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CONGRESS.—In the U. S. Senate, yesterday, the Secretary of War, in reply to Mr. Sumner's resolution of inquiry, stated that the Department had no information in relation to the sale of colored freemen captured by the Confederates. Mr. Hale submitted a bill for the abolition of the grade of medical officers in the U. S. navy. The resolution of Mr. Bayard, in relation to the arrest and imprisonment of citizens of Delaware, was discussed at much length, but was not finally acted upon. A motion to lay the resolution on the table was rejected, ayes 3, nays 40.

The House of Representatives was engaged during most of its session in discussing the bill for the admission of Western Virginia into the Union as a State. The vote on the bill will be taken at one o'clock to-day. The bill offered by Mr. Stevens to amend in some minor particulars the tax bill, was passed.

The financial bill introduced into the House of Representatives by Mr. Stevens, chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, provides for the issue, by Mr. Chase, of a thousand millions in U. S. bonds, similar in amount and form to those authorized by the act approved February 25, 1862, with interest payable semi-annually in the lawful money of the U. S., and the principal payable in twenty years in gold or silver coin of the U. S.; also, to issue legal tender notes of the U. S., the amount not to exceed, with those already authorized, five hundred millions, to enable him to call in all the five-twenty and seven-thirty treasury bonds now in circulation and cancel them, and authorizing him to redeem the U. S. legal tender notes held as a loan and bearing interest. The law authorizing such loans is to be repealed. The bill also provides for the imposition of a tax of fifty per cent. upon all bank circulation over one-half the amount of their capital paid in, to go into operation ninety days after the passage of the bill.

Mr. John R. Thompson, formerly editor of the Southern Literary Messenger, but now acting as special correspondent at Richmond for several Southern papers, writes to the Grenada (Miss.) Appeal, on the appointment of Gen. Burnside to the command of the army of the Potomac, and says that three months ago Gen. B. said if this war should become a war for the extermination of slavery, he would resign—but intimates that he has reconsidered his determination.

Gen. McClellan is accompanied in his visit to Washington by his aids, Lieut. Colonels Switzer and Hudson. The party stops at Willards'.

It is said that Walter Bowie, and some others, recently made their escape from the Old Capitol prison in Washington.

The War in Virginia.

OPPOSITE FREDERICKSBURG, }
December 8, 10 A. M. }

It is still intensely cold, with two to four inches of ice in the Potomac and Rappahannock to-day.

Any movement involving the probability of fighting is considered by our Generals impossible during this inclement weather. Every wounded man would die. With great fires, log houses, and embanked palisades under their tents, the troops keep tolerably comfortable.—It is reported that two or three intoxicated men froze to death last night.

All the reports that some of our forces have crossed the river are premature. We have not thrown a man across the Rappahannock, or attempted it.

Maj. Gen. Lew. Wallace will probably be ordered to duty with this army.

Gen. Pope's official statements in regard to Gen. Sigel excite great indignation through the army. Gen. Sigel is held in high esteem among our best officers.

HEADQUARTERS RIGHT GRAND DIVISION, }
December 8, 10 A. M. }

Owing to the greatly diminished length and breadth of the girth of camp fires, visible night before last, the impression was prevalent that the enemy had fallen back to a new position, some distance to the rear of the former line of their encampments.

The immense volumes of smoke, however, that arose last evening on the opposite side, above the hills overlooking Fredericksburg, and seeming to extend for miles in a western and northwestern direction, demonstrated that the presumed retrograde movement, it made at all, was meant only to bring them under better shelter in the ravines between the first and second range, and in the woods upon the latter, from the piercing northwest winds prevailing since day before yesterday.

The apparent fact of the continued presence of the great body of the Confederate army in front of the right grand division can be but gratifying to General Burnside, for reasons that will be developed in a few days.

The range of the Confederate encampments in a western direction having evidently been extended within the last few days, it is presumed that Stonewall Jackson, with his force, has taken position on the extreme left.

The intense cold of the last forty-eight hours is confining everybody not on out-door duty inside of houses, tents and huts. The freezing winds render it impossible to keep comfortable and both officers and men suffer.

The inhabitants pronounce the present severe weather so early in the winter an extraordinary phenomena, and believe it will not last long. It may delay the movements of the army.

Remarkable quiet prevailed throughout the army yesterday. In Fredericksburg the striking of the town clock alone relieved the desolation settled upon the town.

In connection with the British bark *Blanche*, the Madrid Government has demanded that the extent of six miles from the coast of Cuba shall henceforth be considered to constitute Spanish waters.

The McKinstry court martial at St. Louis has been two months in progress, and is a wearisome thing for the members. They have a trying time of it. The developments are unearthing a good deal of jobbing in army blankets, army horses, etc. The jobbers, great and small, are legion.

The New York Sun states that Jas. Gordon Bennett is to retire from the Herald on the 1st of January next, and that the management will probably devolve upon James Gordon Bennett, junior.

Capt. Waterman, who has returned from the wreck of the *Golden Gate*, reports that Mexicans residing in the neighborhood saved \$150,000 worth of treasure. Other treasure boxes are doubtless buried in the sand below the low water mark, and may be found by chance rather than intelligent search. The employees of the Wrecking Company are continuing to work with diving apparatus.

A Washington correspondent of the Tribune, alleging that the failure in the arrival of the pontoon train at Falmouth "in time" delayed Burnside's army at least a month, says that Congress is about to investigate it, so as to fix the responsibility where it justly belongs.

The Oxford (Miss.) News of Thursday says "the Confederates under General Jackson's command, the rear guard of the enemy, had a skirmish that morning with the Federal advance near the town. The main body of the Confederate army, 40,000 strong, passed through Oxford twelve hours before. The number of the sick and wounded is said to be very large."

It is alleged that the court of inquiry into the conduct of Gen. Buell during his recent western command, has removed its sessions from Indianapolis to Nashville. We learn that this court refused Gen. Buell's application that it might sit with open doors, and at first proposed to require of him an oath that he would not divulge any portion of its proceedings. This oath he declined taking. The demand for the oath in question, on receiving his reply, was waived.

The North Carolina House of Commons have unanimously passed resolutions, declaring the separation of the Confederate States from the United States final, that North Carolina will contribute all her resources to the Confederate cause, and expressing confidence in the administration of the Confederate states and of North Carolina.

Repairs to the *Great Eastern* are about completed. She will be ready in a few days to resume her trips to Liverpool. The date of her departure will shortly be announced.

The correspondent of the Philadelphia Inquirer writes from Falmouth, "the great cry in the army, now, is for the Paymaster, both by the officers and men. Some of the regiments have not been paid off for at least ten months, many six months. In consequence of this, there is a great deal of suffering, especially among the officers."