THE NEW YORK HERALD.

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IMPORTANT FROM THE PENINSULA.

Advance of the Union Army Beyond the Chickahominy.

A Rebel Camp Shelled Out at New Bridge.

PRECIPITATE FLIGHT OF THE ENEMY.

Three Successful Skirmishes with the Rebels.

The Louisiana Tiger About "Finished" by the Fourth Michigan Boys.

The Great Battle to Take Place at the Enemy's Works Before Richmond.

The Union Forces in Splendid Condition for the Contest,

&c., &c., &c.

Despatches from General McClellan's Headquarters.

M'CLELLAN'S HEADQUARTERS, TEN MILES FROM RICHMOND, May 24, 1862.

Our troops crossed the Chickahominy yesterday both at Bottom's and the railroad bridges, and now occupy a position one and a half miles beyond.

A few of the enemy's pickets only were seen in front of the advance under General Stoneman at New bridge.

A strong guard of the enemy is still visible on the opposite side of the creek. Their presence will not interfere with the crossing of our troops when the proper time comes. A large number of men have been detailed for the building of a number of bridges at different points on the creek.

The balloon ascension made to-day by Professor Lowe gave no assurance of the enemy being in any considerable force near at hand.

From the best information that can be ascertained the enemy have selected a position between three and four miles on this side of Richmond to meet the federal troops.

The advance of the federal army now being within seven miles of Richmond, its further progress must necessarily be slow in order that the main body shall come up to be prepared to meet any emergency that may arise in approaching the capital of rebeldom.

Very little firing was heard to day in the direction of the position held by our gunboats in the James river.

The *morale* and vigor of the Army of the Potomac is equal to that of any army in the world. For these characteristics it is indebted in a great measure to its Provost Marshal, Brigadier General Andrew Porter. The condition of the troops in passing through Virginia has probably made a favorable contrast to the rebel army in the minds of the people, as is also every course which has been pursued by the military authorities generally.

M'CLELLAN'S HEADQUARTERS, May 24—P. M.

The only matter of interest which has occurred to-day was the shelling out of the rebels on the opposite side of the river at New Bridge, which was done in a most satisfactory manner by the battery of Major Robertson and Captain Tithall, of the Second artillery. The enemy made no response, but suddenly broke camp and left with their baggage trains.

The balloon made an excursion near one of the batteries, and from its elevated position a note was made of the effect of the different shots, which was communicated to those in charge of the battery.

General Marcy and a portion of General McClellan's staff were present, and witnessed the precipitate retreat of the enemy.

There is nothing further worthy of note from the direction of Richmond to-day.

WASHINGTON, May 24—Midnight.

A despatch to the War Department from General McClellan states as follows:—

Three skirmishes to-day. We drove the rebels from Mechanicsville, seven miles from New Bridge. The Fourth Michigan about finished the Louisiana Tigers. Fifty prisoners and fifty killed. Our loss, ten killed and wounded.

Our Army Correspondence.

BALTIMORE STORE, EIGHTEEN MILES EAST OF RICHMOND, May 23, 1862.

The Reconnoissances—The Engineer Corps—The Railroad in Running Order, with Good Rolling Stock, &c.

The results of several recent reconnoissances have shown the necessity of extreme prudence in making all future movements towards Richmond. Gen. McClellan is doing all he can with the forces at his disposal, and we will have Richmond; but we will have to fight for it.

The army has now advanced to Bottom's Bridge, twelve miles from Richmond. Gen. Woodbury's Engineer corps was engaged yesterday in rebuilding that structure. The turnpike road to Richmond crosses the Chickahominy here. The stream is fordable, however. Gen. McClellan himself, and some of the officers of his staff, including the Prince, rode across it on horseback yesterday.

The railroad from White House to the Chickahominy is now in successful operation. We have upon it locomotives and cars, all of which were brought in steamboats from Baltimore to White House. A new track has been laid from the landing to a convenient point on the old track. More rolling stock will continue to arrive daily.

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Egan, of the Mozart (New York) regiment, who was arrested at Fortress Monroe about two weeks ago, and was confined at the Rip Raps, has been released and restored to his command, by order of General McClellan. He was arrested on a vague charge of treason; but it now appears that the arrest was caused by private malice, and a court martial is now in session here on his accuser. General Fitz John Porter expressed from the first his conviction of Colonel Egan's innocence; and General McClellan, on inquiring into the affair, at once detected the *animus* of the affair, and directed the immediate, unconditional and honorable release of Colonel Egan, and his restoration to his command. As the HERALD published the fact of the arrest and imprisonment, it is but just that this act of vindication should also appear in its columns. I have conversed with a great number of officers in regard to the case, and they all concur in speaking of Lieutenant Colonel Egan as a brave and efficient officer.

After two days of intense heat, a rain storm, accompanied with hail, set in yesterday afternoon, which will considerably impede the movements of the army.

ACCOUNTS FROM REBEL SOURCES.

The Legislature Determined to Defend the Capital.

[From the Richmond Dispatch, May 16.]

RESOLUTIONS PASSED ON THE 14TH INST.

Resolved, by the General Assembly of Virginia, That the General Assembly hereby express its desire that the capital of the State be defended to the last extremity, if such defence is in accordance with the views of the President of the Confederate States, and having declared that whatever destruction and loss of property of the State or individuals shall thereby result will be cheerfully submitted to," and this action being warmly approved and seconded by the Executive, therefore, I do hereby request all officers who are out of service, from any cause, and all others who may be willing to unite in defending the capital of this State, to assemble this evening at the City Hall, at five o'clock, and proceed forthwith to organize a force to co-operate with the Tredegar battalion, and any other force which may be detailed for the purpose indicated. The organization, upon being reported to the Executive, will be recognized and properly officered as prescribed by law, and be subject to the orders of the Governor for local defence, under regulations to be hereafter prescribed. Prompt and efficient action is absolutely necessary. We have a gallant army in the field, upon whom we fully and confidently rely; but no effort should be spared which can contribute to the noble object. The capital of Virginia must not be surrendered. Virginians must rally to the rescue.

Given under my hand and under the seal of the Commonwealth, at Richmond, this 15th day of May, 1862, and in the eighty-sixth year of the Commonwealth.

JOHN LETCHER.

Public consultation having been recommended, the people met *en masse* on the evening of the 15th. We copy the following account of

WHAT WAS DONE AT THE CITIZENS' MEETING.

Mr. Joseph Mayo, the Mayor of the city, stated that the City Council had adopted resolutions requesting the Governor to place the Tredegar battalion at his disposal for the defence of the city. He endorsed in the most enthusiastic manner the proposed action of the meeting, and said that if the city of Richmond was ever surrendered to our enemies it should not be by a descendant of its founder. He would sooner die than surrender our city, and if they wished a Mayor who would surrender the city they must elect another in his place.

Governor Letcher was then called on, and heartily approved the objects of the meeting. He said that the city should never be surrendered by the President, by the Mayor or by himself.

The following committee was appointed by the chairman:—

Colonel St. George Rogers, of Florida; Lieutenant Colonel William Mumford, Colonel R. M. Nimmo, Peyton Johnston, William G. Paine, Lieutenant C. O. Lamotte, of South Carolina.

The committee was requested to meet at the City Hall at nine o'clock to-morrow (Saturday) morning, for the purpose of receiving the names of all persons who are disposed to unite under the organization recommended by the proclamation of the Governor. The meeting then adjourned.

Comments of the City Press on the Necessity of Defence.

[From the Richmond Dispatch, May 16.]

We are proud of the spirit of our governments, Confederate and State, relative to this question of holding and defending this State to the last. The army will not abandon the sacred soil of Virginia. That has been made the battle ground, and on that must the enemy establish his superiority in a fair fight before it will be abandoned to him. The evacuation of the seacoast positions and cities became a necessity. There was no avoiding it, in consequence of the immense advantage enjoyed by the enemy in his possession of the entire navy of the United States, and the material and mechanical skill for the rapid construction of iron clad gunboats, while we had neither a navy nor the material and the mechanical force to enable us to compete with him in any sense. It is true we had the Virginia; but, besides her, nothing. Her destruction, and the questions it involves, suggest matters of debate which afford neither satisfaction nor benefit now to discuss. Our inability to meet the enemy on the water, as a general question, was clear and indisputable, and the withdrawal from the sea unavoidable.

Second to Virginia is the defence of this city, for manifold reasons, and it is in keeping with the general purpose of both governments that they should resolve to the uttermost to defend Richmond. All the means in the power of the State and the confederacy are pledged to this, and we may be assured that the enemy will not be allowed to gratify the prominent desire of his heart, to hector and domineer over the inhabitants of this farfamed and beautiful town, until every means is exhausted.

The President nobly takes the stand that, though Richmond should fail, there are plenty of battle fields yet in Virginia to fight for the cause for twenty years. The sentiment is as truthful as patriotic. The Confederate government assures us that the Old Dominion is not to be given up. God forbid that it should. It would be giving up much more than Virginia. The cause would be, indeed, itself well nigh surrendered in that event. The government is not only just, but wise, in its determination to stand by Virginia to the end.

* * * * To lose Richmond is to lose Virginia, and to lose Virginia is to lose the key to the Southern confederacy. Virginians, Marylanders, ye who have rallied to her defence, would it not be better to fall in her sacred ones than to basely abandon them, and view from the surrounding hills the humiliation of the capital of the Southern confederacy? To die in her streets would be bliss to this, and to fall where tyrants stroke would be to consecrate the spot anew and wash it of every stain.

* * * * The loss of Richmond in Europe would sound like the loss of Paris or London, and the moral effect will scarcely be less. Let us, therefore, avert the great disaster by a reliance on ourselves. It is better that Richmond should fall as the capital of the confederacy than that Richmond exist the depot of the hireling horde of the North. But Richmond can be defended, and saved from pollution. The fate of the capital of the confederacy rests with the people.

"The Ruins of Richmond."

[From the Richmond Dispatch, May 16.]

The next few days may decide the fate of Richmond. It is either to remain the capital of the Confederacy, or to be turned over to the federal government as a Yankee conquest. The capital is either to be secured or lost—it may be for ever, not temporarily—*not as Old Virginia*. Then if there is blood to be shed, let it be shed here; no soil of the Confederacy could drink it up more acceptably, and none would heed it more gratefully. Wife, family and friends are nothing. Leave them all for one glorious hour, to be devoted to the epublic. Life, death and wounds are nothing, if we only be saved from the fate of a captured capital and a humiliated Confederacy. Let the government act—let the people act. There is time yet. If fate comes to its worst, let the ruins of Richmond be its most lasting monument.

Food for Fort Darling.

[From the Richmond Dispatch, May 16.]

The citizens of Richmond are earnestly appealed to to prepare cooked provisions to be sent to the men at the fort, as they have no time to prepare food for themselves. We presume the Mayor can give information as to the manner in which such supplies can be sent to them.

Rebel Account of the Late Gunboat Fight at Fort Huger.

[From the Richmond Dispatch, May 10.]

FORT HUGER, HARDY'S BLUFF, May 8, 1862.

Three of the enemy's gunboats—two of them ironclad, came up at eight o'clock this morning to Fort Boykin (commanded by Captain John U. Shivers) and opened fire, discharging about three hundred rounds of shell and rifle shot. The fort, which had only five mounted guns, returned the fire until ten o'clock, when orders were given to spike the guns and burn the quarters. A fine company of light artillery and infantry had started from Smithfield, Isle of Wight county, to participate in the fight; but learning that the above orders had been given they returned. The three gunboats then moved up the river eight miles to the fort on Hardy's Bluff, and at eleven o'clock the guns at this fort opened fire, which was returned by the boats continually until two o'clock. After firing over two hundred rounds of shell and rifle, they passed up the river out of range of the guns at the fort, we having fired the first and last gun. Our flag waved gloriously throughout the engagement. Not a man was killed in the fort, and only three were wounded.

Captain J. M. Maury (captain of the fort), during the entire engagement of three hours and a half, was as cool and collected as if only performing the daily practising of his guns on the fort; also, Captain J. H. Aikin, of the Varina artillery, and Captain Branch, of White's artillery, and their respective officers—all their names I did not learn; nor can too much praise be given to the men in each company, obeying every order from their officers bravely and cheerfully, as if they had faced a hundred battles instead of this their first battle. It would have pleased their friends to have witnessed how gallantly they fought. After the battle, Captain Maury caused the men to be drawn up in a line in the fort, and stated if there was a man that did not wish to remain in the fort and fight with him, to step out of the ranks, and he would allow him to leave the fort and get out of the range of the guns. Not a man moved, not an eye quivered; but with one universal cry of "No! no! no! we will fight!" Can such men be conquered?

Official Rebel Report of the Iron-Clad Reconnaissance.

[From the Richmond Dispatch, May 16.]

DREWRY'S BLUFF, May 15—11 A. M.

SIR—We have engaged the enemy's five gunboats for two and a half hours. We fired the Galena (iron-clad). She has withdrawn, going down the river, accompanied by the three wooden vessels. Our loss in killed and wounded small. Respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. FARRAND.

Hon. S. R. MALLORY, Secretary of the Navy.

Comment on the Result.

[From the Richmond Dispatch, May 16.]

Though late in commencing our preparations for the defence of the approach to this city by the James river, and though the enemy's "infernal gunboats" caught our obstructions at Drury's Bluff hardly in readiness, we have the satisfaction at least of having repelled his first assault. He went away yesterday, we have reason to hope, smartly damaged, after two hours and a half of fearful cannonading of our batteries. His withdrawal gives time for further preparation for his next essay, which will certainly be made. Our loss is slight; but more than in some instances where important positions have been surrendered. We trust that this beginning is an earnest of the determination to keep the gunboats back. They have been felt by our artillerists, and some idea may be formed of their real capacity and power for evil. The men who man our guns are somewhat more reliable than the militia who have been entrusted with guns at some points where it was most important we should make good our defence. Seamen are the best of gunners, and it has been a great mistake to leave them nothing to do, while the cannonering in many cases has been left to men who were not at all to compare with them. The public spirit here is the best imaginable. The people are ready to make any sacrifice to defend the place, and are entirely averse to surrendering it at all to the gunboats. They will cheerfully submit it to destruction first, according to the disposition of both the governments.

Subscriptions for the Rebel Wounded and Families of the Killed.

[From the Richmond Dispatch, May 16.]

We have been requested to state that a subscription list has been left at the office of the Virginia Life Insurance Company for the benefit of such officers, soldiers, sailors or marines, or their families, as have been or may hereafter be killed or wounded in defence of the obstructions in James river. This is a just and proper movement, and we are gratified to witness its inauguration. The gallant men who are exposing themselves in the batteries along our river shore are contending for a principle dearer and of more inestimable value than more pecuniary consideration; but the very fact that their services are appreciated, and that a generous community is determined to reward their faithfulness and devotion to principle, will cheer their hearts and nerve their arms in the darkest hour of trial and conflict. We will not intimate a doubt that the citizens of Richmond, alive to the importance of a vigorous defence of the city, will readily and gladly contribute to so worthy and so commendable an object.

Richmond Photographed by a "Secesh" Editor.

[From the Richmond Dispatch.]

We are infested with hosts of thieves, blacklegs, prostitutes and others, who daily offend the nostrils with their obnoxious and polluting presence. Gambling dens abound in every direction. We appeal to the sense and justice of the city government, civil and military—let not our youth be longer ruined by these harpies; and particularly let not our wives and daughters be insulted by the unabashed impudence of these fellows, crowding our streets and sapping the life of our liberty and morals.

Rebel Speculations Upon the Capture of Richmond.

[From the Richmond Dispatch.]

The Yankees, it appears, are so certain of soon being in possession of Richmond that they are already making preparations to start the old line of boats from Washington to Aquia creek. These boats, having performed their mission in bombarding and burning the defenceless home-steads upon the banks of the Potomac, and in kidnapping the negroes, are now to be transformed into messengers of peace, and in cementing, by social and commercial intercourse, the glorious Union with our murderers and conquerors. That interesting people seem to take it for granted that, as soon as they have whipped us into submission, we shall forget the past, and be ready to make up and be as good friends as ever. As they advance into our country they will inundate us once more with their wares and notions, their books and missionaries, the men now employed in cutting threats will be competing with each other for our custom, each one accusing the other of having been in the war, and swearing that he himself was always opposed to it; the ships, which are ravaging our coast, will come to our harbors laden with the products of Yankee industry, and go back with the teeming riches of our soil. Such, at least, is their expectation, founded on that knowledge of human nature which is derived exclusively from the study of their own character.

We do not pretend to doubt that there are people in the South who would fulfill these expectations, but we are sure that few of them are of native growth. There may be men from New England, and from other countries, who would hail with rapture the overthrow of the Southern capital, but they are a minority even of their own countrymen resident in the South. The great mass of them are loyal; and as to the native born disloyalists they are too few in number to deserve mention. Tryism is not in the South what it was in the Revolution. Then the tories were powerful in numbers, and often respectable in character and position. Nor did they conceal their toryism, for they were too strong to have reason for concealment. They proclaimed their sentiments boldly, and not only that, but fought us in the broad light of day. There are few tories in Virginia. Whatever may have been the divisions of sentiment at the beginning of the war, the Yankee conduct of it has made us one people. Such a thing as union with them is be-yond an impossibility. If they conquer us they must hold us by the strong arm; for all respect, all confidence, all love has departed forever. They may force their hateful presence on our people, they may perfume our air with the balmy aroma of codfish, and make it musical with their nasal intonations, but they cannot recreate the Union. They might as well attempt to galvanize a dead body into life, and make it perform all the functions of healthy humanity.

It will only be when the South is dead physically and morally, that they can become masters of our country. Their empty vaporing and gasconading pass by as the idle wind. They may take our cities, but our immense territory remains, and not an inch of it will be their's but the ground they stand on. They may plant their feet firmly, but it will be as a vessel plants its keel upon the waves, only to conquer that portion of it which it touches, and always to be at its mercy when it rises in its anger. Even their boastful menaces of the capture of Richmond are no better founded than their menaces uttered this time a year ago. They were just as exultant and confident of the future then as now. Their grand army brought telegraph wires with them, to be extended as they advanced, handcuffs to be placed upon our limbs and halters upon our necks, and they had arranged a programme for a magnificent ball in the city to celebrate the victory. They had even rented a large warehouse in Washington wherein to deposit the host of prisoners who were to be taken at the battle of Manassas. The good book advises those who put on their armor not to boast as those who take it off.

MORE DESPONDENCY CONCERNING RICHMOND.

[From the Memphis Appeal, May 16.]

We don't much like the aspect of affairs at Richmond, as presented by telegraph. Four federal gunboats are reported as having started up James river, and, so far as we are advised, there is no sunken obstruction in that stream to prevent them from reaching the capital of Richmond to go the way of Nashville, New Orleans and Norfolk. If so, the result may be attributed to the unnecessary destruction of the Merrimac and the neglect or incapacity of Mallory, whom Mr. Davis urged upon the country against the earnest and unanimous protest of the nation.

Joe. Johnston to Drive Back McClellan.

[From the Petersburg Express, May 16.]

We learn from a gentleman who left the army at ten o'clock Tuesday morning, that General Johnston's vanguard was only one mile this side of New Kent Court House. General McClellan's advanced forces were at the Court House, but the impression seemed to prevail that he was retiring. New Kent Court House is twenty-eight miles from Richmond, and were McClellan detected at that point the greater portion of his forces would be compelled to retreat in the direction of Yorktown, before reaching which they would be captured or cut to pieces. It was thought not improbable that General Johnston would tender the young Napoleon battle.

NEWS FROM GEN. FREMONT'S CORPS.

FRANKLIN, Va., May 24, 1862.

The following circular was issued from headquarters this morning:—

The General Commanding congratulates the army on a new victory in this department, won by the skill and bravery of our soldiers against the superior numbers of the enemy.

The Third brigade of Gen. Cox's division, commanded by Col. Crook, was attacked yesterday morning at Lewisburg by Gen. Heath, with three thousand men, and after a lively engagement the enemy were routed, and fled in confusion. Col. Crook captured four cannon, two hundred stand of arms and one hundred prisoners. Our loss was ten killed and forty wounded.

The results of this victory will be important.

The General Commanding is confident that the forces now under his immediate command but lack the opportunity to emulate the gallantry and share the glory of their comrades of the army of the Kanawha.

This circular will be read at the head of every regiment or separate corps in this army. By order of

Major General FREMONT.

ALBERT TRACY, Colonel and Assistant Adjutant General.

THE SIEGE OF FORT WRIGHT.

WASHINGTON, May 24, 1862.

The following was received to-night at the War Department:—

CAIRO, May 24, 1862.

The steamer Alps, arrived from the flotilla, reports all quiet. The rebel fleet, which has been absent for several days, has again made its appearance as Fulton, two miles below Fort Pillow.

Nothing official from the fleet.

CAIRO, May 24, 1862.

The gunboat reconnoissance made yesterday discovered the rebel fleet at Fulton, about two miles below. There is no further doubt but that the rebels still hold it.

DEFEAT OF THE REBELS AT LEWISBURG.

Cannon, Muskets and One Hundred Prisoners Captured.

CINCINNATI, May 24, 1862.

Colonel Heth, with 3,000 men, attacked our forces under Colonel Crook yesterday morning, and after a severe fight the enemy were driven back and completely routed. Crook's force numbered 1,300. Our loss is ten killed, forty wounded and eight missing. The loss of the enemy is much greater. There were captured four cannon, two of them rifled; also two hundred stand of arms and about one hundred prisoners, including one lieutenant colonel, one major and several captains and lieutenants.

NEWS FROM GENERAL BANKS' CORPS.

Union Troops Driven from Front Royal by the Rebels.

STRASBURG, Va., May 24, 1862.

Hon. E. M. STANTON, Secretary of War:—

Colonel Kenly's command of infantry and cavalry has been driven from Front Royal, with considerable loss in killed, wounded and prisoners. The enemy's force is estimated at from five to six thousand men, and is reported as falling back on Front Royal. He probably occupies the place this morning.

N. P. BANKS, Major General.

WASHINGTON, May 24, 1862.

Colonel Kenly, in command of the force at Front Royal, was not killed, but only wounded and taken prisoner. No particulars of the engagement at Front Royal yesterday have been received.

The enemy are in possession of Front Royal. General Geary occupies a strong position on the Manassas Railroad, at White Plains. He has been reinforced. General Banks has also been strongly reinforced.

Dispatches were received at the War Department at ten o'clock to-night, from General Banks at Winchester.

He had moved from Strasburg to Winchester for the purpose of securing his stores and trains from the enemy, and to prevent his communication from being interrupted. His advance guard entered Winchester at five o'clock, with all his trains and stores in safety.

A strong attack was made upon the trains at Middletown by the rebel infantry, cavalry and artillery, but it was repulsed, and a few wagons abandoned by teamsters were secured.

General Banks will return immediately to Strasburg.

A gentleman acquainted with the localities and positions of General Banks' army does not regard the report of to-day as indicating any danger to the main body of the troops of that command. Kenly's First Maryland regiment, with a squad of cavalry and a portion of a battery, were stationed at Front Royal as an outpost to guard a mile and a half from the main stem of the Manassas Railroad, while other troops guarded the track. The bridge supposed to be endangered was three miles from Front Royal Junction, and strongly guarded. It is considered almost impossible for the enemy to reach the bridge before reinforcements from Rectortown or Strasburg would have arrived there. At all events the attack could not have jeopardized General Banks' army.

BALTIMORE, May 24, 1862.

The reported death of Colonel Kenly produces intense feeling here, where he was widely known and highly esteemed, and where his regiment (the First Maryland) was raised. His numerous friends have been thronging the vicinity of the newspaper offices all the afternoon, evincing the greatest anxiety to learn the particulars of the fate of the gallant Colonel and his men. The families of the soldiers are painfully alarmed by the numerous rumors flying about.

NEWS FROM RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER.

Our Naval Correspondence.

UNITED STATES STEAMER STEPPING STONES, MOUTH OF RAPPAHANNOCK, VA., May 22, 1862.

The Movements of the Stepping Stone—A Storm on the Rappahannock, &c.

We left the Patuxent river at eleven o'clock yesterday morning, and, rounding Point Lookout, ran up the Potomac. At a quarter past six o'clock we met the Yankee a little above the entrance to Wicomico river, coming down from Washington. Captain Frank went on board, when Commodore Wyman ordered him to follow the Yankee down the river. At ten o'clock we stopped off Piney Point, and ran alongside the Yankee, when we received a quantity of coal from her, of which we were much in need, and received orders to proceed to Fortress Monroe, and report to Commodore Goldsborough. We then cast off, and continued down the river, taking on board Acting Master's Mate George M. Lawrence, as executive officer, and an engineer for the Freeborn, which is up the Rappahannock. The accounts of the Stepping Stones have been transferred from the Wyandank to the Brandywine, at Old Point Comfort, and we may now be considered as detached from the Potomac flotilla.

This morning we reached this place and reported to Lieutenant Commanding Badger, of the Anacostia, when he ordered us to proceed up the river, with the engineer for the Freeborn, and letters, &c., with instructions to put them on board the first steamer we fell in with, and then return on our way to Old Point. On nearing Fort Lowry we fell in with the Resolute, on board of which we made the transfer, and then ran back here to take a full supply of coal from a brig and schooner.

At ten minutes to four o'clock P.M., while thus engaged, the severest hail storm I have ever witnessed burst over the vessel. The day had been hot, with a clear sky and atmosphere, and very little wind blowing. Quickly the heavens up the river were overspread with heavy clouds, the blackness of which increased in intensity over where we are lying, while down the Chesapeake was quite clear. The wind, too, suddenly shifted to the north, and gradually increased in force. The lightning began to flash, but the interval between the flash and the thunder indicated that the electric current was at a safe distance. A moaning sound was now heard from the direction of the wind, and the river, which had been tolerably calm, was agitated by catspaws, which increased in wavelets, driving towards the vessel by the direction of the wind, while a thick black cloud, extending from the water skywards, like a solid wall, advanced with them. The noise increased and drops of rain began to fall. At length the gale reached us, accompanied with a tolerable fall of rain, and the Reliance, which lay a few yards to leeward of the schooner along side of which we were moored, had to go ahead to avoid a collision. Hail now began to fall, in small stones at first, but they quickly increased in size. The precaution was taken to close all doors and windows, particularly those to windward. As the Stepping Stones has in no wise been altered from her form of a ferry boat, she is fitted up with a great number of sash windows. In a minute, almost every glass of these to windward was smashed. The loud rattle of the hail on the hurricane deck was terrific, and resembled the incessant discharge of musketry, while the crash of broken glass added to the noise of the elemental turmoil.

I took my station by an open window to leeward, where I could witness the storm, without danger from the falling hailstones, many of which were of the size of a hen's egg. The deck of the schooner, upon which I looked, was soon covered with them. They fell with so much force that most of them were smashed into small pieces. All hands on board the several vessels were fortunate enough to get under cover in time, or serious wounds might have been inflicted, and it is not improbable that life might have been lost. The water around bubbled up like a seething cauldron, from the large masses of ice that were falling thick and fast from the overcharged clouds. All the while the lightning flashed vividly, but there was very little thunder.

The storm did not last many minutes, nor did it appear to spread over a great area. It seemed to be confined to a comparatively narrow streak. Soon it blew past, and its retreat towards the eastern shore was marked by the rear of the dark, opaque and perpendicular cloud that heralded its approach.

After the storm, the men on board gathered together a large quantity of the hailstones from the earth, for the purpose of cooling their drinking water.

As an illustration of the momentum with which the stones fell and were driven by the force of the wind, I may mention that not only is every pane of glass in front of the pilot house broken, but that portions of the frame were actually torn off. One pane of glass has a hole through it, as if perforated by a large bullet, and is cracked in all directions.

The injury on shore to cherry, apple, peach and other trees, now in blossom or covered with young fruit, must have been great in localities visited by the hail storm. There is reason to believe, too, that cattle and small stock have been destroyed. Happily, however, the devastation cannot have been very widespread.

FORTRESS MONROE, May 23, 1862.

The Stepping Stones has just arrived here, and will report to Commodore Goldsborough immediately. The Yankee is to come down here to-day, I believe, bringing the President and other celebrities. It rained here yesterday, but the hail storm, as I anticipated, did not reach so far down.

NEWS FROM NORFOLK.

The City Authorities Still Refuse to Take the Oath of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATION OF GENERAL WOOL.

The City Placed Under Strict Martial Law.

Enthusiastic Union Meeting at Portsmouth.

Two Thousand Deserters from the Rebel Army Coming In.

REPORTED OCCUPATION OF WELDON, N. C.,

&c., &c., &c.

BALTIMORE, May 24, 1862.

There is but little change in the condition of affairs at Norfolk. The Mayor and members of the City Council still refuse to take the oath of allegiance. General Wool had an interview with them yesterday; but they continued in the sulks, so that he now refuses all intercourse with the people of Norfolk and Portsmouth. Even the little business they have been doing in the way of strawberries and peas is now stopped.

General Wool sent up a proclamation to Norfolk this morning, notifying the people that the matter was entirely in their own hands. So soon as they shall acknowledge the supremacy of the government they will enjoy its fostering aid; but while they remain in their present rebellious mood they will be cut off from all advantages of trade and commerce, and the city will be governed by strict martial law. He also assures them that no contingency can possibly arise whereby Norfolk will again be given up to the control of the rebel government, and that those who entertain Union sentiments can give expression to them with ample assurance of protection of all their rights as citizens of the United States.

Most of the stores are now open, and the sale of such goods as they have is progressing.

As far as can be ascertained, no one is now willing to receive Confederate notes at par. Business is mostly done in small notes of the Virginia banks and other chartered corporations. Government notes are received with great avidity.

The Union men of Norfolk still hold back, afraid to express sentiments openly, in defiance of the rebellious spirit around them.

Quite an enthusiastic Union meeting was held at Portsmouth on Thursday night. Not less than eight hundred were present, including many Union men from Norfolk. The course of the government in refusing to allow provisions to come there for loyal people was severely criticised, and the propriety of such a course by no means approved. The scarcity of provisions and necessaries of life is so great and prices are so high that the poorer classes have to live almost entirely on fish and oysters.

The secessionists are nearly all wealthy people, who can stand high prices, and have laid in their stocks long since.

There is no doubt that the decision of General Wool is tending to great suffering among the poorer classes. They have suffered beyond endurance for a year past, and when the old flag was again hoisted they hailed it with delight, and naturally expected speedy relief from their privations.

It is estimated there are now in Norfolk and Portsmouth not less than one thousand deserters from the force with which General Huger left Norfolk. Those who have come in, and are still arriving, in squads of tens and twenties, did not succeed in escaping until after they reached Petersburg. They are in a most deplorable condition. A party who came in to-day say there must be nearly one thousand more scattered through the woods behind them. All willingly take the oath of allegiance, and appear most happy to have escaped from the rebel army.

The Minnesota will proceed to Norfolk to-morrow morning, when the whole fleet will have abandoned Old Point and taken up a position at the old naval station.

The walls of the Navy Yard buildings are in a solid condition, and can soon be put in order again. The machinery was taken out of the buildings before they were fired, and packed up with the intention of being removed; but the rapid action of General Wool prevented the removal.

Numerous wrecks sunk in the harbor and river by the rebels are all to be removed forthwith, including the wrecked Merrimac. A large number of fuses and shells were obtained from the latter yesterday.

It was reported at Norfolk yesterday that General Burnside had taken Weldon.

Our Norfolk Correspondence.

NORFOLK, May 22, 1862

Sensation Rumors—How the President's Proclamation has been Received—A Visit to Pig Point—Opinions of an Eminent Citizen, &c.

The announcement published in Northern papers, that attempts have been made to assassinate Union troops in this vicinity, I have the authority of the Military Governor for saying, has no foundation in fact. On Sunday afternoon a report reached General Viele's head quarters that the horse of Colonel Brown, Twenty-eighth Indiana regiment, had made his appearance in camp without his rider, and wounded, and that the inference was that the Colonel had been fired upon by some person. Another report reached the same point almost simultaneously that a lieutenant of the first battalion New York mounted rifles had also been shot at and a button taken off his coat. Immediate investigation found Colonel Brown in his quarters, perfectly unconscious that he had been in any personal danger, even from rumor; and the story in regard to the lieutenant was proved to be as old as the trip of the mounted rifles to Suffolk, the matter referred to having occurred in the march to that place and in the vicinity of that town, and that shot was probably accidental. The secessionists in this city are circulating all sorts of rumors daily, and those to which public attention has been called are beyond a doubt some of their villanous concoctions. Thus far there has been nothing but a respectful deference paid to the officers and men of the Union army stationed here by the male portion of the inhabitants, who, if they are a little sulky, have exhibited good discretion in all their acts. The women, many of whose husbands and lovers are in the rebel army, occasionally show a little harmless female spite; but they have been treated with such marked indifference that their exhibitions of contempt have resulted in complete failures. Upon the whole there is not a more orderly, better-regulated city in the United States to-day than Norfolk—thanks to the wisdom and judicious management of those who have had the conduct of affairs; and the last thing to be apprehended is any serious overt act on the part of the inhabitants. At the rate at which the oath of allegiance is administered, Norfolk will be a staunch Union city before the week is out. The city authorities still remain intractable; but a large majority of the male citizens have already bound themselves to the support of the Union government. About two hundred persons apply daily to have the oath administered to them.

The proclamation of the President in relation to the ill-advised action of Gen. Hunter has been well received here, and its effect is already apparent. It has completely disarmed the rabid secessionists and deprived them of their stock in trade. They are used up in their strong point, which has been that the war is a mere plan of emancipation, and they are dumbfounded. They can no longer appeal to the interests or the fears of the slave owners in this part of the State, and their occupation may be considered gone. Moderate Union men have been strengthened by the document, and do not attempt to conceal their joy at its promulgation. They now feel that they have a platform to stand upon and are more secure than since the commencement of our troubles. The seed sown, although it may be upon stony ground, will be found flourishing after many days.

The somewhat celebrated, but not very euphoniously titled, Pig Point battery was visited on Tuesday by a reconnoitering party, under command of Lieutenant Colonel Dodge. The works were found to be in excellent condition, and much better constructed than those on Sewall's Point, Craney Island and other points defending the approaches to Norfolk. Fifteen guns were left in position, one of them a rifled piece of large calibre. The barracks were left in good order and gave evidences of taste and comfort. Colonel Dodge's party were the first Union men that had visited the Point. The farmers in the neighborhood exhibited a surliness of disposition at first, and were disinclined to show anything like a good Samaritan-ish spirit to the half finished excursionists. A few moments' effective action, however, seemed to convince them that the Union troops were humane, and the best that their houses afforded was soon produced. Considerable rebel property was found at the Point, which will be taken possession of.

John C. Wise, an eminent citizen of Norfolk, and elder brother of Henry A. Wise, had an interview with the Military Governor yesterday, by request. Mr. Wise is a confirmed cripple; but notwithstanding that he is suffering from paralysis, and has lost his eyesight, his mind remains unimpaired and is as active as ever. After a few minutes Mr. W. frankly admitted that the people of the South are vain-glorious, overburdened with self-conceit, and boastful in the extreme, and that our present troubles were the result of the fostering of those sectional characteristics until they had come to regard themselves superior to any other body of men in the world. The manner of Gen. Viele impressed him favorably, and, although he came to regard with a sympathy for his native State and the South, he departed more than two-thirds a convert to the General's proposition that the government must be preserved at all hazards, and that the South has no real grounds for bringing such calamities upon the country as have been entailed by this rebellion. The interview was an interesting one, and the few persons who witnessed it were deeply affected by the occasion. Mr. Wise is upon the confines of the grave, pressed by disease and wearied with a weight of years; but still, with a mind unclouded, he gives almost a dying testimony in favor of the old government.

Norfolk has resumed business so far as there is anything to trade with. Some of the large dealers, like Bloodgood, Santee and a few others, who have done the heaviest business here, and who are heavily indebted to Northern houses, remain closed, for obvious reasons. They have been among the most violent of the opposers of the government, probably under the fear that their Northern creditors might call upon them; and now that the door to the Union has been opened they keep up their shutters under the same apprehension. Their true position is well understood here, and the sensible people here look upon them with contempt.

The work upon the railroads leading out of Portsmouth is actively prosecuted, and within a few days trains can pass on to Suffolk. All that is wanted now is the rolling stock.

Business at the Provost Marshal's office is a fair criterion of the good order of the city. It is admitted on all hands that Norfolk has been more quiet for the past ten days than it has been known to be for any time within a year past. There are no complaints of the ordinary outrages upon persons and property, there are no arrests for drunkenness, and the city is more like a country village than anything else. Whether the change is to be attributed to the superior moral condition of our soldiers, which is reflected by example by the people, or whether the rebel army took away all the riff-raff of the community with it, are questions which I will not discuss further than to say that the admixture of the pure Unionism has undoubtedly produced the result.

INTERESTING FROM SONORA.

Secession Agents in Mexico—Possible Secession of Sonora from the Mexican Confederacy.

[Correspondence of the San Francisco Bulletin, May 1.]

GUAYMAS, April 15, 1862.

Political matters are now, with us, the most interesting subject of discussion. For a long time past we have been receiving a succession of reports that the Southern Confederates were preparing to invade our State of Sonora, and were concentrating considerable bodies of troops upon our northern frontier for that purpose. About the middle of last month there suddenly appeared in Hermosillo, a man dressed in full American uniform, buttons and all, of high rank, who was attended by two men, most remarkable for their long hair and general frontier appearance, who were also wearing the United States uniform, in part. It soon became known that the person alluded to was no less than Colonel James Reily, of the Confederate States Army, who was the bearer of despatches from Brigadier General H. H. Sibley, commanding the army of New Mexico, Confederate States, to Governor Pesquiera of this state. Colonel Reily, in his intercourse with the Americans while in this State, boasted that he was the commander of 1,000 men near our frontier, who, for the last six months, had not asked or received one dollar of pay—to whom had not been issued a single ration, either in provisions or clothing; that they were all well armed, and were not afraid of the devil himself; in fact, that his force was altogether self supporting. This fact is rather suggestive of the inquiry how it was that they supported themselves.

The government here has intelligence that Gen. Sibley has under his command about 3,000 men; that he is approaching our frontier, when it is expected that there will be a union between them and the friends of Gandara, and that there will be an attempt made to take possession of the State. Gen. Sibley addressed to the Governor of Chihuah