



Army of the Cumberland and the Battle of Stone's River

Gilbert C. Kniffin

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EXCERPT:

The Army of the Ohio, after crowding into the space of six weeks more hard marching and fighting than fell to the lot of any other army in the United States during the summer of 1862, was, on the last of October, encamped in the vicinity of Bowling Green, Kentucky. General Bragg and Kirby Smith, turning Buell's left flank, had invaded Kentucky, gained the rear of Buell, threatened his base at Louisville, and but for the vis inertia which always seemed to seize upon the Confederates when in sight of complete victory, would have captured Louisville. The battle of Perryville resulting in the hasty exit of the combined armies of Bragg and Smith through Cumberland Gap into East Tennessee, the deliberate sweep of Buell's columns in their rear, the halt at Crab Orchard, and the return march towards Nashville are part of the events of an earlier chapter in the history of the rebellion. The occupation of East Tennessee by the Union Army had from the commencement of hostilities been an object dear to the great heart of President Lincoln. He had hoped for its accomplishment under General Sherman. It had been included in the instructions to General Buell, but eighteen months had passed and the Confederate flag still waved in triumph from the spire of the court-house at Knoxville. The retreat of the Confederate Army into East Tennessee in what was reported as a routed and disorganized condition had seemed like a favorable opportunity to carry out the long-cherished design of the Government. The movement of large armies across the country upon a map in the War Office, although apparently practicable, bore so little relation to actual campaigning as to have already caused the decapitation of more than one general.

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