

batteries with guns, and furnished artillerymen to work them. Had the army been all French or all English, of course every reinforcement would have lightened the burdens of the whole; but, in the absence of any express stipulation for such a contingency, it was natural that the French should avail themselves of their superior numbers to relieve our men and forward our works only so far as was feasible without detriment to their own.

The commissariat of our army has received a good deal of censure. The only school in which its officers can learn any part of their duties is in our foreign garrisons and colonies, where their business is to pay the troops, to make contracts for provisions, and to see that these are of good quality. This is obviously a somewhat slender preparation for the duty of supplying an army in the field—and many among the juniors had not even this advantage. Those members of the service with whom I am personally acquainted, certainly cannot be charged either with indolence or incapacity.

In offering the foregoing remarks, I by no means intend to say that every possible measure was taken to alleviate the distresses of our troops. Better order might probably have been established, and the insufficient means at their disposal turned to better account. But I do intend to say, that, in the absence of large reserves of good troops, and an efficient transport corps, no sagacity or foresight could have obviated, to any extent, the evils which have befallen us. The Government may, or may not, have exerted itself to the utmost in carrying on the war: if it possessed the means of remedying the deficiencies I speak of, it ought to have been called to account long ago for neglecting to do so. But let the condemnation be on just grounds:—the protraction of the siege amid suffering and loss is, in itself, no fair proof of incompetence. The British people, hardest of taskmasters, demanding bricks where they have denied straw, look only to results; and the ministry and the general who commence a war must always, unless aided by fortune to an extraordinary extent, incur the national displeasure at the first arduous undertaking of the campaign; and it will be well for the country if it possesses men capable of efficiently replacing them. Such has been the fortune of the first actors on the present stage; censure has been loud and general, and the difficulties encountered never fairly taken into account. In front, a city of great and daily-increasing strength, with a numerous garrison, and offering unusual natural obstacles to a regular attack—an army in the field threatening us—our forces thinned by sickness, and clad in worn-out summer uniforms, while winter was pressing so close that we felt his breath on our cheeks—supplies daily less attainable, men and horses daily dying—and no retreat. What a problem to set before a General, an army, and a Government, trained amid the experiences of a forty year's peace! The genius of Napoleon, combined with that of Chatham, might have gained lustre by a triumphant solution. It will be said that the conditions enumerated ought never to have been allowed to exist; but I have in some measure anticipated the objection in a former chapter (IV).

It is very natural that those who saw our gallant army quit England, splendidly equipped, elate and eager for battle, should feel sorrow and indignation at the miserable end which so many of these noble troops have met. It is natural that when men of talent have exerted all their descriptive power to set the sufferings of the army in the strongest possible light, their readers should be excited to a pitch of sympathy even beyond that which an actual sight of the horrors so vividly depicted would produce. With advancing civilisation, human life has risen in value and consideration to an unprecedented extent—our soldiers, no longer accounted as food for powder, are thought of as equal in all respects, superior in some, to those citizens of ancient states who have made famous the names of Thermopylæ, Plataea, and Marathon; and those who would scruple to deprive the worst criminal of existence, can not hear of so many brave men perishing without horror. The expression of these feelings, under the circumstances, is natural and inevitable. Not so the contrast so frequently drawn and so strongly dwelt on, between our army and that of the French, and which, coming from ourselves, cannot have failed to efface some of the respect which the sight of the battle at the Alma where three Russians lay dead for every Englishman—of the charge at Balaklava, where our heavy brigade of cavalry met and put to flight three times their number of horsemen—and of the bloody resistance at Inkermann, so signally produced. Is it politic to insist so strongly on our inferiority?—or, if politic, is it just? I have heard of letters from Paris alluding to others received from the French camp, in which the French army is described as being entirely occupied with taking care of the English. The Continental states, taking us at our word, begin to affect compassion for the military system of the nation which is stronger in resources now than when it saved Europe. Cannot necessary reforms be effected without such depreciatory outcry? Might not the comparisons I speak of be drawn with greater fairness? Legions of fresh troops were always ready to cover, and more than cover, the losses of the French. England and France are friends—long may they continue so—nor should any subject be hinted at which is likely to excite jealousy between them—but let us be just to ourselves. Nothing has yet occurred to prove that our ancient reputation in arms is endangered.

CHAP. XVIII.—PROCESS OF THE SIEGE.

Before leaving Constantinople, when the object of my mission was accomplished, I visited again the hospitals at Scutari, and noticed a remarkable improvement in the appearance of the patients. Formerly a large proportion were evidently past recovery; but now, although the hospital was fuller than ever, the *fabrics Hippocraticæ* lent its ghastliness to a far less number of pillows. The most appalling cases were those of frostbite, and I saw one dreadful instance where the bones of the toes stuck out white and naked from the black and swollen feet.

On the 17th of February I sailed for the Crimea, and thus terminated the cheerful glimpse of civilised life which I had enjoyed doubly from contrast with the stern scenes which bordered it. From a smoky hut in a quagmire, to a pleasant room looking on the Bosphorus—from the *Barber of Seville* at the opera

of Pera, to the grim drama of the siege with the snowy waste for a drop-scene—the change was indeed “from grave to gay, from lively to severe.” The ship had been ordered to start a day before her time, and I had hurried down to the Golden Horn, followed by a porter bearing a huge pie, made under the special directions of my hostess, and so stuffed with every available bird of the air as to be a sort of aviary in paste. Woodcock, red-leg, pheasant, and the domestic fowl, nestled in harmonious and sweet companionship on layers of veal and ham, their union being cemented by truffles. It was smoking hot, being drawn from the oven barely in time for my departure. Placing it carefully in a caïque, I seated myself therein, and directed the boatman to row to the vessel, which was hissing with steam as if about to start. On reaching the accommodation-ladder my first care was for the pie, which I well know would be warmly welcomed “before Sebastopol;” and, lifting it from the caïque, I placed it on the step of the ladder, and was about to follow when the boatman let the caïque fall off from the ship's side, and I was obliged to quit my hold of the ladder. The pie, left unsupported, was too broad for the step, and toppled over. For one agonising moment it seemed about to fall into the water; it remained resting on its side, and forth gushed a flood of gravy, filling the air with such odours as saluted the nose of Sancho when he lifted the fleshpots in Camacho's kitchen; or Mr. Codlin's, when the host of the Jolly Sandboys took the cover off the stew. Attracted by the steam of rich disguised perfumes which rose upward, about four hundred Croats, who were shipped on board for the Crimea for the purpose of making roads, flocked to the side of the vessel, and the pie was conveyed across the deck through a crowd of picturesque savages, who hovered fondly around it, snuffing up the fragrance, and who could with difficulty prevail on themselves to quit its neighbourhood. However, it turned out eventually but little the worse, and had, moreover, the advantage of being discussed in a most uncritical spirit.

The harbour of Balaklava was so thronged that the steamer could not enter, and I went in a boat. The place was greatly improved since I had last seen it. The streets were cleaner, the frost had dried the roads, and there were more conveniences for landing. The railway ran from the heart of the town, through the meadows which last autumn teemed with vegetables, fruit, and vines, to the side of the hill beyond Kadukoi at the head of the valley; and huge fat dray-horses suggestive of ale and stout, stalked ponderously by. Ascending the heights to the plateau, too, circumstances were changed greatly for the better. Many huts had been brought up, forming in some spots small villages. The dead horses had been buried, and the live ones sheltered, either in stables of plank, or in trenches covered in with boards or tarpaulin; while the troops had been for some weeks enjoying the comfort of plenty of warm clothing, and wore the appearance of health.

So many stories of desperate sorties, threatened attacks by the Russians on Balaklava, and combats more or less disastrous to the Allies, were always floating about the *table d'hôte* at Pera, generally supported by plausible authority, that I hastened to enquire into the truth of some which had appeared better authenticated than the rest. With the exception of one or two sorties, however, nothing had occurred to break the monotony of the siege. But the night of the 19th February (the day I landed) had been fixed on for an expedition into the valley of the Tchernaya, to surprise the Russian force there, and to effect a reconnoissance of the surrounding country. General Bosquet was to command a considerable French force; and the Highland brigade, with two batteries of artillery, and about three hundred cavalry, was to co-operate with him.

Though the day had been fine, a bitter north wind, with snow, blew all night, and the cold was so intense that the order for Bosquet's division to march was countermanded. The staff-officer, who was sent to apprise Sir C. Campbell of the postponement of the enterprise, lost his way in the snow-storm, and at two in the morning the English force marched out of Kadukoi, proceeding across the plain towards Tchernaya, where, according to the original plan, they were to have engaged the attention of the Russian force, while the French, crossing the bridge, turned their flank. There seems good reason to believe that, had the design been carried out, it would have been attended with success; the Russians had neglected their outposts, and nothing occurred to interrupt the march. Daylight showed the Russian force across the Tchernaya, two miles off, ill prepared for an attack, and it was nearly half an hour before they got under arms. When it was seen from the plateau that the English had advanced, a body of French was despatched to support them—and nearly at the same time came the order countermanding the enterprise. In marching back, the ammunition-mules were separated from the troops, and a body of Cossacks appearing behind a neighbouring hill, two of them, with levelled lances, galloped down to intercept the rearmost animal; but a sergeant and private of the infantry escort, running out, fired at them, and they turned and retreated, while a detachment of our cavalry came back to protect the ammunition. Some of our men were frostbitten—and another misfortune arising from the abortive attempt was, that the enemy were thus placed on their guard against a repetition of the enterprise.

Before this, intelligence had arrived of an attack made on Eupatoria by the Russians, who had been observed on the 15th to receive large convoys and reinforcements from the eastward.

At daylight on the 17th they came on in numbers estimated at 40,000 of all arms, with from sixty to one hundred guns, and opened with their artillery on the intrenchments surrounding the town. Skirmishers covered the guns, the battalions were in rear, and the cavalry on the flanks; subsequently the guns advanced, and under cover of their fire the infantry, forming behind a wall six hundred yards distant from the right of the town, made their attack, and were repulsed—at other points also they were driven back—and at ten in the morning they retired, covered by the artillery and cavalry. Liprandi's division (the 12th), formerly posted in front of Balaklava, was present in this action.

A battery of Turkish artillery was disabled in the attack, every gun being struck, and a third of the horses killed, with nineteen gunners. There were ninety-seven Turks killed, and 277 wounded in all; a French detachment acting