YORKTOWN.

The Coming Centennial of Cornwallis' Surrender.

A PRELIMINARY CELEBRATION

The Historic Spot In Its Ancient and Modern Aspect.

INTERESTING LOCALITIES AND TRADITIONS

Sketch of the Battle that Resulted in Independence.

OUR FRENCH ALLIES AND BRITISH ENEMIES.

YORKTOWN, Oct. 19, 1879.

On a map of the United States as large as a blanket a postage stamp laid down on the Virginia peninsula might be made to cover the localities of Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown. At the first was the earliest permanent settlement of the English in America. Four miles northward of it is the ancient town which was the capital of the Old Dominion for a long time prior to the Revolution. Twelve miles beyond we come to Yorktown, where Cornwallis laid down his arms and "the rebels" enjoyed the ecstasy of feeling that liberty was sealed unto them. These three spots, so precious in memories of the past, have but little lot with the busy, bustling world of to-day. Great cities are marked on the map in places which were unexplored wildernesses when they were in their maturity. Railroads have penetrated mountains and crossed the continent, but the whistle of the locomotive has never disturbed the quiet of their fields or streets. The telegraph encircles the world, but the click of a telegraphic instrument has never broken their repose or aroused their people to sympathy with the hurrying crowds. Theirs is the green old age of honor and peace. Their best days are gone, but they can look without envy upon the blooming beauties of this later generation. At Jamestown

One mouldering tower overgrown with ivy shows
Where first Virginia's capital arose,
And to the tourist's vision far withdrawn
Stands like a sentry at the gates of dawn.

There is but one dwelling house on the island. An Englishman—a Londoner, indeed—has come to replant the gardens and till the fields laid out by his people 270 years ago. At Williamsburg, which was the seat of viceroyalty, the centre of colonial fashion, and later the cradle of Revolution, there is no sign of grandeur, but the contrary. The State Lunatic Asylum located there now gives it its chief importance; for old William and Mary College has seen bitter days, and life seems now nearly, if not quite, extinct. Yorktown never did attain the size of Williamsburg or Jamestown. In the Revolutionary War it had about sixty houses. Now it cannot count many more than a fourth of the number, but it seems of late to have brightened up some, and, with its Court House, two or three taverns, stores and wharves, is not to be regarded as a lifeless corpse. Not by any means. The spirit of patriotic enterprise at least survives, and the celebration to take place here on the 23d, preliminary to the centennial on October 19, 1881, enlists the vigorous exertions and liveliest sympathy of its people, who are proud of the history which belongs to their venerable town, and will welcome with open arms all strangers who come to join them in their preparatory jubilee.

YORKTOWN AND THE PENINSULA.

The Virginia peninsula is a low and narrow strip of land lying between the James and York rivers and terminating at Old Point Comfort. Fortress Monroe is on its eastern limit, Yorktown on the northern and Jamestown Island on the southern, with Williamsburg, we may say, between the last two. From Old Point to Yorktown, as the crow flies, is twenty miles—by road twenty-five or twenty-six. To West Point—where the Pamunkey and Mattapony join and form the York—twenty-eight or thirty miles. West Point is connected with Richmond by rail and telegraph, and is now assuming considerable importance as a port. Great quantities of cotton and other Southern products, brought from the Carolinas and Georgia by the Piedmont Air line, are carried through Richmond to West Point, and are thence shipped to New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore. The steamers to and from the last named city stop at Yorktown (or Gloucester Point) regularly, and so Yorktown, without participating to any great extent in the world's commerce, sees it moving past her every day on the fair bosom of the York, which is a wide, deep and remarkably straight stream from West Point, where it is formed, to the bay, some forty miles, where it empties itself.

Yorktown, the county seat of York, is on a high bluff of concrete or stone marl, covered with a sandy soil, on the south side of the York and about eleven miles from its mouth. The ground is level, and is embraced upon each side by deep ravines, which almost meet in the rear. The site is the highest below Richmond, on either the York or James river, it is said. The town occupies 50 acres and is surrounded by a plain of about 10,000 acres. The main street is about one-quarter of a mile in length and the population 200 or 250. Below the town the river widens into a large body of water, resembling a bay, and not unlike the bay of New York below Fort Hamilton; Clew's Point, corresponding to Sandy Hook and the Gloucester shore, opposite, taking the place of Coney Island. The land on the two sides embraces the bay in a circular form until the sides approach each other (at Yorktown and Gloucester Point) within a mile; then the river widens to about two and a half or three miles, and is almost a straight line up to West Point, twenty-eight or thirty miles distant.

YORKTOWN'S FAME.

Up to 1781 Yorktown was unknown to fame. It had a pleasant society, enjoyed considerable trade, and hoped when the war was over to extend its commercial relations, and by the help of its grand harbor become a large city. The inhabitants had no idea what was in store for them.

The poet Trumbull tells of the quick shifting scene and the quiet country town turned into a camp, the streets into scenes of bloodshed and hardship:—

Again to fair Virginia's coast
I turned, and viewed the British host
Where Chesapeake's wide waters lave
Her shores and join the Atlantic wave.
There famed Cornwallis towering rose,
And scorned, secure, his distant foes;
His bands the haughty ramparts raise,
And bid the royal standard blaze.
When lo! where ocean's bounds extend,
Behold the Gallic sails ascend,
With fav'ring breezes steer their way
And crowd with ships the spacious bay.
Lo! Washington from northern shores
O'er many a region wheels his force,
And Rochambeau, with legions bright,
Descends in terror to the fight.

CORNWALLIS COOPED.

In 1781 Cornwallis, after a victorious campaign in the Carolinas, was ravaging Virginia, when he was suddenly recalled to the sea coast by an order from Sir Henry Clinton, who, being apprehensive that the Americans and French meditated an attack on New York, and fearing that he was not in sufficient force to resist them, had directed Cornwallis to embark 3,000 of his troops to join his garrison at New York. That General, intent on obeying the mandate, marched with his troops to Portsmouth, where he received orders to retain his troops. Clinton, having received a reinforcement of 3,000 from another quarter, believed that he could dispense with further aid, and ordered Cornwallis to remain in Virginia, but to keep near the sea coast. Cornwallis accordingly sent his engineers to view first Old Point (where Fortress Monroe now is) and then Yorktown. The latter was selected as the most eligible for offensive and defensive operations.

A part of Cornwallis' army accordingly proceeded up the York River in transports and boats and took possession of Yorktown and Gloucester Point on the 1st of September. On the 20th the evacuation of Portsmouth was completed.

Cornwallis constructed a line of works completely around Yorktown and also extended a line of intrenchments across the peninsula in the rear of Gloucester. All this time Lafayette was within a few miles of Cornwallis, but dared not strike a blow.

Instead of attacking New York, as expected, Washington, having secured the co-operation of the French fleet, with admirable strategy slipped away from the vicinity of New York. The French fleet blockaded the mouth of York River and landed reinforcements for Lafayette. The combined armies moved from Williamsburg on the 25th of September, and in three days more were all collected in the vicinity of Yorktown. The whole force amounted to 16,000 men. Cornwallis, foreseeing trouble, appealed to Clinton at New York for aid, and Clinton wrote that he would start on the 5th of October with a fleet and about five thousand men to his relief. The allies commenced their works on the night of October 6, in which they made rapid advances, notwithstanding a heavy fire from the town. On the 9th several batteries were completed and a destructive cannonade commenced. On the 11th they began their second parallel, which was only 300 yards from the fort, or main position. In order to complete their works it was necessary for the allies to dislodge the English from two redoubts which were in advance of their main line. Washington determined on attempting them by assault, and assigned to the French, under Baron Viomesnil, the taking of one, while to the Americans, under Lafayette and Colonel Hamilton, he assigned the capture of the other. Both redoubts were taken, not, however, without loss, of which the French suffered the greatest share, because instead of charging over the abattis, as the Americans did, they stood the fire while the pioneers cut it away and then advanced. The redoubt they took was well defended. On the night of the 16th the enemy, under General Abercrombie, made a vigorous sortie, took two batteries and spiked eleven cannon. They were in turn charged furiously by the French, under De Noailles, and driven back.

Cornwallis subsequently attempted to escape to the Gloucester shore at night. A part of his army had already crossed and landed at Gloucester Point; a part were on the river; the Third division alone had not embarked. The air and the water were calm, and his hopes of escape were high. In a moment the sky was overcast and a tempest arose. The very elements seemed against him. The wind and rain were violent, and his boats were driven down the river. The day appeared, and the besiegers, discovering their situation, opened a destructive fire upon the scattered and weakened army, and they were glad when the abating tempest allowed them to return to the fortifications.

THE SURRENDER.

Seeing no hope of escape, Cornwallis on the 17th sent Washington a flag requesting a truce of twenty-four hours. Washington, fearing the arrival of British troops, would grant it only for two hours. Commissioners were appointed to meet at Mrs. Moore's house, on the right of the American lines and just in rear of the first parallel. The American commissioners were Colonel Laurens and Viscount de Noailles; the British commissioners were Lieutenant Colonel Dundas and Major Ross. The commissioners met early on the morning of the 18th, but being unable to adjust the terms of capitulation definitively, only a rough draft of them could be prepared, which was submitted to the consideration of Cornwallis. Washington would not permit the delay that might ensue by leaving those open to further negotiation, as he feared that Clinton would come to the relief of Cornwallis. He, therefore, had the rough articles fairly transcribed and sent them to Cornwallis early on the morning of the 19th, with a letter expressing his expectation that they would be signed by eleven o'clock and that the garrison would march out by two P. M. Cornwallis was obliged to submit, and at the appointed hour the garrisons at York and Gloucester, the shipping in the harbor and all the ammunition, &c., were surrendered, after a siege of thirteen days, to the land and naval forces of the United States and France—the army to the former, the navy to the latter. Cornwallis by no means got the terms he desired, Washington having declared that a general basis for a definitive treaty should be the reception of the two garrisons as prisoners of war, with the same honors as were granted to the Americans at Charleston; but he would not agree to send the prisoners out of the country. They were to be marched to some convenient place where they could be sustained and treated kindly. Cornwallis asked the privilege of retaining the Bonetta sloop-of-war to carry his despatches to Clinton, pledging her safe delivery to the Americans if she escaped the perils of the sea. This was granted.

TESTIMONY OF AN EYE WITNESS.

"Light Horse Harry Lee," the father of General R. E. Lee, and who, as the eulogist of Washington, was the author of the saying, "First in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen," was present at the surrender, and in his memoirs, the third edition of which was edited by his famous son, said:—

The author was present at this ceremony, and certainly no spectacle could be more impressive than the one now exhibited. Valiant troops yielding up their arms after fighting in defence of a cause dear to them (because the cause of their country) under a leader who throughout the war, in every grace and in every situation to which he had been called, appeared to be the Hector of his host. Battle after battle had he fought; climate after climate had he endured; towns had yielded to his mandate; posts were abandoned at his approach; armies were conquered by his prowess; one nearly exterminated and then chased from the confines of South Carolina beyond the Dan into Virginia, and a third severely chastised in that State, on the shores of James River. But here even he, in the midst of his splendid career found his conqueror. The road through which they marched was lined with spectators, French and American. On one side the Commander-in-Chief, surrounded by his suit and the American staff, took his station; on the other, opposite to him, was the Count de Rochambeau, in like manner attended. The captive army approached, moving slowly in column with grace and precision. Universal silence was preserved amid the vast concourse, and the utmost decency prevailed; exhibiting in demeanor an awful sense of the vicissitudes of human fortune, mingled with commiseration for the unhappy. The head of the column approached the Commander-in-Chief. O'Hara, mistaking the circle, turned to that on the left for the purpose of paying his respects to the Commander-in-Chief, and requesting further orders; when, quickly discovering his error, with much embarrassment in his countenance he flew across the road and advancing up to Washington, asked pardon for his mistake, apologized for the absence of Lord Cornwallis, and begged to know his further pleasure. The General feeling his embarrassment, relieved it by referring him to General Lincoln for his government. Returning to the head of the column, it moved under the guidance of Lincoln to the field selected for the conclusion of the ceremony.

Every eye was turned, searching for the British Commander-in-Chief, anxious to look at that man, heretofore so much the object of dread. All were disappointed. Cornwallis held himself back from the humiliating scene.

The post of Gloucester was delivered up on the same day by Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton. By the official returns it appears that the besieging army, at the termination of the siege, amounted to 16,000 men, 5,500 Continentals, 3,500 militia and 7,000 French. The British force, *in toto*, is put down as 7,107, of which only 4,017, rank and file, are stated to have been fit for duty. The army, with everything belonging to it, fell to the United States, while the shipping and all its appurtenances were allotted to our ally. The British loss, including officers, amounted to 558, while ours did not exceed 300.

On the very day in which Lord Cornwallis surrendered Sir Henry Clinton left New York with the promised relief—7,000 men—with twenty-five sail of the line, two ships of fifty guns and eight frigates. The fleet appeared off the Capes on the 24th, where Sir Henry Clinton received intelligence of the surrender. In his official report Cornwallis gave serious umbrage to Clinton.

THANKS.

Cornwallis, in his official report dated Yorktown, October 20, says:—

The treatment, in general, that we have received from the enemy since our surrender has been perfectly good and proper. But the kindness and attention that have been shown to us, by the French officers in particular—their delicate sensibility of our situation, their generous and pressing offer of money, both public and private, to any amount—have really gone beyond what I cannot possibly describe, and will, I hope, make an impression in the breast of every officer whenever the fortune of war should put any of them in our power.

The British prisoners were subsequently marched—some to Winchester in this State and some to Fort Frederick and Fredericktown, Md. The latter were finally sent to Lancaster, Pa. Cornwallis and other British officers went to New York on parole.

The loss of the British during the siege was 156 killed, 326 wounded and 70 missing. The whole number surrendered was 7,000; also 75 brass and 160 iron cannon, 7,794 muskets, 28 regimental standards (10 English and 18 German), a large quantity of ammunition, stores, &c., and a military chest with $11,000 in specie. When Cornwallis found that he would be compelled to surrender he allowed his soldiers to supply themselves with new clothes from the stores, and hence their neat appearance at the surrender.

GLAD TIDINGS—THE COLUMN OF VICTORY.

The news of the surrender went north by special messenger. It created universal joy. From the lowest depth of despondency the patriots were transformed to the greatest exaltation. There were thanksgivings, hymns of praise and outbursts of joy throughout the country. Congress passed various resolutions of thanks and paid conspicuous honors to Washington, Lafayette, &c., and resolved that the field of surrender should be marked by a marble column. It was proposed to have it ornamented with emblems of alliance between the United States and His Most Christian Majesty, and inscribed with a most succinct narrative of the surrender of Earl Cornwallis to Washington, Rochambeau and De Grasse. Ninety-eight years have passed and the marble for that column is yet in the quarry. In 1854 or 1855 the people of this vicinity raised the money for a small monument, and in the presence of a large concourse, including several military companies, raised it on the field of surrender. The monument was of granite, some four or five feet in height. It stood until the breaking out of the recent war, when relic hunters, first from the Confederate and then from the federal army, chipped it away until the last vestige disappeared.

The celebration to take place here on the 23d is only preparatory to the grand centennial of October 19th, 1881, by which time—though Congress is yet to appropriate the money—the column may be quarried and carved and on the 100th anniversary of the surrender unveiled in the midst of admiring multitudes. The field of surrender is definitely known. It is on the road to Hampton, and just in the rear of the national cemetery.

THE PRELIMINARY CELEBRATION.

This preliminary celebration will be no small affair, for here will be gathered together the Governors of the thirteen original States of the Union. There will be four or five war vessels of the United States in the harbor, ordered there by the Secretary of the Navy. The garrison from Fortress Monroe, composed of some five or six companies of regulars, have been ordered to be present by the Secretary of War. The First Virginia regiment and Richmond Light Infantry Blues will come down from Richmond, the Peninsula Guard from Hampton, the Wise Light Infantry from Williamsburg, the Old Dominion Guard from Portsmouth and two companies from Norfolk; it is expected there will be military from other States, in all numbering about seven hundred and fifty men, beside a number of civic societies. The total crowd to be present is estimated at between five and six thousand. Owing to the short time the committee have had to prepare and the limited accommodations of the town the celebration will only last through one day. The proceedings will be inaugurated by an address delivered by Captain James Barren Hope, of Norfolk, Va., who will be followed in an oration by General William B. Taliaferro, of Gloucester county, Va. The meeting will be presided over by the President of the temporary association, Dr. Robert H. Power, of York county, Va. After this a permanent organization will be formed to arrange for the grand event of 1881.

AN OLD VIRGINIA BARBECUE.

This county, aided by some of its neighbors, will provide a free barbecue for all who attend here on the 23d. Six hundred bushels of fine "York River oysters," 3,000 loaves of bread and several fat beeves have been ordered. There will be an oyster stand at every corner, and strangers will be invited to commence eating when they get ready and stop when they have plenty. There is a cordial welcome to the world. The greater the distance a man may come the warmer will be the reception.

CORNWALLIS' HEADQUARTERS.

At the eastern end of the main street stands the famous Nelson House, formerly the property of Governor Nelson, and now held by members of the family. It is a large square structure, built of the old fashioned English brick, each alternate one glazed. In this house Cornwallis had his headquarters during the siege. During the bombardment Governor Nelson offered a guinea for every shell put in his own house, and its eastern face shows several marks of cannon balls, besides the place where one went in and shattered the fireplace in one of the main rooms of the building. Another and much finer house, the property of Secretary Nelson, was entirely destroyed during the bombardment. It stood nearer the river, and just back of the interior lines of defence, the ramparts of which are yet to be seen just back of the new works made in the late war. Next to General Nelson's house stands an old brick building, for many years used as the County Court House, which is only second to it in historical interest, for it was, strange to tell, the first custom house built in the United States!

TRANSPORTATION—CORNWALLIS CAVE.

On the day of the coming celebration special lines of steamers will be run from West Point, Norfolk and Baltimore. These points will be reached respectively by rail from Richmond; from the North by the Bay line of steamers or by the Boston and Providence line.

Just north of the town in the bluff, and a little east below the steamboat landing, is to be seen the famous Cornwallis cave. During the late war a traverse was thrown up in front of it, and it was used as a magazine. This traverse is now being cut away so as to expose its mouth as it formerly was. The cave is dug close to the shore in a calcareous marl, which hardens on exposure to the air. It is about eight feet high and sixteen by twelve in size. Just to the right of its entrance there is an opening leading into another but smaller room connected with it. Tradition says it was used by Lord Cornwallis as a council room, and that it was formerly lined with green baize. Others say a house formerly stood at the entrance of the cave, and that it was used as a secret storehouse for smugglers. It is now lined with a dark, greenish cryptogamous growth, rough and very adherent, which may be the only green baize it ever boasted. However apocryphal the traditions of the cave may be, we will not attempt to dispel their influence. This is a very utilitarian and iconoclastic age and people, and we ought to have a cave or so left us, even if we have to create one from the recesses of our imagination. This cave has certainly been in existence a hundred years, and the name of Cornwallis has been so long associated with it as to bar any other by the act of limitation. Just above the bluff where the cave is stands the old Nelson burying ground. Several ancient, carved tombs yet remain belonging to the family. East of Yorktown is the National Cemetery, constructed since the late war. Here a large number of Union soldiers appropriately sleep in a few feet of the spot where was consummated, in fact, the independence of this country, and where legality was given to the act of July 4, 1776, which declared the colonies free from the rule of Great Britain. The uncertain light which dawned at Independence Hall became an effulgent reality on the plains of Yorktown. The spot where the surrender took place is about sixty yards from the back wall of the National Cemetery.

THE OLD REDOUBTS.

The ground around Yorktown presents the same general features it did during the Revolution; little changes have occurred, and many of the old works are yet in a remarkably good state of preservation. Newer and larger works appear immediately investing the town made by the Confederates and strengthened by the United States authorities during the late war; but from above the town, on the river, and around in a semi-circular manner to Wormley's Creek below the town, the old line of Continental and French works can be traced out. It is amusing to study these old works, in the light of the present improvements in ordnance. The whole line of investment was only about three miles, and Cornwallis was shut in a semi-circular pen with a diameter of less than a mile. Below the point of surrender on the old Temple farm yet stands the celebrated Moore House, where, on the 18th day of October, 1781, Viscount Noailles and Lieutenant Colonel Laurens met Colonel Dundas and Major Ross, of the British army, in rear of the first parallel.

MODERN YORKTOWN.

In 1834 Lafayette was received with great pomp at Yorktown. There was little fighting here during the late war, other than some picket firing across the lines. Yorktown was the left of Johnston's defence on the peninsula prior to his retreat; beyond, toward Warwick River at the dams, there was some severe skirmishing.

Captain Jones' place, three miles north of the town, was the headquarters of Washington. The house yet stands.

ARTILLERY SERVICE.

A CAMP OF INSTRUCTION FOR MEMBERS OF THE STATE NATIONAL GUARD ESTABLISHED AT FORT HAMILTON.

A camp for instruction in artillery service for the National Guard of the State of New York is now established at Fort Hamilton, New York Harbor, on grounds adjacent to the fort. The camp has been ordered for the more thorough instruction of the State militia in the practical as well as theoretical duties of artillerymen. The officers yesterday present were:—Colonel John S. McEwen, Tenth regiment, N.G.S.N.Y., commander and instructor, Albany; Major Louis Balch, surgeon, Tenth Albany; Lieutenant Albert F. Hull, adjutant of the school, battery F, Troy; Sergeant Samuel J. Waddy, chief clerk, company F, Albany; Colonel Edward H. Kent, ordnance officer, New York; Sergeant William Schefner, clerk of the ordnance officer; Captain John J. Powers, battery A, Rochester, N. Y.; Captain Robert Stierly, battery I, Rochester, N. Y.; Captain Paul Birchmeyer, battery H, Syracuse, N. Y.; Captain Laurel L. Olmsted, battery L, Binghamton, N. Y.; Captain Henry W. Linderman, battery M, Buffalo, N. Y.; Captain Henry F. Bissell, battery D, Poughkeepsie, N. Y.; Captain George T. Steenberg, battery F, Troy, N. Y.; First Lieutenant Ernest O. Foeller, battery B, New York, N. Y.; First Lieutenant Nicholas Wahl, battery C, Brooklyn, N. Y.; First Lieutenant Maurice S. Decker, battery G, Elmira, N. Y.; Second Lieutenant Jacob L. Voorhees, battery E, New York, N. Y.; Sergeant John Engle, battery K, New York, N. Y.; Corporal S. C. Colyer, battery N, Brooklyn, N. Y. About eighty representatives of the different batteries throughout the State comprise the camp. The camp will continue for the balance of the present week, General Hancock, commander of the department, and General G. A. De Russy, commandant of the post, regular army, having afforded every facility for the purpose of artillery practice by the State National Guard.

A scale of daily merit has been established which will determine the relative standing of the several batteries at target practice. The scale includes marks for discipline, military bearing, neatness, attention to and proficiency in drills and recitations. A prize of $100 will be given to and a suitable motto authorized to be inscribed on the guidon of the battery whose detail makes the highest average during the course of instruction; a second prize of $50 will also be awarded to the individual attaining the highest average.

General John B. Woodward, Adjutant General of the State, and several others of the military department at Albany, were present at Fort Hamilton yesterday.

The practice to-day and to-morrow will be devoted to mounted and dismounted drills, stable duty, and recitations from the tactics; Thursday to light artillery practice; Friday and Saturday to heavy artillery practice at Sandy Hook, orders having been received from the Ordnance Department at Washington for that purpose.

It is pleasant to notice that all the officers of the regular army on duty here lend their hearty co-operation to this experiment of instructing the local militia in the artillery practice of the regular service.

A CAPSIZED YACHT.

The sloop yacht Cuma left Astoria, L. I., Saturday afternoon, about four o'clock, on a blue fishing cruise. When the storm broke, about ten o'clock that night, the yacht was off Bath and hove to until the storm had passed. On Sunday morning the Cuma started for the Horseshoe and thence for Long Branch. Leaving the Branch before noon the Cuma went to the southward about eleven miles off Deal. It commenced to blow very hard and the sea was very high. The Cuma lay at anchor for some time, with close reefed mainsail and bobsail, until the weather became so threatening that Captain George Mackay determined to seek shelter at the nearest point. Just at this time a sloop yacht, painted white, with green bottom, was discovered about half a mile toward the southeast lying on her beam ends, her sails set, and trailing in the water. There were no signs of life on board, and the sea became so dangerous that those on board the Cuma were afraid to remain any longer in that locality. The strange craft was sloop rigged and was about fifty feet long. On her topmast was a large gilt ball. Captain Mackay says that if there had been any signs of life he would have hove to and lowered a boat, in spite of the storm. The Cuma then beat all the way up to Sandy Hook and reached Staten Island after dark on Sunday, where she lay under the lee of the Kills until yesterday morning.

NATIONAL BOARD OF TRADE.

The National Board of Trade, through Mr. Hamilton A. Hill, acting secretary, has notified the Chamber of Commerce and other trade organizations that its tenth annual meeting will be held in Washington, commencing December 10, and all its constituent bodies have been requested to send in before October 15 all such subjects as they want discussed at the meeting. Messrs. J. S. T. Stranahan, William E. Dodge, Elliot C. Cowdoin and Oliver Hayt will act as delegates for the Chamber of Commerce.

ERIE'S DEFENCE.

TESTIMONY OF MR. BLANCHARD BEFORE THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE—REDUCTION OF RATES IN FAVOR OF THE PUBLIC.

The testimony before the Legislative committee appointed to investigate the management of railroads in this State, given yesterday morning at the rooms of the Chamber of Commerce, No. 63 William street, was chiefly confined to a defence of the charges against the Erie Railroad. Mr. Blanchard, the general traffic manager, occupied the witness stand all day, and his evidence will, it is understood, take two days more. Then the rebuttal on the part of the New York Central and the "L" roads will come up. The committee expect to finish their labors with the present week.

RECEIPTS, EXPENSES AND PROFITS.

Mr. Blanchard again took the witness stand when the committee was called to order and was cross-examined by Mr. Sterne. He testified that the total receipts of milk and cream coming over the Erie road for the five months ending August, 1879, were 4,997,704 gallons. The number of gallons carried between 1862 and 1872 was as follows:—1862, 6,180,537; 1863, 7,078,145; 1864, 7,295,740; 1865, 7,956,189; 1866, 8,457,339; 1867, 9,480,677; 1868, 9,887,284; 1869, 10,310,219; 1870, 11,177,535; 1871, 11,732,940; 1872, 11,721,481.

Witness next offered in evidence a table of the Erie Railroad earnings and expenses per ton per mile from 1872 to 1878 inclusive:—

Year.	*Earnings.*	*Expenses.*	*Profits.*
1872	$1 52	$0 98	$0 54
1873	1 45	94	51
1874	1 31	91	40
1875	1 20	95	25
1876	1 09	88	21
1877	95	75	20
1878	97	67	30

Percentage of reduction in earnings, 36 2-10; in expenses, 31 6-10, or 4 4-10 per cent in favor of shippers.

Also a table of the earnings, expenses and profits of all the railroads in the State of New York, from 1870 to 1878, inclusive:—

Year.	*Earnings.*	*Expenses.*	*Profits.*
1870	$1 70	$1 15	$0 55
1871	1 70	1 14	56
1872	1 66	1 15	51
1873	1 60	1 08	52
1874	1 45	95	50
1875	1 30	96	34
1876	1 16	85	31
1877	1 06	77	29
1878	1 00	69	31

Percentage of reduction in earnings, 47.14; in expenses, 39.93; in profits, 44.2. Percentage of reduced charges in excess of reduced expenses, 7.21.

"If the organization of pools and fast freights," witness said, "were made universal, it would enable the railroads to adjust the business properly; a central authority for all the freight business would be a great economy, and do a great deal to stop discrimination against the public; compulsory legislation would not be so successful as a friendly co-operation between the railroads; the companies had come to the idea that it was wiser to keep contracts than break them."

CLASSIFICATION OF SHIPMENTS.

The direct examination of Mr. Blanchard was again taken up on the subject of classification, ex-Judge Shipman questioning the witness. There were 512 articles classified, and rates made to 412 different points; the classification should take into consideration the value of the articles carried.

Mr. Sterne wanted to know if he should send a telegram by the Western Union lines that his cow had calved and another ordering a transaction by which he could make $10,000 whether the company should charge more for the latter; or whether the Post Office Department should charge more for sending a letter involving an important contract than for a domestic letter? Mr. Blanchard replied that if the Post Office knew the contents of the letters they should charge more for the more important service rendered, and if Mr. Sterne's cow was an Alderney, and produced an Alderney calf, he should be charged more for a telegram announcing the fact than if it was a mere "scrub" calf. (Laughter.)

After recess Mr. Blanchard resumed his testimony. Referring to the cut-rates he said that much of the troubles came from the Western railroads; one road would make a cut-rate, another would follow and down would go the freights like a row of bricks; it was bad for the merchants and bad for the railroads.

Question by Chairman Hepburn—Does not all this argue the necessity for some authoritative supervision of the railroads? A. The railroads have now put a stop to that; their agreement has now lasted over thirty months and is constantly growing in strength; there is nothing likely to occur to bring back the railroads to their old ways of doing business; under the pooling arrangement Erie received thirty-three per cent, New York Central thirty-three, Pennsylvania twenty-five and Baltimore and Ohio nine per cent of all freights; in the California business each road took twenty-five per cent; this arrangement was found to be unsatisfactory to some of the roads, and on March 1, 1879, the following percentages took effect on the different classes of freight from New York:—

	Class.			
	1st.	2d.	3d.	4th.
New York Central	36 2-10	42 5 10	35 5-10	31 8-10
Erie	30 3-10	24	31	34 7-10
Pennsylvania	25	25	25	25
Baltimore and Ohio	8 5-10	8 5-10	8 5-10	8 5-10

Similar schedules, showing the proportionate rates on freight from Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore, were submitted by the witness with copious explanations.

The committee then adjourned until this morning at ten o'clock.

HARLEM RIVER IMPROVEMENT.

GENERAL NEWTON ASKING THE APPOINTMENT OF A COMMISSION TO APPRAISE THE REAL ESTATE ALONG THE PROPOSED CANAL.

A petition was submitted yesterday to Judge Donohue, in the Supreme Court, on behalf of the United States government, by General Newton, who has charge of the excavations at Hell Gate, asking the appointment of commissioners to appraise the value of real estate required for the construction of a new channel from the Hudson River to the East River, through the Harlem Kills. It will be remembered that the Legislature of this State passed an act in 1876 giving permission to the United States to acquire the right of way necessary to carry out this proposed scheme. The act also cited to the general government jurisdiction over the real estate thus acquired. Some amendments to the act were passed by the last Legislature in accordance with the suggestions of General Newton, who has prepared the requisite plans for carrying out the improvement, which contemplates the deepening of the channel of the Harlem River, giving to the water at high tide a depth of twenty-one feet, and a depth of fifteen feet at low tide. The improvement also contemplates the cutting of a canal to join the Harlem and North rivers, such canal to run south of Spuyten Duyvil Creek across the narrowest part of the northern extremity of Manhattan Island, the line of the creek having been abandoned as too winding for the purpose of the canal. Negotiations have been in progress for some time between representatives of the United States and parties owning land along the line of the proposed canal as to the prices to be paid for such land. No satisfactory result having been reached through these negotiations General Newton presented the petition referred to. There are about two hundred different parties who own this land. Some of the holders, however, are unable to give perfect title, and the owner of a portion cannot be ascertained. Messrs. Thomas L. Ogden and Samuel E. Lyon represented General Newton, and Corporation Counsel Whitney the city. A multiplicity of lawyers represented the property owners, but no opposition thus far has been made to the appointment of a commission. After a brief conference Judge Donohue adjourned until to-morrow the settlement of the order as to the parties appearing in court, and until Monday next the settlement of an order as to those not appearing.

MR. ROBARTIS' OFFICE BOY.

Frank W. Robartis, of No. 145 Broadway, is the American agent of an English stationery firm. Six weeks ago a neatly dressed, bright looking young man entered his store and solicited employment. He said he had just come out of Bellevue Hospital after weeks of illness, was in great need of money and willing to make himself generally useful as he had a small family dependent upon his efforts for support. He thereupon produced a number of letters of recommendation, which spoke most highly of his worth. Mr. Robartis employed him as an office boy. He gave his name as Thomas Hackett and his age as twenty-three years. He was intrusted with the sale of articles, the keeping of books and the filling of orders by mail, and fulfilled these duties to his employer's satisfaction. About four weeks ago Mr. Robartis' attention was directed to the fact that the orders he received by mail were gradually diminishing in number. He ordered an account of stock to be taken, and meanwhile a gentleman living out of town visited the store. As he entered Hackett started up from the seat where he had been writing and slipped out of the place. The gentleman asked why his orders by mail had not been filled. It was then found, Mr. Robartis alleges, that Hackett had for weeks been opening the letters thus received and appropriating their contents, besides selling goods and making false entries in the cash book. Days elapsed without word from him, and then came a threatening letter, followed by his appearance in person. Mr. Robartis alleges that the youth acknowledged that from the moment he was employed he had systematically practised forgery and embezzlement; that in fact the very letters of recommendation which gained credence for his story were forgeries, and that he had not been in the hospital. On Sunday he was arrested at No. 927 Sixth avenue. In the Tombs Court yesterday Mr. Robartis confined his charge to one transaction of the amount of $8 25 with the firm of John Monroe & Co., on the 7th inst. He denied the charge, and when the magistrate informed him that he was held for trial and would be locked up in default of bail, he kissed his wife with nonchalance and accompanied the officer to his cell.

OBLIVION.

How the Poor Live, Die and Are Buried in Warren County.

CHILDHOOD WITHOUT A JOY

Old Age and Infancy Without a Comfort.

CALDWELL, Lake George, Oct. 15, 1879.

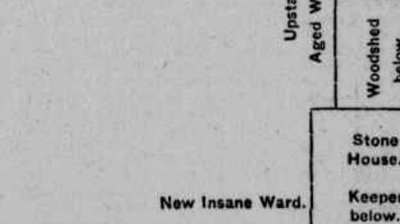
This is not my first visit to the pretty region lying between Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks, and were I called upon to recommend a season of the year in which to ascend the valley of the Upper Hudson and its tributaries I should now say, Wait till the frost has come. The harmony of nature was never more apparent. Throughout all the long ride from Saratoga up the Adirondack Railroad which I made this morning the landscape was a choice work of art, bearing the signature "J. Frost, 1879." A clever master of color is Jack (if only a few brief years of acquaintance with this really great artist will admit of such familiarity). How he has painted the maple, chestnut and ash trees! The bold touches of purple and yellow, the handling of the browns and greens defy all theory. Such colors cannot be mixed by rule. Then, too, the backgrounds of naturally cold, bluish-gray stone are treated in such a way that they seem aglow with autumn lustre. I date my letter from Caldwell, but it is the failure of a trifling bit of enterprise that brings me to this charming spot, where only wedding parties flee at this season of the year to escape from the world. Warrensburg, as I shall soon explain, was my objective point, but having completed my work there I discovered that by a brisk drive I would be able to reach Caldwell by two o'clock, where I could catch the afternoon steamer down the lake and go on to Essex county to-night. The scheme was well planned, for I would lose a whole day by returning to Saratoga and thence going north by way of Whitehall. There was only one obstacle to complete success—and the possibility of this the pleasant weather made me forget—namely, that I found on arriving here that the afternoon boat had been taken off for the season.

So here I am fast until to-morrow at nine o'clock, when I shall venture to make the journey down the lake, which, I am told, is very charming now. But I am not here to study nature. Borrowing Dr. Johnson's idea, I have come to look at men and women. I have already told you how the paupers of the southern, central and western parts of the State are cared for; let us see how the same class of humanity fares among the hills and the forests bordering on the great wilderness known as "John Brown's Tract." Leaving the train on the Adirondack Railway at the station of Thurman a stage of indifferent comfort carried me up the valley of the Schroon River to Warrensburg, a busy village, well supplied with water power. It divides the honors of the county government with Caldwell. Caldwell has the court house, but Warrensburg generally contrives to furnish the majority of the lawyers, petit jurors and—criminals. In this way are all jealousies prevented, and, as neither town has a railway of its own, there is likely to be harmony.

DIVIDING THE HONORS.

As Caldwell has the jail it is only fair that Warrensburg should have the almshouse. So she has it; and a bad enough place it is, too, sufficiently repulsive and inadequate to repel the advances of any person who calmly contemplates entering the ranks of the paupers. Just as soon as arrangements could be completed and a carriage secured your correspondent was on his way to the Warren county poorhouse. The road, soon after leaving Warrensburg, attacks the hills by a truly military system of gradual approach. The valley has become so narrow that the small farms follow each other in single file, flanked by the abrupt, tree-covered heights.

At the end of two miles a square stone building, two stories in height, with its gable end to the road, is seen. There is no yard in front, and no expense or trouble has been wasted on external or interior decoration. The following diagram conveys an accurate idea of the ground plan:—



PARAGRAPHS OF POVERTY.

The yard is reached by driving under a covered way leading beneath the new extension to the stone house facing the road. The keeper, E. G. Hall, has been passed on the road, for he has just set out for Warrensburg. Application at the "office"—in which preparations for preserving berries of some kind for the keeper's family is in progress—procures a guide about the place in the person of a wretched little cripple named Willie Eastman. He has been eleven years in the establishment, and, although he has attained the age of twenty-one, he is not more than a yard high. He conducted me to the second story of the stone structure, and, one after another, we entered the typical rooms which I have before described at Jacksonville and Schoharie. The air was stifling in many instances, no regard whatever being paid to ventilation.

In one room a young woman was found feeding a very old man with a spoon. He was furnished corned beef and cabbage, and it is only just to say that the meat was sweet and wholesome. I am disposed to be rather satisfied than otherwise with the appearance of the rooms in the main building, although there are numberless details that might be bettered. At least they are good compared with what are seen later. I detect a steep stairway leading up to the attic, and although my guide threatens to leave me I push right up. It leads to a close entry which gives access to an apartment where are accommodations for seven or eight persons. The most objectionable feature is the door, which opens in such a way that in case of any rush, such, for instance, as would occur if the premises were on fire, all means of exit would be choked up.

We descended into the basement of the stone building. Here was the kitchen, and it seemed swarming with women. The place was filthy; grease and mud were smeared over everything encountered, even to the clothes of the occupants. I am told that six or seven old women sleep nightly in this kitchen, or in some room adjoining, to which I could not find a means of access. The tables on which the meals were served and the rusty tin pans in which they are doled out were shown me, but they have destroyed my appetite for days to come. It was proposed to show me the bread—but no—I knew that trick by heart.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

Now follows the really sad features of the place, and I am glad to say that some efforts are making to effect an improvement. At present, however, the apartments in which the old women are housed are disgraceful. As the diagram indicates, a long frame shed is joined to the stone structure. The part nearest the main building is used for a woodhouse and the loft between the ceiling and roof is occupied by about sixteen women and several children. The women are mostly very old, but a few girls young in years and misery are there. Three children were found in the room at the extreme end of the loft—one an infant and the two others bright, intelligent little things who came up bravely to have their tiny hands shaken by the visitor. In this foul atmosphere, among these scenes of vice, misery and disease were found these two bright specimens of thoughtless childhood, unsuspicious of anything better, to whom happiness was unknown. Sick and hungry though they looked, they laughed and cried like the joyous children of our New York homes. How they deserved to be pitied! How I wondered that there were not to be found in Warren county childless hearths to which such charming babies would come as angels of joy. I recalled the tale of "Silas Marner, Weaver of Raveloe," and doubted if the young maidens and old men of the Adirondack hills had pondered the moral it contains. While the children were prattling to me, idiotic crones by their side were leering at them; an old woman was cursing and groaning; and a blear-eyed girl, evidently of most erratic habits, was laughing and telling vulgar stories. In the centre of this strange group stood these two children—strangers from the kingdom of heaven—and not a man or woman in all Warren county to pity or to rescue them! Not a toy on the floor; not a story or picture book—no home, past or future.

THE PAUPER FUNERAL.

My driver was the undertaker's assistant—the Jehu of the village hearse. He was susceptible to approachment on the subject of funerals, and finally had something to say regarding the burial of the pauper dead. As we drove away from the Almshouse toward the shores of Lake George he pointed out the mortuary plot, situated among a patch of garden truck across the road from the buildings. He explained the formalities gone through in a succinct and connected manner, which, divested of certain disagreeable technicalities of his office and work, I think best to reproduce in his own words:—

"Yes, that's where we burries 'em. I've heard that it used to be the custom to stick 'em away in the ground in a mere box, knocked together by the paupers themselves for their dead companion. That's changed now, however. We git an order from the Superintendent of the Poor or the keeper for a reg'lar coffin. Course 't'aint much of an affair, but it's a coffin for all that. It's quite as good as the boxes your people in New York stow their paupers away in, I've been told. Now, we—that's my boss—only git four dollars for the coffin and one dollar for the box. Why, it's real luxury to be buried in a box. Many's the one of our poor people hereabouts, outside the Almshouse, who can't afford the comforts of a box in addition to the coffin. But, regarding the paupers, as you say, an' how they are put away.

HOW THEY DIE.

"As to the dying, I don't know much about that because, you see, I haven't been here; but the boss who has says that they drop off quite natural like. They don't usually have much to say; don't make no scene, but let things take their course. Do they ever have a priest or minister by their side? Sometimes. You see, if the man or woman as is dying has been well known it generally gets noised 'round the village. Some of the farmers comin' into town may stop at 'the stone house' and ask, 'Anything new to-day?' and the person as is asked may say, 'Old Uncle Jack's dying' or 'Old Granny Brown's dead.' Then the farmer he'll want to know if it's 'Old Uncle Jack that used to work in the sawmill,' or, maybe, 'old Granny Brown that used to live down on the pike and had a son that went off to Mexico.' Findin' that he knows the dyin' or dead, he'll speak of it as soon as he gets out of his wagon at the hotel or the post office, and in a short bit the news 's all over town.

RECOLLECTIONS OF FORMER DAYS.

"If 'tis near about noon the news spreads ever so much quicker; for, you know, when the men go home to dinner they are very liable to mention it to the women folks, and then the story's all out. It's soon discovered that the dyin' person was once a member of 'the brick church,' or the sewin' circle of Fifty-odd, or the temperance society. Some good woman goes for the parson, and it often happens that quite a good many people go back in the farmer's wagon to the Almshouse. Do I ever see any of the paupers grieving,—cryin', I suppose you mean,—for their dead companion? No, I can't say as ever I did. Yes, I did, onct. It was a young girl—a mere child—who had followed her father to 'the stone house,' because he was blind and needed her care. She seemed awful sorry he was gone; but I don't see why she should, for she was soon put out in a family to live and was a great deal better off. The arrangements for the funeral are agreed upon as soon as the pauper dies. There isn't any regular time to wait. The keeper just sends a message to us, 'Billy Smith dead; 5 feet 4 inches by 26 inches.' We know exactly what it means, and, if nothin' else's crowdin' us, go right to work sawin' up the boards. If we are out of wood, I go down to the sawmill and buy it.

A MERE MATTER OF TRADE.

"Well, to make my story shorter, when we are ready we drive out to the Almshouse. How are the dead dressed for burial? Most generally the women are shrouded. Once in a while—and this's very curious—the person who's dead will have a middlin' good coat or dress which they've been saving up for years to be laid away in. It's natural enough, you think? No, I tell you it's contrary to every principle of pauperism. If the service is going to be read and there's no parson, the keeper or some one of the paupers reads it. Oftenest there isn't anything said or done after we get there. We just screw down the lid and call on three or four of the stoutest men to take holt. We carry the body across the road, lower it into the grave and leave the paupers to fill it up. It is rarely that the inmates come nearer than the fence. Probably they don't like to think of the time when they'll go the same road. They don't 'pear to care much for each other. You would think that, herded together as they are, they'd get to liking one another; but it isn't so, as I said before—— There's Lake George ahead. You can see it through that gap in the trees a little to the right." And here this strange narration ended.

SAD, SOMBRE THOUGHTS.

And as I sit here to-night in a front room of the Fort William Henry House I cannot help thinking that if the great hotel proprietors would give a portion of the large sum which they annually contribute to regattas in direct charity for the poor of their county they would serve God quite as well and man a great deal better. Before me stretches away to the northward the waters of Lake George, a sheet of burnished silver in the moonlight, calling forth all the pathos of one's nature, but the scene is not for me. My mind wanders back over these hills, through the dark ravines I have traversed to-day, to the solemn solitude which envelops as in a cloud the suspended animation of human misery. It is now midnight, but I cannot forget the awakening—the approach of to-morrow—another day's journey for eighty men and women toward oblivion.

A PLEA FOR THE INSANE.

NEW YORK, Oct. 20, 1879.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—

Will not you, who have already done so much to deserve the thanks of the oppressed, espouse the cause of that most unfortunate class of persons, the insane, so that we may have no repetition of the soul-harrowing picture presented by your reporter? Will you not, for one thing, suggest to your readers to save their old pamphlets and newspapers to send to the asylums, so that the poor creatures who have intelligence enough to read (and there are hundreds) may have something beside their own terrible fate to think upon. I have spent a great deal of time among the insane, and believe that a book, a picture or a newspaper will sometimes furnish a clew that will lead the mind out of the labyrinth of fearful fancies that harass the poor creatures. Another thing:—Every ward of an insane asylum should be under the superintendence of a refined and educated lady or gentleman, who could direct such intelligences as show any signs of awakening, in the right direction. A room should be furnished with books, pictures and music, and some one to amuse, play and sing for the patients at their pleasure. There is no such provision at present. The attendants common to such establishments are more noted for their muscular than for their intellectual development. Both are necessary: but let the muscle prepare the meals, do the work and exercise the restraint, which last, unfortunately, is often needed. A refined, intellectual, sympathetic person should be provided to minister to that most exquisite organization, the human mind, when that mind is diseased. And such a person is seldom seen in an insane asylum. If you could only bring about this reform (and you are all powerful), do it for God's sake.

I have seen in an asylum the nurses, coarse, uncultured women, gathered in a group about a lady patient, amusing themselves by goading her on to blaspheme and use the most fearful language (which, you know, is not an uncommon thing with the most refined person if insane). This could not have occurred had a lady been in charge of the hall. On another occasion I saw a male attendant who had brought up the clean linen for the hall stand and bandy words with a lady patient who had in her insanity addressed him. He should have gone quietly away, and would have done so if there had been a lady in charge. The needless exercise of authority (which all ignorant persons love to exercise), much carelessness and cruelty would be prevented if only this little step in the right direction could be taken. If you could see the patients as I have seen them walking hour after hour, day after day, without a soul to speak to or a picture or a book to look at, you would see the necessity of some reform. In the name of humanity help these poor, helpless creatures, abolish the cribs and other abominations, and earn the everlasting gratitude of the whole human race.

C. T.

WRECK OF THE URANIA.

The ship Urania, Captain Jorgensen, left Quebec on October 1 with a cargo of lumber, bound for London. From the 1st to the 10th of October she enjoyed fair weather, but afterward experienced heavy gales from several quarters. On the 11th the vessel was working heavily all day, and at six A. M. on the 12th sprang aleak forward. The water was gaining continually and the captain ordered all hands to the pumps. The windmill pump of the ship worked all right, but the hand pumps were soon choked. About five o'clock in the afternoon, after the crew had been working all day with little effect, they went to the captain and asked that they be allowed to cut away the rigging, as the ship was then lying on her beam ends and a gale was blowing from the southward. He acceded to their request, and all the topmasts were cut away. At eight o'clock on the morning of the 13th there was thirteen feet of water in the hold. About three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day a steamer hove in sight steering toward the disabled vessel. The crew then went again to the captain and asked him to abandon the ship, as the water was gaining continually, and all their efforts to save her were of no avail. The vessel was at that time in latitude 47 deg. 52 min. and longitude 41 deg. 54 min. east, off the Banks of Newfoundland. As there seemed no prospect of saving her and as the lives of all on board were in imminent danger Captain Jorgensen and boats were put out for the steamer, which proved to be the Otranto, Captain Jenkins, bound from Hull to New York. Captain Jorgensen and his eighteen men were kindly received on board the steamer and brought safely to this port yesterday. After getting on board Captain Jenkins asked Captain Jorgensen if he had set his ship on fire before leaving, and on the latter responding in the negative he ordered his mate to go on board and set fire to her, as she was in the track of the ocean steamers, and her wreck, if floating, would be dangerous to navigation. The order was executed, and after burning brightly for a few hours, at ten o'clock at night the last of the ship Urania and her cargo sank out of sight. The Urania was a full-rigged ship, of 1,097 tons burden, built in St. Mary's, Nova Scotia, in 1866, and owned by Jorgensen & Knudsen, of Drammer, Norway. She was insured for about $35,000. The agent of the vessel in New York is Jas Dull Jorgensen, of the firm of Slocovich & Co.