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HOW THE WAR PROSPERS.

(From the Nation.)

The plain truth on the actual prospects of the war is only beginning to be understood. It is getting hinted over dinner tables, and whispered confidentially in clubs—it is still a long way from being openly canvassed in the press. We see no reason for concealing it. Sebastopol is not likely to fall. The truth is, that there is not the slightest probability of its falling at present; on the contrary, the real and formidable danger of the position was, and is, that the Allies will not be able to withdraw themselves in safety from the Crimea. Disease, the Cossack, and the climate have proved Allies still more powerful; and the wild adventure which St. Arnaud planned, to snatch a wreath for his dying brow, will, probably, end in disappointment and disaster.

The siege commenced on the 17th Oct., and we have news up to the second of November. For that entire fortnight, nothing of importance had been effected against the town. As far as the original position of the belligerent parties had altered, that of the Allies had altered for the worse; their slow progress was beginning to excite despondency, their ranks were rapidly thinned by disease, their guns were inferior in range and calibre to those of the besieged, their military stores were failing, and they were harassed by an army in the open field, threatening to cut them off from their shipping, and place them between two fires. On the other hand, the Russians have fought well, and their courage and self-reliance have risen proportionably. They are superior in men, guns, and military stores to their enemies; they have fifty thousand soldiers housed in Sebastopol, and as many more hovering round the camp of the besiegers; they suffer little from disease in a climate to which they are familiar; the town has an open communication with the country, and is abundantly supplied, and half of the garrison are out of range of the cannonade, and form a fresh and invaluable reserve. The town, built of solid stone, defies the bombs and rockets, and any damage done the military works is repaired with a celerity which has astonished and confounded the besiegers. The correspondent of the *Morning Herald*, writing from the camp on the 20th of October, gives us some valuable insight into the actual position of the contending forces:—

"The trenches of the Allies commenced their fire as usual at daylight this morning. The French had repaired their damages during the night, but still were terribly overmatched by the position and strength of the Russian batteries. The English Crown and Green Mound batteries fired a good deal upon the town, but up to ten o'clock did not succeed in setting any houses on fire. At that time, the magazine of one of the principal French batteries blew up with a fearful explosion, killing and wounding many of their men. A few minutes after this accident a shell of ours, thrown into the town, caused a heavy explosion, which destroyed several large houses.—Shortly afterwards some of the works round the dockyard were set on fire with rockets, but were extinguished in half an hour by the soldiers, whom we could see at work. By this time the French batteries had again been compelled to slacken fire, and the whole brunt fell upon the English lines. It is by no means the fault of the French that their batteries have been compelled to cease. Whatever the most desperate and heroic courage could do has been done by them; but the truth is, the enemy's batteries are placed on the most commanding situations, and outnumber them ten to one, mounting also all 32, 56, or 68-pounders, while our Allies have no heavier than 16 or 24-pound cannon. Our lines begin to show the effects of the continued cannonade. At dusk we are obliged to cease in order to repair the batteries, but the enemy fires at intervals all through the night."

If a foreign army in an unfriendly country makes progress so doubtful as this—if the guns of the besiegers are outnumbered ten to one—if twice in twenty-four hours their fire is silenced, one must apprehend that a victory which, if won at all, must be won before the November snow begins to fall, is not destined to grace the present year.

The success of the fleet matches that of the army. The same correspondent describes the action of the 18th October:—

"The Queen, Rodney, Albion, and others of our liners, with the steam-frigates and the *Arethusa*, instantly attacked, and the fire grew tremendous.—Rodney, unfortunately, grounded in coming in, and lay for some time exposed to the enemy's fire, so that one time it was thought it would be necessary to sink and abandon her. Fortunately she was towed off again. The hail of shot and shell which was poured upon the upper tier of guns, which are exposed, soon drove the Russians from their walls; but the lower tiers, which were in casemate batteries, maintained

a close and deadly fire. The enemy used red hot shot, carcasses (combustible shell), and bar shot; and the terrible effects of these soon made themselves apparent. The *Albion* and *Arethusa* were set on fire, and had to be towed out of action until it was extinguished. The bar shot cut the masts, spars, and rigging to pieces. The *Arethusa* received seven shots under her water line, and could with difficulty be kept afloat. The *Wasp* Battery, which was *en barbette*, was soon silenced, and its guns dismantled; but little impression was made upon the forts. The greater part of the vessels continued firing until dark; by that time two of the casemate ports of *Constantine* were knocked into one, and the stonework of all the forts cut away and smashed to the depth of about eighteen inches. The neat regular appearance of the batteries was certainly much disfigured, but as batteries they were as efficient as ever. A foot or eighteen inches knocked off twelve feet of solid granite makes very little difference to the defenders. Some of the casemate guns were dismantled, but never for more than a few minutes, when fresh ones were brought forward. Towards dusk the whole of the cannon on the *Wasp* Battery, which were destroyed and dismantled early in the action, had been replaced, and were firing away as fiercely as ever. Our Allies met with no better success on the south of the harbor. They silenced and dismantled the upper tier of guns, marked the stone work of the forts pretty deeply, but left them as strong as ever. Towards evening the English and French vessels stood out to sea. As they left the Russians cheered vociferously and redoubled their fire."

But the position of the Allies is not simply one of no progress. They have been in serious peril of total ruin. On the 20th of October their supply of ammunition was so nearly exhausted that the accidental delay or loss of a store-ship would have left them destitute. "Had it not been for this supply," says the correspondent of the *Daily News*, noticing the arrival of two ships freighted with powder and shot, "we should have been destitute of ammunition for the larger guns by to-morrow night, even at the present rate of firing, one discharge every seven minutes. Many of the Russian round-shot have been collected and returned." Five days after General Liprandi surprised their rear at Balaklava.—The *Constitutionnel* gives a circumstantial account of this action. How near it was becoming a fatal and irreparable defeat we may learn from one significant paragraph:—

"The bold movement of General Liprandi had partly failed since Balaklava remained in the power of the Allies, and the latter preserved their communication with the sea; it had partly succeeded, since the Russians were in possession of that sole beaten road which leads from Balaklava to Sebastopol, and had taken position in the rear of the besiegers. Accordingly, on the 26th Prince Menschikoff made a strong sortie against the English lines in order to place them between the two fires. If he had succeeded in carrying them, and in effecting a junction with General Liprandi, in the middle of the besieging army, the operations of the Allies would have been almost irreparably compromised."

Meantime, cholera, dysentery, and fever, enemies against whom the stubborn courage, and fiery gallantry of the Allied Army are of no avail, thin their ranks day by day. It is computed that ten thousand men have fallen their victims:—

"There is a great increase," says the *Daily News*, "of dysenteric disease among our men. Lying out for twenty-four hours at a time in the trenches, or covering the batteries elsewhere, fixed to one spot and in a constrained posture, exposed to a warm sun by day and heavy dews at night—and this duty constantly recurring without intervals of rest—these are no doubt the causes of the increase of this affection, but they are unavoidable. What would have been the result if we had had rain and cold during the time we had been occupying these heights?"

Rain has since fallen in torrents; and every third man in the army is on the sick list.

But in the rear stalks the most formidable enemy of all—the climate. When the Winter sets in, (perhaps it has set in already), the condition of the troops will be frightful. Under a blinding snow, in a mountainous and woody country, without roads or towns, watched by two hostile armies of a hundred thousand men—some catastrophe like the retreat from Moscow threatens to mark with ruin the history of this unfortunate expedition. At least the danger is sufficiently threatening to repress all premature triumph, and silence at once the unreasonable and preposterous hopes—which the press cherishes without believing, and the public take upon trust.

A correspondent of a Ministerial Journal, the *Morning Chronicle*, writing from the scene of action, alone prepares the public for defeat. Under a cautious phraseology his meaning is sufficiently plain:

"The contest hitherto (he says) has been between mud fort and mud fort—between offensive works and offensive works; and when these forts are taken or destroyed, the real task of taking the town will commence. It will be a severe trial this taking or destroying of Sebastopol, and many days, perhaps weeks, will elapse before the day of triumph will dawn. The position is, in fact, trying. Here is a besieged force, which has established offensive works, mounted by a larger number of guns than the offensive works thrown up by the besiegers. The damage sustained in the day is repaired in the night, and the morrow dawns to witness a fresh waste of ammunition. The victory would, it almost seems, fall to him who possesses the largest stock of ammunition—and that certainly is not the Allies."

From many a hearth in Ireland, unhappily, eyes are turned towards that inhospitable shore, watching for the welfare of dear friends and kindred. It would be a cruel mockery to give them false news of imaginary triumphs. The position is full of peril and alarm; counterbalanced, we fear, by no compensation present or future.

One man alone has gained or is destined to gain anything from the contest. The gigantic ambition of Louis Napoleon has made strides which compete with the triumphs of Napoleon I. It is not alone that Kings and Princes have been guests at his board; that the Royal husband of Louis Philippe's daughter grasps his hand in amity; that the proudest Court in Europe, the cold Guelph and the plotting Coburg, open their arms to him—these are but feathers in his cap—the solid gain is something more substantial.—His soldiers garrison the capitals of Europe, and the world renowned seats of Empire. Greece, Rome, Constantinople, Paris, are the keynotes of history for two thousand years, and in all of them the Imperial eagle of Napoleon is guarded by his soldiers. Two little years ago the other great European Capital was as certain of his meditated invasion as it is of the fall of Sebastopol to-day; and his army is still encamped at Boulogne, within two hours' sail of the snowy cliffs. But this is not all—Prussia is pushed day after day nearer to an open alliance with Russia.—Let her declare herself, and in a week the ripe fruits of his patient and inscrutable ambition will fall into his hand. A French army will repossess itself of the Rhenish frontier. Belgium will be made a highway for his army—if it resist, the Royal Coburg will vanish in smoke, the fortifications of Antwerp will be completed on the scheme of the first Napoleon, and La Belgique will once more be sliced into French departments.

THE OPENING OF THE ATTACK.

Monday night was an anxious time. As if the enemy also anticipated the coming struggle, and reserved their strength for the following day, we were but slightly annoyed by their fire during the night. A deserter who came over to us that evening, however, imagined a very different reason for the slackening of the Russian batteries. He said that all the officers of the garrison were that evening giving a grand ball to the inhabitants of Sebastopol and that it was attended by all the leading ladies and gentlemen in the town. He said also that both town and garrison are perfectly certain of success, and of repulsing all our attacks within a fortnight; their earth works and batteries he knew were powerful, and General Luders, who commands in chief, was daily expecting news of the advent of an immense body of troops. The statements of these deserters may well be open to doubt, but this fellow appears to have told the truth. Certainly, from whatever cause it arose, the enemy fired little that night, though one shot did ample mischief, killing Captain Evelyn Rowly, of the Guards, and one or two privates, who were out on picket. However, we relied on the following day to revenge everything, and looked forward with intense eagerness to the issue of the struggle. By grey dawn on the 17th, when it was barely light, the enemy commenced a desultory cannonade. The noise and the hope—for we were not yet completely certain—that our trenches would answer it, set out every one astir, and, together with a large number of officers, I hurried up to the remnants of a lone house on the brow of the hill, which is situated between two of our batteries, and commands an almost bird's eye view of the town and harbor of Sebastopol.

A thick sluggish morning dew which lay in the valley, and the smoke which rested heavily over several of the forts, prevented my seeing what the enemy were doing; but a mere glance at our works showed that the long-wished-for day had at last arrived, and we were about to open fire. All the men were at their guns, and the apertures of the embrasures, which had been previously masked in order to protect the working parties, were now cleared and the guns run out. The fog only permitted the Russians to see this in one or two places, but where they

did they were firing, though with no effect, as the morning was too thick. Towards six o'clock the mist began to disperse, and the rich clear October sun was every instant making objects more and more visible. Soon the Russian works, crowded with grey figures, could be distinctly seen, with the large handsome white houses and dockyards of Sebastopol itself. The enemy could plainly see that we were prepared for action, and opened a smart cannonade. But not a shot from our batteries answered, for the French on our left occupy low ground, and the fog was still thick between them and their opponents. Slowly, like drawing back a huge curtain, the mist moved off to sea, a cool morning breeze sprung up, and the atmosphere cleared each moment. The lines of the besiegers could be seen from every point; the mounds and earthworks, bastions and towers of the besieged were full in view; the forms of the line-of-battle ships looked grim and deadly, and encircling all in the distance, like a dark belt, was the fleet of the allies.

It was half-past six. The enemy had been quiet for the last few minutes; both sides seemed preparing for an effort, when suddenly volumes of smoke and flashes of fire broke out simultaneously from every part of our lines—the shot and shell screamed hoarsely through the air, and with a reverberation which seemed to shake both heaven and earth, our attack on Sebastopol commenced. Apparently neither surprised nor daunted the enemy returned the discharge with double vigor and then both English, French, Turks, and Russians fell to work at the guns in right earnest. The first volleys showed us what no soul in either army had hitherto been certain about—viz., the precise nature both of our works and the enemy's, and I am sorry to say it also showed us that, even in earth work batteries thrown up since we came here, the Russians immensely outnumbered the allied lines. Not only were there extensive entrenchments, mounting 25 and 30 heavy cannon, but on every height and ridge guns of heavy calibre were placed in battery. I have been informed that the extensive nature of their works completely astonished our generals and we are by no means sure that we have seen them all yet, for during yesterday fresh ones were frequently unmasked in places totally unexpected.

On the extreme right of our position, on a hill commanding the back of the inlet, and near Inkermann Light, was our first batteries (called the Six Gun), of six 68-pounders. Next to this came two of the Terrible's long 84-pounders, and a one-gun battery mounting a Lancaster. More to our centre, and on the other side of the house which I have spoken of as commanding a fine view, is another long range Lancaster gun, in the valley beneath which, and considerably advanced, is the Crown Battery, one of our largest. It is three-sided, mounting eight guns on each face, with a bank for two 13-inch mortars. The guns are either long 32, 68, or 84-pounders, and between the breastplate are placed colobors for throwing small 4½ inch shell among troops. This battery is manned with the sailors from the fleet. On its left, towards the French, is a four-gun battery of heavy ordnance, and on our left of all is the Green Mound Battery, of the same size and description as the Crown. Beyond these, towards Kertch, and enclosing the whole of the south of the fortress, are the French entrenchments. Unfortunately our allies have no heavier guns in their siege train than 24-pounders, so that their lines of necessity are of a lighter description than ours, and less calculated to resist the enemy's concentrated and heavy fire. The French discovered these facts to their cost in the course of the day.

To meet these guns the enemy had opposed to our Six-gun Battery on the right a tremendous entrenchment thrown up on the top of the hills to the north of Sebastopol. It was, however, nearly 4,000 yards distant, so its shot and shell all fell short in such a manner that firing from it was soon discontinued. As we approach, this battery will prove a tough customer. Beneath this, and 1,200 yards distant from our works, is the martello tower and entrenchment I have already mentioned. The circular earthwork at its base has not only been completed, but two flanking parallels, each mounting 15 large guns, thrown out at either side. In the creek to the right of this tower, but so placed and covered as to command our Crown Battery on centre, was the famous three-decker, the Twelve Apostles. More towards the town, and facing our Green Mound Battery, is the redan wall, which shelters the south side of Sebastopol. It bristles with guns, and, to shelter it still further, the Russians have thrown up in its centre a regular three-sided redoubt, carrying about 40 cannon. Passing over several intermediate 6, 8, and 10 gun batteries the main strength of the Russians on the right is in some entrenchments called the Flag-staff batteries. It is a huge hill, commanding the French lines perfectly, and entrenched for two tiers