The Press.

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 1862.

THE LATEST WAR NEWS.

We publish, this morning, further details of the late battle at Winchester. A despatch from General Shields states that his command, 7,000 strong, were attacked by a force of rebels, numbering over 11,000. After a desperate battle, the enemy were driven from the field by our forces, which, besides killing 500 and wounding 1,000, captured three hundred prisoners, two cannon, a large quantity of arms, ammunition, &c. Our loss was one hundred and fifty killed and three hundred wounded. Our pickets are six miles beyond Strasburg, but Jackson is nowhere visible. A newspaper published at Strasburg states that Johnson and Jackson had concocted a plan to surprise General Banks' command, and, with a greatly superior force, try to capture his army; but the impatience of Jackson for a fight, and his subsequent marching on Shields' division, spoiled the scheme, and brought a disaster on their arms which will be felt from one end of the Confederacy to the other. Secretary Stanton has issued an order, which, while congratulating the troops on their splendid victory, sympathizes with General Shields in his affliction.

Our special correspondent connected with the Burnside Expedition has written us a capital letter, descriptive of the taking of Newbern, North Carolina. It is somewhat late, perhaps, but its graphic style (if we *must* use a threadbare adjective) will amply compensate for the remissness of the mails.

We learn from Beaufort, N. C., via Fortress Monroe, (and from our correspondent at the latter point,) that the rebel steamer *Nashville*, variously reported as having been captured and burnt, has in reality succeeded in running the blockade and escaping our cruisers. Two shots from the *Cambridge*, however, are believed to have struck her.

General Hunter, who has been ordered to take command of the military department consisting of the States of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, left New York yesterday for the scene of his operations. He was accompanied by the following members of his staff: Brigadier General A. W. Benham, who will take the command from which Sherman has been relieved, General S. being assigned to General Halleck; Colonel J. W. Shaffer, Surgeon Joseph K. Barnes, Major Edward Wright, Major R. M. Hough, Captain John W. Turner, Captain Edward W. Smith, Lieutenant Samuel W. Stockton, Lieutenant Arthur M. Kenzie, and Major Charles G. Halpine, assistant adjutant general.

Several weeks ago, Gen. Wool, on behalf of the Federal Government, and Gen. Cobb, on the part of the rebels, entered into an agreement that all prisoners captured in battle should be exchanged. Our Government has rigidly kept its part of the bargain, but the rebels have broken theirs. The Federal Government has, therefore, wisely determined that no more prisoners now in our hands will be released until such time as the rebels are willing to execute their part of the contract.

By the arrival of the Cunard steamer *China*, at New York, we have two days' later news from Europe. The proposed amendments of the Liberal party in the French Legislature to the paragraphs relative to American affairs, in the address to the Emperor, had been withdrawn. The London *Times* still continues to think (or to profess to think) that there will be two, (instead of one) Republics on the present "site" of our country.

Congress Yesterday.

SENATE.—At the request of ex-President Pierce, Mr. Latham introduced a resolution calling for the correspondence between Secretary Seward and the ex-President relative to an organization known as the "Knights of the Golden Circle." The joint resolution tendering aid to States emancipating their slaves was taken up. Mr Davis' amendment was rejected, and also a new amendment proposed by Mr. Henderson, of Missouri. The bill abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia was resumed. Mr. Saulsbury's amendment to distribute the slaves among the Northern States was rejected.

HOUSE.—The House, in Committee of the Whole, resumed the consideration of the tax-bill. Among the amendments adopted was the provision that the tax on goods, wares, merchandise, and manufactures, pursuant to contract, under this act, shall be paid by the purchaser before the delivery thereof.

Pennsylvania Legislature.

SENATE.—The House bill reducing the capital stock of the Girard Bank was passed. The general appropriation bill was taken up in Committee of the Whole.

HOUSE.—A resolution was passed providing for the appointment of a committee to take charge of the remains of Colonel Murray, Captain Gallagher, Lieutenant Reems, and others of the Eighty-fourth Pennsylvania Regiment killed in the battle at Winchester. A message was received from the Governor announcing that he had signed a number of bills—among others, the act to reduce the rate of payment for advertising delinquent tax-payers in this city. Mr. McMakin introduced a bill to reorganize the Board of Controllers of this city. The act attaching Erie and Crawford counties to the Eastern district of the Supreme Court was passed.

THE VICTORY at Winchester has had the effect of producing a feeling of general elation throughout the loyal States. In the midst of our jubilation, however, an incident which we publish to-day cannot be overlooked, and never hereafter shall be forgotten. The dauntless bravery of our troops in the engagement we have previously alluded to. Not less brave or loyal were the band of Irish heroes, who, pushed forward by the rebels as a breastwork, *refused to fire on our troops*. The flag of their adopted land, though long despised and insulted, was still dearer in their sight than life or fortune. With an impulse of true chivalry (that should put to shame the boasted chivalry of traitors), they dare not fire on the emblem of the nation that had been to them and theirs a haven and a shelter from oppression. Its honor was still sacred, and worthy to be cherished, though death should be the recompense of their devotion. And so, one-fourth of them were left to perish on the field, and were, most probably, shot down by rebel balls. All honor to the chivalry of Erin, whose noble sons have been among the first to lend our cause their aid and sympathy, and foremost to encounter death in its defence.

THE PROPOSED SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY was to be founded on African slavery. The pretext of its authors for the dissolution of the Union was to increase the securities and safeguards of that institution. It was to be formed, not like the American Republic, to preserve the liberties, and to promote the prosperity of its citizens, but specially to enable them forever to enslave others, and to increase and extend the area of territory over which they could spread their cherished industrial system, with all its attendant horrors and evils. The mind of every just man, no matter what may be his respect for the rights of property, or his anxiety to give to slaveholders all the security they can reasonably require, cannot fail to be shocked at the bare idea, that in this age of the world the purpose should be unblushingly avowed, of destroying the best and freest Government ever formed, for the sake of establishing on its ruins one of the most despotic and tyrannical political organizations that ever existed. Slavery has formed an incidental feature of many nations, our own included, but nowhere else than in Secessia—no, not even in Dahomey—has it been treated as a fundamental basis. Almost every other imaginable tie and interest has, at different periods, led to the association of individuals under one nationality, but never before was slavery thus worshipped and deified for its own sake, and thus made the central and combining power, the centrifugal and centripetal force, of any people. Never before was freedom construed to mean only the unrestricted and unlimited power to enslave others, and the *chief* political end of civilized men proclaimed to be to hold other races in servile bondage.

TWO PENNSYLVANIA REGIMENTS participated in the late battles between Gen. BANKS' division and Gen. JACKSON'S forces, one of them losing its gallant colonel, WILLIAM G. MURRAY. Thus, the soldiers of our State can boast of having won the battle of Dranesville, and of having aided to win two of the important victories of the war—Newbern and Winchester. Some of them were engaged, too, in the disastrous battle of Ball's Bluff, where treason rendered their bravery unavailing; and they are, at present, represented in every important division of the army east of the Mississippi river.

OUR readers will have read with pain, if not with surprise, the account of the disturbance in Cincinnati on Monday evening on the occasion of a lecture by WENDELL PHILLIPS. The story of the affair, as it comes by the uncertain telegraph, is obscure. It seems, however, that Mr. PHILLIPS, in the course of his lecture, avowed himself a Disunionist, and gloried in the fact that his whole life had been devoted to the cause of Disunion. There was a large audience of ladies and gentlemen—one of those brilliant assemblies which the eloquence of Mr. PHILLIPS always attracts—and on the announcement of these opinions a tumult ensued. This was quelled—the lecturer proceeded—sentiments of the same nature were again expressed—the tumult was renewed, and this time became uncontrollable. The audience revolted against the lecturer—stones and eggs were thrown—an angry crowd rushed at Mr. PHILLIPS with threatening cries—a fight ensued—ladies fainted—the lecturer was removed by his friends—and the angry multitude went away.

We read this with pain, but not with surprise. Such occurrences are always to be regretted. They are breaches of the peace, and no good can come of them. Yet we are not surprised, for in the state of public opinion now existing over the country, the avowal of Disunion sentiments by any public man can only meet with the severest condemnation. It is the misfortune of Mr. PHILLIPS and men of his class, that they cannot see the practical teachings of the hour. Their agitation, unpleasant at all times, is unnecessary and unpleasant now. They cannot aid the work of emancipation, for that problem has been submitted to the sword. When they avow Disunion sentiments, and exult over our woes as the legitimate results of their teachings, they forget that the country is now giving its treasure and shedding its blood for the maintenance of the Union. They forget that in the minds of the people, there is no difference betwixt a Disunionist of the school of Mr. PHILLIPS and a Disunionist of the school of Mr. YANCEY. In this case, however, Mr. PHILLIPS belongs to the winning party. Mr. YANCEY followed Disunion until it led him to the shores of England, an outlaw and a traitor. Mr. PHILLIPS follows Disunion until he finds himself in the hands of a Cincinnati mob. This is the reasoning of the people—and when they find themselves in the midst of a war for the preservation of the Union, it cannot be wondered that they should resent and rebuke eloquent and gifted men like Mr. PHILLIPS, who use their talents to destroy the Union.

It is unjust also to speak of Mr. PHILLIPS as a Republican or a friend of the Republican party. It is not many months since he applied to Mr. LINCOLN the elegant epithet of the "slave-hound of Illinois"—he never delivers a lecture without calling Mr. SEWARD a traitor, an ingrate, or a minion of the slave power—he even distrusts Mr. SUMNER, and although gazetted as a statesman by the New York *Tribune*, invariably takes the opportunity to denounce that great newspaper for its shortcomings. Mr. PHILLIPS looks upon the Republican party with contempt—the Republican party has no sympathy for Mr. PHILLIPS. It is impossible that there should be any affinity between them. The Republican party, whatever may be thought of many of its peculiar doctrines, is committed to the maintenance of the Union. Its leaders, its men in power, its organs, its followers, are all devoted to the preservation of the Union. Mr. PHILLIPS does not desire their friendship; he is anxious to have no relationship with them whatever. It is unjust to the orator to suppose that he is desirous of being recognized; and it is equally unjust to the Republican party to suppose that its members are at all influenced by his example or his opinions.

Lord Russell on the Blockade.

Lord CAMPBELL is a bachelor peer, hitherto undistinguished, except that he has inherited a brace of peerages—having succeeded his mother, Baroness STRATHEDEN, in May, 1860, and his father, the late Lord Chancellor, in June, 1861. He was for some years in the House of Commons, a silent member. At last, he took heart, three days after Mr. GREGORY was snuffed out by Sir ROUNDELL PALMER, the Solicitor General, and challenged Earl RUSSELL, in the House of Lords, for having expressed his opinion, in a letter to Lord LYONS, that our blockade of the Southern ports was sufficiently operative, in fact and in law, and ought not to be disturbed by England. He maintained, on the authority of Mr. BUNCH, British consul at Charleston, that the blockade was only nominal: said BUNCH being an avowed Southern sympathizer, whose word is worth as much as JOHN M. MASON'S—*and no more*.

He was followed by Lord ABINGER, grandson of a once celebrated British lawyer, better known as Sir JAMES SCARLETT, than by the barony which he received when made Chief Baron of the Exchequer. The present Lord ABINGER, who succeeded to the title last year, is a military officer, who distinguished himself in the Crimea. He is new to Parliament and made his first speech, we believe, when, following Lord CAMPBELL, he expressed his opinion that it would be quite unpardonable to raise the blockade under existing circumstances. He sympathized with "the gallantry" of the South, believed it would be impossible to subjugate it, and thought that perhaps the time was come when, to save bloodshed and end the war, the independence of the so-called Southern Confederation ought to take place.

Earl RUSSELL'S reply, as might be expected, was an echo of Sir ROUNDELL PALMER'S speech in the Commons, on the Gregorian motion. His lordship labors under the disadvantage of expressing himself, on important subjects, in an obscure and confused manner, as if his responsibility overcame him, and as if he dreaded, on some future day, to have his words picked out of Hansard, and flung in his teeth. Yet, on this occasion, his oratory was less muddy than it generally is. He defended the President's right to declare a blockade, and declared that whatever the deficiency in the means first employed to carry it into effect, it has gradually risen to be a very effectual blockade. Alluding to Consul BUNCH's report of the vast number of vessels which had run the blockade at Charleston and Wilmington, Lord RUSSELL expressed his conviction that there was great exaggeration in this,—a setting down Mr. BUNCH as a story-teller, which appears prophetic of the early removal of that functionary from public employment. As to the blockade itself, Lord RUSSELL asked if, notoriously, it had not prevented the usual supply of cotton to Europe? He denied that France had ever represented to the British Cabinet that it considered the blockade ineffectual.

Mention is made, in a nursery-rhyme of a certain cow, which, after yielding a large quantity of milk, almost always upset the milkmaid and threw down the pail. Lord JOHN RUSSELL ended his speech somewhat in this manner. He gave a lesson on Emancipation, and hoped to see the end of the war "within three months, or perhaps less," with a "renewal of the old feelings between North and South," followed by—a Constitutional Union, as before? Oh, not so—followed by a peaceful seperation into two States! After talking for an hour in support of the legality of the blockade, Lord RUSSELL, who has a knack of running his head against a stone wall, winds up with this gratuitous opinion that, when Rebellion is crushed, we should allow the traitors to secede, precisely as they purposed from the beginning! What a pity it is that, for the most part, British statesmen are intensely ignorant of the Constitution and laws, habits and feelings of the United States.

BY THE recent capture of Decatur and Tuscumbia, in Alabama, two important points on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, we have gained possession of the main communication between the Southeastern and Southwestern States, and thus the centre of the chief rebel line has been pierced, leaving the army of the West, flushed with its numerous victories, to crush the Rebellion in the Southwest, and McCLELLAN, BURNSIDE, and SHERMAN to overthrow the traitorous armies of the Southeast.

LARGE SALE OF DRY GOODS, CLOTHING, STOCK OF GOODS, &C.—The attention of purchasers is invited to the large assortment of foreign and domestic dry goods, hosiery, ready-made clothing, large stock of dry goods, &c., embracing about 900 packages and lots of staple and fancy articles, to be peremptorily sold by catalogue, on a credit of four months, commencing this morning at 10 o'clock, to be continued, without intermission, all day and part of the evening, ending with the stock, [clothing to be sold in the afternoon,] by John B. Myers & Co., auctioneers, Nos. 232 and 234 Market street.

LETTER FROM "OCCASIONAL."

WASHINGTON, March 26, 1862.

I was reminded this beautiful spring morning, which was rendered still more exhilarating and lovely by the good news just received from the valley of the Virginia, showing how bravely our Pennsylvania troops fought under the Massachusetts Major General, Banks, and the Irish Brigadier, Shields, of the beautiful allusion of Daniel Webster to the old Bay State, in his celebrated speech in reply to Hayne:

MR. PRESIDENT, I shall enter no encomium upon Massachusetts; she needs none. There she is. Behold her, and judge for yourselves. There is her history; the world knows it by heart. The past, at least, is secure. There is Boston and Concord, and Lexington and Bunker Hill; and there they will remain forever. The bones of her sons, falling in the great struggle for independence, now lie mingled with the soil of every State from New England to Georgia, and there they will lie forever. And, sir, where American liberty raised its first voice, and where its youth was nurtured and sustained, there it still lives, in the strength of its manhood, and full of its original spirit. If discord and disunion shall wound it; if party strife and blind ambition shall hawk at and tear it; if folly and madness, if unsteadiness under salutary and necessary restraint shall succeed in separating it from that Union by which alone its existence is made sure, it will stand to the end by the side of that cradle in which its infancy was rocked; it will stretch forth its arm with whatever vigor it may still retain over the friends who gather round it, and it will fall at last, if fall it must, amidst the proudest monuments of its own glory, and on the very spot of its origin.

And what brought these noble words more directly before me was a view of a fresh regiment of Massachusetts troops. The gallant fellows who compose it were circulating over Capitol Hill, after such a sleep as they could catch in the cars, "the soldier's rest," and the adjoining sheds and out-houses.

It is noticeable and significant that the moment a regiment is disgorged from the cars, the first place the soldiers look for is the Capitol of the United States. If they get here at night, they are up bright and early next morning to look at the outside of the massive pile. If they arrive at noon, they immediately strike for the Senate and the House, filling the galleries of both, and looking with curious and surprised vision upon the grave legislators. I have a hundred times come upon a freshly-landed volunteer, who had only heard of this great city through the newspapers or gazetteers, and who, at his own home, was a man of consideration, and watched him as he stood in a deep study before the marble and printed effigies and illustrations of the heroes and the events of American history. It is a novel pleasure to them. Everything surprises and gratifies them. They meet, at the very threshold of their career, a thousand beautiful incidents to stimulate them to continue in it. Every object of a national character is but a new impulse to the faithful and gallant performance of a patriotic duty. The figure of Washington invokes them to go on in more than expressive attitude. He seems to talk to them from canvas and from stone. Inspiration breathes from the resolute lips of Jackson in the rotundo—from the figure of Jefferson—from the form of Lafayette—from William Penn—from Benjamin Franklin—even from the portrait of James K. Polk, whose handsome but stately widow, at Nashville, could not omit the opportunity of insulting the soldiers of the Republic when they came to rescue the grave of Jackson from the hands of the despoilers of the Union. There is something almost sublime in the manner in which our soldiers are received in Washington, and in the manner in which they are here prepared for the great work before them. If it had been designed to impress them alike with the dignity of their own task and the hellish depth of the Southern treason, both these objects could not have been better effected than by impressing upon them, immediately on their arrival in Washington, by every conceivable process, the inestimable value of the Union and the Constitution, and the amazing perfidy of those who are now working to destroy both.

To return to Massachusetts: Her sons are worthy of all praise. Like the other soldiers of New England, they belong to a class which have been made the objects of the ridicule of the South for many years. They have been accused of cowardice and of fanaticism; charged with sympathy with the Abolitionists, it was a common thing to say that they would fail in the hour of trial. Independent enough to refuse to resent the insults of the slave-bullies on the floor of Congress, their chivalry was misunderstood and underrated. But, when the hour of peril approached, they were among the first in the field, and from the day that their sons were shot down in Baltimore to the present time, when their beloved Banks is leading on his victorious legions in Western Virginia, they have never been found wanting. Their blood has been poured out on more than one fatal field. From Great Bethel, where Winthrop fell, to Ball's Bluff, from the Potomac to the Neuse, from the Chesapeake to Galveston Bay, they have distinguished themselves by a conscientious and self-sacrificing spirit, which will make their names immortal in the history of these sad and stirring times.

OCCASIONAL.

Changed his Note!

It has long been a proverbial remark among Englishmen that *The Times* "runs with the hare and holds with the hound"—in other words, that it is consistent only in following public opinion or instructions from men in office. For the last twelve months, until PALMERSTON and RUSSELL finally agreed to maintain a real neutrality in American affairs, *The Times* has been abusing us, libelling us, sneering at us, in all varieties of language. *Punch*, always echoing *The Times*, has done the same—only more so. Latterly, however, *Punch* has been comparatively civil. The last received number contains only a single American allusion, to the mild effect that, as we should admire the Union Jack more than the Stars and Stripes, it would be well to "leave off fighting, make it up, and try to have a *Union*." The sarcasm of *Punch* has actually come down to *this* moderation.

From Fortress Monroe - Escape of the Nashville

BALTIMORE, March 26.—The Old Point boat has arrived.

The steamer *Louisiana*, from Hatteras, had arrived, but brings no intelligence of importance.

FORTRESS MONROE, March 25.—The United States steamer *Cambridge* arrived here this morning from the blockade at Beaufort, N. C., which she left on Sunday evening.

The rebel steamer *Nashville* escaped from the harbor on Tuesday night, 18th inst., having run the blockade.

The only United States vessels off the place were the *Cambridge* and the bark *Gemsbok*, and other sailing vessels.

The blockading vessels had news of the capture of Newbern, and were on the look-out for the *Nashville*, but they were too numerous enough to prevent her escape.

The *Gemsbok* first saw the *Nashville*, and immediately telegraphed to the *Cambridge* that she was coming on; the latter followed her and fired a number of shots with the hope of getting her into a fight, but the superior speed of the *Nashville* soon put her at a safe distance.

Two shots from the *Cambridge* are supposed to have struck the *Nashville*.

The bark *Glenn*, which has been blockaded in the harbor of Beaufort for some time, was set on fire by the rebels on Sunday, and was burning when the *Cambridge* left in the evening. She was supposed to have been fitted out as a privateer. The burning of this vessel was doubtless preparatory to the evacuation of the place.

Fort Macon had not been blown up at the last accounts.

The bark *Gemsbok* and the steamer *State of Georgia* were left at the station by the *Cambridge*.

Important News from the West.

ST. LOUIS, March 26.—The *Republican's* Cairo despatch says that persons who left Memphis report that Generals Beauregard, Polk, Cheatham, and Clark are at or near Corinth, Mississippi, where it is expected a great battle will soon be fought.

The rebels at Island No. 10 have not burned their transports and barges, as previously reported, but were transporting their cannon and ammunition from the Island to the main land.

They communicated by signal lights with their forces at Union City the night before last.

Funeral of Col. Murray.

HARRISBURG, March 26.—The funeral of Col. William Gray Murray, who was killed at the battle near Winchester, will take place at Harrisburg on Friday morning, the 28th inst., at 9 o'clock.

The Louisville and Nashville Railroad.

LOUISVILLE, March 26.—The Louisville and Nashville Railroad is so far repaired that the running time between the two cities is reduced to twelve hours.

Later from Ship Island.

NEW YORK, March 26.—The steamer *Constitution* has arrived at Havana, from Ship Island, with dates to the 19th, and sailed again for Key West and Fortress Monroe.

It was reported that Porter's mortar fleet had passed the Southwest Pass.

THANKS!—We have to thank Mr. Hassan, of the Associated Press, for the *London Times* of March 12th, received by the *Hansa*, a day's date later than our own London files. We have repeatedly been obliged in this manner by Mr. Hassan.

ENGLISH PICTORIALS.—From W. B. Zieber, South Third street, we have advance copies of *Punch*, and the *Illustrated London News* of the 8th inst. We notice with regret that, to diminish postage, the supplement to the latter journal is printed on thinner paper than before.

FROM WASHINGTON.

Proposed Resuscitation of the Democratic Party.

THE WIRE-PULLERS IN SECRET COUNCIL.

ADDITIONAL SENATE CONFIRMATIONS.

Important Order of Secretary Stanton.

NO MORE PRISONERS TO BE EXCHANGED.

THE CONTRACT VIOLATED BY THE ENEMY.

DISLOYALTY IN THE PULPIT.

The Fort Donelson Prisoners Desire to Swear Allegiance.

A REBEL STAND AT RICHMOND IMPROBABLE.

Special Despatches to "The Press."

WASHINGTON, March 26, 1862.

The Bombardment at Island No. 10.

A despatch was received to-night from Cairo, bringing the latest intelligence from Island No. 10, from which it appears that the main works of the enemy on the mainland are overflowed, and, also, nearly the whole of the Mississippi valley in that vicinity.

This delays effective operations by our forces at present.

Congratulations of the Secretary of War.

The following despatch was telegraphed to General SHIELDS to-day:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON, March 26, 1862.

BRIG. GEN. SHIELDS: Your two despatches, relating to the brilliant achievement of the forces under your command, have been received.

While rejoicing at the success of your troops, deep commiseration and sympathy are felt for those who have been victims in the gallant and victorious contest with treason and rebellion.

Your wounds as well as your success prove that Lander's brave division is still bravely led, and that wherever its standard is displayed the rebels will be routed and pursued.

To you, and to the officers and soldiers under your command, the department returns its thanks.

EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

Ex-President Pierce.

Mr. Senator LATHAM, as you will see by the telegraph proceedings of the Senate, this morning offered a resolution, at the request of ex-President FRANKLIN PIERCE, inquiring into certain alleged newspaper charges of disloyalty against that distinguished gentleman. The resolution was unanimously adopted. FRANKLIN PIERCE is too brave, generous, and manliish to have ever allowed any man or party to seduce him from his loyalty to his flag and his country. Mr. LATHAM'S remarks were well-timed, expressive, and forcible. The result will be a most complete vindication of ex-President PIERCE.

Release of State Prisoners.

The following prisoners we to-day released on parole: O. ALLEN SCANLAND, JACKSON BOSSEMAN, JAMES CONNER, JOHN BURSON, and GEORGE W. GORMLY. Two others, B. W. JENKINS and F. M. ELLIS, were recommitted for further consideration.

If it is not probable that any more of the prisoners from Alexandria will be released, as those now in custody have refused to comply with the conditions required.

The Exchange of Prisoners Stopped.

The Secretary of War issued an order yesterday, stopping the release on parole of the prisoners taken at Fort Donelson. It is known that an agreement for the exchange of prisoners was made some weeks ago, under the direction of the Secretary of War, by General WOOL, with General COBB, by which all of our prisoners were to be delivered on the next day, under a flag of truce, at Craney Island. A boat was sent to receive them, but no prisoners were brought from Norfolk. The same was repeated for two days without success. Explanations were demanded by General WOOL, but none furnished. Pending this breach of faith by the rebels, all releases or exchanges will be refused by the Government.

The Fort Donelson Prisoners Want to Swear Allegiance.

Information has been received by the Government that the prisoners taken at Fort Donelson, &c., generally express a willingness to take the oath of allegiance if they can be liberated upon parole.

A Stand at Richmond Improbable.

Many military men are now expressing the opinion that the rebels will not make a stand at Richmond.

Loss of Life at Sea.

The intelligence of the loss, with all on board, of several fishing vessels of New England, excites melancholy thoughts concerning that class of plain, simple-minded people of whom so many fathers and sons are annually the subjects of "Ocean's ravage." The cod fisheries on the Banks are the nurseries of our brave seamen that have drawn a wall of fire and iron around maritime Rebeldom. New England may not have exceeded her quota of volunteers, as have some other States, but she has supplied thousands upon thousands of seamen, who, in all the days of their lives, may be said to have "played with perils."

Executive Session of the Senate.

The Senate, to-day, in executive session, confirmed the nomination of Colonel GORDEN GRANGER, of the Second Regiment of Michigan Cavalry, to be a brigadier general, and NOAH L. JEFFRIES to be an assistant adjutant general in the volunteer service.

The following nominations were also confirmed:

HENRY W. REED, of Iowa, to be agent for the Indians of the upper Missouri.

JOSEPH LYON, to be surveyor of the customs for the district of Perth Amboy.

JESSE H. MCMATH, of Ohio, to be consul of the United States at Tangiers.

EDWARD L. BANGLY, to be collector of customs for the district of Cherrystone, in the State of Virginia.

JONAS A. HUGHSTON, of New York, to be marshal of the Consular Court of the United States at Shanghae.

JAMES L. DEGRAW, of New Jersey, to be consul of the United States at Guyaquil.

WM H. EVANS, of Ohio, to be consul of the United States at Maranham.

EDWARD H. PERKINS, of Pennsylvania, consul at Santa Cruz.

JOHN EVANS, of Illinois, to be Governor of the Territory of Colorado.

The Miseries of Correspondents.

The correspondents of the newspapers are everywhere—on the Potomac, the Neuse, the Ohio, the Cumberland, the Chesapeake, the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Alleghany, the Susquehanna, the Mobile, and on all the other rivers, loyal and disloyal, as well as in or near our "inland seas," gulfs, and oceans, with eager ears, hungry eyes, and ravenous pens; *but they dare not write*. What this small army of steel-pen drivers know would set the world ablaze; what they do not know is not worth knowing. Imagine their miseries! When this congealed intelligence melts and goes forth what a flood and freshet we shall have! Printers and publishers, prepare!

The Democratic Party.

A Democratic Conference was held last night, continuing in session until a late hour. The call was signed by all, excepting four or five, of the members of Congress who were elected as Democrats.

Representative CORNING presided, and Representatives PENDLETON and SHEL acted as secretaries. An injunction was placed upon all present not to reveal the proceedings. It is, however, ascertained from private conversations to-day, that the proceedings of the conference were principally confined to the consideration of the resolutions reported from a committee of which Mr. VALLANDIGHAM, of Ohio, was chairman, declaring in substance that the restoration of the Union and maintenance of the Constitution, require that the organization and principles of the Democratic party of the United States should be fully and faithfully adhered to, and inviting all citizens without distinctions of sections or party to co-operate with the Democracy in supporting the Constitution and restoring the old Union.

A committee of one from each State represented by Democrats, either in the Senate or House, was appointed to report at a future conference. The names of the members are not yet known. It is understood that several members from the Border slave States were present and participated in the proceedings. The entire number at the meeting was about forty. The proceedings are represented as having been harmonious.

The Public Lands in Nevada.

Frequent applications are made as to the disposal of the public lands in Nevada; but as the land districts have not yet been organized therein, no species of claims can now be located. There seems to be no doubt that those who at present occupy lands there will be secured in their locations by future legislation.

The Recent Purchase of Transport Vessels.

The House of Representatives having addressed an inquiry to the Secretary of War, he responded to-day, by enclosing a letter from Assistant Secretary of War JOHN TUCKER, in which the latter says that "a very large transportation by water being required by Major General MCCLELLAN, the quartermaster detailed Captain H. C. HODGES, assistant quartermaster, to this duty, and I was requested to assist him. All parties who had offered suitable vessels in answer to the advertisement for transports were requested to meet us without further resort to the newspapers. It was made as public as possible that the Government was in want of such transportation, and desired to deal directly with the owners. A very large number were chartered by direct negotiation with the owners, while some made their application through ship-brokers. A decided preference was given to the former. Captain HODGES and myself received only our regular compensation as assistant quartermaster and assistant Secretary of War respectively. No other persons have been acting under the authority or by the direction and permission of Capt. HODGES or myself to effect such charters, and consequently no compensation has been or is to be paid for such services, and no person, acting directly or indirectly for the Government, has charged the persons from whom such vessels were chartered any per centage on the amount of the charter or any other compensation."

The Van Wyck Investigating Committee.

The members of the Van Wyck Investigating Committee have all returned, and Colonel VAN WYCK has joined his regiment.

Military Affairs.

The promotions made by the Secretary of War for gallant services at the battles of Fort Donelson and Mill Spring, having been confirmed by the Senate, the commissions have been signed by the Secretary, and will soon reach those thus honored

The official report from Pea Ridge has not yet been received, nor has that concerning the recent action near Winchester.

General DAVIES, of New York, has been assigned to duty in General HALLECK'S department.

General HUNTER is on his way to take command of his department of the South.

Hon. Simon Cameron.

The late Secretary of War, General CAMERON, arrived last evening with his family, and has taken quarters at Willards. He will certainly leave for his Russian mission the first or second week in April, and is receiving his credentials and instructions. During to-day many have called upon him, and when he visited the Senate he was warmly greeted. The kindness of General CAMERON, while he was Secretary of War, to men of all parties, and his liberality in conferring commissions in the army upon many of those who represented the loyal Democracy of the free States, are remembered with gratitude. All, or nearly all, the men he has thus distinguished have proved their fidelity to their country, either by undaunted courage in the field, whenever they have had a chance to show it, or by efficiency and integrity in the line of their duties. It is believed that Mr. FRITCHETTE, of Pennsylvania, will be General CAMERON'S secretary of legation.

The Tax Bill.

The amendments thus far made to the tax bill are not decisive, but merely the action of the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, the House having finally to act upon them. It is believed that Congress will, in conformity with the bill proposed by the Secretary of the Treasury, increase the tax on tobacco, whisky, and other luxuries. The hasty clause taxing the stock of whisky now in the hands of dealers will probably be reconsidered, as it is deemed by many prominent gentlemen to be *ex post facto*, and as, with this clause stricken out, the bill will be more acceptable.

A Statistical Bureau.

The Secretary of the Interior has under consideration a plan for organizing a Statistical Bureau, like that existing in European countries, which annually reports the state of every sort of production, &c.

Pennsylvania Post Offices.

ESTABLISHMENTS.

Niles Valley, Tioga county, Pa.—Jerome B. Niles, postmaster.

Hon. Mr. Grow's district.—John's Branch, Bedford county, Pa.—Thomas M Richey, postmaster.

Hon. Mr. McPherson's district, located between Hopewell and Bloody Run.

APPOINTMENTS.

John W. Tilney, postmaster, Black Bird, New Castle county, Delaware, vice John Ferguson, resigned.

Albert G. Thomas, postmaster, Whitehaltville, Bucks county, Pa., vice A. G. Hendricks, resigned.

Jacob Bixler, postmaster, Kerrsville, Cumberland county, Pa., vice Charles Harvey, resigned.

Mrs. Mary C. French, postmaster, Middle Spring, Cumberland county, Pa., vice Samuel B. Biehl, resigned.

David Trexler, postmaster, Shamokin Dam, Snyder county, Pa., vice John Good, resigned.

Joseph Kemp, postmaster, Fostoria, Blair county, Pa., vice A. M. Myers, resigned.

Disloyalty in the Pulpit.

On Sunday, some of the clergy here omitted to read thanksgiving for Federal victories, although the lesson of the morning enjoins the purging out of all rebels, etc. Serious church divisions, if not defections, bid fair to arise from the attachment which certain clergymen and lay brethren have for treason and traitors. These men are placing themselves out of the pale of citizenship. Being aliens in heart to the country, they ought to have only such rights as public policy dictates in such cases. That is to say, they may hold property, but should have no right to vote or serve on juries, etc. The disloyal of Border-State cities are generally of the aristocratic class of upper tendom. Their spacious mansions, "with all the conveniences," would make most excellent hospitals for the soldiers of the Union armies.

The Capitol Extension.

I hear that General MEIGS is not averse to the transfer of the change of the Capitol extension from the War Department. He considers that the main work is done.

DESPATCH FROM GEN. SHIELDS.

THE FIGHT NEAR WINCHESTER.

OUR LOSS, 150 KILLED AND 300 WOUNDED.

REBEL LOSS, 500 KILLED AND 1,000 WOUNDED.

WASHINGTON, March 26.—The following despatch from General Shields to Senator Rice, dated Winchester, to-day, was read in the Senate this afternoon:

"On the morning of the 23d, my command, 7,000 to 8,000 strong, was attacked near this place by Jackson, with eleven regiments of infantry, the Irish battalion, about 1500 cavalry, and 25 pieces of artillery. After a seven fight, the enemy were put in complete rout, leaving behind two pieces of cannon, four caissons, and a large number of small arms, besides about three hundred prisoners. Our loss is one hundred and fifty killed, and three hundred wounded. The enemy's loss is five hundred killed and one thousand wounded."

WINCHESTER, March 26, P. M.—We expect to obtain a list of the killed and wounded on both sides to-night.

Capt. A. H. Brown, of the Fourth Ohio, has been appointed deputy provost marshal.

A committee of citizens, in conjunction with the Mayor and provost marshal, have buried all the rebel dead which have been brought to town. Eighty-five were buried on the battle-field, and 123 on the roadside, between here and Strasburg.

Two hundred and thirty-five prisoners have been sent to Baltimore. Others are on the way here.

A newspaper from Strasburg states that General Johnson was to have joined Jackson at Strasburg, but subsequently sent him word that he could not join him till Monday night. Their combined forces would have amounted to from 25,000 to 30,000. The rebels were endeavoring to keep General Banks from moving to another point, but Jackson, being falsely informed that our troops had nearly all left Winchester, hazarded his fatal advance alone.

Thousands of persons are visiting the battle-ground and bringing off mementoes of the terrible fight. Our pickets are six miles beyond Strasburg. Jackson was not in sight. All the fences, trees, and ground along the route show the terrible effect of our artillery on the retreating enemy.

Gen. Shields' arm has been reset. His condition is now comfortable, and he will probably be able to resume active duties in two weeks.

IMPORTANT FROM FORTRESS MONROE.

The Merrimac Repaired and Coming Out.

PREPARATIONS TO MEET HER.

ESCAPE OF THE NASHVILLE.

FORT MACON STILL IN POSSESSION OF THE REBELS.

[Special correspondence of the Baltimore American.]

FORTRESS MONROE, March 25.—We have a clear, bright sunshine to-day, which is quite reviving after a siege of storm and cloud.

The Merrimac Again.

Two contrabands were picked up at daylight this morning, in an open boat, and carried on board the *Minnesota*. They were both quite intelligent, and had been at work in the navy yard.

They state that the *Merrimac*, or the *Virginia*, as she is now called, came back to Norfolk from her conflict with the *Monitor* leaking badly, and with six feet of water in her. As she came up in front of Norfolk six steamers were towing her, and it was feared at first that she would go down before extra pumps could be rigged on board of her to relieve her from the water. Her fires were extinguished by the water shortly after hauling off from the *Monitor*, which was the reason the smaller vessels took her in tow.

These contrabands also positively assert not only the death of Commodore Buchanan, who had charge of her when she sunk the *Cumberland* and burnt the *Congress*, but also the lieutenant, who was in command of her on Sunday when she had the encounter with the *Monitor*, was killed, along with seven seamen, and quite a number were wounded. They are positive in their assertions as to the death and burial of both Buchanan and the lieutenant, but whether it was Lieut. A. C. Jones or Lieut. Minor is not known.

They also state that the *Merrimac*, having been fully repaired, was brought out of the dry dock on Monday morning, and that her crew was on board, ready for action. Several new guns had also been placed on board of her, of heavier metal than those she before had. The rebel steamers *Jamestown* and *Yorktown* they represent to have been greatly strengthened and fully repaired, ready to accompany the *Merrimac*. The flag of the latter, with the commodore's pennant, was flying when they left.

The impression here is that it is Lieutenant Minor, her second officer, who is dead, and not Commodore Ap Catesby Jones, as the negroes represent.

How She Will be Received.

The *Monitor* stands out in the Roads this side of Sewell's Point, with steam up ready for action at any moment. She looks as calm and serene as if nothing depended on her, and her gallant commander Jeffers and officers are anxious for the moment to arrive when her powers will be again tested. They are confident of entire safety as if on land, and will follow the *Merrimac* up on her way to Norfolk if she should attempt to retreat.

As to other arrangements that have been made by the Government to meet the iron-clad monster, it would not be proper for me to speak, but that they are deemed ample and suffic