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Publis
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W E NEW YORK SUN.
ished daily, Sundays excepted, at the Sun
dings, cor. of Fulton and Nassau sts, and deliv-
to Subscribers in New York City and vicinity
X AND A QUARTER CENTS PER WEEK.
When sent by Mail, four dollars per year.
HE WEEKLY SUN is published at 75 cents a
r; sixteen months, $1; single copies, 2 cts.
Address "The Sun" Establishment,
New York.

THE SUN.

NUMBER 1358 WEEKLY EDITION—SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 1862 $1 FOR 16 MONTH

THE WEEKLY SUN.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 1862.

The New York City Press.

The morning journals of yesterday were al
upied with the Slidell and Mason surrender,
one of them, the JOURNAL OF COMMERCE
cepted, failing to bestow upon the measure
unqualified approval, and upon the reply
cited from Secretary Seward, their warm
mmendations, it being truly characterized as
e ablest state paper which has for years been
ued by our government. The JOURNAL
mds silent and alone in quietly cavilling at
tone, and dissenting from some of its conclu-
ns.

HE WORLD of Saturday, ably urges that,
er the English question shall have been set-
d without blows, but one great duty will
main to the country—which is to fight. Con-
ess should throw aside all less important ques-
ons about confiscation and emancipation, and
dress itself seriously to the heavy blows which
ust to fall thick and heavy upon the Rebel
ces. Fighting—still fighting—is its watch-
ord for success. Referring to the hate mani-
sted in Canada towards the United States, it
vocates blow for blow, and the immediate re-
of the Reciprocity act, which has aided
country at our expense, and never aided

ts St. Louis correspondent, 21th, gives the
llowing narrative of the arrival of the lately
ntured rebels in that city:

Yesterday afternoon certain long-haired,
ass-eyed, gesticulating young men might
ve been seen on Fourth street of St. Louis
ering to bet fabulous sums of money that no
els had been captured, that not more than
ree hundred had been taken, and finally that
thin a week it would dwindle down that we
d lost more men in battle than we had cap-
ured. The little success which has hitherto
tended their sympathizers in arms has quite
pset their capacity of sober thinking. Fortu-
ately for our loyal people, Gen. Halleck has
ven every one of them an opportunity to test
e matter with their eyes. Towards night a
ge crowd had gathered at the Pacific railroad
ot to see the expected train arrive with
prisoners, notwithstanding the intensely
d and unpleasant weather. It began to look
t that the train would not be in till near mid-
ght, when the great majority left in disgust.
At 11 o'clock the long train made its appear-
nce—thirty five cars, drawn by six locomo-
ves with, on account of the lateness of the
our, they were kept in the cars all night, the
blinds drawn down, and a heavy guard kept
er them. This morning they were taken
der an escort to the college building of Dr.
Dowell, a few squares from the depot.

The eyes and ears of the "secesh ers" were
t a little astonished to find, instead of three
ndred, twelve hundred, and this only the
instalment. General Pope, it is under-
od, has nearly a thousand more, which will
ow in a train today. Not long since it was
nounced in the Memphis papers that Price
ld be in St. Louis by New Year's, and that
command would revel in Christmas festivi-
es in the well-filled liquor saloons of the city.
is a little remarkable that their prediction
ould come so near the truth.

HE TIMES' Port Royal correspondent sees
indications that the slave population
th Carolina gradually but surely tend
a general insurrection. This, he claims,
a view gathered from isolated cases, but
general tendency of the whole course of
s in that section of the country.

Washington correspondence, 27th, has the
lowing interesting details in reference to the
n of Congressman Ely:—

n. Alfred Ely arrived at 7 o'clock this
ing, from Baltimore, and proceeded at once
Willard's, where he was immediately recog-
d and warmly welcomed by a large number
iends. His robust appearance would hardly
te that he had been five months a prisoner
.. The following statement of facts I have
d from Mr. Ely.

e captured by a South Carolina com-
infantry, about 5 o'clock P. M. of the
battle. He had stopped at a black-
shop to have his carriage mended, and
, waited awhile for Senator Foster,
nnecticut, who had gone out with him.
iting he walked down towards a ra-
which he saw a company of National
skulking or in ambush, but as he ap-
ed them, they receded, and just as Mr.
used, to return to his carriage, a spent
ball struck the earth near him. He
d behind a large tree near by to be out
ger, and continued his observations. In
ent a cannon ball went crashing through
nches of the tree, and seemed to be fell-
e whole top upon him. By the time he
ed from his surprise, a company of
accompanied by two well-dressed offi-
merged from the woods near by.

perceiving Mr. Ely, the two officers ad-
d and demanded his name. He answered,
Ely, of New York." The question fol-
"Do you hold any civil office in the Go-
ment?" For the first time Mr. Ely said he
was in trouble. He replied that he was
member of Congress, and thereupon one of
he officers clapped his hand upon him and de-
ared him a prisoner, but assured him he should
e treated with every consideration. They took
their Colonel, and introduced him for-
as "Hon. Mr. Ely, Member of Congress
New York." Instantly the Colonel drew
ol, cocked it and leveled it at Mr. Ely's
not two paces distant, and said, "You
ascal, I'll blow your brains out." The two
who had arrested Mr. Ely instantly
themselves upon the Colonel, forced his
back, and persuaded him away. They
logized to Mr. Ely, saying they were
of their Colonel, who was excited by

Ely was put with a large herd of pris-
and all were started to Manassas. It was
of seven weary miles, and the prison-
ered tortures from the dust, heat and
At Manassas, which they reached at 9
P. M., they were driven into an open
surrounded thickly by guards, and all
to fall on the ground, then wet with a
ling rain, to seek rest and sleep. While
ly was preparing for a similar move
officer rode into the yard and called
ut to know if "Mr. Ely, of New York was
Mr. Ely thought his time had come
be shot. Nevertheless, he answer-
ll, and was told that Gen. Beauregard
him to come to his headquarters. He
the officer and reached the log house
d by a verandah, on the porch of
ch a single candle burning on it, was
ie, and around the table sat Jeff. Davis,
regard, Extra Billy Smith, Porcher Miles,
ther rebel officers, apparently reckoning
the result of the day's battle.

Porcher Miles approached Mr. Ely, and ex-
d regret at his situation, but in a moment
his tone, remarking that he had no
of Congressmen who would come to aid
in invading a state. Mr. Ely was sent
eep in a barn, where he found the cap-
National officers.

e next day they were all started to Rich-
a.

thesition of our hostages at Richmond is
th Seven of them are confined in a room
ongelve by fifteen feet, in the Richmond
wing two small windows, which admit
ght. They are permitted to see no
ut the jailor and the negro who waits
them, and are only permitted to leave
in a thirty minutes in the morning, and
wo time in the afternoon, to walk in the
promenade between the jail building and
of wall. Their food consists of jail fare,
then bread and boiled beef, and they are
ntitled to have anything better even
they purchased it. When Mr. Ely was
he went in company with Mr. Faulk-
ne jail, and the two were granted the
an interview with the unfortunate offi-
Mr. Faulkner expressed his surprise at
or, and he stated that such was not the
nt that the privateers received in New
Philadelphia; that though they were
capital crimes, they were allowed to re-
isitors and to have all the comforts con-
with their safe custody. Mr. Ely thinks
sed upon this last statement by Mr.
ner, the rebel authorities will lessen the
ity of their treatment.

Of the reckless and outrageous conduct of the rebel guards, Mr. Ely speaks in terms of the utmost censure. He states that the prisoners had not been in the tobacco warehouse fifteen minutes before a bullet was fired into the window of one of our prisoners who had ventured to put his head outside, and that in this way seven men had been wantonly killed. This conduct met with severe censure from all who were aware of the facts, but he was not apprised that any action had been taken to punish the offenders by the rebel authorities.

Ma. Ely has not the slightest doubt of an extended and deep Union feeling in Richmond, and says if a national army were within ten miles of Richmond the National flag would be hung from hundreds of windows in the rebel capital. Nevertheless, an utter reign of terror prevails, and no public expression can be given.

Mr. Ely brings a list with him of 2,700 Union prisoners held in the South, whose release he will labor to procure.

The above would convey the impression that Mr. Ely remains unchanged in his convictions of the success of the Federal cause, but from other sources we learn that the worthy Congressman has become quite a convert to rebel views, thinks we cannot conquer them, and is willing to let the southern states go.

The Paris correspondent of the JOURNAL OF COMMERCE has the following reference to the fashions in the French metropolis:

Madame Petit, No. 4 Place Vendome, fashions a nice winter costume styled the cassaque robe, which bids fair to become a favorite style of dress with the elegantes. The body and skirt are of one piece; the corsage is open, with lappels half way to the waist; from the lappels to the edge of the skirt, the robe is fastened with velvet buttons, the lappels and sleeves are lined with a lighter colored silk than that of the dress. The skirt is decorated on each side with three bows of the same silk as the lining of the lappels; these bows are placed on the seams, and festoon a flounce which trims the skirt about a quarter of a yard from the edge, where there is a plaiting of ribbon. The sleeves are open from the shoulder to the wrist; the openings are edged with a plaiting and are held together by bows.

The coiffures of Madame Alphonsine, 12 Rue du Helder, are very recherches. These head-dresses are square in front, in accordance with the form most in fashion. The Neapolitan is made of a square of black figured tulle, edged with a narrow black lace, and crossed by two plaited ribbons which spread out into bows at the sides. A lappet of black and white lace accompanies these drooping bows.

For delicate skins that are easily irritated by the use of soap, the Altheine, a pate d'amande a la quimaune, of Mr. Faquer, the renowned perfumer of the Rue Richelieu, form a useful and agreeable substitute. The amandine is also much valued; when mixed with a little tepid water it composes a softening and pleasant lotion, to be used during the cold season.

In the COMMERCIAL ADVERTISER we find the following quaint correspondence:

MRS. HAIL COLUMBIA AND MRS. RULE BRITANNIA.—MY DEAR MISS MARTINEAU:—Your very kind letter in this week's ANTI-SLAVERY STANDARD, has been duly received. You say: "The people of England are offered an outrage too great to be endured; and, grieved, shocked and ashamed, as we shall be to war upon you at the same time as the Southern states, we shall have no option." Listen to me, one moment. My house was all ablaze, everything was burning up or going to pieces. My boy Wilkes, stealing some of my things on Mrs. Britannia's hand, shook his fist in her face—stepped on her toes—and instead of putting captain and ship in the "lock-up," to be regularly tried and condemned—as you know they would have been—he took the laws in his own hands and hanged the things.

Mr. Lincoln told him at once that although he was a good boy he did wrong, in a letter from my boy Welles; and the boy Seward was told to have Mr. Adams go and say the same thing to Mrs. Britannia, and ask her to consider the circumstances of the fire, the alarm and consternation, and say that I was sorry one of my boys had stepped on her toes, but more sorry he didn't put the vessel and all in the "lock up" for trial. You didn't know all this when you wrote. How very unkind of you to permit *any occurrence* to arouse you to such a pitch of anger, as to propose that Mrs. Britannia should fly at me, to destroy me, while my dwelling, my family and my all are at stake in the dreadful conflagration!

MRS. HAIL COLUMBIA.

AMERICA, Dec. 28, 1861.

The Opening of Madagascar.

While we are too busy with our war to concern ourselves with foreign matters, a great change is going on in the African island of Madagascar, which the advent of a new king, RADAMA II, has thrown open to the Europeans who are hastening to take advantage of the extraordinary privileges granted them. The island has hitherto been closed to strangers, and the capital, regarded as a sacred city, was only visited at rare intervals by Europeans, but now foreigners have perfect liberty to establish themselves where they please, and commercial liberty is granted to all. This change of policy has induced many English planters to establish themselves in Madagascar, where the king has made large concessions of land, and the future prospects of the island are so satisfactory that the French planters of the Mauritius already think of sending to it part of the emigrants destined for their colony. RADAMA is also making great reforms for his own people, and contrary to what might have been expected, encounters no opposition. He has already given encouragement to education and the useful arts, and has abolished the penalty of death. The promises made by him will be kept, since long before his accession to the throne his excellent sentiments were known and esteemed.

For this change in the policy of Madagascar we are largely indebted to two Frenchmen, M. M. LABORDE and LAMBERT, who have induced the King to make the island a free kingdom and assure to it all the advantages of modern civilization, by which foreigners would be the first to profit. The opening of this kingdom is scarcely second in importance to the unsealing of Japan, and, considering the more substantial value of the concessions made to foreigners, it might even be placed before that.

The history of the past relations of Madagascar to the civilized world, is singularly like that of Japan in many respects. There, as in Japan, Christians with their religion, at one time favored, have at another been subjected to the most bitter and relentless persecution, until scarce a foothold was left for them in the island; and any favor shown to them or their religion, on the part of its inhabitants, was cruelly punished as treason of the worst kind. But the cross is again in the ascendant, thanks to the enlightened policy of King RADAMA II, this magnificent island kingdom of the East is brought in contact, as never before, with the western world. A new field is thus opened to enterprise, of which Americans should not lose sight, however much the attention demanded by home affairs.

Not only to the commercial world is this introduction to Madagascar interesting, but to the scientific man and the naturalist, this new country offers a field such as has not been opened since Captain Cook's discoveries. There exists in its forest and inland lakes animals which may create a greater sensation when discovered than even the gorilla, and already are there in the British Museum, and the Museum at Berlin, the cast of eggs as large, or larger, than the human head, the originals of which, taken from the bank of a Madagascar river, are now in a museum in Paris; indeed, some sanguine naturalists hope yet to discover in the island the the original roc of the "Arabian Nights." An entire order of animals, the lemurs, are only found in Madagascar, one variety of which, the aye aye, is actually a monkey beaver. The vegetable productions are marvellous in their beauty. The dyes, gums, and medicinal plants are of great value and variety, while the unworked mineral treasures are immense.

Our Washington Correspondence.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 27, 1861.

It seems that the rebels, in their newspaper and telegraphic dispatches from Richmond, admit frankly that they were signally beaten at Drainsville. As this is the first time that they have admitted that they were beaten anywhere along the Potomac line it is undoubtedly true that they were very badly whipped. The Government regards this affair as one of the most important connected with the war, since its outbreak. It is the first time, since Bull Run, that our troops near Washington have showed that they were able to meet the rebels in a fair stand-up fight, and beat them. The rebels admit the battle lasted for several hours, and that they "retired" from the field. One of our most important Generals remarked, a day or two since: "It is the turning point of the war. The battle, in its dimensions, to be sure, was a small one, but in its results it will prove of incalculable value to the government. In the first place, our men fought long and well. It was no runaway affair on either side. The troops have found out, some of them at least, that they can beat back the rebels who fight under Johnston and Beauregard. Henceforth we shall see no panics or defeats on the Potomac."

Gen. McClellan has very frankly given his opinion that the Drainsville affair was an important advantage, and he as well as the President, awaited the rebel accounts of it that they might learn something of the extent of the disaster to the rebel troops. Mr. Chase says that a great battle in Kentucky, Missouri, or near Washington, within ten days, is worth five hundred millions to the Treasury, and he is doubtless right, especially if the danger of a foreign war can be honorably avoided. The effect of a decided Federal triumph just now, would be prodigious upon Congress, and especially upon the money-lenders.

The short session of the Senate yesterday, was duly improved by Senator Hale to make a furious war speech. Some people here say that it was prompted by hostility to the Administration. Whether this be so or not, the style of the speech does not meet with general favor here. Mr. Sumner's speech is interpreted by some as hinting strongly towards French mediation though there is strong evidence of the insincerity of Louis Napoleon in his course towards us.

The fire at the Government stables last night was a frightful one, and the scene was most sickening in its details. So far as the general effect was concerned, it was a magnificent spectacle. The night was as dark as pitch, and the flames from the burning hay rose in terrific sheets to a great height. An immense crowd of people was present, and numbers of distinguished men were attracted by it. The President and his family stood for a long time on the southern portico of the Executive mansion, watching the progress of the fire. The wretched horses, tied to the racks, were many of them smothered by the smoke before the fire touched them, and were thus an easy prey to the advancing flames. A large number of horses broke away, and this morning, squads of cavalry are chasing them down. The origin of the fire is not certainly known, but it is generally believed that the secessionists of Washington had something to do with it.

I need hardly say that Congressman Ely was last night, the lion of our city. As the "latest arrival from Richmond," he was pursued by all the public men and news-mongers. Yet he says very little about Richmond and the Rebel Government. His views have been evidently somewhat modified by his long confinement in a Richmond prison. He is not so confident of quelching the rebellion as he was last summer, just before his capture at Bull Run. He has apparently suffered but little, physically, during his long imprisonment, as he looks as well as ever. He never was a hale, hearty looking man, but ever since he was elected to Congress, a thin, dead, cadaverous looking man. He is as short as he is thin, and is not a fine specimen physically speaking, of the American Congress. Mr. Ely is very urgent in his endeavors to institute measures for an exchange of prisoners between the rebels and our Government. He represents the condition of the Union prisoners at the South to be wretched in the extreme, and that they are all heart-sick with hope deferred.

The Government still holds back in the business of exchanging prisoners. The trouble is in making any agreement with the rebels—in *negotiating* for the exchange. The Government is very obstinate, and demands to be recognized *as a Government*. Our Government will not consent to this. The feeling in Congress is very strongly in favor of an exchange. OVID.

The Burnside Expedition.

Special Correspondence of the Sun.

ANNAPOLIS, Dec. 22, 1861.

In my letter of yesterday's date, I gave you a brief description of the external appearance of things here. As to gathering any actual *news*, the attempt is a fruitless task. No one knows, or seems to know, when the portion of the expedition fitting out at this place will start to join that collected at Fortress Monroe, but the indications yesterday and today are, that all may be ready within a week.

There is much bustle and apparent pressure of business at Gen. Burnside's headquarters, and since Friday last our fleet of transports and gunboats has increased to 20. This afternoon Gen. Burnside issued an order that none of the officers or crew belonging to the Government vessels should hereafter go ashore without a permit from him, the Asst. Adjutant-General or Quartermaster. Hitherto free communication with the shore and the camps has been allowed, and the officers and crews of all the vessels have very freely availed themselves of the privilege. Apart from the matter of discipline, the chief object of the order probably is to keep all hands at their posts in readiness to act promptly when the General's preparations are completed.

Definite information as to the destination of the expedition cannot, of course, be obtained, but the belief is general, and grows stronger, that it will perform a part in Gen. McClellan's campaign plan in Virginia, and commence its operations at no great distance from Fortress Monroe. But whatever be the first point of attack, the soldiers encamped here are eager for active service. The total number of troops now at Annapolis, including the Rhode Island Artillery, which arrived this afternoon by railroad, is about 12,000. Besides the R. I. A., there are 13 regiments—five from Massachusetts, the 21st, 23d, 24th, 25th and 27th; three from Connecticut, the 8th, 10th and 11th; two from Pennsylvania, the 11th and 51st; two from New York, the 51st and 53d, or D'Epineuil Zouaves, and the Ira Harris Cavalry.

I have visited the camps of nearly all, and found the men in fine health and good spirits. In some, there is not a single case of sickness, but the weather has been remarkably fine and favorable to health. In another letter I will note down my impressions and observations of military camps. Here, however, I may remark that the camp of the New York 51st Regiment presents an attractive holyday appearance, from the evergreen decorations around the tents.—In front of the first line of tents are several large arches, the centre one bearing the number of the regiment, and underneath it the word "UNION." The Connecticut 10th, encamped just opposite, have also decorated their camp for Christmas.

Much interest is felt in all the regiments about the course of our Government in regard to the Mason Slidell affair with England. Upon visiting a camp, almost the first question asked is about this subject. The New England men seem to be most rabidly opposed to yielding to any demand for the surrender of the two traitor emissaries. Perhaps, if our Government can keep the affair an open diplomatic question until its armies secure a few important victories it would be free to act independently of popular clamor.

The Butler Expedition.

Special Army Correspondence of the Sun.

CAMP CHASE, Lowell, Mass., Dec. 25, 1861.

Orders came from General McClellan, this morning, to wait for further instructions before moving, consequently, although the steamer Constitution is all ready for a start, and the energy of our Quartermaster's Department has put everything in proper condition, we may be here for some time to come. I suppose that the belligerent attitude of England has caused this change of plan, and it may be that this division of the army will not see the Sunny South at all, nor enjoy the hospitalities of Ship Island, nor be welcomed by the sons of Louisiana "with bloody hands to a hospitable grave."

Capt. Read's squadron of Mounted Rifle Rangers feel very restive; the horses have gone on, and so have some of the men, and one of the principal officers; the confinement and monotony of camp life becomes very irksome after a time, especially to volunteers. This squadron now numbers about one hundred and ninety picked men, all of them intelligent and educated, and remarkably well drilled. They are armed with Sharp's rifles, Colt's revolvers and sabres, and equipped in the most superior manner. The captain is a Christian and a gentleman, and the 2d captain an officer in the regular army, well posted in everything appertaining to cavalry and the needs of the men.

Capt. Read has shown great energy and judgement in forming this corps, and the success had been commensurate with his expectations. An officer of the regular army, watching the drill a few mornings since, said he never saw better evolutions made by regulars, and that he would rather be commander of the Rangers than any other body of men he knew of. The Lieutenants are a "first rate set of fellows," and indeed all of the officers are "just the thing," and very popular with the men.

We are having a very calm and pleasant Christmas Day, although the hurry, bustle, and momentous news, has caused the goose, turkey, etc., to be left out; nobody seems to care much, as our rations are always excellent and abundant; we have good tents and stoves, plenty of fire wood, and of course any quantity of good company. There seems to be more meerschaum pipes and "Killikanick" tobacco in this camp than I ever saw before, and it shows good taste, when one does smoke, to use the best materials of course.

Ladies visit our camp every day, and mince pies, roast chickens, fresh butter, etc., are by no means uncommon luxuries with us—some of the ladies of Lowell occasionally visit our tents, mend the soldiers' clothing, and cheer and encourage them in their duties. The Rangers, wherever they go, will remember with gratitude the favors shown to them by the able and energetic Assistant Quartermaster at this post, Lieutenant W. O. Fiske; he has done his utmost to make them in *every* way comfortable, and is personally a gentleman of the most genial and hospitable disposition.

There are now in this camp, the 12th Maine and Bay State Regiments, 1st Maine Battery, Capt. Durivage's Light Cavalry, and Capt. Read's squadron of Mounted Rifle Rangers. By the way, among the Rangers are several men who saw service in the Mexican war, and some old Texan Rangers. I hear of nothing important occurring in Lowell—the sleigh riding is quite good, and the merry bells jingle in the camp from morning till night, as visitors come and go. Well, "duty calls me" so for the present, *au revoir*. IRIS.

Later from Port Royal.

Special Correspondence of The Sun.

HILTON HEAD, S. C., Tuesday, Dec. 24th, 1861.

Since my last, of the 20th inst., there has but little transpired here of special interest. We have now almost daily communication with Beaufort, and reports reach us of six rebel prisoners taken by our picket there. Apparently rebel valor is taking fearfully, and they are cautiously creeping back to the dread locality, and preparing to make some show of a stand on the mainland. The village of Bluffton is reported to be occupied by our troops.

On the 18th inst., the steamer Mayflower, Capt. Phillips, ascending Beaufort river in order to reconnoitre around the island and ascertain the depth of water in the river, discovered a rebel battery on the mainland, which opened fire upon the steamer at but a few [illegible]. The Mayflower returned a brisk fire with a small 6 pounder with which she is armed, while a detail of 50 of the 8th Michigan regiment kept up a hot fire of musketry, the steamer at the same time retiring as fast as possible from such close quarters. But a few shots were exchanged, and the Mayflower after grounding once, managed to beat a retreat, receiving one shot through her bow which did no serious damage. No one was injured on our side, whether the rebels suffered at all is unknown, but while the steamer retreated in our direction they retreated in theirs. The battery was masked and mounted two six pound guns, and the Mayflower running near the shore was upon it before being aware of its existence. The object of the reconnoissance was accomplished, and Capt. Phillips reports only nine feet of water at high tide, in some parts of the river; also that the rebels were obstructing the river with scows loaded with stones and live oak logs.

On the 16th inst., the gunboats Pawnee, Pembina and Vixen, left here to reconnoitre North Endisto and Stono river, and returned to Port Royal on the 22d inst. They ascended the Stono river to within eleven miles of Charleston. They met with no resistance, the rebels flying on all sides at their approach, deserting their homes and leaving everything. The object of the movement was fully accomplished. The health of the troops here is improving. The weather is becoming a little cooler, and the air more bracing, dispelling fevers and epidemics.

Winter is gently giving us a few hints of his claims to the month of December, not with the rude and boisterous blasts with which our northern winter heralds his approach, but with pleasant cool autumn days he reminds one that thicker clothes and an overcoat would be comfortable.

The new dock is being constructed here as rapidly as possible under the supervision of Col. Serrell, of the Engineers. In the meantime the large fleet of transports discharge their cargoes very slowly by means of lighters. Many of them have been for a long time, and still are lying idle, awaiting means of landing their cargoes and the erection of sheds to store them—the which two hundred mechanics and laborers are erecting as rapidly as possible. Why the Government should send such a fleet of vessels, with cargoes that are of no immediate use and cannot be landed, merely to pay an extravagant storage upon the goods, in vessels costing $1,000, some of them $2,000 per day to charter, is a question involving too much speculation for your correspondent to enter upon.

On the 22d inst., our pickets at Buckingham ferry were fired upon by the rebels, but no one was injured. With this exception everything has been quiet about Hilton Head.

It is becoming a serious question what is to be done with the negroes here; they show no desire to go to work, nor has Gen. Sherman any authority to make them work, unless they voluntarily offer their services. They have certainly been very busy in digging the potatoes and gathering all kinds of food, hiding it for their own support, and as long as this lasts they will not work, but as soon as it is consumed they will come trooping into our lines, an army of men, women and children, whom Government will have to feed, clothe and shelter, and just at a time, too, no doubt, when their services are not wanted. There is no doubt but that this negro labor would prove by far the most expensive in the end. Out of 325 negroes coming into our lines, only 65 were able-bodied laboring men; the rest were women and children. The southerners, of course, can make this labor more profitable than we, as they make both the women and children labor in the field like the men; but for us to obtain the services of 65 negroes, equal to the services perhaps of half the number of whites, 260 women and children must be supported. It is perhaps but a charitable conclusion that these negroes have become so unsettled in their minds by the wondrous and almost incredible change in their lives that has come upon them suddenly from abject, bondage and harsh masters, to apparently perfect freedom and their own masters, that it is no wonder, perhaps, that they cannot realize their position and settle themselves to work. Besides this, I verily believe that many of these imprudent negroes have no other idea of freedom than laziness, nor will they work until hunger compels them, nor do they seem to have any idea of our ever being compelled to leave them, and their own return to the whip of the master. They seem to look upon the Yankees with a feeling of reverence as their deliverers and superiors of their masters, they have a very good idea of the pleasures of being free and one's own master, but a very dim and vague idea of the responsibilities of the many negroes with whom I have conversed, only one appeared to me to have a true appreciation of his position. He told me that he had looked for this day ever since he was a little child only so high, and he had waited for it and longed for it and looked forward to it, as the day that would free him from the whip of his master and the too heavy labor imposed upon him. After many years of hope and expectation it had come at last, finding him an old man, but even then it was welcomed, and he felt that he still had strength and energy left to gain his own living, and a trifle to help him in the freedom of his old age from the man who had sold in his youth. This he told me, but clothed with his own homely and imperfect diction, and his kindling eye as he spoke betrayed more intelligence and soul than is generally allotted to the negro—an intelligence which has been carefully kept darkened by ignorance, for fear that it would prompt some act of rebellion against injustice and cruelty—and as I observed his endeavors to clothe his earnest meaning in proper language, and looked upon the poor old man who had waited so patiently and toiled and hoped, and waited so long, I felt more affected than I would readily admit. "MONTAUK."

Annapolis—Its People and Its Streets.

(Special Correspondence of the Sun.)

ANNAPOLIS, Dec. 28, 1861.

A stay of a few days at this place has not increased my admiration of the capital of Maryland. To a New Yorker, who has not previously travelled beyond the free state line, the contrast between the active life of the Empire City and the entire absence of it in Annapolis is very striking. Indeed, I may characterize the feeling produced by a walk through the streets as oppressive. Not even the presence of a Government fleet of some thirty vessels, and the collection in and around it of an army of some 12,000 men, can stir its regular inhabitants into the least show of enterprize.

A stranger, knowing no more of Annapolis than that it was the site of the U. S. Naval Academy, and has been made, since the rebellion commenced, the theatre of extensive naval and military preparations, would be likely to ask himself, as his first question on entering the city, "How came Government to select this place for such destinations?" There are two government wharves, at which, however, only vessels drawing a light draft of water can load or unload. Troops brought here by water are landed by means of a barge and a little steamtug, and they must be re-embarked in the same way. This little tug, the only one in port, plies about day and night, among the transports carrying orders from the General, communicating with the officers of the government vessels, and giving directions to incoming vessels as to anchorage, &c. It also does duty in towing alongside the schooners and coal boats from which the expeditionary fleet are now daily receiving the complement of their supply of water and coal.

And here I may remark that even if the order to embark the troops were given tomorrow, it would, I believe, with the means at hand, require two or three days to complete the embarkation. There may, however, be resources which I have not yet discovered. The Generals displays great activity, going around frequently to direct and hasten operations, and his prompt, business-like manner, added to his personal appearance, make him a *general* favorite. I have heard soldiers remark:—"He is just the kind of man we would like to fight under."

As you leave the ship in a row boat, to go ashore, your first disappointment is met at a long pier, running out from the little pentagonal fort, at the south end of the Academy grounds, which is supposed to have been erected for a harbor defence, but in which a rifled cannon shot would easily open a new port hole. You think you can land at the pier, but upon pulling up to it, you find it in such a state of dilapidation as was the Treasury of the United States when Cobb [illegible] loyd had completed his "plunder" [illegible]orous career in Washington. Sam Cannon tell, but it about as useful to him now as some others of his southern expenditures. Finding a landing some distance above it, you pass into the spacious and well gravel Academy grounds, their beauty, however, being much spoiled by the tread of horses and armed men—the Academy buildings being converted into barracks for soldiers and quarters for the officers. Here again the thought arises that Uncle Sam has spent a great deal of money among an undeserving and ungrateful people—as the features of Secessia are very distinctly marked here, where a rebel Legislature attempted to coerce the loyal Governor and Union men of Maryland into submission to their treason. Now a Union Legislature meets in the State House, and Maryland still enjoys, so far as her secret and open traitors will let her, the benefits and blessings of being within the Union. When the war ceases and the Naval Academy buildings are tenantless, when Annapolis is left to itself, the decay which has already seized upon the city will be rapid and destructive, unless a new element of free enterprise be introduced. I have not yet seen a full specimen of "the peculiar institution" and of the blighting effects of Secession, but I can form some idea of it from what I have seen and have not seen in Annapolis.

You ask me to describe the city, and I frankly tell you my powers of description are not equal to the task. Why? because there is nothing in it, when you take the soldiers out of sight to indicate that it is a *living city*—though a state capital of an old state. You enter the city from the Academy grounds, and at once you begin to wonder where the *people* are. It is half past eight o'clock in the morning, and until you reach the head of the street leading to the State House, you meet only soldiers, orderlies on foot or horseback, and army wagons passing to and from the camps. Not a native is to be seen, except an occasional "contraband" who seems to be out of doors by accident. The doors are all closed, you look at the windows, but see no one curiously peering through them. Follow the train of soldiers until you have reached the limits of the city, and the appearance is the same, except that at other times of the day you may see a group of three or four young men standing at the door of one or other of the few dirty stores on the line, with their hands stuck half way into their pantaloons pockets, and their eyes wearing something like a concealed expression of hate as soldiers or strangers pass by. The spirit of "Secessia" speaks through their countenances. You turn back and wander through other streets—and you wonder as you look at the houses if they are inhabited, and if so, whether their inhabitants ever come out. The doors are shut, even most of the stores—and such stores!—have their doors shut. No one at the windows; no eager eyes upon you from partially withdrawn curtains; no one in the streets but the occasional negro, or an occasional couple—they generally go in pairs—of white natives of the male sex, with their hands in their pockets, looking as if they had no business to be out and felt most uncomfortable all over. Why this habit of keeping just the fingers of the hands in the pockets, I cannot explain—perhaps it is because they know no better way of using them, or it may indicate that as they dare not now put them to Uncle Sam's throat, they keep them but half confined to show their readiness to use them if a chance offered. Your Yankee, when he does plant his hands in his pockets, puts them down with a loving freedom that plainly says, "I have use for you"—both hands and pockets. The only civil persons you meet in your walk are the slaves. They salute you politely, and by their salute you know them from the free negroes, who, however, while they omit the salutation, meet you with a pleasant countenance. You wish to purchase certain articles, and you look for stores in which they may be obtained. It is a chance if you find them without inquiring, and when you have found them, it is a chance if they have the article you want. One of the doctors of the 11th Connecticut Regiment exhausted the stock of three apothecary shops in procuring three-quarters of a pound of a very common article used in medical preparations.

You inquire for the Post Office, and having found it in a narrow room of an old two story brick building, you find the door closed, if it be earlier than 9 A.M. You wait until half past, and then you can buy stamps—none being procurable elsewhere. You ask for letters or papers, and as the clerk has not time to look himself, you are allowed to go inside and make search among a pile thrown aside as not called for. The order in that office is "immense." Perhaps you expect a letter by the morning mail—that is not in until half past ten. The steward of your boat is along with you, and he thinks he will employ the time until the mail arrives in going down to the market, having heard there was one. He goes, and finds only an empty shed, of not very large dimensions. The colored man who is sweeping the boards of the floor informs him that the market is closed at 9 o'clock, and does not open until next morning. He is, however, directed to a store close by, "where he can get everything he wants" in the meat and poultry line. He pushes through a narrow door into a dark, dirty, confined store, and there finds that the astonishing number of *three* turkeys are yet unsold, which the storekeeper, after a long apparently mental calculation, and with a decided secesh air, informs him he can have for "one—dollar—and—seventy-five cents a piece." We return to the Post Office. The door is again closed. The mails are in, but they will not be distributed until near 12 o'clock. So we saunter round the streets looking for something, but seeing nothing that we did not see on our first tour. Yes, we do observe now that the streets run circularly and at angles of various degrees around the City Hall, and that they branching off towards the water follow straighter lines. The streets are narrow—few of them paved, and would be dirty, if the principal part of the city were not situated on a gentle ascent, sloping to the bay. Here and there you meet with some cutting and a piece of sidewalk laid with brick. But these, like the houses, exhibit the general progress of neglect and decay. There are some two hundred that still preserve an appearance of being living habitations, but they are few. There are others, upon which their owners must once have looked with pride, but their present decrepit appearance betokens only the wasted wealth and false ambition of their possessors. The mark of "the institution" is upon them.

But we are again on the road to the camps.—There is life here. We see the happy, fearless faces of freemen. We join the living stream, but our visit to the camps must be written of in another letter.

News from the South.

Fortress Monroe, Dec. 27.—A flag of truce went this morning to Craney Island.

Considerable excitement prevails at Yorktown, Va., in anticipation of an attack. All the sick were removed on the 21st, by order of General Magruder.

The publication of the Norfolk DAY BOOK was suspended yesterday, for the want of a supply of paper. A copy of today's issue was brought down by the flag of truce.

The DAY BOOK learns that General Scott had arrived in New York; that he left England at the request of the English authorities, and that they were about to declare war against the United States.

A dispatch dated Nashville, the 25th, says that Tom Crittenden, with 12,000 men, was within forty miles of Hopkinsville, and would advance upon that place at three points. The southern rights citizens there are sending their families and stock to the South.

The banking house, a branch of the Northern Bank of Kentucky, at Glasgow, was taken possession of by the rebels on the 21th. Only $7,000 in Kentucky bills were found.

John G. Davis, a member of the Union Congress from the Seventh district of Indiana, has arrived at Hopkinsville, on his way to Richmond, but for what purpose it is not stated.

A force of not less than sixty thousand men, the advance of Gen. Buell's Union army, has crossed Green river, and is within five miles of General Hindman's advance. Great preparations have been made for the defence of Bowling Green, which show a terrible conflict to be impending.

LATER FROM THE SOUTH.

Fortress Monroe, Dec. 28, via Baltimore, Dec. 29.—A flag of truce brought four passengers from Norfolk this afternoon.

The following news is in the Richmond papers:—

Intelligence from Bowling Green states that appearances do not indicate an engagement, although unforeseen circumstances might precipi-

Charleston, Dec. 27.—The Courier [illegible] ge of this morning, states that some Yankee gunboats exchanged a few shots with the Cole Island battery yesterday.

Dispatches received from Charleston state that a Federal fleet of twelve gunboats had passed up to White Point, on North Edisto, and made demonstrations on Gen. Evans's forces. Reinforcements were sent to Gen. Evans and a battle was expected.

Demonstrations had also been made at other points. The North Carolina batteries disabled a few Federal gunboats on Tuesday last. Five Federal steamers anchored off Cole Island last night, and a battle was expected every hour.

Augusta, Ga., Dec. 27.—It is reported here that the steamer Gladiator had entered a Confederate port with large quantities of arms, ammunition, &c.

The Richmond EXAMINER says that a painful rumor was in circulation that a gentleman of that city, holding a commission in the army of the Potomac, had committed suicide by shooting himself through the head.

From Missouri.

Palmyra, Mo., Dec. 29.—Yesterday General Prentiss with 450 men encountered and dispersed 900 rebels, under Colonel Dorsey, at Mount Sion, Boone county, killing and wounding 150, and capturing 35 prisoners, 95 horses and 105 guns. Our loss was only 3 killed and 4 wounded.

The rebels burned another train on the North Missouri railroad, yesterday, and they say that they intend to destroy all the cars on the road, so to prevent its being used.

Increased Good Order at Washington.

Washington, Dec. 28th.—Within the past week fewer officers and privates are seen about the drinking houses than heretofore, the orders being more strictly enforced in the matter of granting passes.

An improvement has also been made in the military street police, and the recent introduction of mounted guards afford a remedy against unnecessarily fast driving.

Contraband Question.

St Louis, Mo., Dec. 28.—The legal condition of the negroes discharged yesterday, by order of the Provost Marshal is in no wise changed. They are only freed from confinement and sale on the presumption that they are slaves. Gen. Halleck says that this order will not debar any one from enforcing his legal rights to the services of these negroes. Such rights, if any exist, can be enforced through the loyal civil t