

[From the Richmond South, July 19th.]

Col. Steptoe's Battle with the Indians—Letter from Col. Steptoe.

A private letter from Col. Steptoe, dated at Fort Walla-Walla, 31st May, 1858, has been placed at our disposal, from which we extract and subjoin his narrative of the circumstances attending his recent action with the Spokane and other Indians.

As Col. Steptoe did not enter the Indian country with any expectation of hostilities, we do not feel justified in criticising his retreat—His men seem to have fought bravely, and his own undoubted courage and conduct render it probable that no alternative remained, except to be cut off in detail or abandon his expedition. In the face of such a disparity of force, and in a position so unfavorable, it was perhaps the best that could be done. It does not seem to have been a surprise, but an unexpected declaration of hostilities on the part of the Indians. The Florida war began with the surprise and massacre of Dade's command, and we suppose that the battle will be a prelude to an obstinate and expensive war.

EXTRACT FROM COL. STEPTOE'S LETTER.

"I left this fort (Walla-Walla) on the 13th, with the command mentioned above, (152 men) to visit Colville, a white settlement near the British line, and about two hundred miles distant. The object of my visit was to talk with the white people and Indians, and try to effect a more harmonious intercourse between them. Two deep, strong rivers—the Snake and the Spokane—had to be crossed. I succeeded in crossing the first with great difficulty, and when near the other found myself suddenly in the presence of more than a thousand Indians, all armed, painted and highly excited. They demanded whether we came to attack them. I answered that we were friends to all who were friendly, and did not wish to fight if it could be avoided. They expressed themselves satisfied, but posted themselves on the summits of three hills, around the bases of which our road wound.

"Never suspecting treachery, I was on the point of entering the defile when a mere accident excited my suspicion, and I turned aside. There is no doubt on my mind now, that, if we had gone on, not one would have lived to see the morrow. I halted and encamped, but the baffled savages glared upon us, hesitating to attack, and we remained thus in a half-hostile attitude till near sunset. The merest trifle would have been sufficient to precipitate either party upon the other.

"The next morning I resumed the march, but had gone only two or three miles when the Indians attacked the rear guard, and immediately the fight became general. We labored under the disadvantage of having to fight while moving on, and in the midst of a country of successive hills peculiarly favorable to the enemy. My force was all mounted, but composed chiefly of troops who had never before been under fire. About 12 o'clock the commander of one company fell, and the Indians charging fiercely upon his men, they gave way and could not be rallied. Soon after, another company commander fell, and some of the bravest petty officers in the command were severely wounded. I determined, therefore, to take a position and halt. The fight continued without intermission until a short time before sunset when the enemy posted themselves all around us to wait for the night and for reinforcements.—We knew that 200 or 300 more would join them before morning; our ammunition was nearly exhausted; our loss in killed and wounded very considerable. It was evident that we could not fight another day.

"These considerations determined me to make a forced march and get possession of the canoes in which we had crossed Snake river before the enemy could do so. Painful as the step was, I saw there was no other alternative. We could not remain where we were, and a slow march would be fully as disastrous; for, if the enemy seized upon the canoes, our situation would be worse than ever. For these reasons I put the command in motion about 10 o'clock at night, and did not stop until we reached the river nearly ninety miles off.

"This war has been maturing for some time, but if I could have beaten the enemy at the start, all future difficulty might have been prevented; as it is, I fear that many lives will be lost before a satisfactory adjustment can be arrived at. The savages appear to have been excited by rumors that the government intends to take possession of their lands, and the act of the last Congress, to lay out a military road from this place to the waters of the upper Missouri, fully satisfied them of the truth of the rumor. The party to survey the road was just assembling here, and the fight with me has no doubt saved it from massacre."

A THOUGHT ON TWO.—This life cannot be over again. The moments that pass, pass forever. I now behold the clock—there, that tick is past, and still another, and yet another. So pass days, months and years; so pass opportunities neglected, and half of our time without the proper effort. Young man, a word with you—you cannot rub out the figures of life as the boy does the arithmetical question upon his slate. The great blackboard of life is it upon which you make the mark, in the sight of God and men, and once made is there forever. If we make a wrong mark it will not serve us to sit down and repent because we cannot rub it out. The true principle of life is to go on, not with the mistakes, but with the corrections. The mark you made yesterday, improve it to-day. Let every day be a witness of some greater good.

[From the N. Y. Evening Post of July 22.]

Letter from the Peace Commissioners to General Johnston.**GREAT SALT LAKE CITY,**

Utah Territory, June 12, 1858.

Dear Sir: We have the pleasure of informing you that after a full and free conference with the chief men of the Territory, we are informed by them that they will yield obedience to the Constitution and laws of the United States; that they will not resist the execution of the laws in the Territory of Utah; that they cheerfully consent that the civil officers of the Territory shall enter upon the discharge of their respective duties and that they will make no resistance to the army of the United States in its march to the valley of Salt Lake or elsewhere. We have their assurance that no resistance will be made to the officers, civil or military, of the United States, in the exercise of their various functions in the Territory of Utah.

The houses, fields and gardens of the people of this Territory, particularly in and about Salt Lake City, are very insecure. The animals of your army would cause great destruction of property if the greatest care should not be observed in the march and in the selection of camps. The people of the Territory are somewhat uneasy for fear the army, when it shall reach the valley, would not properly respect their persons and property. We have assured them that neither their persons nor property would be injured or molested by the army under your command.

We would respectfully suggest, in consequence of this feeling of uneasiness, that you issue a proclamation to the people of Utah, stating that the army under your command would not trespass upon the rights or property of peaceable citizens during the sojourn in or march of your army through the Territory. Such a proclamation would greatly allay the existing anxiety and fear of the people, and cause those who have abandoned their homes to return to their houses and farms.

We have made inquiry about grass, wood, &c., necessary for the subsistence and convenience of your army. We have conversed with Mr. Ficklin fully on this subject, and given him all the information we have, which he will impart to you.

We respectfully suggest that you march to the valley as soon as it is convenient for you to do so.

We have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servants,

L. W. POWELL, } Commissioners to Utah.
BEN. McCULLOCH, }
Gen. A. S. Johnston, commanding army of Utah, Camp Scott, Utah Territory.

GEN. JOHNSTON'S REPLY TO THE PEACE COMMISSIONERS.

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF UTAH, }
Camp on Bear River, June 14, 1858.

Gentlemen: Your communication from Salt Lake City was received to-day. The accomplishment of the object of your mission entirely in accordance with the instructions of the President, the wisdom and forbearance of which you have so ably displayed to the people of the Territory, will, I hope, lead to a more just appreciation of their relations to the general government and the establishment of the supremacy of the laws. I learn with surprise that uneasiness is felt by the people as to the treatment that they may receive from the army. Acting under the twofold obligations of citizens and soldiers, we may be supposed to comprehend the rights of the people and to be sufficiently mindful of the obligations of our oaths not to disregard the laws which govern us as a military body. A reference to them will show with what jealous care the general government has guarded the rights of citizens against any encroachment. The army has duties to perform here in execution of the Department of War, which, from the nature of them, cannot lead to interference with the people in their varied pursuits, and if no obstruction is presented to the discharge of those duties, there need not be the slightest apprehension that any person whatever will have cause of complaint against it.

The army will continue its march from this position on Thursday, 17th inst., and reach the valley in five days. I desire to encamp beyond the Jordan on the day of arrival in the valley.

With great respect, your obedient servant,
A. S. JOHNSTON,
Colonel Second Cavalry and Brevet Brigadier General United States Army, commanding.
To the Hon. L. W. Powell and Major Ben McCulloch, United States Commissioners to Utah.

OAKS IN ENGLAND.—The Parliament Oak, in Clipstone Park, is said to be 1,500 years old. The park existed before the Conquest, and belongs to the Duke of Portland. The tallest oak was the same nobleman's property; it was called the "Duke's Walking-stick," and was higher than Westminster Abbey. The largest oak in England is the Calthorpe Oak, Yorkshire; it measures seventy-eight feet in circumference at the ground. The Three Shires Oak, at Worksoop, is called so from its forming part of the counties of York, Nottingham and Derby. This tree had the greatest expanse of any recorded in this island, dropping over 777 square yards. The most productive oak was that of Gleenos, in Monmouthshire, felled in 1810; the bark brought £200, and its timber £670. In the mansion of Tredegar Park, Monmouthshire, there is said to be a room, forty-two feet long and twenty-seven broad, the floor and wainscot of which were the produce of a single tree, an oak, grown on the estate.—[Sir W. Symonds.

THE FIRST BATTLE.

The first military achievement which this administration has to show for its large expenditures and boisterous notes of preparation has not occurred in Utah or in the Gulf of Mexico, where its demonstrations were most conspicuous, but about eighty-five miles north of Snake river. Col. Steptoe, for one winter the Governor of Utah, was the hero of it, and twenty-six of his followers were its victims.

The fate of these men was a sad one, and the more so from the fact that it seems to have been as unnecessary as it was unprofitable.—What they were doing up among the Spokane Indians does not appear in the reports; but that they were regarded by the Indians as enemies who came to drive them from their hunting grounds—"to wipe them out," was the expression they used—is beyond dispute. Instead of trying to eradicate this impression, as he should have done if not well founded, Col. Steptoe tells his men that they must fight their way through. We would really be glad to hear some good reason for such management. Why need those savages be disturbed? Why not let them alone altogether, or prepare them for the transit of troops through their country by friendly approaches? We fear that the reason is one which will reflect little credit upon the officer in command or upon the Administration. There is a disposition to treat the Indian on our frontiers with even less forbearance than the white bears or the reptiles which share the wilderness with them, for we do not disturb these *rapacia* except when they are in our way. These Indians are not in our way; we do not need the lands they attempted to defend, for settlement, and if we did, there are other agencies which should be employed, before violence, to get them.

But it seems to be the policy of the present Administration to cultivate every difficulty of a foreign or domestic character, to make it a pretext for spending money. This expedition will be the pretext for asking a larger Indian army. The reports of the battle which have reached the Atlantic coast, all call for more troops to fight Indians with. There are thousands of people delighted by reports of such battles, for they set the treasury funds a-flowing. Orders were received in the city yesterday, we understand, by the Quartermaster of this department, to make arrangements to send 500 men immediately to reinforce Col. Steptoe.—Instead of taking troops on the ground, or volunteers, the government sends a small army three or four thousand miles to fight these Indians, and for what end? To drive them back a little further in the wilderness and to spend a great deal of money. Here we may see the curse of a standing army in the United States. The more we increase its numbers, the more we multiply the sources of disaffection among the border tribes, the more we strengthen that hostile policy which keeps our frontiers in a state of constant disorder. If we had had no government soldiery on the frontiers for the last thirty years, and had left the border states to deal with the Indians as they pleased, we have no doubt the security of life and property among them would be far greater than it is now, with an army of some 18,000 men, occupied almost to a man in fighting them.—N. Y. Eve. Post, July 22.

NO FLATTERY.—A curious incident occurred at one of the prayer meetings down town last week. An unctious brother, who it appears is an out-door clerk for one of the lottery swindles situated in a Broadway basement not far from the Park, and who has been long noted as one of the hardest kind of characters, after chuckling out in nasal spasms a general confession of his sins, and exulting over his curious "conversion," besought the prayers of the assembly in his behalf.

His request was immediately complied with by a younger brother, who seemed well posted on the past career and present mode of life of the only "convert."

This gentleman instantly sent up a fervid prayer in behalf of "brother L—." He implored for mercy for the corpulent sinner, although, as he averred, brother L—'s long life of fraud extended beyond the reach of mercy that was not infinite in its nature. Brother L— rather winced at this literal compliance with his own solicitation, but quite regardless of this, the scathing supplicator went on.

"Thou knowest," he proceeded, "that no sinful wretch stands in greater need of mercy than brother L—! Forgive him for his robbery of the widow and the poor! forgive him for his long life of fraud! Turn his heart this day from lusting after the nefarious profits of the policy business! Awaken him to a knowledge of the sinfulness of false pretences, and the purchase of stolen goods, and inspire him with a determination to pay his debts!"

Quite a lively altercation ensued outside a few minutes afterwards between brother L— and the gentleman who had prayed so pointedly in his behalf, which would probably have terminated unpleasantly, but for the interference of a policeman.—N. Y. Paper.

A GOOD WITNESS.—Lawyer—Did the defendant knock the plaintiff down with malice prepense?

Witness—No, sir; he knocked him down with a flat iron.

Lawyer—You misunderstand me, my friend; I want to know whether he attacked him with any evil intent.

Witness—Oh, no, sir; it was outside the tent.

Lawyer—No, no; I wish you to tell me whether the attack was at all a preconcerted affair.

Witness—No, sir, it was not a free concert affair; it was at a circus.

The Great Earthquake in Mexico.

CITY OF MEXICO, June 30, 1858.

I was on my way to my hotel, when suddenly the earth rocked beneath my feet; I was precipitated against the wall of a house; the houses commenced to crack and roll about like empty bottles in water; the streets were rapidly filled with young and old—some in full dress, some in no dress—all making the most frightful ado; some laying flat on their bellies, but most on their knees, calling on all the saints in the Mexican calendar to save them, their wives or husbands, their children, &c.; horses, dogs, and even the mules and the stupid asses in the streets stood stock still, quivering in every part. A second or more gave me an idea of what was transpiring, and recollecting the exclamation of a *cargador* a few seconds before, that there was an earthquake, I recovered myself as I was going headlong in the street on the rebound, and betaking myself to a doorway took out my watch and commenced making notes of time and events. As I laid hold of one side of the door—which was the San Francisco, near the corner of the Vergara—the houses in the street appeared to me to be rocked about as if they were made of cork; and at the time were floating on a stormy water. Windows cracked; patio lamps were hurled through portals into the streets; altogether there appeared to me to be but little chance of getting through the trouble with whole body and bones, so I made my way as best I could over the heaving pavement to the corner of the street, moved thither by the general instinct exhibited by all living creatures. A crowd of lepers, donkeys, horses, some ladies and a few gentlemen, soon formed my companions. When I arrived at the corner I was the only person standing—all the rest were on their knees or bellies; but a few seconds brought several who also kept an upright position—most of them for bravado. At the corner I could see the National Theatre, the Hotel Iturbide, the Progreso, the Academy at the corner, and several other large buildings. They were all heaving to and fro in the most alarming manner. For my own part, I could not conceive how they were able to resist one of the shocks, so violent were they and so heaving. But, fortunately, no house in the range of my vision came down. The shocks lasted for nearly three minutes, although all the heavy swells passed within the space of two minutes.

The first shock was light and unperceived by me, although noticed by a *cargador* whom I was passing at the moment, who was seated on a corner stone. I had time to cross the street after the first shock, and had gone some twenty feet when the statement of the *cargador* turned out true. After the heavy shocks there were several lighter ones, which were very annoying to foot passengers. The earth was contracting into its place, and gave several disagreeable twinges and jerks.

The first shock came from the south-south-east, and was followed by three from the same direction, when the motion suddenly turned to east and west, and gave us four heavy surges, which was followed by others of less strength.

The whole affair created the most intense excitement throughout this city, which admitted no abatement for three or four days. The previous gossip which had existed regarding the forced loans, banishments, &c., suddenly was hushed, and all were absorbed in learning the truth of the calamity which had passed. For the first night and day the populace flocked to the squares and principal openings in the city. The first night the Alameda and Grand Plaza were filled with thousands of people, who kept watch, for sleep they could not, on account of a drizzling rain. A general impression prevailed that there would be a repetition within thirty-four hours after the visitation. Fortunately this did not come.

The circuit of this earthquake is not yet exactly known, but already it is known to have extended over an area of six hundred miles. It is also impossible as yet to ascertain where the shocks came from. Some incline to the belief that they originated in the volcano of Jorullo, in Michoacan, on account of the almost entire annihilation of the town of Patzeuaro; others think the shocks were caused by some internal movements on the Pacific coast, near Acapulco, as the village of Chilpancingo has suffered severely—sixty houses having been thrown down.—N. Y. Herald, July 16.

NEW USES OF COTTON.—Every year develops some new use of cotton, which takes the place of other materials, sometimes openly and as an improvement, and sometimes by fraudulent admixture. Many of the fabrics called wool and silk contain more of cotton than of the material of which they profess to be made, and many articles for which cotton was till lately thought to be an unsuitable material, are proved to be better made from that than from the fabrics that were originally supposed alone to be adapted to them.

The *Charleston Courier* announces that a process has been discovered by which cotton can be compressed into a solid form, harder than wood, impervious to the elements, fire-proof and water-proof, and capable of use for building purposes, at about one-third of the cost of brick.

GOOD ADVICE.—One of Wyatt's common sayings was, that there were three things which should always be strictly observed:—"Never to play with any man's unhappiness or deformity, for that is inhuman; nor on superiors, for that is saucy and undutiful; nor on holy matter, for that is irreligious."