

HARPER'S WEEKLY.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 1863.

NEGRO EMANCIPATION.



BEFORE this paper is published the President will probably have issued his Proclamation offering freedom to all negro slaves resident in localities which have not elected representatives to Congress by a majority of legally constituted voters. It is hoped by the Northern partisans of slavery that the Proclamation will be postponed or withheld altogether. But we fail to discover any ground for the hope. Whatever reasons led the President to issue the preliminary Proclamation in September last apply with equal force to the case as it stands at present, and our recent reverses supply additional motives for securing the active aid of 4,000,000 slaves, if it can be done.

The States and parts of States which will be excepted from the operations of the Proclamation will be the States of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri; the city of New Orleans, Louisiana; probably the cities of Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee; the city of Norfolk, and the vicinity of Fortress Monroe, Virginia; and a strip on the sea-board of North Carolina. Questions will doubtless arise as to the strict right of such cities as New Orleans—whose legally constituted voters are generally in the rebel army—to avail themselves of the benefits of the exceptional proviso in the Proclamation. But the chances are that that act, if enforced at all, will be construed liberally.

Two questions suggest themselves to every one's mind in connection with this Proclamation. First, will it induce the negroes to run away? and, secondly, what shall we do with them if they do?

Opinions differ upon both these points; but we imagine that most well-informed persons will, with the President, doubt whether the issue of the Proclamation will be followed by any general exodus of the slaves. For a year or more

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our armies have refused to return fugitive slaves. Wherever our generals have invaded the rebel States, they have been compelled by military necessity to welcome the contrabands to their camps. Notwithstanding the famous order No. 3, both Grant's and Buell's army practically gave freedom to the slaves whom they found in Western Tennessee. General M'Clellan has published a letter in which he states that no slaves were returned by officers of the Army of the Potomac after the enactment of the new "Article of War," but that, on the contrary, all contrabands deserting to that army were received, fed, and set to work. At Hilton Head, the slaves of South Carolina have had a safe refuge for more than a year. At New Orleans General Butler has received and employed every slave who fled thither. At Memphis General Sherman issued a general order, early last fall, directing the officers of his command to welcome fugitive slaves, and deal with them as freemen, at all events for the time being. It is hardly possible that the negroes of the South can have been generally ignorant of a policy so uniformly pursued on the entire rebel frontier; and the presumption therefore is, that all the slaves who wanted to run away, and were able to escape, either have already reached our lines, or are now endeavoring to do so. The Proclamation can hardly add any thing to their knowledge of our purposes, or to their ability to elude the vigilance of their masters. In this respect, therefore, it will effect no change in the situation. It merely affirms and consolidates the policy which has hitherto been pursued by individual commanders from military considerations. Slaves will continue to escape as heretofore; the number of runaways will increase as our armies advance and the blockade is tightened. Possibly the knowledge that under the Proclamation the faith of the United States is pledged to protect them in their rights as freemen may impart courage to some who are now hesitating, and so swell the tide of the fugitives.

The problem how to employ the contrabands will necessarily be solved by the war. Necessity will compel us to use them as soldiers. We shall require, to garrison the strategic points in the enormous country which we have undertaken to overrun, more troops than even the populous North can provide. It is clear that even a million of men will be found too few to attack and defeat the rebel armies, storm the rebel forts, and at the same time hold and occupy each point we take. A quarter of a million troops, in detached forts, may not prove too many to hold the line of the Mississippi River, after it has been reopened by our armies and our flotilla. For this service the negroes are well adapted, and whatever scruples may be entertained by individual generals, the logic of events compels us to assign them to it at several points. The work has already been successfully begun. We have a negro regiment at Hilton Head, and a negro brigade at New Orleans. A bill is pending before Congress for the equipment of 200 negro regiments of 1000 men each, and the feel-

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ing among loyal men is in favor of its passage. We shall have to feed and clothe the emancipated negroes, and there is no present way of making them earn their living except by making them garrison our forts. The rebels, as the cut on the preceding page shows plainly, have no scruples against arming them. We can safely follow their example.

