



BLOWING OUT THE BULKHEAD OF THE DUTCH GAP CANAL.

FROM A SKETCH BY J. E. TAYLOR.

The Dutch Gap Canal, on the James River, begun in August, 1864, and finished January 1, 1865, was an engineering success, but a military failure, inasmuch as the activity of the rebel battery in the vicinity prevented its being used. It was undertaken by General Butler during General Grant's operations against Petersburg and Richmond, and was intended to secure a nearer basis for the movements against the latter city. By a cut across a narrow isthmus in a bend of the river it reduced a water passage of four and a half miles to less than 200 yards at a point about half way between the two cities called Fallais Island. What would ordinarily have been the work of a few weeks was prolonged to 140 days by the hostile fire from the rebel battery not far away. The canal was thirty to forty yards wide, and deep enough for gunboats. When the digging was completed the water was let into the canal by blowing up the protecting bulkhead with charges amounting to six tons of powder skillfully disposed. The débris fell back into the canal, and if the rebel fire had suffered this to be dredged out the passage would have been practicable and useful.