Weekly National Intelligencer.

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Weekly National Intelligencer.

BY GALES & SEATON.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 1864.

SOBER THOUGHTS FOR THE TIMES.

Cicero, in many of his letters and speeches immediately preceding the overthrow of the Republic, dwells with honest indignation, not unmingled with despondency, on the luxury and frivolous amusements to which the people suffered themselves to be addicted while the State was convulsed by civil war and actually in the throes of dissolution. Instead of practising the virtues of self-denial and of grappling with the stern difficulties of the time in which they lived, they sought diversion in the cares of business or in the dissipations of Roman life. Magnificent palaces were reared while the foundations of the State were rocking beneath the blasts of contending factions, and costly fish-ponds expanded in their dimensions until they vied with the Lucrine lake. Such was the optimism and such the insensibility of the people that he writes of men who deemed themselves most happy if they "got tame fish to come out at their call and eat out of their hands—fools enough," he adds, "to believe that if the Constitution were destroyed their fish ponds would be safe." There was no adequate perception of the duties demanded by the crisis, and no attempt to perform them by the great mass of the ruling population who gave a tone to Roman society.

It will not be denied that we are living in times fraught with the most solemn destinies that ever awaited any people—embroiled as we are in a civil war of unexampled magnitude, whether regard be had to the extent of territory covered by it or the number of the forces brought into fratricidal conflict. At the same time the foundations of our civil institutions are destroyed in eleven States by their unconstitutional secession from the Federal Union, until the lacerations of the body politic are no less ghastly than the wounds and scars left by the material strife of the war.

And yet, amid all these evils which call for humiliation, or at least for soberness and recollection of thought, what do we witness? The increase and spread of luxury and extravagance on every hand. A spirit of speculation pervades all classes of people. The inflation of the currency lends itself to the delusions of those who make haste to get rich. Our great cities, if we may trust the representations which reach us, are filled with the "booths of Vanity Fair." All forms of popular amusement are patronized beyond precedent. The very winter quarters of our armies are invaded by the train of Pleasure, and "the sound of revelry by night" in ball and dance preludes the opening of the spring campaign!

While England was engaged in the war of the Crimea we read that such was the solemnity inspired by public calamity, and so keenly felt were the private griefs that darkened the hearthstones of English homes, that there was a general suspension of the ordinary forms in which social gayety finds expression. Are we living in a less solemn time, or are we less sensible to the proprieties, not to say the duties, enjoined by the judgments of God when they take the most awful shape in which they can visit any people? If frivolity and thoughtlessness, if greed and luxury are at all times the reproach of a people, what shall we think of dissipation and extravagance and corruption holding high carnival in a time of civil war? If no higher motives can arrest the progress of this degeneracy than such as appeal to the passions of war, it is sufficient to say that no war can be successfully waged which does not beget in its prosecutors the hardy virtues of sacrifice and devotion, which Heaven must frown on a cause which identifies itself with social and political dissolution.

THE BOUNTIES AND THE DRAFT.

The Senate yesterday unanimously passed the joint resolution extending the time for paying Government bounties till the 1st of April. The Secretary of War urged this action on the grounds that great exertions are being made by the different States to avoid the draft, the people coming forward rapidly and volunteering to fill up the quotas; that Generals Burnside and Hancock, and the Governors of several States recommend the passage of such a resolution; and that the measure would be wise and judicious, as its adoption would promote the public welfare more effectually than any other measure. The bill, to become a law, now only awaits the signature of the President, which it will doubtless promptly receive. This will virtually suspend the draft, for the commencement of which on Thursday next, the 10th instant, orders have been issued by the Provost Marshal General.

THE REVENUE BILL.

A third Conference Committee was appointed yesterday by both Houses of Congress to reconcile, if possible, the difference existing between them on the "whiskey clause" in the revenue bill. Like its predecessors, the committee failed to agree. A motion was subsequently made in the House that that body recede from its amendment taxing liquors on hand, which proposition was negatived by a vote of 71 to 61. By this decision the entire bill will be lost unless a pending motion to reconsider prevail. If the present bill falls through, it is not improbable that some time will elapse before a new one can be presented.

IMPORTANT LEGAL DECISION.

We to-day print in another part of our paper an able and interesting opinion of the Court of Claims, delivered by Judge WILMOT on Wednesday last, in the case of Wm. S. Grant vs. The United States, being a claim brought against the Government for the recovery of the value of certain property destroyed by the United States troops in the Territory of Arizona, in the month of July, 1861, in order to prevent said property from falling into the hands of the insurgents.

It will be seen that under these circumstances a majority of the Court hold that the claimant is entitled to just compensation as for private property taken for public uses, and they have accordingly ordered a judgment to be entered in favor of the claimant for such sum as they deem, after a consideration of the several items of the claim, adequate to fulfil the requirements of public justice in the premises.

But, in coming to a decision on the merits of this particular case, the Court was called to discuss and to state certain great fundamental principles pertaining to the very essence of the social compact in the matter of those relations which exist between a Government and its subjects in all cases where the former, by its sovereign legislative authority or by the administrative acts of its authorized agents, assumes to divest the latter of private property for the public good or the public safety. It will be seen that the limitations which hedge about the exercise of this right on the part of the Government or its agents, as also the limitations which attend the right of the citizen to look to his Government for reimbursement in the case of property taken or destroyed by public agents assuming to act for the public good under an imperious necessity, are stated by the Court with great clearness and force, and are founded on an analysis of fundamental principles of public polity, recognised in the structure of all organized Governments, and expressly embodied in the Constitution of the United States.

But while these principles belong to the very nature of governmental prerogative on the one hand and of private right on the other, it is plain that their application to specific cases must depend entirely on the circumstances under which the cases arise. It is only by a full knowledge and a careful consideration of these circumstances that we can discern in any given case whether it is one which fulfils the conditions required to establish the just responsibility of the Government in the premises, or whether it is one in which, the deprivation of private property having been made without due authority or without just presumption of public necessity, there is no valid claim against the Government—the proper resort of the injured party in such a case being an action for damages brought against the trespasser as an individual, acting in his own wrong and not in virtue of his official character.

And in this view we see the necessity of subjecting all such claims to the scrutiny of an investigation conducted with the appliances of a judicial tribunal for the purpose of eliciting all the facts in any case and of sifting the evidence by which the facts are substantiated. Without such an inquiry the Government is perpetually in danger of doing something more or something less than justice, either of which tends to defeat the great end for which all Governments are formed. In a Government like ours, which purports to be a Government *by* the people *for* the people, every possible guard should be set up against the allowance of doubtful or fraudulent claims, and at the same time it is equally consonant with the most primary notions of public justice and private right that there should be in every State a tribunal before which the rightful claims of the citizen may be established against the Government.

Such we understand to be the function of the Court of Claims, and, unless we misconceive the tenor of the learned opinion we print to-day, we think it will be admitted by all that it has correctly apprehended the theory of its existence, by bringing to the discharge of its trust in the delicate matter we have indicated a clear perception of what is due to the welfare of the Government and what is due to the rights of the citizen.

While referring to this Court we may say that we understand it has nearly concluded the call of the Trial Docket for the present term. Such of the cases as were ready for trial the Court has heard, and all others have been either continued to the next October term for cause shown, or stricken from the Docket and the petitions dismissed. The rules of the Court provide that "all cases in which demurrers have been entered, or which have been traversed, or to which a special defence has been interposed by the Solicitor, *prior to the first day of July in each year*, shall be entered on the law or trial docket respectively *for the succeeding October term*, and shall be disposed of in their order unless continued for cause shown," and the conditions of this rule have been fulfilled by the Court as regards the calendar for the current term. Accordingly Mr. GIBSON, the Solicitor for the United States, has represented to the Court that, having regard equally to a strict observance of the rules prescribed by the Court, and to the present financial needs of the country, he will resist the trial of any case outside of the limits within which it would naturally fall in the order of its entry on the General Docket. Any other course, he contends, will lead to confusion in the trial of cases and tend to relax the diligence of counsel in preparing their suits for argument. He holds, moreover, that the Court, having already given two calls of the Trial Docket and thus shown its readiness to hear and decide all the cases thereon, is under no obligation to expedite the hearing of such cases or of any cases out of the order of time to which they are remitted by the rules. The duty to hear and decide claims against the Government does not call it, especially in view of the present condition of the country, to anticipate the orderly processes of its calendar for the purpose of establishing such claims at an earlier date than claimants are entitled by the rules to expect. The whole subject is under the advisement of the Court, and its decision will be reached at an early day.

CONGRESSIONAL.

PROCEEDINGS IN THE HOUSE.

Extracts from Our Daily Reports.

BUREAU FOR FREEDMEN'S AFFAIRS.

The largest portion of the day's sitting was given to the consideration of the bill to establish a Bureau for Freedmen's Affairs.

Mr. KNAPP, of Illinois, made a speech in opposition to the bill. He said that the reasons urged in its favor were that the negroes had been freed by the Executive power; that no power on earth could re-enslave them; that they must not be permitted to starve; and that, with law or without law, the Government must take care of them. This class of people had been denominated "the children of the Government." He argued at length against this theory, desiring to know when this parental system would end. Why should the Government assume this guardianship at all? Whence comes the power? He argued that there was no power under the Constitution and none even under the war power to authorize such a measure. Why should not the Government as well undertake to support the widows and orphans made by the war? If you enroll the negro in the army do by him as you did by others. Give him his pay and bounty and let him take care of his family himself. Another objection to it was that it created a large body of officers in the rebel States, and nothing threatened the extinction of the republican system of government so much as the creation of a large body of dependents upon the Government. If, then, four millions have the ability to maintain themselves, if they can show that they are in every respect men, they will maintain their position as freemen. But all history teaches that if they cannot show this the weak race must always bend and go down before the stronger.

Mr. PRICE, of Iowa, advocated the bill. It opened, he said, a new field for legislation. In this trial hour of the Republic, surrounded by facts and circumstances such as our fathers dreamed not of, such as never before existed, we were without precedents to guide us. This wicked rebellion, forced upon us against our will, had upheaved and unsettled the foundations of society and thrown its component parts into chaotic wildness, and forced upon us the necessity of reorganization. This requires action. The bill proposes simply an organization to direct in a proper channel the physical, bone-and-sinew energy of the black race who have been made free by the fortunes of war. Only this, and nothing more. The stock in trade of these people consists almost entirely of muscle. Their manner of life heretofore has not been favorable to mental development and a business education. They must have assistance now that their stock in trade may be made available; and it would seem as though the only question to be settled is not whether it shall be done, but how shall it be done. He argued that the negro would not disappear as the Indian, and said that, while the latter was roving, unsettled and vicious, the former was domestic and copied the virtues as well as the vices of the white man. The proposed bureau, he said, is to be established because the abolition of slavery has set free thousands of persons who, having heretofore labored for others, must now be directed how they are to help themselves.

Mr. PENDLETON, of Ohio, argued that Congress had no power to pass this bill. Its friends had given up this, the strongest point in the case. If, he said, there is no constitutional power to pass this bill, the fact that it costs nothing makes the infraction none the less flagrant. If there is constitutional power to pass it, then there is power to incur all the expense necessary to carry it into full operation. The effect of the proclamation of emancipation, or its authority, have nothing to do with this question. I agree with the gentleman from Maryland, (Mr. DAVIS,) that no lawyer whose opinion is worth having thinks it worth more than the paper on which it is written. The power of the Federal armies may be brought into requisition to give it validity. Test oaths, unconstitutional in themselves and extorted as a condition precedent to the enjoyment of any civil right, may give it some sort of effect; but of itself it is utterly void; it is illegal; it is of no authority; it ought never to have been issued; it ought to be immediately recalled; it has never freed a single slave; it never will. But that is not the question here. It is not even remotely involved.

We have within our lines now five hundred thousand men, women, and children who are actually freed by the chances of war. The number increases daily. They consist of slaves who have run away from their masters, and slaves who have been made captives by our troops. They are all free, actually free, legally free, and will never be re-enslaved. It is in behalf of these that appeals have been made to us. We are told they are poor; without food, except Government rations; without clothes, except Government clothing; without houses or homes, and without knowledge enough to take care of themselves and provide for their families. We are not told, but it is frequently alluded to in the various reports of those who have looked into this subject, that they long for the repose and quiet of their old homes and the care of their masters; that freedom has not been to them the promised boon; that even thus soon it has proven itself to be a life of torture, ending only in certain and speedy death.

We have not the power to pass the bill; if we had its exercise would destroy our best hopes for a restoration of our Union. My objections to the bill are radical. I will only pause to point you to the officers created by it: the commissioner, eight or ten assistant commissioners, and needful superintendents and clerks to carry into operation this complicated machine wherever it may once get a foothold. I will only suggest the enormous powers you give to one or another of these officers. They shall have power to decide all questions arising under any law heretofore or hereafter to be enacted concerning persons of African descent, whether they have ever been slaves or not, and all persons who have or may become free, or in any wise entitled to their freedom. They shall have power to assign to the freedmen all lands which have been at any time abandoned, even though they may now be occupied by their owners; and to advise and aid them, organize and direct their labor, adjust their wages, and arbitrate their quarrels. Extraordinary powers indeed! Were such ever entrusted to man and not abused? Nor will I remind gentlemen that this very difficulty was frequently foretold, that the incapacity of the negro to take care of himself was often alluded to, and that you always ridiculed the idea. Nevertheless these questions are now here for solution, and the care of the negro bids fair to be as troublesome in the future as his emancipation has been in the past.

But I pass to another consideration. I am one of those who still hope for a restoration of the Union; not the unity of our territory only, but the maintenance of the Union under the Constitution. I hope that we may maintain the integrity of our system of government; the system of confederation; the system whose foundation is State rights. The Constitution is a compact of government made by sovereign States, which assigns to the Federal Government its powers and duties, and reserves all others to the States and people. Its foundation is that all power not granted is reserved; all duties not specifically enjoined are forbidden. The duties of the Federal Government are few and simple. They relate to foreign affairs, and matters of general and universal interest. Its powers were intended to be limited also. To the States were committed all matters of local concern, and the care of the rights and liberties of all their citizens. Their reserved powers were consequently very large. Our fathers thought this the very hidden secret of their system. They thought they had discovered in this the philosopher's stone of government. And so they had. It was the beauty and the pride of our system. It secured to us liberty; it secured to us prosperity; it secured to us self-government beyond the example of any people. In an evil hour it was abandoned. Since then we have had war, and misery, and tyranny; but I forbear.

Build up the system proposed by this bill, and you will have established in the heart of each State that which will prove the very strongest obstacle against its return to the Union on the basis of the old Constitution. Establish it firmly, and you will have in each State a settlement of negroes, superintended by your officers, more difficult of management either by the Federal Government or by the State than were the Indians in Georgia, which will either draw the Federal Government into the performance of a State duty or will harass and annoy and embitter the officers of the State in the performance of it themselves.

I have said nothing, sir, of State institutions. They may perish. They are but for a time. Their duration depends upon many causes. But State rights belong to our Government, are an essential part of its system, are essential to liberty itself. I am pledged to maintain them—pledged by every oath in which I swore to support the Constitution of the United States. That oath I intend to keep sacredly to the end; and because I intend to keep it, I am constrained thus to oppose this bill.

Mr. WADSWORTH, of Kentucky, delivered a brief speech (being limited to ten minutes) against the bill.

The bill proposes (he said) to confide to a bureau in the War Office "all questions" "touching the general superintendence, disposition, and direction of all persons being freedmen of African descent who are or shall become free by virtue of any proclamation, law, or military order issued, enacted, or promulgated during the present rebellion, or by virtue of any act of emancipation which shall be enacted by any State for the freedom of persons held to service or labor within such State." All "military and civil officers charged with the execution of any law of the United States, or of any military order" looking to the freedom of negroes are to report to this bureau "under such regulations and in such form" as may be prescribed by the Secretary of War. The bureau is to establish and enforce regulations for the "judicious treatment and disposition" of all such free persons for their protection, and the protection of "the Government of the United States," and for determining "their respective rights and interests." It assumes to deliver over these free persons, inhabitants of the several States, to this bureau, with its commissioner, superintendents, clerks, agents, &c. in number so many as the commissioner shall deem necessary. These superintendents are to assign them lands, "to advise and aid them," "to organize and direct their labor," fix "their wages," collect and account for same "to the commissioners," not to these free persons. And these assistant commissioners and superintendents are to have power to adjudicate and settle "all difficulties arising between freedmen, except when resort to a provost judge or other legal tribunal becomes necessary."

Such and so monstrous are the pretensions of this bill. It aims at swallowing up people and States. Where does this Federal Legislature get the power to take possession body and soul of the free people of the States, and put over them overseers, clerks, and a raft of mercenary masters to fix their wages, direct their labor, adjudicate their rights without judge or jury, and regulate their whole social and political life by orders from the War Office. Can Congress thus fetter free men? If it has this power over one freeman it has it over all; if over a free negro then over a free white man. The usurpation is flagrant.

The bill also embraces all who may by any State action become free hereafter. They too are to be taken into this class of freedmen, and to be placed under the control of Congress. They are to be put under a bureau which is to be controlled by the War Office, to be kept under the control of those who under the action of Congress are to have charge of them as completely as if they were slaves still. The bill proposes to remove from the Loyal Slave States all the power to control a considerable portion of their own citizens, and transfers them to this bureau. It is unconstitutional; it overthrows our form of government, and must let in a flood of mischief. The result will inevitably be a conflict between the authorities of the States affected by this usurped power and the Federal authorities. Is it to be supposed that the people of Kentucky can surrender to Congress the control of two hundred and twenty-five thousand of her people? No, sir, they will never do it to this or any other Congress so long as they are worthy of the people from whom they are descended.

Is it to be supposed that the State of Maryland, who it is said is about to emancipate her seventy or eighty thousand slaves, will consent to put them under the control of a bureau of the War Office, to be "disposed of," to be hired out, to have their suits arbitrated upon and all their motions regulated, all their rights prescribed, all their conduct controlled, by these petty pelting agents of the Secretary of War? Will the State of Maryland consent to have those who are to be *freemen* within her borders thus controlled? Will West Virginia or Delaware submit to it?

It is said that Missouri has adopted a system of prospective emancipation. Will she allow her one hundred thousand slaves when they become *free* to be placed under the control of this Federal bureau, to be placed at the disposal of the War Department with a bureau to direct their labor, to make contracts concerning their wages, to collect and disburse their earnings, arbitrate their difficulties, and take this monstrous control of her *free* citizens? Let no man believe it.

This bill attacks eleven States, eleven imperishable States in the Union; and which shall stay in the Union; eleven States, some of revolutionary renown, with Virginia at their head. They are, come weal or woe, now and forever in the Union, founded upon the rock of the Constitution; if the prayers and arms and blood of patriots can avail, the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. In every one of these States this bill enters to seize and fetter a large portion of the population, to subject them to the control of the Federal Congress. It is a usurpation of the right of the States to control their own free inhabitants and their slaves as well.

There are now elements at work it is said by which Arkansas is soon to resume her place as a sister in the Union, and yet under this bill she is to come back with a large portion of her people beyond her control. So with Louisiana and Tennessee. Three or four million in eleven States of the Union are by this bill to be placed in the hands of Congress to be managed and controlled in spite of the authorities of the States wherein they reside.

I ask gentlemen to look for a moment at the consequences of such a measure if it were possible to carry it out; but it will not be possible to carry it out. What State will ever permit Federal agents to manage a large portion of its people, to direct their labor, to make contracts for their wages, to collect their wages, and to arbitrate their suits? Freemen as they are claimed to be, what State will ever permit such a thing? These bureaucrats, these negro catchers, meddling with the inhabitants of States, would find their road a hard one to travel.

The bill is a dangerous assault upon the independence of the States. I have before me the resolutions of instruction of the State of Massachusetts to its delegation in the Convention that framed the Constitution. Who believes that noble State, in that noble era, would have ever gone into consultation with her sister States if any possibility had existed that her own domestic institutions and her own people were to be placed under the control of Federal power? Listen to the language of her bill of rights in 1780:

"The people of this Commonwealth have the sole and exclusive right of governing themselves as a free, sovereign, and independent State, and do, and forever hereafter shall, exercise and enjoy every power, jurisdiction, and right which is not, or may not hereafter be, by them *expressly* delegated to the United States of America in Congress assembled."

Have the people of Massachusetts the sole and exclusive right of governing themselves as a free people? When did they renounce it? This bill denies, tramples that sacred right under foot; her own offspring deny it, and do despite to her ancient spirit of freedom, for if they deny the right of Kentucky and Virginia to govern themselves they deny the right of all States wherever throughout the Union. It will give a large advantage to some sections of the country not embarrassed by this population to transfer the control of three or four million people from the States to Congress. I see no possible resurrection for the agricultural States in the South and West if the control of four million ignorant people be removed from those States to this Hall, to depend upon legislation which has its origin here for their future welfare. The policy which puts the control of three or four million men seated in Southern and Western States in the hands of the commercial and manufacturing parts of the country, thus removing them from the control of those among whom these dependent people must labor, live, and die, is big with the destruction of the agricultural States of the South and West.

Mr. ELIOT, of Massachusetts, the chairman of the committee which reported the bill, did not avail himself of the privilege accorded him under the rules of closing the debate. He said that there had been no such attack upon the provisions of the bill as would justify him in detaining the House at so late an hour as they would be kept if he should go on with the remarks which he had proposed to make. All the objections which had been made to the bill had been anticipated by himself and his colleagues upon the committee or by other gentlemen. He therefore waived his right to speak, in order that a vote might be taken upon the bill, upon which he had before demanded the previous question.

The previous question having been seconded, the House, after voting upon two or three minor propositions, took a vote on the bill with the following result:

YEAS—Messrs. Alley, Allison, Ames, Anderson, Arnold, John D. Baldwin, Baxter, Beaman, Blow, Boutwell, Boyd, Brandegee, Ambrose W. Clark, Cobb, Cole, Creswell, Dawes, Dixon, Donnelly, Driggs, Dumont, Eckley, Eliot, Farnsworth, Fenton, Frank, Garfield, Grinnell, Higby, Hooper, Hotchkiss, Asahel W. Hubbard, J. H. Hubbard, Jenckes, Julian, Kasson, Kelley, Francis W. Kellogg, Orlando Kellogg, Longyear, Lovejoy, Marvin, McClurg, Melndoe, Samuel F. Miller, Moorhead, Morrill, Daniel Morris, Amos Myers, Norton, Charles O'Neill, Perham, Pike, Pomeroy, Price, Alexander H. Rice, John H. Rice, Schenck, Shannon, Sloan, Smithers, Stevens, Thayer, Van Valkenburgh, William B. Washburn, Wilder, Wilson, Windom, and Woodbridge—69.

NAYS—Messrs. Ancona, Baily, Augustus C. Baldwin, Francis P. Blair, Jacob B. Blair, Brooks, James S. Brown, William G. Brown, Chanler, Clay, Coffroth, Cox, Dawson, Dennison, Eden, Eldridge, Finck, Ganson, Grider, Griswold, Hale, Hall, Harding, Harrington, Charles M. Harris, Herrick, Holman, Hutchins, Kalbfleisch, Kernan, King, Knapp, Law, Long, Mallory, McAllister, McBride, McDowell, McKinney, Middleton, William H. Miller, Morrison, Nelson, Noble, Pendleton, Radford, Samuel J. Randall, Rogers, Ross, Scott, Stebbins, John B. Steele, William G. Steele, Stiles, Strouse, Stuart, Sweat, Thomas, Tracy, Voorhees, Wadsworth, Webster, Whaley, Chilton A. White, Joseph W. White, Williams, and Winfield—67.

So the bill was passed, and the House adjourned.

PRIVATE LOSSES BY THE REBELLION.

The bill to remove from the jurisdiction of the Court of Claims cases arising out of the destruction of property by the army and navy of the United States whilst engaged in suppressing this rebellion was taken up.

Mr. THOMAS, of Maryland, said this was a question of vital importance to the Border States. The Court of Claims had signified informally their intention to take cognizance of these cases. He proposed an amendment to take cognizance in the way indicated of two kinds of cases: first, all those where officers of the army had taken property without giving the usual certificate; and, secondly, that class growing out of the depredations of soldiers in the Border States, and appropriation made by officers of private property. He earnestly hoped that the House would not agree to remove the jurisdiction of these cases from one tribunal without providing another.

Mr. WILSON argued that the Treasury could not bear the burden sought to be put upon it. He mentioned a case where a claim of $30,000 had been made for the loss of slaves, and caused a letter to be read from the Solicitor of the Treasury, protesting against having the Treasury saddled with the immense burden that would be thrown upon it if these cases should be acted on during the war.

Mr. THOMAS spoke of the letter of the Solicitor as clamorous and in bad taste. His amendment was only the copy of one which had received the assent of the Committee of Claims, and passed the Senate last session. He did not believe that it would impose an unbearable load on the Treasury, as he did not propose that all of these claims should be paid at once; but would the remote States which had not suffered from the actual presence of the war refuse to forego some of their claims that the Border States, which had suffered so much, should be relieved? The Secretary of War in his report had called attention to the reasonableness and justice of these claims, and the propriety of their adjustment, and he set the Secretary against the Solicitor.

Mr. SCHENCK offered an amendment providing that the Court of Claims should have jurisdiction in cases where contracts had been made for forage, &c., and certificates given in writing. He explained that it was just these cases should be attended to. Others were doubtless equally meritorious, but as yet were without evidence to support them, and they would have to wait until another session.

Mr. BOUTWELL opposed the amendment. It would be necessary during the existence of the war to restrict the expenses to the cost of its prosecution. At the beginning of the war he was at Cairo, and sixteen hundred claims were presented there, and if they were allowed to come in now they would break the Treasury.

Mr. THOMAS objected to Mr. SCHENCK'S amendment, and moved his amendment as a substitute therefor.

Mr. KING, of Missouri, sustained the amendment of Mr. THOMAS, and opposed that of Mr. SCHENCK. It was the fault of the military authorities that this legislation was necessary. All they asked was that testimony in these cases might be perpetuated if the claimants did not get their money for twenty-five years.

Mr. GRIDER, of Kentucky, enumerated the sufferings of the people of his State, and the necessity of affording them relief. They had been overrun by both the rebel and Federal armies, and their stock and property taken from them or destroyed. They intended to adhere to the old flag, and all he asked for them was simple justice.

Mr. WILSON said cases were pending in the Court of Claims for the payment of negroes lost by reason of the war.

Mr. BLAIR, of West Virginia, hoped some measure would come before the House that did not have the negro in it. He did not wonder that the representatives of New England could not appreciate this question, for their section was wallowing in wealth, while the Border States were desolated. His district was a barren waste, and sent nearly every man in it to the war. He thought it was time the Government decided whether relief was to be afforded or not.

Mr. WHALEY, of Virginia, sustained the position taken by his colleague, (Mr. BLAIR.)

The bill was recommitted to the Committee on the Judiciary.

REBEL ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE IN FLORIDA.

Correspondence of the Lake City (Fla.) Columbian.

CAMP BEAUREGARD, (FLA.) FEBRUARY 20, 1864.

The great battle of East Florida has been fought, and another glorious victory won by our gallant soldiery.

At an early hour this forenoon couriers arrived at district headquarters with the intelligence that the enemy, seven thousand strong, under command of Maj. Gen. Gillmore, had passed the village of Sanderson, en route for the interior of this State. No sooner was the intelligence communicated than a cavalry force, composed of detachments of the 4th Georgia, Col. Clinch; 2d Florida cavalry, Lieut Col. A. H. McCormick, and Scott's battalion, Maj. G. W. Scott, all under the command of Col. Carraway Smith, 2d Florida cavalry, proceeded forward with the view of ascertaining the strength and position of the enemy. The command of Col. Smith proceeded to a point near the Florida Central railroad, about eighteen miles east of Lake City, where they encountered the advance guard of the enemy. With a view of drawing him nearer to this point, whereby more advantageous position for our troops had been selected, Col. Smith skirmished slightly with the enemy, retiring towards this point in excellent order.

Finding that it was the design of the enemy to destroy the railroad upon his line of march, and to fortify himself at a point about five miles east of this place, Gen. Finegan ordered to the front the 64th Georgia regiment, Colonel Evans; 32d Georgia, Major Holland; 6th Georgia, Col. Lofton; 27th Georgia, Colonel Zachery; 1st Georgia regulars, Capt. Greaves; Bonseu's battalion, Major Boneau; 1st Florida special battalion, Lieut. Col. C. P. Hopkins; 6th Florida battalion, Major P. B. Bird; 28th Georgia, Major Crawford; 19th Georgia, Col. O'Neil; 23d Georgia, Lieut. Col. Huggins; Florida light artillery, Capt. Gamble; Chatham artillery, Capt. Wheaton; and Guerard's battery.

These brave and gallant men, under the command of Brig. Gen. A. H. Colquit, and Acting Brig. Gen. George P. Harrison, 32d Georgia, and Caraway Smith, 2d cavalry, all commanded by Brig. Gen. Joseph Finegan, advanced promptly, and with firm and steady step, to resist the advance of the enemy, who had determined to celebrate Washington's birthday in Lake City, and to avenge that place for the resistance offered a few days previously.

The entire force of the enemy was commanded by Major Gen. Gillmore; that on the field was under the immediate command of Major Gen. Seymour, who, as your readers will remember, was a captain under Major Anderson, at the time he surrendered Fort Sumter to Gen. Beauregard.

When within a proper distance of the enemy our artillery, under the command of Col. R. B. Thomas, opened a heavy and determined fire upon them. The artillery of the enemy responded briskly, but with little effect compared to that of ours. Very soon after the commencement of the artillery duel, heavy volleys of musketry were poured into the enemy's lines by our troops. Volley after volley reverberated through the air, with naught but the yells and shrieks of our victorious heroes to relieve its monotony.

The engagement lasted upwards of four hours, during about three of which the enemy contested inch by inch, very manfully, the advance of our troops. At length largely increased numbers, engaged in an unholy and unrighteous crusade, are compelled to succumb, and to flee before the superior prowess and chivalry of Southern arms and Southern hearts. The enemy was driven, in confusion and disorder, a long distance beyond the field of carnage, leaving, in their hasty flight, all their killed and nearly all their wounded.

The result of this glorious achievement of our troops may be summed up thus: The enemy's loss in killed, wounded, and prisoners is twenty-eight hundred, one stand of colors, two excellent Napoleon and three fine 3-inch rifle guns, fifteen hundred stand of arms, and a vast quantity of ordnance, quartermaster's, and commissary's stores. Our entire loss is about seventy-five killed and four hundred and fifty wounded.

THE LATEST REBEL ACCOUNTS.

The Richmond Whig of the 24 instant says:

"At last accounts from Florida the enemy had reached the protection of their gunboats at Jacksonville. Our cavalry were still pursuing, continually bringing in prisoners, and had got to within ten miles of Jacksonville. A great many wounded Yankees are at Lake City, some of them severely. About two hundred prisoners have been sent to Chattahoochee for present confinement. They admit being badly whipped, and confess that their army was greatly demoralized by the late battle.

"An officer informs the Savannah News that both armies were marching towards each other, in line of battle, and when each discovered the other they were not more than a mile apart. The battle immediately commenced, and for a time was severely contested. Several of the Yankee regiments fought with wire chambered muskets, and fired with great rapidity. The steady fire of our men soon thinned their ranks, and our troops captured a large number of their wire-chambered muskets."

STRENGTH OF THE REBELS.

A despatch dated at Lake City on the 24th ultimo states that the Confederate force did not exceed four thousand men, and that their loss in the fight was from seven to eight hundred. The Federal negro regiments, it is stated, withstood at a distance, the rebel fire, but when their lines advanced they broke in confusion.

On Sunday last President Murillo, well-known on account of his distinguished position in South America, embarked on board the United States steamer Glaucus, in New York harbor, for the purpose of being conveyed home.

The Boston Board of Trade propose to raise $1,700,000 to construct four first-class steamships to run between Boston and Liverpool.

A SUCCESSFUL REBEL EXPLOIT.

CAPTURE OF TWO STEAMERS.

A daring and successful expedition by a band of Confederates took place at an early hour on Saturday morning last. The scene of the expedition was Cherrystone Creek, Eastern Shore of Virginia, in Gen. Butler's department, and the facts, as stated in the Baltimore Sun, are as follows:

The steamer Iolas, Capt. Webster, and steam transport Titan were lying in the above-named creek, just off Cherrystone Point, about four o'clock last Saturday morning, when the officers and crew of both vessels were awakened from sleep to find themselves under arrest and their vessels in possession of armed men, who announced themselves as Confederates, and that they had seized the vessels in the name of the Confederate States of America. There was no alternative for the officers and crew but to surrender.

The Iolas is a medium sized steamer, and is owned by Capt. Webster, who has been engaged from time to time in collecting produce, &c. from the Eastern and Western Shore counties of Maryland and the Eastern Shore counties of Virginia, and carrying it to Fortress Monroe for the use of sutlers, and at intervals his steamer would be specially chartered for the use of the Government. Capt. Webster, of the Iolas, was compelled to give up one thousand dollars in money, besides other valuables. The engineer of the vessel informed the Confederates that it would take four hours for them to get up steam, and they concluded to bond the Iolas, which they did for $10,000. They released Capt. Webster and his crew, except three colored men, on parole.

The Confederates then put their canoes, three in number, on board the steamer Titan, and placed the officers and crew of that vessel, together with the three colored men from the Iolas, under surveillance, and proceeded up the bay into the Rappahannock river. Nothing of any consequence was taken from the Iolas. The Titan was loaded with commissary stores, and had put into Cherrystone Point on Friday night on account of stress of weather. The vessel was valued at $40,000 and the cargo at $50,000.

The most important part of the damage sustained from the expedition was from their destruction of the telegraph station at Cherrystone Point, and the destruction of the submarine telegraph cable running from that point to Fortress Monroe, and which was the only means of telegraphic communication between Fortress Monroe, Baltimore, and Washington. How far out from the point the cable is destroyed could not be ascertained, as a portion of the Confederates were at work at this destruction whilst the remainder were seizing the steamers. The light-house near Cherrystone Point was also thought to be destroyed by them, but this latter statement has received no official confirmation.

The Confederates numbered about thirty men, and were under the command of Capt. Fitzhugh and Capt. Taylor Wood, (nephew of General Zachary Taylor,) both of the Confederate navy. Gen. Lockwood received despatches from the Secretary of War, announcing the fact of the destruction of the submarine cable, and also that the work of repair would be at once commenced. It was also stated that several gunboats had left Fortress Monroe for the Rappahannock river, for the purpose of recapturing or destroying the steamer Titan. At a late hour last evening nothing had been heard from them. The scene where the above mentioned raid took place is now in Gen. Butler's department.

NEGRO RECRUITING IN MARYLAND.

The Baltimore American of last evening says:

"To-day Lieut. Col. Perkins is marching with a large detachment of the Nineteenth United States Colored Troops from Benedict towards Baltimore, with rations for twenty days, canvassing to the right and left through the heart of the Western Shore, piping up the road, lighting up the hill-tops with his camp-fires, permeating the by-ways with his detachments, and calling upon everybody to turn over every able-bodied slave to the Government in all that section of country upon the terms prescribed by act of Congress and act of the Legislature of Maryland.

"At the same time a similar detachment marches up the Baltimore and York Turnpike; another up the Reistertown Turnpike; another over towards the Delaware line; while recruiting stations at Ellicott's Mills, Frederick City, Hagerstown, Cumberland, and a dozen other places, are sending down recruits in squads which must soon fill up several regiments."

FROM NEW ORLEANS.

The steamship George Cromwell, from New Orleans, February 27, has arrived at New York.

The news by this arrival is unimportant. The election returns, up to the 27th, show a total vote of 10,271. Hahn's majority over Fellows was 3,962; over Flanders 4,535; over both 2,241. An attempt, originating with the opponents of Mr. Hahn, will, it is stated, be made to invalidate the election. Those having it in hand say they will carry the question through before all the judicial and executive authorities of the Government.

The New Orleans Times of the 26th says: "We have intelligence, through a naval officer who arrived yesterday from the fleet off Mobile, that Farragut commenced his attack on the forts at the mouth of the bay on Monday, and was still at the work on the succeeding afternoon."

Two negro soldiers, charged with the murder of a refugee while delivering himself up to our pickets, have been convicted in New Orleans and sentenced to be hung. They confessed their guilt.

THE REDUCED QUOTAS OF NEW-YORK.

The following table shows the changes in the 2d, 3d, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th Congressional districts of New York, which are the only ones affected by the reduction of the quota of that State:

Dis.	Quota, as originally fixed on call for 500,000 men.	Quota as now estimated under call of 500,000.	Reduction.
2d	5,056	3,337	1,719
3d	3,905	3,000	905
4th	7,192	3,060	4,132
5th	3,968	2,952	1,016
6th	5,520	2,660	2,860
7th	4,240	3,008	1,232
8th	5,935	3,950	1,985
9th	3,245	2,848	402
	39,061	24,810	
Reduction in New York and Brooklyn			14,251

WASHINGTON NEWS AND GOSSIP.

From Despatches to Northern Republican Journals.

A BLACK DELEGATION FROM LOUISIANA.

A delegation from New Orleans is here representing the free colored people of that city, with a view to secure their rights as citizens and voters at the hands of Congress. Their petition is signed by over a thousand names. In their interview with President Lincoln he declined to act upon their petition, taking the ground that, holding the restoration of the Union paramount to all other questions, he would do nothing that would hinder that consummation, or omit any thing that would accomplish it. He told them that, therefore, he did nothing in matters of this kind upon moral grounds, but solely upon political necessities. Their petition asking to become citizens and voters being placed solely on moral grounds did not furnish him with any inducement to accede to their wishes, but that he would do so whenever they could