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AND COMMERCIAL JOURNAL.

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Pittsburgh, April 1, 1862—ap2:6m

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THURSDAY MORNING, APRIL 17.

Great Achievement by the Engineers.

The following extracts from a private letter, written by a member of Col. Bissell's Engineer Regiment to a friend in Rochester, give a description of the obstacles surmounted in order to furnish the necessary means of transportation to Gen. Pope's forces. The achievement was certainly the most remarkable engineering exploit of the war thus far. The writer says:

"After the surrender of the forts at New Madrid, we (Col. Bissell's Engineer Regiment,) were engaged for four days unspiking the guns, changing batteries, establishing new works, and other engineering matters. Then we were sent over by Gen. Pope to ascertain whether it was not practicable to establish batteries opposite Island No. 10, so as to enfilade their works on the Kentucky shore. We spent three days in the swamps in canoes, with darkies as guides, but found the project impracticable. Col. Bissell, however, stated that he could, by hard labor, get steamboats and flatboats through the woods and bayous, and by that means land our forces nearly opposite New Madrid, and take all the enemy's works in the rear. Gen. Pope at once gave him a *carte blanche*, and he sent to Cairo for four steamboats, six flats, and such guns as could be spared. They sent the steamers W. B. Terry, John Trio, Gilmore and Emma, with the barges, a quantity of lumber, &c., and one eight inch columbiad and three 32-pounder. Tools we did not need, for the regiment carries everything from the heaviest ropes and screws down to fine steel drills for unspiking guns. Our route is about twelve miles long, of which two miles were through timber, and the remaining ten through narrow, crooked bayous grown up full of brush and small trees. We have cut our way right through, the track being fifty feet wide, in which thirty are required for the hulls of the boats. The timber is cut four feet below the surface of the water. In one short stretch we cut seventy-five trees thus deep not one less than two feet through. The machines were rigged from rafts and our lowest flats, and worked each by about twenty men. In the first place, three large launches went ahead to cut out and push out of the track the underbrush and driftwood; then three rafts followed, on which were the men who cut down and cut off the trees; then the saws, then the two large barges, then one of the steamboats. Very large lines were provided to run from the capstan of the steamboats, and haul out by snatch-blocks what the men could not handle. Then followed the rest of the fleet, men being engaged all the time converting the flatboats into floating batteries. From the river to the levee the distance is about 500 feet; here the water was shallow and the route full of stumps; it took one whole day to pass this—then the cut in the levee. Here the fall was over two feet and the rush of water was tremendous. The largest boat was dropped through with five lines out ahead. Then a cornfield, overflowed from a cut in the levee. Here was something of a channel cut by the swift water, and we got along nearly a quarter of a mile to the woods; here was the labor—two straight and long miles to the nearest point in the bayou. Then it took eight days to get through. Then Wilson's Bayou, then East Bayou, then St. John's Bayou, which empties into the Mississippi at New Madrid. If you have never seen a Southern swamp, you have no idea how thick it is; a New York elm swamp does not begin. It sometimes took twenty men a whole day to get out a half sunken tree across the bayou. Such a place as that kept us all back, and none of the rafts or flats could get by, and all had to wait. The water, after we got into the woods, was about six feet deep, with a gentle current setting across the peninsula. In the East Bayou the current was tremendous, and the boats had to be checked down with heavy head-lines. Here we found some obstructions caused by drift heaps, but cutting off one or two logs would start all down the current.

This is the hardest job I have ever seen undertaken, but Col. Bissell is so far down now as to call it successful, for we are in sight of the fences on the t'other side of Jordan."

An engraving of the saw used in cutting off the stumps is then given, and the writer adds by way of description:

"At each end of the saw a rope 30 feet in length is fastened and carried to boats upon which men are stationed. Ten men man and work each rope.

When the saw runs right, we have cut off a stump two feet in diameter in fourteen minutes. Often it pinched and run crooked; then a gang would be two or three hours on one of the same size. If there happened to be any brush under the water it added much to the labor; it all had to be fished up and got out of the way."

A Lament for Whisky.

[Richmond Correspondence of the N. O. Crescent]

We are under the most stringent martial law. The sale of liquor is prohibited and no one is allowed to leave the city. The first clause bears hard upon some people, but the precious fluid—the "oil of gladness," as an old gentleman used to call it—still leaks out. A friend met me on the street to-day and said, "I want you to go with me to see the Provost Marshal."

"So you have been arrested, then?"

No; but come on—I'm in a hurry."

He carried me up to a room in the top of the house, opened a door, and pulled but a demijohn. So that was the Provost Marshal.

Again he says:

The dead silence of this town oppresses me. Martial law is felt but not seen. The moon shines coldly down, and there's not a drink to be had from Rockett's to Screamersville. Wo is me! Where are all the soldiers? Even they are not visable, except in the day time. Would that I were the head of a barrel of the best old Bumgarden! Oh! that the Yankees were in Hades, and I was in Washington at Kloman's or Benter's; or that Cluskey was Postmaster of the House, and this was the last night of the session! I want a glass of ale. A fellow could get a very good hot whisky punch at Brown's or at the corner back of Brown's, in the old days; and Green, who kept the Columbian there by the General Post Office, was not a bad hand for refreshments. Higgs and I have had many a drink in that basement. But here—morals. I think I hear you say good morals, and methinks you mentioned the peace of society and the health of the army. But what is good order compared to good liquor? I tell you I want a drink, and it is not to be had for love, money or blarney.

FROM PITTSBURGH LANDING.

NEWS DOWN TO WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PITTSBURGH LANDING, TENN., Wednesday Evening, April 9, 1862.

OPERATIONS ON TUESDAY.

The days after the battle have been spent in burying the dead and collecting the wounded. Meantime no operations of any importance have been attempted against the enemy. Last night their rear guard was still within eight miles of us. If cavalry is ever to be of any use to us, then was the time to let it out. But no pursuit has been made. Several regiments were ordered out yesterday, on what I suppose was intended as a reconnoissance. They came up to the rebel rear guard, made a push at it, and —— came back something the worse for wear. There were certainly no signs in the movements there that the retreat was a rout.

REBELS ABANDONING PROVISION TRAINS AND THROWING AWAY ARMS.

Yet the rebels abandoned large quantities of property. A mile or two out from Shiloh, (the church in the edge of our lines, where Beauregard had his headquarters,) long trains of wagons—mostly loaded with provisions—got fast in the mud. They abandoned them; but took care to go along before leaving and break off all the tongues. They seemed to imagine that that would serve, like spiking a gun, to disable it effectually. The amount of provisions abandoned was immense.

The rebels had evidently come to stay. Flour was scattered on either side of the road, till in places it looked as if it had snowed flour, and the storm was heavier than had ever been seen before by the oldest inhabitant.

There were some signs, too, of a rapid retreat on Monday evening. In one place rubbers, muskets and accoutrements could be picked up in any quantity. Elsewhere, through the woods and along the road, were abandoned blankets, clothes and arms of every description.

At one point, in the fields a mile or two beyond our lines, they seemed to have carried out most of their dead, who were killed in the battle of Sunday, for burial. Acres were thickly dotted with the bodies.

FUTURE MOVEMENTS.

There are no present indications that we are to follow up our victory with the vigor many will doubtless expect. The army has passed through a very severe battle, in which some of its brigades and regiments, and nearly all its divisions were more or less disorganized. Weeks will be required to put the army in as good shape as it was before the battle. The roads, too, just now, are impassable. And it is understood that Gen. Grant is not permitted by his orders to pursue, or to move from his present positions. It is said he couldn't have moved out to attack Johnston if the latter had even come and leisurely pitched his tents within three miles of our lines.

We are expecting Gen. Halleck by Friday night, or Saturday morning, to take the command in person. He may go into things with a dash, but I should doubt it yet. He is taking command of a somewhat disorganized army. He will hardly risk his first movement with it, till it is again in good condition to meet the enemy. It will take some time, too, for him to familiarize himself with the minuter details of his position, to learn his officers, and, in general, get his bearings. As any rate there is no possibility now of our moving till he comes.

ABOUT BUELL'S FORCES.

Gen. Nelson's Division, forming the advance, arrived at Savannah, Saturday night and Sunday morning. Crittenden's followed soon after. McCook's marched all day Sunday to get up in time for the fight on Monday. Woods' got in just as the battle was closing. General Garfield now has a brigade in it. Thomas' Division brought up the rear, and got in on Tuesday.

Thus all the Divisions of Buell's army are here, excepting Mitchell's. You doubtless know better where it is than we do.

MAJOR-GENERAL C. F. SMITH.

It was a matter of universal regret that this brilliant officer was not able to participate in the battle. For several weeks he has been confined to his room, and sometimes to his bed, by a severe attack of gout and a combination of other diseases. His distinguished coolness on the battlefield, his more than a third of a century's active experience, would have gone largely to prevent the disasters of Sunday.

THE GUNBOATS.

It is barely possible that there may be some complaint about the gunboats killing our own men in the cannonade on Sunday night. It is true, I believe, that they did. An officer of one of them informs me that he estimates the number thus killed at twenty; but it was better to lose those twenty than to lose the cannonade. Firing in the dark, and in the general confusion of our lines, and the advance and change of positions during the night, it is wonderful that they did not do more of this unavoidable damage than they did.

UNDER WHAT NAME.

There is no *town* of Pittsburgh where the battle was fought. There is simply a tolerably good place for boats to land, at which much of the freight for the lower Tennessee, coming from Memphis and Corinth by rail, seems to have been shipped. The place is known to the people of the country simply as Pittsburgh Landing, and Pittsburgh Landing should be the name of the battle. As the greatest ever fought on this continent, with ten times as many troops engaged as at New Orleans, thirteen times as many as at Buena Vista, and nearly twenty thousand more than the Allies had at the Alma, it deserves at least its proper name.

WHAT IT ALL AMOUNTS TO.

Was it a defeat? Certainly not. If a man attempts to knock me down, and the matter ends in my knocking him down, I'm not defeated. At the same time I must know how much I've hurt him, and how badly I'm hurt myself, before I can determine whether I'd better glorify over it much or not.

Johnston and Beauregard attempted to drive us into the river, and the matter ended in our driving them off the field. Certainly it was not a defeat. But was it a decisive victory? We are yet without facts sufficient to form a satisfactory opinion. If they were defeated so badly on Monday, as to turn their retreat into a rout; or if the killing of Johnston, the repulse of the great army on which their last paramedic efforts have been concentrated, and the defeat of the pet Beauregard whom they looked upon as invincible, should produce discouragement and demoralization enough in their ranks to prevent their making a firm stand at Corinth; then the victory was —*or might be made*—the most decisive of the war. But if (as is insisted by those who ought to know best, and as seemed to me, judging from all I could see and learn, to be the case,) their retreat was conducted in good order, and without confusion, and if they are able to perfect their defenses at Corinth, and prepare for vigorous resistance before we attack them, the greatest battle of the war, instead of deciding anything, will become mainly a success in regaining camps from which we had been driven by a surprise.

As to the fighting, the case is greatly in our favor. The rebels selected their time and place of attack, pounced upon a far inferior force, and performed a feat that military writers declare is impossible in a well disciplined army—effected a complete surprise. A stronger combination of circumstances against us could hardly be imagined. Yet we finally repulsed them.

COMPARATIVE LOSSES—KILLED, WOUNDED, ARTILLERY, PRISONERS, ETC.

Nor do the books post so badly. We all believe here that their loss in killed and wounded is considerably larger than ours. Certainly it is no less. They took a good many guns from us, but we got them all back again on Monday, and a few of theirs beside, including at least one fine steel rifled piece.

The balance of prisoners is against us. They took at one swoop the chief portions of three regiments. At various other times they picked isolated fragments of companies and squads. Altogether they must have from three to four or five thousand of our men. And to head the list, they have one of our Division Generals. We, on the other hand, took comparatively few. We have no definite figures yet, but five hundred, I should think, would cover the whole number. We have, however, a large number of their wounded, who are doubtless regarded as prisoners of war, though not included in this estimate. They carried off what wounded they could on Sunday, but on Monday they were forced to leave many to fall into our hands.

Our tents, too, are badly damaged, and much of the camp equipage is destroyed. The rebels occupied all our camp but one, on Monday night. Trunks were plundered, and private property was mostly destroyed; much, however, was left uninjured, especially the camps were not burned, as would certainly have been done, if the rebels had not expected to hold what they had gained, and to use at their leisure the spoils they had gained. But on both Sunday and Monday the battle raged through the camps, and of course the tents were riddled with balls. Many of those exposed are thus rendered worthless.

THE KILLED AND WOUNDED LISTS.

When *will* you furnish complete lists of the killed and wounded? Newspapers, I am afraid, will be besieged by eager inquirers with such questions. But do you know, my dear sir, how a complete list of the killed and wounded has to be made up? As fast as the wounded were brought in they were sent to the boats, and as fast as the boats were loaded they were sent off. The wounded in the battle of Sunday and Monday are already scattered over or on their way to Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri. Unless an organized corps of men had been at the landing to take down each name as the man was brought aboard, there was no possibility of getting lists of wounded there. We must wait, therefore, for the official report of the Adjutant of each regiment—for the killed at any rate—and for the wounded, except where their names may be procured from the boats as they arrive at their several destinations.

The number of slightly wounded is very great. If the estimate I have given should be too small, it will be found to be in my having made no allowance for these. The official reports will of course swell the lists as much as possible. Each regiment wants to show a big number of wounded, as evidence of their having done hard fighting, and so every man bruised by a spent ball, or scratched in any way, is sure to be set down.—*Special Correspondence of the Cincinnati Gazette.*

The Monitor.

Our readers will be glad to read the following in regard to the Monitor, from a letter to the New York *Tribune*:

I visited the Monitor this morning, and examined her thoroughly, under the courteous showing of her commander, Jeffers. The vessel does not float that is a match for her. She is literally the Sovereign of the Seas. Experience has demonstrated the advantage of giving to some of her parts a spherical form; but, take her all in all, she is, without experiment and complete at birth, the perfect idea of a war ship. The revolving battery was the conception of a genius. Ericsson has settled forever this characteristic of the developed American war vessel.

Capt. Jeffers, in the course of the inspection of the ship, made a remark which I feel it a duty to make public. He said: "Sir: If I know as much of the Merrimac from newspaper descriptions and pictorial representations and diagrams, as the Rebels know of the Monitor, I would go up to Norfolk and sink her before sundown." This was the only complaint, if complaint it can be called, which this brave sailor made of the unprincipled and stupid severishness of the managers of many of our daily and weekly papers to publish war news, without the slightest care or thought of the aid and comfort it may give the enemy.

Insurance brokers, underwriters, ship owners, merchants, and money lenders of New York, take heart. Have no fear of this little mailed warrior of yours, in the Hampton Roads. She will whip her big adversary, and all her backers with her. You may underwrite on her, make charter-parties on her, lend money on her, and bet on her. Northern genius, ascendant in peace, will yet show its ascendancy in war.

The Monitor will whip the Merrimac in half the time that Heenan whipped Sayers. Perhaps it would be more just to measure by the time in which David disposed of Goliah, and say that she will sink her in the throwing from a sling of fifty well-selected brook pebbles.

"Attack them in Front, and Break Through."

A Washington letter to the Chicago *Tribune* says:

We have very little news from Yorktown beyond what is transmitted by telegraph. Almost every dispatch assures us that the soldiers have unabated confidence in Gen. McClellan. This, in itself, is cheering. It is difficult to see how long we can be debarred the pleasure of a victory in that quarter, but it is a fact that the rebels have extended a complete chain of fortifications across the peninsula, which cannot be flanked at any point. When Gen. McClellan telegraphed this discouraging item to the President, Old Abe replied: "*Attack them in front then, and break through!*" There is rather more interest felt about the expected contest with the Merrimac than the one with Magruder. If the iron wretch does come out again there will be some terrific fighting done, for our tars are determined that she shall never go back to her post a second time. Guided by the experience of the Congress and Cumberland, and animated by the same heroism—for the glory of the American navy was never sustained by stouter hearts than those—they intend to grapple the infernal thing, and stick to her till the gunpowder runs out at the heels of their boots.

Taking it Coolly.

A letter from the Peninsula of Yorktown, relates the following incident:

During the first day's skirmish on our right, two soldiers, one from Maine, the other from Georgia, posted themselves each behind a tree, and indulged in sundry shots, without affect on either side, at the same time keeping up a lively chat. Finally, that getting a little tedious, Georgia calls out to Maine, "Give me a show," meaning step out and give an opportunity to hit. Maine, in response, pokes out his head a few inches, and Georgia cracks away "Now give me a show." Georgia pokes out her head, and Maine blazes away. "Too low," sings Georgia. In this way the two alternated several times without hitting. Finally Maine sends a ball within an inch or two of the ear of Georgia. "Cease firing," shouts Georgia. "Cease it is," responds Maine. "Look here," says one, "we have carried on this business long enough for one day. Spose we adjourn for rations?" "Agreed," says the other. And so the two marched away in different directions, one whistling 'Yankee Doodle,' the other 'Dixie.'"

A Thrilling Adventure.

A letter from Fortress Monroe says:

We learn from Gen. Wool that there was an accident of a most thrilling nature at General McClellan's headquarters yesterday. Gen. Fitz John Porter ascended in the balloon, for the purpose of making a reconnoissance. When high up, the rope broke, and off floated the balloon, directly over the enemy's intrenchments. The officer was considered to be inevitably lost. The hearts that were wrung with the hardness and strangeness of his fate, were suddenly cheered as well as amazed with the spectacle of the return of the balloon over our own camps. It had ascended to a counter current of air, and was wafted, with all its precious freight, back to safety. Once again over his own troops, the soldier *modèle* pulled the valve and discharged the gas from the balloon, and came down to earth "by the run," entirely unharmed. What he saw is for military use, and not for publication.

THE MERRIMAC.—The Merrimac, it is said, met with a severe accident the last time she came out. A letter from Fortress Monroe says:

The Merrimac's second shot was a shell, which fell harmless at a distance of two miles. The third shot, a shell fired from an immense gun made at the Tredegar Works, and said to be a 300-pounder, burst within the gun, and exploded the piece inside of the port. The pieces of the gun and the shell were seen to sprinkle the water, and smoke ascended from the covering over the deck. The explosion was supposed to have been deadly and damaging, for the Merrimac withdrew from the firing, and slowly went Norfolk-ward.

Can a State Rebel?

O. A. Brownson, in his essay, entitled "State Rebellion, State Suicide," in his last *Review*, thus tersely and vigorously sums up his view of the question:

"That a State in its State capacity can, under our system, rebel, admits of no doubt, if we concede it to be, though in a subordinate sphere, a civil and political entity, or a civil and political person. It is, if a person, capable of state action; and when as a State it resists the legitimate authority of the General Government, and arms its citizens against it, it rebels. If we deny the autonomy of the State, deny that it is a civil and political person, that is, in the sense a corporation is called a person, we eliminate the federal element of our political system, and make our Republic not a federal, but a consolidated or centralized Republic. If we take this ground, Slavery nowhere on our territory has any legal existence, for it is evident there is no law of the National Government authorizing it. Taking the other ground, a State can rebel, and its rebellion is and must be its dissolution as a State. It ceases from the moment of its rebellion to have any legal existence. Consequently, all that depends on its existence for vitality ceases to live, and nothing lives except the natural law, and the Constitution and laws of the United States; but as