NEWS BY THE ENGLISH MAIL.

BATTLE OF THE TCHERNAYA.

THE DETAILS.

For some time rumours had been afloat each night that an attack in force along the whole line would be made, but the deserters had so often proved false prophets that people began to doubt all their stories, until on Wednesday evening three spies came in, who positively declared that an attack would be made in force on the following morning; and hardly had they ceased speaking, when Gen. Mitoville, commanding the French cavalry at Baidar, telegraphed that the heights around were covered with troops, and that he wished to retire, from the fear that he might be cut off, but could not, owing to the road being blocked up by some hundreds of commissariat waggons. The Turks remained under arms all night, but, strange to say, the French, who were most of all interested in the matter, seem to have given themselves no trouble whatever about it, but went to bed and slept tranquilly. A peloton of Chasseurs d'Afrique went out to patrol during the night, and on the other side of the river fell into an ambuscade, and were all made prisoners, except two men, who escaped and gave the alarm, but even this was treated as one of the ordinary incidents of night duty in presence of the enemy. About an hour before daylight the French sentinels in front of the bridge thought they could perceive shadows gliding past them in the darkness and fired. There was no reply, and silence deep as death followed; about the same time, a few shots were heard from the hill occupied by the Piedmontese outposts, but, as the utmost stillness prevailed afterwards on every side, no precautions were taken till just as the first streak of light made itself visible in the horizon, a sharp fire was opened from a party of skirmishers against the *tête de pont*, and a regular assault made upon the Sardinian picket. Gen. Marmora was already on the ground, and sent a battalion of bersaglieri to reinforce the post, so that they might defend themselves, till the troops could be got under arms, and the necessary arrangements made. When the reinforcements arrived half the picket was already *hors de combat* and the assailants were up on the parapet of the little redoubt firing down into them. To prolong the conflict here would only have caused a useless massacre, and the Sardinians consequently withdrew behind an *epaulement* on the other side of the river, near the aqueduct, and there defended themselves till the day broke clearly, and the attack became general. On the side of the French, the *tete de pont* was assaulted in great force, and carried very soon after the enemy's first showing himself on the ground, notwithstanding the heroic resistance of the 20th Regiment of the line, which in one battalion alone lost twelve officers. The bridge was now occupied, two batteries of artillery were brought across, so as to sweep the road leading between the two heights towards Bala Clava, and a strong column was pushed on to the assault and mounted the declivity. Strange to say, although Gen. Pelissier had received full warning the previous night, he refused to believe in an attack until it actually commenced, and consequently no dispositions were made, and nobody was ready. The Russians had already reached the crest of the hill, while the French were still asleep: many officers were awakened by the round shot passing through their tents, a sergeant had his head taken off, while writing the orders of the day for the division. At this critical moment two battalions alone of the 2d Regiment of Zouaves held the whole assaulting column in check, and contested the ground inch by inch till they were forced back upon their own tents. In the meantime the alarm was sounding, the troops got into order, the artillery into position, and a vigorous onset drove the Russians down the declivity, leaving it covered with their dead and wounded. All this occurred in the grey of the morning, which by the time of the action was converted into something like positive darkness, leaving everybody as yet in complete ignorance as to the force they had to contend with, or the dangers they had to bear. In the short pause which followed, however, and during which both sides prepared for a renewal of the struggle, the sun came out from behind the hills, the smoke rose, and the valley of the Tchernaya lay before us like a picture. The tract of table-land lying at the foot of the Mackenzie heights was covered with masses of cavalry, infantry, and artillery. About 30 guns were ranged in a crescent outside the bridge, and thundered unceasingly against the French position. The Piedmontese were drawn up in line behind a small eminence close to the ford on the Tchorgoum road, and their batteries on the heights to the left were vigorously replying to the Russian fire; the three divisions of French, Camoux, Erbillon, and Fancheux were under arms, front line a little way back from the brow of the hill, and a great number of Zouaves were lying down in shelter behind a small ridge. Below, on the plain, along the hollow on which the English light horse died so gallantly last winter, every turf beneath their feet a soldier's sepulchre, were ranged the English and French cavalry, squadron, extending back nearly to the Turkish redoubts, ready to act in case the enemy should force the Piedmontese position and attempt to debouch upon the open ground behind. The pennons of the Lancers fluttered gaily in the line in the fresh morning breeze, and when the sun rose high in glory and poured down its rays full on the plain, making scarlet look redder, and steel and brass brighter and more resplendent, gilding the hill tops, making the tents glitter, and rolling away the mists in great packs up the valley towards Inkermann, the scene became one of passing splendour as well as of passing interest.

RENEWAL OF THE CONFLICT.

We looked in breathless anxiety for the renewal of the conflict. The combatants had taken breath—their blood was up, for hundreds on both sides lay already stark and stiff on the river side around the bridge, and the artillery evidently was simply playing an interlude till the curtain rose upon another act in the tragedy. We were not kept long waiting. From behind the cloud of smoke which naturally hung around the Russian batteries, came two large columns of the enemy, marching in quick time, about 200 yards apart, and exactly parallel, at a distance from the river, and in a line with the bank. As they wound and twisted, mounted and descended, following the inequalities in the ground in long, compact masses, their bayonets glancing in the sunlight, they looked exactly like two huge serpents creeping rapidly along, their eyes glistening with the lust of prey in sight. On arriving within about eight hundred yards of the ford, one halted, and the other turned off abruptly towards the river. It was evident they were about to assail the French position more to the right, on the side next to the Sardinians. On reaching the water, some passed on small bridges hastily thrown over, the rest forded, and on gaining this side, the column broke into loose order, and pushed on towards the canal or aqueduct, which rises with an embankment about the very foot of the hill. Before reaching it, they had to traverse about 500 yards of rough, but smooth, green sward; they were no longer exposed to the French artillery, because the guns could not be depressed sufficiently to rack them, but they had their flank turned to that of the Piedmontese, who had got the range to a nicety, and fired with an accuracy little short of marvellous. The head of the column had hardly come up dripping from the water, when they found themselves in the midst of a storm of round shot, grape, and shell, bent upon relentlessly, unceasingly, mowing them down by the score, and mingling the survivors with clay and gravel. But I must do these survivors justice, and say that they bore up right gallantly, marched firmly onward and upward, passed the canal, though the water was breast high, pushed some yards still on the precipitous side of the hill, when the fire was found to be mortal, for all who fell rolled helplessly downwards into the aqueduct, and were instantly drowned; but at last halted, turned, and fled—never stopping till they reached the river, when they got shelter under the banks and amongst the old wall-wash. An officer remained on the crest alone on the declivity, vainly urging them to follow him. Reinforcements now came up from the second column; they re-formed, but again in loose open order, or rather no order at all, for they marched exactly like a flock of sheep. This was done evidently so that they might present less mass for the artillery to play upon, but it was a great mistake, as will be seen afterwards. This time they displayed more pluck and resolution; they fell to be sure by the dozen, but they never wavered nor hesitated, and on they went victoriously, and at last reached the crest of the hill, and came out on the level. When the head of the column attained this point, the Zouaves, who were lying down behind the ridge on the Russian left, jumped up and ran off to join the main body, which was near the artillery on the top of the plateau, and at the same moment the whole of the French, the artillery included, retired about one hundred yards before the advancing enemy. The firing had ceased except broken and puny fire-firing from the assailants, who now, unable to form in line, and mixed up in disorder, doubtless perceived they should have either mounted in line, or halted and deployed before coming out on the open ground above. For some moments, I thought the French were about to give way and retreat, and the Russians become masters of the heights, but I was soon convinced of my mistake. One could see them, it is true, falling back on all sides, and closing up into a small round mass, but in the twinkling of an eye, this mass opened out like a fan, two black lines shot from it on each side across the plateau, the centre closed up, divided itself, and the next moment a sheet of flame broke from the whole line, followed by a cloud of smoke, and the crash of the musketry fell on our ears in a long, continuous, unflattering whirr, like the roar of a waterfall, drowned every second by the mightier thunder of the artillery, which had made a point to the right, and raked the whole side of the hill with a tempest of grape. The Russians paused for a few seconds, seemed to hesitate, but were speedily released from all embarrassment as to the course they should pursue, by the advance of the French, whose cheer rang merrily through the morning air, as they levelled their bayonets and rushed to the charge. The Russians gave one "Hurrah," as if they intended to come up to the scratch, but instead of suiting the action to the word, they wheeled about, the Sardinian artillery again playing upon them as before, and flung themselves down the hill side in complete disorder. Some hundreds threw down their arms, and surrendered to the French, sooner than run the gauntlet once more across the aqueduct and the river. The remnant of the column got under cover on the other side of the stream, and remained there for some minutes, until two battalions of Piedmontese came up upon the plain, and throwing out skirmishers, advanced upon the river. The Russians now retired in haste, and not in very good order, skirmishing as they went, until they reached the high ground on which their cavalry and the reserve of their artillery were stationed. During the pursuit, the Piedmontese made some prisoners. *The moment was propitious for a charge of light cavalry, who might have cut them up completely.* Major Grovac, the second on the Sardinian etat-major, accordingly brought down their four squadrons, but the colonel objected to charge in face of the Russian cavalry force, fully five thousand in number, unless he were supported by French or English. A message was accordingly sent to Gen. Maurice, the French general commanding the cavalry, requesting him to push forward a body of his troops in rear of the Piedmontese, but he declined, alleging that he had positive orders not to pursue, having returned a similar answer to a similar request on the part of Gen. Erbilon, who commanded on the heights. This is extraordinary, but true, and the only thing we can say about it is we regress a hope, that there was some good reason for it not visible at first sight. The greater part of the Russian artillery now retired, followed up for a short distance by the French Chasseurs de Vincennes; the cavalry then advanced in an immense line, forming a crescent, from out of which issued three guns, which fired away to protect the retreat, till the last column had wound its weary way up the road to McKenzie's Farm, or disappeared amongst the hills towards Tchionlion.

THE BANKS OF THE RIVER AFTER THE BATTLE.

Nothing now remained but to visit the field of battle, on which the Zouaves had already descended like vultures, and were removing everything portable. The scene which presented itself on the banks of the river, below the canal, was something fearful beyond description, much more fearful than the ordinary horrors of a battle field. The canal itself was choked with dead, many of whom had doubtless fallen into it living, after rolling down the hill side, and found repose in its muddy waters; broken muskets, bags of bread, cartridges, one dark red stain on the white chalky gravel, often alone marked the spot where the men first fell; in a moment afterwards tumbled back to perdition. Many had fallen, after scrambling up to the brink of the aqueduct, and ere they had time to cross it, and if not caught in the bushes, rolled into the plain, breaking their bones in the descent, and lay there as we passed, shrieking in agony, and imploring us to kill them and thus put an end to their suffering. Never did eye rest upon humanity in forms so mutilated, defaced and disfigured, as those unhappy wretches, who lay writhing there in their bloody rags, and rolling themselves over with groan and dust that neither wife nor mother would ever have recognized son or husband in these hideous masses of mortality. Some, but they were a small minority, sought to drag themselves to the shade of the few bushes that skirted the river; some sought to hide their heads from the fiery heat of the midday sun under their tattered garments, and others lay with faces upturned and ghastly, their limbs still trembling in the last quiver, and the flies already burrowing in their wounds. Men shot down by any sort of missile, and lying where they fall, gory and mutilated though they may be, is a sight to which one soon gets habituated, but wounded men who have been rolled over a rough soil, and their bones broken in their progress, is one of those sights that one rarely witnesses, and which he who has once seen it never wishes to see more. On towards the bridge the dead lay thicker and thicker. On the banks of the river itself, and in the river itself, they were "heaped and piled," mostly fine men in the prime of life—many with a *vieux grognard* air, which bespoke long years of service. Nearly every one had a brandy bottle, either actually in his hand, or lying near him, or broken under him in his fall. I was riding with a Polish officer, who conversed with a great many of the wounded, who informed us, that large quantities of brandy had been served out to the soldiers before the action, except the artillery men. There were a great many small platforms lying about, some resembling ladders with the rungs very close, and carried by rope-slings attached to each end, as a bridge to be thrown across the aqueduct. The great majority, however, passed without them. One man, who fell high upon the hill side, assured us that he was in the last battalion of the reserve, and that *every soldier had been sent down from the heights; so that had we pursued them we might have gained the Mackenzie plateau along with them and held it.* Prince Gortschakoff commanded in chief, and General Martinaloff the assaulting columns.

(From the European Times, Sept. 1st.)

The accounts which have come to hand from the Baltic during the last few days exhibit more blundering on the part of the Home authorities, and enable the Russians to boast that the fortifications and batteries of Sweaborg are still intact. In the course of the two days' firing, all the mortars were used, and these were of so inferior a quality that they either burst or became unfit for use. Admiral Dundas sent the mortar-boats home; but the Admiralty, on learning this, despatched a steamer to countermand their return, and at the same time forwarded another supply of mortars, the want of which at the proper time saved the defences of the Russian fortress. From this we infer that another attack is resolved upon, but it is distressing to record the want of adequate preparation for an attack, the completion of which failed from a cause which might have been readily guarded against. A despatch from Berlin declares, that the fleets have retired from Cronstadt, and taken up another position. If, during the next month or six weeks, something still more decisive not done, the return of the fleet from the Baltic will not add greatly to the national rejoicing. The remarks in the *Times* of yesterday, respecting the shortcomings of the Baltic and the Black Sea fleets, are unfortunately warranted by the facts, for, as far as the war has progressed, the result has been anything but creditable to our "wooden walls." At the same time it may be stated that while General de Berg asserts, that the loss of life at Sweaborg only amounted to 44, and 110 wounded, a telegraphic despatch from the Baltic declares emphatically that the Russian loss was upwards of 2000.

THE GRAND DUKE AT HELSINGFORS.

In the accounts published of the bombardment of Sweaborg, it is particularly mentioned, that a large Imperial Russian flag was seen flying on one of the buildings, but which was not hoisted on the second and third days. Private accounts received here from Helsingfors state, that the building in question was the habitation of the Grand Duke Constantine, who had come down from St. Petersburg expressly to be present at the expected attack, and to excite the ardour of the Russian troops by his presence. The flag attracted the especial notice of the attacking ships, and particularly served as a mark for the mortar vessels, in consequence of which the building was speedily reduced to a mass of ruins, but the Grand Duke escaped unhurt. From the same accounts, it appears that the navigation department on board the fleet was carried on with consummate skill and an extraordinary knowledge of the intricacies of the approaches, which reflects the highest credit on the masters of the different ships.

GENERAL SIMPSON.

It is rumoured in London, and we fear with sufficient reason, that General Simpson has been obliged, from sickness, temporarily to abandon the command of our army in the Crimea; and that Lieutenant-General Sir H. Bentinck, the next senior officer, is at this moment commanding in the room of General Simpson.

FRENCH REINFORCEMENTS.

On the 29th two English steamers, having in tow the Mary Ann and Eva, transports, embarked about 4000 men at Marseilles for the East. A saling transport proceeds in tow with every steamer that clears out, and the same plan is adopted on the return voyage, by which a great saving of time and expense is accomplished. Since the beginning of the war, official returns show that 2800 officers and 38,000 horses and men have embarked for the East at the ports of Toulon and Marseilles.