

Southern Claims Commission.

WASHINGTON, D. C., October 2, 1871.
 MESSRS. EDITORS: The following, which I clip from *The Republican* of this morning, will be interesting to a large number of your readers who have claims before the Commission. It will also spare much unnecessary correspondence with Attorneys in this city.
 Truly Yours,
 W. M. C.

Judge Aldis (president) and ex-Senator Howell, (member) of the Southern Claims Commission, have returned to this city after an absence of three months spent in mingled recreation and deliberation upon the cases carried by them to their homes for that purpose. Ex-Representative Ferriss, the remaining member of the commission, is detained at the North for a few days longer, but he, too, will shortly join his associates.

According to the arrangements made before their departure, the commissioners will resume their sessions for the examination of witnesses in those cases where the claimants desire their testimony to be taken personally before the commissioners to-morrow. Assignments for this purpose have been made covering all the time that can be spared from other duties to the 15th day of November next.

The special commissioners appointed last June in the several Southern States to take the testimony in claims of small amount, where the claimants are too poor to bear the expense of bringing their witnesses to Washington, have been employed in this duty all summer, and the depositions in some three hundred cases have been received from them to this date. Twenty-five of these special commissioners have thus far been appointed, of whom about eighteen are kept constantly engaged by their own engagements, and the remainder will at once be appointed in the larger and more populous of the once rebel States; but the commissioners will not depart from their first intention of limiting their appointments to the smallest number that can reasonably answer the purpose of their appointment.

It is also probable that they will yield so far to the apparent necessities of the case in another direction as to enlarge the authority of their special commissioners beyond the nominal amount of three thousand dollars, the present limit of the cases in which they are empowered to take testimony. This can be the more safely done, because experience has shown that even in the more intelligent and conscientious classes of claimants the amounts demanded are, in a majority of the cases, much in excess of any amounts which the commissioners are likely to find themselves warranted in allowing in full settlement thereof. Even when the cautious and restrictive terms of the act of March 3, 1870, in exacting a constant, active, and known loyalty on the part of the claimant, rather than an original, passive and secret attachment to the Union, and in requiring proof of a positive or intended use of the claimant's property for legitimate military purposes, instead of its mere loss or damage by unauthorized pillage or military occupation, are known and recognized, there is a permanent disposition on the part of claimants to plead the necessity of their claims against the Government and leave the commissioners to decide what part of it they can or will allow, and what portion is to be left to the future justice or generosity of the Government, should any such settlements move our rulers to further concessions hereafter.

The scale of prices, too, against the United States is usually fixed the same as in the limited transactions between private parties during the war, and under the exceptional state of affairs then existing in the South; while the commissioners, controlled by prudence and measurably governed by precedent, are not disposed to go further than to assimilate the articles taken from claimants to those of the regular supply tables of the army, and to settle for the former at the cost price of the latter, added to the additional cost of transportation.

For the reasons just given, the various large sums named at different times since the establishment of the commission, as representing the aggregate amount of the claims presented, cannot be taken as any near indication of the amount to be drawn from the Treasury in rendering to loyal people in the South the same compensation for private property taken for public use as loyal people in the loyal States have been receiving also by acts of Congress ever since the war began. Failure to establish the required measure and constancy of loyalty, and to distinguish between the necessary and proper use of the property on the one hand, and its loss, damage or destruction on the other; the constant detection of fraudulent and false allegations as to loyalty and pretended facts, and reduction of over-estimated quantities and exorbitant prices, will so injure to the public benefit as to relieve Secretary Boutwell from any apprehensions concerning his monthly debt statements and the tax-paying public from fears of a big raid on the funds in Treasurer Spinner's vaults.

On the subject of additional legislation concerning these claims and their investigation, it may be assumed that claims for the authorized and beneficial use and occupation of buildings and grounds for barracks, quarters and permanent camps and fortifications, as well as depots and hospitals, will be expressly included within the jurisdiction of the commissioners, who, somewhat against their own conviction, and in the face of a formidable array of authorities cited before them, have prudently, at all events—excluded many such claims from present consideration in deference to the restrictive interpretation placed by other Government officials upon the term, stores and supplies.

It seems not unlikely, too, that the investigation of all such claims as these commissioners are now examining will, wherever arising within the United States, be intrusted to them or to some similar board. At present claimants from Kentucky, Maryland and West Virginia and the other Northern States must apply exclusively to certain bureaux of the War Department; those from certain of the States, or portions thereof, officially proclaimed in rebellion, are referred to the Southern Claims Commission, and those from Kentucky, Maryland and West Virginia and the other Northern States must apply exclusively to certain bureaux of the War Department; those from certain of the States, or portions thereof, officially proclaimed in rebellion, are referred to the Southern Claims Commission, and those from Kentucky, Maryland and West Virginia and the other Northern States must apply exclusively to certain bureaux of the War Department.

those from Tennessee and two of the counties of West Virginia, to either, or both, at their option. The subject-matter of all these claims is identical, viz: Certain private property taken or furnished for army use during the late war; but the methods of reception, record, procedure and proof, means of investigation and payment, &c., are all different. It would be but an exercise of ordinary business-like common sense if Congress were to consolidate the business of setting these claims.

Eight thousand claims are now on file with the commissioners, an average of over thirteen hundred claims a month. But of the whole number two-thirds have been filled within the last three months, and the ratio of monthly receipts to the whole number is still increasing. To conduct their large office business the commissioners are at present allowed by law one clerk and one stenographer. They have been preserved from absolute chaos in their internal affairs by the temporary loan of a few clerks from the Treasury and War Departments, who are necessary to be withdrawn for service in their proper offices as soon as Congress, at its next session, shall have an opportunity to provide for the wants of its last creation.

The Web of Character.
 BY EGERT L. BANGS.

It is said that, in the gingham-mill, a brook or a slack-twisted thread spoils the web through the piece of a hundred yards. When we consider what beautiful fabrics are the product of the loom, and how important a part they play in the furnishing of our houses and the adornment of our persons, we are tempted to regard weaving as a high art.

Once indeed it was a feminine accomplishment, and it ranked higher than the second-rate caterwauling of Italian-Opera by English-speaking voices, or the working of blue dogs and pink sheep in worsted ever ought to rank.

It is pleasant to recall the old story of Penelope and her web; it was so intimately associated with conjugal fidelity, a virtue to be revered in these days of cheap divorces and ungenerous unions. She wove her web by day to keep peace among her suitors—having promised to give her hand to one of them, when the web was completed.

But at night she pulled out what she had woven by day, and extended time for her liege lord's return by making fogs of her admirers. If we too could only pull out at night what we have woven by day on the web of character, the pulling out would often be more satisfactory than the weaving.

Our web, however, is a very different one from that of Penelope. She made fools of her suitors, and the girl of the period often does the same, though it must be confessed that her way of doing it is entirely unlike that of the Greek princess. We make fools of our selves, and the pattern once woven is a lasting one. We may indeed improve upon it, but each day's weaving is in fast colors, and the work of each day forms a fabric that will never wear out.

And what an endless variety of patterns different persons are weaving into the web of character. Could they be made visible by some process like that which converts the invisible tracery of acids upon paper into legible characters, we should see such pictures as no material fabric ever had wrought into it.

All woven stuffs of whatever kind, are included under the generic name of "web," and in them all, however varied the figures that adorn them, or the colors that light them up, we find simply a warp and a woof or filling.

The web of character has its warp and its woof. Its warp begins with the first moment of life, and extends to its close. Our Maker himself winds it out to us, and determines its length, but the woof is of our own choosing. And upon our choice the quality of the web depends. It is a curious, sometimes a painful, study to see what kind of filling some weavers are putting into this complex, indestructible, and wonderfully varied web of character.

Sam. Houston's Marriage.

The story of Sam Houston, to the effect that he discovered on the night of his marriage that his wife loved another, and immediately left her, has been told hundreds of times; but it seems there are grave doubts as to its truthfulness. A cousin of the lady, who signs herself "M. B. H.," writes as follows to the Memphis Appeal:

I have seen several pieces in your paper lately, purporting to tell why General Houston and wife separated early. As Mrs. Houston and myself were not only intimate friends, but relatives, I think I can tell why they separated so early, with as much truth as any one else. In the Appeal, several days ago, there was an extract from the Galveston Bee, stating that they lived together only three days. This is not true. They lived together three months. I am pretty certain in stating, also, that she had another sweetheart in the neighborhood. It is true Eliza Houston and William T. were always particular friends, but neither she nor any one else would have thought of marrying a man in the last stages of consumption, for at the time my acquaintance commenced with Mrs. Houston this young man was in Cuba, seeking to prolong his life; and that Mr. and Mrs. Allen were ambitious people, and desired to marry General Houston, is all a mistake. Two more unambitious people never lived. To be sure the match was considered good, and they told their daughter so, but there was no force used, and no stronger persuasion. General Houston, as I have told me, was a maniac on the subject of female virtue, and did not believe a pure woman lived. He upbraided her the first night he married, and every day afterward as long as he lived with her, acting now the fond husband and in ten minutes at a furious maniac, the victim of ungovernable jealousy. Mrs. Houston knew there was no happiness in store for her, and determined to separate. She lived a life of complete seclusion for a year or two—a picture of perfect woe. She professed to be a religion, and was at times quite cheerful; but the look of sadness never, as long as I knew her, left her face, which was of a sweet, gentle and winning expression. She was not pretty, but dignified, graceful and queenly in her bearing. She never uttered a harsh or reproachful word of the General—seemed only to pity him. They both married afterward; he a woman of deep piety, and such was her influence over him that he, too, became a member of the Church and died a good man.

A Story of the Assassination.

The Assassination of President Lincoln is called to mind by a remarkable story just made public by William Withers of New York. "Mr. Withers," we read, "has a son named William, who was the leader of the orchestra at Lina Edwin's theatre last winter. Both father and son were in Ford's theatre at the time that Booth shot Lincoln. The elder Withers was one of the orchestra, and played the trombone. The younger had been seated in the parquette; but just previous to the time when the fatal shot was fired, he left his seat and proceeded to the back part of the stage for the purpose of speaking to some one there on a private matter. The Witherses were well acquainted with Booth, and he with them, the elder having played a game of billiards with Booth on the Saturday evening previous, the former losing the game; but Booth who would not permit him to pay for it, exhibited a thick roll of bills of large denominations, and in a boasting way remarked that he had struck oil. After Booth had fired, and he started to return through the wings to the back entrance, he was met in the passage by young Withers, who did not know what had taken place. Withers tried to speak to him; but Booth made a lunge at him with a knife which he held in his hand. Withers dodged the blow, but it nevertheless struck him in the shoulder in an angular direction, and glanced off, cutting through coat, vest and shirt, and producing a slight wound of the skin. He then rushed on out and mounted his horse. Withers, however, stated these facts to Mayor Wallace previous to his examination, who advised him not to mention the circumstance of receiving the stab, and he did not do so. The elder Mr. Withers cannot imagine for what purpose that advice was given."

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