New-York Daily Tribune.

VOL. XXIV.....No. 7,429. NEW-YORK, FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 1865. PRICE FOUR CENTS.

THE PEACE MOVEMENT.

RETURN OF FRANCIS P. BLAIR.

A Strong Peace Party Among the Rebel Leaders.

They are Willing to Make Almost any Terms.

MR. BLAIR THINKS PEACE PROBABLE.

BALTIMORE, Thursday, Jan. 26, 1865.

A special dispatch to *The American* from Annapolis, says:

Hon. Mr. Blair arrived here this afternoon at 4 p. m. He left Richmond yesterday. He is understood to report that among many of the leaders in Richmond, Jeff. Davis included, there is a strong feeling toward making peace on the best terms they can.

ONE DAY LATER FROM RICHMOND.

Mr. Blair Still in the City—He Has seen Davis—Speculations as to his Terms—Editorials from the Leading Richmond Papers—Armistice Movement in the Rebel Congress—Return of Mr. Singleton—No War News of Importance.

Special Dispatch to The N. Y. Tribune.

WASHINGTON, Thursday, Jan. 26, 1865.

Richmond papers of the 24th of January are received.

On the subject of Mr. Blair's mission, *The Examiner* says: "Public talk in Richmond has taken a decidedly new turn on the subject of the Blair Mission. Since the very expeditious return of that person to this city, the attention of the public seems to have been strongly awakened by the haste of his movements, and the talk through the city yesterday was that Mr. Blair's second visit, so close on the heels of his first, argued a feverish anxiety at Washington, which might very possibly mean that there was an anticipation of certain emergencies ahead very favorable to the Confederacy, against which it might be advisable for the Yankees to hedge as soon as possible. A number of persons thought to discover in the evidence of concern at Washington, suggested by Mr. Blair's second visit, an intimation of the truth of the idea that European powers would, on the 4th of March, recognize the then existing Washington Government as representing only its own constituents, viz.: those who voted in the Presidential election of last November, thus logically involving the recognition of the Confederacy.

"*Later.*—We were informed last night, by an authority which we believe to be good, that the proposition brought by Blair is substantially that stated in *The New-York World*, which the reader will find in our column of Yankee news. Lincoln proposes peace on this basis: he will issue a proclamation of executive amnesty to persons, on the following conditions: First, abolition of Slavery in all the States. Second, return of all the States into the Union as it was, under the Constitution, as it is, the changes made in the Constitution since the war to be accepted as part of it. As no convention has been held to change the Constitution of the United States since the war, it is presumed that he refers to the series of unconstitutional or extra-constitutional laws passed by the Yankee Congress, who make the United States Government at this moment the darkest despotism on earth. Thus the proposition is simply for submission to subjugation in its direct form. The enemy hopes to gain from cowardice what he has hitherto been unable to accomplish with arms. We hope that this will prove to be a correct statement of Blair's 'terms.' Our flag of truce goes down to-day to Boulwares landing, and will convey Gen. Singleton of Illinois, on his return to the North.

The Dispatch says it was said yesterday that Mr. F. P. Blair, the venerable white-winged harbinger of peace, had left town before breakfast, on his way back to the Land of Lincoln. Though we were not regaled with a glimpse of the old gentleman in any of the public places, and heard of no dear friends of former years shaking hands with him at the President's house or elsewhere, we do not believe that he has left us. He would not have come so far to have stayed so short a time. We have no doubt that he visited the President yesterday, but have heard nothing of the interview.

In the House of Representatives on the 23d, Mr. J. T. Leach introduced three resolutions on an armistice and peace negotions as follows:

Resolved, For the purpose of averting, if possible, further horrors of this bloody fratricidal strife, revolting alike to the feelings of statesmen, patriots and Christians, and to add moral to our physical strength, that we the members of the House of Representatives of the Confederate Congress, in behalf of justice and suffering humanity, appeal most earnestly to the President and Senators of the Confederate Congress to appoint such number of Commissioners as to their judgment the importance of the occasion demands, to offer an armistice to the Federal authorities preparatory to negotiations for peace.

Resolved, That should the Federal authorities agree to an armistice, and consent to negotiate for peace that the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, be requested to appoint commissioners for the purpose of conferring with the Federal authorities, and that such terms of peace as may be agreed to by them and certified by the President and Senate; two-thirds of the Senate concurring, shall constitute a bond of peace between the belligerents.

Resolved, That should the Federal authorities refuse to entertain terms of peace by negotiation, and thereby deny us our constitutional rights that for the purpose of more effectually maintaining those rights, and at the same time avert, if possible, the fearful and humiliating fate of subjugation, alike revolting to the feelings of freemen, and repugnant to the demands of justice that we the representative of this House, do unanimously pledge the undivided resources of the Confederate States in the defence of our inalienable rights as freemen.

Referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The Examiner on "Peace" says: "Things have come to that pass when constancy of purpose and determination are sure to secure what we have spent so much to gain. There is no danger but the cause of the Confederacy will triumph, provided the reformation measures now in progress result in giving to the country a resolute and intelligent administration, and provided that all men, soldiers and citizens, but clear out of their minds every thought of retreat or withdrawal. To attain to any peace at all, either soon or in the distant future, we must now think of war only, and dispose all things with a single view to that end, especially when private and unauthorized emissaries from Washington are prowling around, counseling unconditional submission, for this is the only proposal they have to make; we may know that our policy, our diplomacy, the "resources of our statesmanship," all center in unsparing battle. Those prowlers, whether they be North-Western Democrats, or intimate friends and allies of Lincoln, would not be here if there were not at the North a most anxious and nervous haste to bring the war to a close by wheedling us into a submission which they know they cannot compel by force of arms. Yes, with all their bluster, they know this. After their minutes shall have been fired off, and their thundering braggadocia rolled forth over the capture of Savannah and of Fort Fisher, they understand already that they will not have advanced much in the business of conquering the South, if only the South is determined not to be conquered. And their available fighting material is already in the army. They must subjugate a continent with that army which they have now in the field, or not at all, and there is high authority for describing that army as consisting in great part of trash. It is the word used by a "Union General," in remonstrating with his fellow-citizens for having filled up his ranks, not with real soldiers, but with the offal of mankind, bought by the pound. The army of Grant, in front of Richmond and Petersburg, is really but a skeleton and a name. That grand host with which he crossed the Rapid Ann last May, exists no longer; is barely capable of holding the very strong works which frown formidably opposite to ours, but are manned chiefly by negroes and other "trash." The Dutch Gap Canal is a total failure, and so vanishes all hope of bringing Yankee iron-clads up the James to bombard our forts at Chapin's and Drewry's Bluffs from the river. Last Fall there were many and powerful attempts made by Grant to extend his left wing round to the Southside railroad, all repulsed with more or less slaughter, and now he seems unable to even harrass us by futile demonstrations of that kind. In fact, he is evidently waiting upon cooperation from the army of Sherman, coming from the South to march upon Danville and Burkeville, cut off all our railroad communications, and so starve Richmond into a surrender. It is another of those gigantic and stupendous campaigns—only more stupendously gigantic than ever—which we have been accustomed to admire for two or three years; but the more huge, complicated, and enormous, it is all the more liable to have its combinations dislocated and disconcerted as before. The campaign, which appears to be pre-figured for next Spring, is an enlargement of the idea of last May. Then it was Grant advancing on Richmond from the north, Butler from the south, by way of James River and Petersburg, and Hunter from the west, occupying Lynchburg. Now it is Grant clinging to Richmond, while Sherman is to come from the south by way of Branchville, S. C., and Thomas is to complete the grand combination by moving through East Tennessee upon Lynchburg and the same desirable railroads. To take Richmond is the single object of the whole. If they have not Richmond, they think they have nothing. If last year's campaign failed, they imagine it is because that campaign was too small and narrow. This year they enlarge the siege of Richmond by opening trenches in South Carolina and Tennessee. If this fails again, they can commence next year's siege by a combination embracing Arkansas, Texas, and Florida. Pity, that operations on so superhuman a scale should need increased and still increasing hosts of men; that programmes which have such majesty of conception, and fill up the grandiose imaginations of editors and correspondents, should be so liable to fail for want of that human trash, which can no longer be bought by the pound and supplied by contract, in sufficient masses to realize the Yankee ideal of a siege. To submit unconditionally, to deliver ourselves up to the mercy and discretion of Lincoln as beaten Rebels; for this, we repeat, is the only proposal they have to make. It matters not that an old gentleman of the name of Blair—a garrulous old busybody, fresh from Washington lobbies—may hint and whisper, laying his fingers on his nose, as to his own private impressions of the treatment we might possibly expect if we lay down our arms. We cannot be expected to trust to the private impressions of that individual, in the face—in the teeth—of all uniform declarations of the enemy's Government, the proclamations and messages of their President, and acts of their Congress, to the effect that there can be no peace unless we begin by surrendering at discretion. It is well for our people to understand and lay to heart the fact that the enemy still demands an absolute surrender of ourselves and our children and our property to the mercy of Yankees; and this when we have three gallant armies in the field; when a vast section of our country west of the Mississippi is entirely cleared of invaders; when the land is still abounding both in provisions and in arms, and in men to use them, needing only fresh vigor infused into our Administration, and a strong and steady hand upon the wheel to make this year's campaign more disastrous to the invader than the last.

The Whig has an editorial on Blair's peace mission as follows:

The return of Mr. Blair to this city has naturally given rise to much speculation, not only as to the original object of his visit but as to the character of the communications which he has held with this Government and consequently with his own. The pretense of private business which was held out in the beginning can no longer impose on public credulity, and, indeed, the Northern papers, who profess to be well informed on the subject, have abandoned that explanation, and have engaged in a discussion characterized by no little bitterness as to the terms of settlement which Mr. Blair is authorized to offer to us, or has taken on himself the responsibility. THE TRIBUNE declares now the one effect of his mission will be to convince us that the North does not demand an unconditional surrender, and hence THE TRIBUNE infers that good, according to that paper's view, may result, the presumption being that the "Rebels" are not fighting for independence, but merely to save themselves from the dire effects of untrammeled Yankee vengeance. *The New-York Times*, which is presumed to represent more accurately the views of the Washington Government, deprecates this Tribunitian hypothesis as well calculated to awaken false hopes in the rebellious bosom of the South. *The Times* will have it the North does demand nothing less than such unconditional surrender as will turn over the South to the mercy of her Northern masters, and place the rights of the people, and their property of every kind at the absolute disposal of the Yankees. Thus it seems that of the two parties to this controversy, neither one even tolerates the idea of a recognition of Southern independence. The one represented by THE TRIBUNE, appears to think that the moment has come when a simple offer to withdraw the menace of those terrific penalties now hanging in terrorem over us will quite suffice to bring us back into that Yankee Union. We left with the deliberate resolve of never reëntering it and to keep out of which we have been waging four years of bloody war. The other, represented by *The Times*, sees in the situation of affairs a guarantee that the North can accomplish her whole plan of suppression, confiscation and conquest, and will take nothing less, not even that Union for which Lincoln has professed to be making war on us. It wants the lands, the houses and the negroes of the South; to possess and enjoy the real property; to seize the personal effects, and to emancipate the slaves. It will thence be seen that, after all, neither party offers anything that the South can by possibility accept, and the Blairs mission, if it involves nothing more than the theories which have been put forward at the North to explain it, has no significance whatever beyond the evidence which it furnishes of the strength and extent of the delusion which appears to have settled on the Northern mind, otherwise it is the merest of shams, yet a sham which has some meaning, on the supposition which we have already more than once employed to account for it, that the Yankee Government is really convinced of its inability, without the application of some fresh stimulus to the flagging zeal of its people to carry on the war on the immense scale required, not merely for final success, but for the purpose of maintaining its existing acquisitions. We insist on it that this is the key to the Blair problem, and so it will be found in the end. The fact is that all this talk about negotiation and Peace, while one party is still bent on conquest and the other on independence, is idle and meaningless.

The Sentinel thus calls for a Spring campaign:

"Let Congress and the authorities hasten the work of the reorganization and concentration of our resources for the Spring campaign. We are abundantly able to meet any force the enemy can bring against us, if we will but gather our strength in hand and apply ourselves resolutely to our work. We see more and more the evidences that this will be done, and our confidence increases in consequence even to exhilaration. Dismiss promptly all bad and inefficient officials; bring in the recruits, bring in deserters, and let our whole country ring with the evidences of a fresh zeal and of diligent preparation. If we will do our duty, God will make this the last year of the war."

Of general news there is the following:

Maj.-Gen. Gordon has been placed in command of the Second Corps, lately commanded by Lieut.-Gen. Early.

Judge Campbell, the Assistant-Secretary of War, has sent in his resignation.

The House of Representatives, on yesterday, passed an exemption bill which provides radical changes in the present exemption law. It repeals absolutely the fifteen-negroes law, provides that no mail-contractor under forty-five years of age shall be exempt, and limits the power of detail hitherto rested in the hands of the President and Secretary of War.

A recontre occurred in Raleigh, on the 16th, between W. W. Holden, esq., editor of *The Standard*, and Col. D. K. McRae, editor of *The Confederate*. *The Progress* believes that Col. McRae was the attacking party, having taken some exceptions to an article in *The Standard*. Not much damage was done, and both parties were bound over.

The Richmond Dispatch of the 24th has the following:

"For some reason an attack on our lines on the north side seems to have been expected on Sunday night, and arrangements were made to meet it; but the night passed off quietly, and the enemy came not. There is too much mud between the two armies for either to make a serious advance. During the night sharp picket-firing was heard on the lines south of James River.

As no appointment of a Secretary of War has yet been made the office cannot be said to be yet vacant, as Mr. Seddon's resignation has not been accepted. Among the gentlemen named to succeed Mr. Seddon is Gov. Letcher of Virginia.

It was reported yesterday that the Hon. J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of State, has sent in his resignation. We think this is true, though we have no positive information on the subject.

Gen. Joseph E. Johnson was in Charleston, South Carolina on the 13th inst.

One thousand Yankee prisoners, confined in Libby Prison, will be sent North in the flag of truce boat to-morrow morning. The number of prisoners now on hand in this city is upwards of 3,000, including about 60 officers.

ANOTHER REPORT FROM REAR-ADMIRAL PORTER.

The Blowing up of Fort Caswell by the Rebels—Evacuation of the other Forts—Smithville Occupied by our Forces

WASHINGTON, Thursday, Jan. 26, 1865.

Rear-Admiral Porter is so much pleased with Gen. Terry and the manner in which he conducted his part of the operations before Fort Fisher, as to deem it worthy of a special dispatch. He says:

"A timid man would have hesitated to attack the works by assault, no matter what assistance he might have had from other quarters; but Gen. Terry never for an instant hesitated, and though I feel somewhat flattered at the confidence he reposed in my judgment, I am quite ready to believe that he acted on his own ideas as to what was proper to be done in the matter, and was perfectly qualified to judge without the advice of any one. Throughout the affair his conduct was marked by the greatest desire to be successful, not for the sake of personal considerations but for the cause in which we are all alike engaged."

The Navy Department to-day received the following report from Admiral Porter:

NORTH ATLANTIC SQUADRON, UNITED STATES FLAG SHIP MALVERN, OFF SMITHVILLE, N. C., Jan. 20, 1865.

SIR: In my last I informed you that Fort Caswell had been blown up and evacuated, in consequence of the fall of Fort Fisher.

I sent Lieut. N. B. Cushing around in the Monticello to the Western bar, to ascertain what had taken place and to obtain aid from the officers in command of the Nyack and Vicksburg and take advantage of the occasion.

Lieut. Cushing did not obtain the aid he required, for what reason I have not yet learned, but with his usual energy he pushed on in his boats and found that Fort Caswell had been blown up; Bald Head Fort destroyed; Fort Shaw also, and Fort Campbell, to the westward of Caswell, had been abandoned. All these Forts mounted nine and ten inch guns and Armstrong one hundred and fifty pounders.

Lieut. Cushing then pushed into Smithville, after hoisting the flag of the Union over Caswell.

The next thing I saw was the flag waving over Smithville, which the Rebels had left in a great hurry after they saw our boats approaching, leaving everything in the beautiful and heavy fort uninjured, and two nine-inch guns, only spiked, in the fort at Deep Water Point.

In the meantime I had succeeded in getting one gunboat, the Tacony, over the Rip, an interior bar, and sent her up to Reeves Point to disable the guns at that place, about three miles on the west side of the river, above Fort Fisher.

Thus in twenty-four hours after the fall of Fort Fisher and its outworks, all the formidable chain of forts in this river, at its entrance, built to keep out anything we had, have fallen into our hands. They are garrisoned for the present with sailors.

I can scarcely give a description of these works. They are certainly the most formidable and the best built earthworks I ever saw, and do credit to the engineer who planned them. One would suppose that the whole Southern Confederacy had been at work throwing up mud and sand, and clay. Whiting, the engineer, certainly had an abiding faith in the durability of the Confederacy, as he shows his opinion by his works, which have been four years building, and were taken in as many days.

Fort Caswell is of the same shape as it was before it fell into the Rebel hands, except that the Rebels have covered its walls with earth on the outside, and made them almost impervious to shot and shell.

It is in many respects stronger than Fisher and harder to take by assault. Still it could be taken, and the Rebels know it. Three or four gunboats outside would soon have started them out.

I have had a great deal of difficulty in getting the gunboats over the bar and the rips, and only succeeded this morning in getting the last one through.

The Rebels left plenty of good stores and provisions, and our men are now subsisting on them.

I send you a list of the forts that have fallen into our hands since Fort Fisher fell, with the number and caliber of their guns. We have found here in each fort an Armstrong gun with the "broad arrow" on it and the name, "Sir William Armstrong," marked in full on the trunnells. As the British Government claims the exclusive right to use these guns, it would be interesting to know how they came into forts held by the Southern Rebels. I find that immense quantities of provisions, stores and clothing have come through this port into Rebeldom. I am almost afraid to mention the amount, but it is enough to supply over sixty thousand men. It is all English, and they have received the last cargo; no more will ever come this way.

We picked up a telegram from Gen. Lee to his subordinate here, saying that if Forts Fisher and Caswell were not held he would have to evacuate Richmond. He says most truly, and I should not be at all surprised if he left at any moment.

We have plenty of forces to hold this place against the whole Southern Confederacy. I have 250 guns bearing on the narrow strip of land, where our troops are heavily intrenched. There are vessels in the river and outside, and we only hope they will attempt to retake it.

Ten thousand men in Fort Fisher, with the aid of the squadron, would hold this place a long time.

We found this a better place to catch blockade-runners than outside. I had the blockade-runners' lights lit last night, and was obliging enough to answer their signals, whether right or wrong we dont know. Two of them, the Stag and Charlotte, from Bermuda loaded with arms, blankets, shoes, etc., came in and quietly anchored near the Malvern and were taken possession of. The Stag was commanded by Richard H. Gayle, a Lieutenant in the Rebel Navy, and belongs to the Rebel Government. A number more are expected, and we shall, I hope, catch a portion of them. I intrusted this duty to Lieut. Cushing, who performed it with his usual good luck and intelligence. These two are very fast vessels and valuable prizes. They threw a portion of their papers overboard immediately on finding they were trapped.

I inclose a list of guns captured by the Navy since the surrender of Fort Fisher and the name of the different works. This number added to those taken around Fisher makes 168 guns in all, most of them heavy ones, that have been taken.

I inclose a few papers that may be interesting. The Charlotte brings five English passengers, one of them an English army officer. They all came over as they expressed it "on a lark" and were making themselves quite "jolly" in the cabin over their champaigne, felicitating themselves on their safe arrival. The Stag received three shots in her as she ran by our blockaders outside. Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

DAVID D. PORTER Rear-Admiral.

To the Hon. GIDEON WELLES, *Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D. C.:*

LIST OF FORTS TAKEN POSSESSION OF BY THE NAVY SINCE THE FALL OF FORT FISHER, WITH THEIR ARMAMENT:

REEVES'S POINT—Two 10-inch guns.

ABOVE SMITHVILLE—Two 10-inch guns.

SMITHVILLE—Four 10-inch guns.

FORT CASWELL—Ten 10-inch guns, two 9-inch, one Armstrong, and four 32's (rifled), two 32's (smooth), three 8-inch, one Parrott (20-pounder), three rifled field pieces, three guns bored. Twenty-nine guns.

FORTS CAMPBELL AND SHAW—Six 10-inch, six 32's, (smooth), one 32 (rifled), one 8-inch, six field pieces, two mortars. Twenty-two guns.

SMITH'S ISLAND—Three 10 inch, six 32's (smooth), two 32's (rifled), four field pieces, two mortars and seventeen guns. Reported at the other end of Smith's Island, six guns. Total captured 83 guns.

Admiral Porter on Gen. Butler.

WASHINGTON, Thursday, Jan. 26, 1865.

Rear-Admiral Porter, in a long letter to the Secretary of the Navy, dated Cape Fear River, Jan. 22, reviews Maj.-Gen. Butler's report in relation to the late expedition to Wilmington. Though the capture of Fort Fisher has refuted the assertions of Gens. Butler and Weitzel, he deems it due to the naval part of the expedition that the report should receive some notice at his hands. He says Gen. Weitzel was selected, and Gen. Butler's name was never connected with the expedition, except to fit it out. When the expedition did prepare to start, it was going to the attack on the supposition that the powder vessel, originally prepared by Gen. Butler, would blow the forts down, and the troops would have nothing to do but to walk in. He soon saw Butler depended entirely upon the powder boat, and that there would be no assault from the beginning.

It is not true, as Butler says, he gave the Navy thirty-six hours start. The transports started before the Navy disappeared. It was Butler's duty to have rendezvoused at Beaufort and wait until the monitors and powder-boat on which so much depended were ready. The movements of the eight transports should have been subordinate to large and slow moving frigates and iron-clads, and he should have been where he could have arranged with me, says Porter, all the details of the attack; but no, he kept out of my way, and, I think, studiously.

Butler states that Admiral Porter was quite sanguine he had silenced the guns of Fort Fisher, and that he was urged if that were so to run by the batteries into Cape Fear River, and then troops could land and hold the beach without difficulty or without liability of being shelled by the enemy's gunboat Tallahassee seen on the river. Porter says this a deliberate mistatement, adding, "Gen. Butler does not say who urged me; but I never saw him or his staff after the landing on the beach, nor did I have any conversation with him or see him except on the deck of his vessel, as I passed by in the flagship, from the time I left Fort Monroe until he left here after his failure."

Admiral Porter further says in denial of Butler's statement that he never had the slightest intention of passing the batteries until the fort was taken. The Department saw his plan, and the utter impossibility of doing so, he would certainly not have been influenced by Gen. Butler's opinions in nautical matters, or risked his vessels to amuse him.

Admiral Porter says: "All the next paragraph in Gen. Butler's report in relation to what the Admiral said and what the Admiral declined to do is false from beginning to end. I never had any conversation of the kind with any one. Indeed, the whole report is a tissue of misrepresentations, including the part that says 'the instructions he received did not contemplate a siege,' etc., when he knows he never received any instructions, and joined the expedition without orders."

In reply to what Gen. Butler says about the weather assuming a threatening aspect and the surf rolling in on the beach and the landing becoming difficult. Admiral Porter says: I assert the landing on that day was smoother than when Gen. Terry landed there. There was no necessity for Gen. Butler reembarking his men on account of the weather. Gen. Grant never contemplated the withdrawal of the troops. He sent them there to stay, and having once effected a landing he knew that the most difficult part was done.

After a further review, Admiral Porter says in conclusion: Permit me to say that I do not see what it matters whether Gen. Butler's troops landed one day or another. He decided the fort could not be taken when he did land. He could not expect the Rebels to leave a work like that with less than 500 men in it, and he certainly could have tried to assault that number. Gen. Terry had 2,300 to contend against, and he carried the works without a very serious loss, considering the importance of the position to the country.

FROM FORT FISHER.

Capture of Blockade-runners—Rebel Officers taken at Fort Fisher—Reconnoissance up Cape Fear River, and on Land—The Enemy mean to Fight.

From Our Special Correspondent.

FORT FISHER, Jan. 20, 1865.

The navy have made a magnificent haul. On Wednesday night, the 18th, three blockade runners were captured off Cape Fear inlet by our fleet, and last night another one. Two of the steamers have just come in and anchored under the guns of the navy opposite Battery Buchanan. They are iron steamers of the largest and swiftest class of blockade-runners, very long and sharp, with low houses forward and aft scarcely higher than the rail. Like all the rest they are painted a light lead color, or light blue. They have each two raking smoke pipes painted white and set fore and aft; low paddle boxes, with wheels of small diameter, but making up in power by the application of the patent feathering floats, which, I think, is the invention of an American mechanic. They are deeply loaded, and one has the Confederate States flag floating (not proudly) at the main, with a modest flag *above it*, having a large number of white stars in a blue half-field, and longitudinal stripes of white and red. It looks well. The other vessel has the British flag flying from a short raking flag-staff at the taffrail, and the Stars and Stripes at the main.

They are both probably full of choice English goods, with *seasoned* powder and arms for Rebel consumption.

Capt. Robinette, of Gen. Grant's staff, bearer of dispatches, goes to Washington by the California.

Besides the 86 officers sent on board yesterday are Maj.-Gen. W. H. C. Whiting, Miss., C. S. A., wounded; Col. Wm. Lamb, Va., C. S. A., wounded; Maj. James H. Hill, Chief of Staff to Gen. Whiting; Capt. A. S. Vanbenthuysen, La., C. S. Marine Corps and Acting A. D. C. to Gen. Whiting, wounded; Capt. P. G. Hasell, S. C., Acting Lieut. and A. D. C. to Gen. Whiting; M. Glennan, Va., Acting Lieut. and A. D. C. to Col. Lamb; Surgeon S. Singleton, N. C., C. S. Army; Asst. Surgeon P. Bledsoe, Va., C. S. Army; Asst. Surgeon D. G. Cole, S. C., C. S. Army; Asst. Surgeon J. C. Shepherd, N. C., C. S. Army; Asst. Surgeon R. J. Muirhead, S. C., C. S. Army; Asst. Surgeon G. A. Foote, N. C., C. S. Navy; Asst. Surgeon W. W. Griggs, Va., C. S. Navy; Asst. Surgeon J. M. Kicks, Miss., C. S. Navy; Acting Surgeon W. W. Latham, N. C., C. S. Army.

These officers were put on board the Thomas late last evening, and were this morning, at 9 o'clock, transferred to the California, lying off the bar, where she has remained with the other officers since yesterday afternoon. A guard will now be sent on board to relieve the one which has been in charge of the prisoners, and after some rations are put on board for the men she will proceed.

The wind is blowing fresh from the N. E., with every prospect of a protracted storm.

Gen. Whiting's wound is in the right leg, above and near the knee. Col. Lamb's wound is in the hip, the ball still remaining in. Both have to be moved on stretchers. By the good management of Capt. Doane of the Thomas, they were all safely transferred to the California, a work of no small difficulty while lying along side of a vessel in a sea-way.

There are some Northern men among the other officers, who seem not much displeased at the prospect of seeing New-York, Baltimore and other places where they have lived.

The Eliza Hancock, Capt. Ainsworth, with Gen. Comstock on board, proceeded two miles up the Cape Fear River yesterday, beyond where the advance gunboat lay, to reconnoitre. She went in sight of Fort St. Phillip, situated on a projecting point five miles above Battery Lamb. The Rebel flag was flying over the Fort, and there were guns in position. The Hancock turned round and was just getting started back when the fort opened on her with solid shot. The Hancock fired up, and soon got out of range. The navy will soon make short work of Mr. "St. Phillip" by and by. They seem now to have a wholesome fear of torpedoes, and move with great caution.

Examinations thus far made show that the Rebels have constructed a breastwork nearly from ocean to river above our lines, and are evidently preparing as best they can, to contest our advance in the direction of Wilmington. Gen. Paine yesterday made a reconnoissance in force, and after a short skirmish with the enemy captured fifty prisoners. A Lieut. Colonel of a colored regiment was wounded. His name has not been reported. The Spalding from Fortress Monroe, sent after our wounded, and the steamer Howard from Beaufort, arrived this morning. Both have gone inside. Blowing fresh from the northeast at noon. E. S.

THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

Quiet—Bad Weather—Deserters—Presentation to the Chief Quartermaster.

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, Tuesday, Jan. 24, 1865.

Quiet still prevails along the lines of this Army, the bad weather prevailing for the past few days making it impracticable to carry out any military movement even if one was contemplated.

Many persons have predicted that an evacuation of Petersburg would take place before now, but as yet there are no signs of such an event.

The deserters coming within our lines are very numerous, the number ranging from 12 to 50 a day; all of whom tell the most doleful stories of hardships they had to endure, the scarcity of provisions, &c., and predict that the end of the Rebellion is near at hand.

Col. Batchelder, Chief Quartermaster of the Army of the Potomac, was to-night the recipient of a beautiful present from the officers of the Quartermaster's Department of the Second Corps. The testimonial consisted of a costly gold watch and chain, together with a magnificent photographic album, containing pictures of the officers who participated in the affair. He was formerly Chief Quartermaster of the Second Corps, and since he has held his present position he has given complete satisfaction, not only to those connected with the department, but to the commanding General.

Further Particulars of the Operations of the Rebel Iron-Clads in James River.

HDQRS. ARMY OF THE JAMES, Jan. 24, 1865.

Last night the enemy made an unsuccessful attempt to run past our batteries. They took advantage of the storm and darkness to send down a fleet of eight vessels of war and three torpedo-boats. This flotilla consisted of the Virginia, Fredericksburg, and Richmond, iron-clads, mounting four guns each; the wooden vessels Drewry, Nansemond, and Hampton, of two guns each; the Bedford, one gun; the steamer Torpedo, and three torpedo-boats.

The following are the particulars as far as they could be obtained from a deserter from the expedition, who came into our lines after daylight this morning:

The fleet left its mooring about six o'clock last evening, and proceeding quietly until it got near our batteries, they were discovered, and immediately the batteries opened on them, to which they replied. At about 12 o'clock they succeeded in cutting the chain in front of our obstructions beyond the lower end of Dutch Gap Canal, when the Fredericksburg, under full head of steam, passed through the obstructions, completely demolishing one of the sunken canal boats. The Richmond, Virginia and Drewry, in attempting to follow, grounded, when the Fredericksburg had to go to their assistance. The Drewry could not be got off, and was obliged to be abandoned, as it was now daylight and they were in range of battery Parsons. As soon as it became light the battery opened on the Drewry, one of the shells falling in her magazine, which exploded, completely demolishing her; and the remainder of the fleet again made their way back up the river. It was supposed that an attempt would be made to go through again to-night, though what their destination may be can merely be surmised. The only damage done was the dismounting of one gun on Fort Brady.

The deserters report only one man killed and two wounded by the explosion of the Drewry. Four deserters swam ashore and came into our lines.

FROM FORTRESS MONROE.

Capture of Blockade Runners Off Wilmington.

FORTRESS MONROE, Tuesday, Jan. 24, 1865.

The gunboat Advance arrived from Fort Fisher this morning, with a portion of the crews of the blockade runners Stag and Charlotte, captured on the 21st inst., while endeavoring to run into Wilmington with cargoes of rifles, blankets, &c., being ignorant of the occupation of Fort Fisher by our forces.

The night before the capture of these vessels, the blockade runner Owl, commanded by Capt. Maffit, came very near making a similar mistake, but suspecting something wrong, as is supposed, in the signal lights of our forces, made her escape, and succeeded in eluding the vigilance of our cruisers on the alert for blockade runners.

Another blockade runner was, however, captured on last Sunday morning off Fort Fisher, but her name was not ascertained.

An Arrival from Fort Fisher—All Quiet There.

FORTRESS MONROE, Wednesday, Jan. 25, VIA BALTIMORE, Jan. 26, 1865.

The steamer McClellan arrived here this morning from Fort Fisher, with 100 Rebel prisoners, the mails and dispatches from our forces operating against Wilmington.

Nothing of importance had transpired in reference to the movement of the land and naval forces in that direction. Our gunboats were gradually feeling their way up the river, and were some four miles above Fort Fisher when the McClellan sailed. When that was we are not informed. Our troops were quietly resting and organizing for future operations.

The Canadian Parliament—Prevention of Rebel Raids.

QUEBEC, Thursday, Jan. 26, 1865.

In Parliament last night the Attorney-General brought in a bill for the prevention and suppression of outrages on the frontier, and the manufacture and shipment of arms for unlawful purposes; and providing for the seizure and examination of suspected vessels, and giving notice to persons proving unworthy of the hospitality of the country to remove from it. The bill is copied in part from the Imperial act and in part from an act of the Congress of the United States of 1838. The bill was read for the first time, and passes to a second reading to-day.

Slaughter of Negroes.

LOUISVILLE, Ky., Jan. 25, 1865.

The authorities here have been officially informed that Mundy's gang this evening killed at Simsonville thirty negroes who were in charge of 1,000 head of Government cattle. No further particulars have been received.

THE BUTLER-BROOKS CASE.

SPEECH OF MR. BOUTWELL OF MASS.

Mr. BOUTWELL.—It is my fortune, Mr. Speaker, and not ill fortune, that I represent the district of Massachusetts in which General Butler resides. When the gentlemen from New-York (Mr. Brooks) on a day now some time since passed, charged upon General Butler the crime of being "a gold robber," I paid no heed to it. I had seen from the commencement of this war that secessionists and men whose sympathies are with the purposes of the secessionists, had not hesitated, whenever and wherever they could obtain the ear of the public, to arraign whomsoever they might upon whom in any degree, in their estimation, rested the crime of being patriots. I remembered that General Butler had been the first man to expound to this country and to the world the true doctrine as to the rights of the negro race on this continent, and to expose to mankind the course necessary to be pursued in order that this rebellion might be crushed. I regarded the observation of the gentleman from New-York as an observation made in harmony with these continued and oft repeated declarations made by secessionists in the South and secessionists and their sympathizers in the North. I did not properly appreciate the circumstance that he spoke from this floor, that he was here shielded by the Constitution, that he had in a certain sense the ear of the American public, and perhaps of the world, and that what he uttered went upon the records of this House and became a part of the history of the country.

Gen. Butler, being the subject of that observation, took entirely a different view of the matter, and when the remark was brought to his notice he addressed a letter to the gentleman from New-York. That letter has been read before this House; its contents are in a great degree known to the country. If it had been what the gentleman from New-York assumed upon this floor that it was—a challenge to him to mortal combat—if he had not been overwhelmed by his fears he would have rejoiced that that day for which he longed—the day for the reconstruction of this Union as it was—had approached, in that the assassination was attempted in one part of this city of a member for words spoken in debate, and there was a challenge to another, reviving recollections which must have been grateful to him of those days when the Union did exist "as it was," and there was no freedom of speech upon this floor or upon the floor of the other House of Congress; but his fears overcame entirely the tendency which he otherwise would have had to rejoice in the restoration of the palmy days when assassination and dueling was the order of proceedings in the capital of the country. But those days are passed; and now that there are no longer plantation masters to be here or to be represented here, I trust that plantation manners also will depart from us.

It was the last of the designs of Gen. Butler to challenge the gentleman from New-York to mortal combat. The letter to the gentleman was dated on the 20th day of January. On that same day Gen. Butler addressed a letter to the Speaker of this House, which was not sent. I have examined Gen. Butler's letter book, and I find that that to the Speaker anticipates in order the letter addressed to the gentleman from New-York, and if there were no other evidence, it would sufficiently explain the purpose which Gen. Butler had in view. I send that letter to the Clerk, and ask that it be read to the House.

The Clerk read, as follows:

WASHINGTON, Jan. 20, 1865.

SIR: I take leave most respectfully to request you to lay before the House of Representatives this note, in order to avail myself of the only means of redress known to me without breach of the privileges of the honorable House.

Mr. James Brooks, a member of the House, on the 6th of January, is reported to have used in debate the following language:

"I am bound to say that an effort was made by the Federal Government during the pendency of the late presidential election to control the City of New-York, by sending there a bold robber, in the person of a major-general of the United States. Robber as he was of the public Treasury, and major-general of the United States as he was, he dared not exercise the power given to him to attempt to control the actions of those whom the gentleman calls thieves and robbers in my own city." * * * * * *

The correctness of this report of which I have taken measures to ascertain.

Here, then, is a charge made upon the responsibility of the position Mr. Brooks occupies of very high crimes and misdemeanors alleged to be committed by an officer of the United States which, if he is guilty, ought to be visited by the most condign punishment.

If the charge is calumnious and false, then it is due to the national honor that it should be sustained by the imputation of the employment of such a person in its service in high official position, and it would seem also due to the dignity of the House that a public slanderer should be rebuked.

The Constitution and laws of the United States and parliamentary usage give to the officer thus charged no means of redress through the ordinary courts of law, or any other mode known among honorable men; therefore, appealing to the sense of justice of the honorable House, I respectfully ask that an investigation may be ordered of the charge so preferred against me by a member of the House, through a committee of its members with the most ample powers of inquiry.

Further, in order not to embarrass the investigation by confining it to the single charge made, I desire to have put in issue every official act of my public life which can in any way be supposed to affect my official integrity or personal honor, and that my accuser have leave to make good his accusation before the Committee of the House, so that if the accused be found guilty, proper prosecution may be ordered in the courts for his punishment; or if the accusation be found false and calumnious, the honorable House may be in position to vindicate its own honor and dignity by the due punishment of a public calumniator and slanderer.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

BEN. F. BUTLER.

Hon. SPEAKER, House of Representatives, Congress of the United States.

Mr. BOUTWELL—That is a copy from Gen. Butler's letter-book of a letter which he intended to address to the Speaker of this House whenever the gentleman from New-York should have replied to the letter sent to him on the 20th of this month. Lest there should be any misunderstanding, I will say this in regard to these letters: up to yesterday, after the adjournment of the House, I had never conversed with Gen. Butler or with any friend of his in reference to any official act of his life. As the gentleman from New-York was about closing his remarks, I went over to the seat of the honorable member from Pennsylvania (Mr. Stevens) and said to him that I desired that the House should adjourn before this debate closed, and that to-morrow I would probably present official documents to this House. At that moment I had no knowledge that any official documents existed, but I had known Gen. Butler for twenty-five years. I knew his faults; I knew his virtues; I knew his failings; I knew his capacities; I knew that in a transaction involving $50,000 he had evidence incontrovertible as to the position he occupied. And