

CHANGE OF MAIL DAY.

With a view of presenting the latest intelligence from the seat of war, we shall hereafter mail the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN on Friday instead of Tuesday. By this change the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN will have as late war news as any other weekly paper.

It is the intention of the publishers to keep up with the times, in news and in illustrations of new inventions pertaining to warfare, and at the same time, illustrate and describe all new inventions and discoveries which may be considered important in any department of mechanics or science. The publishers trust that all subscribers whose term for which they prepaid are about expiring, will renew their subscriptions.

THE WAR.

THE SLAVES AND THE WAR.

Our foreign subscribers, for whose especial benefit we make up this summary of the events of the war, will understand that while the real ground for the disunion movement was the disappointment of a set of politicians in obtaining the offices which they sought, the pretext was an alleged danger to the right of holding negro slaves. The present President of the United States was elected on the single ground of his opposition to the extension of slavery in the country over territory now free; an opposition shared by the great statesmen of all parties, from the earliest days of the republic. Davis and his confederates professed to see in this principle a danger to the continuance of slavery where it now exists, and on this plea a large party in a portion of the Southern States have been partly led and partly driven into Davis's monstrous scheme for destroying his own country.

As the question of negro slavery was the pretext for the war, the principal steps taken in connection with that institution form a very material portion of the history of the war. We have already published General Harney's letter and proclamation, showing the readiness of the government to return runaway slaves and its determination to put down slave insurrections with a firm hand; and on another page of our present issue will be found General McClellan's proclamation to the same effect. General Butler, of Massachusetts, when he arrived in Maryland with his forces, learning that a slave insurrection was apprehended, immediately offered the State authorities the aid of his troops in suppressing it, and the slaves who fled to him for protection he restored to their masters. On arriving at Fortress Monroe, however, and learning that the enemy were employing slaves to dig entrenchments, General Butler, who is a shrewd lawyer, with a very fertile intellect, determined that if he captured any more of them, he would hold them as *contraband of war*, provided they belonged to secessionists, while, if they were owned by loyal citizens, they should be promptly restored to their masters. Three negroes soon made their appearance, and when the owner sent to demand their return, General Butler offered to accede to the request, provided the owner would take the oath to support the United States government. As it happened that the first slaves who escaped belonged to secessionists, and were consequently not sent back, other slaves followed their example; and General Butler, in the course of a few days, had 135 of them at work in the fortress. Seeing the question was soon to be one of great magnitude, the General dispatched a messenger to Washington for instructions in relation to it. A Cabinet meeting was called, and it was decided to approve of General Butler's course. We give the text of the Secretary of War's dispatch announcing this decision:—

WASHINGTON, May 30, 1861.

SIR: Your action in respect to the negroes who came within your lines, from the service of the rebels, is approved. The Department is sensible of the embarrassments which must surround officers conducting military operations in a State, by the laws of which slavery is sanctioned. The government cannot recognize the rejection by any State of its Federal obligation, nor can it refuse the performance of the Federal obligations resting upon itself. Among these Federal obligations, however, no one can be more important than that of suppressing and dispersing armed combinations formed for the purpose of overthrowing its whole constitutional authority. While, therefore, you will permit no interference, by persons under your command, with the relations of persons held

to service under the laws of any State, you will, on the other hand, so long as any State within which your military operations are conducted, is under the control of such armed combinations, refrain from surrendering to alleged masters, any persons who come within your lines. You will employ such persons in the services to which they will be best adapted, keeping an account of the labor by them performed, of the value of it, and the expenses of their maintenance. The question of their final disposition will be reserved for future determination.

SIMEON CAMERON, Secretary of War.
To Major-General Butler.

According to the latest reports over 100 slaves had sought refuge under Gen. Butler, and a general uprising was feared. What shall be done with these fugitives will therefore become an embarrassing question.

THE PRIVATEERS OF THE SECESSIONISTS.

The pirate vessels sailing under Jefferson Davis' letters of marque have been preying quite extensively on the shipping belonging to the loyal citizens of the country, but the blockade of the Southern ports being now complete, their plundering operations are brought to a close. The seizures made by the Confederates up to the last accounts may be thus enumerated:—

Off the different ports.....	12
In port.....	30
Steamers captured on the Mississippi.....	15
Total.....	57

On the 26th of last month there were under seizure, or as prizes in the port of New Orleans, the following vessels:—

Name.	SHIPS. Master.	Hail From.
Abellino.....	Smith.....	Boston.
Ariel.....	Delano.....	Bath, Me.
American Union.....	Lincoln.....	Bath, Me.
C. A. Farwell.....	Farwell.....	Rockland.
Express.....	Frost.....	Portsmouth, N. H.
Enoch Train (probably).....	Burwell.....	Boston.
J. H. Jarvis.....	Rich.....	Boston.
Marathon.....	Tyler.....	New York.
Marshall.....	Sprague.....	Providence.
Milan.....	Eustis.....	Bath, Me.
Robert Harding.....	Ingraham.....	Boston.
State of Maine.....	Humphrey.....	Portland.
Toulon.....	Upsher.....	New York.
Wilbur Fisk (probably).....	Pousland.....	Boston.
SCHOONERS.		
Chester.....	Bearse.....	Boston.
Ocean Eagle.....	Luce.....	Thomaston.
SCHOONERS.		
E. S. Janes.....	Townsend.....	—
Henry Travers.....	Wyatt.....	Baltimore.
Ella.....	Howes.....	Philadelphia.

Of the above vessels some doubt attaches to the seizure of the *Enoch Train* and *Wilbur Fisk*, but the probabilities are that they have been confiscated.

A BOMBARDMENT ON THE POTOMAC.

On the right bank or Virginia side of the Potomac, 55 miles below Washington, at the mouth of Aquia Creek, is the northern terminus of the Richmond, Frederick and Potomac Railroad. Richmond, the capital of Virginia, and now called the capital of the Confederate States, is 75 miles south of Aquia Creek, and as the latter is on the route from Richmond to Washington by railroad and steamboat, it is a place of some strategic importance. The secessionists have accordingly erected some batteries here and supplied them with rifled cannon. On Friday, May 31st, two vessels in the service of the government—the *Freeborn*, a chartered steamboat, and the *Anacosta*, a one-gun steam tender belonging to the navy—commenced a cannonade on the batteries, which was continued till nightfall, and renewed the next morning; the attack in the morning being aided by the *Pawnee*, a steam sloop of war of 1,289 tons and four guns. One of the batteries on the shore was silenced, but the one farther inland was out of reach of our guns. The *Freeborn* received two shot, one of which passed through the cabin, damaging some of the crockery, but not the vessel, except making a passage through the bulwarks of slight consequence. The *Pawnee* received eight or nine shot, but all too high to inflict much damage. One struck her maintopsail yard, which was thereby unslung, and another grazed the mizzen mast-head.

A DASH INTO THE ENEMY'S LINES.

On the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, 18 miles southwest from Alexandria, is the little village of Fairfax Court House. On the evening of the 31st of May, Lieutenant Charles H. Tompkins, of the second cavalry of the United States Army, stationed at Alexandria, having received orders to reconnoiter in the direction of Fairfax Court House, took with him 47 men of company B, and proceeded to fulfill his orders. Arriving withing 300 yards

of the village at about daylight in the morning of Saturday, June 1, they came upon a picket of the enemy, consisting of two men. One of these was taken prisoner and the other escaped. The cavalry company then charged into the village from the north side, and were fired on from the Union Hotel, formerly kept by James Jackson, who killed Colonel Ellsworth. The man firing on them was instantly shot down. The cavalry then charged down through the principal street of the village, and were fired upon from many houses, and from platoons behind fences. Having passed thus to the end of the village, they wheeled about and instantly charged back, and were then met by two considerable detachments, with a field piece. Turning, they cut through a third detachment in the rear, and left the village, bringing with them five prisoners. Lieutenant Tompkins reports his loss at three missing, three slightly wounded and six horses lost. Of the three missing, it seems that one was killed and two taken prisoners. Among the prisoners taken by the United States troops was Captain Washington, son of the late Major Washington, of the United States Army. He said that he did not wish to fight against the United States, and on taking the oath to support the government, he was released. The other four prisoners refusing to take the oath were detained.

A SECOND DASH—THE TWO DRAGOONS RESCUED.

Word was received on Saturday evening at Alexandria that two of the missing dragoons were taken prisoners, and were to be hanged in the morning. Company B was immediately summoned from their quarters, and mounting, rode up to the Court House, and having by some means ascertained the precise location of their comrades, made a dash through the village, and recovered the two men, whom they brought back in triumph to the camp at daybreak.

ADVANCES TOWARD HARPER'S FERRY.

Harper's Ferry is the most northerly point held by the secessionists in any considerable force, and consequently the first measure of government in beating back the rebellion would naturally seem to be the capture of this place. At last accounts, two strong bodies of Federal troops were apparently preparing to meet at the threatened point. The Pennsylvania volunteers under General Patterson were concentrating at Chambersburg, Pa., some 50 or 60 miles north of Harper's Ferry, while the Ohio, Indiana and western Virginia troops were advancing from the west under General McClellan. Two regiments of the latter force arrived at Grafton, which is 198 miles west of Harper's Ferry, on Sunday, June 3d. Finding that the secession forces stationed at this place had been driven away by the militia of the vicinity, and fled to Phillippa, 16 miles to the southwest, they marched down to attack them. The following is the telegraphic account of the affair, which must be received with the usual allowance for these first reports. It seems, however, to have been the most considerable skirmish that has yet occurred:—

CINCINNATI, Monday, June 3d.

Two columns of troops from General McClellan's command, one under command of Colonel Kelly, of the First Virginia Volunteers, and the other under command of Colonel Crittenden, composed of the Indiana Volunteers, left Grafton early last night, and after marching the entire night about 20 miles through a dreaching rain, surprised a camp of rebels, 2,000 strong, at Phillippa, Va., and routed them, killing 15, capturing a large amount of arms, horses, ammunition, provisions, camp equipage, &c. The surprise was complete, and at the last advices, the Federal troops were in hot pursuit of the rebels. It is probable that many prisoners will be taken.

Colonel Kelly was shot in the breast, but the ball has been extracted and there are some hopes of his recovery.

THE BLOCKADE.

We have telegraphic announcements that the ports of Mobile and New Orleans are now both blockaded by our fleet. The intelligence from Mobile is detailed and definite, the *Powhatan* having arrived at that place and given formal notice of the blockade. At New Orleans the Brooklyn has arrived, and there can be little doubt that by this time all, or nearly all of the Southern ports are efficiently blockaded.

A WRITER in the *United Service Magazine*, on Naval Coast Volunteers, says that naval volunteers occasionally secure a tug boat, put one gun on board, and take a short cruise for practice. Just now, this sort of practice would seem to be much more necessary in this country than in England, and we would recommend its adoption.