

Mr. Kinglake's *Inkerman*.**(From the London Telegraph, Jan. 21st.)*

If we have written—some of us perhaps impatiently—for the continuation of Mr. Kinglake's story of the Crimean War, it may fairly be said that the patient are rewarded, the impatient rebuked. The fifth volume, it is true, only carries the movement of a great drama out to the end of possibly its most exciting act, the marvellous contest waged for very life on the black highlands of the Cherchoneso, and still leaves unrecounted a large period of warfare. Nevertheless, even those who are aghast at the scale on which the narrative has been undertaken, may, when they close the volume, offer their tribute to an author who has taken such pains to clothe in majestic prose the splendid deeds of a handful of English; deed unmatched probably since the Fifth Harry triumphed at Agincourt without "more men from England." Those who remember the deep impression created throughout Europe by the Inkerman battle, and who retain a lively recollection of its astonishing incidents, will agree that Mr. Kinglake has shown a just conception of its spirit and its abiding value in our military annals; and that he has done well to paint it in detail, even although, as a whole the narrative may lose in breadth and force what it gains in minuteness and finish. His object, as we infer, was twofold, first, to bring the conflict living before our eyes in all its fierce, dramatic vigour; and next, to preserve, as heirlooms, for succeeding generations of Englishmen, the authentic proofs of unsurpassed heroism performed in our own time. Not that British History lacks examples of that kind; its pages brim over with them; but that this special combat, standing out in marked distinction on the crowded roll, deserved, by its exceptional character, an exhaustive method of treatment. Other actions have shown us great masses drawn up in grand lines, wrestling for a live long day with each other, and winning victory or enduring defeat by some happy stroke of tactical craft or overbearing exertion of rightly applied force. In these encounters there are scant opportunities for the display of personal valour not common to the whole body. At Inkerman it was otherwise. There the enemy was set upon and worsted by small companies of men each waging almost an independent war. It was a Homeric fight. Acts of individual daring and fortitude make up the sum of work, and, despite the necessity for lengthened narration which the process involved, we think Mr. Kinglake did well to adopt a method displaying the true character of a conflict which stands alone in our modern annals. And it is manifest that he has shrunk from no pains to make it accurate and complete. He has availed himself not only of the plenteous resources accessible to all the works in French, Russian, and English, official and otherwise; but he has gathered up, with astonishing industry, and precious detail from the gallant actors, and has besides had the private papers of Lord Raglan, whence some light on the inner facts may be drawn. Further, he has employed the many years which have slipped away, bringing other and greater wars, to dispose his multitudinous facts in an organic shape, fitting each into each with practised skill; and he has polished his periods with the meticulous care which makes the series of dazzling incidents move onward with the

stalliness of a grand procession. Sometimes, doubtless, the step is too measured for the rush of battle, and the reader might prefer the stern velocity with which a Napier sweeps towards the climax, and with rough, broad touches paints a victorious charge. But an author has a right to his style; and Mr. Kinglake's grand and rolling sentences, are quite in keeping with his methodical and deliberate plan of composing history. In this special example, a light springs up amid the gloomy mist, spreads out in flaming jets over the rugged landscape, becomes a series of isolated deadly wrestlings in thick clouds of vapor which hide one set of struggles from another, surges to and fro with endless vicissitudes, and finally expires in a concluding outburst. All this is described with careful detailed manipulation, the presentation of each stirring episode being polished like a gem, so that in closing the book the mind is left with a vivid impression of the parts rather than a comprehensive grasp of the whole. Yet we are inclined to think that, since Inkerman imparts few scientific military lessons, while it personally illustrates the formidable quality of inborn and disciplined valour, that process is the better which the more clearly brings out what, after all, was the true character of a most fiery ordeal. It has long been said, henceforward it must be held as conclusively proved, that Inkerman was a soldiers', and not a general's battle. Nor does the fact detract from Lord Raglan's merits. The greatest captain ever known could not have directed or governed a fight which he could not see; and Lord Raglan showed good sense in abstaining from all fussy intervention. Both when, either from necessity or neglect, there is no command exercised, no plan devised and carried out, and each man, or knot of men, fights what he sees before him, we may fairly call that kind of death grapple emphatically a soldiers' battle.

Such was Inkerman. But before we follow Mr. Kinglake it may, perhaps, be as well to recall briefly the facts which led up to the terrible fray. The Allies, it will be remembered, under Lord Raglan and Marshal St. Arnaud, landed in the Crimea on the 14th Sept., 1854, with some 60,000 men. On the 20th they had met the Russians on the Alma and defeated them, but failed to follow the beaten force with sufficient promptitude to profit by the moral results of victory and seize Sebastopol, the prize of the campaign. Having moved up the north side of the Russian harbor, they judged it imprudent to assail that front, and they made the famous flank march into the Tchernaya Valley, which gave them as fruits the port of Balaklava, the plateau on the south side of the fortress, and the Bay of Kamiesch. Then followed the quasi-regular siege, or rather artillery attack, on the lines to which Todleben had begun to give form. For various reasons the assault was delayed, and November arrived before any decisive action was taken. Meanwhile the Czar had hurried forward his succours. The army which failed before Silistria, relieved from all pressure, had been brought into the Crimea by forced marches. In the middle of October the Allies on the Tchernaya became aware of fresh enemies; and on the famous 25th the battle of Balaklava disclosed the new conditions under which they were to conduct their enterprise. It had become manifest that, if the Anglo-French troops curved round the fortified land front of Sebastopol, they in turn were absolutely hemmed in, from Tchergoum to the Mackenzie Heights, by a mighty and adverse army. Nor was this the worst aspect of the situation. The

original force which descended on the Crimea, but scantily reinforced since the landing, had grown relatively weak, and hence the really stupendous task of holding a defensible position on the sea board, and prosecuting a so-called siege, had to be carried out with most inadequate forces. It so happened that the English held the exposed positions, Inkerman and Balaklava—the first a highland open to assault, the second the gateway to the sea, whence could all needful supplies from home. The French gave support by occupying a ridge above the Tchernaya Valley, and by sending down a brigade under Vinoy to aid Sir Colin Campbell at Balaklava. But, at the beginning of November, the right or Inkerman flank was scantily manned, and defended otherwise by contemptible artificial obstacles. The ground was strong because the line where a decisive combat must be fought was contracted; nevertheless, great anxiety prevailed in the British camp respecting the danger from the Inkerman side, because it had become known that onomies were swarming beyond the Tchernaya, and that the Russians were bound to attempt some stroke whereby with to frustrate the imminent attack on the Flagstaff Battery, which formed a huge salient of Todleben's improvised defenses. Thus, then, briefly stated, stood the rival armies on the 4th November when darkness closed upon the scene. At this time the Allies had in the Crimea "65,000 men, with 11,000 Turkish auxiliaries," and these had to encounter an enemy 120,000 strong. Moreover, the Russians were able to bring into the open field 68,000 men and 235 guns. In fact, the weak point at Inkerman was assailed by 40,000 Russians; whereas the Allies, beginning with 3,000 infantry defenders, never, even in the greatest stress were able to raise the number above 14,200 men and 50 guns. When the infantry effectives, wrote Lord Raglan to the Duke of Newcastle on the 23rd October, "have furnished the guards and working parties for the trenches, there remain in camp available for the support of those in advance in case of a sortie, and for the maintenance of our position, which is assailable on our extreme right and right rear, something under 8,000 men." A very just estimate, since so far as the English were concerned, the deadly peril of the 5th had to be parried by a band which slightly exceeded 7,000.

Imagine, then, the relieving army gathering together in the night; the spirits of the soldiery roused by the presence of two Grand Dukes, and their faith inflamed by religious ceremonial, so that it was with troops "consecrated for battle" that the Russian generals went forth. One huge column moved out from Sebastopol, another came down from the North and up from the Tchernaya Valley at its mouth; a third, destined to be inactive, assembled opposite Balaklava and the Sapune heights; while the garrison of the fortress stood ready to make sorties. The sound of bells and the dull noise of moving multitudes reached the ears of our pickets, and due notice thereof was sent in; but no unusual steps were taken, and it was not until the crackle of musketry was heard through the fog that the allies became aware of an impending onset. Practically the huge columns and strong array of hostile batteries were almost in position before their presence was discovered. But it chanced that Captain Goodlake, with thirty men of the Guards, a sort of scout corps he had been allowed to organize, was a mile in front of pickets covering the British left; and his watchful and soldierly second sight detected the march of the silent battalions. "Though seeing was

* The Invasion of the Crimea; its Origin, and an Account of its Progress, down to the Death of Lord Raglan. By W. A. Kinglake Vol. V. Battle of Inkerman. William Blackwood & Sons, 1875.