

The Battles in Banks' Department.

We condense and extract some account of the recent successful expedition of Major General Banks, from New Orleans up the Opelousas railroad toward Alexandria on the Red river, from a nine column report in the N. Y. Herald. Gen. Weitzel's division (with Gen. Banks and staff) landed at Berwick City and marched across the country; Gen. Grover's division crossed the Atchafalaya river, landing at Indian Bend, and marched up the railroad—the two divisions meeting again in the neighborhood of Opelousas. On the 12th and 13th, Banks defeated the enemy at Pattersonville, destroying his gunboats and transports and causing them to retreat in disorder from their entrenchments; and on the 13th Grover routed the enemy after a severe battle at Irish Bend. The 12th Conn. was under Gen. Weitzel, with Banks, and the 13th and 25th in Col. Birge's brigade in Grover's division. Our account is necessarily disconnected.

THE ADVANCE.

The advance was now resumed, and beyond an occasional stray musket shot and the capture of a few prisoners nothing important occurred. By Gen. Weitzel's orders, Col. E. B. Smith placed a guard over the houses and plantations. The sugar houses and out-buildings were filled with sugar, corn and molasses. The advance was very rapid the Clifton ahead, occasionally shelling the woods. Many of the families of the planters were taken unawares so that when our forces arrived at their residences an untouched or half eaten dinner on the table, or valuable articles left here and there, proved with what surprise they heard of our advance, and in what haste they left. Black and white all hurriedly crossed the Atchafalaya or accompanied the enemy. None were there to welcome us. It was well that Gen. Weitzel placed a guard over their homes and property, or the owners would have retired to a homeless desert. At 6 o'clock P. M. Pattersonville was reached. This village is distant nine miles from Berwick City. The Atchafalaya runs to the right, parallel with it, and in this neighborhood, it will be remembered, that some four weeks ago the Diana was captured by the rebels.

FIRST DAY'S ARTILLERY FIGHT.

It was about ten minutes past three o'clock when the General and staff rode into the field. The enemy had opened the whole of his batteries from behind the breastworks, and already rapid discharges of cannon, shells exploding in the air, and plunging up the earth were seen and heard. Our infantry in first and second lines of battle, creeping skirmishers and rapid posting of batteries, with the roaring cannon and bursting shells, formed one of the grandest spectacles imaginable. There was something very singular in the actions of the Diana. She would suddenly appear every five or ten minutes, fire and then disappear. Captain Mack thinks that she was fished to the side of the dock, when, by the loosening of the rope, she would turn by the force of the stream into the centre of the Teche, fire her guns, and was then instantly drawn out of sight. One shell from the Diana burst very near the gun. Soon our batteries replied to the enemy's fire, and a constant roar of artillery was heard, with occasional rapid firing, sounding in the distance like heavy musketry. For more than two hours the firing was kept up. In addition to the powerful guns on board the Diana, the enemy were well supplied with batteries and guns of large calibre, answering our rapid discharges with spirit. One, a thirty-two pound smooth bore, at the left of the road and near the end of the breastworks, on this side of the Teche, was fired very rapidly, and no doubt did great execution. It was either a Parrott or a Columbiad.

During the whole of this time Gen. Banks and staff were under fire, riding from one portion of the field to another with apparent unconcern.— Ahead, behind, and on each side of us the shells were falling or exploding, the earth every instant rising in a cloud from where they struck, while the air was filled with flashes from the burning missiles and white circling smoke, which curled and sailed upwards.

The firing ceased with the darkness, and it being found that both the lines of battle were within range of the enemy's guns, an order was given that the advance should retire out of the range of light artillery and bivouac for the night, taking position in two lines, the brigade of Gen. Paine forming the right half of each line and Gen. Weitzel's the left half.

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At half past six o'clock on Monday morning a large force of the enemy's infantry and cavalry advanced from behind their breastworks, for the purpose of regaining possession of the sugar-house and woods. The guns on the Diana (two), the 32 pounder at the corner of the road, the batteries along the breastworks, together with a battery on the opposite side of the Teche, opened upon the woods and Gen. Paine's command.—The men bravely stood their ground amid this terrific hail of iron missiles, and met the advancing enemy with spirit.

An infantry fight of half an hour was kept up, our men still holding their ground, and finally driving the rebels to the shelter of their breastworks.

While our forces and artillery were getting into position on the left, Gen. Paine sent to Gen. Banks, requesting that heavy guns might be sent forward as rapidly as possible, as his position must soon become untenable unless artillery arrived at once.

A rebel battery had been quietly placed between the Diana and our forces, not 150 yards distant from the latter, and nearly 500 yards from their earthworks. They were attempting to post their pickets and get ready to open a fire, which must have forced our gallant fellows back, when Gen. Paine again sent a messenger to hasten up a battery. A moment after the artillery of Capt. Mack's 18th New York was heard thundering along the road. At the bend he was seen galloping at full speed, and the next moment the guns were in position.

So rapid and splendid was the whole movement performed, that the enemy had not time to open their batteries before the staunch 20-pounder Parrotts of Capt. Mack were throwing shell into them, when the whole of the rebel guns were limbered up and hurried away without firing.—400 rounds were fired, two caissons emptied, the Diana and batteries right and left silenced repeatedly, the gunboat finally steaming up the Teche, and never firing a shot this side of the breastworks afterward. Gen. Banks, Emory, Paine, and their staffs, rode up and complimented Capt. Mack and his command. This is the first time that this battery has been engaged, and the men under fire.

It is thought that the firing of the previous day's engagement was terrific; but it was nothing in comparison with this, (3 r. m.) which was the heaviest I ever heard, and continued for three or four hours in a perfect roll.

The enemy's breastworks, extending from the Teche to the woods on the west side, and to Grand Lake on the east, were evidently of great strength and in admirable position. On Sunday they were invisible to the naked eye, and at the distance of three-quarters of a mile could be scarcely distinguished with a glass, owing to their similarity to the earth and plantation ridges around. Now our forces were much nearer and in plain sight. The dirt from the falling missiles was rising in showers along the enemy's ranks, while the same was the case in our front, every place where the shot and shell struck over the fields being plainly visible from the clouds of dark earth suddenly rising to a height of several feet in the air.

The coolest and apparently the least concerned of all the brave men on the field were the commanding generals, and none more so than Gen. Banks himself. Certainly none were in greater danger from the enemy's guns. Surrounded by his staff, he rode from one portion of the field to another, and both days visited all the other generals and inspected the lines himself.

"LIE DOWN OR I'LL ARREST YOU."

While our skirmishers were falling back from an overpowering force of the enemy's sharpshooters, but only to rally and drive the enemy in their turn, several heads would be raised along our line for the purpose of witnessing the engagement, thereby drawing the fire from both the batteries and sharpshooters upon them. Some went so far as to stand upright. "Down, men, down," shouted General Emory, using but this order.—"Being unnoticed, the General stood up and said, "Get down, men. Don't you see that you are drawing the fire of the enemy upon you?" "This order and appeal had no more effect than

the former, curiosity being stronger than the fear of danger. When General Emery, for the third time, stood up, and, in a loud tone of passion, said, "Lie down, or I'll arrest you, and send you to the rear. Commanders of companies and regiments will see that this order is obeyed." The men instantly dropped their heads, and those standing glided out of sight. This order had the desired effect, and it is said that not a man raised himself after, until commanded to do so.

Just at night, Gen. Paine prepared to carry the enemy's works by direct assault; but by order of Gen. Banks the attack was deferred till morning. During the night the enemy hastily retreated, abandoning fortifications, guns and stores.

THE BATTLE OF IRISH BEND.

On Monday morning, April 13, shortly after daylight, the division (Grover's) again advanced, Colonel Birge's brigade in front, followed by the brigades Gen. Dwight and Col. Kimball. Lieutenant Rogers' battery was in the advance, with Captains Closson's and Nimms' batteries in reserve.

About seven o'clock A. M., the advance reached the edge of a dense line of woods, near what is known as Irish Bend (a sharp bend of the Teche), about eleven miles distance from the rebel earth-works, where Gen. Banks was engaging the enemy. Here our force was met by a strong one of the rebels, in position, from the bank of the Teche, across the front and right flank of Gen. Grover's division.

The enemy was strongly posted at this point, their right flank supported by artillery, and their left extending round into another wood, in such a manner as to completely encircle any force which should simply attack their position in the wood first spoken of.

Col. Birge, of the 8d brigade, of Gen. Grover's division, at this time in command of the advance, and supported by two sections of Rogers' battery, now skirmished with the rebels in front for about an hour, our skirmishers and their supports engaging the infantry and dismounted cavalry of the enemy. Col. Birge then ordered the 25th Connecticut and 159th New York in front of the first skirt of woods.

He had no sooner done this than the enemy commenced a flank attack, endeavoring to take the section of Rogers' battery which was on the right.

These two regiments, assailed by a fire on their front and right from an enemy very perfectly concealed, replied ineffectually to the fire, became shaken, and finally commenced to fall back, when Gen. Grover rode up to the front and rallied them, at the same time ordering Gen. Dwight to hasten up with his brigade.

The section of Rogers' battery was compelled to limber up and go to the rear, the fire of the enemy being so lively as to pick off nine cannoniers at their guns.

At this time Gen. Dwight moved on to the field with his brigade. The order to advance was given, and, like veterans, they moved forward across the field, through the woods, and over another field, the enemy slowly but surely falling back before them, sweeping on, taking from him all his positions, and finally compelling him to so hasty a retreat that he left over one hundred prisoners in our hands. Then the position which Col. Birge's brigade failed to take, with a loss of some thing over three hundred men, was taken by Gen. Dwight with a loss of only seven killed and twenty-one wounded.

The Diana did but very little harm during the whole of this time. Our troops in the mean time had been ordered by Gen. Grover to rest in their places until further orders, which they did until about three P. M., when an order was given to feel the enemy on the front and flank, with a view to our attacking their position in force.

Before any considerable advance further was made the enemy evacuated, retreating to the woods and canes, having previously set fire to the gunboat Diana and transports Gosamer, Newboy and Era No. 2. The retreat was accomplished in such a manner as to prevent effectual pursuit.