



CHARGE OF THE SECOND DIVISION, NINTH ARMY CORPS, INTO THE CRATER CAUSED BY THE EXPLOSION OF THE MINE IN FRONT OF PETERSBURG, JULY 30, 1864.

FROM A SKETCH BY A. MCCALLUM.

Many errors were made in the dispositions for taking advantage of the explosion of the "crater" mine. The colored troops selected to make the charge had been carefully tutored for the duty, the first requirement of which was not to pause an instant. But the white division that was ordered forward at the last moment were so overcome with curiosity to examine the effects of the explosion that they crowded around the hole, became all mixed up and lost their organization so completely that it became impossible to command them efficiently; and such command was the more important because the mine had so thoroughly blown up the ground they were to advance over that a change of procedure at the very crisis was necessary. Moreover, the works immediately flanking the crater remained in possession of the enemy, and the proposition to attack these simultaneously had been rejected. Consequently, within a few minutes after the explosion, the troops that had charged into the crater were there "stormed at by shot and shell" from the works both sides of them, and had to seek safety under the walls of the crater itself. Their general had not accompanied them; and when they sent back to him for new orders, he merely repeated the original order (now impossible of execution) to "advance on Cemetery Hill." Thus left without direction, and for some time without support, these unfortunate men were either destroyed where they lay, or were kept there like rats in a trap, until it suited the enemy to come in and capture them. A well-organized advance on Cemetery Hill would have been a success at this time; but the only result of the crater mine episode was the loss of 4000 good Union soldiers and the blowing up of a few sleeping Confederates.