

The Situation.

There are many conflicting reports with reference to the numbers, movements and intentions of the enemy in the Eastern part of the State, and some of these reports are evidently sensational. For instance we were amused this morning by finding an interior column just at hand, parading the following flaming captions: "From Wilmington, N. C." "The Fleet Comes Commanded." "The Fleet attacks Fort Caswell." "An Important Ramon." "This is all introductory of a dispatch dated Charleston, Jan. 14th, and the whole is predicated upon the fact that the usual blockaders threw a few shells ashore, a not unusual circumstance. The "important Ramon" is in the words following: "Passengers by the morning's train state that it was reported that four of the enemy's vessels had passed the Fort." This is all news to us here, that even such a thing was thought of. We can assure our contemporaries of the Associated Press, that anything really occurring in the Cape Fear District will be promptly communicated, where not incompatible with the interests of the public service. They need not depend upon reports of passengers received via Charleston, or any other point.

It is settled that the enemy has a heavy force in the Eastern part of this State, mainly concentrated around Newbern, and between that point and Beaufort Harbor; and that the indications are, that Wilmington, Goldsboro, and other points are threatened. What the hostile force is, or who is to command it, or that BRUCE is to have anything to do with it, are all open questions which time only can solve. There is one thing certain, however. We may expect to hear thunder all along our seaboard, now that the campaign in Northern Virginia may be said to have closed for the season. We must be watchful, firm, but neither too apprehensive, nor too self-confident; and we may indulge a reasonable trust that all will yet be well, and the town be safe.

THE U. S. Steamer Columbia, commander Conroy, 12 officers and 28 men, ashore at Masonboro Inlet, surrendered to Col. Lamb yesterday. Col. Lamb kept off four blockaders that had come up to the Columbia's assistance. The prisoners are expected here to-day.

Since writing the above we have received the following official particulars of the capture of the Columbia:

Fort Fisher, Jan. 17th, 1863. The U. S. Steamer "Columbia," carrying 7 guns, Commander Conroy, grounded off Masonboro Sound on Wednesday night last. On Thursday the commanding officer of Fort Fisher, carried one gun ashore, and the other three were fired on Friday at 10 o'clock. A. M. two shots were fired when the steamer hoisted a white flag. About 40 prisoners had been taken. After the surrender several blockers came up, but were promptly driven off. But one man was left on the ship, and owing to the delay caused by the shot a battery which did not perceive or respect the white flag, all the prisoners were not landed till to-day, with some valuable stores.

The "Columbia" is a splendid Iron Steamer, built to run the blockade, and was captured by the "Iuscarpa" of the Confederates, and taken to Charleston. This is her first cruise as a War Steamer.

COMMISSARY.—We learn that N. W. SCHENCK, Esq., of Wilmington, has been appointed to fill the vacancy in the office of Commissary, occasioned by the resignation of Capt. HENRY M. DRANE. Mr. SCHENCK, or rather, as we should now say, Captain SCHENCK, is familiar with the duties of the position, as well as with the various operations of the Department, having been employed in the business of the Commissary's office from the first. He is an excellent business man, and will, no doubt, make a good Commissary.

We learn that on the night of the 12th inst., Mr. Wm. Sears, of the 25th S. C. (Edgewood) regiment, was severely injured in the leg just below the knee, by stumbling (probably in the dark) over the broken fragments of a large riddled cannon, lying near the Wilmington & Weldon R. R. Depot. His knee came with great force on the rail, causing the injury alluded to. The cannon is the one exploded at Fort Caswell, we think.

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

To the Senate and House of Representatives.

At the date of your last adjournment, the preparations of the enemy for further hostilities had assumed so menacing an aspect as to excite in some minds apprehension of our ability to meet them with sufficient promptness to avoid serious reverses. These preparations were completed shortly after your departure from the seat of government, and the army of the United States made simultaneous advance on our frontiers, on the western rivers and on the Atlantic coast in masses so great as to convince their hope of overbearing all resistance by mere weight of numbers. This hope, however, like those previously entertained by our foes, has vanished. In Virginia, their fourth attempt at invasion by armies whose assured success was confidently predicted, has met with decisive repulse. Our noble defenders, under the consummate leadership of their general, have again, at Fredericksburg, withstood on the forces under General Burnside the like disastrous overthrow as had been previously suffered by our arms, and have again, under the command of Generals McDowell, McClintock, and Pope, in the West, bravely battled with our forces, and have again been baffled, and while at Vicksburg another formidable expedition has been repulsed with considerable loss on our side and severe damage to the assailing forces. On the Atlantic coast the enemy has been unable to gain a footing beyond the protecting shelter of his fleets, and the city of Galveston has just been recovered by our forces, which succeeded not only in the capture of the garrison but of one of the enemy's vessels of war, which was carried by a party of our men to the adjacent river's campers. Our fortified positions have every where been much strengthened and improved, affording assurance of our ability to meet, with success, the utmost efforts of our enemies, in spite of the magnitude of their preparations for such a purpose.

A review of our history during the two years of our national existence affords ample cause for congratulation and exultation in the most fervent expression of our thankfulness to the Almighty Father who has blessed our cause. We are justified in asserting, with a pride rarely not unbecoming, that these Confederate States have added another to the lessons taught by history for the instruction of men; that they have afforded another example of the impossibility of subjugating a people determined to be free; and have demonstrated that no superiority of numbers or available resources can overcome the resistance offered by such a valiant combat, with consistency, under suffering, and such cheerful endurance of privation as have been conspicuously displayed by this people in the defence of their rights and liberties. The anticipations with which we entered into the contest have now ripened into a conviction which is not only shared with us by the common opinion of neutral nations, but is even forcing itself upon our enemies themselves. It will mark the history of the present year of resolute perseverance in the path we have hitherto pursued; by vigorous effort in the development of all our resources for defence; and by the continued exhibition of the same unflinching courage in our soldiers and able conduct in our leaders as have distinguished the past, we have every reason to expect that we shall be the closing year of our nation, which in its inception was waged for forcing us back into the Union, having failed to accomplish that purpose, passed into a second stage in which it was attempted to conquer this second stage of dependent provinces. Dejected and upon another, which our enemies have evidently entered upon, and which we have no other purpose than to repulse and thrust for blood and plunder of private property. But however implacable they may be, they can have neither the spirit nor the resources required for a fourth year of a struggle unshowered by any hope of success, except after a weary and fruitless expenditure of money and blood, and many a life has been sacrificed in their people. Our efforts to avoid the war forced on

us as it was, by the lust of conquest and the insatiable passions of our foes, are known to mankind. But we are not to be deterred by the great sacrifices we have made, or the determination of this people has with each succeeding month become more unalterably fixed, to endure any sufferings and continue any sacrifices, however prolonged, until their right to self-government and the sovereignty of their States shall have been triumphantly vindicated and firmly established.

In this connection, the occasion seems not unapplicable for some reference to the relations between the Confederacy and the neutral powers of Europe since the separation of these States from the former Union.

Four of the States now members of the Confederacy were recognized by name as independent sovereignties in a treaty concluded in the year 1783, with the two of the two great maritime powers, Great Britain and France, and had, prior to that period, allies in war of the other. In the year 1778 they formed a Union with nine other States under articles of Confederation. Disatisfied with that Union, three of them, Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia, together with eight of the States now members of the Confederacy, separated from it in 1789, and these eleven seceding States formed a second Union, although by the terms of the Articles of Confederation express provision was made that it should be perpetual. Their right to secede, notwithstanding this provision, was never contested by the States from which they separated, nor by the United States. When, at a later period, North Carolina seceded to that second Union, and when, still later, the other seven States, now members of this Confederacy, became also members of the same Union, it was upon the recognized footing of equal and independent sovereignties, nor had it then entered into the minds of men that sovereign States could be compelled, by force, to remain members of a confederation into which they had entered of their own free will, at a subsequent period, the defense of their safety and honor should, in their judgment, justify withdrawal.

The experience of the past had evinced the utility of any recognition of such independent rights and sovereignties, the provision for perpetuity contained in the Articles of Confederation of 1778 was omitted in the Constitution of 1789. When, therefore, in 1861, eleven of the States again thought proper, for reasons satisfactory to themselves, to secede from the second Union, and to form a third one under a amended constitution, they exercised a right which they had inherited from the first Union, and which international law and the usage of nations do not permit them to question. The usage of intercourse between nations do, however, require that official communication be made to friendly powers of all organic changes in the constitution of States, and their consent to such changes, and their assent to our desire to continue amicable relations with all mankind. It was under the influence of these considerations that your predecessors, the provisional government, took early measures for sending to Europe Commissioners charged with the duty of visiting the capitals of the different powers, and of endeavoring to determine the more formal diplomatic intercourse.

Prior, however, to the arrival abroad of those Commissioners, the United States had commenced hostilities against the Confederacy by despatching a secret expedition for the reinforcement of Fort Sumter, after an express promise to the contrary, and with a duplicity which has been fully unveiled in former messages.

They had also addressed communications to the different Cabinets of Europe, in which they assumed the attitude of being sovereign over this Confederacy, alleging that these independent States were in rebellion against the remaining States of the Union, and threatening Europe with annihilations of their displeasure if they did not sever all relations with the United States, and recognize the independence of this Confederacy. It soon became known that these pretensions were not considered abroad to be as absurd as they were known to be at home, nor had Europe yet learned what reliance was to be placed on the official statements of the Cabinet at Washington. The delicate situation of the Federal Government in relation to the United States had led Europe into a grave error of supposing that their separate sovereignty and independence had been merged into one common sovereignty, and had ceased to have a distinct existence. Under the influence of this error, all attempts at diplomatic intercourse were abandoned, and the United States made themselves to recognize the self-existent fact of the existence of a war, and to maintaining a strict neutrality during its progress. Some of the other powers of Europe pursued the same course of policy, and it became apparent that by some understanding, express or tacit, Europe had entered into a conspiracy to ally all countries against the Confederacy, and to keep the contest on this continent to the public knowledge in history, under the names of the Berlin and Milan decrees, and the British orders in Council, in the years 1806 and 1807 sink into insignificance! Yet those blockades were justified by the powers that declared them, on the sole ground that they were retaliatory measures against the Confederacy, and the two powers, the British and the French, were the aggressors, and the United States were the most conspicuous; yet those blockades became the chief cause of the war between Great Britain and the United States in 1812; yet those blockades were the principal cause of the war between the United States and France in 1861; yet those blockades were the principal cause of the war between the United States and Russia in 1861; yet those blockades were the principal cause of the war between the United States and Prussia in 1861; yet those blockades were the principal cause of the war between the United States and Austria in 1861; yet those blockades were the principal cause of the war between the United States and Sweden in 1861; yet those blockades were the principal cause of the war between the United States and Denmark in 1861; yet those blockades were the principal cause of the war between the United States and Norway in 1861; 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