ARMY AFFAIRS.

Annual Report of the Secretary of War.

WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, Dec. 3, 1855.

SIR—I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of the army for the past year, and to lay before you the reports of the heads of the several bureaus of the War Department and communications from other officers of the army.

The authorized strength of the army (as now posted) is 17,867 officers and men; but the accompanying tables prepared in the Adjutant General's office, show that at the date of the latest returns the actual strength was 15,752. The recruiting service is now progressing satisfactorily, however, and it is believed that in a few months the disparity between the authorized and actual strength of the army (2,115) will be nearly overcome. The number of enlistments made during the twelve months ending September 30, was 10,546. The number of persons offering to enlist, and who were refused on account of minority or unfitness for service, was 20,522. The number of casualties in the army by deaths, discharges and desertions during the same period, were 5,500. The very numerous applications for the discharge of minors—so many of which have succeeded within the past year—renders it necessary that some steps should be taken to check the growing evil and the serious expense to which the government is thereby subjected. The regulations are sufficiently stringent on the subject of the enlistment of minors; but recruiting officers are frequently deceived by the appearance of the recruit and the false representations respecting his true age. In cases where deceptions of this character have been practised the contract should be considered binding, or the recruit should be required at the time of enlisting to swear that he is either of full age, or, being a minor, that he has neither parent or guardian. A modification to this extent of the existing law respecting the discharge of minors (5th section of the act of Sept. 28, 1850) would, it is believed, lessen the impositions which are now practised and protect the government from no inconsiderable loss.

The general distribution of the troops remains for the most part as indicated in the last annual report. Among the changes of most importance are the following:—The four additional regiments authorized by the act of March 3, 1855, have been recruited and organized. Seven companies of the 1st Cavalry have recently returned from an expedition into the Sioux country, and the regiment will winter at Fort Leavenworth, where it will be in position for ulterior operations in the spring. The 2d Cavalry has been sent to the Department of Texas, to replace the six companies of the 2d Dragoons, transferred to the Department of the West.

The 9th infantry, (riflemen,) designed for service in the Department of the Pacific, has been embodied at Fort Monroe, and held under instruction preparatory to a campaign, which it was proposed it should undertake as soon as the season would permit, through the Indians on the head waters of the Missouri and tributaries of the Columbia river, from which exhibition of our power among the remote tribes it was expected a beneficial influence over them would result. But in accordance with the necessity communicated by a letter from Gen. Wool, commanding the Department of the Pacific, dated November 3, and this day received at the War Department, that regiment will be diverted from the proposed campaign by the overland route, and be despatched with the least delay by way of the Isthmus, to reinforce the command engaged in the suppression of Indian hostilities in Oregon.

The 10th Infantry, (riflemen) with the exception of one company attached to the Sioux expedition, has been ordered to the military stations on the Upper Mississippi. A portion of this regiment, when the season admits, will be employed to establish a post on the Red river of the North, near the northern boundary of Minnesota, agreeable to an act passed at the last session of Congress, appropriating $5,000, a sum altogether inadequate for that object. Six companies of the 2d Infantry have taken post at Fort Pierre on the upper Missouri. Continued Indian difficulties on the Oregon route have rendered it necessary to retain in the Department of the West the 6th Infantry, which regiment it was contemplated to send to the Pacific coast.

Efforts are still in progress for the removal of the remnant of the Seminole tribe from Florida. The troops there have been kept actively employed in exploring the country by land and water, and in opening roads. By these means much important information respecting the territory in possession of the Indians has been gained, which will greatly facilitate future operations. All intercourse with these Indians has been strictly prohibited, and it is believed that they have not in any instance passed the line of observation occupied by the troops.

In the Department of the West, Texas, New Mexico, and the Pacific, Indian hostilities have been of frequent occurrence. For the purpose of chastising the Sioux Indians, implicated in the massacre of a detachment of United States troops in August of last year, and to protect from Indian incursions the Western frontiers of Nebraska and Kansas, and emigrant routes leading from the Missouri river to the West, a military force was sent into the country inhabited by the Sioux, late in the summer, under the command of Brevet Brigadier General Harney. On the 2d of September, that officer with a portion of his command, engaged a party of the Brule band of the Sioux nation, and after a short conflict completely routed them. Eighty-six Indians were killed and a large number taken prisoners. The papers and property captured, leave no doubt that this band was concerned in the massacre of the detachment above referred to as well as in the murders and depredations committed upon emigrants, and in the robbery of the public mail.

In the Departments of Texas, New Mexico and the Pacific military expeditions have been sent against the Indians guilty of outrages upon the persons and property of the frontier inhabitants and emigrants within those sections of the country, and in several cases summary punishment has been inflicted by the troops upon the offending tribes.

The details of these operations will be found in the papers accompanying this report.

The mail steamer just arrived at New York has brought advices from the Department of the Pacific to November 5th, by which I regret to learn that Indian hostilities of a much more serious character than the difficulties in that department referred to above or than from the official reports previously received, there had been reason to apprehend, have occurred in the Territories of Oregon and Washington. The letter of the Governor of the Territory and of the Commanding General of the Department of the Pacific, of October 24, of which copies are herewith submitted, furnish the only official information on the subject in the possession of this Department. It will be perceived that to meet the emergency the Governor has ordered out a mounted volunteer force of seventeen companies, or about twelve hundred men.

The Department, at this distance, and in the absence of more definite information, especially in regard to the extent of the combination among the hostile tribes, cannot judge what volunteer reinforcements to the regular troops may be necessary. This is a matter which must be necessarily left to the military commander in the Department of the Pacific, who has repaired to the theatre of hostilities. His presence there will obviate the difficulties which might otherwise arise on the subject of rank and command between officers of the volunteers and regular forces. The alacrity with which the volunteers have responded to the call of Governor Curry gives assurance that their aid will be as efficient as it has been prompt, and it is hoped that their continuance in the military service, to the great interruption of their ordinary pursuits, will be limited to the shortest possible duration by the arrival of reinforcements which have been ordered to the regular troops of that department.

From a recent report of the Commanding General of the department of New Mexico, it appears that all the Indian tribes within his command have concluded treaties with the Governor of the Territory, and retired to the limits assigned them.

Service in Indian campaigns, though little calculated to excite the military ardor of the soldier, is attended by equal hazard, and even by greater privations than belongs to warfare with a civilized foe. The gallantry, zeal and devotion of both officers and men, have been repeatedly, within the last year, put to the severest test, and they have on all such occasions equalled the anticipations which past conduct warranted, and have renewed their claim to the gratitude of those whose flag they bear, and in whose service they have suffered. The unusual extent of the operations above detailed has necessarily caused large expenditures which must exceed the appropriations made for the ordinary wants of the military service—an incident to which, appropriations made upon estimates prepared so long in advance, are always subject.

My attention has been recently called to the practice in the settlement of accounts at the Treasury, of charging sums due in past years to the current appropriations. It is deemed preferable that the settlement of old accounts should be provided for by appropriations for arrearages, and that the practice above referred to be checked, since so long as it prevails, the appropriations for current expenses must prove insufficient, and deficiency bills be the necessary consequence.

In my last report I suggested several measures which I deemed necessary to preserve and increase the efficiency of the army.

The principal of these was a revision of the laws regulating rank and command, and those fixing the organization of the army. In relation to the evils then shown to be inherent in the present system, I need only say that additional experience has demonstrated their existence more clearly, while it has given no reason to distrust the advantages which were hoped from the change indicated. That the right of command should follow rank by one certain and determined rule that officers who hold commissions which entitle them to the command of troops, should not, at an early period of service, be placed permanently in positions on the staff, which afford no opportunity for increasing military knowledge or confirming military habits; that troops organized, equipped, and necessarily employed for the same service, should not be divided into different arms; that those serving on foot, with regimental organization and bearing muskets or rifles, should not be divided into artillery and infantry, nor mounted men armed and equipped alike, be divided into dragoons and cavalry. These propositions are the basis of the principal recommendations submitted in my last report. They appear too clear to me to need to be enforced by argument, and I hope the evils which the bare statement of the facts expose, will not be suffered to exist after the subject shall have secured the considerate attention of Congress.

A measure scarcely inferior in importance to those which relate to rank, command and organization, is that which has in view to increase the efficiency of the army by retiring from active service those officers who are no longer capable of fulfilling its requirements; but as their profession affords little opportunity for attention to personal interests, and as the very low rate of compensation allowed for their services indicates that it was fixed in connection with the idea of a permanant tenure, it would scarcely seem to be just abruptly to discharge them without any provision for the future. Nor would such course be consistent with the gratitude due to those who, amid the dangers and privations of military life, have been disabled by many years of faithful service, or by wounds received in battle. As, however, the claims of individuals must always be subservient to the public good, so nothing can justify a system which retains men in office for which they have become disqualified.

When age, wounds or other casualties of service have stripped an officer of the power to discharge the duties of a station which in earlier life he adorned, a just consideration for his own fame and a due regard for the public welfare demand that he should give place to one whose mental and physical activity is equal to the station, and who, stimulated by early promotion, would not fail to emulate the honorable fame of him whom he succeeds.

As one of the recommendations intimately connected with this subject, I have to renew that made in my former reports, for an increase of the compensation of army officers and a revision of the laws respecting their allowances.

That this measure has failed heretofore to secure the attention, which is, in my opinion, due to it, I attribute to the misconceptions which are general as to the amount of the pay, and the emoluments of a great majority of officers in active service. In the present condition of the laws regulating the pay and allowances of officers, some may, under certain circumstances, receive much larger allowances than others, and, indeed, more than the nature of the service justifies, and these, which are but exceptional cases, have given rise to a general impression that the compensation of the officers is much higher than it actually is. Perhaps the error would have been less prevalent were it not that their compensation is made up of many items, which vary according to circumstances, and render it difficult to compute the amount in all cases with certainty; but whenever the subject shall be fully considered, the result will, I am confident, show that the officers of the army are on the average less liberally compensated than those who pursue any other occupation demanding equal capacity and acquirements.

I also renew the recommendation that the provisions of the act of August 4, 1854, increasing the pay of the rank and file of the army, be extended to all enlisted men, some few of whom are, by the military signification of the words used in that statute, excluded from the benefits that were probably intended for all who come under military obligations by enlistment.

I commend to consideration the representations of the Surgeon General respecting the necessity for an increase of the medical corps. Such increase is required in consequence of the subdivision of our troops; and as the want of medical officers renders necessary the employment of citizen physicians, often at a higher compensation than that of a surgeon of the army, the new appointments would be attended with no additional expense, I therefore recommend the adoption of the measure.

I concur with the Quartermaster General in recommending the addition of five military storekeepers to his department. At present there is but a single depot of clothing and camp, and garrison equipage, and as the supplies for the whole army have to be despatched therefrom to each company, the distribution can only be made at long intervals, and consequently in large quantities, so that the companies are embarassed in their movements, and the expense of transportation is increased by the large amounts of stores which they have to take with them. With five depots, properly located, the distribution could be made more frequently, and in small quantities, the troops would be less encumbered with baggage, and the expense of their movements would be diminished.

By the seventh section of an act in addition to the several acts for the establishment and regulation of the Treasury, War, and Navy Departments, approved May 1, 1820, it is provided that no land shall be purchased on account of the United States, except under a law authorizing such purchase. Although the steady progress of our frontier westward, and the advance of our military posts with it, has rendered it frequently necessary to abandon old sites and occupy new ones, the prohibition to purchase land has not until recently been the cause of much embarassment, since the troops were operating in territories where nearly all the land was already the property of the government. In Texas, however, the case is different: there this government owns no land except such as it may have acquired by purchase for specific objects, and the greater number of our military posts stand upon the property of private persons or of the State. Embarassments have arisen from this cause, and I have therefore to recommend that the act above cited be so amended as to permit this Department, under such limitations as Congress may deem proper, to purchase such land as may be required for the sites of military posts.

I have again to ask attention to the necessity of legislation to authorize this department to sell useless military sites. Two statutes have been enacted for this purpose, but neither, according to the contemporaneous construction given them, is applicable to the largest class of cases that now embarrass the department. According to that construction the act of March 3, 1019, (3 Stat. 520) applies only to sites then in the possession of the United States, and that of April 28, 1828 (4 Stat. 264), applies only to land conveyed to the United States for military purposes, neither including reservations from the public domain which were not occupied as military sites on the 3d of March 1819. Owing to this omission, when the troops find it necessary to abandon a post of this description, the department cannot sell the land upon which the buildings and improvements of the abandoned post are located, but can only sell the buildings to be torn down and removed, and of course the price obtained bears no proportion to their value. I hope that authority will be given the Department in such cases to sell a portion of the land with the buildings, and use the proceeds for the establishment of new posts in such advanced positions as it may be necessary for the troops to occupy.

In transmitting the annual report of the Board of Commissioners of the Military Asylum for the past year, I take occasion to transmit also their reports for three preceding years, which were made annually to this Department, pursuant to regulations, but which have not been heretofore forwarded.

The view which these reports give of the results of the institution, does not fulfil the anticipations which were entertained at the time of its establishment, although early means were taken to give notice of their rights to all entitled to the benefits of the asylum, by orders published to the army, and by the handbills sent to every post office in the United States, yet the aggregate number of inmates of the several branches of the asylum was at the dates of the respective annual reports, 50, 72, 77, and 87; in addition to the last number, six men, having families, were receiving relief without being quartered at the asylum. In the meantime the Treasurer's accounts show that the net receipts were $490,140 17; that the cost of sites, buildings, furniture, stock, &c., was $380,183 75; and that the amount of current expenses was $51,314 19. If to the current expenses of the several branches, there be added the interest on the cost of building, &c., the average cost of maintaining each inmate will be found to exceed $500—an expense so great as to indicate the propriety of seeking some proper mode of effecting a reduction.

The buildings on the site near Washington City, with the addition thereto, now far advanced towards completion, will probably afford accommodations for one hundred and fifty men, a number greater than that which judging from the past rate of increase, will seek admission into the asylum for many years to come.

The branch which was established in 1852, at East Pascagoula, Mississippi, has been already discontinued, and the same measure is deemed advisable with regard to that at Harrodsburg, Kentucky. This branch was founded upon a heavy charge upon the Asylum fund, and is maintained at an expense much exceeding the advantages conferred upon the disabled soldier; but as it was established in consequence of the provisions of law contained in the Army Appropriation Act of Aug. 31, 1852, section 18, and of March 3, 1853, section 14, the propriety of declaratory legislation in the case is suggested.

I would again call attention to the propriety of additional legislation which shall place the widows and orphans of the officers and soldiers of the army on an equality with those of the officers and sailors of the navy.

I also again invite attention to the necessity of legislative provision for the more prompt settlement of the accounts of disbursing officers, by entrusting to a single accounting officer the audit of the whole, instead of requiring disbursing officers to render accounts to two auditors, as at present. The confusion and embarrassment consequent upon the division of duties, involving injurious delays in final settlement, have heretofore been brought to the attention of Congress, and it is hoped that the evils represented will not be suffered to exist much longer.

Under the appropriation made at the last session for the importation of camels, an officer of the army and one of the navy have been directed to proceed to the East to obtain animals of the different breeds most likely to be useful in our climate. By the kindness of the Secretary of the Navy, a storeship destined for the Mediterranean with naval supplies, was placed at the disposal of this Department to bring in a return cargo of camels and dromedaries, and from the last report received from the officer charged with the execution of the commission, it is expected that as many of those animals as the vessel will transport will be shipped for the United States in February next. Recent inquiries respecting the use of these animals in the Crimea confirm me in the belief that they will be found highly valuable in the military service in our country.

For detailed information respecting the Military Academy, I refer to the reports of the Chief Engineer, and of the Board of Visiters, herewith transmitted, which exhibit a satisfactory view of the condition of that institution. I concur in the recommendations of the former, for the establishment of a new professorship, in order that the chaplain may be relieved of the duties of professor of ethics, &c. and for the appointment of an instructor of cavalry, and for the allowance of light artillery pay to the instructor of artillery.

The act of March 16, 1802, requires that the corps of engineers be stationed at West Point, and constitute the Military Academy, and that the principal engineer, and in his absence the next in rank, shall superintend said academy. By this act the cadets were made part of the corps, and the whole number of officers and cadets was limited to twenty. Under subsequent legislation, the number of cadets have been increased nearly thirty fold, and owing to this extension of the academy, and to the demand for the services of engineers in the field, and on permanent works, the affairs of the academy are mainly administered by professors holding no military commissions, and officers detailed from the army generally. Thus the post has long ceased to be exclusively an engineer station as originally contemplated and the chief engineer himself, under the act establishing an engineer bureau in this Department, has been stationed at Washington. I therefore recommend such revision of the act in question as will render its provisions consistent with the changes introduced by subsequent legislation and the necessity of the service.

The sea coast defences have, during the past year, been steadily pressed towards completion to the extent of the means granted by Congress for that purpose. In no part of our military system is the exercise of wise foresight more necessary than in the prosecution of these works, and I recommend to favorable consideration the remarks of the Chief Engineer upon the subject.

The preparation of the armament for these works is in advance of the constructions.

The communication heretofore made for an appropriation to commence the fortification of Ship island, is renewed. The importance of this work, as connected with the defence of the approaches to New Orleans, and the command of the inner channel of communication between the Mississippi river and Mobile harbor, has been augmented both by the increased value of that navigation in time of peace and the introduction of light-draught war steamers, which would render this approach still more available for the operations of an enemy than when, in 1814, it was selected as the line of a hostile descent.

The physical geography of the vast region drained by the Columbia river indicates that at some day a great city must arise at the point which shall become its commercial entrepot. Attention has been heretofore called to the necessity of fortifying the entrance to the Columbia river, and I would again commend it to attention and favorable consideration.

For information in regard to the operations of the ordnance department, I refer to the accompanying report of the Colonel of Ordnance, taking occasion to renew the recommendations I have heretofore made for an appropriation for arsenals in Texas and New Mexico, and on the North Pacific coast, in Oregon or Washington Territory, as may be found most advisable; also, for a national armory for the fabrication of cannon and projectiles. My views in regard to the expediency of these measures, as heretofore given, remain unchanged. The reasons then advanced in support of the recommendations remain in full force, and are referred to instead of being repeated here.

At the national armories the manufacture of smoothbored arms has been brought to a close. New models for all small arms have been adopted upon the right principle, and embracing the improvements described in my last report, and it is expected that the armories will be at work upon the new arms before the close of the year.

In the meantime, the improved ammunition to which mainly is due the increased range recently obtained by small arms, has been issued to troops bearing grooved arms, and its use in actual service has fully realized all the advantages that were anticipated.

Among the new models for small arms is a pistol of increased length of barrel, furnished with an attachment to the stock, which may be instantly applied, and which converts it into a carbine. Should this prove as valuable in actual service as the experiments now made indicate, no difference will be needed between the arms and equipments of dragoons and those of light cavalry; but the whole, armed with this weapon, will be rendered, in celerity of movement, equal to light cavalry, and in combat as efficient as heavy dragoons. It is thought that this arm will be found also well adapted to the use of sappers and miners, of men working in the trenches, and of light artillerymen.

Under provisions made last year for the purchase of breach-loading rifles, many samples of this weapon have been examined, and a number of various patterns purchased and placed in the hands of troops for trial in the field. It is deemed indispensable to subject them to this test before adopting any as a standard weapon.

The distribution of arms to the militia of the several States for the current year has been made according to representation in Congress, as prescribed by the seventh section of the Army Appropriation Act, approved March 3, 1855. In fixing the quota of the District of Columbia and the Territories, which by the act is left to the discretion of the Executive, it was determined that the District and the Territories should receive the quota of States having the least representation in Congress. The provision of the act which required this Department to equalize, as far as practicable, the number of arms distributed to the States, was executed by issuing from the United States arsenals to each State and Territory which had received less than two thousand stand, so many arms as would bring their supply up to that number.

Arrangements have been made to convert arms of the old model, issued to the States, when desired by them, into rifled arms of the new model, with percussion lock and primer attached, the expense of the alteration to be charged to the States, and deducted from their several quotas of the appropriation for the annual supply of arms.

Under the appropriation made at the last session, editions of cavalry and light infantry tactics have been procured for the militia, and are in course of distribution.

At the last session of Congress an act was passed directing the Secretary of War to cause to be constructed on a site to be selected by the President of the United States, a suitable building for the care and preservation of the ordnance and arms, and accoutrements of the volunteers and militia of the District of Columbia, and for the care and preservation of the military trophies of the revolutionary and other wars, and for the deposit of newly invented and model arms for the military service, for which purpose the sum of $80,000 was appropriated. In the execution of this act a site was selected, and a plan and specification, conformable to the means granted, prepared, and bids for the work duly invited by public advertisement.

A contract has been entered into, but at so late a period that no progress has been made in the construction of the building.

The work upon the military roads in the Territory of Minnesota has generally made satisfactory progress. Those in Utah, Washington and Oregon, for which appropriations were made last year, have been completed according to the plans adopted. Those for which appropriations were made at the last session in Kansas, Nebraska, Washington, Oregon and New Mexico, have not been put under construction. No report has yet been received of the completion of the necessary preliminary surveys.

The survey of the Northwestern lakes has been prosecuted with skill and energy. The several parties employed on this work have been almost exclusively engaged during the past season in lakes Michigan and Superior, and the St. Mary's river. A large area has been surveyed, more than a thousand buoys have been located to mark dangerous reefs and shoals, and materials have been gathered for the minute and reliable charts so necessary to the navigation of those inland seas.

The appropriations for river and harbor improvements have, with few exceptions, been exhausted or reduced so low as not to be effective for future operations. Snag and dredgeboats are usually built out of appropriations for special works; and when, therefore, the fund is expended, it has been deemed proper to sell such boats, machinery, and material, and apply the proceeds for the benefit of the work for which the money was appropriated. The rapid deterioration and constant expense attendant on the preservation of boats, does not permit that they should be kept beyond a short period on the contingency of future appropriations being made. Under these circumstances, and for these reasons, the snagboats on the Western rivers have been sold, and the amounts drawn for the construction, equipment and repair of these boats from the appropriations for the respective rivers, were thus made available for the improvements to which they belonged. And a like course, under like circumstances, will have to be adopted in relation to the dredge boats on the Northern lakes and coasts of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.

Under the authority given in the Army Appropriation act of August 4, 1854, section 5, to use the appropriation for the removal of the Red river raft in such way as would secure navigation in and around said raft, an examination of the obstructions and surrounding locality was instituted, and a plan adopted to secure navigation around the greater part of the raft, through Dooley's bayou; and an agent, with the necessary machinery, is employed in its execution.

Reference is made to the documents accompanying the report from the Topographical Bureau, for the progress made in the improvement of Western rivers and lake harbors, the construction of military roads, and the survey of the Florida canal; and to the report of the Chief Engineer, for the work on the Atlantic and Gulf harbors and rivers.

The reports of the officers employed under the appropriations made for explorations and surveys to ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a railroad from the Mississippi river to the Pacific Ocean, were submitted to Congress on the 24th of February last, with a report from this Department, giving a general sketch of the country over which they extended; a recapitulation of their results, and a comparison of their distinguishing characteristics, from which it was concluded, that of the routes examined, the most practicable and economical was that of the 32d parallel. A report is herewith submitted from the officer in this Department charged with the revision of the work of the several parties, and I refer to it for additional information, derived from materials collected, on a further examination of them by himself and the several officers who made the particular surveys, as well as for the results of explorations carried on during the past year. When the report was made in February last, many of the maps, drawings and scientific papers intended to form part of the report, and which could only be prepared after an elaborate examination of the materials collected, had not been completed for the want of time, and it became necessary to substitute hastily prepared drawings and preliminary reports. This was particularly the case with regard to the work on the route of the 35th parallel. A minute examination of the material collected in that survey, has resulted in showing the route more practicable than it was at first represented to be, and in reducing to nearly one-half the original estimate of the officer in charge of the survey, which indeed seemed, when they were submitted, to be extravagant, and were noted in the report from this Department as probably excessive.

Another feature of interest developed in the course of the further examination of the work, on the route of the 32d parallel, is that the Colorado desert, which is traversed by the route for a distance of 133 miles, and which in the report referred to was noted as consisting of a soil that needed only water to render it highly productive, is in fact the delta of the Colorado river, and according to barometric levels, is so much lower than that stream as to be easily irrigated from it. Thus, there is every reason to believe 4,500 square miles of soil, of great fertility, of which nearly one half is in our own territory, may be brought into cultivation, in one unbroken tract, along the route. Under the appropriation made at the last session for the continuation of those surveys and other purposes, three parties have been in the field during the past season. One of them was directed to make examinations with the routes of 32d and 35th parallels. This survey has greatly improved the aspect of the former routes, by changing the line for nearly half the distance between the Rio Grande and the Pimas village, on the Gila river, from barren ground to cultivatable valleys, and entirely avoiding a *jornado* of 80 miles, which occurs in that section; also, by the discovery of an eminently practicable route through a cultivatable country from the plains of Los Angeles, along the coast and through the Salinas valley to San Francisco. The connection originally proposed between those points was by way of the valley of San Joaquin and the Great Basin.

The attention of this party was also directed to an examination into the practicability of procuring water along certain parts of the route where it is now deficient. The report shows that it may be obtained by common wells at distances of about twenty miles.

From the result of this exploration, moreover, it appears practicable to obtain, at a small expense, a good wagon road, supplied with water by common wells, from the Rio Grande down the San Pedro and Gila, and across the Colorado desert. Such a road would be of great advantage. Military operations would facilitate the transportation of the mail across that country, and relieve emigrants pursuing that route from much of the difficulty and suffering which they encounter.

A second party was charged with the duty of testing the practicability of procuring water by artesian wells on the Llano Estocado, an arid plain which has been heretofore described as a desert. The experiment has so far demonstrated its practicability as to leave little doubt of its final success. It will be continued, however, until the problem shall have been fully solved.

The examinations into the feasibility of causing subterranean streams to flow upon the surface from Artesian wells, though undertaken in connection with the practicability of a railroad, if they should prove entirely successful will have a value beyond their connection with that object, in the reclamation of a region which is now a waste, and its adaptation to the pastoral and perhaps the agricultural uses of man.

The third party was directed to conduct an exploration from the Sacramento to the Columbia river, with a view to ascertain the practicability of a route to connect the valleys of those rivers. The officer in charge has reported the successful completion of the duty, but has not given details. The same officer has been directed to make a reconnoissance of the Sierra Nevada in the vicinity of the head branches of the Carson river.

The prosecution of instrumental surveys, accompanied by investigations into many branches of physical science simultaneously, over lines of such length and embracing such an extent of latitude, is a work of greater magnitude than any of the kind hitherto undertaken by any nation, and its results have not only proved commensurate with the amount of work done, but possess a value peculiar to the scale on which it has been conducted, as affording a basis for the determination of some questions of science which no number of smaller detached explorations could have furnished. The facts developed by these surveys, added to other information which we possess, suggest some considerations of great interest with regard to our territory on the Pacific. They exhibit it as a narrow slope of an average width of less than 150 miles of cultivatable land, skirting the ocean for a distance of one thousand miles, rich in those mineral productions which are tempting even beyond their value, and which would be most readily turned to the use of an invader, drained by two rivers of widespread branches, and with seaports lying so directly upon the ocean that a hostile fleet could commence an attack upon any one of them within a few hours after being descried from land, or if fortified against attack, so few in number, that comparatively few ships would suffice to blockade them.

This territory is not more remote from the principal European States than from those parts of our own country whence it would derive its military supplies; and some of those States have colonies and possessions on the Pacific which would greatly facilitate their operations against it. With these advantages, and those which the attacking force always has, of choice of time and place, an enemy possessing a considerable military marine, could with comparatively little cost to himself, subject us to enormous expenses in giving to our Pacific frontier that protection which it is the duty of the general government to afford.

In the first years of a war with any great maritime power the communication by sea could not be relied upon for the transportation of supplies from the Atlantic to the Pacific States. Our naval peace establishment would not furnish adequate convoys for the number of storeships which it would be necessary to employ, and storeships alone, laden with supplies, could not undertake a voyage of 20,000 miles, passing numerous neutral ports where an enemy's armed vessel, even of the smallest size, might lie in wait to intercept them.

The only line of communication, then, would be overland, and by this it would be impracticable with any means heretofore used to furnish the amount of supplies required for the defence of the Pacific coast. At the present prices over the best part of the route, the expense of land transportation alone for the annual supplies of provisions, clothing, camp equipage, and ammunition for such an army as it would be necessary to maintain there, would exceed 20,000,000 dollars; the land transportation of each field 12 pounder, with a due supply of ammunition for one year, would cost $2,500; of each 24 pounder and ammunition, $9,000; and of a sea-coast gun and ammunition, $12,000. The transportation of ammunition for a year, for 1,000 sea coast guns, would cost $1,000,000. But the expense of transportation would be vastly increased by war, and at the rates that were paid on the Northern frontier during the last war with Great Britain, the above estimates would be trebbled The time required for the overland journey would be from four to six months. In point of fact however, supplies for such an army could not be transported across the continent. On the arid and barren belts to be crossed, the limited quantities of water and grass would soon be exhausted by the numerous draught animals required for heavy trains, and over such distances forage could not be carried for their subsistence. On the other hand, the enemy would send out his supplies at from one-seventh to one-twentieth the above rates, and in less time, perhaps in one-fourth the time, if he should obtain command of the Isthmus routes.

Any reliance, therefore, upon furnishing that part of our frontier with means of defence from the Atlantic and interior States, after the commencement of hostilities, would be vain; and the next resource would be to accumulate there such an amount of stores and supplies as would suffice during the continuance of the contest, or until we could obtain command by the sea. Assigning but a moderate limit to this period, the expense would yet be enormous. The fortifications, depots, and storehouses, would necessarily be on the largest scale, and the cost of placing supplies there for five years would amount to nearly $100,000,000. In many respects the cost during peace would be equivalent to that during war. The perishable character of many articles would render it perhaps impracticable to put provisions in depot for such a length of time, and in many cases there would be deterioration amounting to some millions of dollars a year.

These considerations and others of a strictly military character, cause the Department to examine with interest all projects promising the accomplishment of a railroad communication between the navigable waters of the Mississippi and those of the Pacific ocean. As military operations depend in a greater degree upon rapidity and certainty of movement than upon any other circumstance, the introduction of railway transportation has greatly improved the means of defending our Atlantic and inland frontiers; and to give us a sense of security from attack upon the most exposed portion of our territory, it is requisite that the facility of railroad transportation should be extended to the Pacific coast. Were such a road completed, our Pacific coast, instead of being further removed in time, and less accessible to us than an enemy, would be brought within a few days of easy communication, and the cost of supplying an army there instead of being many times greater to us than to him, would be about equal. We would be relieved of the necessity of accumulating large supplies on that coast, to waste perhaps through long years of peace, and we could feel entire confidence that let war come, when and with whom it may, before a hostile expedition could reach that exposed frontier, an ample force could be placed there to repel any attempt at invasion.

From the results of the surveys authorized by Congress, we derive at least the assurance that the work is practicable, and may dismiss the apprehensions which previously we could not but entertain as to the possibility of defending our Pacific territory through a long war with a powerful maritime enemy.

The judgment which may be formed as to the prospect of its completion, must control our future plans for the military defence of that frontier, and any plan for the purpose which should leave that consideration out of view would be as imperfect as if it should disregard all those other resources with which commerce and art aid the operation of armies.

Whether we shall depend on private capital and enterprise alone for the early establishment of railroad communication, or shall promote its construction by such aid as the general government may constitutionally give; whether we shall rely upon the continuance of peace, until the increase of the population and resources of the Pacific States shall render them independent of aid from those of the Atlantic slope and Mississippi valley; or whether we shall adopt the extensive system of defence above referred to, are questions of public policy which belong to Congress to decide.

Beyond the direct employment of such a road for military purposes, it has other relations to all the great interests of our confederacy—political, commercial and social—the prosperity of which essentially contributes to the common defence. Of these it is not my purpose to treat, further than to point to the additional resources which it would develope, and the increase of population which must attend upon giving such facility of communication to a country so tempting to enterprise, much of which, having most valuable products, is beyond reach of market.

I refer to the reports of the officer in charge of the Capitol and Post Office extensions for detailed information in regard to these works. The progress of the former has been seriously retarded in consequence of deficiency in the supply of marble for the exterior. The work is, however, so far advanced, that the interior finish must now be considered. The original plan and estimate was for a finish similar to that of the main building, but this style would not be a fair sample of the present state of architectural skill, and it is supposed would not fulfil the wish of Congress. It has therefore been thought proper to have prepared for inspection specimens of encaustic tiling, instead of brick and sandstone for the floor; of painting instead of whitewashing for the walls and ceilings; these and other contemplated improvements, not included in the original plan and estimate, may be induced to a greater or less extent as Congress may provide. Modifications have already been made, such as the introduction of ornamental iron ceilings in the principal rooms, the substitution of iron for wood in the frames of the roofs, and the doors and the windows of the basement story, an increased thickness of the marble in the walls, especially provided for by the law, and a costly and extensive corridor required by the plan, but not contained in the original estimate.

At the last session Congress adopted a plan, and made an appropriation for a new dome to the Capitol. No estimate of the cost of the work had been submitted, nor has any yet been prepared. In fact at that time only the exterior had been studied, and a sketch made showing the general effect of the whole building as completed. The study of the details has since been entered into, and I refer to the report of the officer in charge for a narrative of his operations, as well as for a full description of the contemplated structure, which promises to be an object of rare architectural beauty. The resources exhibited in the machinery designed to raise the enormous masses of iron composing the dome, and to place them accurately in their elevated positions, reflect the highest credit upon the capacity and skill as an engineer of the officer in charge of the work.

Notwithstanding a very unhealthy season, the work on the aqueduct designed to supply this city with water, has been prosecuted successfully, and to the extent of the means appropriated. A larger appropriation will be asked in order to realize the benefits of this great enterprise as early and as economically as possible. Should the appropriation be granted at an early period in the session, the operations can be continuously carried on but if it should be delayed until the usual period of making the annual appropriations, the Spring—the most favorable season for work—will be lost, and the operation be again subjected to the interruptions resulting from the autumnal diseases which prevail in the locality.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant. JEFFERSON DAVIS, Sec. of War.

To the President of the United States.

ADVERTISEMENTS RENEWED EVERY DAY.

HOTELS.

CLARENDON HOTEL, CORNER OF EIGHTEENTH street and Fourth avenue.—The undersigned beg leave to announce that they have taken the Clarendon Hotel, relying upon their intimate acquaintance with the business, derived from a long experience both in the United States and Europe, and the interior arrangements and accommodations of the hotel, which in point of comfort and elegance are not surpassed by any similar establishment in either country, they hope and feel that they will be able to give unqualified satisfaction to their numerous friends, and all who may favor them with their patronage. G. KERNER & J. BIRCH, Proprietors.

Table d'hote at 3 and 5 o'clock precisely.

NATIONAL HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D. C.—THIS CELEbrated hotel, situated half way between the President's house and the Capitol, has been leased by the undersigned for a terms of years, and has been refurnished and improved throughout, making it in all its appointments equal to any hotel in the country. The house is now open for the accommodation of the public. WILLIAM GUY, Proprietor.

THE GLOBE HOTEL, CORNER OF FRANKFORT AND William streets, has been completely renovated; is now prepared to furnish single rooms at 25 and 37½ cents each per day, also good rooms for families. Porters up during the night. Meals at all hours.

BOARDING AND LODGING.

773 BROADWAY.—A FINE, LARGE, LIGHT, FRONT room on second floor, to let—partly furnished, with fire and gas, if required—over Godone's music store, between Ninth and Tenth streets; suitable for any light, genteel business: an artist or dentist, &c. Apply in the hairdressing saloon, up stairs.

627 BROADWAY.—GRAND SOIREE, GIVEN THIS evening, at Mesdames SAUVAGNAU'S dancing academy, 627 Broadway. Tickets $1, for a gentleman and two ladies.

383 BROOME STREET.—TO LET, A LARGE FURnished room, with or without board, to two gentlemen, or a gentleman and wife. Terms moderate. Between Broadway and Bowery.

280 SECOND AVENUE.—ROOMS TO LET, WITH board, to gentlemen, or gentlemen and their wives. House new and newly furnished, with all the modern improvements; pleasantly located near Stuyvesant park.

145 TWELFTH STREET, NEAR SECOND AVENUE.—Rooms with board, on the second floor, together or separate; single gentlemen or a gentleman and his wife can find desirable accommodations. Family private; small number taken. Convenient to cars and stages

106 EAST TWENTY-FIRST STREET, GRAMERCY park.—Rooms with board; a large extension room, with bedroom attached, on the second floor; also, a few pleasant rooms for single gentlemen; the house contains all the modern improvements.

105 WAVERLEY PLACE, THIRD DOOR WEST OF Washington park—A family, or a few single gentlemen, can be accommodated with board and rooms on second and third floors. House has modern improvements. Location delightful. References required.

73 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET, FOUR DOORS west of Sixth avenue—Parlors and bedrooms, on the second floor front, to let to gentlemen and wives, for $16 to $21 per week. Three gentlemen can obtain very pleasant rooms, with full or partial board, at $5 per week. Gas, bath, &c. Broadway stages pass the door. Location desirable.

62 RENSEN STREET, BROOLYN HEIGHTS.—A PLEAsant suite of rooms on the first floor; also accommodations in the third story of the above delightfully located first class dwelling. Gas, &c. Dinner at six. References exchanged.

49 MURRAY STREET.—BOARD FOR GENTLEMEN and their wives and for single gentlemen. A very pleasant third floor front room, with gas and Croton water, can be had. Also to let, with or without board, a front and back parlor and hall room.

13 BEACH STREET NEAR ST. JOHN'S PARK.—GENtlemen and their wives and single gentlemen can be accommodated with pleasant rooms and board. References exchanged.

10 CARROLL PLACE, BLEECKER STREET, WEST OF Broadway—A gentleman and his wife and two or three single gentlemen can be genteelly accommodated with very desirable rooms. Reference exchanged.

3 ASHLAND PLACE.—A SUIT OF ROOMS ON THE second floor, front, suitable for a small family or a gentleman and his wife; also, a large room on the fourth floor for single gentlemen, with board. House new, and furnished with all the modern improvements. Family private. Access by Sixth avenue cars, Amity street and other lines of stages. References exchanged.

A LADY IS DESIROUS OF OBTAINING BOARD IN A French family,