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THE REBEL BLOCKADE AT VICKSBURG

Exploits of the Ram Queen of the West.

Terrible Firing by the Vicksburg Batteries.

NOBODY HURT.

THE VICKSBURG STRUCK AND SET IN FLAMES.

THE RAM SET ON FIRE.

From Our Special Correspondent.

OFF VICKSBURG, Feb. 2, 1863.

This morning is the epoch of another great triumph of the gunboat fleet. The gordian knot has been cut. It has been demonstrated that the tremendous batteries of Vicksburg that have so long "breathed out threatenings and slaughter" to our armies may be defied by wooden gunboats. A hundred canon have thundered in vain against one of the feeblest vessels of the Mississippi flotilla.

It has been known to the initiated for the last two days that the attempt would be made to run the blockade with one of the "rams." Night before last we were all on the qui vive, expecting at any moment that the silence would be broken by the diapason of Southern canon, either signing a pean or a requiem to our naval "forlorn hope." But we listened in vain, the night passed without incident of importance. The moon went down; the morning came, but no gunboat; what could have detained her? Perhaps the fog. Perhaps the project had been abandoned as desperate. A thousand conjectures were hazarded, but the public were kept in the dark. As the night drew on yesterday, dark and foggy, notwithstanding the moon, the omens appeared to be propitious. Yet we retired, pretty much expecting that the darkness would again wear away without interruption.

Early this moring, however, our slumbers were broken by the heavy sound of artillery, evidently in the direction of the point, at first dull and distant, then increasing in volume and rapidy, till the air was fairly alive with the discordant din. The meaning of the racket was no longer doubtful. Hastily donning the essentials of the toilet, I started on a full run to the river, a quarter of a mile distant. There, sure enough, large as life, carrying a crest of foam before her bows, under full press of steam, was the black, unwieldy monster, Queen of the West, bearing down upon us. Her boiler deck was piled with cotton bales, black and smoking. The hose was playing upon them, and had evidently nearly extinguished the flames.

The fog had nearly rolled away, and by the light of the red dawn the hill-sides of the Mississippi shore were hurling shot and shell from every direction, now passing beyond her, now making the water around her boil again. She seemed to bear a charmed life. At one time her wheels appeared to stop and her speed to slacken. For a moment we held our breath. But presently she came on again under full headway while the air rang with the cheers of the thousands of soldiers who were watching her progress. At length the gauntlet was run. The shell began to fall short, and the gallant craft was out of danger.

I have just returned from a visit of inspection, and transmit the particulars.

The Queen of the West is a wooden ram of the largest size. Her bulwarks, unprotected by mail and perpendicular, afford no protection against cannon of heavy caliber. Her offensive armor is feeble, consisting of four 12-pound brass pieces and a 20-pound howgun. It was therefore determined to protect her with cotton bales, which covering proved so successful at Island No. 10. One hundred and fifty bales of that material were taken from Griffith's farm, and placed about her boilers two deep. A picked crew, consisting of Col. Charles Rivers Ellet of Pennsylvania, her youthful commander; Scott Long, her pilot; an accidental pilot, the Captain of the Lancaster, who volunteered his services, and the necessary boiler's crew, beside half a dozen negroes, who offered their services, in all about twenty-five men, were placed on board.

The plan was to start at 4 o'clock, but the repairs upon one wheel, which was out of order, consumed the time until 5, when it was broad daylight. Nevertheless, it was determined to send her through. As she rounded the point of the Louisiana shore the guns began to open upon her, at first without effect.

As one object of the expedition was to sink the steamer Vicksburg, which was lying at the wharf, she immediately bore down upon her. But the rapidity of the current, which ran like a mill stream, rendered that task an almost impossible one. In order to hit her fairly in the side, it was necessary to pursue a line at right angles to the current, a course which would require half her momentum, and swing her down stream. In the meantime while this maneuvring was going on, the Queen would be exposed to a terrible fire from a 64-pounder not more than two hundred yards distant. The "Ram," however, struck her with tremendous force, crushing through her guards and opening a frightful gash in her side. It was evident, however, that the hull was not penetrated.

To draw back and strike her again would be the work of minutes, and the crisis was fearful. One 64-pound conical shot had already struck her larboard side, passing through the captain's room, through the cabin, and at last lodging on the other side of the boat. Another shot might sink her. One shell had already set her cotton on fire. It was, therefore, decided to give the Vicksburg the benefit of a couple of heavy wads saturated with combustibles, which were accordingly shot into her side. The smoke and flame issuing out of the cabin doors of the steamer a few seconds afterward told the result. The rebels at length succeeded in extinguishing the flames, but the boat must have sustained very serious damage.

The ram then passed forward on her way down the river, exposed for three miles to the shots from the Rebel batteries. Such a gauntlet has hardly been run in modern times. This terrible passage occupied three-quarters of an hour, and exposed her to a cannonade of from 100 to 150 shots. The number of disasters is variously estimated. The average is about 112. The crew escaped almost by miracle. Col. Ellet inherits his father's bravery, and remained in the pilot-house during the whole passage. The boat is frightfully mangled. She was hit in twelve places, and the devilish implements of destruction—a baker's dozen—were piled up for the benefit of the curious. Altogether, this passage though the "jaws of death" is worthy of a place in song.

DEATH OF THE AMERICAN CONSUL AT JAMAICA.—We regret having to announce the death of Mr. J. T. Noel, Consul in this island for the United States of America. This melancholy event took place on Thursday, after a lingering illness. The unfortunate gentleman was the victim of a pulmonary disease. The flags of the several Consulates, the Consular Exchange, and the ships in port were kept at half mast the whole of yesterday, as a mark of respect to the deceased. [Kingston Jour., Jan. 10.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE GULF.

Arrival of the Empire City.

The United States steam transport Empire City, Capt. Baxter, from New-Orleans Feb. 6 and Key West the 10th, with passengers, to United States Assistant Quartermaster, arrived on Saturday. Left at New-Orleans Bar, bound up, steamer Illinois, ships Bella Wood, Geo. Peabody, barks Albert of Boston, and White Sea (outside bar). Left at Key West United States steamers Octorora, Huntsville, R. R. Cuyler, and the prize steamer Virginia, also United States steamer Rhode Island. Arrived 1st, at 7 a. m., frigate St. Lawrence, bark Gemsbok, United States transport ship Wizard King, for New-Orleans in about ten days.

Returning "Registered Enemies" of the United States to Dixie, under a Flag of Truce—Expedition of the J. D. Brown from New-Orleans to Madisonville, La.

From Our Special Correspondent.

ST. CHARLES HOTEL, NEW-ORLEANS, Feb. 4, 1863.

I have spoken in a previous letter of the steamboat J. D. Brown, which has made a trip or two across Lake Pontchartrain to Madisonville, on its northern shore, conveying such persons whose inclinations prompted them toward that destination, into the realms of Dixie, under a flag of truce. Two days ago I was a passenger on board the steamer during a similar expedition, thinking it of sufficient interest to deserve some record in THE TRIBUNE. Here are my experiences:

I rose at the unnatural hour of 6 a. m., having scribbled until 3 (for was not the Marion to depart on the morrow with a mail for New-York), and just after the sun had followed my example, effected a hasty walk through the French quarter and the dank morning to the depot of the Pontchartrain Railroad. Not that there was any necessity for doing so, for the point of departure lay elsewhere, as soon appeared, but relying on my fellow-creatures, I was deceived. One of my two companions had been misinformed; hence we found ourselves, after a ride of about twenty minutes, through a picturesque swamp, at a point on the lake shore at least three miles eastward of the right one. The conductor, an elderly Frenchman (who, in common with most of his class in this vicinity, had a negro to relieve him of the burden of carrying the tickets), informed us, in broken English, that the J. D. Brown had departed yesterday, and that he didn't believe that any boat started to-day; but beyond this cheering piece of information—of course incorrect—he had none to impart. So that when we alighted at a collection of shabby wooden houses (which looked as if they had yielded to the dreary influences of the locality and settled down into suicidal rottenness), it was to learn our mistake from an intelligent United States soldier, who also pointed out the way to remedy it, namely, a walk along the margin of the lake to "Hickox's Landing."

We set out, accordingly, at a brisk pace, being haunted with lively apprehensions that we should be too late, for our information—of course erroneous—stated it at eight precisely. The road, at first good enough and straight, with the exception of occasional bends round the bayous, lay through the swamp, which completely encircles Lake Pontchartrain, whose wide waste of dreary waters stretched away from our right to the indefinable distance. The sun, as yet but low on the horizon, did its best to cheer a prospect of which the predominant characteristic was desolation, but with half a dozen *parboiled* to help him he would have failed to do it; still, as he warmed our backs and the raw morning air, we were grateful to him. He might have looked on such a scene ages ago, before man was an inhabitant of this planet.

In the swamp all the melancholy trees were bearded with moss, a jungle of undergrowth, of weeds, of reeds and rushes, hiding the mud and water in which they had root, the whole being appropriately bordered by a straight-cut canal, in which a boy was bathing—he said for perch, but I suspect frogs. Altogether, a magnificent preserve for alligators, of which, no doubt, there were plenty.

We saw nothing of them, however, nor for half a mile anything animate larger than a flight of wild ducks on the lake and a lonely mocking-bird in the swamp—demoralized, probably, or he would never have been there. Then our difficulties began. Arriving at a haven, large enough to be a mile river, on which a sail-boat manned by Indians was being propelled likewards, we crossed a foot-bridge, beyond which was a house, a high fence and a garden, and where our path seemed abruptly to terminate.

First we inquired of an Irish soldier in possession of the house, the locality of "Hickox's," who responded with Celtic promptness and with the utmost confidence by pointing directly to where we had come from. On our demurring at this, he suggested our shifting the projection on which the house and grounds stood, by means of a tow-path leaving apparently to nowhere. Our trust in him shaken, we asked an aged Frenchman who objected to the tow-path and yelloomently insisted, first, that we wanted to go to New-Orleans, then to an unknown place, the name of which sounded like the drawing of a cork out of a bottle. Abandoning him, when he had worked himself into a state of partial frenzy at our not starting immediately for the latter, we attempted several Indians, a negro, and an individual who looked like a hybrid between the two with a dash of the Hibernian thrown in. He proved a person of rare intelligence and, recognizing the word "Hickox," conducted slowly with his companions (who all pointed different ways) finally overturning them. We exhausted the grounds suggested by the Frenchman, forded a bayou by means of a plank, and then had two and a half miles of the most abominable traveling before we conceivable.

Our feet were on the mud of Louisiana, our name Emigration! The road, a mere foot path, scarcely discernible, followed the indentations of the lake, thereby affording us an additional mile and a half's locomotion, agreeably diversified by wading. Some time the track disappeared wholly, when we had to trust in Providence and the length of our boots. An astronomer, a sayonin, an eel, might have found himself charmed with the locality, but no your correspondent and his colleagues. Content, however, by the prospect of two tall smoke-stacks in the distance, we held on and presently arrived at the desired landing-place.

Hickox is a name proper, belonging to the proprietor of a house, who appears to have been reared for the purpose of keeping it, of interesting himself in a certain "india-rubber" team owned by a friend of his, and of affording Col. Thorpe, our City Surveyor, a subject for lacteous stories. Hickox received us graciously, condoled with us in mud, and produced breakfast. That disposed of, we turned out to make observations.

It was a busy scene into which we issued, surrounding the house. Suppose a handsomely two-story house, encircled with balconies, vines in bright, spring-like verdure, gardens, terrapin alleys, a setting gallooses line of artificial lawn, a canal stretching out toward the lake, a bridge over it, a magnificent "shell" road inland—these constitute the locality. Fill it up with fifty or more vehicles, either stylish, private carriages or trim-lines cars (New-Orleans shames New-York in the latter conveniences), by and from which are momentarily arriving ladies, officers, and civilians—a parti-colored crowd pleasant to see. The first are clever "secesh" and enemies of the United States; bound to Dixie, or friends "going to see them off," the second have on duty, the third actuated by curiosity or political sympathy. We need not have hurried ourselves, after all, for the J. D. Brown was quite only enough in the canal, beyond a tolerable space of lawn, and the constantly increasing crowd on the near side of it, no less than the pile of baggage about the hatchway, chose that there's a good deed to be done before we get off, which proves to be the case.

All baggage was to be examined. Of that, Tom, *Picayune*, the most outspoken of the muzzled Secession newspapers of this city, had cautioned its lady friends, adding suggestively that they might save themselves trouble and annoyance by attending to it. Whether it was unaware that the ladies were to be examined also, I know not. Any way, that proved to be the fact, and one inciting no little indignation in the feminine bosom. "They searched them even to taking off their stockings," said one lovely Rebel, to whom I was introduced by her husband, of the friends she intended to cross the lake with; while another lady declared audibly that she would rather submit to such another examination at the hands of men than her own sex! Beyond a few smuggled letters, which were opened, and with one exception restored to their custodians, nothing contraband was discovered on the persons of the ladies. I heard of six bottles of excellent brandy being found in the trunk of a matron, but, on her explaining that she was an invalid, and that the cognac was intended to "rub her with," they were allowed to pass freely.

Col. John S. Clark, Aid-de-Camp to Gen. Banks, who had charge of the expedition, was a busy man that morning—generally the center of a little crowd of ladies, six deep. I hear he is popular with them. Under his superintendence things were kept moving, but it was not until within fifteen minutes of noon that we were all aboard the J. D. Brown, and she fairly off, steaming down the little canal into the lake. Then the barrier of blue-coated officers protecting the tabooed space gave way, and the populace rushed inward, waving handkerchiefs and hats, cheering for Jeff. Davis and the Southern Confederacy, and shouting messages to friends existing within it. Running alongside the tow-path, disregarding tumbles and mud, they raced to the very extremity of the pier, and there we left them—a human hive—still agitating their handkerchiefs and imbibing in shrill cheers.

It was a dull, overcast day, threatening rain, the surface of the lake mirroring the leaden sky overhead. The J. D. Brown is not a boat I should select for a pleasure excursion, being old, ricketty, and out of repair; she was captured from the enemy some time during the past year. In addition to her other disadvantages, she possessed no seats to speak of, except those afforded by her paddle-boxes, which, in a raw, cold, February morning, were hardly desirable. However, we adopted the inevitable policy on such occasions of making the best of it, and the choky little saloon on the upper deck being unsavory and full of baggage, we strolled outside and improved our acquaintance with the ladies. At least I did, and do not repent it.

They were all Rebels, of course, and the lovely one before-mentioned rampantly so. She had lived in New-Orleans during the whole of Gen. Butler's administration, and though she knew the General and had a good word for him, I am afraid she believed all the monstrous stories to his discredit which are afloat here, which people invent and credit with all the credulity of hatred. Furthermore, she asserted the heroism of all Southerners, the intrinsic cowardice and despicability of all Yankees. I am not an enough to argue with a pretty woman, knowing that the sex get their convictions entirely through the medium of their feelings, reason having nothing whatever to do with the matter—so I did not attempt to convert her, nor she me. Only this I will say: I wish Northern women were as intensely sympathetic on the right side as Southern ones are on the wrong. Every one of the latter is an intense propagandist of Rebellion, splendidly irrational, superbly perverse. To be sure the thing bores one, carried to the extent that it is, but all Southern people also bores on the subject of their "rights and institutions," and have been for the last quarter of a century.

We chatted then with the ladies and officers, ate native lunches standing, smoked, and disported ourselves promiscuously. In the saloon, beside the baggage, and also crowded on the deck outside, were perhaps twenty negro women, servants or slaves to the ladies; with their black faces, neat, cheap dresses, and bright handkerchief-turbans, adding an additional spice of picturesque to the scene. I was told that we had 94 of their mistresses on board, bound for Secesia, and perhaps half-a-dozen of their lady friends, intending to return with us to New-Orleans. So, with our flag of truce (a white pillow-case, with the ends sewn together) streaming to the breeze, we plashed across the dull waters of Lake Pontchartrain, which improved in aspect as we progressed for the opposite shore, coming in sight of it at about 3 in the afternoon.

A white light-house, a ragged, woody shore, the black trees of which were entirely covered with the unmeasured long gray moss, and a sluggish river, banked by sedges and flags, were what awaited us. Up the river, the Ottiancke, we glided, the landscape on either side being as weird and wary, and wild, and dreary, as if it lay not in actual Louisiana, but on some shore in old romance. Merlin might have retired thither after being jilted by Ginevra, or the genius of Despondency have wandered thither after escaping the slough in Pilgrim's Progress. Ten minutes brought us to Madisonville.

It is a little place, of no importance, comprising a few streets, a hotel, and a dozen shops or two. On the margin of the river, in front of the town, almost the entire population had assembled to welcome our arrival—perhaps a score of hundred persons.

They were a picturesque assemblage—the men attired in homely secession, the women in cheap but showy dresses; nearly all, I should say, country people of the poor farmer sort. The latter waved their handkerchiefs, cheered for Jeff. Davis, and uttered shrill cries of recognition of friends on board. The former gazed curiously under their worn slouched felt hats at the crowded decks of our steamer, not without a certain bitter civility. Speedily they bestirred themselves, catching ropes and throwing out planks, and in a few minutes we had all swarmed ashore.

Close by, on a pole, fluttered a Confederate flag, the well-known "stars and bars," looking gay enough, with its two broad red stripes and blue patch in the inner corner. Here and there were magnificent live oaks, their foliage more or less deformed by pendant moss. Leaving our officers to shake hands with friends to whom they had become known in previous excursions, and the majority of the women to be swept triumphantly into the town, there to obtain a clamorous welcome, and the remainder of the population to group themselves about the landing-place, I, in company with the lame Rebel, and a friend, escaping "a registered enemy" (bound for Richmond), strolled into the village, through it, and toward the outskirts. It was almost entirely deserted, three-fourths of the simple dwellings being closed. The men had gone into the army, the women farther into the interior, up the country.

Having satisfied our curiosity, we were about to return, when seven Rebel officers rode by at an easy canter, and on my companion's adjuring me I threw him to converse with us. Subsets I have called them, though they had but little of the outward semblance of it. Armed in well-worn rusty suits of homespun, of a dingy brown, surmounted by felt hats, each with a rifle or carbine slung at his back, with exceptional odd-contoured spurs jingling their rough boots or old shoes, they looked, as they proved, of the guerrilla order. Three had gray hairs, stands, earnest, commanding, and civil; the fourth was a mere lad of 16; of the remaining three, two rated only an ugly fellow, with deformed shoulders.

"What are you going to do with those guns?" inquired my companion. "You wouldn't shoot those Yankees who were so kind as to bring us over?"

"I don't know as we wouldn't!" answered one of the horsemen, a tall fish, good looking fellow, with light gray, earnest eyes; speaking in his quiet, calm speech, and exhibiting a good set of teeth in smiling.

"They've been very polite to us," and forthwith the speaker began to pour out a liquidus, laudatory and comparative, with all of a proud and petted woman's volubility. In the course of his remarks she uttered the words "Rebel army."

"Why not say our army?" asked the horseman above mentioned, good humoredly, but with a spice of carnousness.

"We are proud of the name in New-Orleans. I'm known as the Rebel lady there," and she talked on as before. In the meanwhile her lady friend addressed the foremost rider, endeavoring to borrow his horse, whereuith to ride to Covington, seven miles distant, thence to proceed to Mandeville, fourteen more. The man belonged, as they presently told me, to the 4th Arkansas cavalry, being on detached service—a mere company—and consequently [illegible] rode on to the landing place, whither we soon after followed them.

Here were more soldiers, of similar appearance, and two fine-looking Rebel officers, attired in handsome gray uniforms, on horseback. Leaving my companion to rest herself in the parlor of one of the two hotels (where the only refreshment procurable was water), I freely mingled with the crowd, and soon found myself in a little group of Rebel soldiers, involving the horsemen previously encountered, and some others.

"Dog gone it! how well them Yankee soldiers is dressed!" said the lad, who had just been commended to me by an elder comrade as a two-year old soldier who had killed four or five Yankees already.

"Yes, that's all they are good for," remarked another. To which an Irishman, also a Rebel soldier, added something more offensive.

I asked him whether, when he became a citizen of the United States, he had not taken an oath to support its Constitution.

"There ain't no Constitution now; it's all knocked to thunder!" struck in another soldier—a curly-haired, hazel-eyed man, with a chronic laugh on his jovial face.

"That's so, and all along of the niggers!" was the universal chorus.

The conversation became general. All the men professed a hatred and contempt for Eastern soldiers too deep for words, amounting to fanatic ire. "Any Southern man could whip four of 'em easy, by—! They *always* run!" But for those claiming the West for their birth-place, they spoke with respect, some of them adhering to the hope that they would yet join the South, in obedience to what they considered their natural interests and proclivities. "God bless 'em! they can't help their hearts being with us, after all," said one man, concluding a story of a desertion of some members of an Illinois regiment. This man had fought at Fort Donelson and Shiloh. I did not care to tell him that I had a nephew who was engaged on the latter bloody field on the other side. Apropos of the contempt for Yankees, it may be easily accounted for by the fact that the speakers had only encountered *Western* men.

The Rebels spoke with a certain archness about their privations—declaring, however, that they were of the past, now, and the Confederate army never in such a good condition—almost touching to listen to. To hear them was to execrate the man who had misled them so long.

But 5 o'clock has arrived; the J. D. Brown blows her whistle impatiently, and the cry is "all aboard!" With diminished numbers we climb the upper deck and steam off from Dixie. I think I shall not speedily forget the look of the picturesque crowd on its receding shores, framed by the trees and gray forest. Nothing more important than a rainstorm and bitter "Norther" marked our return to New-Orleans.

T. B. G.

The Crew of the Hatteras Landed at Kingston—The Florida Blockaded at Kingston.

From Our Special Correspondent.

ST. CHARLES HOTEL, NEW-ORLEANS, LA., February 5, 1863.

I have some brief news to communicate, which will send a thrill of thankfulness and gratitude to God through many loving and mourning hearts at the North. It is as follows:

It is privately known, both in this city and in Havana, that by far the greater proportion of the officers and crew of the Hatteras did NOT share the fate of that unfortunate vessel, in being sunk to the bottom of the sea by the guns of the notorious Alabama. That piratical craft has landed 125 of them at Kingston, Jamaica, where they remain, probably in a parole condition, awaiting an opportunity to return to our fleet. As the navy estimate of the number of persons on board the Hatteras does not exceed 140, of whom 5 escaped with Acting Master Partridge, to tell the story of attack previously forwarded to you, the list of possible—not certain—casualties diminishes to 9.

From the same sources I learn that the Hatteras sank very rapidly after the transfer of the prisoners from her deck to that of the Alabama. Also that the Rebel vessel Florida (known also as the Ovi to or Oreto, either by English name) is lying in Kingston harbor, closely watched by the Cuyler, which followed her when she ran the blockade of Mobile and has thus chased her into port. Another United States gunboat is reported as assisting in the watch.

T. B. G.

A Confederate Defeat in Louisiana.

From The Tex. Delta, Feb. 3.

We learn that Capt. Williamson of Gen. Weitzel's brigade, who has for some time been skirmishing in the vicinity of Bayou Plaquemine, had an encounter with a small body of Confederate troops at Indian Village on the 27th ult., and drove them from their entrenchments, with, it is believed, considerable loss, and none on the Union side, except a few horses killed in the early part of the engagement. After the retreat of the Confederates the Union troops crossed the bayou and destroyed the quarters, fortifications, &c., took one cannon and several stand of small arms.

The Depredations of the Florida—Ten Vessels Captured—She Pursued to Kingston, Jamaica.

From the N. O. Picayune, 4th.

By the arrival of the Creole we have the following intelligence from Havana: The Confederate gunboat Florida was coming at Havana on the 26th ult. She departed the next day, on the Rio Blanco for New-York, via Havana, leaving at the same time, but did not molest the latter, owing, it is said, to a promise given the Captain General to that effect. The San Jacinto pursued the Florida immediately upon her leaving port, but she eluded her pursuer. A number of other United States war vessels subsequently went in search of the Florida and succeeded in compelling her to take refuge in Kingston, Jamaica, where she was lying at the accounts. Among the vessels destroyed by the Florida was a bark from New-Orleans (name unknown) with a cargo of sugar and molasses for a Northern port. The Tribune of the Creole favors us with the following:

"The Florida, Rebel gunboat, is reported to have captured ten vessels of the Union States commercial marine, between the ports and St. Juan de los Remedios. All the United States war vessels in the vicinity of the coast of Cuba are in pursuit of the audacious depredator, and they will not catch her."

THE REBEL PRIVATEER BEAUREGARD.

Her Chases and Fails to Overtake a Schooner, but Captures Another.

The schooner E. A. De Hart, or Georgetown, Capt. Cummings, from Jacmel, Jan. 29th, laden with logwood and coffee to E. Thackeray, arrived at this port last evening. The Captain reports that on the 6th of January, off Cape Tiburon, he was chased by the Rebel privateer schooner Beauregard, who fired several shot and shell at us, and one shot struck the stern, but fortunately doing no damage. The weather at the time was calm, but a breeze coming up we soon ran away from her, but had it continued calm she would no doubt have taken us with her boats. On the same day they saw her board another small schooner of about 80 or 100 tons burden. She was an Eastern built vessel, top painted black and green bottom.

On the morning of the same day, previous to seeing the privateer, they saw a large steamer, which was taken to be a Union cruiser, come from almost the same direction in which they made the privateer out.

Fire in Milwaukee.

MILWAUKEE, WIS., Sunday, Feb. 14, 1863.

A fire broke out this morning in the Newhall House, and damaged the house and furniture to the amount of $ [illegible]. The origin is of the House goes [illegible] extinguishing the fire.

FROM WASHINGTON.

Democratic Opposition to War Measures.

More Aid and Comfort for the Rebels.

THE WORK OF AMENDING THE TAX BILL.

GOOD PROSPECT FOR THE PRIVATEERING BILL.

Provisions of the Conscription Bill.

Rebel Reported Battle by Gen. Banks

Plan to Enlist Men of African Descent.

RESIGNATION OF GOV. STANLY.

Disaster to one of our Picket Guards.

Special Dispatch to The N. Y. Tribune.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 15, 1863.

THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION TO THE WAR MEASURES.

The shadow of an approaching Democratic opposition to the vital measures of legislation now maturing falls darkly on the House. The country must be prepared for a disloyal filibustering against an increase of the army and against the financial measures of the Administration.

THE TAX BILL.

The Tax bill will not be reported from the Ways and Means Committee until Tuesday. The amendments of it do not cease. The tobacco interest consumed a considerable part of Saturday's session, and other interests argued and clamored for justice and reduction.

LETTERS OF MARQUE AND REPRISAL.

Senator Grimes's bill, authorizing the President to issue letters of marque and reprisal, is set down for consideration in the Senate to-morrow. The vote by which it was taken up yesterday is a decisive indication of its passage by a large majority. Senators Sumner and Trumbull will probably speak against it.

THE CONSCRIPTION BILL.

The Conscription bill is also set down for to-morrow. An amendment will be moved calculated to bring within its operation foreign-born citizens who are voters under the laws of the States in which they reside, or have filed declarations of intention to become citizens. Another amendment will probably be proposed enabling drafted men, in lieu of providing substitutes to pay a certain sum, which is to be offered as a bounty for the re-enlistment of nine months' and three years' men.

REPORTED BATTLE BY GEN. BANKS.

An important but vague report comes through Rebel channels to the effect that Gen. Banks has fought a battle seven miles below Port Hudson, the result of which was that the Rebels fell back to Port Hudson, while he retired to his camps.

PLAN TO ENLIST MEN OF AFRICAN DESCENT.

The President and Secretary of War are engaged in maturing a plan by which to enable the Government most effectually to avail itself of the military services of the thousands of able-bodied men of African descent who are only awaiting an invitation to serve their country.

THE CHARGE OF COTTON SPECULATION AGAINST GEN. GORMAN.

Gen. Gorman has been relieved from duty and ordered to report to Memphis, where a Court of Inquiry will forthwith be convened to examine into the charge that he has been engaged in cotton speculation and has, in other ways, prostituted his position to purposes of gain. This is a fresh indication that the War Department is determined to put a stop to the traffic in Rebel products, which, if concurrent testimony from numerous witnesses may be trusted, is the principal business to many of our military posts in the West.

GEN. BUTLER'S COMMAND.

No determination has been arrived at yet respecting Gen. Butler's command. The question stands as it did. The President has requested the General to return to New-Orleans, but the conditions he annexes to the acceptance of the offer made to him are such as the Government finds it difficult to accede to.

Gen. Butler intended to go back to Lowell yesterday, but was requested to remain.

THE NAVY BUREAU OF ENGINEERING.

The nomination of Benjamin F. Isherwood as Chief of the Bureau of Engineering in the Navy Department will probably be withdrawn, a commission, appointed for the purpose, having reported against his engines.

RESIGNATION OF GOV. STANLY.

Gov. Stanly's resignation of his office as Military Governor of North Carolina was sent here five weeks ago. It is understood to have been accepted to-day.

DISASTER TO ONE OF OUR PICKET GUARDS.

About 15 of the 5th Michigan Regiment out on picket were surprised last night near Aquia Creek by a superior force of the enemy. The fight which followed cost us five killed and missing and a few wounded, and ten or twelve horses lost. Our men were [illegible] to give way.

A DESPERATE FIFE FOR FRANCE.

A recently intercepted letter from a lady domiciled in London to a Rebel living office in Richmond contains an instructive paragraph, concerning the attitude of Great Britain toward the so-called Southern Confederacy with that of France. The lady, says the writer, is "a loyal, sensible, treasonous nation, with no love for the South and no desire for its success, her sole wish being for the destruction of a rival nation." But "our noble friend the Emperor of the French," continues the letter, "wishes us to succeed, and will help us."

To the Associated Press.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 15, 1863.

POSSESSORY RIGHTS OF SETTLERS.

The report of Senator Doolittle, from the Finance Committee, relative to the possessory rights of settlers under the fourth article of the treaty of Washington, shows that Massachusetts and Maine jointly confirmed, by a Commission, 53,822 acres of the land to settlers, 52,360 acres of which were the joint property of the two States, and 1,462 the separate property of Maine. The second Commission, after Maine had purchased the rights of Massachusetts, reported for confirmation 43,454 acres more, which it now willing to pass the title to these lands for adequate compensation by the United States. If it is said those States have been paid already for these lands, it is shown that Maine lost 5,012 square miles, or 3,207,680 acres of jurisdiction, by the treaty, and that the consideration of $300,000 was for such loss of territory north of the River St. John, and not for the price of lands they might lose under the fourth article. The Committee, therefore, report in favor of quieting those titles at the minimum price of $1 25 per acre.

BLACK SOLDIERS FOR THE FRENCH ARMY.

United States Consul-General Thayer at Alexandria in writing to our Government, says an event of apparent grave importance had just come to light, and produced much excitement in that community. On the morning of the 7th of January 450 black soldiers from Darfour and Nubia were, by order of the Viceroy of Egypt, taken by railway from the fortifications of the Barrage, about 120 miles south of Alexandria, and at night embarked on board the French transport steamer La Seine for a destination, generally understood to be Mexico, with the object of aiding the French Emperor in his military operations against that country.

These negroes were dressed in Zouave uniforms and fully armed. It is well understood that the French Emperor has been anxious to supply the losses which his Mexican army has suffered from the climate and disease, by the employment of blacks, and the Viceroy declared a month ago that he was about to send 1,000 of his men to some place where their quality might be tested. His Highness, it is known, has always been proud of his army, both black and white, the effectiveness of which, excepting in repulsing the raids of Bedouins, have not been fairly displayed since the war in the Crimea, where his men certainly distinguished themselves as compared with the other Ottoman troops. Our Consul says he was awaiting explanations from the Viceroy. The European Consuls generally have telegraphed to their Governments for instructions.

Minister Dayton also briefly communicates similar information to our Government upon the subject, including the article from the *Moniteur* that the negroes to be furnished by the Viceroy, 1,000 in all, are to garrison Vera Cruz as a matter of humanity to white soldiers, the black race not being subject to yellow fever.

ARRIVALS IN THE UNITED STATES.

The number of arrivals in the United States on shipboard, as given in the official annual statement, is as follows:

Maine, 744; New-Hampshire, 9; Massachusetts, 6,192; Rhode Island, 31; New-York, 29,112; Pennsylvania, 1,939; Maryland, 2,389; Florida, 136; California, 39,170. The number of females is a fraction less than 15,000.

NEW MAIL ARRANGEMENT.

The Postmaster-General has issued orders to the Postmaster at New-York to send the mails direct from his office to St. Paul, Minneapolis, and St. Anthony, Minnesota, which will save twenty-four hours in transmission.

Another order has been issued to postmasters of the principal Northern cities, directing them to send the mails for the lower counties of Ohio by way of Parkersburg, over the Marietta and Cincinnati Railroad, which will expedite them some forty-eight hours over the former time.

VIEWS OF SECRETARY CHASE ON THE CURRENCY QUESTION.

Much speculation is based on the supposed views of the Secretary of the Treasury, and these are differently represented, according to various degrees of information or bias, but the following statement, the result of inquiry, is designed to remove all doubt whatever upon the subject. The Secretary regards the passage of the uniform currency and Bank Bill as absolutely essential to the successful working of the finances. It is not true that he does not expect immediate aid from the Banking Bill, though it is true, as stated in his report, that he does not expect immediate and great direct aid from it.

He does, however, expect great and immediate, though indirect aid, from the rise in value of United States bonds, consequent on their being made the permanent basis for a national currency, which will enable him to negotiate bonds without additional inflation of the currency, and that, through those negotiations, the means may be provided for all public demands promptly; while, at the same time, a check will be placed on the fictitious advance in prices of necessaries, and of gold. He, therefore, regards the Banking bill as virtually necessary to the support of the Government, and, as a consequence, to the most successful prosecution of the war; while he believes that its motive, as a measure for the introduction of a safe, stable currency, uniform in plan and value throughout the country, would require its adoption for the protection of labor, the security of commerce, and the perpetuation of the Union, in the absence of the calamities created by the war.

The Banking Bill, which has passed the Senate, and the Loan Bill, as amended and passed by that body, do not precisely represent the views of the Secretary; but he has always been ready to yield his judgment to that of the Finance Committee of the two Houses on questions not regarded by him as vital, and when unable to yield on such points to submit, if overruled. The two Bills, as they have gone to the House, are regarded by him as embodying a scheme of finance which can be practically and successfully applied; but each measure is necessary to the success of the other, and they, therefore, as really constituted, are only one. Should the Banking Bill fail, he does not think the Loan Bill can be worked out to successful results; but that the only practical course will then be to increase, indefinitely, the issue of legal tender notes; or to make loans by receiving the issues of suspended banks, locked up also indefinitely. Either of these courses, he is of the opinion, will result disastrously to public and private interests.

THE REBELS AT FREDERICKSBURG—THE COLONIAL SHOT.

From information received from the Army of the Potomac, it appears the Rebels are throwing up breastworks and rifle pits south of Fredericksburg. It must not be inferred, from the absence of interesting news from the Rappahannock, that the army is in a condition of idleness. The abolition of the grand divisions has thrown many weighty duties upon the Commanding General and his staff, and the various departments are seriously engaged, without regard to hours, in matters pertaining to the discipline and comfort of the army.

THE PROCLAMATION IN MISSOURI.

Senator Clark yesterday introduced a bill providing that the President's Proclamation, so far as it relates to the slaves in the State of Missouri, shall not be in force until certain conditions, under which the slaves could have been allowed a free and fair opportunity for voting upon such proposition, viz: Bates, Lyon, Wyman, Harney, McDowell, Pleasanton, Raleigh, Gentry, Denver, Pentleton, Fayette, Nicholas and Guy.

A Rebellious Clergyman in Trouble—A Secesh Community Snubbed.

BALTIMORE, FEB. 13, 1863.

Some Union people having placed the pulpit of the Southern Methodist Church, in Pikesville, U.S. Minister, the Rev. John H. Bachelt, who is a Secessionist, came to the church this morning and tore it down, for which he was arrested, and is now in custody.

The Secessionists, who worship at the new Assembly Rooms, were unwilling to meet there that day because Gen. Schenck ordered a National flag to be displayed on the building.