NEWS BY LAST ENGLISH MAIL.

The *Times* is of opinion, thateven if the allies proceed no further than to occupy and hold the Straits of Yenikale and the adjacent peninsula of Kertch, which is easily defensible by any power having the command of the sea, they would remain in possession of the key to one of the principal approaches to the Russian territories :—

In 1851 no less than 1000 trading vessels passed the straits. Taganrog, Marianopol, Berdianski, and Kertch, all commercial towns, which it has been the policy of the Russian Government to protect and foster with the utmost care for the last seventy years, exist only by the feedom of trade between the sea of Azoff and the Euxine. The whole exports of the valley of the Don and its tributaries, and the communication between the Don and the Volga, which places the trade of that mighty stream in connection with the markets of Europe all depend on this neck of the Sea of Azoff; so that it is no exaggeration to assert, that our occupation of Kertch will be felt in the interior of Russia, even to Cazan and Nishni Novogorod. On the Asiatic shore of the straits the Russians have also destroyed their fortifications, so that both sides may be occupied, and the allied forces will threaten or blockade Anapa which is the key to the whole Circassian coast. Kertch itself is a flourishing town of about 12,000 inhabitants chiefly Greeks and Tartars, and for the first time since the commencement of these operations our troops will find themselves in contact with what may be termed, by comparison, a civilized community. The climate, though cold in winter, is healthy and genial in this season. The surrounding country, which is termed by the Russians the district of Kertch-Enikolsk, is luxuriantly fertile, wherever it is cultivated. It is separated from Kaffa by about sixty miles of undulating plain, lying between the Sea of Azoff and the Black Sea, and the isthmus dividing the Bay of Kaffa from that of Arabat is not more than twelve miles in breadth.

The manner by which the soundings which have enabled Admiral Lyons and Admiral Bruat to plan the successful attack on Kertch were made is curious. A British naval officer, (says *The Times*),captured a vessel having on board a private carriage belonging to the Russian governor of Kertch. With this "material pledge" in his possession, he sent in a polite message to the governor, stating that the English cruiser was unwilling to deprive him of his private property and would have great pleasure in restoring the carriage to its former owner. The offer was accepted, and the ship's boat entered the Bay of Kertch, with the vehicle on board, sounding as they went. By this means it was ascertained that there was a passage for the small steamers to within a short distance of the coast; and the governor's carriage made a track for the British fleet.

It is stated that two more volums of Macaulay's History of England are nearly ready for publication in England.

THE COMMONS OF ENGLAND.—The Sebastopol Committee has completed its report of evidence and the country awaits with deep anxiety its final verdict. But perhaps the report of evidence is the most useful result of its session, inasmuch as it lays before the public all the facts which are known to the committee, and enables every Englishman to form an intelligent judgment as to what its recommendations ought to be. The real report of the committee is being made by the country, with a voice neither frantic nor petulant, but very deep and stern. The revelations of the witnesses have justified Lord John Russell's memorable epithets, "horrible and heart-rending," and if the committee were now to separate without further report, they would simply leave it to the country, to do it for them, after a fashion to which the most sluggish of our *faineant* rulers must listen and bow. The strong and earnest cry for administrative reform, which gathers breadth and depth every hour, is the real report of the committee of the Commons. Well will it be for our rulers, if they have grace to receive it reverently; for if they attempt to flout it, it must sweep them away.

True, that committee-room of St. Stephen's had a strange significance, and even a certain sublimity. A few quiet simple English gentlemen, men chiefly notable for honesty, earnestness, and sound judgment, sat there, and England's most distinguished statesmen and warriors came at their summons, and disclosed to them. Peers and commoners, statesmen and officials, generals and admirals, the former Chief Minister of State himself, had to make a clean breast of it, and confide to these quiet gentlemen, representing the Commons House of Parliament, secrets which the rack itself would not have forced them to reveal. It was a wonderful spectacle. There was no wrenching of confessions from unwilling lips. The spell of *duty* was upon the witnesses, and they spake out freely things which have filled England with sorrow and shame.

It is the most striking exhibition of the political omnipotence of the Commons which we are likely to witness in these years, and suggest serious reflections as to the nature of that power which could work such wonders with men whom no other force could have compelled to open their lips. And how calmly it was all transacted. The tocsin of revolution would have been rung in any other country in Europe when such men as the Duke of Cambridge and Newcastle, Lord Aberdeen and Sir John Burgoyne, were compelled by a popular tribunal to disclose the secrets of State and War. Such an investigation could only be set on foot in other countries at the cost of a revolution which would deluge Europe with blood. Yet here the "question" was applied from day to day with the utmost calmness while the business of the conntry went on with exceeding serenity and steadiness, and all parties agreed to wait patiently the issue. No doubt, it was the subject of earnest conversation at the clubs and in every home; here and there, too, a public speaker indulged in some fierce sarcasm, as some deed of deepest darkness was dragged to daylight, but no order felt itself imperiled, no party showed symptons of paralysis, and even the Government took no special precaution to secure itself against an anticipated blow.

The spectacle of a nation so confident of its courage and resources as to dare to search out the very worst of its conditions and bring it into daylight, is one of no moral significance and grandeur. Englishmen may look with honest pride at the labors of this committee, while foreigners can hardly look at it without wonder that we dare to do such things in England;—and shame that they can be dared nowhere.

RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF POLAND.

The Paris correspondent of the *N. Y. Courier* says, the belief prevails very generally in France, that 40,000 men, and an expenditure of ten millions sterling, directed to the re-establishment of Poland, would, a year since, have compelled Russia to sue for that peace, of which she would now dictate the terms. The partition of Poland took place while France was in Revolution, and at war with England, and, consequently, while England was engaged in that ill-advised and ever-to-be-regretted Armed Interference with the internal affairs of France. Now, however, when the direct reverse obtains—when France is tranquil, and she is united (indissolubly it is hoped) with her great neighbor (a brother "proof against the world in arms") the allied Powers should, rejecting all timid or interested advice or consideration, free and restore Poland, and thus raise an eternal barrier against Russian ambition and aggression. "Beautiful in the sight of God would it be—beautiful in the sight of men must it be to see" the two greatest nations of Europe so employed—applying themselves to such a work, even though the selfishness of their motive were in evidence. Where was their delicacy, when the crime which gave to Russia much of that strength which now renders her so formidable was committed? The "*Nullum tempus*" rule would justify France and England in the eyes of the world for now disturbing the three Northern Powers in their possession of Warsaw, Galicia and Posen, even were the expediency of the step not obviously glaring. Why France and England did not adopt the recommendation pressed upon them to "take a bond of fate" by striking at the heart of Russia through Poland, will possibly become known at a day, when the knowledge of it will be only a satisfaction of curiosity. The world now can only conjecture, and that conjecture throws the blame of this lamentable omission upon Mazzini and other political refugees in England and elsewhere, whose secret agents are believed to have disposed a large portion of the population of the State of Continental Europe to insurrection and revolution.

A YOUNG VETERAN.—The *Hamburg News* contains a letter from St. Petersburg, which says: —Captain Vernlow lately made his appearance in the drawing rooms of the capital, and has excited much attention from the fact, that although he is only 23 years of age, he has 24 years of service. 1st, he has been eight years in the army; 2d, he has served 6 months at Sebastopol, and as, according to an order of the Cabinet of the Emperor Nicholas, each month's service there is to count as a year, his six months are equivalent to six years, which give 14 years in all; 3d, he wears the Order of St. Anne and of Vladimir, the cross of the Order of St. George, and has a sabre of honor, which reckon for 10 years more; and in that way he makes up the 24 years. Strange to say, although this officer has been in 12 sorties, he has never received a wound."

PROPOSED INCOME-TAX FRANCHISE. — In the House of Commons, on the 4th, Major Reed gave notice, that on Tuesday, the 26th inst., he would move for leave to bring in a bill, entitled the Income-tax Franchise Bill, for conferring the elective franceise on all persons, not being aliens, who were assessed for the income-tax, but not now on the register of votes for Great Britain and Ireland.

The Cholera has disappeared at Constantinople.

ERUPTION OF VESUVIUS.

The Naples correspondent of the London Daily News in a letter dated May 10th, thus describes the present fearful eruption of this famous old volcano:

The lava has now advanced ten miles from its source, and is doing terrible damage. I have before me the report of Cozzolino on the latest changes which have taken place about the cone. Just at the base of it,a lake of fire has been formed, which looks like a red sea in an undulatory state. In the very centre of this has opened another crater, which is throwing out red-hot stones. On the morning of the 7th, the crater, at the very summit, fired as it were, two heavy cannonades; and after sending forth lightning, flames, and stones, broke up altogether. In the middle of the cone, ten craters have been formed, and from these the lava pours forth like a river, and runs on the side of the Cavallo as far as the Minatore. Here four other craters have been formed, which throw up bitumen in the manner of pyramids, and resemble gigantic exhibitions of fireworks. The whole of the summit of the crater is therefore like a sponge, and must inevitably fall in. The thin crust trembles under you feet. You see the stones dance with the tremendous movement; the part immediately round the crater looks like the sides of a heated copper boiler. Such is a true statement of what is going on at the summit. There are reports of an opening towards Pompeii, which is not unlikely, and of another towards Resina, but I have not been up for some days, as the danger is now very great. Before I write again, I shall make the attempt. Last night I went to the scene of most stirring interest, after an interval of two days. The whole length of this usually quiet road was like a fair, and such was the throng of carriages which were moving on in three lines, that it was with difficulty we arrived at our destination. As we approached the menaced neighborhood, the inhabitants were removing their goods, and on a bridge in the middle of the little township of Cercolo (through which, in the winter time thunders down from the summit of Vesuvius one of those mountain rivers so well known in Italy) stood a company of Sappers. Creeping under this solid handsome bridge into the bed of the river, we went up in face of the lava, which was now coming rapidly down. Here again were Sappers, raising mounds on either side, to divert the ruin from some private grounds, and keep the lava in one straight course. The smoke which rose over the heads of the multitudes told us, we were close on the spot, and climbing up the bank and walking along the top, we looked down on this mighty mass of fire. How changed the neighborhood in two days! Where I walked on Sunday night, was now a sea of fire. The side road by which I had come down into the main stream from Pollena and Massa di Somme was now full of blackened coke. The houses on the borders of the village had fallen—in one 30 poor people lived; a small chapel was swallowed up, a gentleman's villa, and a sad extent of vineyard and garden ground. On the other side of the great lava bed, another stream was branching off to San Sebastiano. We had hoped to have crossed it, and ascended to the cascade again, but it was no longer possible; for, as one says speaking of a marshy country in the winter, the lava was out. The fire here had begun to enter the burial-ground of the little town, but was diverted from its course by a wall. On the opposite side of the stream was the King and all the royal family. The banks on either side were thronged with curious and anxious multitudes, whose faces were lighted up with the blaze of hundreds of torches, and with the more resplendent flame of the rapidly descending lava. Since the morning it had moved a mile. It was like a vast river of glowing coke. As it moved on, the tens of thousands of lumps rolled and tumbled one over the other, crackling, and grinding, and grating; and when, from the very face of it, a large lump fell off, the appearance was that of an iron furnace when the iron is being drawn. To make the resemblance more complete, at such times men darted forwards with long poles, taken from the neighboring vineyards, and pulled out great masses of lava in which they embedded money for sale. What struck me at first, and still strikes me as the most majestic feature in the whole scene, is the slow, silent, irresistible motion of that fiery flood. Active almighty power without an effort! Sweeping everything before it, overcoming every obstacle, growing up against intervening walls or houses, and devouring them bodily, and then marching on in the same silent, unrelenting, irresistible manner as before. There was a spot beneath my feet, where a wall of mason work had been built, to break the violence of the winter floods; to this spot all eyes were directed. The fiery river would fall over it in an hour; as yet it was distant from it seventy yards, perhaps. Gradually it rose in height, and swelled out its vast proportions, and then vast masses fell off and rolled forward; then it swelled again as fresh matter came pressing down behind, and so it broke, and on it rolled again and again, till it had arrived at the very edge. There was a general buzz and murmur of voises. The royal family stood opposite to me, intermingled with the crowd, looking on with intense anxiety. At last it broke, not hurriedly, still with a certain show of majesty. At first a few small lumps fell down; then poured over a pure liquid stream of metal,like thick treacle, clinging sometimes mass to mass from its glutinous character, and last of all tumbled over gigantic lumps of scoræ. Then on it moved once more in its silent, regular course, swelling up and spreading over the vineyards on either side; and now there was a rush for the road which traverses this lava-bed. Houses and the bridge bordered the road, the carriages had all been ordered off, and the bridge was being broken down—we were cut off completely. The sentinels would not let us pass, and struck us and drove us back: but we forced our way, and then found too surely, that it was impossible to get on. The bridge was half demolished, and by the light of the torches we could see the soldiers above working away with the pick and axe. We had therefore to retrace our steps, and making a long circuit through the open country and over walls, came round to the top of the bridge—"run," said the sentinels, "or you will be too late." We crossed the narrow parapet which was still remaining, and soon afterwards down went the whole fabric. In this way, it is hoped, that the lava will be diverted from the townships of St. Sebastiano, Massa di Somme, and Pollena, which stand on either side, and have as yet only suffered partially. Cercolo, through which, however, the stream is rolling, will be sacrificed. The expectation is that the lava, should the eruption continue, will flow down to the Ponte Maddaloni, and into the sea. So grand and so destructive an eruption has not been known for many years, and even now we cannot tell how or when it will terminate. The mountain is literally seamed with lava, and many fear a violent explosion as a final scene of the tragedy.

SIR CHARLES NAPIER.

Sir C. Napier writes to the *Times*, defending himself. The main part of his letter consists of excuses for not attacking Sweaborg:—I send you a chart of Sweaborg and Helsingfors and a plan of their fortification, showing the adjacent Islands and sunken rocks: Show them to any naval officer, young or old (and you must know many), and ask him if it is possible in winter to place buoys and beacons on those rocks; to conduct a fleet alongside the batteries of Sweaborg, having neither gunboats nor mortarboats to cover the approach of the vessels and boats to place the buoys on the sunken rocks, all of which are within range of the enemy's batteries. It will require several days for this operation, and they will be under fire night and day. The Russians themselves could not navigate these seas without beacons, and they are all removed. During the time the process of buoying is going on, the fleet must lie at anchor among the outer rocks. Imagine to yourself, Sir, a South-west gale coming on (and in the winter without warning), and judge what would become of your fleet and gun and mortar boats. A great number of the former would be driven on the rocks, and the latter would either be swamped or obliged to take refuge in the enemy's harbour. You must not compare such an operation to the prosecution of ordinary commercial enterprise. I served with Sir Sydney Smith in his attempt on Bologne in November 1805. He did not weigh difficulties and forestal contingencies, and he lost all his boats, and very nearly lost his ships. Nelson had not those difficulties to contend with, either at the Nile or Copenhagen. At the former, his enemy was at anchor in an open roadstead in August. At Copenhagen, in the month of April, he had a safe harbour to lie in to make his arrangements, no gales of winds could affect either his ships or boats; he could chose his day—as the wise men at the Admiralty told me to do in the month of October—but I will engage not one of them would have found the day, had they been in my place. Lord Exmouth attacked Algiers in the middle of summer; there were neither rocks nor shoals there. He did not capture it, and I doubt whether he would have tried it again. At Acre, the weather was fine, and no difficulties, and, had the Egyptians held out, notwithstanding the explosion, its capture was doubtful, and with a Russian Garrison, impossible. Sir James Saumarez, with a very superior force, was beat off at Algesiras, and lost a ship; and Admiral Dundas had no reason to be satisfied with his attack at Sebastopol. Will you tell, me why Lord Nelson and Lord Collingwood did not attack Toulon or Cadiz; neither of them was so strong as Sweaborg or Cronstadt. Why did not Lord Howe, Lord Bridport, and Lord St. Vincent attack Brest, l'Orient, Rochefort, &c.? Because they knew they would have been defeated. Why did the French Admiral and myself refuse to attack Sweaborg? Because we had not means, and because the narrow entrance was blocked up. Had it been opened (even without gunboats), the allied flags would have been flying on the inner road of Sweaborg. You say, Sir, "Supposing the enterprise to be otherwise favorable, the mere lateness of the season does not appear a sufficient objection." A ship attack on a strong fortress is at all times difficult; add to that, the intricacy of the navigation and bad weather, and it becomes impossible.

The Russians had sunk 40 vessels last year, to block up the Straits of Kertch; these impediments were removed by the currents and ice of winter. The allies attacked before replacement was effected.