

25 August 1863, 1

The Exodus of Negroes in Mississippi.

"Omaha," the Vicksburg correspondent of the New York World sends a letter, bearing date July 29, which contains some interesting statements about the negro accessions to GRANT'S army:

The return of the army from Jackson was the occasion of a remarkable exodus of negroes.— There were few able bodied young men, for the policy of making soldiers of them has made at least nine out of ten as anxious to keep out of the way of the Yankees as are any of their masters. But all the old men and women, and young children in the whole region of country around Jackson— those who have been a burden upon their masters, and will necessarily be dependent upon our charity— accompanied the army on its return in large numbers. Every species of vehicle, and an untold number of broken down horses and mules, were pressed into the service by these contractors en route for Vicksburg. Their effects consisted of a wonderful quantity of old clothing and bedding, and dilapidated furniture, which they seemed to regard as of inestimable value.

The transportation, however, was not sufficient for all, and hundreds, carrying as many as possible of the inevitable bundles, trudged along on foot. All seemed animated by a fear that our rear guard would overtake, pass, and leave them behind, and such a training of energies, and hurrying and bustling, were never before known among the whole black creation. The soldiers were particularly struck with the ludicrous appearance presented by the darkies, and the tedium and fatigue of the marches were often relieved by good jokes cracked at their expense, which served to convulse the whole brigade with laughter.

What on earth we are to do with the immense numbers of them coming within our lines is a problem which the future alone can solve. One thing, however, is certain. No matter how worthless, or how incapable of self-support, they cannot be permitted to starve, and whether collected in one locality, or so equally distributed as to give each township in the North its proportion of paupers, they will be supported at the public expense. There is another thing about this negro question which is even more certain than the other proposition. The minds of all of them are filled with the most extravagant ideas of the North. It is to them a country of ease and plenty and happiness, and say and do what you will, as soon as the military blockade is made less stringent, they will swarm upon you like the locusts of the East. Until I came down here I believed that even if emancipated, the negroes would remain in the South. I now know better. Not one in ten will remain here. They will go North, if they accomplish the distance on foot. They don't feel safe here not even those whose owners are dead, and their fears impel them to go North. And then, their extravagant ideas, as bright and glowing as far as their own ease and happiness are concerned, as the warmest imagery of the Arabian Nights, will never permit them to remain in the South after the road to the North is open.