

THE FIGHTING AROUND PETERSBURG—WHAT IT SHOWS—EVERYTHING AT STAKE.

The Herald has a long editorial on "the terrific fighting at Petersburg," in which it urges concentration of all available forces against Richmond; reinforcements to be sent, Grant, and a final and desperate effort to be made for Richmond; and that secondary places be left to take care of themselves. Here is the Herald's article:

The late terrific fighting of the enemy at Petersburg has disclosed to us several important facts—first, that through the foresight of the rebel leaders the city has been very strongly fortified; secondly, that the bulk of Lee's forces have been drawn over to its defence, and are in for a stubborn resistance; thirdly, that it is the key to Richmond, and, lastly, that General Grant is bound to possess it.

The news of the repeated sanguinary repulses of our troops from the enemy's intrenchments on Saturday caused a sensation in Wall street, which, together with the tinkering legislation of Congress, has enabled the gold speculators to run up the premium on gold two or three per cent. Nor can we expect any effectual reaction against these gold gamblers short of some decisive victory by General Grant. To secure such a victory, therefore, as speedily as possible, additional reinforcements to the army of the Potomac, to the extent of fifty or seventy five thousand men, should be forthwith pushed forward to the James river. Surely from our two or three hundred thousand troops scattered about in little detachments here and there, between the Susquehanna and Mississippi rivers, fifty or seventy five thousand can be drawn to complete the investment of both Richmond and Petersburg at the same time.

Let this be done, and instead of a two months' laborious siege, like that of Vicksburg, Richmond must be instantly abandoned or surrendered by Lee; for otherwise, if placed between two armies, each equal to his own, his army must inevitably be routed, broken up and dispersed. The rebels are now fighting desperately to gain a little time.—They have given up all hope for the present of gaining anything else. They admit that their cause is upon its last legs; but they still hope that, by holding General Grant at bay even a month or two longer, our national finances will become so deranged, and the public mind of the North so discouraged and unsettled, that the copperhead disunion peace faction will gain the political balance of power in the loyal States, and will bring upon them such a state of political discords, strife and confusion in this Presidential campaign as to compel the general government to suspend this struggle with Jeff. Davis and open negotiations for peace.

This is what Lee is now fighting for—a little time, in the hope of gaining, through the financial embarrassments and political dissensions of the North, what the rebel leaders now confess cannot be gained by them in any other way—namely, the disruption of the Union for the mockery of a treaty of peace. Time, therefore, the gaining of a little more time, which is now the last hope of the rebellion, suggests to the government its true course. It is to strike now, while the iron is hot; to bring all our available forces from all sides against Richmond, and without delay. It is the policy of letting secondary places take care of themselves for the present, in order to make quick and certain work of Richmond; for the difference between the capture of Richmond by the middle of July, as compared even with the middle of September, will, as things are now going, be equal to the saving of a whole year's expenses of the war in men and money. Let the government now concentrate all its available strength against Richmond; for with the fall of Richmond the whole fabric of the rebellion tumbles into ruins.

"GRANT'S TRUE PLAN."

The correspondent of the Herald gives the following as "Grant's True Plan":

For the first time since crossing the Rapid Ann, the real plan of General Grant for reducing Richmond is growing manifest. It was never his intention to enter Richmond from the north, unless the unforeseen chances and contingencies of battle should make it an easy conquest. Nature and art have exhausted themselves in making it impregnable from that direction, and General Grant was well advised of this at the outset. But the army was on the Rappahannock when he assumed the general command, confronted by General Lee. To have withdrawn from there, and transported his army by water from Washington to this place, would have given Lee time and opportunity, which he rarely wastes, to have made counter demonstrations on Washington and the Upper Potomac. It was considered best to drive the rebel army before us to Richmond, if it could not be destroyed sooner; for its destruction, instead of the capture of one or many rebel capitals, is the grand objective purpose. To do this effectually, by compelling it to retreat from Richmond on a line of our own selection, the destruction of the railroad through Gordonsville to the westward became an important consideration.—For this purpose the army, leaving the vicinity of Bethesda church and Cold Harbour a full week longer than it would otherwise have done; but the railroad was finally not only destroyed for miles, but completely annihilated, so far as the term is applicable to matter. Our mission on that flank was then accomplished. We are now here.

THE RAMS DOWN THE RIVER.

A correspondent writes from Grant's army of the recent demonstration of our rams down the river:

Three of the rebel rams came down the river nearly to Dutch Gap, and were fired on by our Monitors across the wooded neck between our vessels and the rebel ironclads. It is not known whether any of them were struck or not, as the firing was not so accurate as it might have been. The shots were directed by signal. After having reconnoitered and found our squadron in its proper place, the rams steamed slowly up the river again. It is hardly possible that the rams should come down in the face of our Monitors; but if they do there will be one of the liveliest and most extraordinary contests on record. The river is so narrow at that part that the vessels will have no opportunity of manœuvring, and hard knocks will only decide the fight. Our officers court the trial, confident of their ability to come off victors.

Lieutenant-General Grant and Major General Butler were on the Agawan, having an interview with Rear Admiral Lee, at the time of the approach of the rams, and witnessed the firing of the heavy guns from the Monitors.

AFFAIRS DOWN THE JAMES RIVER.

We gather the following paragraphs of the affairs down the river from the correspondence of the New York Herald:

The gunboat Entaw, Lieutenant Commander Blake, has, for the past three or four days, been shelling the enemy's forces on Malvern Hill, near which a large force of rebels are encamped. The practice with her nine inch shell and heavy rifle guns has been beautiful and exceedingly effective. The rebels have been driven from their position, and are located out of shell range, watching the approaches to Richmond on the north side of the James. Over these fellows Captain Blake maintains a vigilant watch, to prevent them from putting up works on the river between this and French's reach, where the monitors and double-enders lie, covering our sight.

Since our abandonment of the north side of James river the rebels planted a few guns on commanding positions above Charles City Court House and commenced firing on transports. One shot struck a despatch boat, going entirely through her, just above the water line, but doing no other damage. No other vessel was struck. Our gunboats soon silenced the rebel batteries, routed them from their position, and restored the safety and quiet of river transportation.

Arrangements are now about completed for a regular morning mail boat daily between City Point and Washington. The boat leaving here in the forenoon will connect with the Baltimore packet at Fortress Monroe in the evening, and arrive in Washington the next morning, making the trip in about twenty four hours.

SHERIDAN'S RAID—INCIDENTS ALONG ITS RETURN—HOW COMMUNICATION WAS OPENED—HOME GUARDS AND BURGLARERS, ETC.

The Herald has an account of Sheridan's raid, from which we copy the following:

About twelve o'clock at night, such of the wounded as could be moved having been laden into transports and ambulances, and the rest made as comfortable as possible in our hospitals, the trains began to move towards Carpenter's ford on the road to Spotsylvania Court House. Those of the wounded left behind were placed in charge of Surgeon Sickler, who was detailed to remain with them.

Day dawned shortly after we left the station.—We marched some fifteen or twenty miles to Troy man's store, near which we encamped on Monday night, having seen nothing of that villainous enemy which General Lee claims routed us so completely.

ly. The weather was hot and dry, and we could have been traced for miles by the clouds of dust raised by our progress had General Hampton been desirous to follow us up. From the best information gained by scouts, however, it is believed that Hampton removed his command from the battle field to Gordonsville on Sunday night.

The next day, Tuesday, 14th instant, the line of march was in the same direction, and the command halted at the cross roads, three miles from Todd's tavern. Here we found Major Darlington, of the Eighteenth Pennsylvania, who had been wounded six weeks before at the battle of Craig's tavern.—He informed us that he had lain four days with his leg all amputated, without surgical attendance, when General Hampton took up his headquarters at the house and visited him. The general treated him with great kindness and sent his surgeon-in-chief to attend him. Dr. Taylor amputated his right leg at the thigh and provided him with good nursing, which continued until we arrived and found him a much recovered as to come along with us.

On the 15th we passed through the Court House, and inspected the splendid and formidable works which Lee had the honour to construct and Grant had the sagacity to flank. Also after line extended for miles, the last line which Grant did not favour Lee by attacking—being the most formidable of all. They consisted of high breastworks faced forward by abattis of fallen trees lying in every conceivable direction.

We were informed by the landlord of the hotel that both armies had it their hot and heavy from the 8th to the 21st of May, when they both left by parallel roads, and he'd be dogged if he knew which went first. The walls of the hotel, court house and church were all bored through and through with shot and shell.

On Wednesday night we encamped near Julaca's station.

The general now determined to attempt to communicate with General Meade. As yet we did not know that his army had left Cold Harbour. A detail was made from the Sixth cavalry of twenty two men, under the command of Lieutenant Madden, an experienced and skillful officer. Colonel Howard, Chief Quartermaster, and Captain Moore, of the general's staff, and your correspondent were the despatch bearers.

At the first streak of dawn (half-past two, A. M.) we left camp, with a negro guide to Bowling Green, where we arrived, without incident, about sunrise.

We charged through the town at a gallop and captured a man to guide us to Newtown. Becoming satisfied that he was unacquainted with the route, we compromised by taking another darkey in his stead. We now moved on at a brisk walk about ten miles, when we came upon a horse ready saddled, and saw two gray backs leaving for the woods. The advance guard halted them and fired upon them, but they would not stop to explain, so we had to take the horse and saddle for an answer. When near Newtown another shot was heard, and the whole party charged down the road, raising such clouds of dust that we could not see where we were going. We soon came upon a prisoner, Captain A. Garnett, brother to the late General Garnett, from Essex county. He was bleeding profusely from a wound in the arm given by a pistol shot, the ball having first passed through the breast pocket of his coat, several letters and five hundred dollars of rebel notes, which it contained. He was a quartermaster, and said he was trying to reach Richmond. He informed us that Grant had crossed the James. We bound up his wound and took him along. At Newtown we found his three companions, also captives. They told us we could not cross the river at Donkirk, as the bridge and ferry boats had been destroyed, and also that the White House had been abandoned by General Meade as his base of supplies. We proceeded a few miles further and captured two others, who confirmed this intelligence. As this section of country was barren of forage and subsistence supplies, Lieutenant Madden and the staff officers thought it best to report what they had learned to the general without delay.—Accordingly we turned back and met the command midway between Newtown and Bowling Green.

That night a second effort was determined upon, and Captain Ira W. Claffin, commanding the Sixth regulars, was ordered to take his best men and horses, and start at daybreak for West Point by the north side of the Mattaponi. Colonel Howard and Major Forsyth, of the staff, came with us. Also Lieutenants Coates and Tupper of the Sixth. Our force was fifty carbines. Our course lay through Newtown, Cartsville, Walkertown, and so down the river through King and Queen county, where Dahl-green was killed.

We had no opposition till we left Walkertown, where we had halted for an hour. Leaving this we came upon seven or eight home guards, as they term themselves, but more properly called highwaymen. They are composed of old men and boys, who till their lands some, and turn out to swell the conscription posse of Captain Fleet, when any "blue jackets" or "Yanbs" come along, and ambuscade them. A large party of these laid an ambush for us as we were crossing a bridge and a narrow causeway through a swamp. Upon a bluff just on our left flank they secreted themselves and gave us a volley as we entered upon the causeway. One of our men fell dead. We could not cross the swamp to charge them. Captain Claffin at once ordered an about face and re-crossing of the bridge at a walk, firing as they went. Once across the river were formed, and then Claffin commenced some flanking that even Grant need not have been ashamed of. We proceeded to the village of Stephensville, skirmishing as we went, and reconnoitered till we found their force numbered 200 hundred, when Captain Claffin determined to try another dodge. He led us through the woods to Walkertown; here we found Custer's advance.

Colonel Howard, Major Forsyth and myself, concluded to attempt a water route; so we obtained a skiff, and taking E. M. Beach, of company B, and Thomas Wathey, of company M, Sixth cavalry, for oarsmen, we started at ten o'clock for West Point, a distance of thirty miles. The boys rowed well, occasionally relieved by Colonel Howard and Major Forsyth, but the tide was against us half the time, and it was twelve at noon when we made West Point on Saturday. We were delighted to see one or two blue jackets on the wharf, and soon found telegraphic communication with General Meade and also with the White House.

A tug brought us to Yorktown, and an ambulance, kindly furnished by Captain Clark, the next day to Fortress Monroe.

The country through which we passed is chiefly planted with corn and other cereals, but the land is poor and the crops look backward and sickly. No tobacco was seen growing.

THE DRAFT—REFUSAL TO REPEAL THE THREE HUNDRED CLAUSE.

After all, the Yankee Congress has refused, by a decisive vote, to repeal the three hundred clause of the exemption law. The Washington correspondent of the Herald writes:

To day's session of the House was assigned for the consideration of the bill of the Military Committee, and was entirely occupied by it. It went on quite smoothly until the bill repealing the commutation clause of the enrollment act came up. It was evident from the first that a large majority was opposed to repealing it, and the additional section, prohibiting the furnishing of substitutes unless near relatives of the drafted man, did not aid it in the least. Mr. Schenck argued in favour of the bill, and urged its passage, as vitally necessary to carry on the war, but it was of no use. A majority of two to one striking out the first section, repealing the commutation, settled the matter for the present at least. There was very little excitement manifested, but the House was very full and the vote large. If the war is to go on, the repeal of the commutation clause is regarded as a necessity, but it is evident that neither Congress nor the people are prepared for it yet.

The following slip, from the proceedings of Congress, shows the argument used by those who advocated the repeal of the clause:

Mr. Schenck, from the Committee on Military Affairs, substantially explained. The President affirms the necessity of having men and not money, and finds that the existing enactment does not produce them because of various circumstances, such as exemption for substitutes and other things which interfere. The President, enclosing known, had sent a message to the House, enclosing a communication from the Secretary of War and Provost-Marshal General Fry, all recommending that the commutation clause be repealed. Mr. Schenck gave an illustration to show how difficult it was to procure men, showing that in one district only one hundred twenty-nine were secured by "bounty"; fifty-two were obliged to serve because they could not purchase exemption, while six hundred and thirty-nine were released by paying the commutation. In view of all these facts, the first and second sections of the bill proposed to repeal the commutation clause of the enrollment act by providing that substitutes may be furnished by the drafted man in the person of his father, son or brother.

Mr. Wilson, in the Senate, has introduced a new military bill which provides, among other things, for the freedom of the wife and children of negro soldiers.