New-York Daily Tribune.

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FROM THE POTOMAC ARMY.

THE FIGHT ON MONDAY LAST.

DIFFICULT NATURE OF THE COUNTRY.

Temporary Defeat of the Union Forces.

OUR LOSSES THUS FAR ABOUT 800.

UNION LINES EXTENDED FOUR MILES.

A STREAK OF BAD WEATHER.

HDQRS. ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, Feb. 7—7 p. m.

The fight near Hatcher's Run yesterday was one of the most severe that has taken place in this army for some time, and taking into consideration the unfavorable character of the country through which the troops had to move, and the large force opposing their advance, it is not strange that the enemy gained a temporary advantage.

The country from the crossing of the Run to Dabney's Mill is very woody, with swamps and ravines running through it in all directions, and the only road is a narrow by-road, not wide enough to allow two wagons to pass, and in many places in very bad condition.

The Third Division of the Fifth Corps advanced, supported by the First and Second Divisions, and also by a brigade of the Sixth Corps.

The enemy were driven to and beyond the mill on this road, about two miles from the crossing line of breastworks.

There were no less than four divisions of the enemy opposing our men, viz.: Mahone's, Pegram's, Heath's and Gordon's old division—the latter three opposing the Fifth Corps, while Mahone's, acting independently, engaged Gregg on the Vaughan Road for some time, when Gregg ordered his cavalry to dismount, and held his opponent back well, inflicting some loss.

Mahone, finding no chance to accomplish anything in this position, wheeled round, and, marching on a by-road running north-westwardly, struck the left flank of the Fifth Corps, doubling it up and causing it to fall back on the center.

The woods here being so thick as to render the formation of a continuous line impossible, the command became somewhat confused, and the heavy fire which was poured in by Mahone's men made things still worse, and in a few minutes the entire line left their position, falling back rapidly toward the point they started from.

The fear of being cut off from the crossing at the Vaughan Road increased the confusion, and for a short time it seemed as though a regular panic had seized upon our men, but upon reaching the open country on the Vaughan Road, and finding no enemy there, and the bridges all safe in the possession of our troops, they became reassured, and in a short time the greater part of the Corps were in line ready to meet the enemy as soon as he should appear.

A few minutes after when they did show themselves at the edge of the woods they were met by such a severe storm of bullets as to send them back into the woods very quickly.

Our loss during the day amounts to about six hundred, and that of Sunday to about two hundred, making a total for two days of about eight hundred killed, wounded and missing.

The loss of the enemy is not known, but is believed to be fully as large as ours.

We took altogether about one hundred and eighty prisoners, among whom are a number of officers.

Notwithstanding a severe storm rain, which set in last night and continued all day to-day, freezing as it fell, the Third Division of the Fifth Corps advanced to the point it reached yesterday at Dabney's Mills, driving the Rebels before them and into their works beyond.

The casualties in this affair have not yet been reported, but are said to be very few.

This was all the fighting done to-day.

Our permanent lines now extend from what was formerly the extreme left at Fort Cummings, on the Squirrel Level Road, to and across Hatcher's Run at Armstrong's Mill, with the advance well out toward Dabney's Mill, a distance of about four miles.

All this ground has been wrested from the enemy in the past three days, and makes the line much safer and more formidable than heretofore.

As soon as the weather permits, further active movements will no doubt take place in this vicinity.

One or two more like the last will bring us within easy striking distance of the South-Side road, which, it is hoped, will soon be in our possession.

Capt. Forbes, Division Commissary to Gen. Gregg's Cavalry, was last night thrown from his horse on the Corduroy road, near Hancock Station, and so badly injured that his life is despaired of.

The Fight of Monday—Names of Some of the Wounded—Incidents of the Engagement—Our Five Miles Gain to be Held.

From Our Special Correspondent.

HDQRS. ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, Tuesday, Feb. 7, 1864.

Among the wounded in the fight between the Fifth Corps and the enemy on the Boydtown plank-road last night, were: Gen. Ayres, commanding Second Division, Fifth Corps, in the shoulder, severely; Gen. Gwyn, commanding Third Brigade, Second Division, in the foot, slightly, still on duty; Capt. Gawthrop, Adjt. Gen., Third Brigade, Second Division, hip, slight; Maj. Carter, Inspector-Gen., Third Brigade, Second Division, neck, slight; Maj. D. H. Kent, 4th Del., arm, severely, was one of the first to cross Hatcher's Run on Saturday, and received six bullets, altogether through his body and clothes; Capt. Burnett, 4th Delaware, face, slight. The Third Brigade bore the brunt of the battle last night and suffered the most of any. It is composed of the following regiments: The 3d and 4th Delaware, and the 157th, 210th, 190th and 191st Pennsylvania, the last two regiments embracing the old "Buck Tails" and the Pennsylvania Reserves.

This brigade was finally relieved by the First Brigade of the same Division, commanded by Gen. Winthrop, which acquitted itself very handsomely last night, and occupies the most advanced position this morning.

Gen. Warren, as well as Gen. Ayres, was almost constantly under fire during this engagement, and displayed throughout rare coolness and courage.

Besides the regiments mentioned yesterday as having been prominently engaged the day before in the Second Corps, the 128th New-York, in the Third Division of that Corps, behaved most gallantly in the front of the fight, and suffered severely.

Our entire loss in killed and wounded, since the commencement of the movement, is estimated by some at as high as seven hundred—five hundred in the Fifth and two hundred in the Second Corps.

It is also reported to-day that the number of Rebel prisoners in our hands is about eight hundred.

The cavalry yesterday, among other prisoners, captured a Rebel Colonel and two Lieutenants, who left Petersburg yesterday morning to join their regiments on the enemy's right, but lost their way. The Colonel said he did not mind his own capture as much as he did that of his colored servant, who he was afraid would fare hardly with his new masters.

Our gain, by this movement, so far, is an extension of our line about five miles to the south-west—to the Boydtown plank road, which there seems to be a determination to-day to hold.

The snow and sleet storm of this morning has changed into a steady, cold rain, which rather operates against fighting, but the men are improving the time in strengthening their new position.

Some of our wounded who were not brought off last night, suffered terribly by exposure on the cold, sleety ground. It is thought that a few were chilled to death, who otherwise might have been saved. However, the medical department have been untiring in their efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded. The two commissions also, as usual, have done nobly.

It was reported last evening that an entire Company of our Cavalry had been captured during the day yesterday, but they have been heard from to-day as all right.

The reception of the Rebel Peace Commissioners within our lines had the effect to slacken up desertions from the enemy. The failure of the Commission is already followed by a greater influx of deserters than ever along the entire lines. They say that when they saw a peace movement actually on foot, they waited to see the result; and as soon as they saw there was to be no peace they started over. They express the opinion that we may now expect a great increase of desertions from that side.

It is generally remarked by officers and men, that the Rebels do not fight as well as they have been accustomed to, in this locality.

The country can never pay the debt of gratitude they owe to our brave soldiers for their hardships and deprivations in battling for the Union. No pen can describe their sufferings even on this little movement, away from camp as they are during the most inclement weather of the whole Winter, without even a shelter tent to shield them from the storm, day or night.

3 p. m.—More intrenching tools and rations are coming up, and it is the determination to hold the five miles gain on the left of our old fortified lines, at all hazards. This gain, as I have said, brings us to the Boydtown plank-road, and within easy artillery range of the South-Side Railroad. Thus Lee has again been out-generaled, and another Yankee trick played upon the main army of the Confederacy.

Yesterday evening, a part of Gen. Wheaton's Division of the Sixth Corps, fired, by mistake, upon the Second Brigade of the Second Division of the Fifth Corps, wounding several, and killing the Colonel of the First Maryland Regiment.

Among other casualties reported, are Col. Bankhead, Inspector-General Fifth Corps, wounded in the hand; Col. Davies, of the cavalry, wounded; Lieut. Cole, 149th Pa., killed; Capt. H. S. Melcher, of the 20th Me., received several bullets through his clothes without being injured himself.

Ayres's Division of the Fifth Corps, and Smythe's and Mott's Divisions of the Second Corps, officers and men, have covered themselves all over with glory in this movement. Their courage, endurance, and hard, persistent fighting is the theme of universal praise throughout the army. The Third Division of the Fifth Corps (Crawford's) have also acquitted themselves handsomely. A part of this division got out of ammunition last evening, and had to fall back, but their lost position in front was immediately regained by the rest of the division.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, Feb. 8—8 o'clock.

A bright sunny morning dawns upon army operations, cheering the hearts of the brave soldiers who have just endured and accomplished so much. The new gain of five miles on our left is being strongly fortified this morning, and will be held at all hazards. This is a magnificent gain for us, and a corresponding loss to the enemy.

The cavalry are still reconnoitering to the west and south-west.

It has been developed by this movement that Lee had sent several divisions of his troops against Sherman, thus materially weakening his lines here.

Our army line railroad is to be immediately pushed out to the Boydtown plank-road, and will soon, no doubt, be connected with the South-Side Railroad.

Complete lists of casualties will go forward by this or the next mail. ILLINOIS.

MOBILE EVACUATED.

Confirmation of the Report from New-Orleans.

The steamship Yazoo, from New-Orleans on the 31st ult., reports that a confirmation of the evacuation of Mobile was telegraphed to that vessel from New-Orleans via the South-West Pass.

Mobile Not to be Defended.

From The New-Orleans Times.

We have undoubted information by a refugee from Mobile, who left that city on the 16th inst., and arrived here yesterday, that the evacuation of the place commenced on the day of his departure, and that guns and ordnance stores were going to Selma by rail and water.

Simultaneously with this movement a sweeping conscription was going on among the citizens of Mobile, to escape which people were fleeing from the city by squads. Our informant was one of a party of twelve persons who were fortunate enough to escape to a point whence they were taken off by boats from one of our war vessels.

It was the general impression in Mobile that no defense of the city would be attempted. Its garrison was small, and composed of militia alone, under the command of Gens. Taylor and Maury.

The True Delta says: We have a letter from our Pascagoula correspondent, dated the 28th inst., which, aside from a few contraband items, contains nothing of interest. All is quiet at that place.

The navy had a slight scare a few nights ago in Mobile Bay.

Word was received from New-Orleans of an intended attack from the Rebel fleet, and every preparation was made to gobble the enemy's vessels as soon as they passed clear of the obstructions, but the affair passed off in quietness and no Rebel fleet was seen.]

THE DRAFT.

A Special Meeting of the Aldermen.

His Honor, Mayor Gunther, on Thursday morning addressed a communication to Morgan Jones, esq., President of the Board of Aldermen, in which he says that "in view of the fearful consequences which may follow the enforcement of the draft under the present circumstances, I beg you to use your influence to aid in procuring a meeting of the Aldermen immediately for the purpose of acting on the ordinance passed by the Councilmen." The Mayor calls attention to the fact that the 15th instant is appointed as the day on which the draft is to commence in this city. In the meanwhile, in consequence of there being no ordinance to prevent the recruitment of substitutes and volunteers for other localities, New-York is stripped of that portion of her population available to fill up her contingent under the calls of the Federal authorities.

The Mayor also calls attention to the fact that the Common Council of Brooklyn has recently passed an ordinance precisely in the same terms, for the protection of the people of Kings County, as the one submitted to the Board for consideration by him on the 23d instant.

From Louisville.

LOUISVILLE, Wednesday, Feb. 8, 1865.

The recent military order disbanding the State troops has been rescinded by direction of the War Department. Passes from Nashville are now required for all persons leaving this city for Nashville and points further South.

The Vice-President elect is seriously indisposed, having been confined to his bed for several days.

THE PEACE FAILURE.

JEFF. DAVIS'S MESSAGE THEREON.

REPORT OF THE REBEL COMMISSIONERS.

LINCOLN WILL NOT HEAR OF DISUNION.

He Demands Submission to the Constitution and the Laws.

THE CONFERENCE EFFECTS NOTHING.

RAVINGS OF THE REBEL PRESS.

The Peace Mission—Message from President Davis to Congress—Official Report of the Confederate Commissioners.

The Richmond Dispatch of the 7th says:—The following important documents were laid before Congress yesterday morning:

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the Confederate States of America.

"Having recently received written notification which satisfied me that the President of the United States was disposed to confer, informally, with unofficial agents that might be sent by me, with a view to the restoration of peace, I requested the Hon. Alexander H. Stephens, the Hon. R. M. T. Hunter and the Hon. John A. Campbell to proceed through our lines, and to hold conference with Mr. Lincoln, or such persons as he might depute to represent him.

"I herewith submit, for the information of Congress, the report of the eminent citizens above-named, showing that the enemy refused to enter into negotiations with the Confederate States, or any one of them separately, or to give to our people any other terms or guarantees than those which the conqueror may grant, or to permit us to have peace on any other basis than our unconditional submission to their rule, coupled with the acceptance of their recent legislation, including an amendment to the Constitution for the emancipation of all the negro slaves, and with the right on the part of the Federal Congress to legislate on the subject of the relations between the white and black population of each State. Such is, as I understand, the effect of the amendment to the Constitution which has been adopted by the Congress of the United States.

"JEFFERSON DAVIS.

"*Executive Office, Richmond, 6th of February, 1865.*"

"RICHMOND, Va., February 5, 1865.

"*To the President of the Confederate States:*

"SIR: Under your letter of appointment of the 28th ultimo, we proceeded to seek an 'informal conference' with Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, upon the subject mentioned in the letter. The conference was granted, and took place on the 30th instant, on board a steamer anchored in Hampton Roads, where we met President Lincoln and the Hon. Mr. Seward, Secretary of State of the United States. It continued for several hours, and was both full and explicit.

"We learned from them that the message of President Lincoln to the Congress of the United States, in December last, explains clearly and distinctly his sentiments as to the terms, conditions, and method of proceeding, by which peace can be secured to the people, and we were not informed that they would be modified or altered to obtain that end.

"We understood from him that no terms or proposals of any treaty or agreement looking to an ultimate settlement would be entertained or made by him with the authorities of the Confederate States, because that would be a recognition of their existence as a separate Power, which under no circumstances would be done; and, for like reasons, that no such terms would be entertained by him from the States separately; that no extended truce or armistice (as at present advised) would be granted or allowed, without a satisfactory assurance, in advance, of a complete restoration of the authority of the Constitution and laws of the United States over all places within the States of the Confederacy.

"That whatever consequences may follow from the reestablishment of that authority must be accepted. But that individuals, subject to pains and penalties under the laws of the United States, might rely upon a very liberal use of the power confided to him to remit those pains and penalties if peace be restored.

"During the conference the proposed amendments to the Constitution of the United States, adopted by Congress on the 31st ultimo, were brought to our notice.

"These amendments provide that neither Slavery nor involuntary servitude, except for crime, should exist within the United States or any place within their jurisdiction, and that Congress should have power to enforce this amendment by appropriate legislation.

"Of all the correspondence that preceded the conference herein mentioned, and leading to the same, you have heretofore been informed.

"Very respectfully, your obedient servants,

"ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS,

"R. M. T. HUNTER,

"J. A. CAMPBELL."

Voice of the Rebel Press on the Peace Mission and its Results.

The Richmond Whig of the 6th says:

Our "Peace Commissioners" have returned. They were not allowed to enter the enemy's Capital. No Commissioners on the part of the enemy were appointed to meet them. But Lincoln, after the manner of ancient potentates, himself gave them an audience in person, and listened to their errand. In his own backwoods style, he was civil, and, as he never fails to be, jocose, and anecdotical. He assured our Commissioners that he had no terms to offer, or listen to, that did not rest upon our submission to Federal authority, and the return of our States to the Federal Union. Such, we have reason to believe, was the gist of the interview between Lincoln and Seward, on the one side, and Messrs. Stephens, Hunter and Campbell, on the other, at Fortress Monroe last week. Thus ends the interlude, and the tragedy goes on again.

The readers of *The Whig* have not been encouraged to look for any other result. For our own part, we derive no little satisfaction from the fact that the matter has been so promptly disposed of. Hoping next to nothing of good from the embassy, we feared seriously that the tricky Seward might bring some devil's device into play, to prolong negotiations, deceive our Commissioners, mislead our people, and divert our authorities from those indispensable preparations for the coming campaign that will enable us once more to meet the shock of the enemy's onset. This great peril the sagacity of our Commissioners or the unusual frankness of Seward has saved us from. We now see where we stand and what is before us, and every man knows his duty. A liberal and open and honorable effort has been made to terminate the bloody strife in which we are engaged. The most anxious advocate for negotiations cannot object that the Commissioners selected did not fitly represent the sentiments of our people. Neither were they objectionable, on any personal or other ground, to the Washington authorities. The experiment has been fairly made and has completely and signally failed. What these gentlemen could not obtain, no one could obtain, whether they represented the Confederate States in a body, or any one of them singly.

Submission is the only condition on which we can have peace. The man who is not satisfied with this effort at negotiation is a factionist, and will be held by all as an enemy of the cause. To talk now of any other arbitrament than that of the sword is to betray cowardice or treachery. We must beat back this enemy thirsting for our blood, or be destroyed by him. There is no alternative. We must make good our independence, defend our institutions, and maintain our rights, or give up the houses we have built, the lands we have tilled, the slaves we have owned, the institutions we have inherited, the religion, civilization and traditions in which we have been reared, the laws, customs, and habits to which we have been used, the hopes we have cherished, the name we have aspired to—all indeed that makes existence valuable—and go forth, with nothing left but a worthless life, as vagabonds and mendicants.

Here, then, our people bid adieu to all thoughts of peace, except a peace to be wrung from vain-glorious ness and insolence by the might of a universal and all-powerful resolve to conquer or die. They are thoroughly conscious that they are innocent of blame in the matter; they know that from the foundation of the Union they were the victims of wanton, continued and constantly increasing insult and outrage; that they bore these things with a forbearance and patience that bordered on pusillanimity; that, when finally they broke loose from an association that had become intolerable, they did so with no other view than to secure the tranquillity that had been denied them in the Union, and that they asked nothing but to be let alone. Their moderate wish was not granted them. The malignity that had so long covertly assailed them broke out into an open and gigantic effort to overwhelm and destroy them, and the war which has followed has been marked on the part of the enemy with a fiendishness of temper and an atrocity of conduct never surpassed by barbarians or savages.

The people of the South have for four years met the efforts and measured the strength of their foe. They feel an unqualified assurance that they can continue to meet him successfully. They know with absolute certainty that if their cause is lost it can only be through numerous mismanagement or suicidal lack of spirit. And these they will now no longer fear. A new head is to direct all military operations—a head in whom people and army confide to the verge of reverence. The civil departments, it is believed, will undergo reforms equally beneficial. The army will feel that their lives are not to be heedlessly thrown away, nor their valor and strength exhausted in wild campaigns and hopeless enterprises. The people will feel that their contributions to the cause are not to be wasted or misdirected. Unitedly, army and people will recognize the fact that neither life nor property are too valuable to be given, to the last drop of blood and the last crumb of bread, to a cause which if lost carries down with it what is worth more than life or possessions. A new spirit and a more determined purpose will animate both army and people.

Already the fire has broken out in the army, and is spreading with noble contagion from company to company, and corps to corps. From this date we shall mark a revival among the people. The glorious ardor and sublime self-consecration of 1861 and 1862 will show themselves again. "All that a man hath," says the sacred book, 'will he give for his life;' and all that a people have will they give to a cause dearer to all manly natures than life. We have men and means enough to carry on this war from generation to generation. They will come forth now, and there is every prospect that the campaign this year will bring us victories more illustrious and more fruitful than any past campaign, however glorious.

The Whig of the 7th continues the subject:

Do you want to know the terms on which Lincoln will graciously bestow peace upon the South? They are very simple, and, to say the least of them, entirely intelligible. No one can say now that he does not understand precisely what Lincoln intends to do with us, if he ever have us in his power; nor can any one contend that any peace is possible except that which shall be forced on the enemy by the weight of stern resistance, or the final consciousness of exhausted strength. Everything advanced by *The Whig*, in explanation of the recent conduct of the Washington Government in this matter of negotiation, has been fully justified by the event.—Not that any superior sagacity was necessary; but the problem was, in itself, so simple that it could easily be solved by any intelligent mind. Happily we no longer depend, for our convictions, on conjecture; let it be even founded on the clearest data.

The gorgeous edifice constructed by dreaming fancies on the chimerical foundation of hypothetical Yankee recognition has been dissolved; the insubstantial pageant has faded away, leaving not a rack behind; and nothing remains but the reality which would indeed be frightful had we not known and combatted it for so long a time. There can be and there ought to be no disappointment over this result. The triumph of the Black Republican party in the late election was a sufficiently explicit manifestation of the views and purposes animating the majority of the Yankee people; and the emphatic declarations of Seward and Lincoln are merely official and formal sanctions of something which we already knew, and for which our whole people ought long ago to have been prepared.

Even the comparatively mild and gentle programme of THE TRIBUNE is set aside now as not worthy of a moment's consideration. There is no longer a pretense that even conditions might be accorded to these Confederate States should they degrade themselves so far as to seek to propitiate their foes. Nothing will be granted to them but the strict measure of Yankee retribution for the enormities of which they have been guilty in seeking to enforce and establish the great right of self government.

One would imagine that, after four years of cruel warfare, after experiencing all the horrors which a refined and diabolical ingenuity could inflict, after seeing their lands desolated, their homes destroyed, their brothers slaughtered, their women outraged, their property plundered, it would be punishment enough to be forced to return to that Union, to escape from which they had dared and suffered all these miseries. But it is not now the sentimental Union that Lincoln wants. He demands an unconditional submission to the laws and authority of the United States—the sort of submission which the slave yields to the master; the kind of submission which the torturer extorts from his victim, and the executioner from the criminal.

If there is now remaining among this Confederate people any one so base as to yearn for reunion with the Yankees, or for the only kind of reconstruction that is possible, let him know that he cannot be admitted to Yankee association as an equal even with Yankees; but as a criminal and an outlaw who has forfeited every right, whose lands no longer belong to him, whose slaves are to be henceforth his masters, whose house is to be occupied by some fortunate New-England emigrant, and whose family is to be driven from the soil to make room for the race of the conqueror. The "Constitution as it is" combined with "the Union as it was," means the suppression of State sovereignties, the eternal subordination of the South to the North, the confiscation of all Southern property for the benefit of Northern adventurers or to pay the debt incurred in subjugating us, and the emancipation of the slaves by a general and sweeping enactment of the Yankee Congress in the shape of a pretended Amendment to the Constitution.

The transition from a Government thus completely consolidated and centralized, to the imperial despotism of the Illinois lawyer, surrounded with his shoddy aristocracy, would be natural and easy. Should the South, by the fortunes of war, be forced to submit to such a rule, her only consolation would be that those who had reduced her to so profound a degradation would share her misfortunes. But that she could ever so willingly debase herself as to make a voluntary surrender of her liberties, instead of struggling even to annihilation in their defense, would be a thought too monstrous to be entertained except by those with whom dishonor is a merit and infamy a virtue.

The Richmond Examiner of the 6th gives the following account of the doings of the Commissioners:

Messrs. A. H. Stephens, R. M. T. Hunter and J. A. Campbell, so-called "Commissioners," returned yesterday to this city, having proceeded no farther than Fortress Monroe, where they had conference of five hours with Abraham Lincoln and his Secretary of State, William H. Seward. They bring back intelligence such as we have advised our readers for some days past to expect.

When the Commissioners passed into Gen. Grant's lines, they were entertained at his headquarters with great distinction, and appear to have been favorably impressed by the attentions shown them by General and Mrs. Grant, the wife of the Yankee Commander being present on the occasion. The next day Gen. Grant telegraphed to President Lincoln that the gentlemen named were at his headquarters on their way to Washington. Mr. Seward replied by telegraph that he (Seward) would meet them at Fortress Monroe. Mr. Stephens then telegraphed that the Commissioners were quite willing to meet Mr. Seward, and desired also to see the President. It appears that in pursuance of this request, Mr. Lincoln came down in a special boat the day after Mr Seward had taken his departure for Fortress Monroe.

The Commissioners were not allowed to leave their boat when it arrived at Fortress Monroe; and at 9 o'clock on Friday morning Lincoln and Seward met them on board the boat, which they were not permitted at any time to quit. The interview lasted until 2½ o'clock.

Its most important substance is briefly stated. Mr. Lincoln personally stated to the Commissioners that he was anxious to have peace; but that, as a necessary PREFACE to any arrangement to that end the Southern States must lay down their arms, come back into the Union and agree to submit to the Constitution AND THE LAWS AS THEY ARE. Mr. Lincoln, in a subsequent conversation, suggested (for himself (a suggestion in which it was noticed Mr. Seward did not express a concurrence), that he might be in favor of modifying some of these measures supplementary to the Constitution to which the South was required to submit; but that such modification was within the control of Congress and within its discretion.

The Commissioners replied substantially, that the proposition was not debateable, and that they could not enter upon its discussion.

Some reference having been made to the "mission" of Blair, Mr. Lincoln very distinctly stated that the visit of this individual to Richmond, so far as it contemplated any arrangement of peace, was entirely unindorsed by him, and was without his approval.

These are the well ascertained points of all that was important in this conference touching upon the question of peace; and we understand that Lincoln and Seward, who were so far from being personally offensive to the Commissioners, that they treated them to several bottles of champagne, were yet very firm and immovable in the announcement of the terms on which they would receive the submission of the South, as preliminary to the settlement of inferior and collateral issues in a treaty of peace.

In some general conversation which ensued, Lincoln and Seward were both understood to admit that they looked for some future complications in their foreign relations—and more so with England and France—but that they were well satisfied that they could dispose of "the rebellion" in time to take care of their interests in Europe.

Both Lincoln and Seward are described as having been personally very pleasant in their conversation with the Commissioners. Mr. Lincoln told several anecdotes, very much, as the Commissioners thought, to Mr. Seward's annoyance, who sought to interrupt him whenever he broke out of the limits of serious conversation with, "This reminds me of a little story." In parting, Seward shook hands with Mr. Hunter "with effusion." He said, "God bless you, Hunter," and asked to be remembered to all of his "old friends at the South."

It is said that as this visit to Fortress Monroe is properly announced, Mr. Stephens will return to Georgia, and canvass the State for a vigorous prosecution of the war. He stated yesterday, to a friend, that the only hope now left for the people of the South was "in long arms and stout hearts."

In its editorial columns of the same day *The Examiner* says:

Messrs. Stephens, Hunter and Campbell have returned to Richmond. They were not permitted to go farther than Old Point. They were there met by Lincoln and Seward, who, with a certain frankness and straightforwardness, which really nobody expected, closed up at once every avenue of possible negotiation, by referring them for terms of peace to Lincoln's last message—that is to say, unconditional submission, without any terms at all, submission to the Union and the "laws" (specifically to the confiscation law, the law of treason, and abolition of Slavery)—and so good morning! It must be confessed that, on the part of the Yankees, this is for once plain dealing.

There can be no sort of mistake here. Down upon your knees, Confederates! Your hands upon your mouths, and your mouths in the dust; kiss the rod, confess your sins, and brook the penalty at the hands of your conquerors and masters. That's all.

Probably the enemy's Government is of opinion that it may afford to throw aside all considerations of policy; that the "Rebellion" is already broken and gone; that our people are torn by dissension, and our armies ruined by desertion; that the elements of resistance are totally exhausted, and that we are so beaten, stunned, divided and defenseless that it becomes the conquerors to demand nothing short of surrender at discretion. And this while we have three gallant armies in the field! The only plausible excuse they could have for so great a mistake is to be found in the expedition of these three gentlemen themselves to offer negotiation at such a time as this.

The Vice-President of the Confederate States, and two other leading Southern statesmen, repairing at such a time as this, and in the very face of as many positive official declarations on the part of the enemy that no terms of any sort will be granted, and nothing admitted short of unconditional submission, may very naturally have appeared to that enemy in the light of a white flag raised upon a fortress no longer tenable. It is in this light also that the proceeding will be represented, and generally accepted in foreign countries; and we may presume it was for the sake of this fine moral effect Blair was sent to Richmond to delude our authorities into sending such a mission that the whole world might see the almighty Yankee spurn from his presence the highest heads of the Confederacy, because they did not present themselves in sackcloth and ashes crying *mea culpa*.

Well, are our "Peace men" satisfied? Are their mouths shut up? Have they got any further resources of statesmanship to set in motion? Or will they not now at last wheel into line and give their undivided attention and bend all their energies and influences to decide this great issue by the only agency which is open to us—by the arbitrament of battle? If the mission of the "Commissioners" produces this wholesome effect, then it will not have been useless after all. Apart from the lack of dignity in the whole proceeding, and the public humiliation and scorn to which it has exposed us, there may be some good in having got this additional, emphatic, final assurance that the firm resolve of our enemy is not only to abolish our State Sovereignties, not only to make us change places with our own negroes, but also to hold our persons at his mercy as criminals, and to take, hold and enjoy all we possess to him and his heirs forever. It is always desirable to know accurately, and to look full in the face the real issue that we have to deal with; and, up to this day it is feared that many well-meaning but half-hearted people have failed to understand and appreciate this essential point. Now they know it. They have no possible excuse for misapprehending or affecting to misapprehend it. This is not said with a view of taunting those who have talked so much of making peace propositions and diplomatic efforts "looking to peace." It is fair to give credit to most of those persons for a real conviction of the possibility of obtaining by negotiation an acknowledgment of our independence; they did, perhaps, conscientiously think that our quondam fellow-citizens and brethren could not really mean after all to crush us entirely into the earth, to destroy us root and branch, and come in bodily and possess our inheritances as the children of Israel possessed the land of Canaan; and it may now be confidently expected that when they see the whole horrible truth forced upon them, they have too much patriotism and manly spirit to refuse any longer to meet the issue so nakedly held up before them. In that case those who last week talked peace, will this week think of nothing but war, and war to the knife.

And in that case it will be apparent that Lincoln and Seward have this time committed a gross blunder; and that in the whole of this late move the advantage rests with us. Indeed it is highly probable that the three very shrewd gentlemen who went from Richmond upon that mission, knew beforehand how they were likely to be met, and intended, by eliciting a conspicuous demonstration of the enemy's remorseless brutality, to unite all Southern men, and rouse them to the vital necessity of bringing out the whole of the available force of the country to battle and destroy such foul and ruffian invaders. If they so intended, then Lincoln and Seward have played into their hands with a recklessness which few would have expected. In their desire to gratify the vanity of their nation by an insolent rebuff to three Southern statesmen, they missed the chance—their last chance—to sow dissension and cultivate "Union sentiment" in the South. Once more the incredible presumption of our enemy has done us a service, insures our unanimity of action, and made inevitable the ultimate independence of the Confederacy.

Did it ever befall, in the history of mankind, that a power which had in the field three unconquered armies such as ours, with a government firmly seated in its metropolitan city, and a territory scarcely yet touched by an enemy four times as great as that of some first-rate European kingdoms, was asked for an unconditional surrender of its armies, its Government, and the lives, liberties and fortunes of all its inhabitants—men, women and children—to the absolute discretion of an invading enemy, with a certainty besides that this discretion would be exercised for the extirpation of its present race of inhabitants, and the re-settlement of the country by strangers? There is no record of such demand; and the very monstrousness of it in the present case indicates that our enemy has purposely made his demands so incredibly preposterous in order to make all forms of reconstruction, or reconciliation impossible, and has made up his mind to go for conquest and the rights of conquest therein. Be it so. This is indeed throwing away the scabbard. There is at least the stern satisfaction of knowing that parley is at an end, and that the fate and fortune of ourselves, our country and our children lies in the edge of the sword.

The Richmond Enquirer of the 7th inst. speaks editorially as follows:

When the first mission of Mr. Blair to this city was announced, and his certain arrival known, we could not understand its meaning nor explain its significance. To suppose that the enemy was about to lower his demands appeared preposterous; having refused to negotiate in 1862, when disastrous defeat had driven him from before Richmond, we could not suppose that Mr. Lincoln would treat for peace when his armies were victorious, at least in his opinion. But Mr. Blair came and returned, and again visited Richmond and returned, and the third time sent a written communication soliciting an interview, and begging President Davis to appoint commissioners. It seemd impossible that an old man in the grand clemacteric of life was deliberately engaged in the work of deception, and practicing upon so grand and important a subject the low arts and contemptible tricks of a political partisan. The war which for four years has ravaged the country had driven from the midst of these people the subterfuge and deceptions of politicians, and filled them with more serious and honorable motives. Anxiously desirous of peace, Mr. Blair was accepted as an honorable agent seeking truthfully to bring about a lasting peace. Deceived by his appearance, his pledges and his professions, the overtures he made for Mr. Lincoln were responded to, and the three Commissioners departed on what was believed by these people to be the most blessed mission upon which men ever started—the mission of peace, prosperity and happiness. But the whole thing turns out to be a trick, deceptive not only of these people, but also of the United States Congress. Mr. Seward originated the mission of Mr. Blair to deceive the people of these States into sending Commissioners, and then used the fact of our sending Commissioners to deceive the United States Congress into the adoption of an amendment abolishing Slavery in all the States. It was a double trick of fraud and deception, to accomplish an object in which he had failed before.

Mr. Blair was either the knave or dupe of Seward, and played the shameful part either in ignorance of the designs of Seward, or he is a participator in the crime of having deceived his own Congress. Everything may be fair in war, but there are some things that overreach the designs and purposes of their authors. Mr. Seward might have secured this amendment without deception and fraud, for no matter how obtained, its adoption was immaterial and unimportant to the people of these States. But Mr. Seward has done us a service. Before he undertook to use the high and holy purpose of peace-making to serve the low and mean ends of party, the people of these States were somewhat divided. A portion of these believed that the enemy would yet give them fair and honorable terms of peace, provided they agreed to reconstruct the Union; and under this belief there was a growing party which insisted on negotiation. An honorable and manly course on the part of Mr. Seward might have made that party dominant in those States, and ended the war with reconstruction. But his tricks and deception, his trifling with the sacred cause of peace, has undeceived the reconstructionists, and taught them to believe, with the rest of their fellow citizens, that faith, and truth and honor are unknown to the authorities of the enemy. He has united the people of these States in the same spirit which animated them in 1861; and, having destroyed the last hope of peace, reconciled them to war and to fighting it out.

It is not impossible that the scene of discord and division that has distracted the city, made gloomy and despondent the people of these States, and cast a cloud over the ever-buoyant spirit of our army, may have encouraged Mr. Seward to propose his dishonorable terms. That the enemy should hasten to seize upon the moment of our distraction and division, was not to be wondered at; but that the Confederate authorities should continue to give that aid and comfort to the enemy will greatly surprise and disgust this people. We care not which is right nor which is wrong—whether the President is obstinate or the Congress impracticable. The want of concert and harmony is a disgrace alike to both. This is the honest opinion of the people.

They believe that Gen. Johnston should be restored, and they approve of what the Congress has done in this matter; they desire new men in the Cabinet, and to this extent they have witnessed the President's reluctance to gratify their wishes, with sorrow and despondency. On the other hand, the Congress has seemed more intent in forcing the President to comply with its wishes than on strengthening the army and supporting the cause. The Army bill languishes in a committee of conference; the conscription of negroes has been permitted to die out almost, and the country and its cause vegetates to seed for want of the pruning and cultivating hand of the Congress.

We hope the President will seize upon the present time to gratify the wish of the army and the people with the restoration of Gen. Johnston. Whether right or wrong, wise or unwise, the wish and will of the people and the army ought to be complied with, and, unless gratified, the cause must languish. And we hope that the Congress, when Gen. Johnston is restored, will devote its whole time to the business of war and fight.

Fighting is now the sole business of this people, to it every thought should be turned, every energy devoted. The solemn dedication of every kind of property in the State to the cause is the first duty of the Legislature of Virginia. To call upon the people to give their gold and silver, their jewelry and plate, and the solemn dedication of all to the good of the cause and the carrying on of the war, followed by the plan of the abolition of Slavery and the conscription of negroes into the army—to work and to fight is now the duty of the Legislature, and will be, we sincerely believe, the pleasure of the people. The authorities have exhausted all means of an honorable peace; this people can hope for nothing from the enemy but disgrace and ruin. The impoverishment and enslavement of our people are the only terms offered by the enemy.

Mr. Lincoln promises to be reasonably merciful; he will not shed unnecessary blood, not more than decimate us—one in every ten for the gallows, so much he can promise.

But as to confiscation, that is the law of the land, and until repealed, must be executed; that his people have a great debt, his soldiers deserve much at his hands, and while he would like to be merciful in the matter of property, justice to his soldiers will not permit him to hold out any great hope that much property can be spared to the people of these States. He is humane, but he must be just. Rebellion is sin; loyalty is virtue; the one must be punished, the other rewarded.

Such are the prospects of peace. Thank God that the prospects of war are much brighter—cannot be darker than those of peace. At most, we can only be killed in the fight, and that is the worst that Mr. Lincoln promises. Then war and fight is to be our work. Let us go manfully to our duty, and let us leave peace in the hands of God, until his wise Providence shall see good to bless us with its honorable attainment.

Public Meeting at the African Church.

In response to the call of Governor Smith of Virginia, to meet him at the African Church, the greatest concourse of people assembled in that building last evening (Feb. 6) that ever before was at one time collected under its roof. The meeting was advertised to be held at 7½ o'clock. Before 5 o'clock every seat and position where a man could stand was occupied, and with each moment the crowd became greater by additional arrivals, until at last what had been a crowd became a jam. The galleries were so closely packed that serious fears were entertained that they would give way under their weight and crush all beneath them.

It was gratifying to see this immense attendance of a meeting whose object was to hurl back into Lincoln's teeth the insult put upon the Southern people by his answer to the Confederate Commissioners sent to confer with him on the subject of a peace between the two countries. Standing in that immense assemblage, and hearing the patriotic expressions of the citizens and soldiers there gathered together, one was involuntarily carried back by the sight and by the eager spirit that animated all present, to the first days of secession. Never before has the war spirit burned so fiercely and steadily. The firm resolve to resist to the very death the demands of the Northern tyrant that now animates the whole Southern people was plainly visible in that meeting.

About 7 o'clock Gov. Smith, attended by President Davis and several distinguished citizens, came upon the stand. The proceedings were opened with prayer by the Rev. Dr. Burrows, of the Baptist Church. The Governor addressed the multitude in a patriotic and soul-stirring speech, during which he was frequently interrupted by thunders of applause