

## THE BRITISH ARMY.

A writer in the *Moniteur du Soir* gives us his notions of the character of the British army, not, however, we must say, in an ill-natured spirit, and with, perhaps, as much knowledge of the subject as foreigners generally have. The writer had previously given an account of the manner in which the English army is recruited, and shows from its constitution the necessity it always has of large convoys. In the present paper he speaks of the different elements that compose the army. The English troops do not bivouac—at any rate, they never lie down in the open air, except in case of absolute necessity; and on the other hand, to avoid overloading the soldier, he carries no blankets or rugs, and no tent. The result is that the columns are followed by waggons, or mules laden with large tents for the whole of the army, which is the primary cause of the length of the convoys. The care of the baggage animals requires the organization of a distinct corps, or of auxiliary civil conductors, who do not appear on the field in action. The men and animals employed in the transport of baggage feed abundantly, and the provisions have to be augmented accordingly. But there is one very curious fact which gives a good idea of the national character of the Englishman—a soldier would blush at the thought of washing his own linen, of mending it, or of taking care of his necessaries. This invincible repugnance necessitates the permitting soldiers to marry, and when they are about to enter into campaign, a considerable number of women are allowed to follow their husbands. They are chosen by lot, and those whom chance has favored receive a fixed pay, and become washer-women and seamstresses to the army. They are to the French canteen women in the proportion of 100 to 1; but they bear no resemblance whatever to them. The French *vivandière* is, in point of fact, a soldier in petticoats, who serves out the *equarrerie* to her comrades, and who also fights occasionally. The French *cantinières* count in line, and there have been more than one who have taken their turn of the musket. Assuredly the wives of the English soldiers would fight bravely; but habit, general opinion, and something impossible to explain prevent them from taking any part in the fighting. "They would hear on all sides, 'shocking!'" This is another cause of the number of useless mouths in the English army. Then they hate the children and the relations. This necessity for the English generals to enter on campaign with large convoys is a sufficient answer to the charge unjustly made against them of never knowing how to get rid of the impedimenta, and which those only bring forward who do not know the wants nor the character of the British army. An English general must observe extreme prudence; and must not move forward without securing his rear, and protecting his convoys. As he has a crowd of non-combatants he cannot establish himself anywhere but in excellent positions, difficult to turn; otherwise, a handful of men would suffice to throw his immense convoys into complete disorder. It must be admitted that with this system he moves on surely, though slowly; nothing is left to chance, and disasters are of rare occurrence. One peculiar feature in the English soldier's habits is worthy of note, though in this and other respects changes

have been made since the Crimea war. The English soldier lives too much apart, and he does not like to mingle his interests, his fatigues, or his pleasures with those of his neighbor. This does not arise from selfishness. Nobody in the world is more generous than the English soldier—his hand is ever open. It is rather a question of reserve, a sort of jealous independence, the fear of being put out of his way or of putting others out of their way. But the consequence is that the inner life of an English infantry soldier in active service is as different as can be conceived from that of a Frenchman. In the French army, the soldiers live in little groups of ten or twelve, who share in common their fatigues and privations, and share also in the windfalls; help and protect each other mutually. That companionship gives a French regiment a moral cohesion which constitutes an enormous force; an *esprit du corps* is generated by Fraternity, and it is one of the most powerful levers that can be brought to bear in the hour of battle. In the English regiments each man lives separately. He gets his rations, lights his fire himself, prepares his meal in a little kettle belonging to himself, and burns uselessly the rest of his firewood. His neighbor would deem it beneath him to make use of this fuel, and would feel affronted if it were offered to him. The baggage train gets stuck in the mud, but that is the affair of the men in charge of it. The writer gives the "physiology" of the divers types in the British army: the English (properly so-called), the Irish, and the Scotch. He says:

"The Englishman, properly so-called, has but little taste for the profession of arms; but he soon gets into the habit; and for the Englishman, above all others, habit soon becomes a second nature. Once drilled and instructed, he does admirably whatever he does. He marches with perfect regularity, almost like an automaton; and he manoeuvres with wonderful precision. As a marksman he is astonishing—true, powder is abundantly supplied to him for practice. He obeys with remarkable punctuality; he is actually nailed to the post where he is put; he never stirs from it. With respect to intrepidity—that is, the courage of remaining stationary, he is one of the finest military types, and of him it may be said that if the field of battle were swallowed up before him he would stand still unmoved on the ruins. But he has, too, the defects of his qualities. He is somewhat slow on the offensive. He requires to be commanded and directed. He has no sudden inspiration under fire. He must get precise orders, which he will execute punctually. He is somewhat of a grumbler, which, by the way, is no great fault. He is not expansive, yet he is more noisy and bustling than one would suppose. In a word, he is a solid combatant, and one of the good soldiers of Europe, though it is not his vocation that has brought him under the colours."

So much for the Englishman. Now for the Irishman:

"The Irishman is more warm, more impulsive in his intercourse with others than the Englishman. He is quite as brave, but a little too fond of whiskey; he is very ignorant, consequently superstitious, fantastic, and rough. But he has an excellent heart, he is devoted, and does not want a certain ardour which the general temperament of the army prevents utilizing. Moreover, he has the intelligence of the combat, and gets quite impassioned in it. It is to the Irish soldier that are owing certain fiery charges which nobody expected, so little are they in the British character."

The sketch would not be complete without the Scotchman. Here is what M. Noir says of him:

"The Scotch soldiers form, without contradiction, the cream of the British troops. The Highlander is the prototype of the excellent soldier. He has all the requisite qualities, and not one defect. Unluckily for Great Britain, the population of Scotland is not numerous. Saving, it is true, to the point of putting by penny after penny, the Scotchman, for all that, is honest, steadfast, amiable in his intercourse with others, enthusiastic and proud; chivalrous when the question is about shedding his blood. The old traditions of clanship subsist; each company is grouped round an illustrious name, all and every man in it is sure to be the captain's cousin. The Highlanders have a strange sort of bravery, which partakes at once of French fire and of English calm. They rush on with impetuosity; they charge with vigour, but they are not hurried away by anger. In the very hottest moment of an attack a simple order suffices to stop them. Formed in square, one would take them for Englishmen; in charging with the bayonet you would swear they were French. For the rest they are of Celtic origin, and the blood of our fathers flow in their veins; but the blood has a little cooled down by the severity of their climate. "In the eyes of the Turks the Scotch had one enormous fault, that of showing their legs. In our eyes they have but one defect, a slight one, but still excessively annoying—their depraved taste for the screaming of the bagpipes. We know that the Highlanders would not get under fire without being excited by their national airs, played on this discordant instrument. One of their generals having put down this piercing music, they attacked the enemy on one occasion so languidly that the bagpipes had to be restored to them, and they then took the position. In a word, we repeat, the Scotch are magnificent soldiers."

EXPERIMENTS WITH RIFLED CANNON.—It is agreeable news to hear that the success of the efforts of the Ordnance Select Committee to provide the country with cheap guns, in order to arm as rapidly as possible the forts and batteries at home and in the colonies with rifled cannon, promises to be complete. A cast iron 32 pounder, converted by Sir W. Armstrong & Co. for the Victoria Government, on Major Palliser's plan, fired some seventy-six heavy charges at Shoeburyness, as much, we believe as 16 lbs. of powder and 80 lb. shot. The gun was afterwards condemned by the Woolwich authorities, and submitted to the Ordnance Select Committee to the trying test of 2000 rounds of service charges. It has just completed its task having got through 2076 rounds without injury, beyond a few scratches in the bore to the depth of an inch. This result is a proof of the extraordinary pitch of excellence to which the Elswick Ordnance Company have brought their coiled barrels. It is stated indeed, that their converted 65 pounders have been firing battering charges at Shoeburyness usually allotted to much heavier ordnance. Colonel Clark's strengthened carriage answers admirably, one of the converted 65 pounders having fired 100 rounds from it with 22 lbs. of powder and 115 lb. shot. Nothing could be better than the way the carriage behaved. Altogether, the country is to be congratulated on the results of the efforts of General Iffroy and the officers of the Ordnance Select Committee.—*Army and Navy Gaz.*