As soon as Phoebus should dispel the night;
Whose feeble beams at length dispense his ray,
'Twixt floating clouds that shut out half the
day.

Cold northern winds sweep o'er the gelid ground
And through the field there runs a buzzing
sound

Of forming companies, battalions, corps,
Whose measured tread, like rushing waters roar,
With march and counter-march, at length they
form

In line of battle, to repel the storm
Of iron war, now thick and gath'ring fast.

There Van Dorn's rebel force in columns mass'd
Like thick'ning swallows, that essay to fly
To warmer regions, rendezvous the sky,
And clustering thick, and thicker yet debate
The favorable wind, or tardy mate,
So those in line, just westward of Elkhorn,
Led on by Gen'als Rice, Ross, and Van Dorn,
A num'rous host, outnumbering three to one
The Union force, anticipate the vict'ry won.
As when a bullock, whose enormous horns
Project in front, his wrinkled pate adorns;
Beholds a mastiff, passing on his way,
Now strides before, his power to display,

With roaring sound that rends the nether skies,
He shuts his eyes and at the mastiff flies,
Who crouching low, springs with a single
bound,

Seizes the ox and casts him on the ground.
'Tis thus Van Dorn the battle hopes to gain,
And drive the Union forces from the plain:
When lo! the Union right and center throw
Their shot and shell in volleys on the foe.

Now hot, and hotter yet, the battle burns —
This side, now that, advance, retreat by turns,
The guilty and the guiltless side by side,
Fall prone to earth, and flows the purple tide;
Thick, sulphurous smoke envelops all the plain,
And thund'ring cannon an iron deluge rain,
Now here, now there, a batt'ry lost or won,
Or here a dash to spike some murderous gun.
The Union right exposed to deadly fire
From rebel guns, now inch by inch retire;
Now Sigel moves; in concave, sweeps around
And plants a batt'ry on a rising ground,
In front of this, and down the hill a space,
A regiment of infantry held the place*,
With thirty yards of intervening space,
In front of this another reg'ment still,
A little lower down the sloping hill,
Till his thirty guns, all booming in a row,
With the infantry lying flat below;
And like one vast machine, where **ev'ry** wheel

*The "Black Coat Brigade," so called by the rebels because they had black overcoats, crouched with fixed bayonets just below the belching muzzles of the artillery, and actually slept from sheer exhaustion while waiting the onslaught. This was the Fourth Iowa. Infantry.

So nicely fits, the slightest motion feels,
Which at the will of the controlling mind
It moves and turns and does the work designed;
So this long line of human force, but stays
Its mighty strength, th' master mind obeys.
When ever and anon, clear as the bugle's call,
Rang Sigel's voice, and it was heard by all;
" **Make ready ! Fire !**" A sheet of living flame
Burst from the guns, whole ranks at once are
slain;

Again **thoy** load, again repeat their fire,
Again **whole** ranks from shot and shell expire;
The hills **reverb**'rate to the awful sound,
The forests nod, and rocks the solid ground,
The trembling sky now lifts her silver sheen,
As intervenes the sulph'rous smoke between,
And day withdraws, to leave a sombre light,
For work of DEATH is best perform'd by night.
As he sweeps o'er the field his sythe of Time,
And gathers thousands, though just in their
prime,
For war, nor age, nor worth, withholds his
brand,
But smiles where fate directs his bloody hand.
The fool, the wis., the **ignoble** and the brave,
Supinely fall and find a common grave.

Thus raged the battle, like devouring fires
That scorch the fields, and run in wreathy
spires

Among the trees, and burning embers glow
Like liquid flames that in a furnace show;
Whole forests blaze, and burning, tumble o'er,
And one devouring flame its furies pour.
So rag'ed the cannon in one deaf'ning sound,
The corpses tremble, groans the hollow ground—

Three mortal hours, each side their batt'ries
play,
And columns whole at once are swept away;
While Sigel, like a deluge, onward glides,
And o'er his batt'ries, like a God presides.
As here and there he moves—a charmed life—
And urges on his cannoneers to strife.
Now close, and closer yet, toward his foes
With snail-like pace, he constant onward goes,
Till sufficiently near, then a sudden flash—
A terrific sound, and a most horrid crash.
When Sigel thus, with stentorian lung,
Cries "Charge!" and charge along the lines was
sung;
When thousands of bayonets responsive glow,
And instantaneous charge upon the foe;
A sudden shock, as though the heavens fell,
To crush the earth.

As ancient fables tell
How Lucifer and his rebellious crew
The Godhead conquered, and their flight pur-
sue,
Through heaven's enormous space, to realms of
night,
And plunging down, escape in awful fright,
Down, *down*, they fall, in giddy circles round,
To 'scape His wrath, to hell's remotest bound;
So fly the rebel hordes with loud alarms,
Before the ready conquering Union arms,
As though the *furies* lashed the hindmost train
With whips of vipers, o'er the bloody plain;
Some fly this way, some that, to 'scape the ire,
Of vengeful steel and cannon's deadly fire;
Some to the thickets deep and reedy fens,

Or mountain fastness, seek the gloomy dens;
Grim fear and fright attend them on their way,
And close pursuit adds terror to the day.
The battle lost, they throw their arms away,
And curse the fate that lost to them the day.
While from the victor cheering shouts ascend,
As comrade meets a comrade, or a friend,
The fields resound, the laughing hills rejoice,
And vict'ry hails with universal voice.

The Stars and Stripes, propitious now to please,
Shake out their folds and give them to the
breeze,
When lo! the welkin rings "Long Live the
Brave",
Who fight and conquer and release the Slave.

FINIS.





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