

## THE REPULSE IN FLORIDA.

## A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE LATE BATTLE.

It is now a considerable time since we had anything from the seat of war; the following is interesting:

[Correspondence of the New York Times.]

JACKSONVILLE, FLA., Monday, Feb. 22.

## THE MARCH.

The entire column, numbering a little less than 5000 men, left Barber's at 7 o'clock Saturday morning, and proceeded on the main road toward Lake City. I am confident the force did not exceed the number stated, for I am assured by an aide-d-camp to Gen. Seymour, that rations were drawn that morning for not quite 5000. The forward movement was made suddenly. On Friday it was not supposed by the commanding officers—not including Gen. Seymour—that an advance would be made for some days thence. With that conviction, the officers and men had built themselves log huts, and provided such conveniences available in that section as would insure a fair share of comfort. Some time during the night Gen. Seymour received information of the enemy's whereabouts and plans, which led him to believe that by pushing rapidly forward his column, he would be able to defeat the enemy's designs, and secure important military advantages. Whatever that information may have been, the events of Saturday would indicate that it was by no means reliable, or that Gen. Seymour acted upon it with too much haste. We all know that Gen. Seymour is not a man to hesitate in his actions when an opportunity offers for a possible success. He is one of the class that believes he has a chance of winning and a chance of losing, and that success would never be obtained if he rested quietly on the bend of the little South Fork. He means it shall never be said of the army that he commands that it is all quiet on the line of some river. Gen. Seymour deserves credit for his ambition and dash. If he had allowed himself to rest his command at Barber's for a month or six weeks, without making a single effort to engage the enemy and gain advantage, he would have been the butt for censure, not only from the army here, but the people at home. We take the ground that Gen. Seymour did what nearly every one, before the engagement, said he should do. If he had achieved a victory, it would have been as everybody predicted, and his name would have been mentioned with praise. Now he has suffered a repulse, he will, of course, be looked upon by some as having too much rashness to prosecute a campaign, and for that reason must bear whole loads of censure. Although the result of the fight was not favorable to us, it does not alter the fact that we have a man in the Department of the South, who has pluck enough to meet the enemy, regardless of its strength, more than half way; give him battle, and take the legitimate chances of success.

The place at which the fight occurred is on the line of the Florida Central Railroad, forty-five miles from Jacksonville, and within fifteen miles of Lake City. The nearest station to the ground is called Olustee, which is about three miles further up toward Lake City. The nearest station in the opposite direction is Sanderson, six miles distant from the battle-field. On the march from Barber's, our troops passed through Sanderson at about noon. At this place they did not halt, but pushed forward toward Olustee, the point at which Gen. Seymour believed he should meet the enemy. But instead of coming in contact with the enemy at Olustee, the meeting took place three miles this side, so our troops were not so well prepared for battle as they would have been if Olustee had been the battle-field. Our column moved forward in regular order, the cavalry in the advance, and the artillery distributed along the line of infantry. It may be offered as an objection that the column was without flankers. The only source through which any intimation of the enemy's presence could be received was the advance cavalry guard. It would certainly be called a military failing to move a column of troops without the proper flankers through any portion of the enemy's country, even if positive information had been obtained that the enemy himself was a long distance off. The road from Barber's to Lake City lies parallel with the railroad, crossing it at intervals on an average of five miles. It was at one of these crossing-points that the fight was commenced. The head of the column reached this point at 2 p.m. The men had not rested from the time they left Barber's, at 7 a.m. The usual halt of a few minutes every hour was of course observed, but we cannot say the troops fairly rested. Neither had they tasted of a mouthful of food. Thus, after a tedious march of sixteen miles, over a road of loose sand, or boggy turf, or covered knee-deep with muddy water, the troops, weary, exhausted, faint, hungry and ill-conditioned, were suddenly attacked by a large force of the enemy, who had concealed himself behind a thick wood, waiting with complacent satisfaction the entry of our men into his ambush, very much after the manner that the spider would have the fly walk into his parlor. Before reaching the battle-ground, Col. Henry, with his cavalry of the Independent Massachusetts Battalion and the Fortieth Massachusetts Mounted Infantry, came upon a party of five mounted rebels who were stationed behind an old deserted mill, a little to the left of the wood. A few shots were exchanged and then the rebels fled in the direction of their main force. Capt. Langdon's battery of regular artillery was with Henry's cavalry. At the mill, Col. Henry halted until

Hawley's brigade of infantry and Hamilton's regular battery had come up. I will now attempt to give some idea of the order in which our troops came into line, and the character and progress of the

## BATTLE.

With the view of meeting the enemy's pickets, three miles in advance of the mill, two companies of the 7th Connecticut Regiment were deployed on the left of the railroad, while three companies were left at the mill, for the purpose of supporting the artillery. A small force of cavalry was sent to skirmish on the right of the railroad. Our skirmishers had not advanced a hundred yards when they discovered those of the enemy directly in their front. The result was a brisk fire on both sides, which ended by the enemy's falling back on a second line of skirmishers. Our men continued to drive the rebels back, sometimes on the right and sometimes on the left of the railroad, but particularly on the left. While this was going on, two companies of the 40th Massachusetts were ordered to the left, with a view of outflanking the enemy's skirmishers. In endeavoring to carry out that order, the 40th Massachusetts came upon a heavy line of skirmishers and were compelled to withdraw to their original position. Capt. Elder of the First Artillery, in order to ascertain the enemy's force and position, brought one of his pieces into battery on the right and fired one shot, but it did not draw a reply. The Seventh New Hampshire Regiment, in connection with the Seventh Connecticut, was then sent forward to the right and if possible to break through the enemy's line. This movement brought on hot firing, and it was evident that an engagement was near at hand. At this time our force on the field consisted of the Seventh New Hampshire, the Seventh Connecticut, the Independent Battalion of the Massachusetts Cavalry, the Fortieth Massachusetts Mounted Infantry, the Eighth United States Colored, Elder's Battery of four and Hamilton's of six pieces. The remainder of the column halted on the road. While our men were at work on the right, Col. Henry, in person, went over to the left to reconnoitre, and much to his astonishment discovered that the enemy's right lapped on our left. This was reported to Gen. Seymour, who immediately gave orders for the advance troops and batteries to come into position. The enemy watched the movements with an eager eye, and the moment Hamilton commenced unlimbering his pieces his battery was subjected to a galling fire of musketry. A number of men and several horses were shot before he could get ready to fire one round. The fact that the enemy had a force far superior in point of numbers to our own was now beyond all dispute. The firing became heavier and more destructive as each moment advanced. The railroad as it nears Olustee takes a bend, and behind this bend the rebels had taken their position. In the woods at the rear were their supporters and reserves. We had not a moment to lose. Our men were within one hundred yards of the enemy, and the only thing that could be done was to fight. To retreat at that time was impossible, for the road was filled with troops coming up, and the woods on either side would not admit of passage on the flank. By dint of effort, Capt. Langdon succeeded in getting his four guns in battery on the extreme left, but not until he had lost about five or six men and about the same number of horses. It must be borne in mind our batteries were within one hundred yards of the enemy's front. This short distance rendered it a very easy task for the rebels to pick off a man or a horse at every discharge of their rifles. At the commencement of the fight the Eighth United States Colored Troops were supporting Hamilton's Battery, but when their assistance was really indispensable, by some strange order they fled to the right in rear of the battery, for the purpose of joining their right on the left of the Seventh Connecticut. At that particular time the movement was decidedly an error, for by carrying it out left Hamilton's Battery unsupported. In an attempt to enfilade the enemy on his right Hamilton moved forward four pieces; but before he got into position, the rebels on that portion of their line had concentrated all their fire upon him and the Eighth U. S. who had again come up to his support. In twenty minutes' time, Hamilton lost 44 men, killed and wounded, and 40 horses. The Eighth also suffered severely. At no one juncture of the engagement was the fire of the enemy more severe than at the time Hamilton attempted his enfilade movement. Hamilton knew very well his pieces were in great danger of being captured, and he also had sense enough to know that by taking them to the rear it would instantly cause a panic among the infantry, and so inevitably lose the day for us. The behavior of Capt. Hamilton at this critical period of the battle was worthy of special note, and I sincerely believe that it was owing mainly to his persistent efforts that the portion of our line at his battery was not broken and scattered in confusion. He had not only his pieces to command, but his infantry supports to keep from leaving the field. It was in the midst of this destructive fire of the enemy, and while Capt. Hammond was urging the infantry to maintain their line, and at the same time giving orders to his battery, he was struck in the arm by a musket ball, and shortly after was again hit in the thigh. To add to the misfortune, all of his officers—four in number—were wounded. Col. Chas. W. Fribley, of the Eighth United States, was also mortally wounded on this portion of the field. He did not cease for a moment to encourage and rally his men, and by his gallant behavior proved himself to be an officer of no

ordinary merit. Capt. Hamilton kept his pieces at work until it was evident it would be sure loss to fire another round, and then gave orders to withdraw them. Horses were attached to only four pieces; the horses to the other two had been shot, consequently two guns fell into possession of the enemy. On the right of Hamilton the Seventh Connecticut and the Seventh New Hampshire were doing fearful execution. The Seventh Connecticut especially were standing their ground with marked valor. Every volley from their guns told splendidly on the rebel line. But between the two forces a wide difference existed—the rebels outnumbered us five to one. This crushing superiority gave the two regiments little chance for victory. After losing one-fourth of their number they were compelled to retire to the rear. At the same moment Col. Barton's brigade, the 47th, 48th and 115th New York regiments took the field, coming up in line en echelon. On the right was Elder's Battery, and on the left Langdon's and one section of the 3d Rhode Island. The enemy had four pieces of artillery. On a railroad car he had mounted a heavy gun, supposed to be a 32-pounder, and with this he kept up a regular fire, but not destructive, as the shells passed over the heads of our men. There can be no doubt concerning the fighting qualities of Barton's brigade. On this occasion they fought like tigers, but the same difficulty which opposed Hawley's brigade, presented itself to them, viz., the mass of the enemy. The last regiments to enter the field were the First North Carolina, and Fifty-fourth Massachusetts (colored), of Montgomery's brigade. They took a bold position at the front, and maintained their ground with commendable pertinacity. For three and a half successive hours did our brave regiments combat the enemy before them. The instances of personal daring that occurred in the meantime are numerous. Never before did the troops in this Department have such an opportunity for displaying their valor, and on no previous occasion have they exhibited such a high degree of bravery. If the enemy had presented an equal force with our own, or even if it had been only double, no doubt could have been felt as to the final result of the contest. As it was the enemy resisted us with a force in point of numbers three times that of our own, which taken together with the circumstances of the long and tedious march and the ill condition of the men, it would be hardly reasonable to suppose that success would be on our side. The effect of our fire, both of musketry and artillery, was fearful. At every discharge, down went a body of rebels. The gallant Elder on the right and the dashing Langdon on the left, made an impression on the rebel lines that will go far to offset the misfortune that ultimately overtook us. The fight was by no means a trivial encounter; it was a battle hotly contested, fought at close range, face to face and foot to foot. The commanding officers of the various regiments are entitled to unlimited credit for the heroic manner in which they led their men. At the acme of the battle, Colonel Sammons, of the One Hundred and Fifteenth New York, was struck in the foot, and was in consequence compelled to leave the field. His horse was shot from under him. Col. Moore, of the Forty-Seventh New York, was also wounded, a ball striking his hand and passing out at his elbow. Col. Barton had his coat pierced in several places and his horse shot. Col. Henry had three horses shot, but himself escaped in a most miraculous manner. Provost Marshal General Hall had a horse shot from under him, and as for himself, no one would believe it would be possible for to again pass through what he did on that day, and come out unscathed. Lieut. Jackson, of Gen. Seymour's staff had two horses shot. If space would permit, I might fill a column of just such narrow escapes as these.

Gen. Seymour was not away from the ground for an instant. At first on the right and then on the left, he seemed to be everywhere at one and the same moment. His aim was apparently to be in the thickest of the fight, and at the front of his troops.

At 5 p. m. the fire slackened on both sides. On ours, in consequence of the ammunition giving out, and on the enemy's, because we did not press him. A demonstration by the rebels to capture Langdon's Battery, at about the middle stage of the fight, was prevented by Langdon, who poured into their line a quick and deadly fire. But in coming from the field he was obliged to leave to the enemy three of his pieces, not because the enemy charged upon them, but for the reason that he did not have horses to draw them off. At half-past five o'clock the firing had ceased. The cessation was simultaneous on both sides. We held our ground till seven o'clock, and then the order came from Gen. Seymour to gradually

## RETREAT.

The retreat was conducted leisurely and orderly. There was no confusion, no panic, nothing that indicated hurry. Colonel Henry with his cavalry, brought up the rear. At three o'clock Sunday morning, our troops were at Barber's. The enemy followed closely but did not press. A few of their cavalry only kept well up to the rear of Henry's column. At Barber's, our men rested till 9 a. m. and then again took up the line of retreat, reaching Baldwin at about 3 p. m. They halted here for a short time, and then went on toward Jacksonville, arriving at the camping ground, six miles out, on Monday afternoon. On the way down many of the poor fellows could hardly drag one foot after the other.

## OUR LOSS.

To estimate our loss is indeed an unpleasant

task, but, nevertheless, one which must be performed in giving the record of the day's events. In killed, wounded and missing, I give the number at one thousand two hundred. All our killed and the severely wounded, that is, those who were unable to walk from the field, unassisted, fell into the hands of the enemy. Last night at 12 o'clock, about five hundred of the wounded had been conveyed to Jacksonville. Their names are embraced in the list of casualties which I present in another portion of this letter. At that time about 200 wounded were on the way, but did not reach Jacksonville in season for me to get their names so as to send on by this mail. The surgeons estimate 300 wounded to have been left on the field. The proportion of 200 killed to 1000 wounded is that usually allowed. This would make the aggregate of 1200.

We also left on the field five guns, and not a small number of small arms. The road from Barber's to Baldwin was strewn with guns, knapsacks and blankets.

At a station on the railroad between Barber's and Baldwin we burnt a building containing 2000 barrels of turpentine. This we might have got away several days previous had transportation been accessible. We also burnt a trestle bridge on the railroad not far from Barber's. At Baldwin we burnt a large supply of commissary stores, knapsacks and officer's baggage. The wagons used to transport these things to the army were filled on the retreat with the wounded.

## THE ENEMY'S LOSS.

It is customary to make the enemy's list of casualties equal to our own. In this instance I believe I can follow the rule, and be not very far from the truth. When we consider that the enemy had but four or five, and we sixteen pieces of artillery, in a position, it is not difficult to believe we inflicted upon him quite as much injury as he upon us. The fact that he did not follow rapidly is significant of the immense damage he sustained.

**THEATRICAL.**—The favor with which the Corsican Brothers was received on a former occasion induces the management to again present it this evening, followed by the popular Vaudeville—the Loan of a Lover, in which Mrs. Irwin appears as Gertrude. There will no doubt be a fine house. The "put on" of the Corsican Brothers, and the fine tableaux and mechanical effects reflect the highest credit upon the management. We saw no person who was not fully gratified when it was before presented. The Vaudeville is new and sparkling.

**BENEFIT FOR THE LADIES.**—We are pleased to notice the announcement of a complimentary benefit to the ladies of the Association on Saturday evening, on which occasion will be presented for the first time in this Territory Bourcicault's great Irish Drama, Colleen Bawn. From the favor with which this drama has been received in New York and London and its long continuance on the boards of the theatre where it was originally presented, we expect that it will be the best sensation piece of the present season. We have been expecting Colleen Bawn for a long time and we have no doubt its production will be as successful as the public can wish. The beneficiaries are highly respected by the community and have labored long and arduously for the establishment of the drama and we have no doubt that the public will testify in a substantial manner its appreciation of their efforts.

**THE SNOW STORM.**—A very welcome snow storm passed over this valley on Saturday last which refreshed the parched ground and made glad the hearts of the people. The weather since has been very pleasant but at this writing is not very settled. More snow will do no hurt; but that which fell on Saturday, without more, will be of incalculable benefit to the fields and gardens.

**GOING TO THE SEVIER.**—Our "friend David," of Mount Pleasant favors us with a few items of news from Sen Pete. Everything speaks well for the enterprising laborers under the direction of Prest. Orson Hyde. The pioneers for the Sevier were going along merrily, and the prospects of permanent and beneficial extensions were very encouraging. That's right. Labor is wealth, and industry the first virtue. Without them, poverty and crime. Go a-head and God bless your labors.

**THE FIRST BORN.**—Among the notices of "keeping the commandment" in to-day's paper we observe the claim for one of the fair ones that she was the "first born" of Israel in the mountains. Over a year ago, there was a similar claim made in good faith; but we think the records award the honors to the present claimant, born August 9th 1847. How time flies! Israel has reason to be grateful.