NEWS BY THE ENGLISH MAIL.

THE FRENCH FLOATING BATTERIES.

A Belgian contemporary quotes the following from the letter of a French officer attached to the Kinburn expedition:—"We have just put the floating batteries to a most satisfactory proof. They opened their fire at a quarter-past nine, at a distance somewhere between 400 and 600 metres, and by noon there was a splendid breach. The 50 pound balls quickly scaled off the facing of the rampart, and the shells knocked over everything. I was in the fort after its surrender, when the fire kindled by the mortar-vessels was still burning. I never saw such a confusion of smashed gun-carriages, of broken or dismounted guns; the chaos was superb. Now, we must set to work and try to do better still. The first trial has been good, but there is yet room for improvement; the engines are not powerful enough, and the hulls do not readily answer the helm. But one thing is decidedly proved—the main and essential thing—and that is, the invulnerability of the floating batteries. They all of them bear the dints of from forty to fifty shots, just like the marks of bullets on a target. We have only lost a few men from some projectiles that entered by the port-holes. We are well rewarded by the signs of astonishment and admiration on the part of the English and the Russians."

RUSSIAN WARFARE.

The Russians themselves certainly have no reason to be desirous of prolonging a contest in which they have experienced nothing but defeat since it was begun. Prince Gortschakoff comforts his army by telling them, that they are no worse off in evacuating Sebastopol than the Russians were in deserting Moscow after the battle of Borodino, and that in both cases, they had the pleasure of destroying their own cities, and presenting a smouldering heap of ashes and stones to their conquerors. The Russian mode of warfare is something like duelling among the Japanese, when each party rips open his own bowels, instead of performing that act of destruction upon his antagonist. Thus far, Russia has destroyed her fleet in the Black Sea, burnt Sebastopol, and sacrificed a hundred thousand, or more, of her men; and as Prince Gortschakoff appears to think that it is a feather in his cap, to destroy his towns and ships, if the war should continue much longer, he may yet have the pleasure of seeing St. Petersburg under water—for it would be easier to drown than to burn it—and Moscow again in flames, after Odessa and all the smaller cities have been laid in ashes. "Two years," says the *Times*, "have elapsed since the first struggle of Russians and Turks at the earthworks of Oltenitza. What was then the position of Russia in Europe? During forty years, she has been in the estimation of the world the first military power. She had broken the spell which bound mankind to the throne of the great Napoleon; she had taken the lead in the deliverance of Germany, and if the Prussians had been more frequently and more successfully engaged during the campaign of 1813, Russia at least had been the great support, the reserve, which was to sustain in the conflict the more forward of the allies. She had not shared in Waterloo, but she had borne the chief part in the discussions which preceded and followed the crowning victory. The world had peace, and Russia shared in its benefits; but it was only, that she might extend her dominion over the more or less helpless nations which dwelt on her frontier. Poland fell for ever; Turkey lost the mouths of the Danube and two Pachalics in Asia. Austria, threatened with destruction in the convulsion of 1848, was saved by Russian arms, and fell apparently under Russian vassalage. Not only in the despotic courts of Europe, but in our own parliament, the praises of the autocrat resounded. His greatness, his magnanimity, his moderation, were the themes of a large party in the freest country of Europe. It cannot be wondered at that his heart grew high, and that to him the resistance of Turkey was ridiculous—the intervention of Europe a thing not to be dreamt of. From Oltenitza and Citate to Silistria and Giurgevo, from the Alma to the bloody battle of the Tchernaya and the capture of the Malakoff, from the cannonade of Odessa to the occupation of Kinburn, from the capture of Chef katil to the defence of Kars, the allies may count a series of almost unbroken successes. All that balances the Russian reverses are a few successful sorties at Sebastopol, and the successful repulse of attacks in June and September. The flood of victory had set strongly against the Muscovite empire, and there is not the least sign of a change in its direction. We may, therefore, count it among the greatest triumphs of the present war, that this great and wide-spreading reputation has been so suddenly and completely overthrown.

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ACCIDENTAL EXPLOSION IN SEBASTOPOL.

On the 1st instant, an explosion occurred in the part of the town occupied by the French. The report was compressed and loud, and the reverberation was so strong as to lead to the impression that some considerable magazine had been exploded; but some Frenchmen, bringing up a wounded man to one of the ambulances, declared that it was loose powder in an ammunition wagon which had been accidentally fired, and that two or three injuries to bystanders, and those comparatively slight, were the only ill-effects resulting. Our allies are not very communicative on such matters. The Russians evidently concluded, that they had blown up one of the magazines of the mortar battery behind Fort Nicholas, not far from which the column of smoke which followed the explosion appeared to rise, for during the remainder of the day they concentrated a heavy shelling fire in that direction.

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Despatch from General Codrington.

Lord Panmure forwards the following telegraphic despatch, received from General Sir W. Codrington, dated Nov. 16:—

"A very heavy explosion of a store of powder at a French siege train took place about 3 p. m. yesterday. It communicated fire to our siege train, close to it, where there was no powder, but some naval live shells, most of which were removed; but the loss of life and damage done is considerable. The great explosion threw a shell over the camp of our siege train, and the huts of the 1st Brigade, being entirely damaged, but not by fire. All officers and men were on the spot at once, and worked with good will and energy, and I saw all safe when I quitted at 7 p. m.—Killed: Deputy-Assistant Commissary Yellou, R. A., and 21 non-commissioned officers and men.—Wounded: Lieutenant Dawson, R. A., lost his leg below his knee; Lieutenant Robert, dangerously in the arm; Lieutenant Eccles and Assistant Surgeon Reade, 2d Battalion Rifle Brigade, slightly; 116 brigade noncommissioned officers and men, of whom 47 slightly. Missing, 4 rank and file."

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According to the Berlin correspondence of the *Times*, the steam corvette Harrier, which arrived off Waxholm (fortress near Stockholm) on the 8th instant, left there again on the 10th for Sandhamn to watch an American vessel lying there, which was understood to be laden with revolvers for Russian account, and to be only waiting for a favourable opportunity to cross over to Finland.

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There are now under Government contract as war ships about 240 steamers and 200 sailing ships. The maximum price paid by the Government for the hire of these vessels is £2 15s per ton per month, and the minimum price is 16s per ton per month.

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The British government have taken up four more steamers to be employed as regular transports, namely, the Queen Victoria, the Eglinton, the Sardinian, and the Nicholas Wood.

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Every available mechanic is now employed upon the construction of the despatch gunboats at the dockyard at Pembroke Dock. They will very shortly be ready for launching, and, being built upon the diagonal principle, like the Agamemnon, 91, will prove to be of very great strength.

(From Wilmer's European Times).

RISE IN THE VALUE OF PRODUCE.

The enormous increase in the value of sugar has directed attention to the statistics of the subject, from which it appears, that the stocks on hand are small, and that a fear of exhaustion has mainly led to the panic now raging. In the present state of the market, it will be to the manifest advantage of the West Indians to send forward their supplies with all imaginable speed, if they desire to avail themselves of the rates which are now prevailing. During the last twelve months, the price of sugar has nearly doubled, and speculation in the article recently has been immense. We hear of some houses which have cleared as much as £200,000 by their stocks, of others which have netted half that amount, of others again, which have realized £50,000, and so on—all, of course turning over the pound and the penny at a moment so favourable to fortune-making. One version of the cause of the rise is, that the beet root this year in France has been a failure, another that America, to supply her wants, has been compelled to import largely; but certain it is, that the speculation in sugar has been amazing, and that immense sums have been made by the general feeling of scarcity which exists. The speculation, nevertheless, is not confined to sugar. All articles of consumption, such as coffee, tea, rice, tallow, breadstuffs, and linseed, have been in great demand, the prices of which have almost equally advanced. Indeed, during the last fortnight or three weeks, the transactions in these articles have tripled and even quadrupled the ordinary amounts. The fever for speculation is now at its height and never, perhaps, within the memory of man, was there so high a range of prices contemporaneous with the same dearness of money. In fact, the theory of the political economists has been reversed during this unprecedented crisis,—namely, that when money is dear, prices fall. Not only is money scarce and dear, from causes to which in former numbers we have referred, but the value of all the necessaries of life is more than correspondingly elevated, and seems likely, from present appearances, to continue so during the winter. As regards bread, the range of prices astonishes every one, even the farmers themselves, considering the late excellent harvest, and the ample supplies which exist in America. Trade, like other things, is susceptible of a good deal of trickery, and mankind rarely tax their inventive powers higher, than in the effort to turn passing events to pecuniary profit. The infirmity has even reached, it is said, at least, one Royal head; for it is now pretty plainly understood, that the cry of a deficient harvest, which was raised in France a short time ago on official authority, has answered the purpose of the Government,—namely, that of securing ample importations to assist a cereal yield which was little, if at all, below an average one. But the *ruse* answered other ends than that which the French Emperor designed. He, far-seeing man, was mainly solicitous for his own welfare,—knew that physical destitution was the parent of political convulsions, and adroitly announced in the Government organ the existence of all but a famine in France. In England, we leave these things to private enterprise—to the natural laws of demand and supply; but the bait was too tempting not to be seized by the corn-dealers of this country, who have long learnt intuitively how to make the most of that useful cry—"wolf." Mr. Caird, an authority on the statistics of grain, at length raised his voice, and showed that a very slight importation of corn would suffice for our wants until the next harvest; but his statistics were denied, and his reasoning assailed by a host of persons, all having an interest in the continuance of extreme rates. The result will be, that in the course of a few months, we shall have enormous importations of breadstuffs from the Western world, to be followed, soon after, by as rapid a decline in prices; and the unfortunate sufferer will be—the importer, taxed with freight, insurance, commission, and the other *et ceteras* of commerce, to meet unremunerative quotations.

Recurring to the subject of sugar, with which we commenced these remarks, the official statistics show that instead of the home consumption increasing, it has positively fallen off. In the first nine months of last year 5,954,314 cwts., were taken for consumption; in the first nine months of the present year, 5,885,514 cwts., exhibiting a decrease of 68,800 cwt. Imports have, however, fallen off to the extent, it is asserted, of fifty per cent., caused, mainly, by the absence of cultivation last year in Louisiana, and not to any deficiency in the crop. In 1853 the production of sugar in that State was so much in excess that the article became unproductive, followed, the next year, by non-cultivation, to a large extent, and this year, necessarily, by considerable exports into the Union. If this be a correct solution of the increased value of sugar, the cause is temporary, and our sugar colonies must be prepared to take advantage of it. But it would be difficult to find half so good a reason for the advance which has taken place in many other articles for which we are dependent on foreign countries. The intelligence will reach Jamaica at an interesting time, for we perceive by the last mail that the position of the island is improving,—that the government expenditure as well as the parochial expenditure has been largely reduced, and that the island debt has been considerably liquidated, by means of alarge issue of inconvertible paper, on the principle suggested by the Legislative Committee. The radical wants of the West Indies are money and labour. The first might be remedied by an issue, on the part of the Imperial Parliament, of a colonial paper currency, to be made a legal tender in England; and the second by sending our convict population to these beautiful islands, under such restrictions for the preserva- of their health, as might comport with proper discipline and the reformatory process. These suggestions are so important, that we shall probably return to them again.

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Religious Discontent.—The rumour of considerable religious discontent existing in Russia, is confirmed by a Government circular just issued to the Russian clergy: "He who doubts the Czar to be the sole protector of the Orthodox Church is declared to be an apostate."

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The appeal of the English consul at Cologne against his sentence (for illegally enlisting for the Foreign Legion) has been unfortunate. The court has condemned him to six months' imprisonment instead of three; and his secretary, who was acquitted, has been now sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

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The Pope and the Queen of Spain's Present.—The following passage is extracted from a letter which has just been received in Paris from Madrid:—"We learnt yesterday, at Madrid, with considerable astonishment, that the Pope had just sold, at the Church of St. Peter, at Rome, for the sum of $80,000, the magnificent tiara which Queen Isabella presented to him last spring."—*London Daily News*

UNITED STATES.

Rhode Island Liquor Law.—A new Act has been introduced into the Rhode Island Assembly to supersede the existing liquor law. It provides, in substance, that cities and towns may grant licence for the sale of liquors in quantities not less than one quart—the party licensed giving bond, that he will not allow any such liquors to be drunk on the premises where the same are sold—that he will not sell to any person under the influence of intoxicating drink—nor upon Sunday, or any week day after ten o'clock in the evening—nor sell any liquors not pronounced pure by a commissioner appointed for that purpose—nor give credit for any liquor sold. Another act for the suppression of tippling-shops was introduced at the same time, which possesses provisions similar to those of the Maine law with regard to complaint of parties and seizure.

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Japanese Potato Plant.—The "Japanese potato plant," *Dioscorea Japonica*, has been successfully cultivated this season by a florist in New York city. He planted over twenty roots in May last, in pots, in his hot-house, and when he dug them up in October, they had, in some cases, grown to the length of two feet. All grew finely. This root having been recommended as a substitute for the common potato, is now in great demand. It grows fast, can be cultivated in any climate, and will do well in any soil, though sandy loam is preferable.

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Swallowing Needles.—Dr. Fearing, of Nantucket, Massachusetts, has taken from the stomach, abdomen, and left side of a patient, named Jane James, sixty-two needles, *and more remain.* The patient, some years ago, was deranged in mind, and fancied herself a pincushion, swallowing all the needles and pins she could lay hands on.

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Sickness in Ohio.—Several parts of Ohio are said to be afflicted with sickness unparalelled in the history of the State. It is not confined to particular localities, but appears to be general, on the hills as well as in the valleys, in towns, as well as in the country. In Central Ohio, where the chills were never before known, they have been shaking the people most cordially.