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Washington Letter.
Capitol Episodes—Congress Adjourns—Christmas Scenery—Projected City Improvements.

From our Regular Correspondent.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 24, 1880.
It would require a very large book to record all that Congress has omitted to do during the past week. On Tuesday Senators Conkling and Lamar both returned to the Senate Chamber, and after gazing at each other with fierce, portentous, beetling brows, without saying howdy, resumed their respective chairs. Nor has the House been without its episode, less dignified than that of the Senate, but not much less dignified than the episode of last session which caused the estrangement of Conkling and Lamar. You have doubtless already been fully advised of the way in which Messrs. Weaver and Starks harled billingsgate at each other, and how other members were disposed to engage in the *melée*. But the Capitol is now silent and deserted. Congress has adjourned for the holidays; a large majority, both of members and of Senators, have returned to their homes for the enjoyment of Christmas.

Never before, within the memory of woman or child, has the shops on Pennsylvania Avenue and Seventh street presented such a gorgeous appearance, and never before have women and children had so much money, and such an inclination to spend it. Toys, dolls and gimcracks of every conceivable design and price fill all the windows of all the stores. Christmas greens festoon the booths in the market places and give a hateful emphasis to hundreds of drinking saloons. The odorous scent of cedar is in the air. Clinging mistletoe and prickly holly—every variety of greenery which has withstood the winter is now brought from the forest to decorate churches, homes and drinking holes.

Standing on the steps of the Capitol, and looking down Pennsylvania Avenue, the scene may well remind the beholder of Paris. Where, except in Paris, will he see such broad and perfectly paved avenues? But with the avenues the comparison vanishes. Washington is not architecturally all that it promises to be, provided the Capitol shall remain here. A sweeping fire, such as has regenerated great cities from London to Chicago, would be a drastic remedy; but nothing milder will sweep away numberless mean-looking houses that contrast strangely with the marble palaces that Uncle Sam has built. There are many projected improvements for the National Capitol. In this holy city of "the Great Republic," as English newspapers call us, there is no suffrage. The residents of Washington do not vote, but we are none the worse for that. Washington is the special privilege of Congress. Congress votes for us, or rather appropriates for the National Capitol, and Congress is expected, either during the present session, or in the extra session, which it is now almost certain will follow General Garfield's inauguration, to appropriate for the draining of the Potomac marshes, and for the erection of a National Library Building. The first is a sanitary *sine qua non*, for even Sunset Cox is down with malaria. (Abstinence from whiskey would reduce much so-called malaria among Congressmen.) A library building is a biblical necessity, for there are in the Capitol literal hectomets of books with no shelf-room for their arrangement.

London Letter.
Interesting to Farmers—European Agricultural News Items.

[Regular Correspondence.]
LONDON, England, Dec. 13, 1880.
The mild, open weather of the past week has been very favorable for wheat sowing, and good progress has been made towards overtaking arrears. The wet clays are now workable, and on drier soils the land turns up well. The young wheats are looking exceedingly well, and the later sowings are coming through the ground with an abundance of plant. So far prospects for production in the current cereal year are fairly good, both in England and on the Continent of Europe; but there is an area not yet seeded, the dimensions of which are not yet ascertained, which must form an important feature in all estimates of the value of present data in connection with prospects for the harvest. There is now no question whatever as to the fact of the world's surplus of marketable breadstuffs being more than equal to the consumptive requirements of England for the year 1881-'82, and the only thing that keeps prices at their present level is the paucity of supplies on the spot at the immediate present. The United States has a surplus of wheat which has recently been officially estimated as being about 4,000,000 qrs. in excess of last year, and stocks in sight are now increasing to a marked extent both on the Atlantic and Pacific seaboard. Up to the commencement of the past week I hear that speculation has been active in the United States, but there has not been the faintest indication of a disposition to invest on the part of the British trade. The position is simple. Your surplus is admitted to be greater than that of last year, whilst the collective requirements of Eu-

ropean countries is acknowledged to be less. A combination of circumstances in connection with a late harvest and increased prosperity has had the effect of retarding the movement of the United States surplus to the seaboard, and meanwhile England is well supplied from other sources, and will continue so to be for the immediate future. Even from Russia the floating contingent in the matter of breadstuffs is not much smaller than at this time last year, whilst from Austria and India the supply is liberal. Time is creeping on, and if the equivalent of the present position is maintained for another six weeks there will be a very material portion of the United States surplus of breadstuffs which will not find a market for consumption in the cereal year 1880-81. Country-made flour is dearer in some provincial markets than in London, when it comes into competition with American brands of greatly superior strength at comparatively lower rates.

The American surplus will soon become a disturbing element for weakness in the trade; if you send it in rapidly it will cause a sharp reaction in value here, and if you hold it over it will still remain an element of weakness ahead.

In France the grain trade has assumed a quicker tone during the week, and Saturday's telegrams show a weakening tendency for breadstuffs.

In Germany the trade in breadstuffs has rumbled slow during the week, superior qualities only maintaining their values. At Dantzic good samples of wheat have been scarce. Rye is quoted lower, and the tone of the market is decidedly easier, highest values having probably been touched.

In Holland the markets for wheat and rye have been cheaper during the week. In Belgium markets have been firm for breadstuffs, and oats have maintained previous values.

The Construction Bonds.

[From the Charlotte Observer.]
Will you allow me space to say a word on this question, which is creating such a stir at this time. I am only interested directly in the matter as a tax-payer, and I think I have formed my opinion impartially; and if your premises are correct (and I presume they are), your conclusions cannot be far wrong. If I understand the position, it is this: The State's stock of \$3,000,000 is mortgaged for the redemption of \$2,650,000 of bonds, with some \$300,000 accrued interest. These bonds are now, or soon will be, due and the holders of these bonds propose to exchange them for new bonds, bearing the same interest as the old ones, and running 40 years—throwing away the \$300,000 of interest which has accrued. This is the position as I understand it.

Now, you are in favor of accepting this proposition (if no better can be obtained), and so am I, rather than for the State to surrender her stock for the bonds; and for this reason:

As long as the lease of the North Carolina to the Richmond and Danville road lasts (some 17 or 18 years, I believe), the State will get \$24,000 annually, in excess of what she pays out to the bondholders, and it is quite safe to calculate that the lease can be continued, until the bonds fall due, on the same or better terms.

Supposing this proposition to be correct, let us see how matters will stand at the expiration of 40 years. If the State can find this \$24,000, as it is paid into the treasury, in bonds bearing 6 per cent. interest, it will, in 40 years, amount to the neat little sum of \$3,714,306, or \$1,114,306 more than the bonds she will be called upon to redeem at that time. But supposing she can only find at 4 per cent., the amount then would be \$2,796,204, or \$198,204 more than the bonds, and leaving her still with her \$3,000,000 of stock free.

Taking this view of the question I am for accepting the proposition of the bondholders, provided no better terms can be obtained from them. It looks supremely ridiculous to me to hear people talking about placing these construction bonds on the same footing as other bonds of the State. That might do if there was no mortgage in the way.

ANOTHER TAX-PAYER.

It is announced from Chicago with some show of probability that Jay Gould, who appears to have the power of at once reaching out and taking in every railroad he desires to possess, has turned his attention to the South, and is likely to become the owner of large interests here. The Chicago Tribune says of his plan:

It proposes opening an original traffic between Chicago and the Gulf States, holding itself free forever from the domination of the Victor-Norfolk system. At present Chicago's bulk and other products in limited amounts reach Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Florida partly via Louisville and Nashville. President Duncan, of the Mobile and Ohio, and the Gould syndicate propose making Jackson, Tennessee, a distributing point, working that far in harmony with the Illinois Central. This can be the more effectually accomplished now that the Gould syndicate has its own Chicago line as also the Iron Mountain. Heretofore the Gulf States have consumed Kansas City and Chicago provisions shipped by rail and water to Baltimore

and New York, and then re-distributed to them by steamer and coastwise sail. One glance at the map of the Southern States will show what an original field is thus opened to the two great corporations. The Illinois Central with its Southern line, must be conceded the Mississippi, Louisiana, South American and European trade, for its facilities are being daily increased. To the Mobile and Ohio will fall all the trade susceptible of distribution via Corinth, Decatur, Meridian, Montgomery, and Mobile proper.

MISCELLANEOUS.

From the New York Observer.
Absalom's Pillars.

BY REV. R. H. CRAIG.

We read in the Old Testament that "Absalom in his life-time had taken and reared up for himself a pillar which is in the king's dale." This, with the exception of Absalom's tomb, which is still pointed out in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, is supposed to be the only monument ever erected to perpetuate the memory of that self-conceited, effeminate and spoiled son of David. There is another pillar which Absalom reared with his own hands, and which still stands in the land, and which he left it, "to keep his name in remembrance." His entire life was spent in building it, having commenced it in childhood, and completed it only at death. Gradually it was built up, and it will remain to the end of all time: for pillars built of such lasting materials never crumble in decay. Of course, you cannot expect to see this wonderful pillar: therefore I shall endeavor to describe it to your imagination, that you may learn profitable lessons from it.

Fancy a tall obelisk, or four-sided pillar, like those to be seen in any cemetery, only much larger and made all of one piece, standing upon a broad pedestal called its base. Then, as in all monuments, there must be letters cut deep in the stone on each side. The first which we will look at displays the figure of a tall and most handsome man, with long bushy hair falling over his shoulders in great abundance. It is anointed with oil and powdered with gold dust, which give it additional charms according to the tastes and customs of the age. Underneath you can fancy you see the following words cut deep in the hard stone, and red, as if they had just been painted with blood:

"Absalom was a favorite son of David, the King of Israel. He was indulged in every luxury which a palace could afford. He had gold in abundance, many friends, and held banquet at pleasure. He was greatly admired by his father's subjects, but was revengeful and treacherous. He invited his friends to a great feast, and when all were drunk with wine, commanded his men, whom he had appointed for the evil deed, to slay his brother, the special object of his hatred."

The next side represents the same tall figure standing at the gate of a great city, surrounded with chariots and horses and a company of fifty men to serve him. Then beneath are words like these:

"Absalom, the deceitful, treacherous betrayer of his father, full of cunning and stratagem, who stood by the gate, and when any man came near to bow to him, put forth his hand, took hold of him, and kissed him; then asked him his name, and what city he was from, inquired his cause, pronounced it good and right, but lamented that there was none to do him justice, and ended by exclaiming: 'O that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!' Thus by flattering words he stole the hearts of the people of Israel."

On the third side is displayed the same tall figure, now bowing very lowly, as if engaged in prayer; but behind him can be seen a great army of men of war gathered from all parts of the kingdom; and under this figure can be read the following words:

"Absalom, the great hypocrite, who pretended to his father that he had vowed a religious vow to God, and that he desired permission to go to Hebron in order to perform this pious obligation. His father, not thinking that any son could be so treacherous,

readily granted leave. Nothing could have given David more joy than to know that his wild, and reckless son had become a devout worshipper of God. The moment he went out from his father's presence, however, instead of going to worship God, he sent spies over all the land to raise an army that he might rebel against his father and take away the kingdom from him."

At the top of the fourth side appears this great army led on by the same tall figure, riding upon a mule, and pressing hard after a small band of men, who followed an old man as he fled from the city of Jerusalem, "barefoot" and weeping, and all his followers weeping. Underneath you can fancy you see these words:

"Absalom's army fought against his father's loyal followers by the woods of Ephraim, but the Lord, the God of David, fought against Absalom, and his army was defeated and broken up, twenty thousand men were slain, and the wood devoured more people than the sword, and Absalom himself fled, riding upon a mule; for he saw that the battle was sore against him, and the Lord had caused his sin to find him out."

Next appears the same tall figure hanging in the branches of an oak by the hair of his head, of which he had been so vain, with a crowd of men around him, and one of them in the act of stabbing him to the heart with a dart which he holds in his hand, with these words following:

"Let us not fight against God."

On the base of the pillar you may see the appearance of a great heap of stones, and the words:

"They took Absalom and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him." Such is a view of the pillar of Absalom's character which he built up by his wicked acts in life, without a single word of good to be said about him, except that he was a very handsome man, with luxuriant and bushy hair. And God has left his character standing as a monument to the world, that young and old may remember that the violation of God's commandments will certainly bring punishment, and especially that he who dishonors his parents cannot expect to escape the awful consequences of his crime, but may come to a premature death, and shall certainly lie in a dishonored grave. On the other hand, if a character of good deeds is built up, it will last through ages to the honor of him who reared it. God's Word tells us that "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance, but the name of the wicked shall rot."

The scales which fly off from iron being worked at forges, iron trimmings, filings, or other ferruginous material, if worked into the soil about fruit trees, or the more minute particles spread thinly on the lawn, mixed with the earth of flower-beds or in pots, add greatly to the productivity of the soil. For colored flowers, they heighten the bloom, and increase the brilliancy.

As a slight evidence of what Texas is doing in the way of raising fruit trees, it is stated that a nurseryman in Washington county has twenty-seven men traveling, and holds orders for 70,000 peach trees.

The young man who shirks his duties as often as possible never succeeds in life. You may sit it down that sooner or later he will be a drone in the great hive of human industry. If you begin life a shirk, you may set it down as a fixed fact that the habit will follow you through life, and instead of a success, you will be an utter failure.

The celebrated Doctor Dumoulin, being surrounded in his last moments by many of his fellow physicians who deplored his loss, said to them, "Gentlemen, I leave behind me three great physicians." Every one thinking himself to be one of the three pressed him to name them; upon which he replied, "Cleanliness, exercise, and moderation in eating."

You may write it down as an indisputable fact, that when a man talks a great deal about his religion he is simply exaggerating his capital in order to catch trade.

A Curious Combat.

A traveler in South Africa witnessed not long since a singular combat. He was musing one morning, with his eyes on the ground, when he noticed a caterpillar crawling along at a rapid pace. Pursuing him was a host of small black ants.

Being quicker in their movements, the ants would catch up with the caterpillar, and one would mount his back and bite him. Pausing, the caterpillar would turn his head, and bite and kill his tormentor. After slaughtering a dozen or more of his persecutors, the caterpillar showed signs of fatigue.

The ants made a combined attack. Beating himself to a stalk of grass, the caterpillar climbed up tail first, followed by the ants. As one approached, he seized it in his jaws and threw it off the stalk.

The ants, seeing that the caterpillar had too strong a position for them to overcome, resorted to strategy. They began sawing through the grass stalk. In a few minutes the stalk fell, and hundreds of ants pounced upon the fallen caterpillar. He was killed at once, and the victors marched off in triumph, leaving the foe's body on the field.

Prohibition.

Despite the many and powerful obstructions thrown athwart the path of its progress, the cause of temperance—total abstinence—is forcing its way to the front. Slowly, but powerfully, the public mind is being aroused to the great evils of the whisky traffic, and is demanding in unmistakable tones its suppression.

Already the Commissioners of Chatham, Halifax and one other county of this State, have refused to license liquor dealers. The M. E. Conference, of North Carolina, recently in session at Winston, and the Baptist Convention, recently in session at Goldsboro, as well as the Grand Lodge of Colored Masons in session in this city last week, have taken advanced ground upon the subject. This has been followed by a meeting of the State Prohibition Liquor Law Association, which met last week and adopted plans for a general convention of the friends of the movement in this city on the 12th of next month, and a vigorous prosecution of the work.

The issue has been made up; the line of battle has been drawn. On which side my friend, will you range yourself?

For our part, we have long since planted our batteries on the high ground of prohibition. We believe this right. We believe it the one great means by which we are to rid ourselves of the terrible curse of rum. And who would not rid our fair land of this giant evil? It is the one monster upon, towering above all others and poisoning with its deadly malarial every fount of health and happiness.

Its work of desolation, degradation and death, meet us all over our land. And year after year this evil is fastening itself upon us more firmly. Indeed, it already bids defiance to the powers of earth and Heaven and asserts with impudent insolence its mighty power.

No, we should suffer no longer the domination of rum. Like freemen, we should bravely meet the arch enemy of our common humanity and in one bold, determined and resolute onset drive him from our borders.—*Journal of Industry.*

IS THE NEGRO DYING OUT?—It was asserted some time ago, and has been steadily believed by many, that the Negro is dying out, and that, ere many generations, he will be almost entirely removed from the American continent. The census returns, however, so far as they have been ascertained on the subject, upsets in the most complete manner any such idea, and shows instead, that the Negro is increasing at a rate far in excess of the whites. The following are the significant figures: 17 counties in Alabama show a white increase of 18.20 per cent., and a Negro increase of 27.60 per cent. The white increase in South Carolina is 35.50 per cent., while the Negro increase is 46.50 per cent. In 25 counties in North Carolina, embracing the heart of the cotton, tobacco and manufacturing region, the whites increase at the rate of 25 per cent., while that of the Negro is 35.70.—*Journal of Industry.*

A new sort of garter for women is in the market. It is not worn outside the stocking, but next to the skin. It consists of a wide elastic band, which is clasped around the leg above the knee, and the inner surface is not so smooth as to let it slide so easily. By an ingenious contrivance the top of the stocking is turned under the edge of the band and fastens there. The idea is to make the garter invisible. Clara Belle says the invention does very well for legs that are larger at the knee than above, but it does not stand the test of those that taper downward with any degree of regularity.

Col. A. K. McClure, the accomplished editor of the Philadelphia Times, having finished a tour of observation through the South, has embodied an exhaustive résumé of his impressions in a communication to his paper. He does not find the South altogether lovely, but he deals manfully with the chief points of interest and tells what he conceives to be the truth without fear or affection. He declares that the South is not animated by partisan hostility to the coming President and that there is no desire to command the spoils of power, but there is an earnest and almost universal desire for peace—that peace that honest government should ever give to an honest people. The supreme want of the South, he says, is a thoroughly competent and upright civil service, and that should not be sought as a favor from any faithful President. This he asserts is not only a matter of right to every section, but it is a matter of imperative duty on the part of the government.

In all of this we cordially concur. The South asks for no peculiar favors. She only desires that the government shall be administered in the interests of the Union, and not run as a piece of partisan machinery.—*News & Observer.*—True, Oh scribe.

FROM HOME.—The way a professional Christian behaves himself from home tests him and reveals him in his true character. He is then out of the ruts of conventionality and habit. He acts himself. If he is prayerless in spirit, he shows it by neglecting the forms that kept his conscience quiet at home. If his heart secretly longs for hallowed pleasures, he goes after them. If he prefers the society of the gay and worldly to that of the quiet and spiritually-minded, he shows it in the choice of his associates.

The Spanish Government have intimated that they are prepared to extend the privilege of asylum to the members of the religious associations expelled from France only on condition that they do not form themselves into new societies, nor publicly wear the habit of their order. If the monks had been willing to accept this condition in France they might have remained there still without molestation.

North Carolina once had seven natives in the United States Senate at one time. Three of her sons have been President. Kentucky now has six natives in the Senate, namely: Maxey, of Texas, Saunders, of Nevada; Vest, of Missouri; Jonas, of Louisiana; Call, of Florida; and Walker, of Arkansas, members of the present United States Senate. If Crittenden is elected from Missouri she will have seven.

An editor in Georgia says: "Gold is found in thirty-six counties in this State, silver in three, copper in thirteen, iron in forty-three, diamonds in twenty-six, and whistkey in all of them; and the last gets away with all the rest."

The Home Rule members of Parliament held a meeting in Dublin on the 27th, Mr. Parnell presiding. It was resolved that they would vote against all measures "that refuse the just demands of the Irish people." The crowd detached the horses from his carriage and drew Parnell through the streets.

The London Times, a paper as free, perhaps, from panic and exaggeration as any English journal, says that in many parts of Ireland the ordinary functions of the government are absolutely suspended and that the list of outrages is assuming enormous proportions. The wild rule of the Land League reigns supreme.

A strange (we will not say just) fatality hounds the footsteps of those mischievous adventurers who plundered South Carolina as its so-called Governor, has committed murder and is in jail.—*Rail, News & Observer.*

A family never becomes extinct in Japan. If there are no male descendants, a young son of another family is adopted and takes the family name.

The smoking car on the Iron Mountain Railroad, near St. Louis, was fired into last night at Keeleyville by some one unknown. Dr. J. H. Paine, of Carroll, Texas, was killed and P. P. Jones and wife, of Pennsylvania, were mortally wounded.

Will not Senator Conkling squirm when Ben. Butler, as counsel for Sprague in the divorce suit, gets hold of him.—*Rail, News & Observer.*

Ah, lucky Blaine! If he will now "step down and out," of the Senate, he may "step up and in"—to Mr. Garfield's cabinet.

Milton "Chronicle": The hog cholera prevails to an alarming extent in Person and Caswell. We hear of a nuuber of fine fat hogs dying in the pen.