NEWS BY LAST ENGLISH MAIL.

FRENCH FLOATING BATTERIES.

A letter from L'Oriente states that the second floating battery, Foudroyante, was to be launched in a few days. The floating battery Lave will soon be ready to put to sea; she is 51 yards in length and 15 in breadth; her armament consists of 16 50-pounders worked by *elite* gunners; she will be manned by a crew of 200 men, and carry besides 200 marines; her screw propeller is of 220 horse-power. The weight of these floating batteries, when armed, will be about 1,400 tons; their iron sheeting alone weighs nearly 400 tons.

A FRENCH OFFICER'S OPINION OF THE BRITISH ARMY.

A French officer of high rank, who has seen a great deal of service, has, in a letter to an English officer, given his opinion as to the state of the British army before Sebastopol. After praising our engineers and artillery in the highest possible terms, the writer proceeds—"You may think me, perhaps, too severe in the opinion I give of the English cavalry, but were you out here you would yourself be still more severe. The cavalry of an army of field service should be the eyes and ears of the force. In the English army that arm is neither the one nor the other, and this with perhaps the very best material in the world to form an excellent cavalry. The superior officers (*les officiers superieurs*) of the English dragoons know nothing whatever of their duty, beyond how to turn a regiment out of the stables and the barrack yard in good order. But I must do them the justice to say, that the general officers commanding their divisions and armies (*leur corps d'armees* really don't know how to use the cavalry put under their command. After the battle of Alma, an effective cavalry would never have lost sight of the enemy, and every movement of the latter would have been communicated forthwith to Lord Raglan. But it was not so. An hour before the first shot was fired at Inkermann the English general was perfectly ignorant of a single Russian being near him. In point of fact, the Russian army at Inkermann fell upon the English force just as much as if the latter had no outposts, no guards, and no cavalry. Even at Alma, the English cavalry might very well have followed the Russians, cut them up to a considerable extent, or, at any rate, have prevented their retiring as they did. But what did the English cavalry effect on that occasion? Nothing whatever. The Russians went away in as good order as if they were returning from a parade; the only molestation they suffered was from the gnns of the English artillery. The cavalry of Lord Raglan's army did not annoy them in the least. This, combined with their uselessness at Inkermann, caused the English cavalry to be much laughed at (*d'etre bien meprise*) by the infantry of that army. Their leader's name was made the subject of a pun." (The writer here alludes, I imagine, to Lord Lucan being called Lord "Lookon" after Alma and Inkermann.) "This leads me to the desperate folly of the charge at Balaklava. Much has been said of that charge, but in our army there is but one opinion as to the extreme bravery of those who obeyed the order and rode to certain death, and of the utter madness and culpable throwing away of life on the part of those who gave the order. The order was caused by a sort of desperation on the part of the cavalry leaders, who preferred death to being sneered at by their comrades in the infantry."

"And now I come to the consideration of the English infantry. Of this arm of their service I will say that for the battle-field, in hand-to-hand encounters, they are certainly the bravest men in the world; but for guarding themselves, whether on picket or in the trenches, from the surprise of the enemy, they are by no means good soldiers—very far from it. The English infantry, as at present constituted, should be kept for fighting, and for that alone. The work of guarding them in the trenches should be performed by other troops. This defect is not the fault of the officers, who seem to urge as much as possible upon the men how necessary it is to keep a good and vigilant watch at all times; but with the soldiers themselves there is a want of thought, an utter recklessness as to consequences, provided the present hour can be enjoyed, which is to us Frenchmen most marvellous. But this is a fault throughout the English army. From Lord Raglan down to the private sentinel, no one seems for a moment to give a thought as to what the morrow may bring forth; and precedent appears to them sufficient excuse for any amount of blunders. Then, again, the infantry of the English army are dressed and accoutred in a manner the most absurd. They still wear the stiff leather stock which we discharged long ago. The white leather belts, which in our army gave way to black belts five years since, still find favour in their eyes. In place of a single waist-belt, with moveable pouch upon it, the English foot soldier still has his chest confined by the abominable belt across it, which must in a great measure confine his lungs. Although very fine and very muscular men, they are not trained in any way to walk, run, fence, or make the best use of their limbs, as is the case in our infantry. They are merely taught to hold themselves erect, march with precision, and handle their arms together and as ordered. Individual intelligence or personal perfection in their profession is never thought of. To sum up, the men are as fine, or perhaps finer, than any infantry in the world, but the system is the worst it is possible to conceive. Their own officers, or at any rate such amongst them as are lovers of their profession, see the truth of this, and lament greatly the defects of their army. But what can they do to bring about a better state of things? Nothing. The seniors are so wedded to all that is old-fashioned as to look upou every change as a sort of military revolution."

THE OPERATIONS IN THE SEA OF AZOFF

The operations of the allied fleets in the Sea of Azoff continue with unabated energy and success. Intelligence was received yesterday by the Admiraity, dated the 31st of May, from Kertch, that the squadron in the Sea of Azoff had appeared before Genitchi, landed a body of seamen and marines, which drove back the Russian forces, and destroyed all the depots and vessels laden with corn and supplies for the Russian army. Lord Raglan's despatch of the 2d of June relates to the same achievement, and states that 90 vessels were found on this important point, laden with supplies for the army, all which were sunk or destroyed to prevent their escape. Another despatch, which, as we are informed, reached the Foreign-office in the course of yesterday afternoon, states that no less than *six millions of rations of corn and flour*, destined for the Russian army at Sebastopol and in the Crimea, have been destroyed in the Sea of Azoff, as well as 240 trading vessels. Barely four days had elapsed since the squadron forced the Straits of Yenikale and entered upon this astonishing operation. Berdiansk, Arabat, and Genitchi fell in rapid succession, and before they were conscious of their peril the Russians found their storeships and magazines in the hands of the enemy, or only to be rescued from capture by instantaneous destruction The enthusiastic satisfaction which the nation will feel on this occasion is heightened by the remarkable fact that our success has not cost the squadron a single life, one man only having been wounded at Genitchi, though, in all probability, this bloodless victory has inflicted a much severer blow upon the enemy than the hard-fought and dearly-won fields of the Alma and of Inkermann. Russia is prodigal of men, and she has more than once threatened and attempted to overwhelm the gallant bands which have invaded her territory by the multitudinous hosts of her armed serfs. The loss of stores, of food, of wealth, and of the means of transport is a greater calamity to the Czar than the defeat of an army; for, indeed, of what use is an army, and what resistance can it offer, if it be deprived at the very outset of this campaign of the means of subsistence? War in the Crimea has this peculiar character, that five large armies are at this time arrayed within the narrow limits of that peninsula, although the natural produce of the conntry is insufficient to support any one of them. In ordinary years the Crimea does not produce corn enough for the nourishment of its own scanty population, and last year the harvest was below the average; this year the cultivation of the soil has been neglected. The result is that the armies must all be fed by provisions brought from other countries; that is an operation for which we are now prepared, and which the Russians have hitherto been carrying on by the Sea of Azoff on a gigantic scale. But, although we have not yet invested Sebastopol in the proper sense of that term, we shall soon have invested the Crimea, and, when the supplies are cut off, the greater the force of the enemy may be in that country the less able will he be to maintain it there.

Another circumstance which causes us the most sincere satisfaction is, that the rapidity with which this squadron has swept the Sea of Azoff is the first exploit in the present war which the navy have been enabled to perform on their own element. England has not undervalued the admiral devotion, perseverance, and courage shown by her seamen in this campaign, under many strange and unusual circumstances—their attention to the wounded, their gallant behaviour at the siege, their firm attitude at Eupatoria, and the boldness with which they have navigated the Euxine throughout the winter. But they have had to do with an enemy who sunk his ships and who continues to fight behind walls, and no real opportunity had been afforded to the fleet for an achievement worthy of its power. The occupation of the Sea of Azoff is an unparalleled display of the means of destruction possessed by such a squadron. Under the orders of Sir Edmund Lyons and Admiral Bruat, who were the chief projectors of the expedition, they entered the Straits of Yenikale and landed an army in a position which paralysed the forces of the enemy. The vessels of small draught then instantly proceeded to enter the Sea of Azoff, into which no foreign vessel of war, and probably no trading vessel above the size of a corn brig, had penetrated—a sea resembling a shallow lagune, the brackish waters of which are lost in the surrounding marshes. Across this sullen basin, which the ancients called a marsh, and which the most recent travellers who have visited it, compare to a reservoir of pea soup, our steamers ploughed their way. In 24 hours Berdiansk was visited, at a distance of more than 100 miles from the Straits, and on the following day Arabat was shelled. We had forseen, and had mentioned some days ago, upon the first arrival of this news, that Genitchi would be one of the first points to attack, because it commands the strait between the mainland and the tongue of Arabat, and also the communication between the Putrid Sea and the Sea of Azoff. It is therefore a point of the greatest consequence for transport both by land and water, and we are not surprised to find that the Russians had accumulated there very large quantities of stores for the army.

The Strait of Genitchi, across which there is a ferry, is said to be not more than 60 fathoms wide; but it is deep, and it serves to carry off the waters of the Putrid Sea into the Sea of Azoff. Of the Putrid Sea itself, or Sirwash (as it is properly called), scarcely anything is known, and it is wholly unmarked by soundings in any charts that we possess. It appears, however, to present considerable analogy to the lagunes which encircle Venice, and, though it may be inaccessible to steamers of war, we do not despair of ships' boats performing a service in these waters which might be of the most essential importance to the campaign. The Russians have within the last ten years, as before stated, constructed a road on piles across the Sirwash, at one of its narrowest points, which connects the Crimea with the mainland by a wooden bridge about 200 fathoms in length. This military road, lying between the Isthmus of Perekop and the tongue of Arabat, is more practicable for an army than either of these two natural communications, and nothing would be more fatal to the Russians than the destruction of the wooden bridge which completes this line of communication. The distance from Genitchi to the bridge cannot be more than 20 or 25 miles; we are, of course, ignorant of the depth of water there may be in the lagunes, but if it be sufficient to float the ships' boats, and we hold the entrance to this inland water, there is no reason why the destruction of this road should not be attempted.

In any case, however, the success we have already obtained augurs most favourably for the next operations of the combined forces. After some hesitation and some further experience, means have been found to turn against the enemy the resources of the peculiar country in which we are carrying on war, and to apply with irresistible superiority the maritime strength of the allies. Our squadron in the Sea of Azoff is performing the work of another army, and of an army which has not only outflanked the Russians, but cut off their principal base off operations, for, as we have more than once observed to the opponents of the Crimean expedition, there is no other spot in Europe which present such stratagetical advantages to the operations of a maritime Power supporting an army of invasion with a powerful fleet. We await with the deepest interest the arrival of the despatches which will give us the details of these fortunate and glorious exploits, and in the meantime we shall learn by telegraph the effect produced both at St Petersburg and at the Ruisian head-quarters in the Crimea by reverses for which our antagonists appear to have been altogether unprepared.—*Times*, June 4.

CONSTANTINOPLE, May 28.—The Banshee has just arrived, bringing news which has gladdened the heart of every Englishman. There is now a real prospect of the reduction of Sebastopol. Kertch was taken on the Queen's birthday, without firing a gun. Why should I endeavour to record from hearsay events of which you will have long and graphic descriptions? One or two facts that have come to my knowledge may be related. The whole of the correspondence between the Governors of Kertch and the military authorities, together with the archieves of the place for many years, were found floating in the harbour by a midshipman of the Royal Albert, and are safe in the possession of the English. From these it appears that the want of provisions was much felt in the Crimea, bread having risen to double its former price. A letter was found from the Russian commander-in-chief, ordering the immediate preparation of a hospital for 16,000 sick and wounded, a proof that the Russians expect not only an unhealthy season but a bloody campaign. Arabat will no doubt be at once taken and occupied. This is the point to which all the Russian supplies are brought from Taganrog; a high road runs from Arabat to Simpheropol and Bakshiserai. In a few days we shall have details of this conquest, not less glorious because it was bloodless and easily won. For the present it is only possible to give a bare outline, which I send, for fear your correspondent's letter may have been delayed. On the 23rd a mixed force, consisting of 10,000 French, 5,000 Turks, and 3,500 English, left Kamiesch and Balaclava. The expedition entered the Straits of Kertch on Thursday (the 24th) and reduced the forts blowing up five magazines. The gunboats silenced the Pavlovskaya battery, destroyed some Russian gunboats, and took several small brigs. The garrisons of Kertch and Yenikale, said by some to be 10,000 strong, by others to amount only to 5,000 were seen to leave and fall back into the interior by the southern road. Meantime, the troops landed without opposition at Ambalaki, where they bivouacked for the night. They then moved on towards Kertch. During this time the gunboats were actively engaged beating up the Tamanskoi Gulf, and in reducing the forts on the sand-bank. All the inhabitants fled, and many of the houses were burning on Thursday. By 3 o'clock on Friday Kertch and Yenikale were in the hands of the allies with all the guns in the batteries and stores. The flotilla at once entered the Sea of Azoff, which it will penetrate up to within 20 miles of Taganrog. The enemy had entirely disapeared by Friday evening.

Nearly 3,000 men have set out from Varna to form the nucleus of the Turkish Contingent. Officers have been appointed to five battalions, and in a short time the drill will commence either at Kilo, on the Black Sea, or on the heights which overlook the Sultan's Valley in the neighbourhood of the Bosphorus. Many of the officers are making considerable progress in Turkish; it is said that voluntary examinations are to take place periodically, in which the competitors will be encouraged by the prospect of advancement in the force. In six or eight months it is hoped that the officers will be independent of interpreters.

THE PORTLAND MAINE LIQUOR RIOT.

With respect to the circumstances which led to, and the transactions attendant on the seizure of liquors imported by the Mayor of Portland, so far from bringing discredit upon the authorities of that City and confusion upon the cause of Temperance and the Maine Law, it is calculated to show up their opponents in their true colours. Most disgraceful indeed has been the conduct of all who either incited to, or took part in the riot or were at the pains to circulate the reports which were first printed by our contemporaries. We quote from the St. John Telegraph.

Although that part of the story which represented the Mayor of Portland as purchasing liquors on his own behalf in violation of the law, was too absurd to be believed, we might have felt some uneasiness with respect to his dealing with the rioters, had we not known something of the man, and entertained the best opinion of his judgmet and discretion; and although pleased to find that the stories which obtained a ready credence here, were essentially untrue, we cannot say, that we are in the least surprised to find that they have been misstatements from the beginning to the end of the chapter. It was said, that Neal Dow had bought liquors on speculation and in order to make money out of their sale to the City agency; that such sale was in contravention of the Act: that he had resisted the seizures of the liquors unlawfully imported by him and had without cause and illegally ordered the Military to fire upon the people; that an innocent man had been shot, and so forth, and lastly that the public of Portland had condemned Mr. Dow's proceedings and had called upon him to resign. Now what are the facts? And first with respect to the purchase of the liquors. It appears from the testimony given on the trial of the Mayor, that he was one of a Committee appointed by the City Government to procure the liquors for the agency, that they were imported by the Committee under the authority of the Council, stored in a public building, and were marked '*Portland Agency, Portland, Maine*,' that a thick-headed Alderman who appears to have been absent when the resolution was passed, hearing some out-of-doors reports with respect to the purchase of liquors by Mr. Dow "on his own hook," and fired with zeal for the public welfare and a virtuous indignation against the man who had condescended to do such things, posts off to the Council meeting and interrogates him on a matter with which, but for his inattention to his duties he would have been familiar, in such a way as to excite the pleasantry of the Mayor and the other members of the Board. Not having brains enough to perceive to what might have been apparent to a child of ten, or else being viciously bent on mischief, he leaves the Council, and on his way home informs a person not over friendly to the Maine Law, that Neal Dow had broken the Law, who communicates the story to others. The Editors of the *Argus* and the *State of Maine* got hold of it. It is nuts for them, and without waiting for any confirmation of the story, they published an account of it, and foolishly and wickedly incite the public to acts of violence and outrage. Had it not been for the too ready credulity of these two men, their overflowing zeal for liberty, and their unpardonable precipitancy, it is probable, that the sad events they have been called upon subsequently to record, would not have occurred. These men have much to answer for; the blood of the slain lies in our humble opinion at the door of the men who thus hounded them on to a breach of the peace, and not at that of the authorities by