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Gunpowder Explosion
near Waltham

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and

one photographed illustration

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Transcribed from "Illustrated London News"

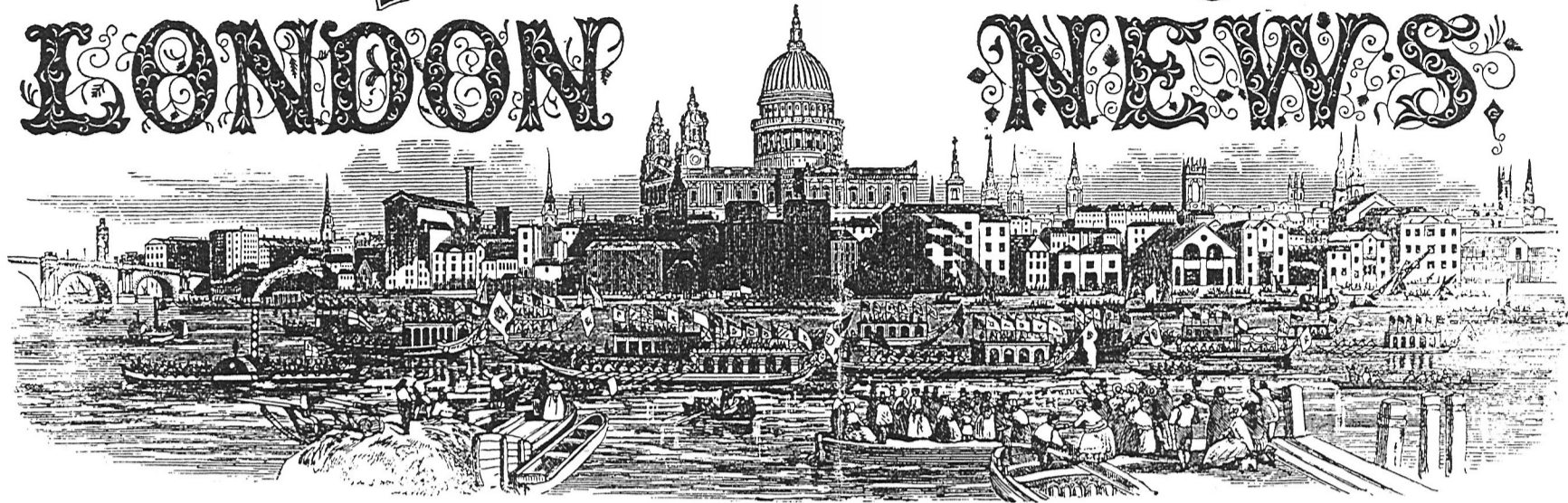
Vol. XXXVIII, p. 537 (8th June 1861)

Gunpowder Explosion near Waltham

We give on the first page an Engraving of the scene of the terrible explosion at the Government gunpowder-works, Waltham Abbey, which took place on Monday week. Some men were clearing a "nest of mills", and one of them, using a wooden handspike, saw the powder flash, and remembered nothing further until he found himself being extricated from a stream of water where he had thrown himself to extinguish his burning clothes. Several other explosions followed. One unfortunate man named Samson Woodham, who was found lying on the long grass in front of the mill, his clothes in a mass of flame, died on Thursday week. Three other poor fellows, John Rule, William Argent, and William Burgess, are badly burnt. After the first explosion the flame seems to have penetrated into the three adjoining mills, for scarcely a moment elapsed between the subsequent explosions. The effect of each was most destructive. The iron roofs and sides of the buildings were blown in all directions, and large pieces were found, many yards off, forced deep into the ground. - Last Saturday afternoon an inquest was held on the body of Woodham, when evidence was taken to considerable length. The following verdict was returned by the jury:- "We find that the deceased met with his death from an explosion of gunpowder, at the works at Waltham Abbey, caused by not using the hide leathers provided for their use in removing the runners, and the jury would recommend that the foreman be instructed to see that the leathers are used by the men; and any other precautionary measure be adopted that the authorities may deem fit."

Waltham Abbey - 1/872

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS



No. 1092.—VOL. XXXVIII.

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1861.

[WITH A SUPPLEMENT, FIVEPENCE

THE FUTURE OF COTTON.

THAT which feeds the industry of between three and four millions of our fellow-countrymen can hardly become an uninteresting topic. Present circumstances, however, invest it with extraordinary interest. England is at this moment in a very analogous position with regard to a famine of cotton to that in which it stood with regard to the cholera in 1831, when the disease, unknown to her till then, except by fame, after travelling towards her for three or four years across the Asian and European continents, shook menace at her from the port of Hamburg. There was then, as some of our readers will recollect, a secret dread brooding upon the public mind, but no adequate preparation. The first cases of the mysterious epidemic which showed themselves at Hull took almost every one by surprise. They were just what might have been, and ought to have been, expected. The miasmatic invasion which swept away many thousands of our population did not take place until after repeated and emphatic warnings. But hope had prevailed against fear. We had never, at least in the memory of men then living, been subject to the assaults of this terrific Asiatic disease, and we tried to flatter ourselves into the belief that we never should. Hence we neglected precautions until it was too late; the foe was upon us; consternation seized the hearts of all, and myriads of our people paid with their lives the penalty of unreasoning confidence.

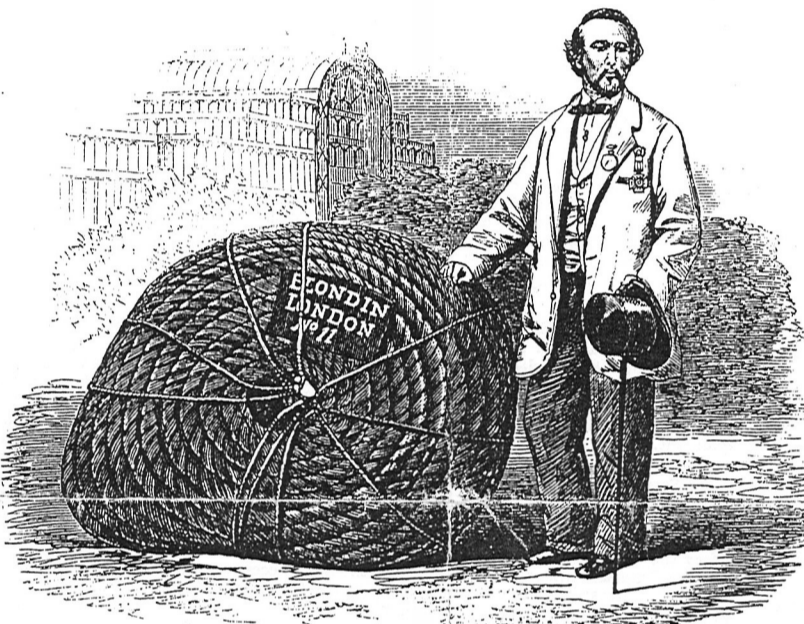
We fervently pray that this passage of our national experience may not be repeated in regard

to a possible, we might almost be justified in saying a probable, blight on our supplies of cotton. Many a time have we been threatened, but hitherto we have been spared. The appalling calamity has again and again loomed on the horizon, and in sight of it our hearts have quaked, and our faces have grown

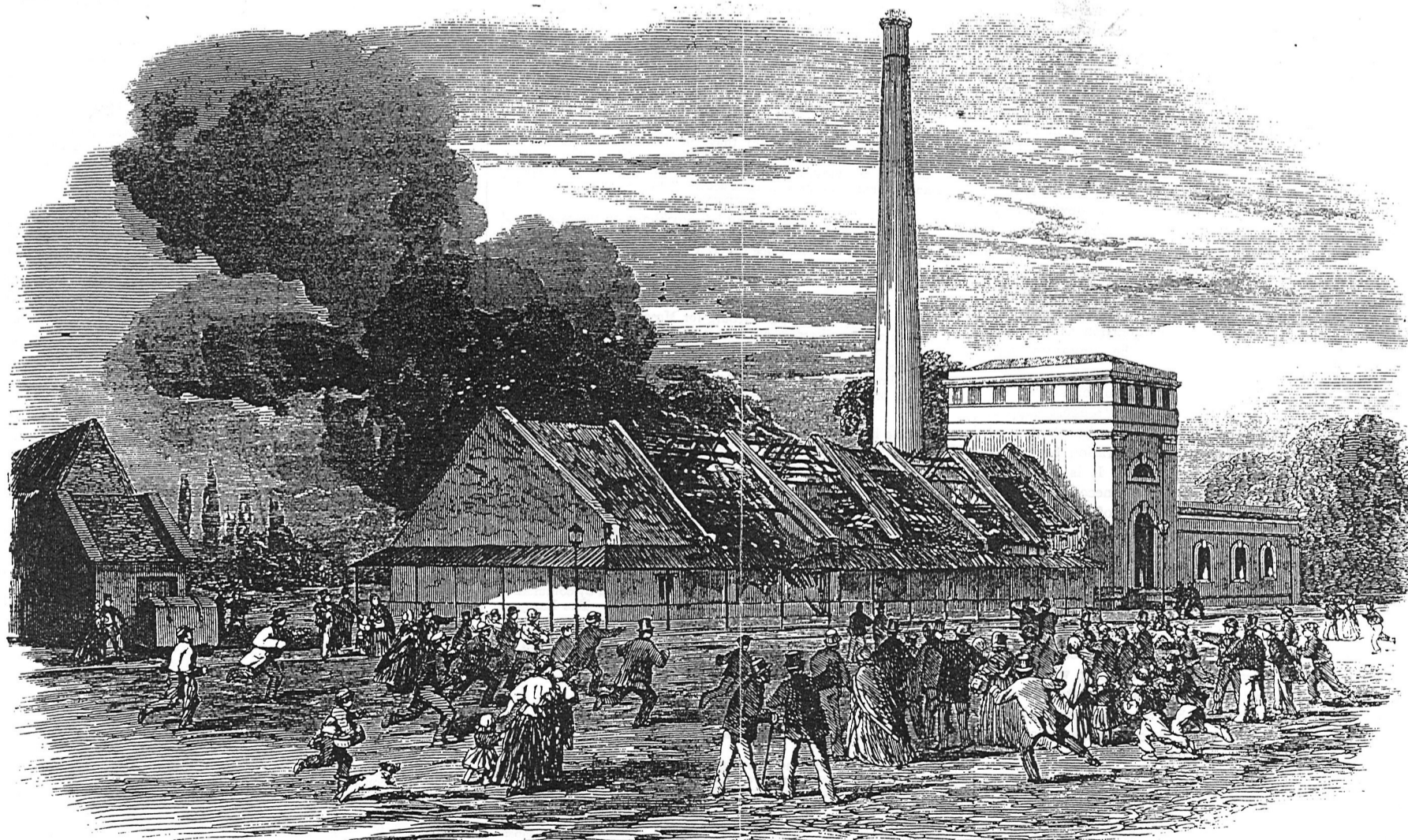
pale; but it has passed away. Once more, however, it has revealed its stern features—this time more distinctly than ever. We cannot, it is true, predict with certainty that the peril which seems so close at hand will strike us. We may escape it, as we have done before. But this we

do say, with the utmost confidence, that the warning rung into our ears by the civil war in America is far too distinct to be reasonably set at nought; and that, unless we take effectual steps to secure ourselves and our interests against sudden ruin, we shall have none but ourselves to blame for the ravages of so fearful a calamity should it unhappily overtake us. We are aware that something is being done, that Manchester has formed a Cotton Supply Association, that her Majesty's Government have set on foot a searching inquiry among the consular body, and that the question is frequently mooted and casually discussed in both Houses of Parliament. But we should rejoice to be assured, which we are not as yet, that the danger is being effectually grappled with by both commercial and governmental foresight and energy, and that nothing which they can do to avert the calamity is being left undone, or is being committed to the caprice of chance.

Never, perhaps, has so vast a contingent evil been so completely within the power of human precaution to avert. It is a case in which every inch of way is plain before our feet. We know precisely what we should do, how it should be done, when we should do it, and what would be the results. The means and materials are in our hands far



M. BLONDIN.—SEE SUPPLEMENT, PAGE 537.



EXPLOSION AT THE GOVERNMENT GUNPOWDER-WORKS NEAR WALTHAM: THE POWDER-MILLS AFTER THE EXPLOSION.—SEE SUPPLEMENT, PAGE 537.

beyond the scope of any proximate need. To plant and cultivate cotton in a suitable soil and climate, to pick and clean, pack and export it, in sufficient quantity for the wants of our manufacturers, sums up the whole of the duty required of us. We possess land in abundance. India, where cotton is indigenous, Australia, South Africa, and the West Indies, offer us an ample range of soil admirably adapted to the purpose. We have a plethora of capital seeking a secure and profitable investment. Both in the East and West Indies there is a redundancy of labour. The necessary knowledge, experience, and skill may be had at a week's notice, at a moderate price, and to an extent fully commensurate with our want. There is no insuperable difficulty to bid defiance to our efforts. It is averred, and we believe upon well-founded data, that the island of Jamaica alone could be made to furnish next year sufficient cotton of excellent quality to render Lancashire independent of whatever may happen in the Southern States of America which now supply us with the bulk of our stock. As to India, wise measures on the part of the Government, and good organisation on the part of adventuring industry, might very soon convert it into a source of supply ample enough for the wants of the whole world. Of course, in every instance there is some intervening obstacle—some "lion in the path"—some thing requiring resolution and energy to clear away; but never was there a case in which the French proverb was more to the point, "Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte." There are no difficulties which would not vanish before Anglo-Saxon enterprise as naturally and as completely as the morning mists disappear from before a summer's sun.

Nor are pressing inducements wanting. Several millions of our people are as absolutely dependent for their livelihood upon this fibrous produce as they are for their lives upon an adequate supply of bread. A blight, a servile insurrection, a war—a score of causes beyond our own control—might, as matters now stand, paralyse in an instant our most important industry, fill the country with the direst distress, dry up our prosperity at its source, and eventually depose us from our position as a first-class nation. If we are content to leave things for the future as they are at present—to receive cotton from the slaveholders of the Secession States in the same proportion as we have been accustomed to do, or even as we did no later back than 1860, when we imported cotton from America to the enormous extent of 1,115,890,608lb., while from India we imported but 204,141,168lb., and from the Mediterranean not more than 40,058,608lb.; or, in other words, 80 per cent of our whole supply from America, 15 per cent from India, and 5 per cent from all other sources—if we allow ourselves, in reference to an article so identified with the springs of our wealth, to remain another six months longer than is imperatively requisite so largely at the mercy of a single country, of its temper, and of the accidents which may befall it, we must make up our minds to endure all the disadvantages, as well as to risk all the misfortunes, which inevitably beset such an unwise and improvident arrangement. People who live in the neighbourhood of a volcano are proverbially insensible to the perils of an eruption; but surely the events of the last few months may have sufficed to convince us that a total disregard of visible danger is to the last degree childish, and is certain of being punished, sooner or later, by sudden and overwhelming disaster.

But we have other than merely commercial inducements to open up new cotton-fields wherever nature and political facilities concur in putting them within reach of our enterprise. The Southern States of America are the stronghold of negro slavery, and cotton is the food upon which it principally thrives. Those States have recently formed themselves into a Confederate Republic, the object of which is to conserve and to extend the slave system. Now, quite apart from the interests of the slaves themselves, and looking exclusively to those of freedom, morality, and religion, it does seem to us to be an obvious duty, a duty enforced upon us just now by the arrangements of Divine Providence, that we should strenuously exert ourselves to defeat an experiment so largely fraught with evils to humanity. We can, if we will, make slave labour in the cultivation of cotton well-nigh unprofitable; at any rate we can reduce its profits so considerably by competition as to leave scarcely an inducement to perpetuate the unnatural and demoralising system. By depriving America, as we might very soon do, of the command of the European market for her staple article, we should crumble away the strongest support upon which slavery rests, and probably compel the planters of the South, in sheer self-defence, to make preparation for a safe and early transition to a sounder social basis. It is impossible to calculate the beneficial effect which this necessity and its results would have upon the moral character of society in the South. We have all seen with sorrow the influence exerted by a determination to uphold involuntary servitude in deteriorating national sentiment, in poisoning the sources of morality, and in converting even Christianity itself into a screen for injustice and violence. Slavery eats into the vitals of a nation like a cancer; and any severity which will have the effect of cradling it is mercy compared with the soft-hearted weakness which, with a view to avert immediate suffering, would let it grow, and spread, and triumph. Duty as well as interest—duty even more than interest—demands that we should promptly and actively bestir ourselves to put an end to the partial monopoly of cotton culture at present in the hands of American slave-owners.

We entertain sanguine hopes that such will be the outcome of civil war in America. We earnestly desire, and are not altogether without expectation, that the end will be brought about even although there should be no effusion of blood in the fratricidal contest, and no insurrection of slaves. The warning, we trust, will have been sufficient. A close view of the danger will have dispelled obstinate listlessness. And as free trade in corn has rendered us independent of local failures in the grain crop, and has placed our prospects of subsistence upon an immovable

basis, so we would fain believe our supply of cotton will soon be rendered independent of local contingencies, whether physical, social, or political. Probably we shall not reach this "consummation devoutly to be wished" without being subjected to a severe temporary pinch, but we believe that every day is placing us nearer to eventual escape from the threatening danger, and that within a year or two we shall have effectually weathered it. Still there is reason enough to enforce another of the proverbial maxims of our nearest neighbour—"Aide toi, et le Ciel t'aidera."

FOREIGN AND COLONIAL NEWS.

FRANCE.

The Emperor and Empress left Paris for Fontainebleau on Thursday week.

Prince Napoleon and the Princess Clothilde have embarked at Marseilles in the *Jerome Napoleon* for a pleasure voyage in the Mediterranean.

A decree in the *Moniteur* orders that all the articles in the Treaty of Commerce between France and Belgium shall apply to England. The new tariff on British productions imported into France, so far as regards manufactures, and yarns of flax, hemp, and jute, came into operation on Saturday last. The date at which the whole of the new tariff comes into force, as fixed in the treaty, is October 1.

SPAIN.

The Queen was delivered of a Princess on Tuesday. The Duke of Montpensier will embark at Santander on the 20th inst. for England.

The question of the importation of cotton has been decided. The importation of cotton from non-producing countries is permitted for four months.

ITALY.

Count Cavour, whose illness had been for some days of an alarming nature, died at Turin on Thursday morning, at seven o'clock. On the previous night an immense crowd blocked up the avenues leading to the Count's hotel, and great emotion was manifested by the people when the procession bearing the sacrament of the Church went into the hotel. Signor Minghetti has been entrusted *ad interim* with the portfolio for Foreign Affairs, and General Fanti with the provisional administration of the Marine.

The national fête was celebrated on Monday with great splendour. Victor Emmanuel issued an order of the day to the Army on the presentation of the new banners of the kingdom of Italy, in which he reminded his soldiers of the gradual realisation of his father's declaration in 1848 that the destinies of Italy even then were ripening. Now, declares the King of Italy, they are ripe at last.

Francis II. has issued a new protest. This time he protests against the loan which the King of Italy is about to contract, and warns all capitalists that he will never himself consent to recognise it in so far as it applies to Naples and Sicily.

A Roman telegram states that three vessels laden with counterfeit money, bearing the effigy of Francis II., have sailed for Amalfi.

AUSTRIA.

The Emperor and Empress have taken up their residence for the summer at the Palace of Laxenburg.

M. Deak and the moderate party in the Hungarian Diet have succeeded in inducing the Lower House to vote the address to the Emperor Francis Joseph; but their victory was gained by the scanty majority of three votes—155 members having voted for the address, and 152 against it.

PRUSSIA.

The Session of the Chambers was closed on Wednesday by the King, who delivered a speech, in which he declared that the results of their deliberations would strengthen the influence of Prussia in Germany and Europe. He thanked the Chambers for the vote of funds to defray the expense of reorganising the Prussian Army, and observed that the Prussian military establishment is the more necessary for the safety of Germany as the attempt to improve the federal organisation has been unsuccessful. Denmark had not entirely granted the demands of the German Confederation, and her proposals "do not afford a certain prospect of the solution of the pending questions." "Nevertheless," added the King, "the nature of the relations between Prussia and the great Powers offers guarantees that they will not be affected by the energetic measures which may become necessary within the limits of the German federal territory." Finally, Frederick William V. expressed his confidence that his reign will be a prosperous and a happy one for the Prussian people if the Chambers are not led astray into revolutionary paths.

The *Prussian Gazette* announces that the President of Police, Baron Zedlitz, has obtained a congé for an indefinite period—in other words, has been dismissed.

DENMARK.

A Copenhagen journal states that the non-German Powers are actively endeavouring to effect an arrangement of the dispute between Denmark and Germany, and that Sweden has made a proposal which the German Governments are willing to accept "with some modifications."

SWEDEN.

The King of Sweden and Norway left Stockholm on the morning of the 22nd ult. for the latter country. The Government is to be carried on during his absence by Prince Oscar, Duke of Ostrogotha, as President; M. Gripenstedt, Minister of Finance; Baron de Björnstjerna, Minister of War; and M. Thyselius, Councillor of State.

RUSSIA.

The Czar has quitted St. Petersburg for Moscow. A telegram from Warsaw announces the death of Prince Gortschakoff on Thursday week. The Prince was the Governor of Poland, and had just been relieved by the Emperor from his duties on account of ill-health, brought on in a great measure from the excitement caused by the late proceedings in Warsaw.

INDIA.

Mr. Laing introduced his Budget in the Legislative Council on the 27th of April. The army is to be reduced to 200,000 men. The Budget shows a reduction of £3,600,000 in the expenditure and an increase of £2,080,000 in the revenue. Mr. Laing proposes to raise £500,000 by taxation through the local governments. These three operations balance the finances and leave a surplus of £250,000. There is to be no new loan on account of increased expenditure for public works. Local legislative councils are to be established. The import duties on cotton, yarn, and twist are to be lowered to 5 per cent. The income tax is pronounced to be a failure, and is to be abandoned. The license tax is to be withdrawn.

The Scinde Railway was opened to Kotree on May 11 by commission. The army amalgamation order has been published. The European rank and file volunteer freely. The officers stand aloof.

General Congreve died at Simla on the 29th of April. Major Atkinson has died at Umballah of apoplexy. Captain Boddam, of the Bombay Engineers, died on the 2nd. It is rumoured that the ex-King of Oude is dead.

It is asserted that a civil war has fairly broken out in Morocco, a brother of the Emperor having assembled a considerable force in the neighbourhood of Fez.

The insurgents in the Herzegovina, according to accounts from Ragusa, have repelled the advances made to them by the Turkish Government, and in overwhelming numbers have attacked the troops under the command of Dervish Pasha.

A letter from Rome (says the *Gazette de France*) announces the probable marriage of the two sisters of King Francis II. Donna Isabella is to marry the Grand Duke of Tuscany, a widower; and Donna Annunziata the Count of Flanders, second son of the King of the Belgians.

The *Natal Courier* states that three adventurous Englishmen—Mr. Edmund Phillips (son of Mr. Aldcroft Phillips, of Manchester), Mr. Alexander Forbes, and Mr. Herbert Oakes—had set out on a journey to the Great Falls of the Zambesi.

Captain W. Pigott has been elected Deputy Master of the Trinity House Corporation, in the room of Admiral Gordon, resigned.

THE CIVIL WAR IN AMERICA.

OPERATIONS ON LAND.

On the night of the 23rd ult. a considerable portion of the Federal Army concentrated in Washington, and consisting in its entirety of 25,000 volunteers and 5000 regulars, made their first step in advance, and crossed the Potomac into Virginia. 13,000 troops, consisting of six New York regiments, the New Jersey and Michigan Brigades, and some of the Washington volunteers, now occupy Alexandria, Arlington Heights, and the junction of the Orange and Alexandria and Manassas Gap Railways. They are commanded by Major-General Mansfield, Colonel Ellsworth, the creator of the famous regiment of Chicago Zouaves, and lately of the New York Zouaves, formed from the firemen's brigade of that city, was shot dead by the keeper of an hotel in Alexandria, while descending the stairs of the hotel with a Secession flag in his hand which he had taken from a flagstaff on the roof. The assassin was immediately run through the body by one of Colonel Ellsworth's men. This makes the second Colonel whom the Federal Army has lost in the course of the week, Colonel Vosburgh, of the New York 71st Regiment, having died of inflammation of the lungs, caused by exposure to the weather.

The 1st Michigan Regiment surprised at the railroad station a troop of Virginian cavalry, handsomely uniformed, plumed, and accoutred. They were placed on board a steamer and sent to Washington, "there to be dealt with as traitors."

The few Confederate troops in the neighbourhood of Alexandria fled. General Butler, of Massachusetts, who lately commanded at Annapolis and Baltimore, has been ordered to Fort Monroe, which commands the entrance to Chesapeake Bay. Nine regiments, of 1200 men each, accompanied him thither. General Butler left the fort on the 21st ult. for Sewell's Point, with 4000 men on propellers, for the purpose of demolishing the fortifications between that place and Norfolk. Sewell's Point is situated at the mouth of Elizabeth River. Commodore Stringham, with two frigates, was to conduct the attack on the water side. There were eight batteries and 15,000 Confederate troops between Sewell's Point and Norfolk, so that an engagement was expected.

The Confederate troops are in considerable force at Harper's Ferry. Most accounts place the number at from 9000 to 10,000, with thirty-five pieces of cannon. A battle was anticipated near this point.

NAVAL OPERATIONS.

The Federal Fleet in the Chesapeake has not been idle. Commodore Stringham, of the frigate *Minnesota*, stationed off Hampton Roads, reports the capture of thirteen vessels, chiefly laden with tobacco—among others of the British barque *Hiawatha*—which had delayed till the fifteen days' grace had expired. The steamer *Freeborn* on the 19th ult. destroyed a Secessionist battery on Sewell's Point, at the mouth of Elizabeth River. Again no lives were lost, the Confederates scattering in all directions. The same steamer on the Potomac, about ten miles below Fort Washington, captured two schooners with forty recruits for the Confederate Army at Alexandria on board.

Mysteriously enough, the blockade of Charleston has been raised almost as soon as instituted. The blockading vessel, *Niagara*, has sped southward, and is supposed to be off Savannah. Several British ships have arrived in port, and are obtaining cotton freights at the enormous rate of 2½d. per pound.

No new Southern seaport has been sealed up during the week; but a New York paper gives a list of thirty-nine vessels ready for blockading purposes, of which eighteen are regular men-of-war and twenty-one irregular and chartered vessels. The only seaports actually blockaded at last advices were those on the Chesapeake. The river blockade on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers has become more stringent. Hitherto provisions had been allowed to pass between the North-western States and Kentucky, a non-seceding and neutral Slave State. As it was discovered that the seceding States were supplying themselves with provisions through the Kentucky ports of Paducah and Columbus, the order has been issued to allow only so much provisions to pass into Kentucky as may reasonably be required for the bona fide consumption of her people.

THE CONFEDERATE STATES.

The Montgomery Congress has ordered the emission of a loan of 50,000,000 dollars. Three-fifths of the amount are to be issued in bonds bearing 8 per cent interest, and redeemable in twenty years, and the remaining 20,000,000 dollars in Treasury notes without interest. The latter provision amounts to an issue of assignats. As only 8,000,000 dollars of the previous loan of 15,000,000 dollars were ever taken, it is not likely that the 8 per cent bonds will be any more successful. The State of North Carolina, whose credit has always been well maintained, has voted 5,000,000 dollars for the war. The Secession ordinance has passed the Convention of this State unanimously.

Arkansas was admitted as one of the Confederate States by Congress on the 18th ult.

President Davis has communicated to Congress the correspondence between Judge Campbell, the intermediary, and Secretary Seward, to which he alluded in his recent Message. From this it appears that so late as April 7, the day before the Federal armament left New York for Charleston, Mr. Seward wrote to Judge Campbell, "Faith as to Sumter fully kept; wait and see." A few days previously he had said, "Before that letter reaches Montgomery, Sumter will be evacuated." In justification of Mr. Seward, it is said that the evacuation of both Sumter and Pickens had been agreed upon by the Cabinet, and that their views afterwards underwent a change when they found Northern public opinion was hostile to this policy. Congress adjourned on the 22nd ult. till July 20. The low Tariff Bill had passed.

Fugitives from the far South describe business at Charleston as almost annihilated. Coin was very scarce. Gold only to be had at the banks for the payment of duties, and there at 10 per cent premium. Butter was fetching 75 cents per pound (3s. 1½d.); ham, beef, and mutton from 25 to 30 cents; and flour, 18 dollars per barrel. From Savannah the reports are similar. Bacon, usually at 11 cents per pound, had risen to 18 cents. Provisions were pouring southwards in great quantities from Kentucky. The main reliance of the people was on the coming crops, which are looking splendid. In Georgia the wheat was already ripe, and the farmers gave out that they would have enough for two years. In Texas the grain harvest will be equally fine. Thus the South may be beaten in the field, crippled in her finances, and prevented from raising and selling the next cotton crop, but her exuberant soil and splendid climate will render all the threats to "starve her out" futile.

Texas advices say that Colonel Von Dorn had succeeded in causing the surrender of the remaining Federal troops in Texas. The Texans under General Young were pursuing Captain Montgomery, of Kansas fame, and the Federal volunteers who had made a raid on the northern frontier of Texas. The baggage and ammunition trains were overtaken and seized, with some bees and horses. Galveston is being fortified by the citizens.

The President has appointed a day of public prayer, humiliation, and fasting, in order to propitiate the goodwill of Heaven in their conflict with the United States.

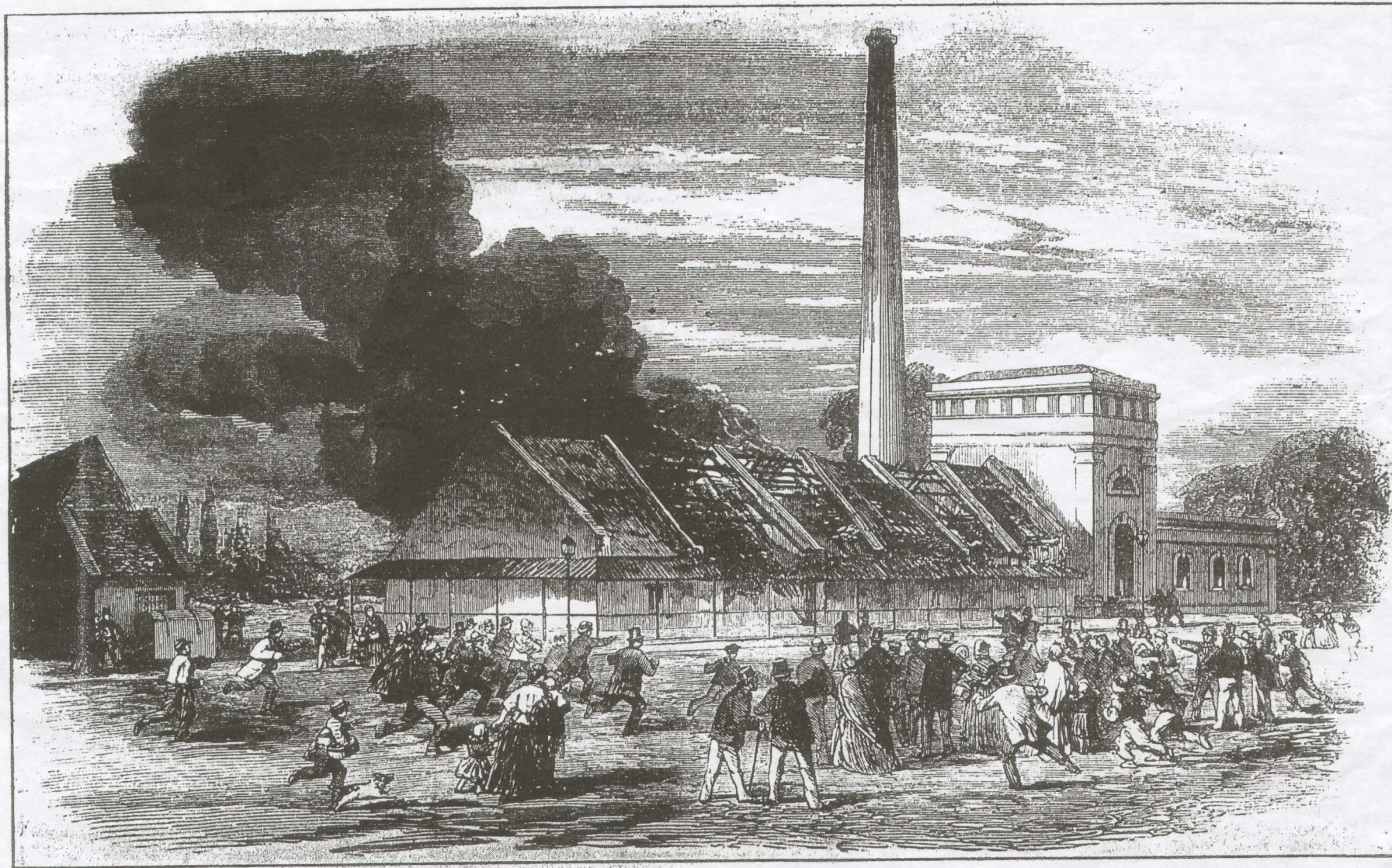
The Virginians voted on the two ordinances for seceding from the United, and joining the Confederate States on the 23rd ult. No one doubts that both ordinances were carried, the only interest manifested being the vote in Western Virginia, where the Unionists hope to obtain a majority.

The Virginians are liberal enough to acknowledge that the finest regiment of Confederate troops they have yet seen is one of 300 Indians from Cherokee County, North Carolina. Not one of them is under six feet, and the rifle has been their constant companion from infancy. They are stationed near Harper's Ferry.

The Richmond *Examiner* estimates that the Confederates have 150,000 improved firearms in their possession, of which 135,000 came from the Federal arsenals. In addition, there had been large arrivals of arms at New Orleans. These were shipped from Europe early in April, and consist of over 200,000 muskets and rifles, and ample supplies of powder, percussion-caps, and machines for making the latter.

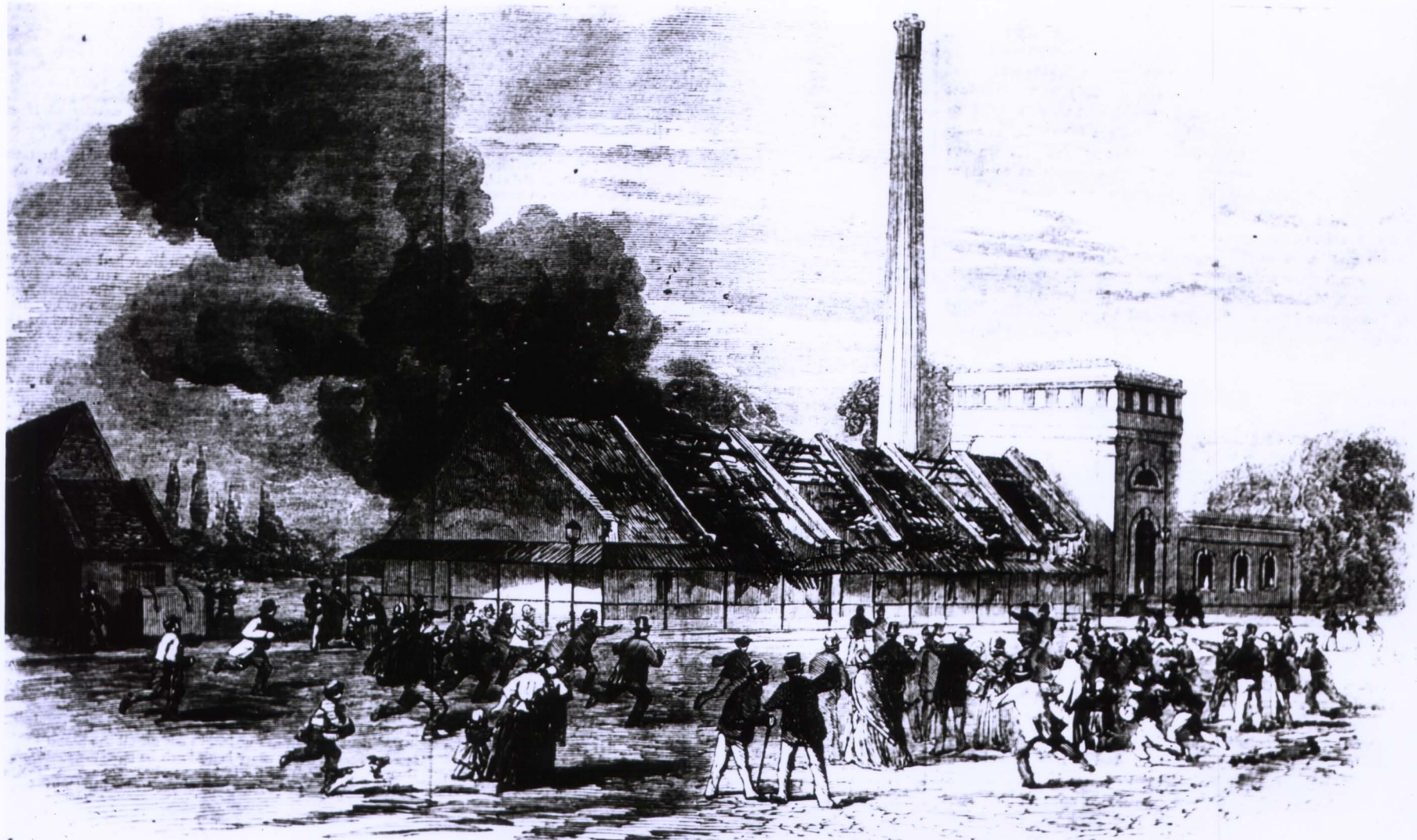
There is no truth in the rumour that the remains of the great Washington had been disturbed. The announcement that the Southern Congress would remove to Richmond is made without authority, and is improbable, because Richmond is near the frontier, while Montgomery is as safe from invasion as any place in the South can be.

President Lincoln has at length cut off all the postal facilities to the seceded States, so we shall henceforth be more isolated from the South than we have been for the last six weeks. Tennessee is excepted from this decree, her people not having yet ratified the secession ordinance,



EXPLOSION AT INCORPORATING MILL, 27th MAY, 1861
(By Courtesy of Illustrated London News)

Group A Incorporating Mills
1857-1861
First Steam Powered



EXPLOSION AT THE GOVERNMENT GUNPOWDER-WORKS NEAR WALTHAM : THE POWDER-MILLS AFTER THE EXPLOSION.—SEE SUPPLEMENT, PAGE 547