Progress of the War.

JOURNAL OF THE SIEGE.

CAMP BEFORF SEBASTOPOL.

January 28th.—Nothwithstanding the fine weather, the transport of clothes, fuel, and provisions entails considerable hardships on the men. The sick make little progress towards recovery, and the number of men sent down every day is a sad proof of the unsatisfactory condition of our army as regards its sanitary state. Ponies have been lent to some regiments to bring up their clothing. The Second Division has been ordered to take part of the night duty of the hard-working and hard-fighting Light Division, and the men of the latter have now sometimes three nights out of seven in bed. The coffee is now issued to the men roasted, with few exceptions. Vegetables, however, are greatly needed. Picks and spades, billhooks and axes, are in much request, and are very much needed. Requisition after requisition is sent in, and returned scratched out. In one company of a regiment, I know there are three pick-heads and no handles, two spades, one broken in two, and all the bill-hooks worn out, yet these must be used to clean the camp, dig graves, and cut wood. The Board of Ordnance certainly deserves great credit for the care they have taken of their men. The artillery offered a great contrast for a long time to the rest of the army. They were well shod, well clad, and decent-looking. The officers here had a splendid stock of long boots to choose from. They have waterproofs, fur caps, fur coats, &c. &c. The infantry have two suits of warm under clothing. Some have watch-coats and sheep-skin jackets; but the men generally have no waterproofs or long boots, though they have to wade about like cranes in the trenches.

It is said that Lord Raglan had another escape, when he visited the trenches of the left attack on the 26th. With his usual contempt of danger, the Field Marshal rode out from the trench upon the open ground in front. Two Russians at once came forward, and took a steady aim at him; but, ere one could fire, a sharpshooter of ours shot him, and the other was hit an instant afterwards. The story goes that Lord Raglan asked the soldier his name, and said, he would remember him. There is another statement, of an entirely opposite character, to which I shall not allude.

JANUARY 29th.—The weather keeps up, but we are told to expect a change very soon, and to be prepared for a dreary February and a terrible March. There was a council of war to-day at Lord Raglan's head-quarters, at which General Canrobert, General Bosquet, and several French officers assisted or were present. Subsequently, Lord Raglan had a little *levee* of his own generals, and received visits from the generals of division, who also had interviews with the quartermaster-general at head-quarters. There was heavy firing last night, principally on the French.

There was a serious sortie on the French last night, and some desperate fighting in the trenches. The Russians were repulsed with loss. Among the dead was an officer, richly dressed, and covered with orders. He was thought to be a general, but it is now believed he was a staff officer of the Naval Brigade; his body was sent back to the enemy. There can be no doubt, from the statements of the prisoners, that the Grand Dukes have returned. A Polish officer is said to have warned us to prepare for an attack, and stated, that the Grand Duke had addressed the soldiers, and called on them to make one more attempt to save Sebastopol. If they failed, they were assured they would not be asked to fight again—if they succeeded, they would be saviours of their church and of the city, and would be rewarded by both. This may or may not be true, but it is certain, that great and unusual animation exists in the town. The men work busily at the defences, and the thin streaks of smoke from the camp fires indicates the arrival of considerable masses of the Russians over the Tchernaya, or the table land above it. The new battery they have established on these heights is fired at our right and at the French pickets incessantly without much effect.

JANUARY 30th.—By general orders, dated 29th of January, Lord Raglan communicates the intelligence to the army that the Russian commanders have entered into an agreement with the allied generals to cease firing all along the lines, whenever a white flag is hoisted to indicate that a burying party is engaged in front of the batteries. No flags of truce are to be sent out, without the sanction of the commander-in-chief. This last order is understood to have arisen from the fact, that an officer in a line, whose servant was taken prisoner by the Russians some time ago, actually sent out a flag of truce on his own responsibility to demand back his servant, and the baggage which had fallen into the hands of the enemy. The general in command restored the man and the officer's papers and letters—the rest of his effects shared the fortune of war. It is further directed by the same orders, that all flags of truce shall be sent through the French works to the angle of the cemetery works. This order was required, for several accidents had taken place among burying parties on both sides from the fire of the riflemen. Admiral Boxer has arrived, and will assume the command of the harbour of Balaklava. The harbour and town are much better than they have been.

JANUARY 31.

To-day a spy walked through some of our trenches, counted the guns, and made whatever observations he pleased besides, in addition to information acquired from the men with whom he conversed. He was closely shaven, and wore a blue frock-coat buttoned up to the chin, and he stopped for some time to look at Mr. Murdock, of the Sanspareil, "bouching" the guus, or putting new vents into them. Some said he was like a Frenchman, others that he "looked like a doctor." No one suspected he was a Russian, till he suddenly bolted away down the front of the battery towards the Russian pickets, under a sharp fire of musketry, through which he had the singular good luck to escape unscathed. Strict orders have been issued, in consequence of this daring act, to admit no one into the trenches or works without a written permission from the proper authorities, and that all persons found loitering about the camp shall be arrested and sent to divisional head-quarters for examination. On the other hand, our spy who was sent out some time ago to report on the condition of the army towards the Belbek has returned, and states, that he went as far as Simpheropol, that the enemy are in some force along the route, but that the cavalry is in a miserable condition, and that their horses are lying dead by hundreds all over the country. I stated some time ago, that the French have been in the habit of sending out working parties through our lines, towards the valley of Baidar, to cut wood for gabions and fuel, along the sides of the romantic glens which intersect the high mountain ranges to the S. E. of Balaklava. They have frequently come across the Cossack pickets, and as it is our interest not to provoke hostilities with them, a kind of good-fellowship has sprung up between our allies and the men of the Russian outposts. The other day the French came upon three cavalry horses tied up to a tree, and the officer in command ordered them not to be touched. On the same, day a Chasseur had left his belt and accoutrements behind him in the ruined Cossack picket-house, and naturally gave up all hope of recovering them, but on his next visit, he found them on the wall untouched. To requite this act of forbearance, a French soldier, who had taken a Cossack's lance and pistol, which he found leaning against a tree, has been ordered to return them and leave them in the place he found them. The next time the French went out, one of the men left a biscuit in a cleft stick, beckoning to the Cossacks to come and eat it. The following day they found a white loaf of excellent bread stuck on a stick in the same place, with a note in Russian, which has been translated for them in Balaklava, and to the effect, that the Russians had plenty of biscuit, and that, though greatly obliged for that which had been left for them, they really did not want it; but if the French had bread to spare like the sample left for them, it would be acceptable. The sentries on both sides shout and yell to each other, and the other day a Russian called out, as the French were retiring for the day, "Nous nous revenons, mes amis—Francais, Anglais, Russes, nous sommes tous amis." I fear the cannonade going on before Sebastopol, the echoes of which reach the remote glades distinctly, must have furnished a strange commentary on the assurance, and must have rather tested the sincerity of the declaration.

FEBRUARY 1.—The marines of the Algiers and Agamemnon re-embarked on board the Sanspareil to join their ships to-day, and 100 supernumeraries of the fleet will take their place in the front. It is beyond doubt that whenever the assault takes place the fleet will run in, to draw off the effects of the fire of the north forts on the south side of the town. As the southern forts will be in the hands of the allies, there will be no cross-fire on the ships, but it is somewhat difficult to foresee the real action and effect of the fleets on the place, inasmuch as the entrance to the harbour is sealed by the boom and the sunken vessels. It is believed that the large screw line-of-battle ships can break the boom and force their way through the *chevaux de frise* of amputated masts and spars by running at them full speed, but any failure in such an attempt would lead to the most serious consequences to the vessels, whose progress would be necessarily arrested at a fixed point under the fire of the northern forts.

If the southern forts are seized rapidly in the first rush of the assault, the allies may avail themselves of their very heavy armament to aid the fleets, to cover their own position, and to reply to the guns of the northern forts, but it is more probable that the Russians will destroy the guns, and that the forts are mined, so that they may be at once sent into the air, when the outer batteries are forced. Two of these forts have hollow casemated galleries towards the land-side, and are perfectly open, so that the guns cannot be turned from the sea-face by the enemy, and brought to bear on our attacking columns. Fort Alexander and Fort Nicholas can scarcely bring a score of guns to bear on the place, as their embrasures all look seawards, and the casemates are open in the rear, being accessible by long galleries of solid masonry. The fort at the extremity of Cape Paul at Karabelnair, which mounts 78 guns in three tiers, can fire on the French side of the town, from one angle and one face, and it is recovered by the formidable works of Malakhoff and by the Redan and Garden Battery, and by a long line of earthworks. Should these works and the lines of Malakhoff not be speedily forced the fire of the Paul battery would be very annoying to any troops in possession of the town at the other (the western) side of Dockyard Harbour, and would take Fort Nicholas in reverse. It is not at all probable, that the Russians will overlook the importance of destroying all the southern forts, in case they intend to defend with obstinacy the northern side of the place. We know indeed that the magazines of these forts form most effectual and powerful mines. and there is not much reliance to be placed in the stories we hear respecting the want of powder in Sebastopol. Should the ships be able to subdue the fire of the northern forts, nothing will remain for the army to do but to invest the citadel and to meet any army which may threaten it in the rear from the south, or advance to raise the siege on the north. Such a happy result is almost too much to expect; but Sir Edmund Lyons has declared, the fleet shall not be idle, when the assault does take place, and if energy, skill, and courage can carry our wooden walls to victory, we may be certain, he will win it. The success of the fleet would relieve us from serious difficulties in the reduction of the north side of the place, for the dangers of crossing round by the ravines and marshes at the head of the valley of Inkermann, over scarped and broken paths swept by the fire of very heavy artillery, are not to be lightly estimated. There is no other way of getting round except by the mountainous road and road and forest tracks towards Mackenzie's Farm, and there is no doubt that the enemy have prepared the route for our reception in the event of our undertaking so difficult an operation.

From the Inkermann ruins down to the road to Mackenzie's Farm, the inaccessible cliffs which overhang the course of the Tchernaya in sheer slabs of many hundred feet in height, close up the flank of the Russians completely on that side, and only leave two roads open to the north—that by the marshes and over the defiles close to the sea, and under the Lighthouse Batteries of Inkermann, and that round towards the south of the Belbek, by Mackenzie's Farm. The disappearance of Liprandi's corps from the valley of Balaklava has relieved us for a time from uneasiness, and leaves our rear open; but at any moment—at the period of the assault, for instance—the same force, or one in still larger numbers, may re-appear, and paralyse the action of the allies, who must maintain their present position, till they have actually reduced the whole of the south side of the place. I presume some reconnaissance in force will be made immediately ere the assault takes place, to ascertain the exact force and disposition of the enemy in that direction. They still hang about our rear—the eternal Cossack is ever on the watch on all the mounds and hill tops towards Komara, Tchorgoum and Baidar. It was but yesterday I saw three mounted officers evidently taking a quiet reconnaissance of their own, under shelter of the ruined church of Komara, and examining the position of our army. The enemy in our rear are not in strength certainly, but it is quite practicable for them at any time to march over from Bakshi-Sarai or from the Belbek in considerable force, and we can have no intimation of their arrival till they are seen streaming down the sides of the mountains by the paths from Khutor Mackenzie almost into the very valley of Balaklava. The road from Baidar is impracticable, and our position on that side, if properly defended, is capable of resisting any force that can be brought against it. There would be considerable difficulty in marching any large number of men from Bakshi-Sarai towards Balaklava, if the country is in the same state along the roads as it is around our camp. The mud, trodden by innumerable feet and hoofs, has been worked up here into a sticky, tough, nasty compost of the most determined character, and of the greatest tenacity, and it would be no easy matter to move artillery, ammunition, or stores until the ground becomes in better order.

From whatever side the attack may come, if it be made at all, our troops will meet and repel it with unabated courage and vigour, unless they are led into some trap or are sadly mismanaged, and I own, I have little doubt of the result of any effort the Russians may make to dislodge the allies from their position as long as this fine weather lasts.

That an attempt of some kind or other will be made very shortly no one can doubt, after the information we have received and the demonstration of last night. A sortie from the town is the most likely shape for the attack to assume, as the Russians can collect their columns, and make their dispositions for the assault under cover and also under the protection of their guns. They have the shelter of deep ravines during their advance, and a rapid run on the heels of the pickets brings their men right up to the trenches. But there the advantages they possess terminate very abruptly. The parapet, and the guns, and the men are before them, and the only chance the enemy has lies in vastly superior numbers, which would enable them to overlap our batteries, and sweep round into them by the flanks, to work their wicked will, till reinforcements arrive to expel them. The Grand Dukes made a reconnaissance of our front yesterday.

This morning early the French made a demonstration on our right, and two divisions were marched down towards Inkermann, consisting of about 16,000 men, but the Russians who had been cheering loudly all along our front did not meet them. I regret to say, our gallant allies suffered severely in the sortie which took place on them this morning and last night. About 300 men and several officers were put *hors de combat*, and the loss is the more melancholy, inasmuch as a considerable amount of it was occasioned by an unfortunate mistake, which led one French regiment to fire upon another in the obscurity of the night. The firing all last night was incessant, and the French were so anxious, as to the nature of the Russian movements in our front, that ere day-break General Rose rode to our camp to inquire if anything unusual had taken place. We are still expecting an attack. The guns ordered up to the hill over the road outside Balaklava have not yet been mounted, but the work is all traced out, and the guns are lying ready to be hoisted up and placed on their carriages.

The weather is beautiful; in fact, it is almost too warm for the time of year, and makes our men, who will insist on wearing all their warm clothing at once, unpleasantly hot and oppressed. Our pickets have the strictest injunctions to be on the alert, and our cavalry have a little more duty in the way, that cavalry are accustomed to act than they have had for some time back. The preparations for laying down the electric telegraph from head-quarters are going on rapidly, and with success.

FEBRUARY 2.

Nothing unusual last night. Many of the regiments were held in readiness for immediate action. The cavalry were under arms all night. About 200 sick came down and were sent on board the Ripon. Many of them were covered with vermin, and their blankets were not sent down with them. The weather has changed. It is cloudy and overcast, and it blew hard at intervals last night, but the thermometer is still up to 42 degrees. The Russians have not moved. Two more ships full of navvies have arrived at Balaklava. The St. Jean d'Acre is still outside the harbour. The roads are all covered with shakos, which have been thrown away by men of the various drafts and regiments recently landed on their way to camp. Colonel Eld, of the 90th, was under arrest for five days, because it was thought, he had not acquainted his men with the orders he had received not to throw away their shakos on pain of severe punishment, but it was owing to the detention of the letter at head-quarters ordering his release that he was under arrest for three of those days.

ST. PETERSBURG, Feb. 4.—The hard frost which has set in is hailed with joy, as the old and true ally of 1812 comes once again to the aid of Russia. Pictures are published, in which the French and English are represented as bivouacking in the greatest misery before Sebastopol, and the populace are taught, that the ice and snow and desolating blast are sent from God in answer to the prayers of the Orthodox, and for the annihilation of the enemies of the holy cause.

VIENNA, Feb. 15.—The Earl of Westmoreland had lately several conferences with Count Buol. It is confidently stated, that their object was to settle conditions of a loan of £15,000,000 sterling which the Austrian Government wishes to contract with the guarantee of England. The loan is to be brought out in the London market.

ST. PETERSBURG, Friday, Feb. 16—Prince Mentschikoff reports from Sebastopol on the 8th—The general situation is unchanged. We continue to disturb the siege. Deserters affirm that the French guard the trenches in consequence of considerable losses of the Englsh army.

The two Grand Dukes had arrived at Sebastopol, and it is added that the Russians had received considerable reinforcements.