

FOREIGN NAVAL AND MILITARY ITEMS.

Prussia is stated to have given out an order for two new ironclads of great strength but comparatively light draught.

The French Versailles Government having declared their inability to meet the payments exacted by Germany, the *German Correspondent* directs the attention of M. Thiers to the following reply addressed by the first Napoleon to his brother Joseph, who complained of his want of money, and urged Napoleon to have mercy upon Spain, and not entirely exhaust the country. Napoleon remarked: "Il se plaint de n'avoir point d'argent. Pourquoi n'en a-t-il pas? Il y en a en Espagne. J'ai tiré un milliard de la Prusse. Il ne m'aurait pas été difficile d'en tirer deux de l'Espagne. Allez."

It appears from the War-Office return that last year the British Government received £39,000 from the sale of commissions, and that amount has been placed to the credit of the military reserve fund. So small an amount has not been received for nearly twenty years. The total sum received since the operation of the plan, commenced in 1851, is £1,712,829. The fund is now and has been for many years past applied chiefly to buy up the commission of supernumery and half-pay officers, to reduce cavalry prices, and to reform the corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms and Yeomanry of the Guard.

The new British mutiny act contains one important alteration—section 2 is wholly omitted. This section provided for the branding of deserters with the letter D, and of soldiers discharged with ignominy with the letters B. C. (bad character.) Clause 117 of the Articles of War also deprives courts-martial of the power of marking men. This abandonment of a degrading punishment is the direct consequence of the reform. Henceforward, too, "any soldier may be tried for desertion without reference to the time during which he may have been absent;" and the time (twenty-one days' absence) which has hitherto distinguished "desertion from "absence without leave" is thus effaced.

May 4, a number of experiments were made from H. M. S. *Audacious*, stationed at Kingstown, under Lieut. Boyle, R.N., in the presence of the officers of the ship, several scientific gentlemen, and a number of ladies and gentlemen. The first torpedo, containing about eighty pounds of gunpowder, was lowered and exploded at a depth of twenty feet, causing the water to rise nearly fifteen feet above the level of the tide. The second machine, with a canister of twenty-seven pounds of the same quality of powder, had the effect of creating a revulsion of somewhat more than half the extent above named. The explosive power used was the pile battery, which is composed of zinc and copper plates, with flannel beds saturated in vinegar and water.

With reference to the reported failure of some experiments made with Captain Harvey's torpedoes at Portsmouth, the *Globe* says: "We feel justified in stating that these failures were owing to the employment of a very slow gunboat to tow the torpedoes. A good performance might as well be expected from a gun improperly mounted as from a torpedo improperly towed. No doubt the experiments which were so successful at Devonport would have failed had the vessel which was first proposed by the Admiralty been employed. It is really too bad of the Admiralty, in spite of the objections which

have been urged, to persist in using vessels whose defective speed renders them altogether unsuited for manœuvring with torpedoes."

The Berlin *Militair Wochenblatt* tells the following story of German strategy: "On the 5th of January, Rittmeister von Kaisenberg of the Fourteenth Uhlans was on the outpost at Bucquoz very near the enemy. Two companies of the latter going towards Ayette passed so near that the vedettes were obliged to withdraw to the village. Kaisenberg then stationed a number of Uhlans behind a thicket and told them to fire rapidly with their pistols. The salvo was fired at a distance of 800 paces from pistols and one Chassepot gun, which was all the squadron then possessed. The enemy stopped—infantry they had not expected—and desisted from an attack, so that the squadron rested safely that night. The stratagem succeeded once, but its repeated success would be doubtful."

According to official accounts, without reckoning the capitulation of Paris, the report of which has not yet been published, the whole booty taken by the Germans during the war in France amounted to 120 eagles, flags, and standards, 2400 field guns, more than 4000 fortress guns; 11,669 officers and 363,326 men were detained as prisoners of war in Germany, besides whom the garrison of Paris, 170,000 men, surrendered, but were not taken to Germany; 84,000 French soldiers were interned in Switzerland, and 600 in Belgium. In the campaign of 1866, exclusive of the results of the capitulation of the Hanoverian army at Langensalza, 13 flags and standards, 208 guns, and about 49,000 prisoners were taken; while the entire captures made by the French army in the Italian campaign only amounted to 3 flags, 26 guns, and about 16,000 prisoners.

Professor Abel, chemist to the War Department, Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, has after a number of experiments succeeded in perfecting the new explosive agent recently produced by him under the name of "picric" powder as a means for charging shells, which, though it is not so violent in action as gun-cotton, nitro-glycerine, or picrate of potash powders, is a much more powerful explosive agent than gunpowder, and has other properties which appear to render it peculiarly adapted for use in shells. Its merits are that it may be readily and expeditiously prepared, and that it is remarkable for its safety as compared with all other explosive agents, being so much less sensitive to ignition by percussion than gunpowder. The president of the committee on explosives at Woolwich having pronounced the new powder worthy of further experiment, it will be tried under various conditions in order to ascertain its suitability to the requirements of the service.

Prince Bismarck recently spoke in the German Reichstag against a resolution calling on him as Imperial Chancellor to take more energetic measures to enforce the claims of Germany against Portugal, for a vessel illegally seized and condemned at Praia, a small port in the Cape Verde Islands: "The German Government," he declared, "do not believe they require to exculpate themselves for declining to despatch iron clads to foreign ports for the purpose of backing reclamations of their subjects which are before the law courts of those countries. It requires nothing less than a firm resolution to turn everything to account that can be alleged against a government to approach it with not coming to the aid of its countrymen and clients by

threatening with its shells the judicature of another State, in an action that has lasted, if I may trust my memory, five or six years, and is not yet ended. Similar suits, in which our compatriots do not doubt that they are right, are pending in the courts of nearly every foreign country from America to Russia; if it were insisted that we should second every pretension advanced, by means of ships of war or battalions, we should have to go great lengths indeed."

A correspondent of the *World*, in a recent letter from Pesth, Hungary, says that a couple of months ago in Pesth one heard nothing but hatred expressed towards the Prussians and the new German empire, but now there is a complete change, and they are making all sorts of enthusiastic demonstrations in favor of the "hordes of Attila." What is the reason? The solution is probably to be found in the recent interchange of friendly sentiments between the Sublime Porte and the Czar of the Russias. As you already know, the Sultan has sent the most friendly invitation to the Czar to visit Constantinople on his way to Palestine. The Austrian papers are in a great state of alarm about this. The general argument appears to be that what Russia can't accomplish by arms she will accomplish by diplomacy, and the day which sees Alexander of Russia in Constantinople as the guest of the Sultan will also be the last day on which Austria may hope to have any influence in the East. Austria alone can do nothing; therefore she must conciliate the new Teutonic empire; but this idea seems to have occurred a good deal sooner to the ruler of the Russian empire.

THE THRONE OF FRANCE.—Two hundred years have elapsed since a son succeeded his father on the throne of France. It was in 1643 that Louis XIV. succeeded his father. Louis XV. Great grandson of Louis XIV. succeeded in 1715; and he, in turn, was succeeded in 1774 by a grandson. Louis XVI., who fell on the scaffold (with also in the same year, his Queen, Marie Antoinette) Louis XVII., titular King, remained in prison after the death of his parent, and there perished miserably at the age of 10. Napoleon Bonaparte died in bonds and exile, no son of his succeeding. Louis XVIII., brother of Louis XVI., was placed on the throne by the events of 1714—slipped off after Elba—and slipped back again after Waterloo. On his death in 1824, his brother, Charles IX. ascended the throne, and reigned till 1830. Then came the Citizen King, Louis Philippe, (descended from a younger brother of XIV.) who survived seven assaults on his life; and went off in an open boat in 1848, as "William Smith."

BIGGER STILL.—A new *Wellington gigantea* or "big tree," forty feet and four inches in diameter, has been discovered lately near Visalia, Southern California. This is thicker by seven feet than any other that has yet been found. A section of one of the "big trees," is now exhibited in Cincinnati, which is seventy-six feet in circumference and fourteen feet high; and, standing on the floor of the hall, it gives one a particularly clear idea of the enormous size of the tree from which it was taken. The section was cut last year in the Mariposa grove, about two hundred and fifty miles south-east of San Francisco, and far up the western slope of the Sierra Nevada mountains. It was divided and hauled a hundred and forty miles to Stockton, on three waggons by seventy yoke of cattle.