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LOCAL INTELLIGENCE.

THEATRE.—The *Dream at Sea* was presented to a very good house last night with Mr. John Davis in the leading character. It was well performed and well received. In the afterpiece, *Boots at the Swan*, Mr. Barnes, a young gentleman who promises the achievement of considerable histrionic fame, made his debut on these boards.

To-night two private pieces are announced—*The Conscript* and *Black-eyed Susan*.

ARREST OF DEPREDATORS.—Last week two negroes and a soldier forced their way into the house of Mrs. Clark, living about four miles from town, and robbed her of \$250 in money and a quantity of jewelry. She was provided with a safeguard but they paid no attention to it and decamped with their booty. Complaint was made to Colonel Randlett, our provost marshal, who at once instituted measures for their arrest. They were detected yesterday while making their way out of town and placed in the military prison. Their crime is intensified by the fact of their forcing a safeguard, the penalty for doing which is death. It is intended to make an example of them in order that our citizens may be secured from similar outrages. Evil-doers should take into account that summary punishment awaits their misdeeds.

TO THE LADIES OF WILMINGTON.—Mrs. Gen'l Hawley has organized a benevolent association of ladies which meets daily at the Bellamy House on market street for the purpose of preparing linen, bandages, pillows, pillow-cases, sheets and like articles for the comfort of the sick and wounded in the hospitals. Every lady in the city who is desirous of co-operating in this good work should join the association.

SECRETING DESERTERS.—Absentees and deserters it is reported have been secreted in some of the houses in town. People conniving at this practice will be summarily dealt with by the military authorities. Aiding or abetting or concealing a deserter is punished as severely as the crime of desertion itself.

FIRST TRAIN FROM GOLDSBORO.—The first through train from the army at Goldsboro arrived in town last night about sunset. It consisted of a locomotive and three cars, and brought down a detachment of the construction corps and one of the assistant superintendents, Mr. Shumaker.

PERSONAL.—Colonel D. Heaton, treasury agent of this district, has returned from a visit to Newbern and Beaufort.

FAVORS.—We are indebted to Brig. Gen. Dodge for favors in the way of very late dates from the North.

Mr. Hunter's Opinion.

R. M. T. Hunter, who was nicknamed "Run Mad Tom Hunter" in the old days of Democracy and Whiggery, has been moved by the spirit to make known his sentiments upon the subject of "submission," being also impelled thereto by a feeling that the reports current in Richmond as to his sentiment are not only injurious to himself, "but hurtful to the country," meaning and intending the rebel country. He takes occasion to say that the reports about himself are "entirely erroneous." No person within the Confederacy can exist to whose feelings and interests such an event as a reconstruction of the old Union would be more repugnant than to him (Hunter.) He has always held the opinion that the rebels ought to continue the struggle for independence as long as there is hope of success. Aye! but what are Mr. Hunter's opinions as to the hopefulness of success? Really upon this point he says nothing. He declares that Jeff Davis and Robert E. Lee ought to know, and as long as they have hopes everybody else should hope and strengthen their resources and make their hands powerful. But after all he meekly suggests a "sense of the justice of their cause" should confirm the hearts of the people. But suppose they had no conscientious belief in its justice, what will Mr. Hunter do then? His course is simple enough; the old cant about looking for aid to the Chief Ruler of the Universe is resorted to, and Mr. Hunter finally attempts to saddle the whole responsibility for the failure of the rebellion upon Divine Providence. The card will surprise no one. Anything like common sense from the leaders of the rebellion is impossible. They have overwhelmed their countrymen with sorrow, distress and ruin, and although they can at any time lay down their arms and invite peace to bless them once more, they prefer to sacrifice every life over which they have assumed the control and achieve their final destruction or holocaust of blood.

GRANT.

INTERESTING ACCOUNT OF THE LATE BATTLE.

Full Particulars of the Assault and Repulse at Fort Steadman.

A correspondent of the *N. Y. Herald* gives the following interesting account of the recent battle near Petersburg:

Near PETERSBURG, March 25, 1865.

A rebel column, about three thousand strong, under command of Major General Gordon, made an attack on the front of the Ninth corps shortly after four o'clock this morning. The rebel onset was sudden, overwhelming, and partially successful. The pickets had received orders not to fire unless there was some necessity for doing so, and the night had been a remarkably quiet one all along the lines.

The point of attack was Fort Steadman, near Meade's station. That part of the line is held by the Third brigade of the First division, Gen. Wilcox commanding. Fort Steadman is a square work, covering nearly one acre of ground. It was garrisoned chiefly by the Fourteenth New York heavy artillery, under command of Major Randall. The pieces in it were brass Napoleons, three inch rifles and siege mortars. Immediately to the left of the fort is a work known as battery No. 11. The rebels entered both on the right and left of Fort Steadman, tearing down the abatis in several places.

It is supposed that the rebels had a twofold object in making this attack. First to destroy some portion of General Grant's military railroad, which is here only three-quarters of a mile from their main line; and, secondly, to capture the headquarters of General Wilcox. How they failed in both I will now proceed to explain.

Under cover of the darkness Gordon massed his men, and they passed rapidly over the short space of ground between their works and ours. The ground is remarkably well adapted for such a movement, being full of ravines. The rebels made good use of every advantage, and entered our works along with such of our pickets as had not been wounded or captured. Their next movement was to close in on the rear and enter Fort Steadman. The movement was a successful one, and the work fell into their hands. Major Randall was seized by some of the rebels and tossed over the parapet into the ditch. His head struck the soft muddy bottom without injuring him in the least, and he escaped immediately afterwards. The bombproofs and magazines were then entered by a great number of the rebels, while others turned the guns of the fort on Fort Haskell, another of our large works, about half a mile to the left. A fierce artillery duel ensued, and amidst its noise and smoke the work of plundering the officers' quarters went briskly on.

While the above scenes were being enacted, General McLaughlin, commanding the Third brigade of General Wilcox's division, proceeded to make a proper disposition of his troops to repel the attack. He rode out into the breastworks and into battery No. 11, just to the left of Fort Steadman, to ascertain the position of the rebels. They were, however, already inside the battery, and captured him before he had time to turn his horse round. Lieut. Thos. Sturgis, aid-de-camp on his staff, was captured at the same time. It is believed they were sent off to the rear immediately.

The command of the brigade then devolved on Colonel Robinson, of the Third Maryland battalion, who had only returned from a furlough the evening before. The rebels were by this time pressing forward, not only toward the railroad, but also in the direction of the Third brigade headquarters. The Twenty-ninth, Fifty-seventh and Fifty-ninth Massachusetts, Third Maryland battalion, One Hundredth Pennsylvania and a part of the Fourteenth New York heavy artillery, were formed in line, and holding the rebels in check, although their skirmish line was within fifty yards of the brigade headquarters, and some of their men had succeeded in cutting the telegraph wire. The rebels cheered wildly, and for a short time fought with energy and determination. Some Pennsylvania regiments, of General J. F. Hartman's division (the Third), came up and turned the tide of battle. The rebel line was charged with great vigor, when they immediately broke and ran. The rout was complete, and the demoralization of the rebel column never excelled. They endeavored to get back to their own line, but not more than about five hundred succeeded in doing so. Regimental and company officers and privates surrendered at discretion. About fifteen hundred prisoners were captured, of whom at least sixty were officers. Many stands of colors and immense numbers of small arms also fell into our hands. In the final charge Major Arthur McClellan, of General Wright's staff, and Captain A. M. Tyler, of Gen. Wheaton's staff, took part, and a rebel colonel surrendered to them. Colonel Morehead, of the Fifty-third North Carolina; Col. H. A. Brown, First North Carolina, and Lieutenant Colonel W. P. Mosely, Twenty-first North Carolina, were among the rebel officers captured. Colonel Morehead, after his capture, said the rebel column had, in his opinion, been completely annihilated.

Captain Joseph F. Carter was captured by

the rebels early in the fight, but afterwards managed to escape and capture of two rebel battle flags, one belonging to the Fifty-first Virginia and another to the Twenty-first North Carolina.

Every officer belonging to the Twenty-seventh Massachusetts Volunteers was captured, and all but two afterwards escaped.

Captain H. L. Swords, ordnance officer on the staff of General Wilcox, was captured, as was also Major Robertson, of the Twenty-ninth Massachusetts.

Captain Joseph L. Johnson, of the One Hundredth Pennsylvania, captured a battle flag of the Fifth Virginia. Private J. B. Chambers, of Company F, same regiment, captured a flag belonging to the First Virginia. Corporal M. B. Dewie, of Company A, brought in a rebel flag staff, with part of a color attached, and another battle flag was captured by Color Sergeant Charles Oliver, of Company M, One Hundredth Pennsylvania Volunteers.

Prisoners report that the rebel General Terry was killed this morning while endeavoring to rally his men.

By fifteen minutes past eight o'clock the rebels had all been either killed, wounded, captured or driven back. The line was again reformed, and surgeons and chaplains were ministering to the wants of the wounded, both rebel and Union. Fort Steadman presented a vivid picture of the ravages of war. Dead and wounded men were lying in and around it, and the ground in many places was soaked in blood. Small arms, ammunition, cooking utensils, regimental documents and fragments of shells, were scattered about in every direction. Every officer and private had lost something, either horses, clothing or equipments, and all were alike indignant. The roofs of their houses had in many instances been perforated by shells, and almost every chimney was shattered. But the rebels had not succeeded in carrying off a single piece of artillery.

A flag of truce was displayed from the rebel works shortly after the attack had been repulsed, and permission was asked for them to be allowed to bury their dead who had been killed between the lines. This was granted, and burying parties from both armies were soon engaged on that melancholy duty. While doing so they occasionally entered into conversation with each other, when the rebel Major General Walker rode out, and commanded his men to go on with their work, "as he would not allow any such damned nonsense as that."

Reinforcements were on their way to this part of the line shortly after the attack commenced, but their services were fortunately not required. General Wheaton's division of the Sixth corps and a brigade of cavalry remained within supporting distance for some time, during which they were occasionally visited by a Whitworth bolt from the rebel batteries.

FROM WASHINGTON.

WASHINGTON, March 27, 1865.

TRADING WITH THE REBELS.

It is asserted by a legion of speculators who are here to have the President overrule General Grant's orders to prevent trading with the rebel armies, that they are sure to be retracted by Grant, at the earnest solicitation of certain Messrs. Risley and others.

MAJOR GENERAL BUTLER.

Was before the Committee to-day, and completed his testimony upon the Fort Fisher affair.

END OF THE BAKER-GWYNNE CASE.

In the case of Colonel Baker, charged with the false arrest of Stuart Gwynne, charged with being engaged with S. M. Clarke and others in a conspiracy, &c., the suit was to-day abandoned by the prosecution.

SILENCE OF THE REBEL PRESS.

The Richmond papers of Saturday are barren of news. They have no account of that last fight of Hardee's, and do not state in what direction he retreated last.

THE SITUATION.

The best possible spirit animates our troops, and prominent military men seem to be well satisfied with the aspect of the situation.

Yesterday a transport left City Point for Point Lookout, with sixteen hundred rebel prisoners, who were captured on Saturday. The Lizzie Badger brought up two hundred and eighteen rebel deserters, all of whom came within our lines on the 23d and 24th instants, accompanying whom were one hundred and forty nine prisoners of war, who were captured by our troops in the engagement of Saturday.

THE PRESIDENTIAL PARTY AT THE FRONT.

A gentleman who to-day arrived from the front says that, while on Saturday morning General Grant and the President and his party were on their way from City Point to witness a review in the Army of the Potomac, and when about ten miles from that place, General Parke, just from the battle-field, approached and gave a circumstantial account of the fight at Fort Steadman.

Lieutenant-General Grant thanked him for his skill and gallantry, and the President also complimented him highly for the manner in which he and the officers and men under his command had conducted themselves on that occasion. The party then resumed their journey and stopped at a fort within a mile and a half of a subsequent action, and from the parapet of which they had a good view of the contending forces.

They afterwards continued their trip and visited many points of interest, their extreme stopping place being within six miles of Richmond. On this excursion General Grant and several members of his staff, together with General

Sheridan, accompanied the President's party. On their return they witnessed the crossing of Sheridan's cavalry from the North to the South side.

The President has been indulging in riding on horseback and his health has been considerably improved since his absence from Washington.

MEXICO.

Maximilian's Difficulties With the Church Party.

His Imperial Decree Regarding Reform Laws and Church Property.

THE CAUSE OF THE EMEUTE.

We lay before our readers this morning an important document, the decree of Maximilian which has been the occasion of the division between him and the church party, and which threatens farther dissolution of the Mexican Empire.

It is well known that after the intervention of the allied Powers—England, France and Spain—in Mexico had commenced it was through the influence and direct efforts of the Catholic clergy and church party of Mexico that the objects of the intervention were changed, and the purpose of establishing a monarchy, with the Archduke Maximilian as Emperor, was substituted for the simple redress of grievances proposed at the outset of the allied expedition.

The clergy of Mexico sought to recover the property of which they had been deprived by the reform laws of the Juarez government, and to regain for the Church the privileges and powers it had enjoyed in ancient times.

In this purpose all Catholic countries could not but sympathize, especially as by this means they hoped to see terminated those grave questions which for so long a period have been the source of civil strife and a barrier to all progress in Mexico.

England, however a Protestant Power, did not look with favor upon this restoration of the privileges of the Church, and, through peculiar circumstances, her influence at that moment was so great with Spain that that Power also was induced to withdraw from the intervention when these objects were announced.

France was differently situated. She could not withdraw. Her position as the chief Catholic Power of the world forbade her abandoning the cause of the Church when the opportunity of securing for it so great advantages, and at the same time of restoring peace to Mexico, was apparently so favorable.

It was under these circumstances that Napoleon listened to the solicitations of influential representatives of the Mexican Church and acceded to their request that Archduke Maximilian should be selected to fill the throne of Mexico.

It is needless to say how strong were the assurances of Maximilian's devotion to the Church, and how confidently all interests relied upon his good faith and adherence to those who were aiding him towards the attainment of so brilliant a destiny.

Through the direct act of the Mexican clergy and the church party of Mexico the empire was proclaimed and Maximilian was elevated to the throne.

To the Church, therefore, he owes not alone the fact of his selection, but the fact of the creation of the empire. Napoleon had no interest in Maximilian, nor had he any desire to see the form of government in Mexico changed. His purpose was simply to restore peace to Mexico, and to protect, in so far as was proper, the legitimate rights of the Church.

Unfortunately for these ends the person selected by the Mexican clergy, and the leaders of the party who favored the intervention, has proved unfaithful to the trust reposed in him, and, once having reached power, he has turned upon those who placed him there—has violated his most solemn faith to the Church, and proved himself a worse enemy than even the governments of President Juarez or Comonfort, from whom the laws of reform first emanated.

It was hoped for a time that even these difficulties might be over a one, and that, through an arrangement between the Pope and Maximilian, harmony might be restored. For this purpose a Nuncio was sent to Mexico, and every effort has been made to avoid an open rupture. But it has all been in vain. Maximilian, blindly infatuated with a confidence in the strength of his position, has rashly chosen to break with those to whom he owes his power, and, even rejecting the disinterested counsels of Napoleon, he has undertaken to settle by himself the grave and important questions pending with the Church, and has taken the final step which forever separates her interests from that of his throne in Mexico, and forces her to seek his downfall.

DECREE CONFIRMING THE REFORM LAWS OF JUAREZ, AND RATIFYING THE SALES OF CHURCH PROPERTY.

We, Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico, having consulted our Council of Ministers, have decreed and do decree the following:—

ARTICLE 1. The Council of State shall revise all the operations of the ascertainment and na-

[Continued on the 4th page.]