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OFFICE—No. 104 King street, over Stone's, (formerly French's) Book Store.

U. S. CONGRESS.—In the Senate yesterday, the House bill, known as the Currency bill, was reported from the Finance Committee with amendments in regard to taxing State Banks. The bill "to repeal all acts or parts of acts, for the rendition of fugitives from service or labor," was debated.

In the House of Representatives the Internal Revenue bill was under consideration.—The tax on domestic spirits was increased from sixty cents to one dollar per gallon, from and after the 1st of May. At the evening session a bill to reimburse the State of Pennsylvania for expenses incurred, in repelling invasion, was considered.

The Richmond Enquirer announces "all ready" for the approaching conflict of arms, and says that "what man can do to prepare for the fearful day has been done, and the South, at least, stands ready, like the strong armed; the good man with his sword loose in the sheath, his harness bright, and his heart full strong. People and army feel alike that when the clash comes it will be a struggle for life or death." It adds:—"Numbers have not reduced the rebellious Confederates to loyalty; the blockade has not curbed their defiant treason; starvation has not humbled their proud spirit; and the fourth year of the war opens upon their armies numerous as those of the foe, as well drilled, and in better morale, and ready to test the virtue of the policy of concentration."

A fleet of war steamers went to sea from New York on Wednesday morning. The iron-clad Onondago left the Navy Yard early in the morning. The Vanderbilt, Navy Yard tug, and the Rose accompanied the iron-clad from the yard, the Mattabassett following shortly afterward. The fleet is to touch at Hampton Roads, and it is said that its orders are not to be opened until after its departure from that point. The Mattabassett is one of the twenty-seven double-enders, and sister ship to the Chenango.

Governors Brough, of Ohio, Morton, of Indiana, Stone, of Iowa, and Yates, of Illinois, have arrived in Washington. They have been in consultation upon public affairs as affecting the northwest, and are to have a conference today with President Lincoln. It is understood that they propose to raise a volunteer force of "two hundred thousand men, to serve for six months, who are to do frontier duty and enable the disciplined troops to go to the front."

All the sick of the Army of the Potomac have been sent to Washington.

In the recent attack on Plymouth the Federal gunboat Whitehead is reported to have been sunk by the Confederates.

An Alexandria, Louisiana, letter of the 9th states that the Confederates are burning all the cotton on the Red and Ouachita rivers.

THE CONFEDERATE LOAN.

The London Morning Post in its city article says the Confederate loan is about to be placed on a new basis, a combined French and English undertaking, in which the Confederate Government has an active interest, is in active formation, having for its object to organize a regular system of blockade-running from the various Confederate ports for the export of cotton. The capital is 500,000 pounds sterling. Shares are to be allotted only to the holders of Confederate bonds. The company's steamers are to take out cargoes to supply the wants of the Confederate Government. It is estimated that the whole of the bonds of the Confederate loan may be exchanged for cotton and produce expected from Southern ports within twelve months. The promoters of the company are stated to be gentlemen of capital and long versed in blockade running. The fastest steamers are to be employed, but, in order to reduce the risk, a very large cargo will not be entrusted to any one vessel.

MYSTERIOUS MURDER.—There was a mysterious case of murder at Georgetown on Wednesday night. A man named James H. Harrison, who was in the booth of Hillary Hutchins, at the fish wharf, at midnight, and left there with several others, was found within an hour or so afterwards lying at the corner of Potomac and Water streets, dead with three pistols shots in his body. The parties who were with him testify to leaving him on the street, though one (John Mister) mentions that as they walked down Water street, they met about fifteen soldiers, and deceased ran against or jostled one of them; but there is no testimony that any difficulty occurred, and the deceased appears to have walked on considerably further before being left by the comrades who testify. Two police officers testify to having heard three pistol shots, and one of them says a soldier came and told him of a man lying on the sidewalk, whom he found dead when he reached him.

Rev. A. H. H. Boyd, Philip Williams, esq., Hon. Robert Y. Conrad, and Messrs. A. S. Dandridge, and Nathan White are the names of the parties arrested at Winchester, Va., and now held at Wheeling as hostages for the release of Bechtol and Wheat, who were recently captured by the Confederates at Berkeley Springs, Virginia. Mr. Conrad was a prominent member of the Virginia Convention which passed the ordinance of secession, and was regarded as a Union man until the final vote was taken. Mr. Williams is a very prominent lawyer of Winchester, and Mr. Boyd is an eminent Episcopal minister of the same place. Messrs. White and Dandridge are from Jefferson county.

The New York News says: "A remarkable financial change has taken place here since the banks have been found unwilling to pay specie or legal tenders for their obligations. Bankers now buy and sell foreign exchange in gold currency; and bills on London command 10½ per centum advance therein."

Gen. Grant left Washington yesterday for the headquarters of the Army of the Potomac. Stirring times are anticipated, as it is understood that the campaign in Virginia is about to be commenced.

The Battle on the Red River.

There is very little additional from the Red River—nothing later. If any official report of the battle has reached Washington, it has not yet been made public. The Cairo dispatches are very conflicting, the news purporting to have reached there, through private letters, from privates in the Chicago Mercantile Battery. One of these letters state that

"Of our whole division, numbering three thousand men, but one thousand are left to tell the fearful odds against which they contended. Two regiments of the division were consolidated, and had in all fourteen hundred men and seven officers, the highest in rank being a Captain. The thirteenth corps checked the Confederates and held them for about twenty-five minutes, when they were forced to retire, which they did slowly, and as night came on the bloody conflict ended. The next evening Gen. A. J. Smith came up with his command and relieved Gen. Franklin and whipped the rebels badly. Twelve pieces of cannon were recaptured, and eight hundred prisoners taken."

A letter from another private in the same battery says: "Our corps (the thirteenth) were all cut to pieces, and we fell back to this place (Grand Ecore), five or six miles from the battle field, to organize. We lost twenty four pieces of artillery, all that were in the fight."

Still another letter says: "We get all sorts of reports from the front. The latest is that Gen. Smith whipped the Rebels, taking two thousand prisoners and eighteen guns. The expedition is no doubt broken up, and our troops are falling back."

Gen. Banks is mentioned as having been on the field on the 8th.

The Philadelphia Press regards it as probable that the Federal forces were defeated, but thinks that it is unlikely that the Confederate advantage was decisive. In respect to the later telegrams, announcing a Federal victory, the Press remarks, "We trust this may be found true; but no one has reason to be surprised or disheartened by news of a repulse in Northwestern Louisiana."

The New York World says: "The news from the Red river country has a very unpleasant look. Notwithstanding the semi-official contradiction of the disaster in that quarter, the balance of evidence would seem to indicate that our troops were severely repulsed in an attack upon Pleasant Hill; and that the expedition is for the present checked in its onward movement. If the reported loss of two thousand men is true, we fear the whole movement must be set down as a failure."

The Washington correspondent of the New York Herald writes that Gen. Butler has written a very spirited letter to a high public functionary, of which the concluding paragraph reads as follows:—"If the arrangement proposed be carried out, it would have the effect of making me a mere recording secretary for the will of Major General W. F. Smith, who would be the real commander. To this I cannot submit. The office of civil mayor of Old Point Comfort is not the sort of service for which I was mastered in. I therefore most respectfully demand either to be relieved altogether from my present position, or to have under the General-in-Chief, supreme control and direction of any military movements having their base within the limits of my department."