HELL GATE.

What the Sound Channel Is to New York and the Country.

The Importance of Its Clear Passage.

History of What Has Been Done—What is Being Done Now.

In the HERALD of Sunday, the 6th of December, there was published a historic review of the past growth of our city, and in full consideration of the prospective changes in the current of the world's trade, wrought by scientific and mechanical improvements, the immense advantages of New York as a central point were referred to. That these all tend to make our city one of the greatest on the globe and the commanding centre of commerce no one can or will deny. The great mass of our mercantile population intuitively feel it. The palatial storehouses building on every side of us, changing the physiognomy of whole streets and avenues, are evident proofs of this feeling. New York is getting ready to house the products of the industry of all nations; preparing fitting places of deposit for the wealth of the world.

Though much, very much indeed, is done to this end, it is far from being enough. What the liberality and far-sighted policy of individual citizens can accomplish is being gradually achieved. But there are other measures of improvement, not exactly beyond the means or scope of individuals, but on account of their more national than local character, justly within the province of our national authorities. Others again, of equal and almost supreme necessity, are, owing to our form of government, the duty of our municipal corporation to provide. Among these last is a system of piers and wharves, at once a help to commerce and an adornment to the city. The present rotten structures of decaying piles are not only a disgrace to our city but a hindrance to trade, obstructing its legitimate proportion of increase. It not being the purpose of this article to enter at large into this subject of appropriate docks and wharves for our harbor, the mere reference to it is considered sufficient. Another measure of improvement, eminently necessary, and coming within the jurisdiction of the national government, is the removal of the obstructions in the Hell Gate channel.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK.

To clear the approaches to New York harbor by way of Long Island Sound from all obstructions, so that vessels of all grades may pass without danger, is in more than one sense a work of national importance. New York is the centre of our international commerce. The whole country is equally interested with our own immediate population in the easy accessibility of the port of New York for the ships of the world. But even leaving out of view for the present this more extended general aspect, all will concede that navigation of the Sound is intimately connected with the coasting trade of all the New England States. A few authentic facts suffice to prove this. From the 1st of August to the 1st day of December there have passed through Hell Gate no less than 19,408 vessels, of all classes. Of these there were 2,434 steamers, 8 ships, 22 barks, 435 brigs, 11,859 schooners and 4,649 sloops. An estimate, believed to be rather under than above the actual figures, fixes the value of this floating property at $733,920,000, or a daily average of $6,141,000, the ownership of which is divided among thousands of people from New York to Maine. But this is only the value of the vessels, with a combined tonnage of 5,466,000 tons, or a daily average of 45,557 tons. The roads over which the marine trade of six States passes daily, in such a volume as this, are most certainly of more than local importance.

Further, the amount of freight transported by way of Hell Gate by steamers alone averages $9,000,000 per day, increased by about $1,000,000 more carried in sailing crafts, thus giving a grand total in the value of freight and of the ships carrying it of over $16,000,000 daily exposed to the dangers of the rocks and reefs of this narrow passage. Moreover, from the register of the steamers and from other reliable sources it has been ascertained that the passenger traffic on the Sound to and from New York averaged during the four months from August to December 7,212 persons daily, exclusive of the officers and crews of the vessels, which will increase the total daily average to about 12,000 persons.

But this is not all. The sailing distance from Europe to New York is by fifty miles shorter than through the Narrows. And not only this, but about 100 miles of outside exposure would be saved. Were the obstructions at Hell Gate removed the largest passenger steamers afloat could enter our port by the Sound one day earlier than now, a saving in wear and tear and in fuel that would soon make itself felt in the cost of passage and of transportation of freight.

Still another consideration to be taken into view is the naval defence of our harbor and coast in case of war. This consideration is chiefly drawn from our practical experience in our past wars with England, where the enemy ravaged the shores of Long Island Sound and preyed upon our domestic commerce. This was earnestly urged by Lieutenant Charles H. Davis, of the United States Navy, in his report to the Superintendent of the Coast Survey, dated February 15, 1848, in which he says:—"The means of resisting and preventing such hostilities must be drawn chiefly from New York; and if the Hell Gate passage be made secure, not only our largest men-of-war but our steamboats of a superior class, which on such occasions would be armed for the purpose of defence, would be at once enabled to hasten to the scene of danger. * * * During the war with Great Britain our frigates were blockaded in the harbor of New York, which could not have been the case if the Hell Gate passage had been open. Commodore Decatur ventured to carry his squadron through, but with such risk that the attempt with a frigate was only made once afterwards, notwithstanding the constantly recurring necessity. The removal, therefore, of the obstructions to the safe navigation of Hell Gate is recommended by a regard to the future naval defences of the country." And Lieutenant David D. Porter, who in our late war has won for himself imperishable fame as the commander of the Mississippi flotilla of gunboats, in a report made by him to Professor Bache on the 30th of October, 1848, upon the same subject, fully confirms the statements of Lieutenant Davis by remarking:—"It was my intention to have made you a full report on the subject, but a copy of the report of Lieutenant Charles H. Davis on Hell Gate was sent to me to-day, and I find it so full and correct in all its details that I could say but little more without incurring the charge of plagiarism; in fact, the opinions expressed by Lieutenant Davis coincide with those I had formed previous to reading his report." It is scarcely possible to say anything to add to the weight the matured opinion of such eminent naval officers carries with it.

There is yet another consideration to be touched to show the full importance of this work. This consideration is based upon the prospective growth of the commerce of our city. We are cramped for room for commercial purposes. So long as the main and only outlet for maritime intercourse with the world is through the Narrows and the Lower Bay the commercial centre of the city is below Canal street, towards the Battery. The natural shape of this lower portion of Manhattan Island, its narrow extent from shore to shore, necessitates overcrowding. Go where you may in this portion of the city during the business hours of the day and you will be made sensibly conscious of this fact. Innumerable drays and carts and trucks block up the streets at every corner at every hour of the day and interfere with the speedy transaction of business. The space allotted by nature for an immense trade is already too small. Even now New York merchants store their goods in other cities from here to Philadelphia for want of room in this city. The loss of time and increased expenditure consequent upon this overcrowding results in diminished profits or else in enhanced prices—either one calculated to check enterprise. Another consequence is the immense loss of valuable time consumed by merchants, manufacturers and all their employés to reach their business places down town from their homes in the central and northern part of the island; and as "time is money," this loss is undoubtedly considerable in every aspect one may view it.

By clearing Hell Gate passage this pressure of overcrowding would soon be materially relieved. Another plan has been suggested, and it was even submitted to our State Legislature at Albany some time ago. This plan contemplated the damming up of the two channels, east and west of Blackwell's Island, another dam in the region of Hell Gate rocks and the cutting through of a ship canal or channel from about the mouth of Newtown creek to the neighborhood of Flushing bay, and adding the whole of the territory west of this proposed canal and the land reclaimed between the dams to the city for business purposes. This visionary plan, sprung from a brain full of imaginative power, is entirely abortive, since it would take countless millions to carry it out, while two millions at most would suffice to give us a much better and more feasible natural channel, by removing the obstructions at Hell Gate, than any canal across the flats of Long Island ever could be. And contiguous to this natural channel there is land enough which the commerce of New York may need for perhaps centuries to come. With this channel opened it would not be many years before the location of trade in the city would become more systematized, and instead, as now, of there being one commercial centre, there would be as many as our commercial relations assume different ramifications. The trade with Europe would become localized on the east side and, owing to the accessibility to the means of transportation, may eventually cover the whole water front to Harlem river. The Western and Pacific trade would centre around the inlets of the great trunk railroads to the West, and the Southern trade would soon accommodate itself likewise. In view of these results, not only possible or probable, but pointed out as sure to come by the natural laws of trade, the importance of this work of clearing Hell Gate channel and making it an unobstructed passage way for vessels of all grades cannot be over estimated.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE.

Hell Gate to-day presents quite a different appearance from what it did years ago. It is no longer the whirlpool, with its foaming eddies and violent agitations of waters, thrilling descriptions of which Fenimore Cooper has given us in his "Red Rover" and the "Water Witch." It is not so dangerous now to navigation as it was in years gone by. But that is not is due not so much to the government as to the liberality and munificence of private citizens. And it will probably be of interest to the reader to know what has been done and how it was done, and hence a short account of it is here inserted.

The first movement towards clearing this passage of the dangerous rocks originated with the merchants of New York in 1845, and a numerously signed petition, led by David Hall, was presented to Congress asking for an appropriation to remove these obstructions. This petition, however, had no effect, and nothing was done until the reorganization of the Coast Survey office, under the efficient superintendence of Professor A. D. Bache, who, in 1847, deputed Lieutenant Charles H. Davis, United States Navy, an assistant attached to the Coast Survey Bureau, to make a thorough examination and survey of Hell Gate. Lieutenant Davis was occupied in this work for two months, and on the 15th of February, 1848, he made his report already referred to above. As this report and the subsequent one of Lieutenant David D. Porter give a complete description of Hell Gate as it was then, and that a full understanding may be had of the amount of work since accomplished, portions are here quoted. Lieutenant Davis says:—"Of the sailing vessels that enter the Hell Gate passage it is estimated that one in fifty sustains more or less injury by being forced by the violence of the currents on the rocks or shoals; and the accident to the Oregon, which nearly proved fatal to her passengers, shows that even steamboats, with a motive power that keeps them under perfect control and guided by the most experienced pilots, are not secure from peril. Such an improvement in the channels of Hell Gate as would render them navigable to vessels of all classes under common circumstances would supply to the commerce of New York a new outlet to the sea—one in a different direction from the harbor channels, and available when those are temporarily closed by adverse winds or other causes—and would therefore be a permanent and valuable resource both for those vessels outward bound and for those returning home." Speaking, then, of the necessity of this improvement to increase the facilities of our naval defence already quoted, the lieutenant proceeds:—"The dangers in this channel arise from the great strength of the current and the number and position of the rocks and reefs. The strength of the current is such that sailing vessels can only stem its force or escape from it by a commanding breeze; but as the main course of the flood tide keeps the middle of the eastern channel it is most secure for vessels coming from the westward, with the tide, to place themselves in the centre of the stream, and follow its direction. They are thus carried through in safety. This plan, however, is inadmissible for any but small vessels, on account of two rocks, the 'Pot' and the 'Frying Pan,' which lie in or very near the mid channel, being in the way both going to the eastward and westward, and having but little water on them at low tide. There is also a reef called 'Way's reef,' which lies in the course followed by the steamboats principally when coming from the eastward against a strong flood. It is their custom to keep close around Pot Cove and run up under Hallet's Point; by so doing they avoid the strength of the flood. In this part they find an eddy current in their favor. But in the ebb the greatest danger arises from the divergence of the current at a point marked A on the sketch—(a point about half way between Ward's Island and Hallett's Point)—where the ebb tide branches off into three directions to take the course of the three channels—the main south channel, the middle channel and the eastern channel. The safe navigation depends here upon deciding sufficiently soon at the point of separation which channel shall be taken; and the neglect to do this, or a loss of control over the vessel for any reason, frequently results in being carried on the 'Gridiron.' When a vessel that has attempted the eastern channel finds herself carried towards the 'Gridiron,' her only chance for safety is to run for the middle channel, which is narrow and made precarious by the middle reef, the outer rock of which is the 'Negro Head.' The 'Gridiron' is, owing to the strong set of tide on it, the most dangerous reef in the passage. The reef known as the 'Bread and Cheese,' on the eastern end of Blackwell's Island, is also very dangerous. Vessels are liable to go on it on the flood, when it is covered, by getting into the eddy near it, with a light wind. The chief danger is on the ebb and from the same cause as that which makes the 'Gridiron' dangerous—*i. e.*, the strong set of tide in that direction." This report was sent to the House of Representatives by Professor Bache, and ordered to be printed on the 14th of March, 1848, and a copy of it was also communicated to the New York Chamber of Commerce. This body took a deep interest in the matter and in the course of the same month it adopted an address to the Committee on Naval Affairs of the House, earnestly asking that the plan proposed by Lieutenant Davis for clearing Hell Gate passage of its obstructions be adopted.

All that was done in the matter, however, was that the Coast Survey office sent Lieutenant D. D. Porter to resurvey Hell Gate in the summer of 1848. This officer made his report in October of that year, detailing the obstructions more minutely than Lieutenant Davis, as follows:—"The first in order, and the principal obstruction in Hell Gate, is 'Pot Rock,' on which I found eight feet of water at the lowest tides. At half tide the depth of water does not increase on 'Pot Rock,' as there is at least a fall of four feet, and a vessel drawing over eight feet must strike upon it. A full rigged brig struck it three days since, and went down with a valuable cargo on board. This obstruction once removed, Hell Gate would be less dangerous by one half, and the eddies, which are now the cause of half of the difficulties, would, in a measure, disappear. There is a dangerous rock called 'Bald Headed Billy,' fifteen yards from Hatter's dock, which is dry at low water, and 'brings up' a number of vessels at high water. Three vessels struck at this rock while I was at Hell Gate; one was got off with much difficulty, another lost bowsprit, anchors and chains. Opposite 'Gibb's Point,' and within fifty yards of Blackwell's Island, is a large rock which I have called 'Blackwell Rock.' The current sets directly upon it with the flood tide, and it is a most dangerous obstruction. It is six feet out of water at low tide, and could be removed at small expense. The 'Frying Pan' rock is a ledge running north and south, and is a part of the chain of rocks which runs from 'Hog's Back' to Hallet's Point. This rock removed, vessels would always drift through the main ship channel. The difficulties of removing it would be much greater than any other rock in the gate, as it is so difficult to lit upon it. There is a small rock, though a very dangerous one, to the southward of Woolsey's Bath House. It extends about fifty yards out into the channel and is connected to the shore line at low water. In a place where the interests of so many are at stake the want of attention to the navigation of Hell Gate appears like culpable neglect. No one can form an idea of the number of vessels that go on shore during the course of a month; eighteen went on shore during the period I was occupied there (two months) and many of them were very much injured. I am convinced that if proper measures were taken to protect the commercial interests of this great city, by blasting the rocks mentioned above, and docking as proposed by Lieutenant Davis, not one vessel would be lost in five years."

Thus earnestly spoke Lieutenant (now Rear Admiral) Porter in 1848, and though it caused another appeal to the federal government by the New York Board of Underwriters in 1849 all that was done was the sending of Lieutenant Alexander Woodhull, of the Navy, also an assistant of the Coast Survey, to make another survey in the summer of that year of Little Hell Gate and Harlem river, and he also made an extended report. Thus three years had passed, three surveys were made, then reports received, and nothing was yet done to remove an inch of the rocks; but Lieutenant Woodhull was not satisfied with a written report alone. He also prepared a model—in papier maché—of the whole of Hell Gate, from Pot Rock to below the Negro Head and from shore, from actual measurement, which model is now at Washington, probably forgotten in some musty corner.

About this time the merchants of New York began to move with greater activity in the matter. Mr. Eben Meriam, Mr. Walter R. Jones, President of the New York Life Saving Benevolent Association, and Joseph Walker, of the Society of Friends, interested themselves personally. Memorials and petitions asking for an appropriation poured in upon Congress in December, 1849, and "seeing that delays attended the making of an appropriation by Congress" Mr. Henry Grinnell came forward voluntarily and subscribed $5,000 towards a fund for the removal of the obstructions. This, however, was not done until the 20th of March, 1851. The cause for it was that Mr. B. Maillefert, a French engineer, had ever since October, 1849, urged the feasibility of clearing the channel by his new method of submarine blasting without drilling, using the superincumbent volume of water for a fulcrum, and consequently doing the work at much less expense. His offer was that he would remove the three most dangerous rocks, Pot Rock, Frying Pan and Way's Reef, for $15,500. On the 24th of May, 1851, this proposition and the offer of Mr. Grinnell were submitted to the Chamber of Commerce, and being considered very liberal and feasible. Messrs. Henry Grinnell, Walter R. Jones, Charles H. Marshall, Joseph Walker and Mortimer Livingston were appointed a committee to adopt such measures as they deemed necessary to secure the desired object. On the 18th of June, 1851, another meeting was held at the Merchants' Bank, at which Mr. James G. King presided, then a member of Congress from New York, and the propositions of Mr. Maillefert formally accepted and their execution placed in the hands of a committee, of which Walter R. Jones was made chairman.

Under this arrangement the blasting was commenced by Messrs. B. Maillefert and W. Raasloff (then submarine engineer in this city, afterwards Danish Chargé d'Affaires at Washington and now Minister of War at Copenhagen), on the 15th of August, 1851, on Pot Rock, and work was continued from time to time, as he was in funds. An interruption occurred on the 26th of March, 1852, by the premature explosion of a charge as it was being lowered down, which severely injured Mr. Maillefert and killed three of his assistants. A subsequent appropriation by Congress of $30,000, passed August 31, 1852, in aid of the work, enabled it to proceed, and when that appropriation was exhausted the work stopped, and it lies to-day as it was then left on in the fall of 1852. While this was progressing, for a while Lieutenant Washington N. Bartlett, of the navy, was detailed by the Coast Survey Office, and subsequently Major Frazer was sent by Colonel Abert, of the Engineer Department, to superintend it. From the official reports of these officers and from articles that appeared from time to time, as this work was being done in *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* a full knowledge of the results of these labors is gathered.

From Pot Rock there have been removed 1,887 cubic yards of rocks (gneiss), and the depth of water, which was only eight feet at mean low tide, was increased to twenty and one-half feet, so that Lieutenant Bartlett, in his report to Professor Bache, made in December 4, 1851, when the depth of water was only eighteen feet, could say:—"Vessels drawing sixteen feet water can pass over it with impunity, and any frigate in the navy can do so at high water; second, the increased facility for the passage of the rapid current of the flood tide over the top of Pot Rock prevents that high and violent ebullition of water which formerly existed, to the imminent danger of all small vessels (though they might not hit the rock itself) which were thrown within its influence, while it prevents that rapid eddy, a return current, which formerly existed, and which threw all boats or small craft which once entered it into the very centre of the 'Pot' and then engulfed them." And on the 26th of January, 1852, the same officer reports nineteen feet of water over Pot Rock, and says that "if means could be obtained for deepening the water on Hallet's Point, the Frying Pan and Way's Reef, Hell Gate could be made the best channel into New York." As stated, when the work stopped, by the exhaustion of funds, there were twenty and a half feet of water over Pot Rock, equivalent to twenty-six and a half feet at high water.

Way's Reef was reduced by 895 cubic yards, increasing the depth of water from five to fourteen and a half feet at mean low tide—equivalent to twenty and a half feet at mean high water. From Frying Pan 341 cubic yards of rock were removed, and the depth of water increased from nine feet to eighteen and a half feet at mean low tide, and twenty-four and a half feet at mean high water. Shell Drake Reef was lowered from eight and a half feet of water to seventeen and a half feet, or twenty-three and a half feet at mean high tide. Bald Headed Billy was removed entirely, also Holt's Rocks and Opposition Rock. "The appearance of Hell Gate," says an article in *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* for September, 1852, "is greatly changed and the terrible whirlpool called the 'Pot' is not to be found any more."

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SINCE.

The condition of Hell Gate is now, as already stated, the same as it was when the work of blasting and removing the obstructions ceased in the fall of 1852. Numerous have been the applications to Congress, and also of repeated surveys under the directions of the Coast Survey Office, but neither the sounding lead and notebooks of the surveying engineers, nor the petitions and memorials to Congress, nor resolutions of the Chamber of Commerce and Board of Underwriters have removed a cubic inch of rock. It appears that in this as in so many other matters the department at Washington have taken Dickens' "circumlocution office" for their model, and study intensely "how not to do it." One of the great hindrances to efficiency is the constant change of officers. Hardly has an officer of the navy or the engineer corps conducted a survey of the channel and acquired some personal knowledge of the situation when he is detailed to other duty, a new man is sent here, and he has to begin anew, *ab ovo*, to inform himself; and when he has got so far as to be able to usefully apply his information he also is sent elsewhere, and again a new man is substituted in his place.

But Congress did wake up at its last session to the great national importance of the subject under consideration. Whether the great number of memorials and petitions or any other reason influenced the members of the House, it is of no consequence in this general review. On the 30th of June, 1868, the House of Representatives passed a bill which, being entitled "A bill making appropriations for repair, preservation and completion of certain public works and for other purposes," appropriated on its sixth page and 109th and 110th lines "for removing obstructions in East river, including Hell Gate, $300,000." To the bill itself, when it was up for consideration in the House, there was some objection, but none to this appropriation; even the "Bulldog of the Treasury," in his minority report, recommended the same amount to be appropriated for the clearing of the East river channel. The bill failed in the Senate. But the House was not to be balked in this way, and in the Deficiency bill, which was approved on July 25, 1868, a committee of conference between the two houses having been at work at it, the following section was passed:—

For the repair, preservation, extension and completion of certain public works on rivers and harbors, to be expended under the direction of the Secretary of War, $1,500,000; provided that said expenditures shall not be applied to any works not mentioned in the bill "making appropriations for repairs, preservation and completion of certain public works, and for other purposes," which passed the House of Representatives June 30, 1868.

It was thus intimated that in both houses of Congress the sum of $300,000 was intended for the removal of the obstructions in the East river. But for some reason "or other" the Secretary of War made a different disposition of the funds placed in his hands, and instead of the sum allowed he assigned only $85,000.

This amount is now almost exhausted. General John Newton, who has been placed in charge of the work, found it necessary to make new surveys and also to make experiments in drilling, and the whole amount he asks now to make the channel the best approach to New York is only about $2,000,000. Whether this or any other sum will do it let Congress appropriate it. The commerce of New York demands it. Seven-tenths of the customs revenue of the whole country is collected here, and this city will be the converging point of the trade of the world. Whatever is done for New York and its harbor is done for the whole country.

THE PRESENT DANGERS OF HELL GATE.

Much has been done to lessen the dangers of Hell Gate. Much remains to be done to make the passage secure to vessels of all grades. Mr. I. H. Upton, Secretary of the American Shipmasters' Association, says that while no losses are reported as occurring on the rocks already named, on other portions of Hell Gate disasters are frequent, "involving loss to an amount sufficient to prove that the perils attending navigation at that point are not wholly removed."

That this statement of Captain Upton is true every one knows who is acquainted with the peculiarities of the navigation at Hell Gate. And, knowing it, and knowing the importance of the channel in every view one may take of it—knowing the damage resulting almost daily, the amount of capital floating on the channel and the results expected from its being cleared, it is quite astonishing that Congress has done so little.

By whatever means the channel may be cleared the clearing of it is of supreme importance. Private interests and individual motives should give way to the great end in view.

If it cannot be done in any other manner, if the "bulldogs of the Treasury" are too careful for little drippings to ooze out of Uncle Sam's strong box, let some of our representatives in Congress attach it to some big job, in which all are interested, like the Niagara canal job, and thus they may do some good even while enriching lobbyists.

A SECOND CONFLAGRATION ON THE ROUTE OF SHERMAN'S MARCH.

Disastrous Fire, with Loss of Life, at Columbia, S. C.

[From the Columbia (S. C.) Phoenix, Dec. 15.]

MONDAY, Dec. 14—6 A. M.

This morning about two o'clock fire was discovered in Mr. Clendining's restaurant, on Taylor street, rear of Gregg's Hall, which in a short time communicated to the main building, and in a few minutes the entire structure was wrapped in flames. The fire had obtained such headway before the alarm was given that the firemen were unable to save the building, and, mournful to relate, not without a terrible loss of life and limb. A squad from the Independent Fire Company, assisted by several citizens, were endeavoring to get a stream in the rear of the burning building, when the south wall of Wearn & Hix's picture gallery fell, completely crushing the life out of two of the men and severely, if not fatally, injuring several others. The following is a list of the casualties:—Killed—D. A. Carrington, Frazee B. Squier. Severely wounded—F. B. Beckham, leg broken and badly cut in head and body; Charles F. Ryan, compound fracture of left leg and cut and bruised in body; Richard Tozer, right leg dislocated and severely cut in head and body. Slightly injured—W. K. Evans, cut in head; James Smythe, bruised in head and body; Charles Beck, leg injured; F. L. McKenzie, abrasion of legs. There were several others who received contusions, while a large number narrowly escaped.

The property destroyed, known as Gregg's Hall, is located on the southwest corner of Richardson and Taylor streets—the old Commercial Bank corner. It was erected by Messrs. Thomas and Walter Gregg about a year ago, and consisted of a three story front with two and one story additions in the rear, and was occupied as follows:—First floor, front—Thomas E. Gregg & Co., crockery establishment; Gregg, Palmer & Co., brokers. Rear—Mr. James Clendining, restaurant. Second story, front—Dr. T. T. Moore, dentistry; rear—Messrs. Wearn & Hix, photograph gallery. Third story—Gregg's Hall. Messrs. Gregg & Co. saved their books and papers, and a small portion of the stock; they had an insurance of $25,000—in the Queen's, Home and another company—$15,000 on the building and $10,000 on the stock; their actual loss above insurance is estimated at $12,000. Dr. Moore's loss is estimated at $3,500; uninsured. Messrs. Wearn & Hix lost their entire stock, valued at $8,000, and were insured $2,000 in the North American, New York. Mr. Clendining was insured for $2,000. The wounded men were promptly cared for, our citizens vieing with one another in offers of hospitality. Mr. Tozer was carried to the house of his brother-in-law, Mr. John C. Dial, and was attended to by Drs. Trezevant, Gibbes and Lynch. Although severely and painfully injured, he is doing very well. Mr. Ryan was carried to the residence of Mr. H. N. McGowan, and Dr. W. P. Geiger at once tendered his services and made the broken limbed man comfortable. His right leg is badly crushed and he received other injuries of a serious nature. After a few hours he was carefully removed to his home. Mr. Beckham's right leg was badly fractured below the knee, his back injured and he received several terrible cuts and bruises. He is attended by Drs. B. W. Taylor, A. N. Talley and John Darby, at the residence of his uncle, William Glaze.

ARREST OF A MURDERER.—Rufus W. Morrow, the man who shot and killed Dr. Cheatham a few months ago in Todd county, near Elkton, was captured about one week ago and by order of the Judge of the Todd Circuit Court, brought to our jail for safe keeping until his trial takes place. An old grudge had existed between the parties and Morrow sought Dr. Cheatham and killed him one night, after which he mounted a horse and made his escape.—*Louisville Democrat, Dec. 15.*

EUROPE.

The letters which we publish to-day from our special correspondents in several of the European capitals will be found to contain a variety of information on the prominent topics of interest in the countries from which they are dated.

AUSTRIA.

Political Condition of the Danubian Principalities—Baron Beust on Eastern Annexation—Speech of the King of Hungary—Army and Navy Estimates—Organized Emigration to the United States.

VIENNA, Dec. 2, 1868.

The Danubian Principalities are one of the inflammatory and incendiary spots on the European Continent. Their political condition is a source of perpetual anxiety to the statesmen of the Austro-Hungarian empire. The resignation of the Bratiano ministry and the formation of a conservative and peace loving Cabinet give some satisfaction here, because the change is universally attributed to Prussian influence, and it is seen with pleasure here that Prussia has begun to pursue on the lower Danube a policy which is favorable to letting things remain as they are in the Turkish empire and in harmony with the policy pursued in common by Austria, Hungary, France and Great Britain. But the satisfaction felt here at the ministerial crisis in Bucharest is qualified by the consideration that Bratiano has still on his side a majority in both houses of the Legislature and the popular feeling, and inasmuch as Prince Charles will not dissolve the Chambers (and if he did it is probable that the same members would be returned) the party of peace and conservatism are as yet by no means "out of the wood."

A joint interpellation, signed by several of the members of the Hungarian delegation, was on the 24th ult. addressed to Baron Beust in reference to the imperial government's relations with the Roumanian government, and the answer was delivered by the Ministerss Hungarian mouthpiece (Baron Orczy) on the 26th. The question ran as follows:

"Whereas the government of the Danubian Principalities, pretexting that the Austro-Hungarian monarchy is cherishing plans of annexation as regards the east of Europe, is constantly collecting arms and at the same time, in its official newspapers and through its organs generally, is doing its best to inspire a feeling of hatred against our monarchy, we respectfully ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs whether any and what steps have been taken to make the influence of our State felt with a desire to restrain those excesses and movements which threaten the existing peace and are doubly inconsistent with the position of the Danubian Principalities as guaranteed by treaties, and what attitude generally does the Minister intend to take up in certain possible eventualities?"

The answer of Baron Beust to this question was in these words:—

"As regards the position which the Minister for Foreign Affairs takes up towards the Danubian Principalities it ought to suffice to say that the ministry in this as in other questions has remained unalterably true to its leading principle of maintaining friendly relations with its neighbors. The ministry is confident that, looking to the true interests of the State and ever outspoken principle of neutrality, it has given proofs of the greatest impartiality on the occasion of all the agitations which have made themselves manifest of late in the Danubian Principalities; yea, more—it was even accused of supporting the armaments of the Danubian Principalities when it permitted arms to be imported there through the territory of the monarchy. From this fact it is impossible on any pretext to pretend that the Austro-Hungarian monarchy cherishes the design of occupying or annexing the said principalities. It must emphatically declare in the name of the ministry that no idea lies further from their thoughts than that of conquering the Danubian Principalities. The Austro-Hungarian monarchy only demands of these countries that they respect those treaties which form the basis of their existence as a State.

As regards the armaments and their consequences it cannot be denied that they have created a situation which has endangered the peace and quiet of Europe, and it also cannot be gainsaid that the conduct of the inhabitants of those countries does not correspond with those conditions on which peace can be maintained. The reproach of these armaments falls especially upon those countries whose prosperity is likely to be ruined by the burden of the same. There is also reason to fear that the said armaments will exercise a pernicious influence upon the treaty relationship between the Danubian Principalities and Turkey. It follows from these premises that the imperial ministry and the governments of other States as well follow the movements in the said countries with attention. Concerning the danger which might ensue from these armaments, being now in a position to look with calmness upon every eventuality, has not thought it necessary to take any exceptional precautions in respect thereto."

On the 26th the deputies sent by the Croatian Diet to represent Croatia and Slavonia in the Hungarian Diet were received by Francis Joseph at Ofen. After the spokesman of the deputation had made a complimentary and loyal speech the King of Hungary answered as follows, in an improvised speech:—

"To-day is one of the best of my reign. The reconciliation between Croatia and Hungary is an epochal event, not only for the two kingdoms, but also for the collective monarchy. His Majesty hopes that the work so happily begun will continue to bring forth good fruit. Concerning the autonomy of Croatia and Slavonia, the deputies may look forward to the future with perfect confidence. I wish to see this autonomy maintained, and the duty of protecting the same may be safely confided to me."

The deputies afterwards called upon Franz Deak and informed him of their admiration for his public character and their intention to join that party in the Diet which follows his guidance.

The Army and Navy bill is passing through the Upper House of the Reichsrath in the shape as it passed the Lower House, without the change of a single word. The Hungarian Diet has also accepted all the modifications made in the bill by the Lower House of the Reichsrath, in order that the legislation on the subject of the army and navy may be identical in both halves of the empire. This is another instance of the truth of the proverb, "Where there's a will there's a way." The machinery of legislation in this dualistic empire is uncommonly complicated, but the will to make it work effectively and smoothly is rife on both sides of the Leitha, and the way is found to satisfy that wish. During the debate in the Upper House of the Reichsrath the Ritter von Schmerling endeavored to show that the parliamentary administrations on both sides of the Leitha had been more extravagant in their estimates than he had been when he was at the helm of affairs. Minister Giskra replied to this speech by proving that M. von Schmerling was mistaken in his figures, and that the imperial army, on its present peace footing, falls short of the numbers in Schmerling's time by 36,000 men. He further stated that with the exception of 1866 the ordinary army and navy estimates in Austria never fell short of 90,000,000 florins, and that the efforts of the liberal opposition were confined to cutting down this figure to 80,000,000. The present government, continued he, has already succeeded in doing that which former governments had declared to be unattainable—namely, in cutting down its normal army and navy budget to the long-yearned after figure of 80,000,000 florins. This explanation of Giskra's is an answer not merely to M. von Schmerling, but to that portion of the English press which, after perusing the telegram from here which bore upon the Army and Navy bill, disseminated the unfounded and totally erroneous idea that Austria and Hungary were about to keep up a standing army of 800,000 men.

The facts which govern the rise and fall of the premium on the precious metals during the currency of so-called "invertible" treasury or bank notes have not been so minutely recorded and analyzed as they deserved. Here is a contribution to this branch of knowledge. On the one hand the manufactures, the internal and external commerce and the revenues of this empire are progressing at a great rate. Nevertheless the export trade is not so large as it was at the end of last year, owing to the good harvest in Western Europe last year. The consequence is that in spite of the general material progress and the present glow of confidence in the business and speculating world, the premium on silver has steadily risen from eleven per cent, at which point it stood at the commencement of last July, to seventeen per cent, at which it stands now, with a tendency to rise further. I must not forget to add that the volume of the note currency remains stationary, being neither contracted nor expanded.

An Innsbruck paper informs the world of an intended organized emigration from the Tyrol to the State of Virginia—whether Eastern or Western does not appear. Herr Von Alpenburg, of Innsbruck, is the chief promoter of this scheme. It is said that he has made a very advantageous purchase of a large extent of land in Virginia, and he proposes to settle thereon his Tyrolese countrymen. The departure of the first company of emigrants is appointed for February next.

Vice Admiral Petz, commander of the Austro-Hungarian expedition to Eastern Asia, has telegraphed hither that he left Tangier on the 24th ult., *en route* for the Cape of Good Hope.

PRUSSIA.

The Prussian Diet—The Prague Treaty Again—Danish Loyalty—Confiscation of Royal Estates—Standing Armies, Furloughs and Economy—Torpedoes—Potato Disease—A Titled Plagiarist—Prince Salm Salm's Book—A New South African Republic.

BERLIN, Nov. 30, 1868.

The Lower Chamber is still engaged in the discussion of the budget while the Herrenhaus, or Upper Chamber, enjoys a *dolce far niente* and counted at its session the day before yesterday only forty members present. After the close of the preliminary budget debate—which will probably be in a fortnight—the work of the committees begins, and then the Lower Chamber is likely to adjourn until after Christmas. Count Bismarck may arrive here within a few days, though the resumption of his official activity is again postponed to the middle of next month.

It may fairly be concluded that none of the sharp-witted diplomats, not excepting Bismarck or Benedetti, who framed the Prague peace treaty had the slightest presentiment of the trouble likely to arise out of paragraph five of the stipulations. The apparently innocent section five says:—"The Emperor of Austria assigns to the King of Prussia all his rights gained in the Vienna peace treaty of October 30, 1864, to the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, with the condition that if the inhabitants of North Schleswig should, by a popular vote, express a wish to be united with Denmark, they should be given up to Denmark."

The vast difficulties already produced by this conditional bargain are well known to your readers—indeed, the veriest peace prophets, to whom also belongs your correspondent, have always admitted that this tender question, involving as it does the jealousy of every one of the great Powers, contains, more than any other, the germ of a *casus belli*. If Prussia has toughly held on to what it got and studiously protracted a settlement, it happened that Denmark, no less, considered prudence the better part of valor, and Herr von Quaade thought fit not to stir a peg. Public opinion in the Schleswig district has also remained firm, as shown by the re-election of the same two representatives to the Prussia Legislature, whose seats had been last year declared forfeited owing to their refusal to swear the Prussian constitutional oath. Chosen by nearly the same majority they have again presented their credentials and demanded admission, while they still refuse the oath which, they contend, would prejudice the rights of their constituents, as vouchsafed in paragraph five of the Prague treaty. The report of the committee on credentials was the same as that of last year; but a minority insisted upon and gained the point that the said two members, Hons. Kruger and Ahlmann, should not forfeit their seats, but be excluded only until they chose to swear the member's oath.

In the committee charged with the confiscation bill of ex-George's and the Palatine of Hesse's estates, as proposed by the government, a difference of opinion exists, some members considering a confiscation as an act of arbitrary power and in violation of treaties made, and insisting that a sequestration would better meet the merits of the case. It will be recollected that the government demands half a million thalers annually out of the revenues of the confiscated Hanoverian estates, for the purpose, as it is asserted, of forming a secret fund for suppressing Guelph conspiracies and machinations. This gave Deputy Dr. Virchow, one of the committee, an opportunity of observing that this fund would most likely be made use of for feeing informers and for carrying on the system of petty persecutions. An amendment by another member to allow the government 300,000 thalers only, obtained eventually the majority, and it remains to be seen whether the House will agree to this, in which event all the revenues of the confiscated property would flow into the Prussian treasury, with the exception of the above-mentioned 300,000 thalers. There will be some, when the matter comes before the plenum, who will vote against all and every confiscation measure, in order to leave the whole responsibility of the attachment, which has taken place with the government, while others again will object to confiscation on the ground that King George's state of mind is such that he can hardly be held accountable.

While the continental sovereigns and their governments are full of words of peace, and while the people are clamoring for a show of disarmament, no diminution whatever in military establishments is perceptible. Standing armies, ever on the increase, are yet the order of the day. While this is the case the money saved by granting furloughs goes only to defray the expenses of such military purposes as the government dare not ask for, and consequently are unprovided for in the budget. Here in Prussia the furloughs during the coming year will again be about five men for a company, and may remain so for several years to come, although the Minister of War has fondly imagined he might be in a position to diminish them. It is well known here that the money economized since 1861 by these more or less extended furloughs has been expended for the social comfort of the officers, in organizing clubs, messes, and moreover in procuring additional regimental equipments, which fact has been kept secret from other governments, as, if known to them, it would have been considered tantamount to preparation for war. It may here be mentioned that with the reorganization of the Prussian army the year 1860 companies of mechanics were attached to all divisions, who were secretly put to work and have filled the depots with equipments for 600,000 men. Since it has been determined—in 1866—to raise the effective number of men to 900,000. These mechanics are still busy at work, and though, of course, it will require several years yet, there is no doubt they will quietly and *sub rosa* execute their task.

The North German marine, according to the new organization laid out, will require in case of war not less than 25,000 sailors. For the torpedo experiments lately undertaken at Kiel two old gunboats of 100 feet in length and twenty feet in width were put in requisition. One of the torpedoes was charged with gunpowder only, the other with dualin, which is a preparation made from nitro-glycerine. The former, ignited by electricity, split the gunboats in three parts, blowing the centre high into the air and sinking the remainder. The dualin had a still stronger effect, as it shivered the other gunboat