

# Weekly Messenger

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## The Weekly Messenger

### THE SOUDAN WAR.

It might have been supposed that the Mahdi would be encouraged and excited by the news of Britain's quarrel with Russia, but that does not seem to be the result. In fact, the latest reports are that the rebels are neither in as good a condition or in as good spirits as they were before. They are said to be not very strong in numbers, and the people of Berber and other places are described as dissatisfied with the Mahdi's laws. They have heard of the just treatment of the natives by the advancing white men, and consequently are anxious for the success of the British troops.

There have been some fatalities at Suakim, but the loss of life was caused not in open fighting, but in silent and secret attacks. On the night of March 11th, the Arabs made an assault on the enclosure where the garrison keep their guns. In answer to a challenge the rebels replied "friends." They then swarmed into the zareba, overpowered the pickets and attacked the guards, but hearing men landing from the gunboat they decamped, carrying away their dead and wounded, except the body of their leader, Abdul who was Osman Digna's standard bearer. Six British Guardsmen were killed and seven wounded. In repelling the attack the outposts fought heroically. Hand to hand encounters were frequent. In one instance five English soldiers bayoneted fifteen rebels. When disabled by wounds in the legs they fought in a kneeling position, firing as long as any strength remained.

During the night before, hostile Arabs stole into the British camp and stabbed an Indian sentinel to death. These Indian troops—a regiment of Sikhs,—are already doing good service. On being sent to repel an attack of the Arabs, they were splendidly handled and showed admirable coolness and steadiness. The skirmish was hot, but the Arabs were repulsed, leaving many of their dead upon the field. The casualties among the Indian troops were few. The Arabs became panic-stricken when they saw swarthy Mohammedans chasing them in British style, delivering their fire with such precision as to make every shot tell.

A later despatch says that an actual mutiny has broken out in Osman Digna's camp. Deserters to the British lines bring terrible tales of suffering among the Arabs, and say Osman Digna is only able to maintain his authority by a system of cruelty and terrible severity.

There have been reports that Kassala has fallen, and that the garrison has been massacred, but as yet there is no confirmation of the news.

Zobehr Pasha, a former "slave king" of the Soudan, has been found to be in secret league with the Mahdi and plotting against the Egyptian and British authorities. He and his two sons have been arrested and taken on a British warship to Malta where they will be kept as prisoners.

The last item of news about the Mohammedan rebellion which we have to communicate to our readers this week, is that the Mahdi's emissaries are trying to stir up the people of Arabia. By revolutionary placards, in the Red Sea towns opposite the Soudan coast, the Mahdi tells the people to drive out the Turks, saying that he will soon come over and lead his hosts to Mecca, where he will be acknowledged as "the Prophet" by displays in the sky!

### THE CHINESE WAR.

There is still a lull in the quarrel between France and China. As neither country likes war, there ought to be some way of putting an end to it; but there is no sign of peace yet.

A British steamer, the "Glenroy," was recently seized by the French fleet, for having lead in her cargo. The French claim that lead is "contraband of war," and hold it until the question is settled—though they have released the ship.

The Chinese correspondent of the London Times gives an account of the French way of proceeding in this war—a way by no means creditable to a civilized nation. He says:—"Since the 5th of January the French have been constantly engaged in the destruction of small craft, not only of junks from the mainland—which might be carrying contraband of war—but of fishing and trading craft, boats carrying firewood, dung, peanuts and charcoal. In fact, the hundred and one forms of small craft used by the Chinese to gain an honest livelihood have been shot, shelled, blown up, burnt, torpedoed, sunk or scuttled along the coast. The survivors of their crews have been kidnapped and sent to Kelung to work the French batteries. We have seen these mighty ships, among them the *Triumphante*, pursuing a little junk laden with dry fish, firing big guns, and round after round from the machine guns in the tops, at the poor junkmen. Hundreds of junks have been thus destroyed and the greatest misery has resulted." The correspondent adds that, of the kidnapped boatmen, many through illness, caused by denial of food and water, became unable to work. The French soldiers then stuck bayonets into them to make them move, and if that failed, the sufferers were shot. The correspondent's informant saw seventeen shot, some through the forehead, some through the ear, some through the breast, their only fault being inability to work from want of food.

### GIGANTIC IMPUDENCE.

Central America has been the scene of an almost laughable attempt, on the part of an ambitious man, to carry out a scheme something like that which Napoleon Bonaparte tried in Europe eighty years ago—to bring unwilling nations under his own power. The story is told in telegraphic despatches.

On March 5th, President Barrios, of Guatemala, declared in the assembly that Central America should constitute one republic, and that he would assume command of all the military forces of the various states. The declaration was accepted by

Honduras, but rejected by San Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Guatemalan forces began immediately to march against San Salvador. The people in the latter republic rose as one man to resist the invasion, and on the 11th, Guatemala ceased hostilities. President Barrios, however, tried to obtain by "cheek" what he could not get by force. He sent a request to President Zaldivar that San Salvador should appoint two commissioners to proceed to Guatemala with power to treat in the present crisis. Whether this request will receive any attention is not yet known.

Meanwhile, President Zaldivar telegraphed an account of the situation to President Diaz, of Mexico, and asked him to use his influence to prevent bloodshed. President Diaz promptly sat down upon the ambitious Barrios, sending him this message: "Your telegram of 7th, announcing your determination to declare Central America one republic, and assume yourself the command of all forces thereof, has been received. This declaration has been made by your assembly only, and has been rejected energetically by your sister republics. These circumstances have created such antipathy to your course among Mexican citizens that my Government will be obliged to take immediate action to prevent the execution of your threat against the sister republics of this continent."

President Barrios has not yet submitted to the inevitable, but if he tries to interfere with his neighbors again he is likely to be taught that he is not a Bonaparte.

### WILL RUSSIA FIGHT?

This has been a most exciting week. As last week came to an end, the war-cloud seemed blacker than ever, and it was thought that a collision between Russian and Afghan troops might have actually occurred. Now, however, a sort of understanding has been come to, by which neither side shall advance from its present position, and the international commissioners are to proceed with their work of laying down the frontier. It is just now believed that Russia is really desirous of peace. The *Journal de St. Petersburg*, which would not be allowed to print any such opinion without the Russian government's approval, says:—"The negotiations between Russia and England still continue. They are conducted with the firm desire to avoid a warlike collision, and upon the profound conviction that it is to the interest of both countries to reach a solid settlement of the present dispute, one that will firmly establish peace and substantially strengthen the good relations existing between the two."

The fact seems to be that Britain—in spite of all her other difficulties—is prepared for a war with Russia, while Russia is by no means prepared for a war with Britain. The London Times says that Gen. Kamosoff's force threatening Herat is not supposed to exceed 8,000 men. The British force in and about Quetta which can be poured into the Herat valley in a few weeks is estimated at 26,000. The Sikhs, Punjabies, Pathans and Ghoorkas, who are the

most warlike races in India, are eager for military service, and are devoted to British rule, and can be drawn on indefinitely for recruits. The Turkomans, on the other hand, are smarting under the Russian yoke, and in case of war would cause Russia great trouble. The Afghans receive an annuity of \$600,000 from the Indian Government, and any increase will fill them with fight. Besides, as the New York Herald points out, "Russia is beset with domestic foes. If the Czar should lead his men into Asia, who can say that his throne might not fall in his absence? Every rumor of defeat would strengthen the Nihilists. Every hardship of the campaign would feed the discontent of the army. No, Russia cannot afford to fight. For the first time since the Crimean war England has her at a disadvantage."

There is already a small force under British colors right on the spot where the fight is likely to begin—for Sir Peter Lumsden, the British Commissioner, sent two months ago to define the frontier, has with him an escort of 200 Bengal Lancers and 200 Punjab Infantry, with a number of Royal Engineers. These would be of value in leading the Afghans, and the engineers are already instructing them how to fortify the cities of Herat and Penjdeh, which would be attacked first by the Russian invaders.

Both nations are actively preparing for war, and the lull may be only a truce before hostilities actually begin. Britain will insist on Russia withdrawing her troops from Afghan territory; and Russia will need to be considerably afraid of the consequences of refusal before she agrees to Britain's demand.

### KANSANS IN EARNEST.

A telegram from Atchison says that "the double-ribbed, ironclad, copper-plated prohibition law passed at last session of the Kansas Legislature went into effect on Saturday. Dispatches from various points indicate that the saloon men are divided as to what stand they will take. Some are defiant, but others have gone out of business. In Atchison the County Attorney, who, under the new law, is a whole Grand Jury all by himself, gave notice that all saloons or wholesalers of liquor doing business on and after Monday, March 23rd, would be prosecuted under the law. It is believed that this action will settle the saloon business, so far as the city is concerned. The managers of the different railway and transportation companies have issued circular letters calling the attention of their agents to that section of the new law which provided that any officer, agent, or employee of any railway, express company, or common carrier, who knowingly delivers any intoxicating liquor to any person in the State shall be fined from \$100 to \$500 and imprisoned from thirty to sixty days. This has resulted in the stoppage of liquor shipments. People along the Missouri line will not suffer much, but those in the interior have been employing the week just passed in laying in large stocks of ardent liquors in anticipation of thirsty days to come."