Progress of the War.

THE BRITISH EXPEDITION IN THE CRIMEA.

(*From the Special Correspondent of the Times.*)

CAMP BEFORE SEBASTOPOL, Nov. 30.—The needy knife-grinder would not be in possession of more abundant materials for anecdote, had he lived out here for the last week, than he was when he met Mr. Canning several years ago in the neighbourhood of Eton. We are all ancle deep in mud. No, that would be nothing. It would be no great matter of complaint or grievance if we had to deal with ordinary material, so familiar to all Londoners after a few wet days, ere the scavengers remove the formidable soft parapets which line the kerbstones. That can be scraped off, cleaned, rubbed away, or washed out. This nothing but long and persevering efforts, continually renwed, and combining all the former operations, can remove. It sticks in pasty clods to the shoes, and will insist on being brought into clean huts and tents to visit your friends. It has a great affection for straws, with which it succeeds in working itself into a kind of gigantic brick, somewhat underdone, in which condition it threatens to build your legs into the ground, if you stand long enough in one place to give it a chance; and it mightily affects horse-shoes also, and sucks them off with a loud smack of relish in those little ravines between rocky hill sides in which it exercises the greatest influence. Literally and truly it is like glue half boiled and spread over the face of the earth for the depth of several feet. It is no joke for a soldier to see his sleeping place, in hut or tent covered with this nasty slime; but they cannot be kept clean. One step outside and you are done for. The mud is lying in wait for you, and you just carry back as much on your feet as if you walked a mile. Carts stick immovably in the ground, or the wheels and axles fly into pieces from the strain of the horses and mules, which have led a wretched existence, indeed, ever since this weather began. As I write, the air resounds with the noise of the blows inflicted on the head, sides and legs of the miserable quadrupeds drawing fuel and stores from the commissariat depot of the division. But then, it will be said, that huts can be swept out and cleaned. Doubting the fact considerably, from my personal experience, I must be permitted to tell our good friends, the public, that they are labouring under great delusions respecting these same huts. Now what, for example, do they think of the Guards being at this present writing under canvass, and likely to be so, till the middle of January or thereabouts? It is of course no great privation in ordinary weather to have to live in a sound, well-pitched tent, but it is well to let the truth be known. The new huts are much complained of, and it is said they are frail, ill-made, full of chinks, and knots, which drop out, and leave inimical little embrasures for the wind to shoot through. During a moderately strong breeze of wind, a short time ago, the roof of one of the hospital huts at the monastery went off on a mission of its own, and left the poor inmates shivering in the cold, till they were removed to another building. The hut in question, however, was built before the new ones came. The tents now issued to the army are new and good, and most of the war and time-worn fabrics, inside which our gallant ancestors reposed in Egypt or Spain, have been condemned, and are used as outsides for the new tents, or as covers for huts, officers' quarters, stables, and fabrics of that kind. The authorities of home, you already know, refused the application of the commissariat, for more tarpaulins to cover the stores, "because they were so expensive." Well the wet weather comes on—hay began to smoke, corn and barley to heat; and the commissariat officers were obliged to purchase canvas wherever they could to prevent the loss of thousands of pounds' worth of property, not to speak of the mischief to the army. But the "holders of the canvas stood firm;" they saw their opportunity, and they refused to sell it for less than 2s a yard; at which sum many hundred yards were purchased for the commissariat store of this division. But even now the stores are badly protected, for there is no pitch or tar to cover the canvas, although there is a vessel reported to be in Balaklava with 300 tons of those useful articles on board for the use of the army.

TUESDAY, Dec. 4.—There has been a complete dearth of incident since I last wrote. We are in the *status quo*, possibly the mud is deeper, and the Russians fire more than usual upon the town. There is no change in the attitude of the enemy. The storm of Saturday morning taxed the new huts severely, and they are by no means highly spoken of; they are too frail, and lightly built, and the rain and wind pass through with uncomfortable facility. The huts constructed in the sides of the hills by the French and Sardinians are much more comfortable, and do not cost a tithe of the money. They are roofed with wattles, covered with mud and earth, and if they are rather dark they are at all events warm and water-tight. It is now said, that the men would have done much better, if the authorities had sent out nails, hammers, planks, old canvas, and some glass. The "races" were the great object of attraction and of talk during the week, and the stewards can only wonder at their good fortune in the weather, which was such as permitted all who could get away from duty to go to the course, if they pleased. Monday was like a breezy English October day, with just enough of cold to make exercise pleasant; the ground dried up amazingly, and the course was altogether in a very sound and excellent condition. The spot where the races took place was in a valley between the French head-quarters and the Monastery, about two miles from the shore, and the distance from camp was too great to permit the attendance of many of the soldiers,—a circumstance which General Codrington regretted, as the cheering effects of such assemblages among English soldiers are undoubted; but no other piece of ground equally good and large enough for the purpose was available within easy reach of the camps. The races were well attended. Marshal Pelissier drove over in an open carriage, preceded by a solitary Spahi (who seems the last of the bright-eyed, wild-looking, and picturesque warriors who formed St. Arnaud's escort), and followed by a guard of regular cavalry. Several of his staff and a large number of French officers were also present, and seemed to take a lively interest in the races. General della Marmora, and many Sardinian officers, paid us the compliment of coming over from the neighbourhood of Tchorgoun; and Sir Wm. Codrington, attended by a single orderly, rode across from the English head-quarters, and remained on the ground, till the principal races were over. The divisional generals, brigadiers, colonels, and staff officers, were plentiful as blackberries; and though the only representative of the fair sex was Mrs. Seacole, who presided over a sorely-invested tent full of creature comforts, the course had a very animated appearance, owing to the number and variety of uniforms; and at the same time, the domestic character of the scene was preserved by the efforts of a band of Ethiopian serenaders, furnished by amateurs from the Guards, who favoured us with abundance of the peculiar vocal and instrumental music in vogue among that interesting race. The course was over $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles long, and abounded with "famous obstacles" in the shape of banks and stone walls close on four feet high, hurdles, and a brook 12 feet wide. The Royal Artillery came out in an astonishing manner; all the races were won by "the gunners." No accidents occurred during the races. General Lawrenson, when riding in admirable style a good second, got a "purler," owing to the swerving of his horse, but he received no greater injury than a slight shaking and a scratch on the nose; and there was the usual number of spills on the course. One officer was ridden down in the rush from one point of the course to the other, and was taken away in a state of insensibility. These rushes were tremendous; not less than 4000 horses at it together; and no small amount of kicking, biting, and tumbling going on at the same time. In the evening 116 of the officers interested in the sports of the day, and their friends, dined at the restaurant of the 3d Division, Colonel Daubeny in the chair; and the foundation was laid for an army jockey club, with a permanent fund for races wherever troops may be encamped. The dinner would have astonished those who knew the camp this time twelvemonth. The tables, the room itself, the lights, the songs, would seem to him the effect of enchantment, and more than once one shut his eyes as he thought of last year, and asked himself could it all be a dream. The night was pitch dark, and the rain fell in torrents; as the camp is intersected by deep drains, and full of all kinds of unpleasant *trous de loup*, many of the company bivouacked on the floor of the shed, and only left at dawn. The rain has now ceased, but the wind blows strongly from the eastward, and the sea is high. The mud is deep all over the camp, and the road has settled so much in various places as to require considerable repairs. The weather looks exceedingly threatening, and the gale increases every moment. The waste of property as of life in war is prodigious and unavoidable. I firmly believe that for three feet deep, the whole of the quay of Balaklava, near the commissariat landing place, is a concrete of barley and corn. The sacks are often badly tied or rotten, and full of holes. It is no uncommon thing to see a Croat or Turkish labourer waddling slowly along with a sack on his back from which the corn is descending in streams against the back of his legs, till he arrives from the ship at the store, and then to behold him depositing the collapsed and flaccid bag on the heap with the greatest gravity and satisfaction at his success in diminishing his load at every step. In the various divisional commissariat depots, there is also an enormous loss of grain from similar causes, and from shifting the sacks and the distribution of the rations. But it seems to be impossible to prevent these losses, which are regarded as incidental to a state of war.

The saturnalia in which the army seems to have indulged whilst the expedition was at Kinburn have terminated, and wise, judicious, and feeling measures have been taken by the commander-in-chief to prevent their recurrence by pointing out to the soldiers the mischief they do themselves, their families, the army, and the country by such excesses. The fact is, that Major Powys has pointed out some of the main causes of the evil in his letter, and those causes will be removed in a great measure by the orders which General Codrington has issued respecting the transmission of soldiers' money to home. There will be drunken soldiers ever, just as there are drunken cobblers and drunken gentlemen —but the figure of *pars pro toto* is not just. The men had more money than they knew what to do with; they could not get rid of it in any way but by drinking it or throwing it away, and some of them selected the former plan, while many more escaped the alternative by wisely keeping it. The other day a man came to me and begged of me to take care of 30 sovereigns for him, as "he did not know what to do with it till he could get leave to purchase his discharge, and it was not safe to carry it about with him." Would it not be practicable to establish ambulatory regimental savings banks' in the field at trifling trouble and small expense. The French are by no means free from evil, bnt the extent of it is less apparent, inasmuch as the men are not permitted to stagger about the country in a state of drunkenness, although an occasional bacchanalian may be seen singing *chansns* from between his blankets of mud anywhere between Kamiesh and the left *parc de siege*. As to our own authorities they are waging a war of extermination against spirit vendors and, above all, against raki importers. This villanous spirit inflames men's brains and sets them mad; it has all the abominable properties of fresh raw rum or new whisky, but it affects the nervous sysytem more mischievously, and produces prostration, which frequently ends in death. It is dreadfully cheap, it is white like gin, with a taste of bad anisette and a fiery burning smack on the tongue, and is alcohol, all but pure, with the exception of the adulteration, which contributes to give it the flavour. Captain Shervinton, the provost-marshal at Balaklava, has a wonderful knack of following out the concealed depot of this by the smell, and the process of punishment is simple. The owners are compelled to start the poison into the sea, and they are then ordered to leave the Crimea instanter. Canteen keepers who keep it are fined heavily, their canteens are shut up, and themselves deported at their own expense to Constantinople. No less than three native vessels were seized the other day by Captain Shervinton full of raki; the cargoes were confiscated, and the ships sent away never to be let into Balaklava more. Every canteen keeper or storekeeper, on whose premises a drunken soldier is seen, no matter what the excuse may be, is fined £5 for each, and the provost-marshal has more money than he knows what to do with from this source alone. But they are a wealthy race, these social vultures—many of them king vultures—respectable birds of prey, with kempt plumage and decent demeanour—others mere adjutants, dirty and predacious. The settlers care little for £5 fines while they can get 6d. a dozen for tacks and 2s. a pound for lard (subnomine butter,) and they pay their taxes like lords, or rather much more willingly now, that the income tax is pressing on them. Taxes!—What is the man talking about? It is quite true nevertheless. There is an unchartered corporation in the town of Kadekoi, with a mayor and aldermen, or town councillors, and a vigorous administrative staff that would astonish the elder brethren about Guildhall. They have a machinery of scavengers and sewer men, and they pay about £120 a month for keeping their city in order. This weather, however, does not contribute to their comforts, and diminishes their profits, and the condition of the roads makes the chariot wheels drive heavily. As to these roads, on which so much depends, it is not possible to express an opinion yet; but a portion of the section below the Col. is in a very bad state, as I can attest, and I am told, that the portion in question is just the very part where the military engineers interfered with the civil engineers.

At first it was proposed to repair the old road between Balaklava and Kadekoi, to carry the whole traffic between those points, and also to repair the old French road between Kadekoi and the stationary engine, passing up the Vinoy Ravine for an up-road, while the car track round the east side of Frenchman's Hill was to be improved and used as a down road between those two latter points. Mr. Doyne reported on the whole line, and after careful examination, found that it would require much less labor to make a new and good road between Balaklava and Kadekoi by a different route, than to attempt to repair the old one while the traffic was passing over it. Accordingly, a main drain was cut down the centre of the valley, running into the head of Balaklava harbour, to intercept all water flowing from the east of it, and free the road and railway drains rapidly from the rain water. The road was made parallel to the railway, the material over which it passes being deep, spongy, vegetable soil, easily drained in its natural state, but very retentive, if worked up under wet; drains four feet deep were cut at 40 feet apart, and the surface between rounded to a foot higher at the centre. Cross drains were cut at every 44 yards, connecting main drains, and the large stone pitching, 28 feet wide, was filled in with smaller stones, and afterwards macadamised. Before laying on the pitching, the whole traffic of the camp was turned over the formed surface for five days to beat it down, and to consolidate it, a strong force of navvies being employed in the morning and evening to keep up the proper form. This course proved perfectly successful—the surface was quite smooth when the metalling was laid on, and, consequently, the rain runs freely off without penetrating the soil. On this section there has been laid down about 13,000 tons of hard limestone pitching, and metalling on a length of one mile. From Kadekoi to the stationary engine, the old road up the Vinoy Ravine was so steep (1 in 12), and so liable to be washed away, and the ground over which the down line was prepared to pass was so bad in (some places 1 in 7), that Mr. Doyne determined to abandon both, and make a new road round the eastern base of Frenchman's Hill, nearly parallel with the railway, and Sir Richard Airey gave his assent to the change. Here for a considerable distance the road is terraced out on the hill side, formed of hard carboniferous limestone rock, and a clear metalled roadway is obtaining from 20 to 25 feet wide throughout. In the next section to Mrs. Seacole's hut, the old French road is widened, deep drains cut, the centre raised, and a deep coat of limestone metalling laid on. In the next section up to the Col, the ground again slopes very rapidly, and the road is terraced out for a mile, partly in rock, sand stone, and clay, and is then formed and metalled as before. From Balaklava to the Col the chief difficulty to be contended with in maintaining a road is the numerous bodies of water that come down the hill-sides. To protect the road against this enemy trenches are cut on the upper side, zig-zagging according to the line of the ground so as to intercept the water, and convey it into large culverts constructed under the road at every dip in the undulation of the hill, so that no water can get upon the road except what actually falls upon the surface, and that small quantity, from the rounded form of its surface. is rapidly carried away into the side drains, To relieve a road in every way from the destructive action of water, both by sub and surface drainage, is the first principle of road-making; without attention to this, any amount of labour will prove fruitless. From Balaklava to the Col, about three miles and a half, the works throughout are of a very heavy character, and the provisions for drainage are upon a very extensive scale; besides about 10 miles of open ditching, there are between 150 and 200 culverts constructed; from the great want of materials these are formed in every variety of way—many with Army Works Corps' water barrels, some with commissariat pork casks, others with royal engineers' fascines and green platform timber. But the work which required the greatest amount of labor was the metalling, there having been over this $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, nearly 40,000 tons of hard limestone rock quarried, collected, and