

IMPORTANT FROM BUREAU. THE PROBABILITY OF A WAR. ENGLAND REPUDIATES THE FRENCH MESSAGE.

We get advice from the North to the 2d instant, says the Richmond Examiner of the 6th. Through this channel we obtain more highly interesting intelligence from Europe in regard to affairs in this country. We make up from our advice the following summary:

England Contemplates a War in any Event.

Our advice from England say that an impression prevailed that England would go to war with the North in any event, and that her warlike preparations continued without abatement. The London Observer of the 23d of December (ministerial organ), says that England wishes for peace, but that she will gain it by war, as it will enable her to rectify her American frontiers, open the ports of the South, and give a lesson to the United States.

In noticing the telegraphic summary of the Asia's news, the London Times says:

The news by the Asia is not encouraging. Looking at the vote of Congress and the approval of the Navy Department on the San Jacinto affair, the danger of war appears imminent. The President, however, has refrained from the topic, and this goes some way toward neutralizing warlike inferences. The uncertainty of the ultimate issue still remains, although the chances of peace are undoubtedly diminished.

The London correspondent of the Manchester Guardian writes:

The conviction forces itself upon many that the day is not far distant when the Southern Confederation must be recognized; and that recognition may be expected to bring about a fresh difficulty, in which we must be prepared to maintain our policy. It is with this view, and as a demonstration of our intention to hold our own way, that the government are sending out ten thousand men to Canada, without any reference to the reply of the American Cabinet. If Messrs. Mason and Slidell landed at Liverpool to-morrow not a soldier the less would be sent out. If we are to have a war with the North in connection with this United States schism, there could be no more favorable time than the present. It would be a short and decisive war, and would have a vital influence on the preservation of peace and the uninterrupted freedom of commerce for many years to come, without our having to pass through the ordeal of social and mercantile confusion which wars, as a general rule, entail. Our military departments are working double time. The clothing establishment at Pimlico was at full work all last night and the preceding one.

It is a very common anticipation among persons of Canadian experience, that a war with this country is likelier to end in our acquisition of Portland than in the capture of Montreal by the Federal armies. In any case there are rectifications of our Canadian frontier which can scarcely fail to follow upon war. The States' frontier, settled by the Ashburton Treaty, closely hugs the postage road—our Canadian highway from the coast—along a part of its length. The United States have two fortified posts close upon that road, which would have to be taken at the outbreak of a war, as well as Cape Rose, (which they have been lately strengthening,) within 30 miles or so of Montreal.

THE FEDERAL NAVY.

England fosters the blockade as a "policy" and does not see the blockade as a "policy" in an act of hostility.

We turn then, to the report of Mr. Gideon Welles, the Secretary to the Federal Navy, for explanation of those follow or enigmatical phrases in which Mr. Lincoln boasts that the American navy, created since the present difficulties began, has performed deeds which have increased the naval renown of the United States. No nation has less reason to undervalue the renown of the American navy than we have. Since that it rests almost entirely upon the capture of three or four English frigates under circumstances of extraordinary disparity, and seeing also that its victories were gained entirely by English sailors who had been seduced by a disparity in the rate of wages, which, if our Admiralty is not absolutely insane, will never again occur, we have the best possible reason respecting that renown. Our difficulty is to discover how that renown has been increased by the events of the civil war. That Mr. Gideon Welles has used a certain industry in the department under his control we are quite prepared to admit.

He tells us that, on the 4th of March last, the effective American navy consisted of only forty-two vessels of all classes, carrying 555 guns and about 7,500 men—a very small navy for a power which proposes to defy all the navies of the world, and to take liberties with the commercial ships of all nations. He says that at the date of his report he had increased this small naval force to two hundred and sixty-four vessels and 24,000 seamen. This is certainly

Mr. Welles as an official than, but the amount is not undeniably terrible, especially when he proceeds to tell us how this has been accomplished, by hiring all sorts of commercial vessels and gathering together every floating thing that would carry a gun. These frigates represent a naval force which would be very terrible to Prussia, which might alarm the fleet of Italy, and which would call forth an effort from Spain; but which France could easily destroy, and England cannot but hold exceedingly cheap. This is not the navy of a first class power; it is enough for a people who desire to be at peace, but it is ridiculous for a people who insist upon being quarrelsome. A little man who holds his own against a big man who is trying to bully him has every bystander's sympathies in his favor, but nothing is more contemptible than a little man who is noisy and offensive only in reliance upon the impunity which he expects on account of his own weakness and the generosity of those whom he insults. To sustain the pretensions of Federal statesmen to insult all neutral nations, Mr. Welles' increased navy is still but a contemptible flotilla.

Very different, however, is its force as proportioned to the enemy with which it is immediately matched. The Confederate States have no navy at all. Against them the navy of Mr. Welles is as a great giant against a dwarf. It has been within the last few months, when the Federal Government had 264 ships and 24,000 men, and their enemies only two or three wretched privateers, and some craft fitted for inland navigation. Yet we believe the Sumter is still plundering the Federal commerce, and we know that the Harvey Birch was burnt close to our own shores; we see a "sensation heading" in the New York papers that the "Federals are blockading the channel of Tybee island, and Fort Pulaski," and we have Mr. Welles' own testimony that although his navy "continued to capture every rebel vessel which showed itself on the Potomac," it ceased to do so "when the rebels erected batteries on sand dry points on the Virginia shores, and thereby rendered passage on the river dangerous." We confess that we are compelled to look beyond these facts to discover the reasons for the tone of congratulation which runs through Mr. Welles' report, and deserve the increase of renown claimed for the Federal navy by Mr. Lincoln. Mr. Welles himself seems to think some further explanation necessary.

He urges, therefore, the onerous duties of blockading a coast of three thousand miles in length, of the active pursuit of privateers, and of the organization of naval expeditions. This is all very well, but it is necessary to show that those duties have been accomplished. The naval expeditions have, indeed, reached their destination, but as they had no enemy worth the name of an enemy to meet, the renown of the Federal navy cannot be much raised by what was little more than transport service. The privateers have, as we said before, not been taken. The blockade has been so notoriously a failure that nothing but the extraordinary scrupulousness of the European powers has allowed it to continue. Ships have passed in and out at all times just as they pleased, and so far as the harbors are concerned, there has never been any difficulty in getting into them or in getting out of them. The Federal Government has itself implicitly admitted the failure of their naval blockade, by an act of barbarity which is unparalleled in the history of national wars. They have actually endeavored to annihilate what Columbus had done—to shut up from all mankind forever the ports which the great discoverer opened to the human race, and to destroy by artificial impediments the gates by which men of all nations enter and pass out of some millions of square miles of fertile and productive lands. This is a crime against all human kind. If it does not end in universal opposition, it is only because the enterprise is believed to be as impossible as its design is execrable.

We have nearly exhausted the deeds of the American navy during this eventful year. One act, however, yet remains unnoticed, and it is just possible that it may form the staple of Mr. Lincoln's general and very guarded allusion to the great addition of renown, so recently acquired. This is the act which has made the mayor of Boston and the Governor of Massachusetts eloquent with exultation, and which has excited even the House of Representatives to gratitude. This act is thus dealt with by Mr. Gideon Welles: "Captain Charles Wilkes, in command of the San Jacinto, while searching in the West Indies for the Sumter, received information that James M. Mason and John Slidell, disloyal citizens, and leading conspirators, were, with their suits, to embark for Havana in the English steamer Trent, on their way to Europe; to promote the cause of the insurgents. Cruising in the Bahama channel, he intercepted the Trent, on the 8th of November, and took from her these dangerous men, whom he brought to the United States. His vessel having been ordered to rest for service at Charleston, the prisoners were retained on board, and conveyed to Fort Warren, where they were committed to the custody of Colonel Dimmick, in command of that fortress. The prompt and decisive action of Captain Wilkes on this occasion merited and received the emphatic approval of the de-

partment; and if a too generous forbearance was exhibited by him in not capturing the vessel which had these rebel emissaries on board, it may, in view of the special circumstances, and of its patriotic motives, be excused; but it must by no means be permitted to constitute a precedent hereafter for the treatment of any case of similar infractions of neutral obligations by foreign vessels engaged in commerce or the carrying trade."

There is no disputing the boldness of this act, nor, indeed, the boldness of this threat; but whether it is likely to increase the renown of the Federal navy, future events yet must show. Mr. Welles will want more than 24,000 men to make good these foolish words. That he can get more, and will get more, we are well aware, for we do not undervalue the power or energy of our rugged kinsmen if they put their heart in the matter; but he will get little "renown" for his department in such a cause as that he so unnecessarily proclaims, or against the antagonist he so rashly defies. If either the discretion of Mr. Welles or the ability of Mr. Lincoln is to be estimated by their State papers, they are not enemies greatly to be feared, either in national or in civil warfare.

The English Press on Lincoln's Message—Old Abe "catches" it.

The style of the American President has fallen with the fortunes of the republic. Instead of the jolly, frolicking periods of former days, each of which seemed to suggest at its close a state of "Hail Columbia," we have now got a discursive and colloquial essay, ill-arranged and worse expressed. Nor does the matter redeem the style. It is really wonderful when we consider the present state of the American Republic, how any one placed in the position of Mr. Lincoln could have taken the trouble to produce so strange a medley, so incoherent a rhapsody. There are several subjects on which we earnestly desire information, and on no one is it afforded. Above all things, we want to know what view the American Cabinet takes of the affair of the Trent, what advice it has received from its legal counselors, and with what feelings it approaches the coming controversy. On this point there is not a word. Then, we should like to hear a little of the financial measures by which the equilibrium between revenue and expenditure is to be preserved in the face of so vast an outlay.

We should like to know what measure the President proposes to adopt with regard to the slave population of the Southern States; whether, with one half of his Cabinet, he is for emancipation, or, with the other half of his Cabinet, for a maintenance of the rights of the slave owner. On these points our oracle is silent. But, if he tells us very little that we want to know, he amply indemnifies us by telling us a great many things in which we have no interest. He has a plan for re-adjusting the circuits of the judges and for the codification of the statute law. He is very minute on the receipts and disbursements of the post-office. He is anxious to extend the District of Columbia into Virginia. He has something to say on the exhibition of 1862. He has, in common with most of his predecessors plans for getting rid of free negroes by a system of colonization, and has room for an argument to show, not as he wishes, that labor is independent of capital, but how little progress the most ordinary doctrines of political economy have made in the higher circles of American politicians.

It is not easy to see why Mr. Lincoln should have omitted from his speech all notice of the Trent. If he means to give up the persons illegally seized, one would have thought it no unwise precaution to prepare the public mind for such a decision. If he means to keep them, we cannot understand why he does not grasp at all the popularities that is to be had in exchange for present war and future ruin, instead of allowing it to be picked up by obscure members of Congress embarking in a contest whether the transcendent merits of Commodore Wilkes would be best rewarded by thanks or by a gold medal. Possibly the simple solution may be that the President has as yet arrived at no solution at all, and that, perplexed by the divisions of his Cabinet, he has been content to let the matter alone till events shall determine for him that which he is unable or unwilling to determine for himself.

He will not have long to wait. Each successive mail brings us the report of some instance in which the American nation is step by step committing itself to a war policy with England, till, when challenged for its final decision, will probably find that it has gone too far to have any power of retraction. The government has received the admiralty has thanked Commodore Wilkes, and Congress has now given the seal of its approbation to a proceeding so deeply offensive to Great Britain. It is hardly possible to imagine a government sunk so far below its duties and responsibilities as to allow all this to go on and make no sign either of assent or dissent. The President is bound to lend his aid in guiding the Legislature to a true decision, on a matter so nearly touching the duties and the character of the Executive. He ought to set before it the principles involved in the question, and to give it every opportunity in his power of arriving at a conclusion conformable to the real interests of the country. But he has done nothing of all this, and has abandoned the vessel of the State to drift helplessly before the gale of popular clamor.

The President has given us instead of the information we desired, his opinion on the real issues of the present war. The North, he says, are fighting for the integrity of the Union—that is, as Lord Russell said, for empire, to compel the South, by force of arms, to live under a government which they detest. The South, on the other hand, are fighting against the right of the people of the North to govern them against their consent. This description ought to put an end to the statement so often repeated that slavery is the main matter in dispute. But the South have done still worse, and, not content with questioning the right of the North to govern them, they have even gone to the extent of questioning the wisdom of certain Northern institutions. Thus persons are actually found who wish for

a restriction of the suffrage; to contend, in spite of the evidence afforded by the North of the purity of election, and the high moral and intellectual qualities secured by such a process, that it is better election should be confined to legislators, and not extended to magistrates; and some have even been heard to pronounce the horrible name of "monarchy."

No wonder that Mr. Lincoln, luxuriating in the paradise to which the will of an unbridled democracy has introduced him, and looking forward to a desperate struggle with England, brought about apparently by the same cause, should feel a pious horror of those who venture to think such experience not conclusive, and the existing Constitution of the United States a little short of perfection. We have nothing to say for slavery, but if Mr. Lincoln's description of the South is indeed true, if she is fighting to emancipate herself from the blind tyranny of a degraded mob, from the elective judges and elective governors, he has given his antagonists a better title to European sympathy than they have hitherto possessed; and thrown upon his government the stigma of fighting to impose upon other institutions which have already brought it to the verge of ruin.

But the most remarkable part of Mr. Lincoln's speech is that in which he touches the relations of his government with foreign countries. The fact seems, on his own showing, to be that all foreign countries have hitherto preserved a strict neutrality; that they have rejected all applications from the South to make common cause with it against the North; and that they have quietly submitted to a blockade which grievously injures their commerce and manufactures. These facts would have called forth from the chief of any other government in the world, republican or monarchial, a gracious and courteous acknowledgment of the respect and forbearance with which a nation, not remarkable for carrying either of these qualities to excess, has been treated by all other nations in its hour of trial. Nothing can be more ungracious, more contrary to the usual conditions of international courtesy, than the language with which President Lincoln re-plays the consideration extended to him: "These nations," he says, "appear as yet not to have seen their way to their objects"—that is, the restoration of commerce—"more directly or clearly through the destruction than through the preservation of the Union."

This is a broad insinuation that foreign nations are actuated by the meanest and most selfish motives, and Mr. Lincoln is content, as he cannot deny that we have hitherto done right to express a suspicion that we do so for reasons we cannot avow without shame. It is not wonderful that a notion of foreign relations begun in this spirit should end in the exhortation with which we are already familiar in the circular of Mr. Seward, to fortify the sea-coast, the great lakes and rivers. After all, says Mr. Lincoln, "the safety and stability of the republic depends not on foreign nations but upon ourselves." That is perfectly true at this moment, because foreign nations earnestly desire peace, and to avoid all occasion of quarrel, but it will cease to be true the moment that America has forced its way into a war, for one of many evils of war is that a nation is deprived by it of the control of its own destinies, and forced to shape its course not by its own will, but by the decision of war itself.

THE EMANCIPATION QUESTION IN CONGRESS—WHAT TO DO WITH THE NEGROES.

A Washington correspondent writes:—The agitation of the great question of the times—viz: What to do with the negroes in this war?—continues to absorb men's minds both in and out of Congress. The idea of colonization, suggested rather than recommended in the message of the President, finds much favor in certain quarters, although surrounded with practical difficulties so great as to render its adoption very improbable. The friends of the measure are busy in mapping out the territory for their New Africa. Florida is absurdly proposed by some—as if a tract of country, which is a mere congeries of coral reefs, and which any large population but alligators, would starve without supplies from abroad, were adapted to sustain millions of consumers, ignorant of the arts of life. Others much more reasonably propose Texas, which is, at least, capable of supporting a large population—whether white or black, and is, perhaps, the best adapted of all the States for such a purpose—if a State is to be taken. The plan proposed is, to reduce Texas to the status of a territory, as a just penalty for her share in the rebellion, and then to colonize the territory by law of Congress with the emancipated slaves. Of course, no State, possessing and exercising the power of a State government, would open its territory to receive such an unwelcome immigration. The thing must be done, if done upon United States soil at all—by force of the authority of the general government, and upon soil directly within its control.

HIGHLY IMPORTANT.

The New Orleans Delta learns that his Excellency Don Francisco Serrano, the Captain General of Cuba, has expressed his indignation at the frequent outrages committed by Federal cruizers almost within sight of the forts at Havana, in overhauling vessels leaving the port of Havana. Several messages have been sent by him to the Consul of the United States in regard to these outrages, and the commanders of the forts have orders to keep a look out, and if any United States ship is discovered in the act of passing or boarding any ship within canon shot, to open upon and sink her.

The Captain General has been so disgusted by the audacity and insolence of the Yankee skippers, that he openly declares his sympathy with the Confederate States, his determination to protect their ships, their citizens and their flag whilst within his jurisdiction, and his conviction of the utter insanity of the futile attempt of the Yankees to subjugate the South.

Immense quantities of ice are floating down the Mississippi from the cold regions of the North. A perfect gorge of it was visible yesterday. Confederate News.

Confederate Tax.

There was a good deal of uneasiness at one time felt in regard to the ability of our people to procure the right kind of funds to pay the Confederate tax; but we are gratified to learn from the Collector in this county, that he has made arrangements with the Banks in this place, by which the difficulty will be easily obviated, and the people allowed to pay in any current money they may have. Under this arrangement, our people would be ready to pay the tax at any moment, for we think there never was a time when the farmer had more money. They raised large crops, and most of them have sold at high prices. They have neither bought many goods nor paid many debts; and so they must have money.

Drafting Soldiers.

It will be seen that the Legislature of the State of Virginia has a bill before them providing for raising troops by the draft. We believe that this method of replenishing our army will at last be found the true and only successful one. The volunteer system was successful in bringing into the field a splendid army of ardent and determined men; and if the war was one of greater activity, it might still answer the purpose. But we have an enemy whose method is breaking the impatient spirits of our troops; and showing us that the war is to be one of heavy burden, independent of the fighting. Not many will be found willingly to assume these burdens for the rest of the community, and bear them to the end. They will certainly reflect that A B and C, at home, are as able to bear it as they are, and that it is but right they should be required to come forward. The draft will obviate the discontent arising from this source, and satisfy many minds that the post of danger they are called to fill, befalls them in the course of Providence, and not by their own seeing.

Municipal Court of Richmond.

The following is an extract from the reported proceedings of this Court, Wednesday the 9th of January. Mr. CRANE gives a faithful picture of it in his passionate outburst. John Hagan, referred to in the extract, is a Richmond bully, from the butcher's district. Having been charged by the Examiner of black mailing and maltreating some free negroes under his superintendence on the public works, he went to the office to whip the editor; but that gentleman got the start of him and cracked his head severely; and thus Hagan came to Court. And such a Court!

Mr. CRANE—"I wish to make"—
Mr. MAY—"I wish to save you some trouble."

CRANE—"Yes, let John Hagan go as much as he wants to, while I, as counsel, am not permitted to open my mouth. It is a subject of mortification to me that this man is allowed to walk about in this court and bully and brow beat both witnesses and counsel, while I, who should be heard, am silenced. I wish to God somebody would try whether his head is really, as he says, as hard as a half. There was another witness here, who had just been called in the foregoing case, who had promised to prove that Hagan had gone to the Examiner's office with a pistol. If the court wants my opinion, I will say I do not think \$200 big enough to require of a decent man like this, who boasts that he can give two hundred thousand. I think this best a piece of insolence amounting to contempt."

The City papers would show a higher regard for their City and its Court by omitting to publish such proceedings as in this case, and that of "Commonwealth vs. John Finney." The testimony of "an Irish woman" would grace the columns of a New York paper, but our Southern journals have not usually found it compatible with interest or good taste to spread such matter before the public.

Sabbath School Paper.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Southern Confederacy, recently in session in Augusta, Georgia, ordered "the Committee on Publication," located at Richmond, Va., to publish, as soon as practicable, a Sabbath School paper. Mr. Wm. Brown, Secretary of the Committee, has issued a circular on the subject, from which we learn the paper will be about the size of the Philadelphia Sunday School Visitor, and will cost thirty cents per copy. The churches are solicited to send in their orders. Donations are also solicited, on the ground that the enterprise must be started from the foundation, and that too without a cent in hand to begin with.

The Charlestonians are talking of making a Park, or public pleasure ground, on the spot made vacant by the disastrous fire.