

The Local News.

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October 7, 1861.

ALEXANDRIA, MONDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 10, 1862.

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ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE OFFICE.

ARREST OF A MINISTER WHILE AT PRAYER IN A CHURCH—GREAT EXCITEMENT—Yester-

day the services at St. Paul's (Episcopal) Church were conducted by the Rev. K. J. Stewart, who, in conjunction with Rev. G. A. Smith, has been officiating for some weeks to the congregation worshipping there. The congregation was yesterday composed of the most part of ladies and children—there being but, comparatively, few males present. One of the pews near the chancel was occupied by the military, and some soldiers were scattered about in other parts of the church. As the minister was commencing the Litany, some one from the pew filled by the military, demanded that "the prayer for the President of the United States should be read"—and the demand was repeated by an officer near him, dressed in uniform. The minister not heeding the interruption, was proceeding with the Litany, when a sergeant was ordered to arrest him. This caused, immediately, great excitement, and expressions of indignation from the congregation. The military came up to the chancel, and various citizens also gathered around. The prayer book was taken from Mr. Stewart's hand, he was seized and conducted out of the church, followed by his little daughter who clung to her father, and was held by one of the soldiers. The alarm of the females, the cries of the children, the rush of the people, and the fear of some farther violence, which occasioned some blows to be passed between the civilians and the soldiers, all occasioned a scene perhaps never before witnessed in a Church on this side of the Atlantic. And the excitement was increased by the entrance into the building of a number of soldiers, from the adjoining barracks, with sabre and revolvers in their hands, some of them uttering violent imprecations. By this time, however, Mr. Stewart had been carried out of the church, protesting against the violence offered him, and the congregation dispersing and following the crowd, the church was closed, and quietness soon prevailed. Mr. Stewart in his clerical robes, was first taken through the streets, to the quarters of Col. Farnsworth of the 8th Illinois cavalry, on Washington street. Gen. Montgomery, the U. S. Military Governor of Alexandria, who was attending service in Christ Church, was immediately sent for, called out, and informed of the affair. He stated that he had given no orders for the arrest, and knew nothing of such a proceeding, and, if it had been done, without orders from Washington, it was a matter which he condemned. The declarations of Gen. Montgomery, which were, indeed, expected from him, by most citizens of all parties calmed the excitement. It is understood that the particulars of the affair were immediately telegraphed to the proper authorities in Washington, and an answer returned disavowing the issue of any authority for the arrest, and authorizing the release of Mr. Stewart. Gen. Montgomery then, in a gentlemanly, and humane manner, released Mr. Stewart, who returned to his family and friends. It is said that the particulars of this affair will be reported to Gen. Montgomery for further action, and that the matter will be laid before the authorities in Washington.

ARRESTS.—Mr. Hico, a Japanese, who has come to this country for the purpose of establishing commercial connexions with some of the business firms in the Northern cities, having an acquaintance in this city, came here a short time since on a visit. It appears that he has been mistaken for a Louisiana Creole, and his movements closely watched. Yesterday, Mr. H., in company with Capt. Wm. Boothé, called at the residence of Mr. George Bryan, where they had been but a few moments, when a squad of soldiers entered the house and arrested the three gentlemen, who were taken before the Provost Marshal, who after hearing the explanation, acquitted Messrs. Bryan and Boothé, and released Mr. Hico, that gentleman giving bond for his re-appearance.

At San Francisco, there is a slight revival of business on account of a partial reopening of communication with the interior counties.

GENERAL NEWS.

Contrabands coming in the Federal lines report that beyond Fairfax Court House, and towards Centreville, the roads had been abatised so as to impede the advance of the Federal forces. Centreville, as a general thing, had been deserted by the inhabitants. Many of the houses had been turned into barracks and officers' quarters. Gen. Smith had his quarters beyond the town, in a farm house. The troops were in winter quarters, the camps being scattered from Centreville to Manassas.

A thoroughly posted person states that only four hundred negroes are at Fortress Monroe, while four times that number are hanging about the Federal lines, and fear to go within them, lest they should be put to hard work, or be carried off. The general testimony of persons from the North is that no considerable number of fugitive slaves have fled thither since the commencement of the war.

The solution of the dispatch received from the Confederate Gen. Johnson, is still wrapped in mystery. Some say it is one thing, and some that it is another. But the truth is, none but those high in authority know any thing of its contents.

Schooner Addie E. Barnes, which arrived at New York on Saturday, reports that on the second inst., in lat. 32 34, long. 72 45, heard heavy firing to the westward. There were three vessels in sight at the time.

Letters from Hayti state that Gaffard will send a white minister to Washington if Hayti is recognized, as no colored man of any standing would submit to the inferior social position he would necessarily occupy.

The proprietors of the Cohoes Hotel, Cohoes, N. Y., are surprised at an event which took place there recently. A young lady arrived from Albany, took a room, passed the night and went away in the morning, leaving behind her a carefully wrapped parcel which proved to be a live baby. The landlord doesn't know what to do with it nor where to find its mamma.

A lecture was delivered in Washington, on Friday night, on "the difference between working and shirking." There is really a very material difference—but some people in the world make one pass for the other.

Capt. Wm. Chase, a retired sea captain, was robbed on Wednesday night in Boston of \$10,000 worth of notes and city stocks.

The white population of Charleston, S. C., is about 27,000.

The Confederate estimate of the value of the property at the Navy Yard in Norfolk, including land, buildings, vessels, machinery, &c., is \$4,810,056 68.

A man was captured on Wednesday by a company from one of the New York regiments in Gen. McDowell's Division, in the hollow of an old tree, where he had been secreted for several days. He was fully supplied with provisions. He refused to give his name, or what his business was. He was sent to headquarters.

Think of 215 men and boys immured in a coal-pit—buried alive! That was the last accident in the mining districts of England, and after a week's labor not one of the number was rescued. The deadly gas and the falling earth almost prevented the work of deliverance.

The question in regard to a man's political position used to be, "Is he sound on the goose?" Now, Prentice says, it is, "Is he sound on the eagle?"

They say Barnum will find in Commodore Nutt as profitable a kernel as Tom Thumb.

The National Intelligencer treats upon the expulsion of Senator Bright, and expresses the opinion that his case was decided by the Senate with an extremity of rigor not justified by the historical circumstances under which the letter that forms the ground of the indictment against him was written.

Francis Petit, tried in Washington, for shooting a man some months ago, has been acquitted.

A number of robberies have lately been committed in Nanjemoy district, Charles county, Md.

In the U. S. Senate last Friday, the bill from the House appropriating \$10,000,000, to build twenty iron-clad gunboats was passed, as was a resolution of thanks to Com. Dupont and those under him, for their success at Port Royal, and a joint resolution to pay the awards of the military commission for expenditures in the department of the West. The bill from the House making sundry civil appropriations for 1862, and additional appropriations for 1862, was passed with amendments.

The Nashville Courier of the 3d contains the following:—"By order of the Provisional Government of Kentucky, the name of Wolfe county has been changed to Zollicoffer county."

The feat of telegraphing direct from Boston to Salt Lake City was performed for the first time on Saturday. The first dispatch from Salt Lake City was dated at 8:35, and the Boston time was 10:30, showing a difference of nearly two hours between the time of the two places.

The rumor of a speedy intervention of France in American affairs, is contradicted in official circles in Washington.

A dispatch from San Francisco announces that \$1,400,000 in treasure is on the way to New York in the Panama steamer.

A substantial wire bridge has been constructed over the Gauley River, in place of the structure which Gov. Wise burned.

In the Senate of the U. S. the Committee on Elections has reported favorably in the case of Mr. Stark, the Senator elect from Oregon. The report was ordered to lie over.

Owing to illness in the family, the usual reception at the Presidential Mansion in Washington, will be omitted on to-morrow.

WAR NEWS.

The Burnside expedition is believed to have at last commenced active operations. The fleet left Hatteras Inlet on Wednesday morning, sailing north, its destination understood to be Roanoke Island, distant forty miles. Gen. Huger, commander at Norfolk, informed one of the passengers at Old Point under the flag of truce on Saturday, that a dispatch had been received to the effect that the expedition had reached Roanoke Island Thursday, and commenced an attack on the Confederate works early on Friday morning, and were twice repulsed. Roanoke Island commands the entrance to Albemarle and Currituck, and is said to be strongly fortified. It is stated also that Gov. Wise is in command of 5,000 troops at Nags head, on the outer beach, off the lower point of the Island.

The dispatches from Tennessee state that the Federal troops were pursuing the retreating Confederates in the direction of Paris on Thursday, and that it was expected that Gen. Grant would attack Fort Donelson on Friday. This is on the Cumberland about twelve miles distant from Fort Henry. Late Southern papers state that Fort Donelson would be defended by three thousand troops. Gen. Wilson's division left New Haven, Ky., on Thursday, and advanced to Green river, above Munfordville, but could proceed no further on account of the condition of the roads. The divisions of the army in Kentucky, under Generals Thomas, Schoeff and Buell, are preparing for an advance into Tennessee.

The intelligence from Missouri indicates that the Federal forces are concentrating for some important movement.

Three vessels, a portion of Gen. Butler's expedition, shifted from Boston for the mouth of the Mississippi on Saturday.

An arrival at New York brings intelligence that the late movement in the Savannah waters has been greatly exaggerated. The expedition was simply a reconnaissance, composed of a few gunboats carrying about two thousand men. The vessels entered the Savannah river from two different estuaries, but found the channel obstructed. Several Confederate vessels were discovered and fired on, and this accounts for the report of firing heard. The main part of the expedition had returned to Port Royal on the 30th ult.

Those amiable Peruvians are still on the "rampage." They have been trying to assassinate their President, Gen. Castilla, but he was obstinate and wouldn't be assassinated.

A scene occurred in St. Paul's Church, Alexandria, Virginia, on Sunday morning, February 9th, 1862, which has, perhaps, never had a parallel among civilized nations, certainly not in the history of this country. The officiating minister—Rev. K. J. Stewart—had gone through the Morning Prayer of the Episcopal Church as far as the Litany, the prayer for the President being omitted, but without anything in its place, and was proceeding with the Litany, when an interruption occurred of the character which the law designates as "brawling"—that is, the intervention of noise and tumult by certain persons, who had come to the church with the intention of interrupting the service should it not proceed according to their wishes. These persons commenced the disturbance as soon as they found the prayer for the President omitted. One of them, Captain Farnsworth, of the Eighth Illinois Cavalry, who sat near the chancel, dressed in uniform, with some five or six of his soldiers near him, undertook to officiate in prayer (if prayer it can be called) by reading the prayer for the President of the United States. How far he went in it does not appear in the confusion, but soon quitting his position as the offerer of prayer, he advanced to the altar where Mr. Stewart was kneeling, still continuing the Litany, and ordered his arrest. Mr. Stewart was dragged from his knees by the soldiers. The ground of the arrest Captain Farnsworth distinctly avowed to be the omission of the prayer for the President of the United States. With this avowal, he said, "I arrest you by the authority of the United States, as a rebel and a traitor"—"and I," responded Mr. Stewart, who by that time had advanced to the chancel rails, to Capt. F., "summon you to answer at the judgment seat of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords for interfering, by force of arms, with His ambassador, while in the act of presenting the petitions of His people at His altar." The solemnity of this appeal apparently caused the parties to fall back and pause, but soon the soldiers were ordered to seize Mr. Stewart, which two of them did with great violence, forcing the prayer book from his hands, one of them drawing a revolver. Another revolver was presented to an old and venerated citizen within the chancel, when the officer ordered the soldier not to fire. Very soon, a considerable number of armed soldiers appeared in the church. Mr. Stewart, refusing to yield voluntarily, was dragged by force from the altar, and, through the aisle, out of the church. He was in the surplice, which he wore through the streets, and at Col. Farnsworth's quarters, where he was taken.

Capt. Farnsworth said that he went to Church intending to arrest Mr. Stewart if he should offer any prayer for the Confederate States. Near him in the same pew, sat Mr. Morton, the "detective" agent of the United States government, who there gave orders to Captain Farnsworth to make the arrest, which was executed as above described. Mr. Morton has declared that he was acting under authority from Washington. The scene in the Church was such as may be imagined under such circumstances. Gentlemen were indignant and excited, and ladies giving utterance to their feelings of grief and indignation, but, of course, no serious effort was made to prevent the arrest. Mr. Stewart was taken away, and the congregation dispersed. It is proper to state that these proceedings were without the knowledge of Gen. Montgomery, the Military Governor of the city, and were strongly condemned by him, when they came to his knowledge. He telegraphed to Washington for instructions from the government, which, when received, were of such a nature as to lead to Mr. Stewart's release after a few hours detention.

The issues involved in the transaction, thus imperfectly sketched, are too grave to admit of comment. It will, however, be well to state that Mr. Stewart only insists upon the rights of all ambassadors to communicate with their King, untrammelled by civil or military interference, and that in no case have any of the services of this Church assumed a political aspect; no prayer has been offered, and no sentiment advanced at any time that was calculated to offend even the most sensitive critic, but public worship is interrupted, soldiers invade the chancel, and with drawn revolvers, drag the minister of religion from its altar, because he will not do their bidding. The undersigned were present in Church, and testify to the facts as above stated. It may be proper to state that by request of the Vestry, in the absence of their rector, the Rev. George A. Smith and Rev. Mr. Stewart have been officiating in St. Paul's Church for several weeks past, and that Mr. Smith was in the Chancel at the time these occurrences took place.

GEORGE A. SMITH,
CASSIUS F. LEE,
SIDNEY G. MILLER,
A. H. CURRIE,
JOHN A. DIXON,
W. H. MARBURY,
TOWNSEND D. FENDALL,
ALBERT E. BASSFORD,
EDWARD C. FLETCHER,
GEO. H. SMOOT,
J. J. WHEAT,
W. A. HARPER,
NATHANIEL BUSH,
JOHN WEST,
P. A. CLAGETT,
JAMES GREEN,
ISAAC WINSTON,
THOMAS W. SWANN,
JAMES ENTWISLE,
LEWIS HOFF,
CHARLES R. HOOPE,
J. D. CORSE,
STEPHEN A. GREEN,
S. F. GREGORY,
JOHN F. DYER,
GEORGE T. BALDWIN.

Copies of the above statement have been sent to the President of the United States and General McClellan.