

Abingdon Virginian.

BY COALE & BARR.

Friday, Jan. 8, 1864.

Increase of the Army.

Since the war began, we have deemed it our duty, for the success of the cause, to utter no word of censure against our authorities in either the cabinet or the field. We thought we could appreciate the difficulties that surrounded them, and the extraordinary responsibilities that rested upon them. As our law-givers and Generals are but human, and as liable to human frailties as others, instead of censuring their inevitable blunders when they have committed them, we have tried to make allowances for them, and when we could not commend have remained silent. It is our purpose to pursue the same policy still, for the sake of harmony and unanimity of action, but when measures of great and vital public policy are on the tapis, tending to the weal or woe of the nation, duty to ourselves and our country, demands that we should speak out and to the point. One of the measures now before Congress is of this character. We allude to the conscription of all persons able to bear arms, between the ages of 16 and 55. As President Davis said in the beginning of the struggle, so we say now, the enlistment of youths under 18 years of age—youths who ought to be under the influence of their mothers or at school—is "grinding seed corn." Aside from the moral effects, there are insuperable objections to the policy. The boy of 15 or 16 has formed no permanent habit, and his mind is as plastic and impressible as a lump of clay in the hands of the potter, ready for any impression that surrounding circumstances may make upon it. No one, we presume, will pretend to argue, that the influences of camp life all tend to immorality. Even the best men—men of high moral and intellectual training—without singular care and firmness of purpose, imperceptibly and gradually become vitiated to a greater or less extent. Not only so, but it is a common remark among soldiers, that many of the Chaplains in the army lose the most of their religion the first campaign. If men of discretion, therefore, and even Ministers of the Gospel are vitiated by camp life, what may be expected of boys of 15 or 16 years of age? When the war is over, a rabble more terrible than the war itself would be thrown upon the country, and an aggression would be waged that could not be allayed by compromises, negotiations or interventions.

As many and as potent arguments can be adduced against the enlistment of old men—Some men must be left at home, and what more suitable class than men of years and of presupposed discretion? Were they even able to endure the exposure of the field and the fatigue of the march, they could render far more service at home, by the direction of domestic affairs, and the promotion of such measures as are absolutely necessary to the sustenance of the armies in the field. But an old man cannot stand camp life. Seven men out of ten over 45, if not in larger proportion, would give way under the fatigue and exposure, and become a burthen upon the Government.

And now, to sum up the matter, what are the reasons given for this almost universal enlistment, recommended by the authorities and about to be adopted by Congress? To increase the army. We don't pretend to be very far-seeing, nor do we know much more about the management of armies than a very intelligent horse, but we do think we have common sense enough to see that this thing is fraught with far more evil than good. If, with all the discipline that has been enforced, and all the energy and industry of the President, the War Department, the Commandants in the field and an Enrolling and Conscription Officer at every cross roads in the Confederacy, less than one-half the enlisted men are kept in actual service, how much better would it be if every old man and boy in the land were conscripted? If the smaller number cannot be controlled and kept in place, how utterly futile to attempt to control the larger.

But neither of the reasons we have given, is the main ground of our objection to the enlistment of old men and boys. If it be necessary to increase the army—and we believe it is to a reasonable extent—the increase should be drawn from other sources. There is scarcely a railroad station, or a cross roads, or blacksmith shop, or doggerly, between the Bay of Mobile and the Chesapeake, that has not its Provost Martial and Provost Martial's Guard. These guards range in number from 10 to 20, and sometimes as high as 50 to 100 men. These are nearly all superfluous. Nine out of ten of them could be very well spared, and thus the army might be increased to the extent of a dozen or more full regiments.

Another division of able-bodied soldiers could be culled from railroad trains. Who of late has entered a car without being confronted by a burly two-fisted fellow with the demand "let me see your passport?" And what good do they do—how many spies have they detected? If they have been of any benefit we have never heard of it, and if they have ever detected a spy it has never come to the knowledge of the world outside of the cars. The thing is simply a nuisance, ought to be abolished, and that

large number of men put where their military knowledge and prowess might benefit the country. The passport system, to make the best of it, is an unmixt humbug. They are signed by thousands of different men, and there is not a detective on any car in any train on any railroad in the Confederacy, that can tell whether a passport is genuine or bogus when he sees it—nor could all the "Philadelphia Lawyers" in Christendom decide the matter for him. From these two classes, therefore—the post and train guards—the army could be increased 50,000 men.

There is another view of this subject. We cannot see the propriety of increasing the army very much, until we have the means of clothing and feeding the men better than we have been doing it. If Gen. Lee's opinion were known today, it would be that he would rather fight Meade with 25,000 well-clad well-fed soldiers, than 50,000 ragged, hungry, barefooted men. This very day—and it is useless to disguise the fact, or shut our eyes to it—one-half of our men in the field are ill-clad and shoeless, and on half-rations. How much better will it be when the army is doubled and the productive force of the country lessened to that extent? It is not as difficult of demonstration as a problem in Euclid.

Congress—the Crises.

The difficulty heretofore has been that Congress did not do enough—the difficulty now is that it will do too much. It is well enough to put a stop to substitution, but we cannot bring ourselves to believe that it is right to put the principal and substitute both in, in all cases. While it is not right to have privileged classes, there should be some discretion somewhere with regard to the conscription of certain classes. We know of many extensive producers who have substitutes in the army. The question is, whether these would not do infinitely more good out of the army than in it. The army must be clothed and fed, and somebody must clothe and feed them. If the large producers do not do it, who will? If they be put in the army, it will be undone. This is a serious matter, and no man can contemplate it without feeling its importance. The privilege of substitution has been so much abused, and so many men have made fortunes by speculation and extortion while others were exemplifying their patriotism for dollars and cents, the thing has become exceedingly odious. We contend that the man who has escaped one bloody battle by having a substitute has received a consideration for his money, as has also the man who has amassed by speculation an amount over and above a legitimate profit equal to what he paid for a substitute. All such should be put in the army, but there should, we repeat, be some discretion somewhere, to relieve from conscription large producers, as the army and the people cannot be otherwise sustained.

We have at this moment an instance in our mind by which we can illustrate. There is a gentleman of our acquaintance who raises from 10 to 20,000 bushels of corn per annum, and wheat, oats, hay, potatoes, &c., in proportion. Besides he has a mill, a blacksmith shop, a tannery, &c. This gentleman has a substitute, and hence he keeps his extensive operations going. Put him in the army, and all these stop. The question is, would he be more useful where he is or in the army? It don't admit of argument. There are many exactly such cases as this all over the country. Individual cases cannot well be provided for in a general law, but Enrolling or Conscription Officers, it seems to us, should have the power of exempting all such, either from their own knowledge, or reliable evidence of the fact.

Two New Papers.

Since our last issue, we find among our exchanges two new papers—the one the "Bristol Gazette," and the other the "Religious Sentinel and Soldier's Friend." The former is published at Bristol, Tenn., by Messrs. Dickey & Co. and the latter at Marion, Va., by the Rev. Messrs. Talley & Neal. They are both a size or two smaller than our ordinary size, and are published at \$3 per annum or \$5 for six months in advance.

From the specimens before us, they both promise well. The editorials are well written, and the selections are in excellent taste. We wish them a long and happy career, but have but little hope that they will be profitable to the proprietors in a pecuniary sense. Printers can labor as hard and live upon as little as any other class, but they can no more make both ends meet at present rates, than they could scull a copper kettle up the Falls of Niagara with a crow-bar. They now charge only four prices for what they sell, and give twenty prices for what they buy. How long will they be able to keep the machine going at these losses? Time will answer.

The Richmond papers state that Mr. Seddon intending to resign, Gen. Bragg is to be appointed Secretary of War.

New Year's Dinner.

On New Year's day, the ladies of this place prepared a sumptuous dinner at the Hospital, which was gratefully enjoyed by the patients.

The Northern papers say that the steamers Olympus and Armanda, of N. York, were captured and burned by the Alabama, on the 16th of November, off Java Head.

Lee County.

We learn from a gentleman of reliability from Lee, that Gen. Jones and Giltner had a force of Yankees in an ugly fix in that county a few days ago. The impression was that they had the Yankees between them, but we have heard nothing since.

Since the above was set up, we learn from a gentleman just from Bristol, that Gen. Jones, assisted by a portion of Col. Slemple's command, succeeded in capturing 450 Yankees out of about 600, one mile below Jonesville, together with three pieces of artillery, and all their horses, mules and wagons.

Gen. Jones' loss was as follows:

Killed—Lt. Samuels, Privates Leonidas Love, Henry Bumgardner, and Charles Morris, of the 8th Va. cavalry, and Wm. Shoemaker, of the 36th Va. Battalion. Twelve wounded.

No Exemptions.

Congress, it seems, has knocked the Exemption Bill sky-high. None are exempt but officers of the Confederate and State Governments, except by special favor of the President or Secretary of War. Preachers, Doctors, Teachers, Printers and all, fall into a common pile, and have to go to the army unless excused by one of the functionaries above named.

The following promotions have lately taken place in the 48th Va. Regiment:

Capt. Paris, to be Major.

Sergt. Jo. A. Smith, of Co. A, 1st Lieut.

W. W. Frazier, of Co. E, 2d "

Jno. Moore, of Co. C, " "

C. D. Hall, of " G, 1st "

Col. Dungan writes us that the regiment is completely and comfortably housed for the winter. The troops are in excellent health and spirits. Not a sick man in the regiment. All well-clad, but a number without shoes. We trust the Colonel's appeal for leather and tools will be liberally responded to.

Mr. John D. Alderson, Postmaster at Pine Spring, Russell county, having gone into the service, has resigned his position as P. M. The office, therefore, we presume, will be discontinued. Letters and papers designed for that neighborhood should be directed to Hansonville.

The Senate has confirmed the nomination of the Hon. Geo. Davis, of N. C., as Attorney General of the Confederate States.

The railroad from Chattanooga westward for 100 miles, is said to have been destroyed by recent freshets.

For the Virginian.

HEADQUARTERS JONES' BRIGADE,

Camp near Rogersville, Dec. 28th, 1863.

Messrs. Editors:—Believing that your numerous readers would feel some interest in the operations of this portion of the army, and as no one has given you an account of the same, I have concluded to give you a short sketch of our movements for the last few weeks.

The Brigade left the vicinity of Carter's Depot, Nov. 21st, in a heavy rain, which wet every body completely. The command camped that night at Spurgeon's Mill, from thence proceeded to Hawkins county, going up Horse Creek, on the south side of Bay's Mountain and down Beech Creek, crossing Holston river at Chisholm's Ford, thence by Rogersville, and crossing Holston again at Cobb's or Island Ford, thence through Russellville, Morristown, Mossy Creek and Strawberry Plains, crossing Holston again below the Plains, thence on to near Knoxville, where Gen. Burnside was closely besieged by Gen. Longstreet and the different cavalry commands. We arrived on Saturday, the 4th of Dec., the evening previous to the attack made by Gen. Longstreet on College Hill, of which your readers are fully informed. On Monday night the Brigade moved in the direction of Maynardville, Tuesday morning met the enemy and skirmished with him most of the day, and on Wednesday we drove the enemy from two or three miles south of Clinch river, entirely north of the river. In the last engagement, the 8th and the 21st Va. regiments only were in the action, and part of the time were under an excessively heavy fire.

We returned again to Knoxville, and when the siege was raised, we went to Powder Spring Gap in Clinch Mountain, at which place we were attacked, and drove back the enemy, holding the Gap until Tuesday morning of the 8th Dec. We then went to Morristown by the way of Bean's Station, and on the evening of the 10th Dec., the enemy, supposed to be six regiments strong, advanced by the Rutledge road. Preparations were made to meet them by placing the 21st regiment, commanded by Lieut. Col. D. Edmondson, the 36th Battalion and two companies of the 8th Va., commanded by Capt. Morgan, on the left of the road. A section of Lowry's Battery, supported by the remaining companies of the 8th, commanded by Lieut. Col. Cook, and the 37th Battalion, commanded by Maj. Claiborne, on the right. The attack was made entirely on our left, which was gallantly defended, under a heavy fire of musketry and artillery for some two hours, until the enemy in heavy force had gained our left flank, causing our men to fall back to the town. Our forces on the extreme left suffered severely, especially the companies of the 8th, having fought until nearly surrounded, before they gave way. Several of the enemy got their apportionment of land, (6 feet by 3,) at that place. The different commands were again formed and moved towards the field, when it was found that the enemy had retreated some two miles, we retired to Russellville that night, and on the night of the 13th, re-crossed the Holston at the Island Ford, and the next day while Gen. Longstreet advanced from near this point on the Knoxville road, our whole cavalry force crossed Clinch Mountain at Flat Gap, opposite Moresburg, and proceeded down Clinch Valley to the Kentucky road at Thorn Hill, where we captured a wagon train, loaded principally with sugar and coffee. In advance of the wagons was a picket some 90 strong, which fired into the advance guard, and the

front of the 21st regiment, when the 21st and 34th Battalions moved forward most gallantly, capturing 65 prisoners and between 30 and 40 wagons. The other commands were marching in the rear that day, and did not get into the action until after the 21st and 34th had occupied and held the field. A regiment of Yankees who held the Gap in the mountain, skedaddled by a mountain path, leaving all their baggage behind, where some of Gen. Longstreet's men supplied themselves with blankets, overcoats, camp equipage, &c., most bountifully.

From the time the forces left Carter Depot, Gen. Wm. E. Jones commanded the Division, and Col. Wm. E. Peters commanded the Brigade, to the entire satisfaction of the officers and men in their respective commands.

In all these movements we have been separated from our cooking vessels, having to make up our bread on oil-cloths, and bake it on sticks and rocks; also moving a great part of the way in the night, and upon the whole, it does not often fall to the lot of a soldier to undergo greater hardships and privations than we have endured since we left Elizabethton. We are now a few miles below Rogersville, all of us thinking it time to go into winter quarters. M.

For the Virginian.

RED SULPHUR SPRINGS, VA.,

Dec. 26, 1863.

Messrs. Editors:—Will you be so kind as to give publication to a short letter through the columns of your wide-spread journal, in order that a more explicit statement may be made of the part I took in combating the late Yankee raiders. I would not trouble your readers with a communication, but from the fact that I have seen an article on the subject in the "Lynchburg Republican" in which the writer makes mention of my name in a very complimentary manner.

The enemy made their appearance in this section on the morning of the 15th ult., en route for Salem. As soon as apprised of their appearance, I mounted my horse, borrowed a rifle and went in pursuit. Riding up the road a mile, I dismounted, tied my horse and concealed myself in the woods near the turnpike. The enemy's column by this time was considerably scattered; I watched my chance, and on one of the "blue jackets" approaching in twenty yards of me, I leveled my rifle, and at its crack, the fellow reeled and fell.

I continued "bushwhacking" them until I fired seven shots, killing four and wounding two. My horse was captured about noon, but I succeeded in capturing two, which amply repaid me. At night I took six citizens with me and crawled up within ten steps of their pickets, and on being halted, fired, and ordered my little party to charge, but they being civilians, charged the wrong way, and "double quicked" in the opposite direction. Next morning about 9 o'clock, on the return of the enemy, I headed a party and charged the "rear guard" of the column, while they were engaged in burning one of their broken down wagons. We fired upon them, and putting spurs to their horses, they were soon out of sight. This little surprise so alarmed the equine, that they immediately reported it to their commander, and on following them eight miles, we found the road "blockaded" by trees, and their regiments drawn up in "line of battle."

And here I will end my short letter, stating that the enemy on account of swollen creeks and severe weather, found Salem a rough road to travel.

I expect to start for the Eastern army soon, and will attach myself to Gen. Stuart's command. Wishing you and your readers's pleasant New Year, I am, sirs,

Very respectfully yours,

R. B. FOSTER.

For the Virginian.

HD. QRS. 43rd VA. INFANTRY,

January 2d, 1864.

Sergt. John A. Norvell, Co. E, of this regiment, is detailed to bring up material and tools for shoe-making purposes. It is proposed to establish a shop, and all the members of the regiment who furnish their own leather, can have shoes or boots made free of charge. It is the cheapest and best, as well as the surest mode of obtaining shoes. The chief difficulty, no doubt, will be found in getting the leather. It is earnestly requested, therefore, that every friend at home who desires to aid a soldier of this regiment, will send him a pattern of shoe or boot leather. Such a present might save the life of a soldier friend, and add comfort to his situation.

I send a requisition approved by Brig. Gen'l J. M. Jones, to Capt. Jas. Fields, of Abingdon. Any Government Agent or Q. M. who could fill the requisition, would confer a great favor upon the troops of this regiment by so doing. Any one willing to aid us under this call, will please deliver their material at Estillville, Scott co., by the 15th inst.; or at Hamonville, Russell co., by the 16th inst.; or at Mr. Carnahan's, Abingdon, by the 17th inst.; or at Mr. R. S. Benham's, near Seven Mile Ford, Smyth co., by the 18th inst. All articles delivered at these places by or before the dates named, will be taken charge of by Sergt. Norvell, and brought to the reg't.

R. H. DUNGAN, Col.

The Currency Bill.

The bill of the "Currency Committee" was, on Thursday, read before the House of Representatives in secret session. We understand from the Examiner that the bill relies upon taxation, and not upon funding, for the reduction of the present currency. It is said it proposes to levy a tax of four per cent upon the present valuation of property, a very heavy discount being offered as an inducement to tax payers to pay in their taxes within a short given period. —Lynchburg Virginian.

Murdered.

The little dwarf of Wythe county, Wm. Walters, who was only 3 feet 2 inches high and 40 years old, was murdered, in that county, a few days since, by a man named Roberts. They were returning from a Still house together, and Roberts ascertaining that his victim had a considerable amount of money in his possession, murdered and robbed him. The murderer has not been arrested, though it is thought that he cannot long elude the grasp of the officers, who are on his trail.

For Hire.

THE undersigned desires to hire, for the present year, a likely negro man. Call and see him at Squire Mallico's.

Jan. 8, 1864—2t T. J. McCULLOCH.