Richmond Dispatch.

SATURDAY MORNING.....DEC. 28, 1861.

THE POWER OF BRAG.—With few exceptions, there never was a bully who was not a coward, nor a brag who did not prove as impotent in performance as he was obstreperous in promise. A man who cannot express himself upon the most common subjects except in the language of rantipole and exaggeration, gives the best evidence that he has neither dignity, strength of character, nor confidence in himself. It is useless to deny that Americans have always been famous for their preposterous devotion to superlatives. Their conversation is strewed all over with capitals and exclamation points. Their steamers beat all creation, their balloons rise higher, their diving bells sink deeper, their soldiers are the bravest, their business men the fastest, their cities the grandest, and their rural population the most virtuous in the world. Their Congressional orators throw Pitt, Fox, and Burke into the shade; their pulpit lights completely eclipse Massillon, Taylor, Hall, Summerfield; their General, old Scott, was "the great soldier of the age," an age in which Napoleon, Wellington, and a thousand other brilliant European Generals had lived, and in which Pellisier, Todleben, and the other distinguished names of the Crimea and of Italy, still lingered upon the stage.

It was, also, the "manifest destiny" of America to absorb all the rest of this Continent, and when it would not consent to be absorbed of its own volition, it was to be filibustered in by a process nearly akin in its moral features to highway robbery. Even Canada, Central America, and Cuba have each in turn felt in their pockets the affectionate fingers of a people who pronounced them simply the saints of the earth, the elect of God, but who were not above picking, and stealing, and murdering. Where Brother Jonathan derived his habits of brag and exaggeration, it is not easy to perceive. John Bull, whom he claims as his father, is proverbially proud; but pride is a different quality from vanity, which is Jonathan's besetting sin, and a proud people are too conscious of their strength to be always parading it in words. In England we rarely see the language of exaggeration either in the press, the pulpit, or Parliament. The grandest events throw no one into hysterics, and statesmen, debaters, writers, and soldiers, each of whom, if a Yankee Doodle, would be described in the United States as the most unrivalled of his class that ever lived, are noticed there in terms of discriminating criticism, and with a moderation of eulogy, which prove that the object of their commendation has not exhausted all the brains in the kingdom.

The present war has developed Yankee Doodle's habit of exaggeration to the most enormous dimensions. The world has never seen anything like the incomparable bragadocia of the New York newspapers, and the New York *Herald* surpasses them all. To see the New York *Herald* and its minor contemporaries, two weeks ago, "*humble the British Lion*," on paper, was a beautiful spectacle. To see the flagellated Bennett, who at every street corner has had his shirt cowhided into as many stripes as the "Flag of the Union," seize the British lion by the throat and choke him to death in thirty seconds, was the most wonderful sight ever beheld since David slew Goliah. "England cannot afford to go to war with us," exclaimed Bennett; "we would confiscate nine hundred millions of British property in shipping, stock, &c., in the United States; we can spare six thousand ships for privateers, and arm them and send them over the ocean to sweep her commerce from the deep; and she will lose Canada, her West India possessions and island. In the event of England, in her folly, declaring war against the United States, the annexation of the British North American possessions, to which Mr. Seward looked forward in his speeches made before the present administration came into office, will inevitably follow. Between Vermont and Minnesota we can pour a hundred and fifty thousand troops into Canada in a week, and overrun the province in three weeks more. It would take a longer time to capture the citadel of Quebec, but still time would do the work. In this invasion we would be aided by a large portion of the inhabitants, two-thirds of whom are in favor of annexation to the United States. The press of the country may have led to a contrary opinion, but the press by no means represents the general feeling on the subject. In a very short time we could, if required, bring a million of men into the field to secure the conquest. And what resistance out of Quebec could the British Government offer to the tide of invasion? None that could not be easily overcome, even by a fraction of the force we should bring into operation. Her army in all North America is insignificant, her fortifications few and far between, and her frontier totally unguarded. Canada would, therefore, be at our mercy from the day of our crossing the boundary line."

If we had not been trained by a year's military experience to the astounding mendacity and brag of the Northern press, who could believe that it is this same *Herald* which at the first growl of the British Lion, has plumped down on its knees, and with a visage, which looks like a cross between the Wandering Jew and the Impenitent Thief, sends up a shriek of terror that makes the harshest hootings of the screech owl seem soft as the music of a nightingale? What must be the country of whose public sentiment such a paper is the exponent? And yet, we verily believe, it is a correct exponent. We believe that, from the audacity which led to the perpetration of the outrage upon the Trent, and to its approval by the whole people and their representatives, the United States, at the first show of British indignation, are ready to tumble down to an abyss of shame and humiliation as far beneath the level of ordinary degradation as their vainglorious braggadocia was above the capacity of their performances. Great Heavens! If the South could permit itself to be subjugated by any government under heaven, could it ever consent to be subjugated by such "servants of servants and slaves of the devil," as the Lincoln dynasty! These donkeys, aping the king of beasts, and trying to scare us with their terrific bray, are they to be our masters? Have we survived two conflicts with the genuine lion, defeat and even destruction by whom would have been no dishonor, to be kicked to death by an ass in a lion's skin?

It is enough to make Paul Jones, Truxton, Hinman, Hull, Perry, and McDonough, rise from their graves; to call from the depths of the sea, the bones of those bold sea-kings, whose keels the ocean was once proud to bear, to witness such degradation.—Not one of them was capable of such an outrage as that upon the Trent; but, if it had been committed, the man among them who had not thrown up his commission if his Government had refused, in the language of the London *Times*, to "fight his way out of the difficulty," would have been a shunned and degraded man on sea and shore to the day of his death. But every spark of chivalry has been extinguished in the Northern sky. Justice has fled; generosity is laughed at, self-respect, itself, has gone; nothing remains but avarice and malignity; and, conscious of its own turpitude, and humble in its own esteem, this degenerate race, is ready for any act of servility and degradation that will gratify its base appetite of greed and of revenge.

THE SITUATION.—When the State of Virginia passed the Ordinance of Secession, on the 14th of April last, the Yankees threatened to settle the rebellion, as they were pleased to term our refusal to be governed by them, in six weeks, or even a less time. As old "Fuss" found out, however, that he could not get the Grand Army ready in that time, the period of final settlement was postponed until the 23d of June, the day on which the question of accepting or rejecting the Ordinance was to be put to the people. The 23d came, and the "rebellion," so far from having been crushed, had increased in strength, and was daily waxing greater. Hence old Scott determined to take "a hasty plate of soup" in Richmond on the 4th of July. But, upon second thought, he changed his mind and put off the grand catastrophe until the 21st. Then the "Grand Army" was to move in force and bear down all before it. Accordingly, it set out upon that day, having been engaged for some days previously in marshalling its forces, crossing the river, and fighting at Bull Run. It left few troops behind it, either in Washington or Alexandria. Old Scott, after he was whipped, fled, like the egregious old scoundrel he is, by saying that he was not ready when he undertook to whip the rebels on the 21st. The fact is, that he *was* ready, as far as he ever could be ready. He sent over *all* his force. Only two hundred men were left to guard the bridge over the Potomac. How the "rebels" used the Grand Army is matter of history. There never was such a rout, considering the small number of killed and wounded, since the world began. Instead of crushing the "rebels," it is very generally understood that the rebels might have effectually crushed them, but for the existence of a strange influence which paralyzed their arms and arrested their advance in the hour of victory. The Yankees were allowed to rally and recuperate, behind their defences, and there they now stand afraid to come out and try it again, although six months have elapsed since they tried it before. So far from crushing the rebels, they do not seem to be entirely assured that the rebels do not mean to crush them.

In Kentucky they are pursuing the same policy. They have collected two mighty armies, which stand facing two armies of ours, which they dare not attack. They boast, they splutter, they magnify their numbers, and yet they dare not advance. If they are superior to us, numerically, why do they not come on and sweep us at once from the face of the earth? The reason is obvious. They are afraid to trust their men in a general engagement. In every affair of a partial character, where we have not been outnumbered five to one, our men have invariably beaten them. They know this, and they are unwilling to put their cause upon the issue of a battle in which our forces are likely to approach theirs in number.

In South Carolina we observe the same timid policy. They land, they throw up entrenchments, they sit down, and they content themselves with plundering the country. They dare not attack our troops in a general engagement. One of the correspondents with their army wrote, three weeks ago, to a Northern paper, that in four days they would be in Savannah. We have not heard of them in that place yet, and we do not expect to hear of them there, except as prisoners. It is precisely the same thing over again with regard to Mobile and New Orleans. We hear any quantity of threatening, but the cities are not yet taken, or even attempted. It has been suggested, indeed, that they do not intend to move on any of the points indicated; but that they merely intend to draw a large portion of our forces to them, and keep them there, thus paralysing them entirely, and in the meantime preparing another grand expedition, which is to march when all our men shall have been occupied in guarding the points already threatened.

It is certain, at any rate, that they have made very little progress in subjugating us thus far. In the meantime they have completely enlightened the world as to what they really are by their conduct in the Mason and Slidell affair. European nations, having nothing to judge from but their own lying newspapers, have hitherto believed them a powerful nation, and us a handful of insignificant rebels. They have been taught to believe that the Yankee Government was the best in the world, and that the large majority in the Southern States were eager to return to its bosom, but could not, because prevented by a few factious individuals. The Mason and Slidell affair has taught them what the Yankee Government really is—that it is the basest pretence of a Government that was ever inflicted upon a people. Bethel, Bull Run, Manassas, Lexington, Leesburg, Carnifax, Belmont, Alleghany, have proved to them that the Confederate States are not a mere handful of factious citizens, but a great and powerful nation, with a mighty army in the field, and ample resources to sustain it. Assuredly the "rebellion" is not likely to be crushed out in our time.

FROM NORFOLK.

Return of Gen. Scott to Lincolndom—The Winan's Steamer in Hampton Roads—Gen. Magruder Expects an Immediate Battle—Parade of Colored Firemen, &c.

[SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE DISPATCH.]

NORFOLK, Dec. 27, 1861.

The principal subjects of conversation and surmise here are the important items of foreign news received yesterday and Wednesday. Much is said about the return of that miserable old hater of the South, Winfield Scott. The authenticity of the statement is doubted by some persons, although it seems in rather bad taste to give so great importance to the movements of a great small man, who is ridiculed and sneered at in Europe, and detested throughout the length and breadth of the Southern Confederacy.

I learn that the singular iron structure, known as the Winan's steamer, has come down Chesapeake Bay, and is at anchor in Hampton Roads. If she is really in our waters, there may be some special object in the visit. The Yankees may have seized her for the purpose of trying her power as a marine battering ram. Her upper works will be a splendid target for our rifled cannon.

Dr. J. W. Heintz, formerly surgeon of the Federal war steamer San Jacinto, arrived here yesterday, on his way South. He was arrested and held as a prisoner of war, but was released on parole.

It is rumored here that Gen. Magruder is hourly expecting an attack on the Peninsula, and is making active preparations to give the Yankees a cordial old Virginia welcome. It is stated that the sick in the hospital have all been removed, and that a vigilant lookout is kept up daily and nightly for the approach of Hessian hosts.

The "colored firemen" of this city had a parade yesterday and attracted considerable attention. The engines, which they drew along with them, were in fine order, and being dressed in neat uniforms presented an orderly appearance. The sable firemen seemed to enjoy their holiday parade vanity. They had music, too, and marched along in evident consciousness of the importance and usefulness of their position.

A visit to the Navy-Yard yesterday would afford a fruitful subject for a long letter and the details of what was seen there might prove interesting to your readers. This, however, would probably be deemed injudicious and I shall give no particulars, nor will you expect them.

The long, dry spell, continues—no rain yet; although the clouds are gathering, and we shall probably have stormy weather very shortly.

ABE LINCOLN AND QUEEN VICTORIA.—We mention as one of the *ex dies* of the day, by the flag of truce, that Abe Lincoln, the President of the Rumps, has been prevailed upon to sue out a writ of divorce from "his Folly Ann," for the purpose of marrying Queen Vic., and thereby secure the interests and assistance of Great Britain in suppressing the rebellion; and it is said the Yankees are greatly excited at the opportune desire of Prince Albert, as it thus opens a road to them to effect an honorable arrangement.—*New York Herald, 24th.*

LOCAL MATTERS.

Homicides.—On Tuesday evening, last, a difficulty occurred between two negroes—Robert Napier, slave of Mrs. Waddell, of Staunton, and Sidney Robinson, slave of Mrs. Graham—at the store of Milton Williams, near the corner of Broad and Mayo streets, which resulted in the stabbing of the former, whose injuries terminated fatally next morning. The murderer fled, and has not yet been arrested. The fact was made known to acting Coroner Sauxay, who held an inquest on Christmas day, and the jury returned a verdict that Robert's death was caused by a stab in the left side, inflicted by Sidney Robinson.

On Tuesday night, two free colored boys, named Beverly Randolph and John Henry Ashby, apprentices to Robert Francis, barber, got into a playful controversy about a knife, which the former had in the shop, where they were employed, on Main street, below 17th. Beverly first rapped John on the head with the knife, but this had no effect, and finally he thrust it into his left side, whether intentionally or by accident, must be determined hereafter. The boys were good friends, and had no previous misunderstanding. John died the next morning, and Beverly has since been taken into custody. An inquest was held yesterday, and a verdict rendered in accordance with these facts.

Desperate Affray.—An affray occurred in the second tier of the theatre on Thursday night, which had a sanguinary result, and may cause the death of one of the parties engaged. At present it is impossible to give a minute statement of the affair; but the report is that a soldier, belonging to Caskie's Rangers, was set upon by a Baltimorean named Patrick Callahan, and summarily kicked down the flight of steps leading to the first tier. The Ranger gathered himself up, drew a long bowie-knife, and rushing back upon his antagonist, dealt him a fearful blow on the head, cleaving his skull and making a ghastly wound. The Baltimorean fell, and the soldier immediately left the house. We are informed that he gave the knife to an officer as he went out, but no arrest was made. The wounded man was conveyed to the Medical College Infirmary, by his friends, and we heard yesterday that he was in a critical situation. He denies that he was the offending party, and we therefore do not vouch for the entire accuracy of the above report; but that the Ranger, whose name we have been unable to learn, was shamefully assaulted by some one of the crowd with whom Callahan was associated, will, we think, be sustained by the evidence, if the affair is brought to a legal investigation.

In consequence of the difficulty Thursday night, and apprehensions that it would be renewed last night, it has been deemed prudent to close the theatre temporarily. There was, therefore, no performance last night.

Mayor's Court.—Arthur Ferguson, a free boy of color, indulged so deeply in Christmas potations on Thursday, that he fancied himself a white man, and pitched into Wm. Mitchell with a will; but found out his mistake when Mr. M. tied him and took him to the cage.—The Mayor sent the pugnacious youth on to the Hustings Court for trial, admitting him to bail in the sum of $200.

The second in the series of ludicrous mistakes was furnished in the case of Napoleon Reminger, a drummer boy, connected with one of the New Orleans companies at Manassas. He came down to Richmond to spend Christmas, got on a big bender for so small a specimen, mistook himself for a horse, and went to sleep in Sutherland's stable. The Mayor sent him to General Winder, with a recommendation to investigate his spiritual condition.

David Bum, a German, might possibly have mistaken himself for a "bum"-shell, so well was he loaded on Thursday night; though we can only learn that he mistook E. F. Ragland's kitchen for his own lodgings, and disturbed the peaceful slumbers of the colored people on the premises. He was arrested, and the Mayor yesterday required him to give security to keep the peace.

Beverly Randolph, free negro, is under arrest upon the charge of killing John Henry Ashby, another negro, and will be examined by the Mayor this morning.

The charge against a young man named Reynolds, for assaulting a negro girl, was dismissed yesterday.

Grand Bonfire—The Law Satisfied.—At 12 o'clock yesterday the gaming apparatus lately seized by the police in the houses of F. H. T. Allen, Murphy & McCann, and Richard Copeland, was taken from the City Hall by the officers and broken up and burnt publicly, according to the terms of the law. The scene of the conflagration was Broad street, in front of the City Hall, and, as near as we could ascertain, the following is a list of the articles consigned to the flames: Faro tables, 5; roulette table, 1; shove-it-up-a-spout, 1; cards, a bushel (more or less); ivory checks, ditto; and some trifling articles, the names of which we did not hear. It was a big fire, and, as a matter of course, a big crowd assembled to see it. The flames roared and crackled as, one after another, the massive mahogany legs and other members of the body of King Faro were pitched into the devouring element, and the grim executioners stirred up the glowing coals with malignant joy, unmoved by the grief of sympathizing spectators. When nothing remained but a mass of red-hot embers, the officers retired, and then young Richmond, white and black, made an effort to secure some relic of the departed monarch. "I've got a fine dollar chip!" said one—"I've got a copper on the ace!" said another; but they crumbled at the touch, and nothing now remains but ashes of what was once so gorgeous and mischievous. We were about to add that this is the last of the faro banks; but we remember that the apparatus taken from Worsham and Burns is still in litigation, and thus reserved for a future conflagration.

The Holidays.—Some of the more prominent characteristics of the Christmas holidays have been visible all about for a day or two past. The egg-nogg must have had an undue proportion of bad whiskey, judging from the very common complaint of "misery" in the head or somewhere else. Some of our acquaintances, who boast that they were never before "thrown," have been forced to acknowledge the corn this Christmas, and now feel conscious of having done some very foolish things, which they can't exactly describe. These holiday indulgences, moreover, are dangerous and expensive.—They make people sick, and the man who gets sick now-a-days must pay the doctor a dollar and a half for feeling his pulse. In other respects, the present season varies from the holiday peculiarities of former years. There are fewer idle negroes about the streets, and people who were wont to "keep it up" for a week are now reflecting upon the ways and means to keep body and soul together.

Amusements.—While the mirth and music of Welles and Company continue to excite the pleasant emotions of the multitude at Metropolitan Hall; and the Theatre furnishes a pleasant entertainment for large audiences every night; the youth and beauty of the city contrive the means of driving away dull care by home amusements, from which not only they, but their favored friends of maturer years also, derive social benefit. A series of *tableux vivants*, in which some twenty beautiful young ladies participated, is among the more recent of these delightful parlor entertainments.

The Season.—A gentleman has sent us some twigs of sycamore, plucked from a tree in the woods on Thursday last, which he found in full leaf, just as in the month of May. Such a winter as we have thus far experienced is gratifying enough to those who look only upon one side of the picture; but the mischief of it is the ponds and rivers remain open, and there is no present prospect of securing a supply of ice.

Another Liberal Contribution.—We learn that the privates of the First Maryland Regiment have forwarded to Ro. Hough & Co., of this city, a generous contribution for the relief of the Charleston sufferers, amounting to $325.

The Tredegar Battalion.—The fine body of soldiers, composed of men employed at the Tredegar Foundry, and commanded by Major R. S. Archer, paraded yesterday morning.—The appearance of the corps was highly creditable.

The Eufaula (Ala.) *Spirit of the South* says it is rumored that some persons in Barbour county have been engaged in shipping cotton from Eufaula to Columbus and thence to Apalachicola, where it is clandestinely convoyed to the enemy's vessels, to be carried north.

Gen. Borland, in command at Pocahontas, Ark., has embargoed White river, to prevent speculators from monopolizing and carrying off supplies.

The Tableaux at the Mobile theatre last Friday night yielded about $1000, clear, to the soldiers' cause.

Charleston was fired in several places Sunday morning last. Several wooden buildings were burnt and small value were destroyed.

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

[OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

MANASSAS, 26th Dec., 1861.

Christmas in the army passed off very quietly, although celebrated in true Southern style. In every camp unusual preparations had been made to make the day pass off pleasantly, and our soldiers, although far from home and deprived of the sweet household music that has made the day joyous in former years, still made the holiday as merry as possible. The day was very pleasant and warm; huge fires burned in every direction; the mess table groaned beneath the weight of good things sent in by friends, and immense bowls of punch and egg-nogg were to be found in every camp. There was very little drunkenness and no casualties, as far as I have heard, the result of frolicking. Everybody appeared to have a good time, without the aid of fire-crackers and Roman candles, and the usual noisy demonstrations. To-day nearly one-half the army is engaged in building log cabins to live in when bad weather comes.

The battle at Drainsville instead of being a disastrous defeat and the one-sided affair represented, proves to be exactly the reverse. From my present information I can give a better statement of facts. On the morning of the fight the Yankees sent out a foraging party, under the escort of three brigades from Gen. McCall's division. Fearing an attack, they had sent one brigade of five regiments, a battery of six guns and a regiment of cavalry to protect the roads leading into Drainsville, and then their wagons were sent into the country for hay. They had been there but a short time when Gen. Stuart came up in sight of them. The two remaining brigades were held in reserve a short distance to the rear. Gen. Stuart had taken out near three hundred wagons for the purpose of obtaining forage, which was the sole object of the expedition, and not, as has been erroneously supposed, to make an attack upon the enemy. Coming upon the Federals suddenly, and seeing their force outnumbered his, Gen. Stuart at once prepared to protect his wagons, and to do that had to make some demonstration to keep the enemy in check, while the wagons were being hurried to the rear. For that purpose he advanced towards them and sheltered his infantry in a pine forest.—At this time the reserved of the enemy was seen approaching, accompanied by additional artillery and cavalry, and the moment seemed almost a fatal one to our little force, but through the coolness of a clear-headed and skilful officer it was saved with a comparatively small loss, considering the odds in favor of the enemy.

At first it was considered doubtful whether the Federals were marching upon Leesburg, or whether they had been informed of the expedition by spies, and had come out to capture it; in either case the wagons were in danger, and it was necessary to protect them at any sacrifice. Had they been lost, the greater portion of the transportation of the second corps would have been lost. Making a vigorous attack upon the regiment, drawn up against him, Gen. Stuart scattered them, causing great consternation in their ranks.—They did not reform until the reserve came up, when, inspired by the appearance of fresh troops, they returned to the fight.—After the wagons were at a safe distance, Gen. Stuart saw it was useless to contend with so great a force against him, with no prospect of reinforcement, unless on ground of his own choosing, and so he fell back to a spot selected to make a stand, but the Yankees had fought long enough and were not disposed to follow.

As to the results. Several of our missing men have been recovered, many of them wounded. The casualties may be summed up as follows: Killed, 43; wounded, 143; missing, 3. Some of the wounded have since died. The enemy's loss was heavy, although their papers say it was slight. The evidence is too strong against them, and the truth will soon come out. The people of Drainsville say they left in a great hurry, carrying off twenty wagons containing wounded men. They promised to return in the morning for our wounded, who were left on the field, some with very slight wounds, but failed to do so, and they acknowledged that the fight had been much more severe than they bargained for. The Baltimore papers are gathering the facts and publish them as collected. One of them gives a list of casualties in two regiments, amounting to eighty killed and wounded. Gen. Johnston is very well satisfied with the result, and has complimented Gen. Stuart upon the coolness and bravery displayed by him on the occasion.

Yesterday evening a large body of Federals, three thousand strong, came out in the direction of Pohick church, and marched towards our lines, seemingly for the purpose of making a reconnoissance. After coming within about a mile and a half of our pickets they halted, and soon after retired. Their movements were closely watched, and had they ventured a little further some little impediments might have been thrown in their way.

Since giving my address a few days since a great many letters have been sent in to me upon various subjects, and I will endeavor to attend to them as soon as possible. Perhaps I may be pardoned a word to some in this letter. "Sigma" asks me to correct a serious fault in the quartermaster's department. I can only call attention to the matter, and will do so at an early date. O. P. C., your letter has been forwarded. Miss M.—The battery you speak of will winter upon Bull Run, near Blackburn's ford. W. T.—My own opinion is that it would be useless for you to come.

The First Virginia regiment is still at its old camping ground. Thus far no preparations for winter quarters have been made, and beyond a few speculations as to the possibility of getting to Richmond, very little is said upon the subject. Gen. Ewell's brigade will winter in the advance, and I believe the First will take up its quarters as near the enemy as any regiment. With good, warm log houses the soldiers can live very comfortable through the cold weather, and if their friends at home will furnish books, and means of enjoyment in the shape of quoits, balls, gymnastic fixtures, chess boards, &c., the time will soon pass away. It is not so very certain that there will be no fighting during the winter. As far as I know the health of the regiment is very good. A subscription has been started for the benefit of the Charleston sufferers, and, although still growing, has reached a very respectable figure. In the Washington Artillery, also, a large sum has been subscribed for the charitable purpose. One company alone, the 2d, Capt. Rosser, has subscribed six hundred dollars, nearly every member giving a month's pay. The other three companies have also put down a handsome sum.

The weather still continues good and is not excessively cold. There has been but one stormy day for some time. So long as the roads continue in the present good condition, there is a possibility of a fight. It seems hardly probable, however, that if a general advance had been contemplated, it would have been so long delayed. McClellan had no reason to suppose the weather could be good so late in the season, and he certainly cannot be waiting for bad to fight in.

BOHEMIAN.

ECLIPSE OF THE SUN.—We see it stated that there will be a total eclipse of the sun on the 31st of this month, but only partial to us. In the United and Confederate States, the beginning will take place before sunrise. The end of it only will be visible to the east of a line drawn from the western shore of the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Superior, but generally under unfavorable circumstances, as the sun will be near the horizon.

In Christian county, Illinois, corn is selling at 10 cents per bushel and potatoes at 15 cents.

Why are penmakers the most dishonest persons in the world? Because they make people steal pens, and then say they do write.

LATEST NORTHERN NEWS.

THE MASON-SLIDELL AFFAIR.

IMPORTANT NEWS FROM MISSOURI.

Address from General Rosencrans.

&c., &c., &c.

We have received Baltimore papers to the 24th, and New York dates of the 24th and 25th December. From their columns we extract the following items of interesting news:

THE MASON-SLIDELL AFFAIR—ENGLAND BENT ON A WAR.

From the Paris correspondence of the New York *Herald*, dated 6th of December, we make the following extracts:

Now that the Northern States of America are in trouble, England and France seize eagerly upon the slightest pretext to attack them. The hot blood of indignation mounts to the cheeks of loyal Americans here and in London when reading the vile, unmanly threats of the principal organs of both Governments. It is useless for me to recapitulate the open menaces made. Your fleet will afford you ample proof that I do not exaggerate when I say that abuse and threats are heaped upon you. The decision of the jurist consults of the English Crown is a farce. The inconsistency of such a conclusion is too glaring not to let the world see that it is England's desire to go to war to save herself from a social crisis that is impending. Mr. Bright's advice to the trades unions, to demand their political rights, if followed out, would virtually kill the power of the aristocracy.—The six millions of working men could not be threatened or bullied to vote as their lords chose to dictate, and the people would soon rule instead of the aristocracy.

A war with America might for some time avert the storm. Hence the evident desire of England to jump at once into a conflict which she may find, to her cost, not so one-sided as she imagines. She has, I know, been making preparations for months for such an emergency as is afforded by the arrest of the rebels Slidell and Mason, and will no doubt push matters to extremities, urged on as she is by France, unless the people show unmistakable signs of not permitting the war. This they may do, the more so as John Bright, their apostle, sees through the schemes of the Palmerston Cabinet, and is already busily counteracting them.

Months ago I warned you in my letters that France and England were inimical; that they would surely seize the first opportunity to recognize the Davis Government. Recent events prove that I was but too correctly informed. I may now add that the Government has signified to Great Britain its willingness to recognize the rebel Government at once, and that in case the Lincoln Cabinet refuses to deliver up the rebels, Slidell and Mason, both Eng and and France will do so—thus setting an example to the world of the extreme length to which jealousy of liberal institutions will drive monarchial Governments.

The honesty of such a proceeding is upon a par with the antecedents of both this Government and that of England. Had the Americans recognised the Canadians during their rebellion, Europe would have shouted out "infamy;" and yet France and England are preparing to do just that infamous thing. It will not surprise you to hear that the organs of this Government have discovered that the arrest of Messrs. Slidell and Mason took place in Spanish waters, and that hence Spain has a right to join England and France in recognizing the South. The *Patrie* says we cannot remain idle spectators of a struggle between North America and England. It is quite clear that it is not our duty to avenge the wrongs of England; but the recognition of the South by that power, which would imply a final separation from the United States, could not be regarded as an isolated act, and would impose upon France the necessity of assuming a decisive attitude on this question. The result would be that two great maritime powers of Europe might be drawn into a common action with the same identical political object.

Since writing this the *Patrie* has come out so strongly for the rebels as quite to astonish all classes here, except those who know what it costs. The London *Times* and *Post* affect to consider this as wonderfully suggestive, and speak of the *Patrie* as the most confidential organ of the Emperor Napoleon. On the part of these journals such an assertion is false; as they well know that their own Paris correspondents have informed them that M. de la Guerioniere, the head of the *Patrie*, is no longer in favor with his Majesty, who sees him no more. I assert that both the *Times* and *Post* are well aware of this, and that when they pretend to attach undue significance to the *Patrie*, they are as false as it is.

The *Patrie* has now no political importance. Since the fall of its chief editor, it gets no more inspiration.

Unfortunately, the *Pays* and *Constitutionnel* do. It was these worthy sheets that made the discovery about the Spanish waters turn of affairs, and they own to having imbibed the idea from the last letter of Dr. Russell.—How hardly all that will be, and how easy the transition of the English, French, and Spanish fleets from Mexican to American waters. Mr. Seward was but too well inspired when he asked for increased fortifications along the coasts.

England evidently means war, and has meant it all along. She has waited in hopes that the North would meet with serious reverses; but now, that the star of the Lincoln Cabinet seems brightening up, England will strike ere too many successes are gained.

The leading editorial of the New York *Times*, of the 25th inst., in reference to the Mason and Slidell embroglio, says:

"Everybody, high and low, rich and poor, was striving to outclamor everybody else in his fulminations of war, and revenge against this country. There was not the slightest disposition to listen to explanations or to wait for apologies. It was a foregone conclusion that they were forthwith to have war—the whole fabric of English society was rocking and reeling on the waves of this swelling and surging tide. It is presumed that the English Government does not share the insane presumption of the people.

"We should not be greatly surprised if it should prove after all that Mr. Seward has got the start of them, and has actually sent explanations and all due apologies on this subject long before any demand for redress was made. The extraordinary delay which attends the movements of Lord Lyons finds a very satisfactory reason in the supposition that Mr. Adams has been already charged to present the whole case to the British Government at London."

The New York *Post*, of the 24th inst., says:

A private letter from well advised sources at Washington represent that certain interviews took place between Lord Lyons and Seward immediately after the Trent affair, and that their respective letters to London at that time were based on a disavowal of any knowledge on the part of our government, that such a capture was to take place, and a disavowal of all purpose to insult the British flag. This has delayed the presentation of the peremptory demand of the British government, which came out on the Europa.—Further advices from London will therefore probably be awaited.

A special dispatch to the *Post* from Washington gives a rumor that the Cabinet have resolved to release Mason and Slidell, and that orders have gone on to ship them at once to Halifax. The *Post*, however, regards this rumor as improbable.

The Washington correspondent of the New York *Herald*, of the 25th inst., argues that, although nothing officially has transpired in regard to the deliberations of the Cabinet on the subject, yet there is no doubt but that the difficulty will be settled without a war between England and the United States. It concludes thus:

"The affair is complicated. Time alone can unravel it, and the utmost prudence on the part of the Administration will be necessary to avoid a war which may involve us with more than one European Power, while we are engaged in a life and death struggle for the preservation of the Union itself."

GEN. SCOTT'S RETURN.

From the Washington *Star*, of the 23d inst., we clip the following in relation to the purpose which induces old "Fuss and Feathers" to return so soon to the United States:

The fact that Gen. Scott has so soon returned to the United States (in the Arago) is understood by his immediate friends here to have been the result of his belief that he possesses information, concerning the state of the affair of the Trent on the other side of the water, of importance to our Government; and therefore hastens here with it.

It will be remembered that our avoidance of a collision with England on two former occasions—in that of the northeastern boundary difficulty, and that of Gen. Harney's imbroglio—was due in great part to Gen. Scott's personal efforts to settle the questions then in issue between the two Governments peacefully. He doubtless hopes—we trust justly—that in this case his respective similar exertions may terminate as happily. The mass of the people of both countries wish him "God speed" in this labor of exalted humanity.

IMPORTANT FROM MISSOURI—BRIDGES BURNING BY THE CONFEDERATES—SUCCESS OF THE EXPEDITION SENT TO LEXINGTON, &C.

ST. CHARLES, MO., Dec. 21.—A preconcerted movement was made last night by the rebels along the North Missouri Railroad. The rebels who returned from Gen. Price's army destroyed about ten miles of the road, on a long road near Mexico. Commencing eight miles south of Hudson, they burned the bridges, wood piles, water-tanks, ties, tore up the rails for miles, bent them, and destroyed the telegraph line. This was continued to Warrentown, where the work of destruction ceased. How many were concerned in this villainous work is not yet known, but there is no doubt but that it was a preconcerted and simultaneous movement of the citizens along the road, as no single party could have accomplished so much in one night. Three hundred of the villains are known to have been engaged in the destruction of the bridge track at Warrentown.

[*Second Dispatch.*]

WARRENTON, MO., Dec. 24, 1861.—The damage to the North Missouri Railroad may be summed up as follows: Bridges at Sturgeon, Centralia, Mexico, Jeffstown, and Warrentown, burned; also one station and perhaps twenty cars, from fifty to sixty culverts, large and small; three or four water stations, 10,000 ties, from 200 to 300 telegraph poles, and five miles of iron destroyed, and ten miles of wire rendered useless.

Two trains, one having eight car loads of hogs and several car loads of hemp, and two cars of merchandise, are in the possession of the rebels. Four engines are lying where they can be seized by them.

Some of the men who belonged to the trains have arrived here, from whom I learn that the persons who did the damage are yet encamped along the road, about five hundred being at High Hill, and other bodies at or near Martinsburg, Mexico, Centralia, Sturgeon, and Alien. At Centralia they went within half a mile of the Berge Sharp-shooters and destroyed a bridge and water station. Two freight trains were captured within four miles of the camp of a detachment of the same force.

At Renwick the work was directed by practical railroad men, and the right course was always taken to make the destruction complete. Where the track was taken up, the rails were removed, the ties gathered in piles and set on fire, and the rails thrown across the pile, so that when the centre of the rails became heated the weight of the cold ends bent them so as to render them useless.

In destroying the bridges the fires were kindled around the corners, where they would soon throw the bridges down, and the trestle guides which spanned the open culverts were burned, as were also the frames on which the water tanks stood usually.

The houses of railroad men and of all Union men in the vicinity of the road were surrounded, and the inhabitants assured that no harm was intended them while they remained in-doors.

We hear of scarcely any pillage, or any other outrage beyond the destruction of the road and telegraph line.

The damage to the road cannot fall short of $300,000, and at least one month will be required to repair it so that trains can pass.

ST. LOUIS, Dec. 23.—Dispatches received at headquarters say that the command sent to Lexington by General Pope burned two ferry boats and a foundry at that place, and took two captains, one lieutenant, four men, and several horses.

OTTERVILLE, MO., Dec. 24.—The cavalry which General Pope sent to Lexington have returned. In addition to the two ferry boats and the rebel foundry which they burned and the rebel officers and privates captured, previously reported, they killed the notorious Arkansas Robinson, and drove every band of rebels from the county for miles on either side of the route. They report the county quiet of the rebels.

JEFFERSON CITY, Dec. 24.—A gentleman who has been with the rebel army several weeks arrived here to-day, and reports that on Thursday last Price's camp at Osceola was thrown into confusion by the news that the Union troops were upon them. They beat a hasty retreat, and when last heard from were at Hammansville, hurrying South.

ST. LOUIS, December 24.—About a thousand of the rebel prisoners taken by Gen. Pope arrived here last night, and were allowed to remain in the cars until this morning, when they were escorted by their captures, under Col. Davis, to Dr. McDowell's medical college, where they will be taken care of for the present.

WARRENTON, MO., Dec. 24.—By arrivals from Mexico we learn that the bridge over Salt river, which is the largest and most costly on the road, except that at Perrgue, which the rebels previously spared on Friday night, was entirely destroyed on Sunday night.—The station house at Jacksonville was also burned, together with four or five cars. The repairs progress rapidly here. The bridge is repaired, and the culverts between here and Jonesburg, and the track at that place will be to-morrow, if the men are not interrupted, and the repairs of the telegraph line keep pace with those of the road.

ST. LOUIS, Dec. 23.—General Halleck has issued an order, fixing the penalty of death on all parties engaged in destroying railroads and telegraphs, and requiring the towns and counties in which the destruction occurs, to repair the damages and pay expenses.

GEN. ROSENCRANZ'S ADDRESS TO HIS OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS.

The following address has been issued to the troops of the Western department of Virginia by the Commander of the Federal forces.

Officers and Soldiers of the Department of Western Virginia:

You have closed an arduous campaign with honor to yourselves and satisfaction to the country. None but those who have been with you, as I have, can fully appreciate your trials and privations.

Your triumph has been three-fold—over your own inexperience, the obstacles of nature, and the rebel forces.

When our gallant young Commander was called from us, after the disaster of Bull Run, this department was left with less than fifteen thousand men to guard three hundred miles of railroad and three hundred miles of frontier, exposed to "bushwhackers" and the forces of Gens Floyd, Wise, and Jackson. The Northwestern pass into it was fortified and held, Cheat Mountain secured, the rebel assaults there victoriously repelled, and the Kanawha Valley occupied.

A march of one hundred and twelve miles over bad roads brought you upon Floyd's entrenched position, whence the rebels were dislodged, and chased to Sewell. Finally your patience and watching put the traitor Floyd within your reach, and, though by a precipitate retreat he escaped your grasp, you have the substantial fruits of victory.—Western Virginia belongs to herself, and the invader is expelled from her soil. In the name of our Commander-in-Chief, and in my own, I thank you.

But the country will expect, your Commanding General expects, still more from you. A campaign without a defeat, without even a check, must be eclipsed by deeds of greater lustre.

To this end I now call upon you for your own future honor, to devote yourselves with energy and zeal to perfect yourselves in all that pertains to drill, instruction and discipline. Let every officer and every soldier be emulous to teach and learn the firings, light infantry drill, guard duty, company discipline, and police.

Your Commanding General proposes to procure for you everything necessary to prepare you for your coming work, and will soon organize Boards of Examiners, who will rid the service of the disgrace, and soldiers of the incubus of incompetent and worthless officers, who hold the positions and receive the pay without having the will or the capacity to perform the duties of their positions.

Remember, you are fighting for your country, for your flag for your homes.