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GEN. HOWARD ON WAR.

WHAT THIS COUNTRY'S DEFENCE WOULD BE.

FORTS SUPERIOR TO IRONCLADS—THE NAVY SHOULD TAKE THE OFFENSIVE—INVENTION AND ENERGY.

General O. O. Howard, commanding the Division of the Atlantic, is more worried over the collection of $20,000 for his Elizabeth-st. mission than over the prospect of war with Italy. Still, the one-armed old warrior is just as willing to fight as he was when he chased Bragg from Chattanooga to Knoxville. A Tribune reporter found him at his home on Governor's Island yesterday, as genial and kind-tempered as only a veteran soldier can be.

"General," he asked, "if it comes to war what are you going to do? How long will it require to mobilize the regulars and the militia, and how will you go about it?"

"A general of the Army in my position," was the reply, "cannot talk freely on that subject when there is any real likelihood of a conflict—that is, of the amount of force in hand, the troops that could be raised, how long it would take to mobilize them, and what would be the nature of the conflict."

"You do not mind expressing an opinion as to what sort of warfare would be involved in case Italy should attack us?"

"While practically armies and army corps could be left out of consideration, the struggle would be mainly for the navies and the best procurable defence of our seaboard towns and cities, and everything that would involve protection to our commerce. For many years the thinking men of our Army and Navy have been studying the subject of a possible attack from a foreign enemy. We have thought of England, Spain, Chili and China, as at one time or another each of those nations has had with us a controversy involving international law, with international rights and obligations."

"You have not considered Italy?"

"Yes, Italy has been thought of. Her armament has been very fully ascertained, and her seagoing vessels and men-of-war have been set down in the books. She has a fine navy, but we think her largest ironclads rather unwieldy, and we are not so sure that the cannon of largest size and most enormous weight on shipboard are by any means the best for naval warfare. Could a vessel be undisturbed in an offing six or seven miles from a large city, she could do great damage, but such a condition of things we do not mean shall exist. Our navy is growing in size, with modern appointments and effective guns. These, taken in connection with the unconquerable spirit of our people, would make a fight against any naval squadron which we are likely to meet. Probably there would be great danger to us if our Navy stood simply on the defensive, but this would certainly not be the case in the event of war. The home defence would necessarily be left substantially to torpedo boats, floating batteries, modern mortar batteries of the finest construction, and permanent works."

"What could be done to make our permanent works on the seacoast defensible against modern armor?"

"I know it is believed by many that our permanent works all along our extensive coast are unavailable against modern projectiles. But this is not strictly true, for in a short space of time embankments could be extended so as to protect the majority of our fortifications against projectiles from the sea. The recent naval conflict in Chili showed the seacoast batteries far superior to their best ironclads. By the fire of the former the ironclads were speedily disabled and driven beyond range. One thing is perfectly evident. It is this: If iron and steel can be used to cover a ship so that the largest projectiles from the most powerful guns cannot penetrate and destroy it, the forts can be clad with iron and steel with more ease and more thoroughness, because the weight of metal is not involved. Of course it would have been better for New-York to have kept herself always prepared against foreign attack, as she has magnificently done against fire from within, but there are plenty of expedients in the hands of our superb Navy and our little Army which would be promptly used in case of need. If any people on the earth should wish to conquer the United States it would be well for it to wait till this generation of inventive power and tremendous energy shall have died out. The people as a whole believe in justice and mean to give it and exact it, but any pretext intended simply to bolster up the old monarchical notion will find little sympathy here. Be sure that if we follow the examples of our hero leaders who have gone from us, ever taking a prompt offensive against an intruder, the enemy, be he great or small, after a reasonable time, will have little to boast of."

"You speak of the energy of our people."

"Yes. Judged by results, it is evident that we have a people superior in what the French, during the Revolution, called energy, to any other people. During the war the concentrated energy of the North, or rather of the Government, was against the concentrated energy of the South. Now these two forces have come together and the resultant is not easily estimated. When Robert Lee had our victorious troops in his front at Williamsport his engineers built a bridge of boats from planks and boards in a day, a bridge that carried over the main portion of his army and landed it in safety on the other shore. In our march to Knoxville Sherman and his lieutenants bridged rivers in a night by using a portion of their command, so that there was no considerable halt in the movement. Railroads which had been thoroughly destroyed, culverts burned and irons twisted, were so quickly replaced that the trains hardly stopped running for a single day.

"Apparently we have little artillery, but we have the men with the ability, the brains and the muscle, out of which artillery will quickly spring."

nominal; No. 1 flaxseed, $1 21@$1 21½; prime timothy seed, $1 26@$1 27; mess pork, per bbl, $12 50; lard, per 100 lb, $6 70; short ribs sides, loose, $5 90@$6 0; dressed shoulders, boxed, $5 20@$5 25; short clear sides, boxed, $6 30@$6 35; whiskey, distiller's finished goods, per gal, $1 16; sugars unchanged; No. 2 white oats, 53½@53[illegible]; No. 3 do, 53[illegible]@[illegible]; No. 2 barley, f. o. b., 73@77c; No. 4 do, nominal.

Articles.	Receipts.	Shipments.
Flour, bbls	20,000	9,000
Wheat, bush	81,000	50,000
Corn, bush	172,000	95,000
Oats, bush	120,000	175,000
Rye, bush	5,000	5,000
Barley, bush	12,000	15,000

On the Produce Exchange to-day the butter market

VESSELS TOSSED ABOUT LIKE STRAWS BY THE GALE.

ANCHORS DRAGGED AND COASTERS IN COLLISION—WIRES DOWN THROUGHOUT NEW-ENGLAND AND MUCH DAMAGE TO SHIPPING DONE.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.]

Boston, April 3.—A severe gale which struck Boston between 4 and 6 o'clock this morning caused more damage to vessels lying in the harbor than any storm for many years in this locality. Fifteen coasting vessels were blown hither and thither, like so many feathers in the air, and had their sides stove in, their bowsprits and masts broken, or were otherwise injured. There were about thirty outward-bound vessels detained in the harbor, where they had rem several days, owing to unfavorable winds. half of this number received damage during t ing's blow. Nearly all of them were lying Boston, in the vicinity of the New-York England Railroad docks and the new Mar They were either driven ashore at this damaged by collision. They are mostly comparatively poor people, who are engag business of carrying lumber from one point coast to another. Few owners, if any, wer Six vessels were tangled together in the bu South Boston, off the Marine Park, sever been blown clear across the harbor to t by the wind.

The schooner Maggie Miller broke from her and drifted against the bulkhead of the New New-England pier, damaged her rudder a her sides considerably. The schooner W Leggett, of Wiscasset, parted her chains a against the bulkhead, carrying away jibb bowsprit; also had her bow badly stove. The Mansure B. Oakes, coaster, drifted afoul of head above mentioned. She lost bowsprit and carried away the top of the cabin-house and her stern. The schooner Lucy, bound to Ca had her jibboom and davits carried away. dragged anchors and drifted against the bu the railroad dock. The schooner Sophie coaster, dragged her anchors and drifted bulkhead, tearing away a good portion of t aft and somewhat damaging the railroad she boom running through it. The schoone Crockett, coaster, carried away her mainmast with other damage to her starboard side, by against the sea wall. The British schooner Annie May dragged her anchor and drifted against the bulkhead, where she chafed her side and carried away her bowsprit and jibboom. The schooner George A. Pierce had bowsprit and jibboom carried away; also had boat stove in. The schooner War Steed was afoul of an unknown schooner; had her stern stove in and boat carried from the davits. The schooner Frank McDonnell lost her jibboom by collision with an unknown schooner.

Three small coasters, outward bound—the Baltic, of Castine, Me.; Sea Bird, of Tremont, Me., and Caroline C., of Tremont, parted chains and drifted together early this morning, and after chafing for a considerable time, the rigging of each schooner parted. The masts, being left without support, fell over.

The barges Scranton and Binghamton, belonging to the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, dragged their anchors and were driven across the flats near South Boston, but were afterward towed to a safe anchorage. The schooners Herald of the Morning and Daniel Simmons dragged anchors and fouled each other on South Boston flats with damage to each. Two dredges, the Falmouth, belonging to the Eastern Dredging Company, and a dredge owned by the Bay State Dredging Company, met with considerable damage. Both parted from their moorings, together with a number of scows. The powder boat Adeliza, with a large quantity of powder on board, broke from her moorings and drifted across the flats to Souther's dumping pier. She was afterward taken in tow by a tugboat. One of the United States lightships recently launched by Harrison Loring broke from her wharf, but was soon afterward secured with but little if any damage.

The schooner Joseph Hay, of New-Bedford, Captain Fisher, arrived at this port this morning from Hoboken with a cargo of 300 tons of coal. The Joseph Hay anchored off the Bug Light Thursday night and early this morning lost both anchors and about fifty fathoms of chain on each anchor. She was afterward picked up by the tugboat Peter W. French and towed to Commercial Wharf, where she was placed in the mud, the schooner leaking badly. She had about two feet of water in her hold.

The fishing schooner Parnell O'Hara, of Boston, Captain McCarthy, arrived at Boston this morning from Georges Banks with 30,000 pounds of fish. The schooner was running in for a harbor. Shortly after midnight she struck a ledge near the Bug Light, which caused the vessel to leak badly. The crew were kept at the pumps, but in spite of their efforts the water gained on them so rapidly that when she reached her dock at I Wharf she filled and sank.

The telegraph and telephone wires are down in every direction. On the line of the Massachusetts Central Railroad 373 telegraph poles are down in a space twenty miles long. In Lowell the electric plant suspended operations by order of the Mayor to avoid danger to the linemen working among the mass of wires which fill the streets.

Reports from Chatham state that more damage was done on the land than by any other gale within the memory of man. The barometer reads lower than ever before and the tides are running high, the water completely covering the beaches. The Chatham skating rink was lifted from its foundations and entirely demolished. Several large buildings were moved from their foundations, and small vessels in the harbor were driven ashore.

Hartford, Conn., April 3.—The snowstorm which set in here about 8 o'clock last evening caused a great deal of damage to the wires. The snow was damp and heavy and a high wind during the night helped on the work of destruction. This morning the clouds cleared away and large gangs of men were set to work repairing the wires for the third time this season. Telephone communication is imperfect in the city and all the long distance wires are down in several directions. The electric lights were partially interfered with during the night and several telephone wires were burned out at the central station as the result of contact with the electric light wires. The fire alarm circuit is broken at different points and the fire alarm bell rang at intervals during the night and this morning. A hack driver named Brackin, while driving at Capitol-ave. and Broad-st. about 3 o'clock this morning, ran against an electric-light wire. The horse was instantly killed and Brackin received a severe shock in trying to unharness the animal. The snow is melting now rapidly.

YESTERDAY'S CONFLICT—RESUMING WORK THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT.

Mount Pleasant, Penn., April 3.—Quiet reigned throughout the coke regions to-day. No outbreak has