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MONDAY MORNING, APRIL 21.

General Banks' Department.

Gen. BANKS is moving onward slowly. He is now at New Market, on the Southern bank of the Western branch of the Shenandoah. New Market is a post village of Shenandoah county, and distant one hundred and fifty miles northwest of Richmond. It is delightfully situated in the Great Valley, between Massanuttan and north mountains. There are several forges and factories in the vicinity, which abounds in iron ore. It contains three or four churches.

The reason why Gen. BANKS does not proceed further, we presume, is, that he is now well up to the movements of the center, under General M'DOWELL. Should he move up the great valley faster than M'DOWELL moves east of the Blue Ridge, he would be in danger of being attacked in flank and rear, by rebel troops from the Rappahannock region. Why M'DOWELL does not more faster we cannot divine. He has two *corps d'armee* under his command, and yet nothing seems to be doing. Of course we know not all the facts, or the reasons for delay, but to us it is inexplicable. Among M'DOWELL's troops is M'CALL's division of Pennsylvania Reserves—who have been in the field some ten months, without any opportunity of importance to distinguish themselves. They are at Manassas, and we hope may soon have the chance of marching "onward to Richmond."

To come back to Gen. BANKS. He has conducted all his operations with great caution and shrewdness, and he is gradually pushing the rebel Ashby up the valley of the Shenandoah. He is now off the line of railroad, which he will not reach again, in passing up the valley, until he arrives at Stanton.

Shenandoah county, the scene of the recent operations of Gen. Banks' command, is situated in the north-eastern central part of Virginia, forming part of the great limestone valley which extends along the western base of the Blue Ridge. The area is about 500 square miles. It is drained by the north fork of the Shenandoah river, from which the name of the county is derived. The surface is diversified by valleys and ridges. The soil is generally productive. The rocks which underlay the county are blue limestone, slate and sandstone. Iron ore is abundant, and affords an article of export; *lead and copper are also found.* A railroad extends from Strasburg, in this county, to Alexandria. Capital, Woodstock. Population, in 1860, 13,896, of whom only 753 were slaves. The county is largely peopled by Germans. The following was the vote for President in 1860:

Breckenridge	1,563
Bell	427
Douglas	175
Lincoln	12
Total vote	2,193
Majority for Breckenridge	1,422

The Surprise at Pittsburgh Landing.

Two principal causes is stated for the disgraceful surprise of our troops on that fatal Sunday morning. One is the neglect to establish adequate pickets, and the daily sending out of scouts. Another is, the miscellaneous shooting in camp. On this subject, the correspondent of the Cincinnati *Gazette* says:

But there is one lesson of this surprise standing out in such glaring prominence, that it cannot be impressed too deeply on our army in the future. *Notwithstanding all neglects elsewhere, there would have still been no such disaster on Sunday morning, but for the abominable carelessness and lack of discipline in our soldiers, in discharging fire arms.*

The proper alarms were giving in due season. *Had the discipline of our troops been such as to enable them to understand an alarm, they would have been prepared for the attack.*

The articles of war make the giving of false alarms by the discharge of firearms punishable *by death.* Yet you cannot go into a camp of these rawer volunteers that an incessant popping does not keep you in constant fear that a stray bullet should come your way. In an enemy's country every gunshot, except at the stated hours for the discharge of the loaded pieces of returning guards, pickets, etc., should be an alarm. As it was with nearly all the regiments in our front on Sunday a sharp skirmish half a mile from their lines would not have alarmed them. They were so used to hearing guns fired at all hours and in any place, by any fool who wanted to get his load out, or try his luck at a squirrel, that the sound of shots never suggested an enemy.

Yet the sound of shots is all we have to give seasonable alarm to an encampment. The pickets, after firing, may rush back to camp, but the enemy can rush as fast as they. If the shots have alarmed the camp, it is ready, if not, the enemy are upon them before they wake from the idea that some fellow had been violating an absolute regulation by firing his gun in glorious American independence, whenever he wanted to make a noise.

In any well regulated camp, the sound of a shot, except at the stated hours for discharging old loads, should be as instant an alarm as the beating of the long roll through every company. If worthless officers had attended to enforcing this sort of discipline, as the regulations require, instead of playing euchre and drinking whisky in their tents, the blood of the men murdered in their tents that Sunday morning would not now be resting on their heads.

It seems, also, that a surprise was not unexpected. How strange it was not guarded against. The same writer says:

But it is astonishing that higher officers, knowing the probabilities of attack, took no visible measures to prepare for it. I have heretofore spoken of General Grant's saying, as early at least as Friday, that he thought an attack very probable. Knowing the forces at Corinth, and that his troops thus menaced were between an overpowering enemy in front and a deep river in the rear, the probability of an attack was certainly a serious enough matter to demand preparation. A remark of General Sherman's about the probability of an attack was characteristic. Some one asked him, a week or two before the fight, what he thought of the position at Pittsburgh Landing. "I think we are in very great danger of attack," was his reply, and he went on to give his reasons. "Why, then, do you not urge your views upon the Commanding General?" "*Oh!*" with a shrug of the shoulders, "*they'd call me crazy again.*"

THE WET WEATHER AND THE SPRING CROPS.—Much alarm begins to be manifested throughout Northern and Central Illinois, with regard to the coming crops of spring grain. During the last four or five weeks it has rained almost daily, till the soil is so thoroughly saturated with water as to preclude the possibility for some time of either plowing, sowing, or planting. The danger of this shortening of the season is felt doubly at this time, in consequence of about 50,000 of our Illinois farmers being now withdrawn from the State to fight for the Union. In ordinary times even, when the spring work is forced close upon summer, by the employment of extra help, much of the danger is averted; but at present the prospect is gloomy enough. —*Chicago Tribune.*

LETTERS FROM WASHINGTON.

[Special Correspondence of the Pittsburgh Gazette.]

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 15, 1862.

I do not intend giving you all the war news I have obtained, since I have been in this vicinity. No doubt your readers would be pleased to hear it, and it would be alike gratifying to me to spread it before them; but it might prove "inconvenient" to your correspondent. Suffice to say that, in due time, Yorktown will be ours. The enemy are receiving large reinforcements; they are making vigorous preparations for a stern defence of the gate to Richmond; but *they will be defeated.* Of this rest assured.

Gen. McDowell, with our State Reserve corps, is in advance of Manassas, a few miles. I cannot tell you what other troops are there, or whether there are *some others* there, at present, because that would be "contraband of war." The Reserve corps are restive under a temporary state of inactivity. Those who have prophesied that McDowell would reach Richmond first were mistaken.

The Pennsylvania 11th, Col. Coulter, for several months on guard at Annapolis, are now here. The officers visited Hon. John Covode, at his Hotel, last night, and had a good time with their Representative. Speeches and toasts were the order of the evening, until at a late hour the company dispersed, mutually gratified with the interview. The President reviewed this regiment, yesterday, and expressed himself highly gratified with its discipline and drill.

The work of the Capitol extension, strangely enough, has, up to this time, devolved upon the Secretary of War. Recently, and mainly through the efforts of the member from your Allegheny District, Hon. Robert McKnight, of the Committee on the District, this duty has been transferred to the Department of the Interior. There is a hope, therefore, that the work necessary to preserve the dome from injury, by exposure, and by the vandalism of visitors, will be prevented by a speedy covering over, and closing in of the exposed iron skeleton.

The President has not yet signed the bill abolishing Slavery in this District. No doubt is entertained, however, that he will do so. Some Senators have been talking of the "indecent haste" with which the bill was rushed through—apparently forgetting that it is over *thirty years* since the friends of freedom began the agitation of this question.

Special News, as you may have observed, the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs introduced a clause into the Naval Appropriation Bill, appropriating $250,000 towards casting heavy naval guns at the Washington Navy Yard. Through the vigilance of your members, this clause was stricken out in the House, and a committee of conference appointed, upon which committee Gen. Moorhead was appointed. The committee of conference agreed to strike out this clause. So much for *our* Representatives. But do not be too sanguine. I have seen and heard enough to create the impression that the prospects for the establishment of a National Foundry at Pittsburgh never have been very encouraging, and now remain very much in the same condition, notwithstanding the untiring efforts of both our immediate Representatives, and some of our most influential citizens. We may get an enlargement of Knapp, Rudd & Co's foundry. I fear that, owing to the power of the Eastern and Western combination, and the division of the Pennsylvania delegation themselves, our great natural advantages will be overlooked.

I am glad to see, by yesterday's *Gazette*, now before me, that Gen. Moorhead is now fairly nominated for a third term. This is as it should be. No new man, whatever his natural gifts, could so efficiently serve his constituents. Any intelligent person who comes here, and observe things impartially in the Legislative tactics of the House, in Committee work, in the routine business necessary to be performed with the Departments, must at once see the ridiculous impropriety of the people sending novices every fourth year, to commence the business of learning this official routine, and acquiring this official acquaintance, so necessary to the successful accomplishment of the business devolving upon a Representative of the people, in the seat of government. I sincerely hope that not only Gen. Moorhead, but Hon. Robert McKnight, and also the present member from the adjoining District comprising Beaver, Washington and Greene counties—Dr. Wallace, with "honest