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THE STORY OF THE CAMPAIGN. (*)

WRITTEN IN A TENT IN THE CRIMEA.

[At the last moment we received the following continuation of "The Story of the Campaign" from our friend in the Crimea, accompanied by a private letter, from which we give an extract:—"Camp before Sebastopol. 7th Dec.—Several days that I have set apart for writing up have been spent in the saddle. Could I have managed it, you should have had the account of the battle of the 5th; but the divisions of the army are scattered at such a distance from me—several miles—that I have been unable to collect the information necessary for accuracy in describing the events of the day, and I was too much occupied myself to see all that passed, being in the thick of it, as you will believe when I will tell you that my horse, receiving three wounds, was killed by a cannon-shot, which passed through him behind my leg; and a poor sergeant, in the act of extricating me, had his thigh carried away by another. It was a gloomy, but a glorious business. The cannonade, far more tremendous than at Alma, lasted, almost without intermission, for more than nine hours."]

CHAP. IX.—THE POSITION BEFORE SEBASTOPOL.

Most of the inhabitants of the valley had left the doors of their houses locked, as if they intended to return shortly, and expected to find things as they had left them. But, notwithstanding a general order (called forth by a great slaughter of turkeys, geese, and hens with rifles and revolvers) that private property was to be respected, the houses in Kadukoi, the village at the entrance of the valley, were pillaged, and the doors, window-sashes, and rafters for the most part taken away for firewood. Some of the chiefs of the army took up their quarters in Balaklava; a post-office was established, and ships laden with siege materials were brought into the harbour and ranged along the road in front of the houses, which the great depth of water close to the shore rendered almost as accessible and convenient as a wharf. Private speculators set up stores for the sale of grocery and clothing; cargoes of the same articles were brought from Constantinople in the hired transports; and in most instances advantage was taken of the necessities of the troops to demand shamefully exorbitant prices.

Meantime the third, fourth, and light divisions were moved up to the heights of Sebastopol, and bivouacked within long cannon-range of the fortress. Some shot, pitched into their positions, forced them to move, on different occasions, a little to the rear; but, after a time, this ineffectual annoyance was for the most part discontinued, and at the beginning of October the rest of the allied army was moved up to the position it was intended to occupy, leaving the cavalry, a troop of horse-artillery, the 93d Regiment, and some marines and seamen, with guns from the fleet, to protect Balaklava.

For eight days the time was spent in landing and bringing up the materials and armament for the batteries of attack; and these being collected in sufficient numbers, the trenches were opened. This process was rendered very difficult and laborious by the soil, which was extremely rocky, and the progress made in it necessarily slow. As the whole interest of the campaign was now focused in this particular portion of the Crimea, it will be well to describe minutely the position which was soon to become the theatre of a series of conflicts. These would be but imperfectly understood without a fuller idea than a map can give of the whole of the ground occupied by the allied army, and by the enemy.

Looking at a map of the Crimea, the reader will see that a valley extends from the inner end of the harbour of Sebastopol, where the Tchernaya runs into it, to that of Balaklava. From the former harbour to the ruins of Inkermann the valley is from twelve to fifteen hundred yards wide; then the heights on either side separate till, at the point where the road to Mackenzie's Farm crosses the Tchernaya, they are nearly four miles asunder. Here a rounded cluster of gentle eminences divides the valley into two defiles; these, sweeping round from south-east to south-west, unite in one plain, which, traversed by small hills, spreads to the gorge of the valley of Balaklava, and up to the heights right and left. Thus this valley, extending from one harbour to the other, forms a wide neck to a small peninsula of which Cape Kherson is the extremity, and on which the allied troops took their position. This peninsula, having steep cliffs at the sea-shore, consists of a high undulating plain, or range of plains, cleft by deep gullies that descend gradually to the basin in which lies Sebastopol. From a point opposite

the ruins of Inkermann, to that where the road from Sebastopol descends to Balaklava, the range of heights bounding the valley is unbroken, except at a point easily defensible, where the Woronzoff road crosses it. But to the left of the point opposite the ruins of Inkermann the ground south of the Tchernaya slopes upward so gradually as to oppose no serious obstacle to the advance of troops to the heights, while the English division posted there was not on the ridge looking into the valley, but on another ridge in rear of it. Thus the space between the right of the allied batteries of attack and the heights opposite Inkermann was, while unintrenched, the weak point of the position. The ground will be more minutely described in an account of the two actions of which it was the scene.

The harbour of Balaklava lies, as had been said, in a cleft between high and steep mountains. Beyond the inner extremity of the harbour this cleft continues itself for about half a mile in the small cultivated valley described in the last chapter. A row of low isolated hills extends across the entrance of the valley and up the heights on each side, to the plains of the peninsula on the one hand, and to the cliffs above the sea on the other, thus forming a natural line of defensive posts. At about 3000 yards in front of these, on the plain, sweeping, as before described, from the valley of the Tchernaya, is another range of isolated hills, the left of which is within cannon-shot of the heights held by the Allies, and the right one near the village of Kamara, which lies on the mountains forming the southern boundary of the plain. This last range of hills, crowded with small entrenched works armed with artillery, and garrisoned by Turks, formed the outposts of the Allies in front of Balaklava. Thus, the position extended from the sea-shore in front of Sebastopol round the heights of the peninsula to the Woronzoff road, and thence across to the last hill on the plain near Kamara; while an inner line of posts extended across the entrance of Balaklava valley, up to the heights of the peninsula on the left and round to the sea-cliffs on the right, enclosing valley, town, and harbour.

Of the gullies already mentioned as channelling the plains, the principal one divides the peninsula nearly in half. Resembling at first a wide ditch between grassy slopes, it gradually becomes a deep winding ravine with steep rocky sides like the dry bed of a wide river; and descends to the basin of the inner harbour. The left of the English lines in front of Sebastopol rested on one margin of this ravine, the right of the French lines on the other. The greater part of the French troops were encamped behind their lines on the site of the ancient Ksaronesstus, leaving a large space by the sea unoccupied. Their supplies were landed at Kamara Bay, one of the deep narrow recesses of Cape Kherson, from whence to Sebastopol the coast is indented by many inlets. There a fleet of transports assembled, so numerous that their masts looked like a forest; and a wharf afforded the necessary convenience for landing the multitude of stores which crowded the beach and the environs of a small city of tents.

Half-way between Cape Kherson and Balaklava the bold coast line turns back at a sharp angle, close to the site of an ancient temple of Diana, now occupied by the monastery of St. George. It stands on the edge of a high sloping cliff, and consists of a long low range of white buildings, with pillared porticoes and green roofs and domes. The cliff it stands on is of yellow clayey stone—the next headland southward, abutting far beyond it, is of extreme richness of colour—a deep pearly grey, dashed with dark red, of a tone which, even on a gloomy day, imparts to the mass a kind of sunset radiance and glow. A sergeant's guard of Zouaves is stationed in one of the buildings, and many Russian families continue to inhabit the place. Passing through the edifice by a steep flight of steps, a gallery is reached extending along the upper face of the cliff. Terraces connected by a winding path just out below, and near its base the rock is clothed with a shrubbery of small firs. There was a sound of chanting as we passed along the balcony: the Zouave who accompanied us opened the door, and motioned us in without ceremony. The place was a very small low chapel, its walls hung with sacred pictures executed with elaborate skill. A priest in a red garment was reading prayers to some others who sang the responses. He was bare-headed; but the rest, clad in black gowns, wore tall cylindrical caps, from which black veils descended behind. There was something strange in coming thus suddenly from a great camp into the presence of this secluded brotherhood, whose devotions, usually accompanied only by the dashing of the waves below, were now broken by the less serene sound of the distant bombardment.

The whole of these plains are probably much the same in aspect now as in the days when Diana's year shippers crossed them on the way to her temple. A short dry turf, scarcely clothing the grey rock, which everywhere pushes its fragments through, is, except the patches of coppie, the only verdure. No fields nor gardens tell of an attempt to make the soil productive, but here and there vines cling to the side of a slope where the earth is deepest, and are enclosed by walls of loose stone. A few trees, soon cut down for firewood, surrounded the farm-houses, and others grew at intervals down the courses of the larger ravines. Lit by a warm sun, bounded by a blue sea, and enlivened by the view of the white-walled city, the aspect of the plains in October was fresh and almost cheerful, while, looking inland, the tumbled masses of hills always lent grandeur to the landscape. But when a north wind whistled piercingly across the heights—when the dense fogs of November hung their grey drapery along the horizon, and rested in cold white

(*) See the last Number.