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SUN LETTERS.

FROM LAURINBURG.

A Fire that was Put Out—Baptist Festival.

LAURINBURG, N. C., May 6.—Last night between 12 and 1 o'clock a fire broke out in the store occupied by Messrs. Teinken & Co., known as the drug store of Mr. J. S. McCallum. Luckily for those in that locality, some young men of this place who were paying their best respects to some of the fair sex in and around town, and were entertained to a late hour, saw the smoke and heard the cracking of the fire in time to give the alarm. The fire was extinguished before it had made much headway. The damage to the building is estimated by some at \$25, and on the goods \$50, but the writer thinks the damage considerably greater on both. The fire started inside of the store. The doors were all perfectly fast. Some think rats did the work with matches, others think differently.

The Baptist festival, which is to come off the last of June, bids fair to be one of the largest and most extensive ones ever held here. Due notice will be given as to the precise day, &c. General Taylor, of your staff, is especially invited.

ALPHA.

As election matters had been anticipated by telegraph, this part of our correspondent's letter is omitted.

Congress and the Military Issue.

Let us briefly review that contention. After the disgraceful and humiliating exhibition of Federal bayonets made in this city by Grant in 1870 for the purpose of over-awing votes in the November election of that year after the even the more disgraceful and scandalous conduct of Grant in surrounding the State House at New Orleans with bayonets and rendering possible the military outrages which Mr. Evarts denounced with so much earnestness and emphasis before a great meeting of the best citizens of this city; after Mr. Taft (now likely to be the next Republican candidate for the Governorship of Ohio) had issued in 1876 his orders and opinions authorizing the use of nearly five thousand Federal troops at the polling places and around the State returning boards in three of the Southern States, it would have been the height of imbecility in the leaders of the Democratic party not to perceive that the Republican managers had made up their minds to use the army and navy of the United States as partisan tools. In the spring of 1877, therefore, the Democratic majority in the House refused to make appropriations for the army unless the Republicans would consent to legislation confining the use of the army within its legitimate limits under the Constitution. The Army bill in that year therefore fell before the Democratic House and the still Republican Senate.

In June, 1878, the Democratic House insisted on a *posse comitatus* section in the Army bill which the President approved on the 15th of that month. Subsequently it was discovered that section 2,002 "expressly" declared that the army or navy could be used "to keep the peace at the polls," and the Democrats determined to expunge those seven words from the section. This request was refused by the Republican party managers by Mr. Garfield, and the Republicans in the Senate opposing it the Army bill failed again at the last session before the two houses, and the President therefore called the present extra session. At a Republican caucus it was threatened that if the Democrats endeavored to introduce the repeal in the House as a separate measure, the Republican minority would filibuster and use the rules to prevent them from doing so. Thereupon the repeal was again inserted in the Army bill as before. Mr. Garfield immediately took up his parable, and in heart-rending accents proclaimed that such a repeal would not be germane to the bill, would be a "rider" and would be a wicked attempt of untrained rebels to coerce a loyal President. Superfluous and unreflecting people were distressed by this clamor for a time, but as a reaction of common sense soon set in, Mr. Robeson, in the course of the House debate on the bill, was selected by the backers of Grant in Philadelphia to make a new issue. That gallant tar promptly sent Mr. Garfield below for a lubber and put him under batches, while he himself made the point that the proposed Democratic repeal would prevent United States marshals from summoning a *posse* of civilians to aid in the execution of judicial process if such a *posse* of civilians should be armed. Mr. Robeson assumed that the phrase "troops or armed men" in section 2,002 embraced armed civilians, and tried to infer from this assumption that if the repeal became a law, "civil officers" could no longer use "armed" civilians as a *posse* on voting days at voting places. The point of the argument seemed to sensible lawyers and practiced interpreters of statutes too trifling to deal with seriously or even to talk about. But Mr. Hayes, "solitary and alone," and without the knowledge either of Mr. Evarts (who, it is said, is quite distressed by the Grant managers and contemplates abandoning the State Department) or of any other member of his Cabinet, as the *Tribune* affirms, took up Mr. Robeson's point and argument, and to the astonishment alike of friends and foes, inserted them in a veto message. Mr. Robeson's objections as well as Mr. Garfield's germane and was a second thought by grown men, but the Constitution has, fortunately or unfortunately, made it possible for a very weak and a very absurd man, if only he happens to be President of the United States, to worry Congress into dealing seriously with the weakest and the most absurd propositions he can put forth. The Democratic majority in Congress, therefore, in a spirit of patriotic patience and statesmanship and in order to preserve and protect the public interests confided to their keeping, have now proceeded to frame a new measure, intended and calculated to meet what Mr. Hayes has chosen to put forward as his objections to the sixth section in the vetoed Army bill.

Naturally the backers of Grant are very unhappy, as, our Washington dispatches this morning show. They know not clearly which way to turn.

That Fifty Dollar Transaction.

The Richmond *States* makes an extended editorial summary of the case of young Merritt, Cashier of the Metropolitan Hotel, New York, who was accused of taking a fifty dollar bill from a colored sailor, Williams, formerly of this city, or rather vicinity. The case has excited much interest on account of the social standing of young Merritt, who is a nephew of Col. Merritt, the New York Collector of Customs. The story is, that the colored sailor Williams had been discharged from a vessel in New York harbor and paid off. There was \$98 coming to him, and the paymaster gave him in part payment a fifty dollar bill, newly issued. After wandering about New York for a day making preparations to go home to see his mother in Wilmington, N. C., buying a suit of clothes, paying his wash-bill, and making a few other purchases, he suddenly found himself overtaken by night with a change left in his pocket, and no place to put up. The fifty dollar bill he intended to preserve intact and carry home to show his mother what great things he had done, and gladden the old man's heart, and had sewed it up in the waistband of his trousers for better security. But it was necessary to change the bill as his last resort now, not having a penny of the \$15 in money left. He applied the clerk of the Purcell House for the exchange, showing him the bill. Now mark how the story grows in interest. The Purcell clerk kindly enough it appears told him he didn't have so much change on hand, (and silver and small change are by no means desirable as large bills, he would no doubt have been too happy to get the change), but told him he would get it changed across the way at the Metropolitan Hotel. Hither he repaired, and approaching the Cashier handed him the bill and asked him to change it. It was night, but the gas burned brightly. The cashier took the bill and put it in the cash-drawer. Then, after a few minutes, during which the negro boy waited patiently, he took out four silver quarters and handed them to him. "What is this?" inquired Williams. "Your change," replied the clerk; "you gave me a dollar." "Oo, no, sir; it was a fifty dollar bill I gave you, and if you will look in that drawer you will find it, on the other side, as I saw you put it in." The clerk grew indignant, refused to look in the drawer, and persisted in saying it was a dollar bill, and going to the drawer took one of that denomination out and handed it to the negro, taking back the silver, and said, "There's your dollar, go, and don't come here making a row, or I'll have you taken out." There was a row, however, as the negro refused to go, and persisted in asking for his fifty dollars, saying if the clerk would look in the drawer and didn't find it there he would be content and go, though he knew he had given him the bill. The policeman of the establishment was called, and the negro was not only ejected, but taken to the station, and next morning brought before Justice Otterburg. Add this brings us to the second act.

The policeman in his story in the usual way, when poor devil is the victim and one of better head the aggressor. He had simply found the negro raising a disturbance at a hotel, and "took him in." But something the negro said attracted the attention of the justice, who, it appears, is one of those men who are an equal honor to our common humanity and the law they are chosen to administer, and he questioned the negro and got the whole story. He at once sent for the clerk and heard the other side, and the proceeded to summons the clerk at Delvin's clothing store, who sold the negro clothes, and also the clerk at the Purcell House, to whom Williams had first applied for change. Suffice it to say the fifty dollar bill was traced in the negro's possession right up to the clerk's desk at the Metropolitan, and it was quite satisfactorily shown he had no other money. The clerk pleaded his standing, brought a cloud of witnesses up to sustain him, and some to try to prove that it was a dollar he received, but none of them could testify to that fact. Though present, they had not seen the money. The case looked very bad for the clerk. There was no doubt in the mind of any of the bystanders who took this fifty-dollar bill with him to the Metropolitan and that it was the bill he tendered the clerk. The case was continued for further evidence, and Merritt bound over. When it came up the next day a new complication met the justice. An old washerwoman, whom Williams had paid that same day \$1.50, being his wash bill, appeared at the justice's office and testified that after Williams had left her house she picked up from the floor a fifty-dollar bill, which he no doubt had paid her by mistake for fifty cents, and which she had shown to the neighbors, thinking it one of those spurious advertising cards so common formerly; but as they all told her it was genuine, and as she had heard of the trouble at once to assist him, she came at once to relieve the clerk, and yet how come Williams to have his fifty-dollar bill at Delvin's and also at the Purcell House after he had paid his washerwoman? The mystery was rather deepened than dissipated by this new witness. But it was not long before Justice Otterburg reached a very plausible and highly suggestive but probable solution. The negro woman admitted a white man had called at her shanty, and after talking some time about Williams and asking her as to what he had paid her, went away, and it was after his visit and departure she found the fifty-dollar bill on the floor wrapped around another white man's hat, which she picked up and found plenty of the Longshoremen ready to go to work. It was rumored last night that several of the coasting companies would follow this example to-day. The French line finding it impossible to get the Canada ready last night took on old hands giving them old wages of 45 cents for day work for night work and 30 cents for day work.

Merritt or his friends to drop the fifty dollar bill in the negro woman's shanty, that its discovery might bring confusion to the negro accuser and relieve Merritt of the slightest suspicion. And had the evidence developed in this circumstance all would have gone well, but not only did the negro declare it was not his fifty, but he even refused to receive it, saying he only wanted his own; and there is very good evidence that it is not the same bill that was paid to the discharged seaman, Lemuel Williams, by the paymaster of the navy. The result was that the Justice committed Merritt before the grand jury, remarking:

"If there is probable cause to hold Mr. Merritt, as I think there is, Mr. Merritt has done his best to make the probable cause his own creation. I feel it my duty to hold the defendant in \$1,500 bail to appear before the grand jury."

At this announcement the audience applauded loudly. When order had been re-established by a grand jury than by your Honor, I do not often arise to address a court. It was my fortune to have been absent from the city when this offence was charged against my nephew, and in this case I have taken no part, except what I deemed my duty, to defend an upright and truthful young man. I wish to read a paragraph from the New York *Sun*, which appeared last Sunday. The paragraph puts these words into my mouth: "If the complaint Williams made does not suffer by being confined, I am ready, sir, to do every thing in my power, to make his position more easy. I know I cannot go on his bond, but if there is anything I can do for him, that I am ready, willing, to do it. Now, your Honor, I never made any such remark in this court, and I wish to make this public denial. I said last Saturday, as I say now, if an offence has been committed let the offender be punished, but your Honor (placing his hand upon young Merritt's head), I believe that this young man is as innocent of the crime charged against him as the Judge on the bench."

Justice Otterburg: My personal consideration for Collector Merritt has induced me to allow him to make this statement. I will simply say now, that I have done my whole duty, as I understand it, to complainant and defendant. If I had a nephew in this predicament I would ten thousand times rather he should be declared innocent by a grand jury than by a magistrate. The complainant, Williams, is held in \$500 to appear as a witness."

Nothing of a criminal character that has occurred in New York, or in any other part of the country, for many a year, as we remarked, has excited the interest that has been created, not only in this city, but throughout the whole country, by this fifty-dollar bill, and the mystery surrounding the singularity of the case, must be our excuse for devoting so much space to its proper explanation, which could not have been made clear in briefer detail.

Governor Garcelon, of Maine, the first Democratic Governor that State has had for twenty-five years, and who is also Mr. M. D., is in Atlanta attending on the Medical Convention at present in session there.

Shorter Telegrams.

The Longshoremen's strike continues in New York, putting the steamship companies to considerable inconvenience.

The National Woman's Suffrage Association, convened at St. Louis, to-day. It was attended by the oldest and most prominent workers in the cause.

The Pennsylvania Democratic State Central Committee, met at Harrisburg to-day and decided to hold a State Convention on July 16, at that place.

The West Woolen Company, of Pittsfield, Mass., is bankrupt. Liabilities \$75,000. The assets consist of the stock, machinery and mortgaged mill property.

A decision is expected to-morrow on the motion for a bill of particulars entered in Chicago yesterday, as well as on motion to quash indictments in Custom House cases.

Theodore H. Belton of New Orleans, aged 25 years, was found dead in his bed this morning, with a pistol shot in his head and a pistol by his side. Believed to have suicided.

The vote city on the new Constitution is very heavy. Probably 40,000 opponents confident of defeating the measure. The information received is insufficient to warrant the estimates of the result.

Mrs. Sarah W. Underwood, a lady of high social distinction, was yesterday arrested in Milwaukee charged, by Harvey S. Hayden, of Chicago, with altering forged paper. Bail was promptly furnished.

SUN TELEGRAMS.

EARLY AND MIDNIGHT REPORTS.

WASHINGTON.

Congressional.

SENATE.

WASHINGTON, May 6.—The Senate, on motion of Mr. Ingalls adopted a resolution calling on the President to communicate to the Senate what measure had been taken to prevent the occupation of the Indian Territory by white settlers.

The House bill to prohibit military interference in elections was read twice. The Senate, by a vote of 24 against 31 disagreed to the motion of Mr. Edmunds, to refer it to the committee on Judiciary, and then laid it on the table, the subject to be called up hereafter.

The Senate resumed consideration of the Louisiana contested election case.

Mr. Edmunds' amendment was rejected.

Mr. Conkling then offered an amendment to the pending resolution, providing that the enquiry shall be confined to the persons alleged in the memorial of Mr. Spofford to be new and different from those covered by the previous inquiry, which was also disagreed to.

The committee then accepted an amendment enquiring whether Spofford used corrupt or unlawful means. After considered discussion, in which Louisiana affairs were alluded to with much animation, the Senate passed the resolution of the Committee on Privileges and Elections, authorizing them to take testimony in the matter of the memorial of Spofford containing the seat of Kellogg, with the amendment of Mr. Hoar as above mentioned. The vote on the adoption of the resolution was 26 and 17.

The Senate took up the House bill prohibiting military interference at the polls.

Mr. Blaine offered an amendment imposing severe penalties on persons who shall carry a concealed weapon at any place within a mile of a place where a general or special election for representatives to Congress is being held.

HOUSE.

Mr. Chalmers, of Mississippi, called up as a question of privilege, the resolution previously offered by him for investigation into his conduct at Fort Pillow. He said that his friends had pointed out to him the difficulty in the way of such investigation, and that he himself recognized the danger of rekindling the flames of passion and prejudice which all good men desired to see covered up in their ashes. But it was a hard thing to ask a soldier, who had lost all save honor, to permit that also to be taken from them by the repetitions of accusations that were utterly untrue. The action of the House yesterday had, however, satisfied him that the gentlemen were not willing now to go into that investigation, and therefore, he had concluded to accept the advice of his friends and to make his own statement. He proceeded to narrate the incident of attack on Fort Pillow, in which attack he had been early in the day on command of Confederate cavalry, but had gathered around General Forrest and himself for protection, and had been protected. As to the Confederates taking advantage of the flag of truce in order to gain a better position, that statement was a part of the Federal troops, who had lost their fort, and nearly all of those were killed or wounded. But a large number of the garrison (mostly white men) had remained and had gathered around General Forrest and himself for protection, and had been protected. As to the Confederates taking advantage of the flag of truce in order to gain a better position, that statement was a part of the Federal troops, who had lost their fort, and nearly all of those were killed or wounded. But a large number of the garrison (mostly white men) had remained and had gathered around General Forrest and himself for protection, and had been protected. 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