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THE STRUGGLE IN THE WEST.

Strategic Positions Held by the Rebels to Resist the Advance of the Unionists Either by Land or Water.

The Feeling in Kentucky and Missouri at the Present Time.

The Rising of the Tennesseeans Confirmed by Correspondence Dated Anterior to the Battle of Morristown.

Map of the Vicinity of the Contested Ground.

A UNION ADVANCE IN PERSPECTIVE, &c., &c., &c.

MAP OF KENTUCKY AND TENNESSEE.

The Union and Rebel Positions—The Advance of the Union Troops, and the Places Selected by the Rebels as Points of Resistance—The Bridges Destroyed by the Loyal Tennesseeans, &c.

In view of the importance of the struggle now going on in the West, we are induced to present our readers with a clear map of the States of Tennessee and Kentucky, including much of the surrounding vicinity, taking as a central point the rebel position at Bowling Green, which is situated on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, at the junction between that and the road leading to Memphis. The strategic importance of Bowling Green is made apparent to all at a glance, and its possession by the rebels gives them the command of the most advantageous means of reinforcement both in men and the commissariat, as well as a ready route to the Mississippi in the event of the advance of the fleet from Cairo. As troops are continually pouring into Louisville (nearly due north from Bowling Green), and General Rosseau's Union camp is situated at Muldraw's Hill, several miles nearer the rebel camp, and on the railroad, the rebels to prevent the advance of the Union troops—and which advance must be apparent to them—have destroyed the railroad bridge across the Green river, so as to interfere with their transit. Union camps are, however, located at Danville, Lexington and Somerset, on the road from Cincinnati through Covington, from which places good travelled roads lead into Tennessee via Cumberland Gap and at a point farther west and higher up the Cumberland river. These points are guarded by the rebels, and doubtless will be warmly contested if attacked. From Bowling Green to Memphis it is apparent that the rebels have occupied all positions on the railroad likely to be attacked, and, as several junctions break in upon the main line communicating with Nashville, Hickman and Columbus, it is important that they should not lose the possession of any part of the road, so as to enable them to immediately concentrate their troops at any one of the exposed positions. It is also as important that the Union troops should gain possession of some of these branches, or even of the main line itself.

Another important feature is the terrific efforts that are being made by the rebels to further fortify Columbus and the many bluffs and points of the Mississippi river, so as to resist, retard, and perhaps annihilate, the fleet about to start from Cairo. Whether they can do the last or not is a question of time; suffice it to say they certainly did not succeed in doing so at Hilton Head, Hatteras Inlet or Tybee Island. The railroad lines before noticed can convey troops to all these important points, and, if beaten at the first, can hurry them to the second, third, and so on, until they reach Memphis, or even New Orleans. Although we hold Paducah, the troops cannot as readily be transferred as can those of the rebels.

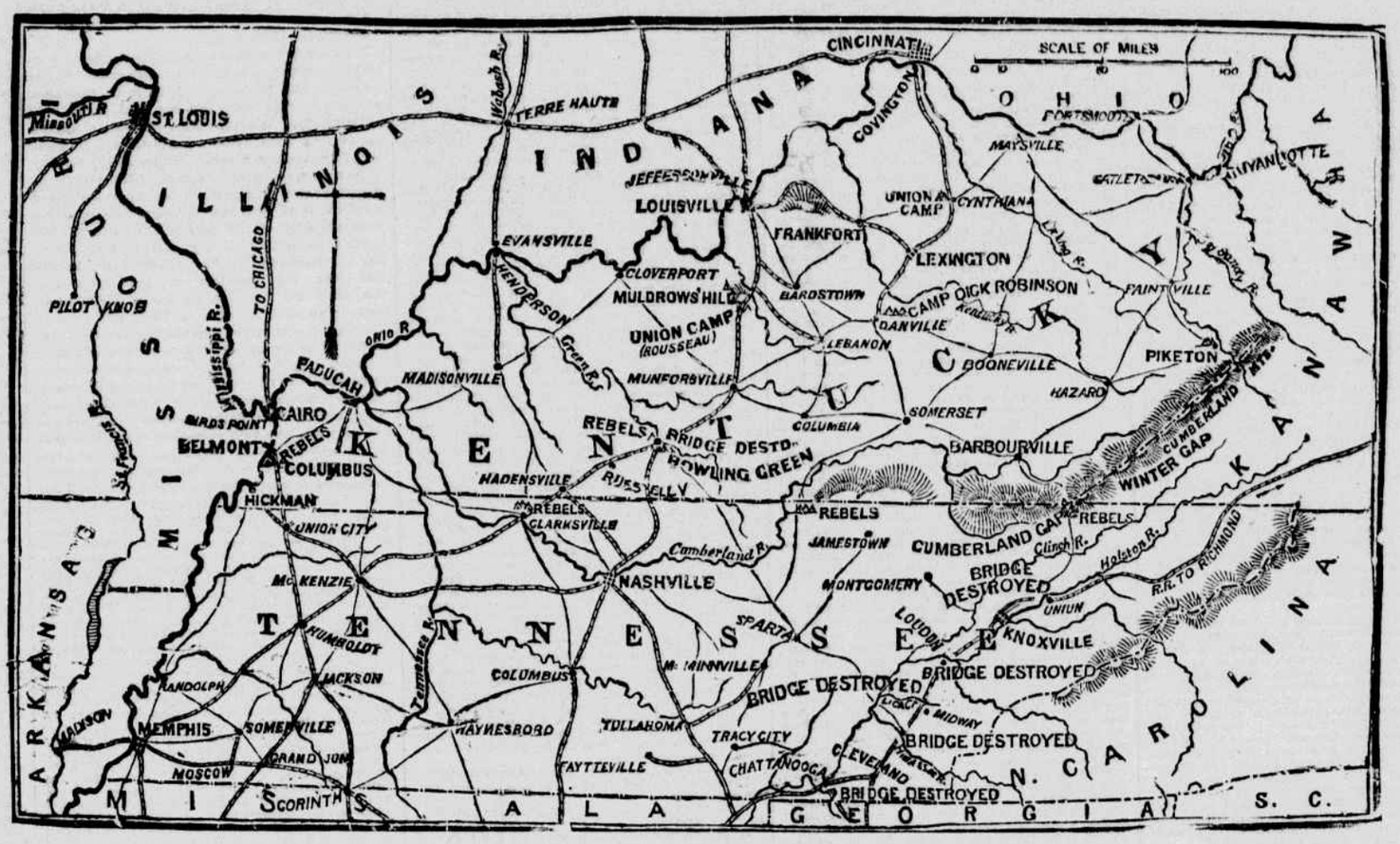
The Cumberland Mountains are important, containing, as they do, several important strategic positions. Cumberland Gap and Winter Gap have been so often previously mentioned that nothing is further needed than the map to show their exact locality.

Passing, therefore, to the south, we notice the railroad to Richmond and the main line of communication between the rebel forces East, West and South. By reference to the map it appears that no less than five bridges have been destroyed by the Unionists of Tennessee, thereby cutting off this communication and retarding the advance of troops from Virginia to Memphis and the Mississippi. Further than this, we have recently received the news that Acting General Parson Brownlow has taken possession of a part of the line at Morristown—a point situated nearly due south of Cumberland Gap.

That the mountains of East Tennessee and Western North Carolina contain strong Union residents there can be no doubt, and that these men are rising in behalf of the Union we have abundant proof. These facts, in connection with the Mississippi fleet, make this the most important part of the struggle at the present time.

THE WESTERN SEAT OF WAR.

The Important Strategic Positions of the Western War—The Advance Towards Tennessee and New Orleans via the Mississippi and the State of Kentucky—The Points of Resistance Selected by the Rebels, and the Bridges Destroyed by the Unionists in Tennessee.



above it, and every available means are being employed to render the position impregnable.

May it not be true, as has been suggested, that the Union forces in the central part of Kentucky are waiting for this movement, on the part of the Mississippi army, to engage the attention of Buckner and Johnston? A large army—fully 75,000 men—is now concentrating by degrees upon Bowling Green. The movements are painfully slow, and apparantly wanting in vigor; but we are content here to wait and see what is to be the end. The rapidity with which troops are moved here, and the slowness with which they are moved forward towards the line of the enemy, are extremely incomprehensible. There are now not less than 12,000 men in camp at this place, which is seventy-five miles from the advanced position.

It is considered at headquarters that the appearance of Zollicoffer and other rebel forces in Southern Central Kentucky, instead of being for offensive purposes, is meant as a protection to the right wing of General Buckner at Bowling Green. I am not aware of any efforts being made to force in the wing and rid the country of the depredators, unless fortifying can be called such. General Breckinridge is upon the left flank of Buckner, to oppose the forward movement of General Crittenden.

There is little hope of a forward movement in this quarter at an early day.

The State Legislature met on Wednesday, the 27th November, but did not get to work until the 29th, a quorum not being present on the first day, and Thanksgiving Day interfering on the second. By resolution it was proposed to go into an election of a United States Senator in place of Breckinridge on the 3d of December. No provision appears to have been made for holding an election for a Senator in place of Powell, who, it is said, will take his seat in the present convened Senate.

The Senate had before it and referred to the Committee on Federal Relations a resolution to the effect that, "as Kentucky has ever cherished and adhered to the federal Union, she will cling to it now in the time of its extremest peril with unfaltering devotion; that, though at the beginning of the mad and wicked war which is being waged by the rebellious States for the destruction of the government she forbore to take part, she has never swerved from her full and fervid loyalty to the government; and that now, since her proffered mediation has been spurned, and her soil invaded by the Confederate armies, she deems it fit that she should announce to the world that, standing firmly by her government, she will resist every effort to destroy it, and she calls upon her true and heroic sons to rally around the standard of their country, and put forth the whole energies of the Commonwealth till the rebellion shall be overthrown, and the just supremacy of the national government shall be restored and maintained everywhere within its limits."

Leave was granted to bring in bills for the relief and benefit of the Kentucky volunteers and soldiers in the army of the United States. One exempts them from the payment of county taxes, another from attachment of property, and a third from arrest and trial for the commission of misdemeanors. A fourth bill, not read, and the minutiæ of which is not stated, makes some kind of provision for Kentuckians in the regular service.

A bill was referred to the Judiciary Committee providing that no person now aiding and assisting the rebellion, or who has aided or assisted said rebellion against the government of the United States, shall ever hold any office of honor or profit in this Commonwealth.

More notice was taken of the "provisional government" movement of the rebels at Russellville than the insignificant effort deserved. The resolutions offered and submitted to the appropriate committee declared that the attempt to establish a "provisional government" over Kentucky is an open and flagrant violation of her constitution and of the right of her people to govern themselves; is an effort to subvert and overturn the civil government of the State, and substitute a military despotism in its stead; the work of disappointed ambition; a part of the general scheme to destroy the national government, and unprovoked and unmitigated treason of the deepest dye; subversive of popular government; is deserving of the utter execration of every true Kentuckian; must, and, "if Kentucky remains the Kentucky of old," will be put down and the power of the Commonwealth vindicated.

Attached to the resolutions was the following:—"We therefore appeal once more to the oft tried bravery and patriotism of Kentucky to expel the invaders from our soil, break up this 'provisional government' of traitors, sustain the national Union of which she is a member, and defend the national government that so promptly and nobly defends her in this her hour of trial against the invasion of her 'Southern brethren' and the perfidous treachery of her own unworthy sons." In connection with those Governor Magoffin is instructed to issue his proclamation to the people of Kentucky forthwith, forewarning them against participating in, aiding, abetting or in any manner giving countenance, aid or comfort to said provisional government or any similar organization intended or calculated to subvert, counteract or obstruct the constitution or laws of the State, and requiring those already engaged in said provisional government to disband and desist from all further efforts to organize or carry it on.

The Kentucky Congressional delegation was instructed to use all constitutional means in their power to induce Congress to afford, by appropriate legislation, relief to Ireland.

The charter of the People's Bank of Kentucky has been so amended as to allow a majority of the stockholders to remove it from Bowling Green to Louisville. The specie in the vaults of the mother bank, at Bowling Green, was removed anterior to the advent of Buckner, and the main assets of the bank are thus and otherwise secured.

A resolution was adopted instructing the Committee on Military Affairs to inquire into and report whether it is expedient and necessary to raise 25,000 troops in Kentucky or any other number, in addition to those now in service from this State, for a term of service not exceeding one year, to be organized and officered under the authority of the State, and subject to the order of the commanding general of this department.

A resolution was offered by Mr. Burns, the rebel representative, demanding of the President of the United States the immediate delivery of Messrs. Morehead, Burr and Burrett, now in Fort Warren, into the custody of the United States Court for the district of Kentucky, that charges may be preferred against them if they have committed any offence against the laws of the United States, and that they may have a speedy and impartial trial, as prescribed by the constitution of the State of Kentucky.

The resolution lies over.

LOUISVILLE, Ky., Dec. 5, 1861.

Zollicoffer at the Head of 8,000 Rebels on Cumberland River at Grider's Ferry—Colonel Hoskins, with a few Union Troops, Defends the Crossing—An Artillery Duel—Arrival of a Portion of General Schoepf's Brigade—Rebels Compelled to Retire—The President's Slavery Clause of the Message Condemned—Why the Kentuckians Object to It, &c., &c.

General Zollicoffer has made his appearance, at the head of 8,000 men, on the Cumberland river, at the point in Pulaski county crossed by the road from Somerset to Monticello. This point is known as Grider's Ferry, and is the only point available for crossing within many miles. Four miles down the river Fishing creek empties into the Cumberland, and three miles above another stream joins the river. These streams, running south to the river, and nearly parallel with each other, renders it necessary that Zollicoffer should cross at a point between the two streams, consequently at Grider's Ferry. To defend this crossing, Colonel Hoskins, who had been encamped at Somerset, marched to the river, and with two pieces of artillery attempted to defend the passage of the river. On the 1st inst., a skirmish, or rather artillery duel, took place between the advance of Zollicoffer's and Colonel Hoskin's force of an incomplete regiment. A few shells were thrown among the rebels, but with what effect is not known.

Immediately subsequent to this reinforcements which Col. Hoskins had asked for began to arrive. Gen. Schoepff, with a detachment of cavalry and two pieces of artillery, arrived on the afternoon of the 1st of December, in time to give the departing rebels a last salute. Four regiments were to have reached Grider's Ferry on the same evening, but we have no information to that effect up to this time. It is known, however, that the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Ohio regiments, with four pieces of artillery, passed through Somerset.

On the 2d of December the rebels made their appearance on the south side of the river in greater force and with several pieces of artillery. They opened in a brisk cannonade, throwing shells into Col. Hoskins' camp; but they were soon compelled to retire when the rifled pieces were made to bear upon them. The officer in command of the guns was known to have been killed, and was seen carried off the field.

Passengers by last night's train report heavy cannonading in the direction of Somerset on the 3d of December, continuing all day. It is thought that a battle has been going on. We shall probably have more definite news to-morrow.

Considerable excitement exists here, growing out of the distressing articles in the *Journal* and *Democrat* of this morning on the Presidential treatment of the slavery question. The language of the Message did not cause any undue excitement, but to-day the *Journal's* critique upon the clause relating to slavery has started the loudmouthed, and it is being generally discussed and condemned. The confiscation law referred to by the President has been a source of trouble in this State from the first, and is likely to do much harm in dividing the people of the State upon the Union question. The *Journal's* article is very strong and emphatic. It looks upon the objectionable clause of the Message as the "expression of an indirect and unmanly concurrence" in the lately expressed sentiments of Cochrane and Cameron, "that the passage is virtually a hint to Congress to adopt extreme measures, &c." By "extreme measures" the *Journal* means "abolishing slavery." The *Journal* thinks the "adoption of such measures would swallow up the nation," that their adoption can only be prevented in three ways:—First, by great and immediate success of our arms, rendering the abolition of slavery unnecessary; second, by a strong conservative opposition; or, third, by the resignation of the heads of the army departments. It calls upon the Legislature of Kentucky first, and the Legislatures of the Southern Union States, to take immediate steps to oppose the apparently intended action of the administration.

The *Democrat* sees in the suggestion to the States to confiscate slave property and turn the slaves over to the government only a commercial way of setting them free, and objects to it, arguing that the national government has no right to purchase slaves, and, instead of being a remuneration, is a tax upon the people of the State. It thinks the right course of our Legislature is to confiscate the slaves of rebels and sell them to individuals—not to the government! The question then comes up, is the anti-slavery, semi-abolition majority in Congress willing to pay the expenses of the war by what they consider trafficking in blood?

The Legislature is doing little of importance. A bill has been prepared, but not presented, providing for the confiscation of the slave property of rebels, and their disposal for account of the government. What it will end in, what distractions it will produce, cannot be foretold. The House stands about seventy-four to one for the Union; but I think before the discussion of the confiscation bill is ended the majority will be considerably reduced.

THE MOVEMENTS IN THE DIRECTION OF NASHVILLE.

[From the Cincinnati Gazette, Dec. 2.]

It was understood that the Camp Dick Robinson troops were to be moved across the country to co-operate with the column on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, in the attack on Bowling Green and the advance to Nashville. In accordance with this design the troops marched from Danville across to Lebanon, where they reached a branch of the Louisville and Nashville road, and could be speedily united with the main column. The Fourteenth Ohio had arrived at Lebanon, and the Seventeenth and Thirty-first were well on the way when, on Thursday last, orders came up to move back to Somerset to repel a demonstration of Zollicoffer's. On Friday the Fourteenth was still at Lebanon, waiting to be paid before returning, and the Seventh and Thirty-first had got as far as Danville on their way back. Somerset is but twenty-five or thirty miles from London, where the troops halted on their movement toward Cumberland Gap. So the troops, after marching over eight counties and one hundred and eighty miles of bad roads, are to get back almost to their old place. Zollicoffer is said to be making a demonstration against Somerset; hence the sudden advance backward again.

GENERAL BUELL'S DIVISION.

OUR LOUISVILLE CORRESPONDENCE.

LOUISVILLE, Dec. 3, 1861.

Military and Legislative Intelligence—Nashville News Significant—Zollicoffer Still at Cumberland Gap, Which is Strongly Fortified—A Panic in Memphis—The Movements Towards Bowling Green—No Forward Movements Expected—The Meeting of the Kentucky State Legislature—A Strong Union Resolution Before the Senate—Relief for Ireland, &c., &c.

Southern papers, without containing much news, are significant, particularly those of Nashville dates of the 18th November.

Cumberland Gap, it appears, has never been evacuated by Zollicoffer, and any attack which may have been made upon it by General Thomas would have been exceedingly doubtful of success. The point has heretofore been considered of much importance, and in the beginning of the war was partly fortified. Immediately subsequent to the retreat of Zollicoffer, who, according to the *Courier* of Nashville, fell back that he might be nearer his supply trains, the fortifications were materially strengthened and heavily garrisoned. The natural advantages of the situation have not been overlooked, and the rebel papers chuckle over the fact that it now separates the East Tennessee Unionists from their friends, and shuts them out from all aid from Kentucky. They claim that the Gap is now a stronghold which the force holding it can defend against 10,000 men coming from any quarter. *This indicates that Zollicoffer has made preparations for the anticipated attack in his rear by the forces under Brownlow, who appears to have lain down the prayer book of the parson and the quill of the editor to take up the "shooting stick" of the soldier.* It is stated also that Zollicoffer has again moved forward into Kentucky; but, as it is said to be by another route, it is not credited here. He is reported at Monticello, Wayne county, where a part of Gen. Schoepffs' brigade was until lately stationed.

No fears seem to be entertained by the rebels that Cumberland Gap cannot be defended. Indeed, they anticipate no advance by that route. The attention of the whole Southwest seems to turn towards Columbus and the approaches to Memphis. The denizens of the latter place entertain great fears of an immediate attack from some source not named, and by despatches dated the 18th to the Nashville *Patriot* I learn that the city of Memphis was in a fever of excitement and disorder in consequence of an impending conflict at Columbus. The Legislature of Arkansas appears to have been dispersed on the 15th by news received from the northwestern counties of that State. A despatch to that effect is found in the Memphis papers of the 17th. What movement in that quarter created this consternation is not stated, nor can it be imagined here, unless the Mississippi army shall have unexpectedly made its appearance in Northwestern Arkansas. At any rate, this consternation has reached Memphis, and extended over the whole of Tennessee and Mississippi, and every preparation is being made to defend Columbus. Troops for especial duty at that point are being raised in Mississippi and Louisiana. Important works of defence are being constructed at Columbus and

GENERAL HALLECK'S DIVISION.

VIEWS OF GENERAL HALLECK ON THE WAR.

WHAT HE THINKS OF THE PLAN OF ATTACK, CONCENTRATION AND DEFENCE—WHY THE TROOPS FELL BACK IN KENTUCKY AND MISSOURI.

General Hallack, the present commander of the Department of Missouri, several years since delivered a course of lectures, in which he made almost prophetical remarks applicable to this war. Speaking upon *offensive* war, he said:—"A war of invasion may, however, have its disadvantages. Its line of operations may become too *deep* (that is, the end to be attained may be very distant from the base of operations), which is always hazardous in an enemy's country. All the natural and artificial obstacles, such as mountains, rivers, defiles, fortifications, &c., are favorable to defence, but difficult to be overcome by the invader. The local authorities and inhabitants oppose instead of facilitating his operations; and if patriotism animate the defensive army to fight for the independence of its threatened country, the war may be long and bloody. *But if a political diversion be made in favor of the invading force, and its operations be attended with success, it strikes the enemy at the heart, paralyzes all his military energies, and deprives him of his military resources, thus promptly terminating the contest.*"

THE FALLING BACK OF THE TROOPS IN MISSOURI AND KENTUCKY.

Several small bodies of troops have been for some time scattered about in various parts of the troubled States of Kentucky and Missouri, and when they had, by order of the former commanding Generals, reached the neighborhood of the borders of the seceded States and apparently were about to advance upon the rebels on their own ground, they were chagrined to find the new commanders give orders for them all to fall back upon certain particular posts. The natural inquiries of the non military reader of the said intelligence would be "What are they retreating for?" and "Why do they not advance and whip the rebels on their own ground?" Gen. Halleck shows plainly that the movement is but a part of his own settled policy (and doubtless one that meets the cordial approval of the Commander-in-Chief); for he says:—"The first and most important rule in offensive warfare is to keep your forces as much concentrated as possible. *This will not only prevent misfortune, but secure victory*, since, by its necessary operation, you possess the power of throwing your whole force upon any exposed point of your enemy's position."

Some writers have made exceptions to this rule of General Halleck's, viz:—

1st. When the food and forage of the neighborhood in which you act have been exhausted and destroyed, and your magazines are, from any cause, unable to supply the deficiency, one of two things must be done—either you must go to the place where these articles abound, or you must draw from them your supplies by detachments.

2d. Small detachments should be sent out to feel the way for the main body, so as to draw an attack, and so risk one body for the security of the other.

3d. When you have complete evidence of the actual or probable insurrection in your favor of a town or province of your enemy, or of a division of his army, you must support this inclination by strong detachments; and

4th. When, by despatching a detachment, you may be able to intercept a convoy or reinforcement coming to the aid of your enemy.

General Halleck, however, contends that these are apparent, rather than real exceptions, to the rule of concentration.

SHOULD THE ARMY BE ALL IN THE SAME PLACE?

On this question the commander of the Department of Missouri puts forth a decisive negative. He says:—"This rule does not require that all the army should occupy the same position. Far from it. Concentration requires the main body to be in immediate and supporting reach." He intimates that the invading forces should be so located that an open hand placed upon the map of the country should represent their position, the fingers indicating the location of the several detachments thrown out on important strategic lines, and which should be able to be as readily drawn in as closing the hand, upon the principal and central mass, preparatory to striking some important blow. This doubtless accounts for the movement of the various brigades scattered about Missouri by the former commander of the West to points upon the railroad lines, all within easy distance of each other, and readily accessible from St. Louis. The same fact applies to Kentucky, and gives a denial to the reports of a disastrous retreat of our army in that State. The falling back is but a portion of a preconcerted plan based upon authorities similar to the above.

SHOULD THE ATTACK BE VIGOROUSLY FOLLOWED UP?

All writers agree upon the affirmative in relation to this point. General Halleck says:—Whatever measure be necessary to open your route to these objects must be promptly taken, and if you mean to subsist yourself at the enemy's expense your movements must be more rapid than his. Give him time to breathe—and, above all, give him time to rest—and your project is blasted; his forages will be completed, and his magazines filled and secured; the roads of approach will be obstructed, bridges destroyed, and strong points taken everywhere and defended.

How plainly this short but important truism has been verified in the present war. During the engagements in Western Virginia, but more especially at Laurel Hill, Rich Mountain, &c., how long did General McClellan allow his enemy to rest after he first attacked him? Comparatively no time at all. Attack after attack fell upon the rebels, until, in the course of one short week, the whole party were routed, their general killed, and Western Virginia saved. How different in Missouri. Lexington was besieged, but no help was there by order of the commander of the department. Price got possession of the place and the Union troops, and, although the commander made a great show of advancing upon him, and even left St. Louis with a body of troops for the purpose, still he only reached about half way, and there stopped, allowing the rebel general not only time to breathe, but also to rest, and to escape. The excuse may be that he could not get his troops together in time, but, if he had acted upon the proper principles of concentration a much less time than he occupied would only have been necessary for that purpose, and he not only would have been able to have attacked Price, but would have saved the country the expense of the chase throughout the southwest of the State, and which resulted in the order for the troops to "come back again" without having accomplished anything. Burgoyne, in 1777, by similar action, reduced himself to the necessity of bleeding at every step without equivalent or use.

SHOULD THE ASSAILED ALWAYS FIND SECURITY IN FLIGHT?

Such a course must always tend to their disadvantage in the end. In giving instructions for the best means of conducting a defensive war, General Halleck makes the following remarks:—"Instead of finding security only in flight; instead of habitually refusing to look the enemy in the face; instead of leaving his march undisturbed; instead of abandoning, without contest, points strong by nature and by art; instead of all this, the true war of defence seeks every occasion to meet the enemy, and loses none by which it can annoy or defeat him; it is always awake; it is constantly in motion and never unprepared for either attack or defence." (In the "glorious" campaign of General Floyd, in the Kanawha Valley, it does not seem to be his policy to follow this plan of arrangement in the slightest particular.) After describing what the attacked party should do, the General concludes his remarks in the following language:—"In a word, by adopting the maxim that the enemy must be made to pay for whatever he gains, it disputes with him every inch of ground, and if at last it yields to him a victory, it is of that kind which calls forth only his sighs." Such a victory was Bunker Hill.

OUR ST. LOUIS CORRESPONDENCE.

ST. LOUIS, Dec. 1, 1861.

The Rebels Reported in Possession of Warsaw—Price's Army at Osceola—McCulloch Gone into Winter Quarters—Progress of the Mississippi Expedition Preparations—Miscellaneous News, &c.

A lady who arrived last evening direct from Warsaw—having left that town on Thursday morning—states that at the time of her departure there were about six hundred rebels in possession of the place. They were from Price's army, which they represented to be at Osceola, on its way to Lexington and other towns along the Missouri river, though they did not all agree upon the same story. A part of the gang asserted that Price had not left Spring field, and would come no further north until the return of warm weather; while still others assured their listeners that the rebel army was at Stockton. All agreed that McCulloch had not treated them properly, having deserted them as soon as the Union army was withdrawn, and taken up his line of march for Fort Smith, where he expected to winter. These returned rebels say they have come home to spend the winter in their own houses, where they can get well clothed and shod, and prepared to return to the field again in the spring. They claimed protection from federal soldiers or office holders, and asserted, with much vehemence, that they could not be troubled after they had voluntarily left the rebel army.

Fremont's treaty with General Price is the shelter under which they attempted to hide, and great was their surprise and chagrin when they learned that it had been annulled by Fremont's successor. It is, however, quite likely that they will not be molested while at their homes, unless some of their loyal neighbors choose to interfere. These returned rebels are thinly clad, and some are badly off for shoes, but the most of them appear in good health and confident of ultimate success. They evince a deepseated hatred and fear of General Siegel, and would doubtless march against him with much reluctance and many misgivings. General Sturgis was the least obnoxious to them of all our division and brigade commanders.

In contrast with our kind treatment and non-molestation of rebels in our lines is the abuse and outrage heaped upon loyal citizens of Missouri wherever the traitor army is now in power. Yesterday I saw a line of some thirty wagons just arrived from the Southwest and containing the families and household goods of Union men who had been driven out in consequence of their loyalty. Those I saw were but a small fraction of the number that has already passed through St. Louis to seek an asylum in some of the Northern States, and they told me that there are full ten thousand now on the way hither. Many are entirely destitute, the rebels having plundered them of nearly everything of value before driving them away. I have known repeated instances of families depending upon the charity of the people here to aid them in crossing the river and getting again on their way. The ladies of Barnum's Hotel are this morning busy in making collections of all the cast-off clothing about the premises, with the view of distributing it among the more needy and thinly clad refugees. They have gathered quite an array of coats, pants, dresses, and many numerous and nameless etceteras of male and female apparel, and will make glad the heart of many a poor, shivering outcast. A ton of such old clothing could be easily distributed where it would do much good, among most worthy recipients. Despoiled of everything, and driven destitute upon the world at the approach of winter, for no other crime than that of loving the Union, the refugees of the Southwest seem particularly deserving of sympathy.

The gunboat Benton, which is to be the flagboat of the fleet, will be in a condition to receive her armament in three or four days. She will not take her guns on board here, but will proceed to Cairo for that purpose, as all the other gunboats have done as fast as completed. The most of her sheathing has been put on, rendering her almost completely shot and shell proof. At a little distance one would hardly dare say what kind of craft she should be called. Long, low, black, with sloping sides, a convex roof, completely iron-clad, and with no wheelhouse or pilot box visible, one could easily imagine her to be the hull of some mammoth canal boat turned bottom upwards by mistake. Of course a specific and detailed description of the flagboat of the fleet would not at this time be judicious.

Up to the hour of my writing there is no news of any battle having occurred in the Southwest, and since the return of McCulloch to Arkansas, and the rumored detour of Price in the direction of Kansas, the chances of an engagement between the rebel and the Union armies in Missouri have grown exceedingly small. The troops at Rolla are engaged in building winter quarters, and I learn that orders have been issued for the forces at Tipton and vicinity to do likewise. The soldiers now under instruction at Benton Barracks have lately been furnished with stoves, and are getting along quite comfortably. There are several regiments in our Western army that have not yet been supplied with overcoats, and large numbers of the soldiers sleep and shiver nightly under blankets of the flimsiest fabric. General Halleck is putting matters in order as fast as possible, and promises to attend in due time to the personal wants of the men.

John A. Thompson, Esq., of Granby, Newton county, Missouri, has lately received a commission as captain in the Eighteenth United States infantry, and is ordered to report at the headquarters of his regiment, at Columbus, Ohio. Captain Thompson was formerly City Attorney of Chicago, and the author of the "Municipal Laws" of that thriving lakeopolis. Three years ago he removed to Southwest Missouri, and was extensively engaged in lead mining at the time the rebellion opened. Early in the summer he was compelled to flee to escape the fury of the rebel bands then organized in the lead regions, and came to St. Louis, leaving his worldly possessions at the mercy of the traitors. A good lawyer and an enterprising lead miner has thus been metamorphosed into an officer of the regular army. Considering his relations with Missouri, it would seem proper that Captain Thompson should be in the service within the limits of the State rather than outside her borders.

The river is steadily falling, and within three days there will be less than five feet in the channel between this city and Cairo. Ice is already running past St. Joseph and Dunleith, though none is apparent in front of this city. Old steamboat men are less fearful of a close of navigation by cold weather than they were a few days since.

ST. LOUIS, Dec. 5, 1861.

Vigorous Policy of General Halleck in the Treatment of Rebel Outrages—The Exiles from Springfield to be Quartered on Wealthy Rebels in St. Louis—Vagaries of the Camp Jackson Prisoners—Interesting Items, &c.

General Halleck gives evidence of a vigorous policy towards the rebel traitors of this State. For some days past the unfortunate sufferers of the southwest portion of the State, who have been driven out on account of their Union sentiments, have lined our thoroughfares and presented many of the most painful scenes of poverty and affliction ever witnessed in this city. Only a small portion arrived in proportion to the thousands who left Springfield and vicinity in company with General Sigel's division. Their appearance—half naked, benumbed with cold, and hardly able to stand, has excited the liveliest sympathy, and it is evident that something must be done for these destitute people or they will die outright of starvation. Yesterday General Halleck issued an order on the subject, which has struck consternation into the hearts of the secessionists and at the same time provides an effective remedy. It is as follows:—

The law of military retaliation has fixed and well established rules. While it allows no cruel or barbarous acts on our part in retaliation for like acts of the enemy, it permits any retaliatory measures within the prescribed limits of military usage. If the enemy murders and robs Union men we are not justified in murdering and robbing other persons who are, in a legal sense, enemies to our government, but we may enforce on them the severest penalties justified by the laws of war for the crimes of their fellow rebels. The rebel forces in the southwestern counties of this State have robbed and plundered the peaceful non-combatant inhabitants, taking from them their clothing and means of subsistence. Men, women and children have alike been stripped and plundered. Thousands of such persons are finding their way to this city barefooted, half clad and in a destitute and starving condition. Humanity and justice require that these sufferings should be relieved, and that the outrages committed upon them should be retaliated upon the enemy. The individuals who have directly caused these sufferings are at present beyond our reach; but there are in this city, and in other places within our lines, numerous wealthy secessionists who render aid, assistance and encouragement to those who commit these outrages. They do not themselves rob and plunder, but they abet and countenance these acts in others. Although less bold they are equally guilty. It is, therefore, ordered and directed that the Provost Marshal shall immediately inquire into the condition of the persons so driven from their homes, and that measures be taken to quarter them in the houses and to feed and clothe them at the expense of avowed secessionists, and of those who are found guilty of giving aid, assistance and encouragement to the enemy.

The above order is the tenth section of General Order No. 13, the balance of which comports with the extract. The other section provides that all spies shall be arrested and if condemned as spies shall be shot, without regard to sex. The vigorous tone employed to give expression to General Halleck's determination to deal with the rebels with an iron hand, is what causes the latter the greatest uneasiness.

Upon inquiry at headquarters this morning, I learn that the above order will be strictly enforced. The disposition of the matter has been handed over to the Sanitary Committee, composed of Messrs. Yeatman, Elliot, Partridge, Greely and Johnson, who have been invested with full power by General Halleck to use any building owned by a rebel in the city that may be needed for the shelter of the refugees from the Southwest, to seize blankets, stores, bed furniture, and, in short, everything needed to make the exiles comfortable, without regard to cost or consequence. The Provost Marshal has already turned over to the committee several hundred dollars' worth of property, consisting of blankets, clothing and medicines, &c., taken from the baggage of the Camp Jackson captives lately sent South as exchanged prisoners. It was remarked as a curious fact, that if General Halleck wished to use a "secesh" building for sheltering the exiles he could commence upon the one occupied as his own headquarters, the building being owned by a rampant secessionist. The enforcement of the order is an easy matter. There are are plenty of empty buildings owned by secessionists within reach, and other articles needed to make the sufferers comfortable will not be long forthcoming.

The departure of the Camp Jackson prisoners for Cairo by steamboat was to them an unexpected alteration of destination. Their programme was to pass the federal lines at Sedalia and forage through the country till they reached Price's lines. The sudden change in their route was a severe damper upon that interesting programme. It is a good thing for the city that these men have left. For more than two weeks they travelled around the streets dressed in the recognized uniform of rebel soldiers, and flaunting treason in the faces of loyal people in the most objectionable manner. They tried all sorts of dodges to obtain advantages not laid down in the law for the exchange of prisoners. One of their schemes was to appeal very vigorously to the military courtesy of the obliging Provost Marshal. Last Tuesday General Frost, the king pin of the camp Jackson gang, and Major Henry W. Williams, who, in part, arranged the terms of exchange, cornered the Provost Marshal in his office, and endeavored to persuade him that courtesy required him to permit them to carry various contrabrand packages to their friends in the South. They urged that some day hereafte the Confederates might be in possession of St. Louis, and that he—Capt. Leighton—might be in their fix, and requiring favors at the hands of the victors. But they could not convince the gallant Captain, and he told them plainly that they would be restricted to their personal effects, recognized by military usages; so the rebels will have to wait awhile for their packages.

It appears that Kansas City, and, in fact, all the country west of Ludlam, from the Missouri river to the Arkansas line, is to be given up entirely to the rebels. Gen. Hunter has ordered Col. Jennison and his band of Jawhawkers to return to Kansas. Jennison evacuated Kansas city day before yesterday, and by this time is safe in Leavenworth. It is generally believed, so I am informed by a gentleman just arrived here from Leavenworth, that a portion of Price's army intends to attack that point, and extensive preparations are being made to give them a warm reception. Kansas City will soon be depopulated by the Union men and their families. Merchants are moving their goods by steamboats and by wagons to Leavenworth as rapidly as possible. Families are emigrating to safer quarters, and a general alarm prevails. The telegraph wires between Kansas City and Independence have already been cut in several places, and it is designed by the telegraph company to immediately close the office in Kansas City. There will doubtless be many outrages on the property of Union men which cannot be removed, and a little further retaliation in St. Louis will be necessary to make good the loss of Union property in that vicinity. President Lincoln's Message was received here with pretty general satisfaction. The radicals on the slavery question of course wish for a more decided policy on the emancipation question, but nine-tenths of the people, excluding the secesh, think Lincoln is right in defining the principal object of the war to be the restoration of the authority of the Union. The secesh take particular delight in comparing the late Message of Jeff. Davis, as a literary effort, with that of Honest Abe.

Jeff. Thompson's men are returning, as well as Price's, to their homes for the winter, in squads of five or six at a time. An officer who came in from Pilot Knob last night says that the Union scouts report the return of many of the rebels who were in the Fredericktown fight. They are in a destitute condition generally.

The Lieutenant Colonel, Chappelle, who was Jeff. Thompson's aid, and who lately arrived at Cairo with a flag of truce, asking permission to go after Jeff. Thompson's wife, was formerly an employe on the Pacific Railroad of this State, and lived at Allenton. He only left here last summer.

ST. LOUIS, Dec. 6, 1861.

Rare Political Gossip Affecting the Cabinet, United States Senate and Supreme Court—How Senator Polk is to be Ousted from His Seat—Judge Bates to Resign—Subscriptions to National Loan—New Complications, &c., &c.

A rare piece of political gossip is in circulation here and is told with such strong asseverations of truth as i