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SEMI-WEEKLY EDITION.
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Saturday, January 4th, 1879.

WASHINGTON LETTER.

What is Transpiring at the Nation's Capital.

Correspondence of the HERALD.

WASHINGTON, December 23.

Without much preliminary foolishness the house of representatives has made a commendable start in the serious business of the session. Five of the thirteen appropriation bills go through before the holiday recess—a very unusual state of things—and somebody has just said that if they kept on this headlong rate, there wouldn't be appropriations enough to keep them at work until the 4th of March. But it would hardly be worth while for these solons to let up on that account. It is a good plan to do your work first and play afterwards. Past experience, however, renders it a tolerably safe prediction that these congressmen will find enough to tinker at up to the very last moment, and that the closing hours will witness the accustomed crash of belated business, and the usual attempt to crowd five ordinary days work into one. But such is life.

The senate has accomplished little beyond the passage of Mr. Edmunds electoral bill and Blaine's inquiry resolution. The debate upon this latter question has not resulted in the party advantage which its originators anticipated, nor has it greatly advanced Mr. Blaine's personal fortunes in the struggle for the presidency. It is conceded that notoriety, and a commanding position for the nomination in 1880, is what the senator from Maine is chiefly striving for. The affecting scene at the late McCullough banquet, wherein Mr. Blaine and Joe Blackburn, of Kentucky, embraced across the table in token of returning fraternal feeling between the north and south, is allude to the senator's present attitude in the senate. Sociability—with a little "feast of reason and flow of soul"—is one thing, and party politics another. Us politicians all understand that. Senator Conkling shrewdly declines to play second fiddle to Blaine in the proposed investigation, and a special committee, instead of that on judiciary, will be assigned to the work. Senator Thurman's amendment extending the scope of this inquiry, so that it may possibly reach Massachusetts bulldozing, Pennsylvania Cameronism, and a few other trifling matters, was adopted. Everything of a party nature aside, it really does seem proper to look a little into this huge swindle of federal supervisors of elections. There are grave charges that it amounts simply to the purchase of a few thousand floating votes for a per diem of \$5, which is paid out of the United States treasury. A motion to hold sessions of the committee with open doors, was voted down by the republicans. This seems a grave mistake. The light of day can not possibly hurt an honest investigation. Every such inquiry, involving as it may, serious reflections upon individuals, and even whole committees, should be open and above board, giving all an opportunity to know what is going on. The democrats, none too liberal withal, set a fair example in this respect, by opening the doors of the Potter committee, so that the press had full reports, by its own representatives, of each day's sessions. Doubtless the republicans will see the advantage of this before going very far.

Work on the Washington monument has been again abandoned. A score or more of plans have been submitted for strengthening the foundations, though there is grave doubt that it needs any strengthening. Nearly every engineer in the army, including General Babcock, has reported observations on the subject, but Col. Casey, now in charge of the public buildings and grounds, has never had an opportunity to tell what he thinks about it; so the directors got together, and said Casey should have a chance. He has since transmitted his views to congress. Meanwhile the derricks and things are standing around doing nothing and not earning a cent. Congress last year appropriated a quarter of a million dollars to finish the monument, and the money has lain idle in the treasury ever since. A good deal of bad blood exists in the old Washington Monument Society, that has got away with so much money, as to what relation the society now sustains to the monument, and somebody must decide it. Probably, however, that

organization won't finger the present appropriation. The senate committee, raised at the demand of Senator Conover, to investigate the mysterious disappearance of a page from one of the appropriation bills last session, had not reported, but undoubtedly it will fully exonerate Mr. Conover. On the last night of the last session the general appropriation bill, with some senate amendments, was hurriedly engrossed in the office of the clerk of the house, and after adjournment it was discovered that a clause making provisions for continuing the Hot Springs commission had been omitted. Poul play was at once charged, and finally a small-bored spy in the secret service bureau undertook to connect Senator Conover with the matter. Conover is not very friendly towards Governor Stearns, one of the commission, and this was assigned as the motive for defeating the measure. This sneak of a detective reported to his bureau, and the report was sent to a committee of the house charging Conover and his secretary with the theft of the missing sheet. Clerk Adams, however, has always believed that it was merely an error in his office, easily accounted for by the confusion and haste of the closing hours, when his clerks were overworked and kept two days without sleep. The result of the investigation has vindicated Senator Conover, a republican and a gentleman, while Secretary Sherman will vindicate decency by kicking Benson out of the secret service bureau of his department.

After the recess the army reorganization bill will occupy the attention of congress to some extent. More of that another time. Don PRIMO.

An Extraordinary Plowing Bee.

Says the Visalia Delta, of the 20th ult.: Last Tuesday morning, at about 10 o'clock, a couple of men and teams in the employ of Perry Phillips were leisurely plowing the dry ground on Jim Fretwell's place, adjoining J. W. Cox's ranch, their notice was attracted to the arrival of a couple of teams, the unloading of tools and hitching in to plows for cultivation. A number of wagons were seen approaching in the distance, from different directions, but nothing was thought of that. Phillips' men, who were Portuguese, approached the new comers and ordered them off. Soon more teams arrived, and hitched up for plowing, and then in all directions were seen teams and men arriving, till the roads presented only long columns of rolling dust. Then it was the thick-headed Portuguese began to feel a largesized flea tickling in their ears, and taking counsel of their fears, fled with their teams toward the lodgement of their employer, who was soon on the ground with a wagon load of men. By this time there were a large number of teams leisurely turning over the sod. Mr. Phillips, it is said, approached and warned the new-comers that they were trespassers at their peril. But he made no attack, and the plough-gee kept on rapidly augmented by new arrivals, until there were about one hundred men and eighty teams on the ground. We hardly need say that it was an interesting spectacle, and that the dust settled away from the field like a perpetual cloud, out of whose sides were seen men and teams slowly moving. On the following day the unplowed ground was turned over, and the whole seeded and harrowed. Some of this ground ought to give extraordinary results, for it has been thrice plowed; first by Fretwell, next by Phillips, and last by the new-comers, who went right over the whole of it, leaving no spot unimproved. Some of the plowmen came from the lake, some from up Kings river, and others from Cross creek, and it is said that, but for some misunderstanding as to time, there would have been two hundred teams in the field the first day. There was no disguise on the part of the plowmen, most of whom we learn are settlers on even land. This affair has its grave as well as its funny side, for it portends a strife that may end in the letting of much blood, and if it does it will not all be shed on Tulara soil. It shows that the settlers, in large bodies, regardless of odd or even sections, are united and determined to protect themselves, and the rights of their families and neighbors, against distrust and legislative wrongs. We doubt if the state is able to overpower them, or that the courts can overawe them. For the prosperity and happiness of the state, and all concerned, we hope the railroad company will not force the issue in the courts, but lessen their demands to such prices as the settlers can accept.

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