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WEDNESDAY MORNING, MAY 21.

General David Hunter.

Although the President, by his proclamation, has modified Gen. HUNTER'S famous emancipation order, still the people will think no worse of the General who made it, and we doubt if the President does. Gen. HUNTER has identified himself with the history of his country, and has found a warm corner in the hearts of all the true lovers of freedom. We are asked daily for information concerning his early history. It is as follows:

Major-General David Hunter is a native of the District of Columbia, and was appointed to the army from that District. He is about sixty years of age, and entered the Military Academy as a cadet, in September, 1818. He graduated in 1822, standing No. 25 in a class of forty, in which we find the names of Gens. A. K. F. Mansfield, George A. McCall, T. Morris, J. J. Abercrombie and others. On the first of July, 1822, he was promoted to the second lieutenancy of the Fifth United States infantry, and in June, 1828, was further promoted to the first lieutenancy. He became a captain of the First dragoons in March, 1833, and resigned the service on the 4th of July, 1836. On the last day of November, 1841, he was appointed a temporary paymaster of the army, and on the 14th of May, 1842, he obtained the position of full paymaster. The appointments were debited to the State of Illinois. In this latter capacity he held the same rank as a major of the active military service, and in the Army Register for 1861 his name stands second on the list of paymasters with that rank. On the 14th of May, 1861, he was appointed Colonel of the new regiment of cavalry, numerically designated as the Sixth regiment of United States cavalry, and with this rank held the command of the Second division of Gen. Burnside's army at the battle of Bull Run. For his gallantry on that occasion he was, on the 13th of the following August, made, by Congress, a major general of volunteers. It will be remembered that he was ordered to report to General Fremont, in Missouri, and he took charge of certain troops organising at the depot at Rolla.

When General Halleck was appointed to that department a new department was created, entitled the Department of Kansas, and Major General Hunter was appointed to the chief command. During his administration, some little trouble occurred between Senator (or Brigadier General) Lane and the commander, which perhaps more than anything else led to the breaking up of the department, which is now incorporated in that of the Mississippi, and General Hunter proceeded to Warhington. He was next appointed to supersede General Sherman at Port Royal, and take command of the new Department of the South, which embraces the States of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

He is reported as being an intimate personal friend of the President, and he traveled with him during his tour from Illinois to Washington previous to the inauguration.

With regard to his personal appearance, he is thus spoken of by an editor of a Kansas paper who visited him during his stay at Fort Leavenworth:

"As you enter you will be pleasantly but very calmly greeted, and the first leisure moment will be afforded you for your business. You will find yourself conversing with a man of some sixty years, above average height, hair sprinkled with grey, form slightly stooping, and whose expression of countenance denotes high intelligence, strong resolution, and, above all, a settled, placid calmness, which convinces you that right is the basis of the conviction it shadows, and robs you of every desire to combat them. He sits there, the model general, and twirling his golden bowed spectacles, the legacy of toil and fleeting years, listens to your words and makes brief sentences his part, in the conversation. Occasionally, when allusion is made to a timid, halting policy, or a twaddling "message," the eyes, roofed with heavy brows, burn with light, and strong words tell his clear disgust of it all. The stars are on his shoulder, his dress is the army blue, and if you know his history you will recollect that he, too, is a man of West Point; but you leave his presence feeling that you have not been snubbed, but that the quiet dignity of a great man has established itself in your mind the old respect for our regular army. Such is Major General Hunter—"Black Dave," as he is sometimes called."

As one of the incidents of his life, it will be remembered that during the Kansas troubles, General Hunter, who then held the rank of Major under Colonel (now General) Sumner, at Fort Leavenworth, recommended that the guns of the fort should be turned upon the Missourians, who, he said, were crossing the river to commit an outrage on the ballot box of the State of Kansas.

North Carolina Rebelling against the Confederacy.

The news from the old North State shows that secession is about played out there.

The authorities at Richmond, who have been in the habit of dragging the citizens of this and other Southern States before their star chamber in the most summary manner, and executing them without trial, for entertaining Union sentiments, have been very unexpectedly snubbed in these unwarrantable proceedings by the Governor of North Carolina, backed up by the State Convention. It appears that Jeff. Davis ordered the arrest of Mr. Respess, the Mayor of Washington, N. C., charged with having an interview with Gen. Burnside soon after Newbern was taken. The Mayor was arrested in the night time, in the most summary manner, and hurried off to Richmond in irons, where he was thrust into a dungeon, and not allowed to see any of his friends or receive any food or clothing from them.

This outrage created the most intense excitement throughout the State. Gov. Clark was instructed by the Convention, now in session in Raleigh, to make a peremptory demand on the authorities at Richmond, in the name of the State, for the immediate delivery of the person of Mayor Respess, which demand was refused by President Davis. Then a committee was appointed by the Convention to wait on Davis & Co. and inform them that the demand made by the Governor must be immediately complied with; otherwise the State of North Carolina would resort to forcible measures if necessary.

Mr. Respess was on trial before Davis when Gov. Clark first made the demand for his release; Davis answered that the trial must go on, and not until the committee made the demand in person was Mr. Respess released. This committee was also instructed to inform Jeff. Davis that North Carolina considered herself capable of inquiring into the conduct of her own citizens, and that the Richmond authorities must make no more arrests in this State. Mr. Respess was brought to Raleigh by the committee, where he was set at liberty, and will soon join his family and friends.

This movement on the part of Gov. Clark and the State Convention, is rather ominous, to say the least—especially so when it is understood that North Carolina has withdrawn all of her aid from Davis, and refused to meet a renewed demand from the rebel President for more troops and additional transportation facilities. The State has positively refused to allow any of her troops to accompany the retreating rebels into the Cotton States. Her railroads, however, are placed at the disposal of the traitors to enable them to return to their respective States.

The Heroic Exploit of Robert Smalls.

HILTON HEAD, S. C., May 14, 1862.

One of the most daring and heroic adventures since the war commenced was undertaken and successfully accomplished by a party of negroes in Charleston on Monday night last. Nine colored men, comprising the pilot, engineers and crew of the rebel gunboat Planter, took the vessel under their exclusive control, passed the batteries and forts in Charleston harbor, hoisted a white flag, ran out to the blockading squadron, and thence to Port Royal, via St. Helena Sound and Broad river, reaching the flagship Wabash shortly after ten o'clock last evening.

The following are the names of the black men who performed this gallant and perilous service: Robert Smalls, pilot; John Smalls and Alfred Gradine, engineers; Abraham Jackson, Gabriel Turno, William Morrison, Samuel Chisholm, Abraham Allston and David Jones. They brought with them the wife and three children of the pilot, and the wife, child and sister of the first engineer, John Smalls. The balance of the party were without families.

The Planter is a high-pressure, side-wheel steamer, one hundred and forty feet in length, and about fifty feet beam, and draws about five feet of water. She was built in Charleston, was formerly used as a cotton boat, and is capable of carrying 1,400 bales. On the organization of the Confederate navy she was transformed into a gunboat, and was the most valuable war vessel the Confederates had at Charleston. Her armament consisted of one 32-pound rifle gun forward, and a 24-pound howetzer aft. Besides, she had on board when she came into the harbor one seven-inch rifled gun, one eight-inch columbiad, one eight-inch howitzer, one long 32-pounder, and about two hundred rounds of ammunition, which had been consigned to Fort Ripley, and which would have been delivered at that fortification on Tuesday had not the designs of the rebels been frustrated. She was commanded by Capt. Relay, of the Confederate Navy—all the other employes of the vessel, excepting the first and second mates, being persons of color.

Robert Smalls, with whom I had a brief interview at General Benham's headquarters this morning, is an intelligent negro, born in Charleston, and employed for many years as a pilot in and about that harbor. He entered upon his duties on board the Planter some six weeks since, and, as he told me, adopted the idea of running the vessel to sea from a joke which one of his companions perpetrated. He immediately cautioned the crew against alluding to the matter in any way on board the boat, but asked them, if they wanted to take it up in sober earnestness, to meet at his house, where they would devise and determine upon a plan to place themselves under the protection of the Stars and Stripes instead of the stars and bars. Various plans were proposed; but finally the whole arrangement of the escape was left to the discretion and sagacity of Robert, his companions promising to obey him and be ready at a moment's notice to accompany him. For three days he kept the provisions of the party secreted in the hold, awaiting an opportunity to slip away. At length, on Monday evening, the white officers of the vessel went on shore to spend the night, intending to start on the following morning for Fort Ripley, and to be absent from the city for some days. The families of the contrabands were notified and came stealthily on board. At about three o'clock the fires were put under the boilers, and the vessel steamed quietly away down the harbor. The tide was against her, and Fort Sumter was not reached till broad daylight. However, the boat passed directly under its walls, giving the usual signal—two long pulls and a jerk at the whistle cord—as she passed the sentinel.

Once out of range of the rebel guns, the white flag was raised, and the Planter steamed directly for the blockading steamer Augusta. Capt. Parrott, of the latter vessel, as you may imagine, received them cordially, heard their report, placed Acting Master Watson, of his ship, in charge of the Planter, and sent the Confederate gunboat and crew forward to Commodore Du Pont. The families of the crew have been sent to Beaufort, where Gen. Stevens will make suitable provision for them. The crew will be taken care of by Commodore Dupont.

The contrabands who came by the Planter represent that the feeling in Charleston approaches nearer to a panic than at any time since the rebellion was inaugurated. The women and children have been ordered out of the place, and have taken whatever of value they could carry with them. The troops are in constant expectation of an attack, and the remaining citizens are nightly holding meetings to devise further means of defence. The steamers in the harbor are seven in number; but only one of them—the Marion—is armed, and she is not capable of doing any damage or offering any resistance to an attacking force. Provisions are terribly scarce and dear