

# Hillsborough Recorder

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE LAWS—THE GUARDIANS OF OUR LIBERTY.

Vol. XLIV.

HILLSBOROUGH, N. C., DECEMBER 23, 1863.

No. 2226.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

(Continued.)

Experience has shown the necessity for further legislation in relation to the horses of the cavalry. Many men lose their horses by casualties of service, which are not included in the provisions made to compensate the owner for the loss, and it may thus not unfrequently happen that the most efficient troopers, without fault of their own, indeed, it may be because of their zeal and activity, are lost to the cavalry service.

It would also appear proper that the Government should have complete control over every horse mustered into the service, with the limitation that the owner should not be deprived of his horse except upon due compensation being made therefor. Otherwise, mounted men may not keep horses fit for the service; and the question whether they should serve mounted or on foot, would depend, not upon the qualifications of the men, but upon the fact of their having horses.

Some provision is deemed requisite to correct the evils arising from the long continued absence of commissioned officers. Where it is without sufficient cause, it would seem but just that the commission should be thereby vacated.

Where it results from capture by the enemy, which, under their barbarous refusal to exchange prisoners of war, may be regarded as absence for an indefinite time, there is a necessity to supply their places in their respective commands. This might be done by temporary appointments to caduce only until the return of the officers regularly commissioned. Where it results from permanent disability incurred in the line of their duty, it would be proper to retire them and fill the vacancies according to established mode. I would also suggest the organization of an invalid corps, and that the retired officers be transferred to it. Such a corps, it is thought, could be made useful in various employments, for which efficient officers and troops are now detached.

An organization of the general staff of the army, would be highly conducive to the efficiency of that most important branch of the service. The plan adopted for the military establishment, furnishes a model for the staff of the provisional army, if it be deemed advisable to retain the distinction, but I recommend your consideration the propriety of abolishing it, and providing for the organization of the several staff corps in such number and with such rank as will meet all the wants of the service. To secure the requisite ability for the more important positions, it will be necessary to provide for officers of higher rank than is now authorized for these corps. To give to the officers the proper relation and co-intelligence in their respective corps, and to preserve in the chief of each, useful influence and control over his subordinates, there should be no gradation on the basis of the rank of the general with whom they might be serving by appointment. To the personal staff of a general, it would seem proper to give a grade corresponding with his rank, and the number might be fixed to correspond with his command. To avoid the consequence of discharge upon a change of duty, the variable portion of the personal staff might be taken from the line of the army, and allowed to retain their line commissions.

The disordered condition of the currency to which I have already alluded, has imposed on the Government a system of supplying the wants of the army which is so unequal in its operations, vexatious to the producer, injurious to the industrial interest, and productive of such discontent among the people, as only to be justified by the existence of an absolute necessity. The report of the Secretary on this point establishes conclusively that the necessity which has forced the bureau of supply, to provide for the army by impressment, has resulted from the impossibility of purchase by contract or in the open market, except at such rapidly increased rates as would

have rendered the appropriations inadequate to the wants of the army. Indeed, it is believed that the temptation to hoard supplies for the higher prices which could be anticipated with certainty, has been checked mainly by the fear of the operation of the impressment law; and that commodities have been offered in the market, principally to escape impressment, and obtain higher rates than those fixed by appraisement. The complaints against this vicious system have been well founded, but the true cause of the evil has been misapprehended. The remedy is to be found, not in a change of the impressment law but in the restoration of the currency to such a basis as will enable the department to purchase necessary supplies in the open market, and thus render impressment a rare and exceptional process.

The same remedy will effect the result universally desired, of an augmentation of the pay of the army. The proposals made at your previous sessions, to increase the pay of the soldier by an additional amount of Treasury notes, would have conferred little benefit on him, but a radical reform of the currency will restore the pay to a value approximating that which it originally had, and materially improve his condition.

The reports from the ordnance and mining bureaus are very gratifying, and the extension of our means of supply of arms and munitions of war from our home resources, has been such as to ensure our ability soon to become mainly, if not entirely independent of supplies from foreign countries. The establishments for the casting of guns and projectiles; for the manufacture of small arms and of gunpowder, for the supply of nitre from artificial nitre beds, and mining operations generally, have been so distributed through the country, as to place our resources beyond the reach of partial disasters.

The recommendations of the Secretary of War on other points, are minutely detailed in his report, which is submitted to you, and extending, as they do, to almost every branch of the service, merit careful consideration.

### EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS.

I regret to inform you that the enemy have returned to the barbarous policy with which they inaugurated the war, and that the exchange of prisoners has been for some time suspended. The correspondence of the Commissioners of Exchange is submitted to you by the Secretary of War, and it has already been published for the information of all now suffering useless imprisonment. The conduct of the authorities of the United States has been consistently perfidious on this subject. An agreement for exchange in the incipency of the war had just been concluded, when the fall of Fort Donelson reversed the previous state of things, and gave them an excess of prisoners. The agreement was immediately repudiated by them, and so remained till the fortune of war again placed us in possession of the larger number. A new cartel was then made, and under it, for many months, we restored to them many thousands of prisoners in excess of those whom they held for exchange, and encampments of the surplus parole prisoners delivered up by us were established in the United States, where the men were able to receive the comforts and solace of constant communication with their homes and families. In July last the fortune of war again favored the enemy, and they were enabled to exchange for duty the parole at Vicksburg and Port Hudson. The prisoners taken at Gettysburg, however, remained in their hands, and should have been at once returned to our lines on parole, to await exchange. Instead of executing a duty imposed by the plainest dictates of justice and good faith, pretenses were instantly sought for holding them in permanent captivity. General orders rapidly succeeded each other from the bureaus at Washington, placing new constructions on an agreement which had given rise to no dispute while we retained the advantage in the number of prisoners. With a disregard of honorable obligations, almost unexampled, the enemy

did not hesitate in addition to retaining the prisoners captured by them, to declare null the paroles given by the prisoners captured by us in the same series of engagements, and liberated on condition of being again serving until exchanged. They have since openly insisted on treating the paroles given by their own soldiers as invalid, and those of our soldiers, given under precisely similar circumstances, as binding. A succession of similar unjust pretensions has been set up in a correspondence tediously prolonged, and every device employed, to cover the disregard of an obligation which, between belligerent nations, is only to be enforced by a sense of honor.

No farther comment is needed on this subject, but it may be permitted to direct your special attention to the close of the correspondence submitted to you, from which you will perceive that the final proposal made by the enemy, in settlement of all disputes under the cartel, is, that we should liberate all prisoners held by us, without the offer to release from captivity any of those held by them.

In the meantime a systematic and concerted effort has been made to quiet the complaints in the United States of those relatives and friends of the prisoners in our hands who are unable to understand why the cartel is not executed in their favor, by the groundless assertion that we are the parties who refuse compliance. Attempts are also made to shield themselves from the execration excited by their own odious treatment of our officers and soldiers now captive in their hands, by mis-statements, such as that the prisoners held by us are deprived of food. To this last accusation the conclusive answer has been made, that, in accordance with our law and the general orders of the department, the rations of the prisoners are precisely the same, in quantity and quality, as those served out to our own gallant soldiers in the field, and which have been found sufficient to support them in their arduous campaign, while it is not pretended by the enemy that they treat prisoners by the same generous rule. By an indulgence, perhaps unprecedented, we have even allowed the prisoners in our hands to be supplied by their friends at home with comforts not enjoyed by the men who capture them in battle. In contrast to this treatment, the most revolting inhumanity has characterized the conduct of the United States towards prisoners held by them. One prominent fact, which admits no denial nor palliation, must suffice as a test. The officers of our army, natives of Southern and semi-tropical climates, and unprepared for the cold of a Northern winter, have been conveyed, for imprisonment, during the rigors of the present season, to the most Northern and exposed situation that could be selected by the enemy. There beyond the reach of comforts, and often even of news from home and family, exposed to the piercing cold of the Northern lakes, they are held by men who cannot be ignorant of, even if they do not design, the probable result. How many of our unfortunate friends and comrades, who have passed unscathed through numerous battles, will perish on Johnson's Island, under the cruel trial to which they are subjected, none but the Omnipotent can foretell. That they will endure this barbarous treatment with the same stern fortitude that they have ever evinced in their country's service, we cannot doubt. But who can be found to believe the assertion that it is our refusal to execute the cartel, and not the malignity of the foe, which has caused the infliction of such intolerable cruelty on our own loved and honored defenders?

### TRANS-MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT.

Regular and punctual communication with the Trans-Mississippi is so obstructed as to render difficult a compliance with much of the legislation vesting authority in the Executive branch of the Government. To supply vacancies in office; to exercise discretion on certain matters connected with the military organizations; to control the distribution of the funds collected from taxation or remitted from the Treasury; to carry on the operations of the

Post Office Department, and other like duties, require, under the Constitution and existing laws, the action of the President and heads of Departments. The necessities of the military service frequently forbid delay, and some legislation is required, providing for the exercise of temporary authority, until regular action can be had at the seat of Government. I would suggest, especially in the Post Office Department, that an assistant be provided for the States beyond the Mississippi, with authority in the head of that Department to vest in this assistant all such powers now exercised by the Postmaster General, as may be requisite for provisional control of the funds of the department in those States, and their application to the payment of mail contractors; for superintendence of the local post offices, and the contracts for carrying the mail; for the temporary employment of proper persons to fulfill the duties of postmasters and contractors in urgent cases, until appointments can be made, and for other like purposes. Without some legislative provision on the subject, there is serious risk of the destruction of the mail service, by reason of the delays and hardships suffered by contractors under the present system, which requires constant reference to Richmond of their accounts, as well as of the returns of the local postmasters, before they can receive payment for services rendered. Like provision is also necessary in the Treasury Department; while, for military affairs, it would seem to be sufficient to authorize the President and Secretary of War to delegate to the commanding general so much of the discretionary powers vested in them by law as the exigencies of the service shall require.

### NAVY.

The report of the Secretary of the Navy gives in detail the operations of that Department since January last, embracing information of the disposition and employment of the vessels, officers and men, and the construction of vessels at Richmond, Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, Selma, and on the river Roanoke, Neuse, Pelee, Chattahoochee and Tombigbee; the accumulation of ship timber and supplies, and the manufacture of ordnance, ordnance stores and equipments. The foundries and workshops have been greatly improved, and their capacity to supply all demands for heavy ordnance for coast and harbor defenses is only limited by our deficiency in the requisite skilled labor. The want of such labor and of seamen seriously affects the operations of the Department.

The skill, courage and activity of our cruisers at sea cannot be too highly commended. They have inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, without suffering a single disaster, and have seriously damaged the shipping interests of the United States, by compelling their foreign commerce to seek the protection of neutral flags.

Your attention is invited to the suggestions of the report on the subjects of supplying seamen for the service, and of the provisions of the law in relation to the volunteer navy.

### POST OFFICE.

The Postmaster General reports the receipts of that Department for the fiscal year ending the 30th of June last, to have been \$3,337,853 01, and the expenditures for the same period \$3,662,804 67. The statement thus exhibits an excess of receipts amounting to \$675,048 44, instead of a deficiency of more than a million of dollars, as was the case in the preceding fiscal year. It is gratifying to perceive that the Department has thus been made self-sustaining, in accordance with sound principle, and with the express requirement of the Constitution that its expenses should be paid out of its own revenues after the 1st March, 1863.

The report gives a full and satisfactory account of the operations of the Post Office Department for the last year, and explains the measures adopted for giving more certainty and regularity to the service in the States beyond the Mississippi, and on which reliance is placed for obviating the