

BULLER MEETS WITH A SERIOUS REVERSE.

Attempts to Effect a Crossing of the Tugela River.

But is Compelled to Retire Under the Galling Fire of the Boers.

Suffers Severe Losses in Killed and Wounded, Besides Losing One Field Gun by Shell Fire and Having to Abandon Ten Others—Great Depression at London Over Buller's Repulse.

LONDON, Dec. 16.—(12:47 a. m.)—The War Office has received a dispatch announcing that General Buller has met with a serious reverse, losing eleven guns.

General Buller was attempting to cross the Tugela River. Finding it impossible to effect his object, he ordered a retirement, in order to avoid greater losses. He left eleven guns behind.

The following is the text of General Buller's dispatch announcing his reverse: "Buller to Lansdowne, Chiveley Camp, December 15th, 6:20 p. m.—I regret to report a serious reverse. I moved in full strength from our camp near Chiveley at 4 o'clock this morning. There are two fordable places in the Tugela River, and it was my intention to force a passage through at one of them. They are about two miles apart.

"My intention was to force one or the other with one brigade, supported by a central brigade. General Buller was to attack the left drift. General Hillyard the right road and General Littleton was to take the center and to support either. Early in the day I saw that General Buller would not be able to force a passage, and I directed him to withdraw. He had, however, attacked with great gallantry, and his leading battalion, the Connaught Rangers, I fear, suffered a great deal. Colonel I. G. Brooke was seriously wounded.

"I then ordered General Hillyard to advance, which he did, and his leading regiment, the East Surrey, occupied Colenso Station, and the houses near the bridge.

"At that moment I heard that the whole artillery I had sent to support the attack—the Fourteenth and Sixty-sixth Field Batteries and six naval 12-pounder quick firing under Colonel Long—had advanced close to the river, in Long's desire to be within effective range. It proved to be full of the enemy, who suddenly opened a galling fire at close range, killing all their horses, and the gunners were compelled to stand to their guns. Some of the wagon teams got shelter for troops in a donga, and desperate efforts were being made to bring out the field guns. The fire, however, was too severe, and only two were saved by Captain Schofield and some drivers whose names I will furnish.

"Another most gallant attempt with three teams was made by an officer whose name I will obtain. Of the eighteen horses, thirteen were killed, and as several drivers were wounded, I would not allow another attempt, as it seemed that they would be a shell mark, sacrificing life to a gallant attempt to force the passage, unsupported by artillery. I directed the troops to withdraw, which they did in good order.

"Throughout the day a considerable force of the enemy was pressing on my right flank, but was kept back by mounted men under Lord Rondon, and another part of General Buller's brigade. The day was intensely hot and most trying on the troops, whose conduct was excellent. We have abandoned ten guns, and lost by shell fire one. The losses in General Buller's brigade are, I fear, very heavy, although the proportion of severely wounded, I hope, is not large. The Fourteenth and Sixty-sixth Field Batteries also suffered severe losses. We have retired to our camp at Chiveley."

A MOST SERIOUS EVENT. LONDON, Dec. 16.—(4:30 a. m.)—The news of General Buller's reverse was received so late that newspaper comment to-day is confined to perfunctory expressions of extreme regret and disappointment, and of the necessity of calmness and redoubled efforts to retrieve the position. The latest check is regarded as the most serious event in Great Britain's military history since the Indian mutiny.

The "Standard" says: "General Buller's dispatch is deplorable reading. It is the now familiar story of concealed Boers and of British troops marching up blindly almost to the very muzzle of the enemy's rifles. It cannot be doubted that the moral effect will be to aggravate our difficulties over the whole field of operations. The country has discovered with annoyance and surprise that subduing Boer farmers is about the hardest work we have entered upon since the Indian mutiny. Their commanders have shown themselves able to give our Generals useful but expensive lessons in modern tactics."

The "Times" says: "Since the day of the Indian mutiny, the nation has not been confronted with so painful and anxious a situation. Plainly General Buller's advance is paralyzed for the moment as completely as Lord Methuen's and General Gatacre's."

The depression over the defeat of Great Britain's trusted and idolized Commander is all the greater, as, during the last forty-eight hours, there had been reports of the relief of Ladysmith. Yesterday the War Office allowed it to be understood that the position of affairs in Natal was entirely satisfactory. The reaction is all the more pronounced on this account.

The gloomy information came too late to reach the service clubs, and only a few journalists and stragglers were waiting at the War Office. It had hardly been realized when news came after the experience of the week, that General Buller could fail. Virtually nothing had been allowed to leak through regarding his preparations, but the public waited patiently, in the confident belief that he was taking such time and precautions as would insure success.

No independent reports of the engagement have yet been allowed to come through, but General Buller's own dispatch tells the sad tale in sufficient outline to show that the British have been entrapped again by the astute Boers. It was not anticipated that General Buller would make a frontal attack. No criticisms of his movements are made, however, since apparently he suffered a repulse rather than a defeat, and did not push the attack home, but broke it off in the middle, so as to save a useless sacrifice of life. It is expected that he will renew the attack shortly.

Immediately on receiving the news, the War Office decided to mobilize still another division, and to replace the losses of artillery. The necessary reinforcements will be hurried off as speedily as possible.

Fifteen transports are due to arrive at Cape Town between December 17th and January 8th, with about 15,000 troops of all arms, but unless General Buller is able to renew the attack, which is exceedingly doubtful, the British Generals will be compelled for another fortnight or more to remain on the defensive.

The latest dispatches indicate the continued bombardment of Ladysmith, whose position is now perilous. Major General Sir Herbert Charles Chornside has been appointed to command the Fourteenth Brigade in the Seventh Division.

CONGRESSIONAL PROCEEDINGS.

The Closing Day of General Debate on the Financial Bill

Proved to be One of Exceptional Interest in the Lower House.

A Sharp Personal Colloquy Between Representatives Wheeler and Berry of Kentucky Over the Recent Election in Their State Tends to Liven the Proceedings.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15.—The closing day of the general debate on the financial bill proved to be one of exceptional interest. At the outset a sharp personal colloquy occurred between Representatives Wheeler and Berry of Kentucky over the recent Kentucky election, and the charges growing out of it. Considerable feeling was shown. Later in the day Mr. Bailey of Texas, until recently the Democratic floor leader, received close attention in an hour's speech vigorously presenting the Democratic view, and eulogizing the time honored and undying Democratic organization. In marked contrast with Bailey's utterance, Scudder of New York, who followed him, announced as a Democrat that he believed in the gold standard, and would vote for it. Payne of New York and Dalzell of Pennsylvania also spoke during the day. The debate under the five minute rule occurs to-morrow.

Jones of Virginia opened the debate in opposition to the bill. After Rhea of Kentucky and Williams of Illinois had spoken against the bill, the serenity of the debate was unexpectedly interrupted by a rather sensational personal clash between Berry and Wheeler, both Democrats of Kentucky. Wheeler secured recognition to question a statement made by Berry yesterday as to corruption in the recent Kentucky campaign.

"I regret the necessity of having to wash our dirty linen of Kentucky on the floor of the House," said Wheeler, "but I do not propose that our people shall be maligned and slandered without a word of protest."

Berry sat a few seats ahead of Wheeler, and the latter addressed himself personally to his colleague. Wheeler declared that Berry represented neither Kentucky nor her people, and that the people of his district would speedily rebuke him by retiring him to private life. The election of Taylor, he asserted, had been bought and paid for, with a railroad on one side and the plain people on the other. But despite this, he said, Governor Goebel would yet be seated.

"Yes, I use the word advisedly," proceeded Wheeler, referring to his characterization of Mr. Goebel as Governor, "for before the people of this State in Kentucky he will be his Chief Executive, and he will have routed that nefarious gang who won their certificate of election by corruption, fraud and rascality."

Wheeler closed by declaring emphatically that Taylor had not been elected, that he secured his regular methods a certificate of election, but when the calcium lights of the courts were turned on this proceeding it would be William Goebel who would be seated in the Executive chair.

Berry was quickly on his feet as Wheeler closed, and responded savagely, personally, and with much feeling. He said the speech just heard was typical of the intolerance of that Kentucky element which did not brook any freedom of opinion. He did not need the influence of the gentleman or his backers. Four times he had been sent here, and he would return again.

Shaking his finger at Wheeler Berry exclaimed: "You are cringing at the feet of Goebel, and I tell you that your scalp is taken now by Goebel."

When reference was made to the irregularity of the Louisville convention, Wheeler sought to interrupt, but Berry waved him off, declaring that the gentleman had participated in the disorder, and had stood up and yelled down opposition, with policemen about him.

Wheeler interjected a flat contradiction of this, but not heeding interruptions, Colonel Berry proceeded in his fiery response, declaring that Wheeler was as bad as Goebel himself.

Wheeler gained a minute to reply, defending the regularity of the Louisville convention, and saying that only a few thugs and toughs were excluded. The tension over the affair was relieved at this point by a point of order from Representative Cox of Tennessee.

"What is the point of order?" asked the Chairman.

"I object to having this Kentucky side show thrust into a financial debate," said Cox gravely, to the edification of the Republican side. This caused a laugh, and the heat of the exchange between the two Kentucky gentlemen was dispelled.

Brossius of Pennsylvania spoke in favor of the bill.

SENATE PROCEEDINGS. WASHINGTON, Dec. 15.—To-day the practical completion of the Senate committees for the fifty-sixth Congress was announced officially by Senator Aldrich of Rhode Island. He presented to the Senate an order fixing the committees, and it was adopted without dissent. A few vacancies in the minority representation are yet to be filled. They will be disposed of in a few days. No other business of importance was transacted by the Senate.

Soon after the Senate convened to-day, on motion of Hale, it was agreed to adjourn from to-day until next Monday.

Aldrich of Rhode Island then presented a special order fixing the standing committees and their personnel for the Senate of the fifty-sixth Congress. The order was adopted without dissent, and it was adopted without dissent. The order was adopted without dissent. The order was adopted without dissent.

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WILL MEET IN THE QUAKER CITY.

National Republican Convention to be Held at Philadelphia.

Tuesday, the Nineteenth Day of June, Declared Upon as the Date.

The Payne Resolution for Changing the System of Representation to be Brought Up for Consideration at To-Day's Session of the National Committee.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15.—The national Republican convention will convene at Philadelphia on Tuesday, June 19th, next. The place and day were decided upon by the National Republican Committee to-day, after a friendly contest. The proceedings were enthusiastic and harmonious, every speech that was made emphasizing the fact that President McKinley will be renominated, and that the convention will be in effect simply a ratification meeting. After the time and place had been selected the committee considered briefly a request from Delaware that the committee take some action to equalize the fact of the unequal representation in that State, to prevent two contesting delegations from appearing from that State. The committee decided that it had no jurisdiction.

After the Delaware case had been disposed of, the Chairman was authorized to appoint a sub-committee of five to make arrangements for the convention, also a committee of three to prepare and distribute literature.

Chairman Hanna and Secretary Dick were made ex-officio members of all sub-committees.

Messrs. Manley of Maine, Long of Florida and Simon of Oregon were appointed a sub-committee to consider the election of delegates in the District of Columbia.

Adjournment was taken until 11 o'clock to-morrow, when the Payne resolution for changing the system of representation will be brought up for consideration.

At 9 o'clock to-morrow morning the committee will call on the President to pay their respects to him in a body. The National Committee met at the Arlington Hotel, Chairman Hanna presiding.

Up to the open session, at which the claims of the various candidate cities were presented, a brief executive session was held. The corridors of the hotel were alive with the delegations from the various cities, and before the meeting assembled they put in their last quiet work.

The executive session of the committee was very brief, and consisted in calling the roll, the adoption of the order of business and the adoption of a resolution in memory of Vice President Hobart, which was offered by Mr. Fessenden of Connecticut.

The delegations from the different cities were then invited to present their claims. An hour was accorded to each city.

The first city heard was Chicago, for which Samuel Raymond made the opening address.

Mr. Raymond said that everyone knew the facilities which Chicago possessed in the way of hotels, railroads and telegraph. "We have had you once, and would be glad to have you again," he said. A picture of the building in which the convention would be held was presented.

He concluded by saying that Chicago would guarantee the fulfillment of any requirement that the committee might make.

George W. Miller followed in a more elaborate speech. He spoke as a representative of the Hamilton Club. He said that the convention was to be held in a State that did not have a candidate, it could not come to Illinois for that State had a candidate, not a resident of the State, but one of the neighboring States—Ohio. This reference to the President provoked applause. He said Chicago desired to have a Republican platform adopted in that city to wipe out the name "Chicago platform of 1896," which stood for repudiation.

John S. Miller, President of the Union League Club of Chicago, was next introduced. He said the convention should be held in the West, at St. Louis, Omaha, Denver or St. Paul, but more particularly at Chicago, which was the center of the whole United States.

St. Louis' claims were presented. Mayor Walbridge making the first speech in behalf of that city. He said that they did not have a large delegation, "having left some of our people at home."

Mr. Walbridge said that the facilities at St. Louis for holding the convention were superior to those of 1896. He spoke in behalf of 305,000 Republicans in Missouri.

Alluding to the reference of Mr. Miller to President McKinley, he said that he wanted the citizens from the Lake City to understand that being for McKinley was not patentable, and if it were St. Louis claimed priority.

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AN OLD LANDMARK LAID IN RUINS.

A Pioneer Showhouse of San Francisco Destroyed by Fire.

Was Known as the Alhambra in Years Gone By, Later as Comedy Theater.

Adjoining Buildings for a Time Threatened With Destruction, but the Firemen by Heroic Efforts Succeeded in Confining the Flames to the Playhouse, Which Was Soon in Ruins.

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 15.—The Comedy Theater was destroyed by fire this afternoon. The loss will exceed \$25,000. The Comedy Theater was originally the Alhambra, one of the pioneer show houses of this city. Subsequently it was known as the Old Bush-street Theater, and more recently as the Comedy Theater. Almost every actor of prominence in the old school has played in this theater.

The fire, which in some mysterious manner started in the rear of the theater shortly after 1:30 o'clock, gave promise at one time of destroying one of the principal business blocks in the city. The fact that the adjoining buildings are constructed of brick was a most fortunate circumstance, for it was a hard fire to fight, and was greatly enlivened by the wind.

The fire started among the old scenery stored in the rear of the theater, and rapidly consuming the combustible material, it crept to the floors above, and soon the rear portion of the old historical building was a regular furnace.

The firemen were promptly on the scene, and readily realized the difficulties that confronted them. In the rear of the building where the fire originated there is an open space formed by the cellars of the buildings which face on Sutter street and those on Trinity street. Up through this space swept a draught which fanned the flames.

The interior of the theater building burned like tinder, and within ten minutes after the alarm was sounded the flames had reached the roof and ignited the wooden structure above it, in which the hoisting machinery of the old theater was enclosed.

A dense smoke clouded the scene and seriously handicapped the firemen on the adjoining roof, but they held their ground, and fought the fire bravely.

Meantime the flames on the lower floors were threatening the adjoining buildings on Trinity street, most of which were constructed mostly of wood in the rear and were inviting material for a fierce fire.

The firemen, however, were well distributed, and, with a good supply of water, were soon bucking the spreading flames, and inside of forty-five minutes they were practically master of the situation.

Fortunately the trend of the flames was in the direction of Bush street, and to this fact may be attributed the good fortune of Nathan, Dohrmann & Co., whose building was threatened for a while. The firm will, however, suffer some loss by water.

MUNICIPAL LEAGUE.

The Convention Adjourns Until December of Next Year.

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 15.—After amending its constitution, electing new officers and committees, and passing a number of resolutions, the California League of Municipalities adjourned at noon to-day to meet again next December in San Francisco.

The convention has been productive of some good results, and it is expected to influence the cities of the State in support of whatever worthy municipal projects are started in the Legislature or in any part of California. The league is now a permanent organization, and is expected to be of practical benefit.

Mayor Phelan offered a resolution, which the convention approved and adopted, that the people of the State be urged to elect to vote at the next election "for a constitutional amendment exempting from taxes all bonds issued by the State and by all counties and cities of the State of California."

There were three candidates for President: W. H. Turner, Mayor of Merced; Mayor Sweet of Santa Rosa; and Mayor Snow of Oakland. Mayor Snow was elected.

In the other elections there were no contests. Mayor Sweet of Santa Rosa was elected First Vice President, W. H. Turner of Merced was re-elected Second Vice President, H. A. Mason of Santa Clara was re-elected Secretary, and the First National Bank of California was elected Treasurer.

Disappearance of Mrs. Cannon. LOS ANGELES, Dec. 15.—Mrs. Mildred E. Cannon, who disappeared from Philadelphia several weeks ago, has never been heard of since, in the wife of E. E. Cannon, a mail clerk residing in this city. Mr. Cannon will not believe that his wife has deserted him wantonly. He believes she has become deranged and is in some insane asylum. He has asked the authorities of several Eastern cities to assist in the search for her.

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