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DEFENCES OF NEW YORK.—The fort at Sandy Hook was commenced recently by the construction of buildings required in the prosecution of operations, and by grading and planking roads leading from the wharf to the site of the fort.

THE HIGH SEAS.—American vessels trading to foreign ports only, are registered in the custom-house, while those engaged in the coasting trade, between ports in our own country, are enrolled.

BOLLS CURED BY CREOSOTE.—Dr Lynch in the Eclectic Medical Journal, treating of boils as a kindred disease to Erysipelas, says: "In all cases, creosote is an effective local remedy."

"WHAT'S THE TRICK?"—Reader, did you ever, after asking this question, notice the different style in which it would be answered, according as the person interrogated, had a gold watch or a silver watch?

—The Louisville Journal says: We are happy to see that the Senate of Kentucky on Saturday purged itself by the expulsion of two notorious traitors, Dr. J. M. Johnson of Paducah, and W. T. Anthony of the Warren, Allen Edmondson District.

FRANCIS NAPOLEON.—It is pleasant to observe the thorough courtesy shown by the Prince Napoleon to Americans abroad. It seems that the hospitality shown to himself and wife while here, was fully appreciated, and has rendered him a fast friend to the United States.

A GREAT COUNTRY.—Were all the United States as densely inhabited as Massachusetts, it would have a population of 446,000,000, of which Texas would have 50,000,000.

—A new and very striking Balmoral has made its appearance. It is composed of black alpaca, with gold stripes about six inches apart. They are very much admired.

SALTPIETRE CAVE.—It is believed that we have salt-petre in the mammoth cave in Kentucky, and in other parts of the country, which if properly worked, will render us independent of England.

Ed. ARGUS: Somebody inflicts upon the readers of the Argus of March 22d, over the signature of + (a dagger tipped over) —not the editor, of course—two mortal columns of editorial matter, the premises of which consist of a strange medley of glaring statements and false assumptions.

I acknowledge the truth when I say I am ashamed of any person who should attempt to justify our Government, in this age and day, in excluding certain traitorous, maliciously-bent, newspapers from the post offices and mails upon the flimsy pretext set up by your would-be editor.

Now I submit whether the reverse of the above statement is not the naked truth, and not the statement itself. He says in a radical sense—that is, in strict principle, in theory, we have no freedom of the press; yet practically—that is, in every day practice, we have; that the checks and restraints of public opinion prevent our having a free press—while he does not intimate that anything prevents our having a free press on all occasions in practice.

Again, he says "public opinion in the Southern States" "has totally forbidden the discussion of the slavery question," yet had this privilege been allowed "it would have barren of any good results." I don't know what he means by good results;—though the next sentence implies that the progress of free principles would be good results. I agree with him there. But shall I agree with him that "the bare right to print and publish" anti-slavery doctrines (carrying with them the right to circulate, and read, and discuss the merits of every production, of course), if practiced in the slave States, would not have extended and established free principles in the mind and judgment of hundreds and thousands of the laboring masses in those States—to such an extent, even, as to have checked, ultimately, the spread and intensifying of the institution of slavery? Never; everybody knows the contrary—that such bare right of publishing, circulating, reading, and discussing anti-slavery questions in those States, would, if allowed and continued, even after commenced by Lovjoy in St. Louis, before he went to Illinois, ere this time have wrought such a salutary influence as in all probability to have entirely prevented the present most monstrous and atrocious rebellion. And this fact, I wish it to be noticed, is not what would have barely become possible; but it was sure to come, and the slaveocrats of Kentucky foresaw it as plainly as the writing on the wall presented itself to Belshazzar of old. Hence the mob that destroyed C. M. Clay's press and paper at Freeport, Kentucky.

But, says your would-be editor,— "To further illustrate: the abolitionists under twenty-five years ago commenced under the most favorable auspices," &c., and the most favorable amount of influence have spent "an immense amount of labor and talent" in the discussions, yet "no perceptible increase, either in numbers or influence, has taken place. Does any sane man make such a statement as that? Has he any recollection of the times when Joshua R. Giddings was expelled from the House of Representatives of Congress—and John Quincy Adams severely censured, under the infamous " gag resolutions" introduced by that dogface,

dirt-eater, James G. Atherton, of New Hampshire and sundry other fantastic tricks that were enacted in Congress about those times—and all in behalf of Slavery, and against Anti-slavery men—men who were then known, and are now acknowledged to have been among the purest and greatest men that ever lived? And then does your would-be editor say that the principles of those men have made no progress since that time? Could John P. Hale, Sumner, Potter, and Lovejoy be expelled from Congress now? The awakening sense of the nation was felt some six years since when Brooks, the slave-propagandist, was expelled from Congress for brutally beating a Senator for his anti-slavery speech. Now, however, they expel Senators and Representatives for assisting the rebellion, which is only assisting to perpetuate slavery, and seriously deliberate upon the propriety of expelling such as Powell, Stark, &c., who have only spoken in favor of the rebellion and against the "abolitionists." And there has been no change of public sentiment on this subject, has there? Well and truly did Mr. Seward say, in his Rochester speech (I think), that he could recollect the time when you could hardly find as many voters in the whole State of New York as then, 1858, were the members of Congress—each representing 93,420 inhabitants—who were each one of them up to the old standard of J. R. Giddings, J. Q. Adams, &c., &c., who were only copies of Washington, Lafayette, Madison, Adams, Henry, Jefferson, and Hamilton, whom your would-be editor thinks were so vehement. What is the legislation of the North, which shows the masses there are now less in favor of the distinctive tenets of that party (the old abolition, I suppose) than ever before.

Again, he says the ill-informed "modern democratic leaders, who are wilfully and ignorantly misleading their followers, imagine that because the slavery question is now much discussed, whereas formerly it occupied little or no attention, we are becoming more anti-slavery and radical," &c., &c. The whole of this sentence is a false assumption, if I read history, past and present, correctly. Our public men to-day are constantly quoting the language of Jefferson, Wesley, &c., &c., that slavery fosters barbarism—"is the sum of all villainies," &c., &c. Passing over some thirty more lines of the article, which are full of absurd and false assumptions, in my opinion, the writer truly says, "Our Government is in the midst of a struggle for its existence and authority." The rest of the article is quite passable. Then why not say, that for this very reason—because the Government is in this great emergency—when every man who is not for it is against it—and it is very important to have every man for it—and thus strengthen the hands of the government at home and abroad—for that reason and that alone is the government justified in temporarily suspending its benefits to its enemies.

Mr. Editor—I don't know whether you like poetry better than prose, but however I am going to write this here letter in prose, mostly that is, for I can't tell for certain but I may get sum little poetry in, as that kind of verse has seemed to kum nat. I spoke your subscribers will in time begin to feel sum curiosity about who I am, or rather who I am, and therefore I will tell them nigh the commencement of my career. I am a teacher in a little log school house down in the brush by a spring, and of somebody thinks this no which woe it is, I can tell them thore ar laboria under a mistake, and what is more I don't mean that shall no. In acknowledging that I belong to that class kollerd schoolmarm I hardly no whether I shall stand hier or loer in the scale or bin than koomon people, that depend on where the reeder or these letterz waz brought up, but be that as it may it cannot be denied that the deestrick skool teacher who bords around has an exelent opporehewitny tew see life in vurus positions and study karakter in meny different frazes. I experience sum difficulty in gettin a skool—the gratist obekshun that was razed was that I waz a woman, now you no sum people has a most erous noshun that wimmin dont no enything but I answered all three questions and I gess that will give up before the skool iz out that I no most az nuch as even me. Well, the next obekshun that found was that I did not spel korrkety, now I thought this was the foolishist won or all for I no sum or the smartist lawyers and doekter in the kuntry who kossider it small biznis tew pay enny atenshun tew spellia, and I prezume to say that when our skool-committee see that I am kompetent to rite for the papuz that woz enny more about my disqualifykashuns. The skollars like me and I like them, and we tharefore get along well, as mite be expected. I alwaze did like children, thare are the blossumz of ereshun. You must excuse my poetizn, for I cannot otherwise express my feelins.

I have the children, to be shure I dew. Thare alwaze look so kinder fresh and new. Thare harts and fawez open az the day. We alwaze kno the mren jest what they say. Yewer-twenty. UFFERYM. Muddy-nook, Feb. 28th.

863,933 feet of lumber was shipped from San Francisco to China, during 1861.

THE ERICSSON IRON BATTERY.—The following description of this battery, though written before it was launched, will doubtless be interesting to our readers from the fact that she met and defeated the iron-clad rebel steamer Merrimac after she had destroyed in severe, but unequal engagements the American wooden-walled steamers Cumberland and Congress.

The hull is sharp at both ends, the bow projecting and coming to a point at an angle of eighty degrees, the sides inclining at an angle of fifty-one degrees to the vertical line. It is flat bottomed, six and a half feet in depth, built light, of 3-8 iron, 124 feet long, and 34 feet wide at the top. Another or upper hull rests on this, with perpendicular sides, and sharp ends. This is 5 feet high, 41 feet 4 inches wide, 174 feet long, extending over the sides of the lower hull 3 feet 7 inches, and over each end 25 feet, thus serving as a protection to the propeller, rudder and anchor. The sides of the upper hull are composed of an inner guard of iron, a wall of white oak 30 inches thick, the whole covered with iron armor 6 inches in thickness. When in fighting trim, the lower hull is totally immersed, and the upper one is sunk 3 feet 6 inches, leaving only 18 inches above water.

The battery will then draw 10 feet of water. The interior is open to the bottom as in a sloop. The deck comes flush with the top of the upper hull, and is bomb-proof. There will be no railing or bulwark of any kind above the deck. The inclination of the lower hull is such that a ball to strike in any part must pass through at least twenty-five feet of water, and then strike an inclined iron surface at an angle of about ten degrees. It is therefore absolutely protected, yet so light as to give it great buoyancy.

The turret, within which two guns of the largest calibre are worked, consists of a cylinder 20 feet internal diameter, 9 feet high, composed of 8 consecutive rings, each one inch thick, all firmly bolted and riveted together. There are no horizontal joints, the plates lap over each other in such a manner as to present a single joint only at any one place. Including the interior skeleton to which the plates are attached, the turret presents an immense wrought iron cylinder, 9 inches thick, and weighing upwards of 100 tons. The top is covered with a shell-proof flat roof, six inches down the cylinder. It consists of forged beams covered with perforated plate iron. Several sliding hatchets, composed of 2 inch thick plate iron, gives access to the turret from above. The port holes are circular, and placed three feet above the deck. The guns will move on slides made of forged iron, extending across the turret; the carriages also composed of wrought iron, are made to fit the slides very accurately, these latter being planed for that purpose. The circumference of the turret rests on a turned composition ring inserted in the deck, but the weight is sustained principally by a vertical shaft ten inches in diameter, which rests in a cup supported by a bracket firmly bolted and braced to the main bulkhead of the vessel, about half way down. A spur wheel 6 1/2 feet in diameter, 11-inch face is attached to the turret shaft. By means of the spur wheel and intermediate gearing, actuated by a double cylinder engine, the turret will be turned, and the guns pointed to any direction. A rod connected with the reversing gear of the engine, passes through the vertical shaft and enables the person in charge of the guns to control the aim. For a contest with iron clad ships carrying the heavy ordnance recently devised in Europe, Capt. Ericsson proposes to dispense with two of the outer plate rings of the turret, and to attach in their place, staves of rolled iron 4 inches thick, thus presenting an aggregate thickness of 10 inches of plating, besides the internal skeleton.

In case it is boarded, no harm is done. The only entrance is at the top of the turret, which cannot easily be sealed, and even then but one man at a time can descend. Two Columbiads will be mounted on the turret, and a rest of the impregnability of the battery will be made in front of some large rebel battery, when if its offensive and defensive capabilities are satisfactory, it will be at once turned over to the Government.

The Monitor, which is the name of the new craft, was only launched on the 30th of January at N. Y. City, and on the 9th she encountered and defeated the Merrimac.

Her name we think has been well selected, as she will prove a Monitor, teaching stern lessons of experience to the rebels, or any others who may seek to bandy weighty arguments with her.

THE TRIAL OF THE BATTERY.

FORTRESS MONROE, March 9th.—The Confederate steamer Merrimac made her appearance yesterday, with two gun-boats near Norfolk, and made an attack on Newport News, and the vessels stationed there. The Merrimac was first seen from the ramparts of Ft. Monroe at 10 o'clock. Her sides, wheelhouses and stern, are covered with sloping iron plates, extending two feet below the roof of a house. On her above like the roof of a house were two sharp bows, above the water line were two iron points, resembling plows. From the bow were seen two guns projecting from long elliptical port-holes. The design of the enemy did not become apparent until after one o'clock, by which time the Merrimac got under weigh for the scene of action. Steamship Roanoke being disabled, was taken in tow by two gun-boats. The first shot was fired at two o'clock, from the frigate Cumberland. Sewall's Point battery then opened on the Merrimac, which was passing, and fired several guns. The Rip-Raps replied, and the engagement soon became general. After firing two guns the Cumberland was struck twice by the Merrimac's sharp bow armor,

making terrible holes in her below the water line. The Cumberland continued firing until the water entered her port-holes, when she careened slowly, and finally sunk. No apparent effect was produced on the Merrimac by the continuous firing from our batteries and vessels. The Merrimac having got aground on her way up, could afford but little assistance. Shortly after 3 o'clock, the rebel gun boats Yorktown and Jamestown arrived. The former being disabled early in the afternoon, put ashore for repairs.

After sinking the Cumberland, the Merrimac turned her attention to the frigate Congress, and in less than an hour the latter surrendered. Her officers and marines were taken prisoners, but the seamen were allowed to escape. The frigate St. Lawrence arrived here during the afternoon and immediately proceeded up the river, following the example of the Minnesota and Roanoke, firing on the battery at Sewall's Point, but, like the rest, the shots fell short. The gunboat Mystic also turned up, but at sundown the Roanoke, Mystic and St. Lawrence returned. The conflict between the Minnesota and rebel gunboats continued without apparent effect till dark. At midnight the Congress was burned by the rebels. During the evening, the iron clad steamer Monitor, Ericsson's new steam battery, arrived here, and proceeded to take part in the action. Reinforcements of men and ammunition were sent yesterday afternoon to Newport News. During the night only an occasional gun was fired.

This morning the conflict was renewed, until the presence of the Monitor became known to the Merrimac, when they engaged each other for two or three hours at long shot range, without perceptible effect on either side. The Monitor finally succeeded in forcing a large hole in the port side of the Merrimac, when the latter returned to Norfolk.

Lieut. Worden commanding the Monitor, was injured, but not dangerously it is supposed.

During the action all the rebel gunboats and batteries in reach directed their fire at the Merrimac, doing her some damage, and killing four or five of the crew. With the assistance of the Spaulding, the Merrimac finally got off, and was towed under the guns of Ft. Monroe. The naval authorities here are confident that the Merrimac was disabled. The Monitor proved herself impregnable to heavy shot at close quarters. She behaved remarkably well on her passage from New York, and although the sea completely covered her deck at times, her speed was not perceptibly diminished.

One rebel gun boat was cut in two by the Monitor without apparently hindering her speed.

The latest estimate of the number killed on the Congress, is 50, including 3 officers; 27 wounded, and 40 prisoners. The killed wounded and drowned on the Cumberland will probably reach 150. On the Whitehall, 4 are killed and three wounded. On the Minnesota 6 were killed and 17 wounded. On the Dragon, which received a shot in her boiler, 3 were killed. The Roanoke received only two shots, and was but little damaged. It is now generally believed that the Merrimac is seriously injured. The testimony of some of the seamen who saw her is, that she listed considerably as she went in to Sewall's Point.

The following item, is copied from Gen. Wool's official report. "The Chief Engineer of the Monitor says three balls from that vessel passed through the Merrimac. The Monitor was struck 33 times.

Assistant Secretary Fox having returned to Washington, from Ft. Monroe, reports the Merrimac badly injured in the two day's fight. She had a hole bored in her hull by the Monitor, and was leaking badly when she put back. The Cumberland's broadside on the first day of the fight, injured her so badly that she could not attack the Minnesota or Roanoke although both were aground. He considers it utterly impossible that she should go to sea, as she would immediately founder in an ordinary gale.

—A military order dated March 11th is as follows:

"Gen. McClellan having personally taken the field at the head of the army of the Potomac, is, until otherwise ordered, relieved from the command of the other military departments. It is further ordered that the two departments now under command of Gen. Halleck and Hunter, together with that part of Gen. Buell's department which lies west and north of the south line drawn through Knoxville, be consolidated, and be designated the department of the Mississippi, and until otherwise ordered, be commanded by Gen. Halleck. It is further ordered that the country west of the department of the Potomac, and east of the new department of the Mississippi, be a new department under the command of Gen. Fremont.

Gen. Pope's official report to Gen. Halleck, says that the victory at New Madrid was greater than at first reported. 25 pieces of artillery, 24 and 32 pounders, rifled; two batteries of field artillery, and an immense amount of fixed ammunition; an immense amount of small arms; 10 boxes of muskets and cartridges; 300 horse and mules; tents for an army of 12,000 men; and an immense quantity of other property. Not less than \$1,000,000 in value has fallen into our hands. The enemy left so hurriedly as to leave the officer's baggage, and the men's knapsacks, the dead unburied, and the supper on the tables. A storm raged the whole day on Thursday. Our lines were drawn close to the works, under a furious fire from 60 pieces of artillery. The fear of their works being assaulted by the night of Friday, induced them to fly precipitately. During the night many prisoners were taken, also the colors of several Arkansas regiments. Hollins was commander of their fleet of gunboats. Gen. Pope has 25 guns planted at the enemy's works, commanding every part of the river.

SELLING THEM OUT.—Some of the St. Louis seceders refuse to pay the tax that Gen. Halleck imposed upon them for the support of loyal women and children, who had been driven from their homes by the rebels. Accordingly the provost marshal has 15 advertisements in the papers of that city, offering to sell property he has seized to pay this tax. The seceders threatened to "spot" those who purchased at the sale, and have waxed wrothy over it, but have been rather cooled down. One man whose property was seized obtained an injunction to prevent the sale, and Gen. Halleck arrested and imprisoned all the parties concerned therewith—lawyer, judge, and constable—and ordered the party at whose instance it was made, to leave the State immediately and never to set foot in it again. No other injunctions were served.

"WHAT AILS JENNISSON AND MONTGOMERY?"—Col. Jennison, Kansas 1st Cavalry, is a small man, delicate constitution; a physician. His residence originally was Livingston county N. Y. When the border ruffian horde went into Kansas to elect the first Territorial Legislature, they passed his house. Jennison's wife and only child attracted by the cavalcade, went to the door, and while standing there, were both shot dead by the ruffians. "That's what ails Jennison, the Jayhawker."

Montgomery, is a Kentuckian—a mild, gentlemanly, highly educated man—a clergyman, and a graduate of Oberlin. When the border ruffians in one of their raids, reached Montgomery's home, they took him prisoner, tied him to a tree, and bringing out his wife—an educated accomplished lady and subjected her to the last, and most brutal indignity in the presence of husband, "And that's what ails Montgomery."

Paris letters state that in spite of all denial, it is well known that a large number of recruits are leaving in France for the United States. The old Garibaldi officers and volunteers, are all being organized for a speedy departure, and are only waiting for the orders of their chief to embark. This chief is a well known and gallant French officer, who after defending the barricades of the Republic in Paris, fought the battles of the Empire in the Crimea, he took service with Garibaldi, and is now in that of Victor Emmanuel, has given in his resignation, and was hurriedly expected in Paris.

Wm. D. Kingin was convicted in Michigan recently of a murder marked by very atrocious circumstances. In accordance with the law of the State, he was taken to the State Prison, there to endure solitary confinement for life. From the time he enters his cell—a grave for the living man—he will never see a human face again. His meals are conveyed to him through an opening in his cell, and when it becomes necessary for human beings to approach him, they are hooded so as to conceal their features.

Fowler and Wells are making a sensation in Ireland. In Belfast they lectured for ten nights in succession to crowded houses, and their rooms were thronged constantly with people waiting to have their bumps felt out. Four secretaries were constantly employed writing down delineations of character. The Belfast papers have enthusiastic accounts of their performances. They were to go from Belfast to Dublin.

A report by Capt. Dupont to the Navy Department concerning the sinking of the second stone fleet in Charleston harbor, shows that the work has been successfully accomplished. The statement that the first operation was a failure, and that vessels have gone easily into the harbor by the obstructed channel, are shown to be false. The place is now effectively sealed up.

Frank Blair has proposed to the House a bill to enforce the collection of Federal taxes, in the disloyal States. It makes the taxes in these states, a lien on all lands in them, if not paid within sixty days after the President's proclamation. The title to these lands to vest absolutely in the U. S.

Accounts from Accomac, and Northampton counties, on the eastern shore of Virginia, recently occupied by the Federal troops, represent the people as happy and prosperous. Even those who had been misled or driven into secessionism profess themselves satisfied with the protection of Uncle Sam.

Before the war began, there were in Missouri no less than 113,000 slaves. But such have been the ravages of guerilla bands and local spy committees, that it is said there remain but 35,000 slaves, or as one account has it, 10,000.

Mr. Holt, the predecessor of the present Postmaster General estimated that by telegraphic dispatches the Government lost annually \$1,000,000 of revenue.

A GAME.—Thurlow Weed writes from Europe, that the bluster of the Liberals in England is only designed to checkmate the Tories, who hoped to ride into power on the 'war-cloud.'