The United States may at any time after the expiration of five years from the date of the passage of this act, for postal, military, or other purposes, purchase all the telegraph lines, property, and effects of any or all of said companies at an appraised value, to be ascertained by five competent, disinterested persons, two of whom shall be selected by the Postmaster-General of the United States, two by the company interested, and one by the four so previously selected.

SEC. 4. And be it further enacted, That before any telegraph company shall exercise any of the powers or privileges conferred by this act, such company shall file their written acceptance with the Postmaster-General of the restrictions and obligations required by this act.

APPROVED, July 24, 1866.

SEC. 2. And be it further enacted, That the number of line officers of the navy on the active list, five lieutenants, fifty masters, and seventy-five ensigns may be appointed from those officers who have served in the volunteer naval service for a period of not less than two years, and who are either now in that service or have been honorably discharged therefrom: Provided, That if by these appointments the number of officers in any grade shall exceed the number fixed by law, no more promotions or appointments to that grade shall be made until the number is reduced below the number fixed by law for that grade: And provided further, That the authority given by this section shall be exhausted when the number of volunteer officers above named shall have been once appointed.

SEC. 3. And be it further enacted, That the Secretary of the Navy shall appoint a board consisting of not less than three naval officers superior in rank to the officers to be thus appointed in the regular navy from the volunteer service, which board, after examination of the claims of all candidates, shall select and report to the Secretary of the Navy the most meritorious in character, ability, professional competency, and honorable service, the number to be appointed and transferred to the several grades mentioned in the second section of this act, provided they shall find that number who are suitably qualified therefor. And any officer who has served in the volunteer naval service for the term of two years or
more shall have the right to appear before the examining board and present his claims and be examined for an appointment in the regular navy. And any volunteer officers attached to vessels at sea or on foreign stations may be appointed to the regular navy, subject to the conditions contained in this section, after their return to the United States.

SEC. 4. And be it further enacted, That the Secretary of the Navy be, and he hereby is, authorized to retain, or to appoint under existing laws and regulations, such volunteer officers in the navy as the exigencies of the service may require.

SEC. 5. And be it further enacted, That lieutenant commanders may be assigned to duty as navigation and watch officers on board of vessels of war as well as first lieutenants of naval stations and of ships of war.

SEC. 6. And be it further enacted, That the annual compensation of the admiral of the navy shall be ten thousand dollars a year, and he shall be entitled to the services of a secretary, who shall receive the annual sea pay of a lieutenant in the navy.

SEC. 7. And be it further enacted, That naval constructors and first and second assistant engineers in the navy shall be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, and shall have naval rank and pay as officers of the navy.

SEC. 8. And be it further enacted, That all acts and parts of acts inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed.

APPROVED, July 25, 1866.

CHAP. CCXXXII. — An Act to revive the Grade of General in the United States Army.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the grade of “general of the army of the United States” be, and the same is hereby, revived; and the President is hereby authorized, whenever he shall deem it expedient, to appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, a general of the army of the United States, to be selected from among those officers in the military service of the United States most distinguished for courage, skill, and ability, who, being commissioned as general, may be authorized, under the direction and during the pleasure of the President, to command the armies of the United States.

SEC. 2. And be it further enacted, That the pay proper of the general shall be four hundred dollars per month; and his allowance for fuel and quarters, when his headquarters are in Washington, shall be at the rate of three hundred dollars per month, and his other allowances in all respects the same as are allowed to the lieutenant general by the second section of the act approved February twenty-nine, eighteen hundred and sixty-four, entitled “An act reviving the grade of lieutenant general in the United States army”; and the chief of staff to the lieutenant general shall be transferred and be the chief of staff to the general, with the rank, pay, and emoluments of a brigadier-general in the army of the United States; and the act approved March third, eighteen hundred and sixty-five, entitled “An act to provide for a chief of staff to the lieutenant general commanding the armies of the United States,” is hereby repealed, and the said general may select from the regular army for service upon his staff such number of aides, not exceeding six, as he may judge proper, who during the term of such staff service shall each have the rank, pay, and emoluments of a colonel of cavalry. And it is hereby provided, that in lieu of the staff now allowed by law to the lieutenant general, he shall be entitled to two aides and one military secretary, each to have the rank, pay, and emoluments of a lieutenant colonel of cavalry, during the term of such staff service.

APPROVED, July 25, 1866.