

mark about the improbability of anything of the kind protested against occurring at this session of Congress. It is well understood how these petitions are prepared and signed, and they have no more effect than blank sheets tied up in a bundle.

The weather, that inexhaustible subject of intellectual conversation, is and has been splendid. Except an occasional rain it has been charming. Clear skies, warm sunshine and balmy air. New Years' calls were numerous and the leaders of fashion kept open house with refreshments *ad libitum* and a stereotyped smile for all well-dressed comers, the ladies receiving in "full dress," most of which was on the floor.

The Supreme Court of the United States, as is well known, is overcrowded with work, and the cases before it are so numerous that in the ordinary course of adjudication the latest cases on the docket will not be considered for several years. The docketed cases now number 1,438. About 450 is the average number disposed of during each term, and the average increase is about 200 a year. There is no remedy for this but by Act of Congress, and little disposition is manifested in that body to afford relief. A bill introduced by Senator and ex-Judge Davis passed the Senate at one time but went no further. It proposed eighteen additional circuit judges, and to raise the minimum limit of money involved in a case before the Supreme Court to \$10,000. George Ticknor Curtis once proposed to relieve the Supreme Court of all patent cases and send them to a Patent Court of Appeal. That was a good suggestion but has never been seriously and practically considered. The Davis bill would answer the desired purpose, and may be revived during the next session of Congress, when the republicans expect to have their own way in legislation.

A large number of "school marm's" in excursion parties visited Washington during the holidays. They were a bright, intelligent looking body of women, and went about their sight-seeing in a business-like manner. During their inspection of the Capitol one party took seats in the House of representatives—it was during recess—and all but two sat on the Republican side, and commenced to make fun of the twain on the other. But these, pointing to the picture of George Washington on their side of

the chamber, said they were in good company and with the Father of their country thought they were on the right side after all. A little five-year-old girl in the party went around reading the names on the desks, such as Hon. S. S. Cox, Hon. Thomas B. Reed, Hon. John T. Caine, etc., and seemed considerably puzzled. Running up to a gentleman she asked, "Can you please tell me why all the boys in this school are named Hon.?" The little miss was duly enlightened, her informant being Hon. Ezra B. Taylor, who is always in the House, except on Sunday, after half-past 9 o'clock in the morning and until the evening shades appear.

There is quite a breeze here over the negligence in the State Department concerning the pardon of prisoners. At the White House everything acted upon is promptly forwarded to its proper department, and a perfect record is kept of the disposition of each case. But frequently papers are mislaid and cases delayed in the State Department, causing no end of trouble and distress. Pardons are granted and, instead of the looked-for release being made at once, the warrants are held in a heartless way, and sick and dying prisoners are detained in confinement because of the tardy unwinding of official red tape. One poor cripple, pardoned December 21st, was still in prison in Virginia at New Year's day, and other similar cases are coming to light which arouse a good deal of indignation. By the by, it should be understood that the release of Bishop A. A. Kimball was brought about by the kindly intervention of Judge Judd, who passed sentence upon him. He imposed but a light penalty considering the charge, because he saw that the defendant was in bad health; and learning by a dispatch from Marshal Dyer that Mr. Kimball was in a dangerous condition, the judge promptly wrote a personal petition for his pardon, which he forwarded to Delegate Caine, who at once endorsed it, obtained the signature of Attorney General Garland waiving further formalities, and presented it to the President, who acted upon it without delay. The Department of Justice telegraphed news of the pardon, and as the Marshal and Warden in Utah have more humanity than devotion to dry formalities, he was liberated without waiting for papers that might be detained through official lethargy here. Of course the dispatch from the Department of

Justice was reliable authority. Judge Judd is entitled to credit for this act of kindness to a suffering prisoner, and Marshal Dyer also for his share in the proceedings.

Those Idaho prisoners recently pardoned and released from Sioux Falls received executive clemency to relieve them from the shameful and illegal punishment of two penalties for one offense. They were convicted of unlawful cohabitation and adultery, when the latter offense was really covered by the former. This is how it is understood here. The Department of Justice and the Executive of the Nation agree on this, whatever the wise judges of Utah and Idaho may think to the contrary. It was not designed by the framers of the law to inflict double punishment on an offender, even if he is that terrible irritant to pharisaic puritanism, a "Mormon polygamist." Every lawyer here whose opinion is asked as to the legality of this piling on of penalties is emphatic in condemning it utterly. The same with that cruel and inexcusable Utah judicial practice of forcing a woman under threats of imprisonment to disclose the paternity of her child, when she is liable to prosecution herself or the testimony would expose her to public reproach. This excessive zeal in the enforcement of a special law, it is thought, has been carried to the verge of official fanaticism and the appearance of judicial spite.

Bishop J. P. Newman, known in Utah as "Leviticus xviii, 18," formerly pastor of the M. E. Church with the chimps, has been re-visiting his old particular sphere, and has been cordially received among his friends. He and his wife have been the guests of Senator and Mrs. Stanford, of California, at whose house a reception was held in his honor yesterday. The new Bishop wears his honors proudly, and fills his office with much ability. He is a popular preacher and far above the average. The District of Columbia is reducing its public debt, its sinking fund being something more than a name. Since July, 1878, it has been shaved down \$3,970,100. But those who think a bonded debt a benefit to a town or a nation need not be discouraged at this. The District still owes the comfortable sum of \$20,142,050, which would make a number of fortunes for several reasonable individuals—a simple twentieth would be quite satisfactory to

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