

REV. A. M. STEWART'S LETTER.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 10, 1865. DEAR BROTHER MEARS:—These turbid waters of Washington are being constantly agitated by some under or surface commotion; some seemingly favorable or adverse breeze, and occasionally by a downright hurricane.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION BURNED.—A short time since this beautiful structure took fire from some defective flue, overheated on a cold, windy day. Unchecked by the inadequate efforts of Washington fire companies, the flames soon seized upon the cabinet cases, desks, shelves, and specimens, burst out grandly through the windows, nor ceased its rage until combustible material was no longer within reach.

Your readers are perhaps sufficiently familiar with the origin and history of this Institution. Thirty-seven years ago a poor old English miser died in Genoa, Italy, worth half a million of dollars. Without friends to inherit his substance, or mourn him when dead, yet did the poor old man long for a name, and in order to obtain it, left all his money to the United States Government, to found an institution after his own name.

Difficult whether the world in general or science in particular will, in the end, suffer great detriment in the destruction of the large cabinets of natural history. They have been hastily collected, somewhat crudely arranged, and many of the specimens not worth their shelf room.

Congress has finally voted an amendment to our organic laws, forever prohibiting human slavery within our American Union. Wonderful progress this within four years. For such a glorious triumph over the barbarism of ages, let us give thanks to God, and not to Congress.

OUR PRESIDENT, it is generally understood, slipped away, a few days, since to commune with rebel commissioners about peace. This seems to have been done in almost a *tao*, a manner as he came to Washington, early in 1861. Sober-minded Union-loving people will be likely to whisper, "He had better have remained in the White House."

SOME professors pass for very meek, good-natured people till you displease them. They resemble a pool or pond; while you let it alone it looks clear and limpid, but if you stir it toward the bottom the rising sediments soon discover the impurities that lurk beneath.—*To-day.*

News of the Week.

XXXVIII CONGRESS—24 SESSION. SENATE.

February 7.—The enrollment bill was taken up, and an amendment adopted, subjecting to punishment substitute brokers, recruiting agents, or other persons who, for profit, shall enlist persons who are insane, or who, at the time of enlistment, are in a state of intoxication.

February 8.—A petition from pastors of churches, asking exemption from military service, was referred to the Military Committee. A resolution requesting the President to communicate information respecting the conference in Hampton Roads was adopted, not, however, until after considerable opposition and debate.

February 9.—A bill was passed, enlarging the area of the State of Nevada, by adding thereto one degree from the Territory of Washington. A bill establishing a bridge across the Ohio River at Cincinnati, was passed.

February 10.—A bill was passed authorizing the issue of a warrant of attachment against the property of defaulting post-masters and other postal agents, who have continued or abetted the rebellion.

February 11.—A memorial was presented from the Jews, remonstrating against any amendment to the Constitution which should recognize Christianity.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

February 7.—The Select Committee on the outrage committed on the person of Representative Kelley, brought in a resolution directing the arrest of A. P. Field, the aggressor, for breach of privilege, and also, that he be denied the privilege of the hall heretofore accorded to him as an applicant from Louisiana for a seat in the House.

February 8.—A resolution of inquiry in relation to the peace conference, addressed to the President, was adopted. A select committee was ordered for inquiry into alleged frauds and corruptions in the Patent Office.

February 9.—The morning was spent in miscellaneous business. A long evening session was devoted to amendments to the Internal Revenue bill, those relating to the tax on domestic liquors, occupying the chief attention.

February 10.—The amendment to the Internal Revenue bill, taxing spirits on hand, was defeated. A message was received from the President relative to the peace conference. [Noticed in another column.] No action was taken.

February 11.—The morning was spent on the Internal Revenue bill. The proposition to increase the present tax on beer, lager beer, ale and porter, was voted down.

February 12.—A bill to establish a monthly mail from San Francisco to China was passed. The duty on paper was placed at 15 instead of 20 per cent, as it now stands, and instead 3 per cent, as voted by the House.

February 13.—A joint resolution was adopted appropriating \$25,000 for a contract with W. H. Powell, to paint a naval picture for the head of the grand stairway of the Capitol. A resolution of inquiry into the condition of the freedmen about Washington, many of whom are said to have died of starvation, was passed.

THE WAR.

The active operations of the week have been chiefly an advance movement of the Army of the Potomac against the right of the rebels, made by our Fifth Corps, with no important result beyond an improvement of the position of our line on the south side of Hatcher's Run.

The lowering of Presidential dignity in hurrying to meet those rebel commissioners, has instead of convincing them of his magnanimity, in all probability been taken by them as an evidence of weakness, with an over-earnest desire for peace, and sent them back to Richmond full of new resolves to fight.

SHERMAN'S MOVEMENTS.—Southern papers of Friday last, received at Washington, show that Sherman is making a successful advance in South Carolina. He has already, at last accounts, seized the railroad between Augusta and Branchville, and is now moving in force upon the latter place.

General Grant's recent movement is admitted by rebel editors to have been a success, inasmuch as he succeeded, notwithstanding the temporary reverse to the Fifth Corps, in extending his line westward to the Boydton plank road.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11.—General Grant in answer to a question from the Committee on the Conduct of the War, answered that he had effected an arrangement for the exchange of prisoners, man for man, and officer for officer, or his equivalent, according to the old rules, until one or the other party has exhausted the number they now hold.

THE HAMPTON ROADS CONFERENCE.—The resolution of inquiry, adopted by the House of Representatives on the 8th inst., has furnished the President with the opportunity to give to the nation authentic information of the beginning, the progress, and the end of the movement which, while in progress, kept all parties under so nervous an excitement.

First. That Mr. Blair was granted authority to go to Richmond upon a simple pass, without authority to speak or act for the United States Government, and without apprising the President what he intended to do or say.

Second. That at Richmond Mr. Blair had taken upon himself the functions of an ambassador, and that he made representations as to what the United States might be induced to do.

Third. That in consequence of Mr. Blair's voluntary statements, Jefferson Davis was induced to write a letter to Blair, to be shown to President Lincoln, in which he said he was not disposed to find obstacles in forms; that he was willing to enter into negotiations for the restoration of peace, and to send a commission whenever he had reason to believe that it would be received, or to receive one if sent, and that he was prepared to renew the effort to enter into a conference, with a view to restore peace to the two countries.

Fourth. That President Lincoln then wrote a letter to Blair, authorizing him to say to Jefferson Davis that he (Lincoln) had always been, and still was ready to receive any agent whom Davis, or any other influential person, now resisting the national authority, might informally send "with the view of securing peace to our common country."

Fifth. That Blair went to Richmond a second time, and showed President Lincoln's letter to Jefferson Davis, and informed him that the part, in the letter of Lincoln, "about our common country," referred to that part in Davis's letter "about the two countries."

Sixth. That General Grant telegraphed to the President that he would delay no military movement in consequence of the commission.

Seventh. That General Grant also telegraphed to Secretary Stanton that in his opinion, it would be advisable for President Lincoln to see Hunter and Stephens at least, and to confer with them on the subject.

Eighth. That on the morning of February 3d the distinguished party met. That an informal and verbal conference took place between them.

Ninth. That the substance of the instructions to Secretary Seward were communicated to the Southern Commissioners, as containing the only basis of peace which could be admitted by the United States. That the Southerners did not say that, in any event, or in any condition whatever, would they consent to re-union; and yet that they did not declare that they would not consent.

TEST-TUESDAY.—The statement that Sherman occupied Branchville is not affirmed, nor yet denied, that Grant has been victorious; the rebels say Thomas's men. It is also affirmed that Hood has detached some of the fragments of his broken army to move eastward.

Thus far only the State of Delaware has voted against the Reconstruction amendment. New Jersey and Kentucky have not yet voted.

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Amount previously acknowledged, \$1,068,111 80  
Total Receipts, \$1,070,364 52

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STORES. Stores received by the U. S. Christian Commission at Central Office, Philadelphia, for week ending February 9, 1865.

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NEW YORK. New York—Samaritan House Co., 12 packages; Albany—Branch U. S. C. C., per Wm. McIntyre, 4 boxes; Troy—Branch U. S. C. C., per F. P. Allen, 3 boxes, 1 barrel.

MAINE. Bangor—Branch U. S. C. C., per T. G. Stickney, 2 boxes. MARYLAND. Cumberland—1 box. OHIO. Cincinnati—Branch U. S. C. C. 5300 papers. Total, 99 packages of Stores.

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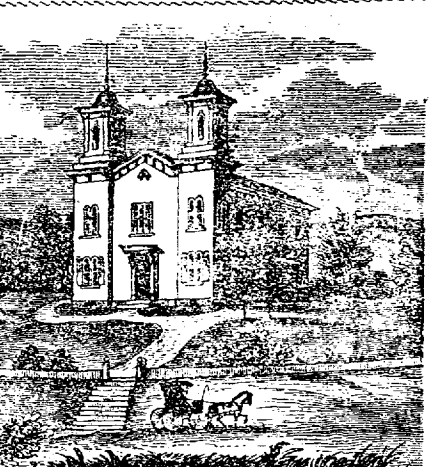
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