

Selections.

Narrative of the Siege of Kara, &c. By HUMPHRY SANZWITH, M.D., Chief of the Medical Staff. Mur- ray.

(Concluded from last week.)

On the 23rd they are convinced that the Russians are going; all but the wary Hungarian Kmety, who proves to be right:—

"Sept. 23.—Sundry preparations for departure are observed in the enemy's camp; lanterns are moving about during the night, and trains of carts are passing to and fro. We feel convinced that Mouravieff intends to raise the siege; but Kmety persists in the belief that he will make an attack before he goes. The vigilance of the sentries, and the indefatigable and wakeful activity of the General and his staff, are not relaxed for a moment.

"Sept. 29.—About four o'clock this morning one of the sentries on Tabmasp heard a suspicious sound in the distance, something like the rumbling of wheels and the measured tramp of infantry. The report passed from mouth to mouth along the whole line; and the officer on duty reported the fact to General Kmety, whose tent, with that of Teesdale, was in the corner of this position. The latter officer was going his rounds in another part of the camp. Kmety was at once on the spot where first the sounds had been heard, and he listened attentively; but all was silent, and the night was moonless and dark. On inquiry, it was found that more than one soldier had heard the sounds in question, and there were positive and confident in their statement. All the troops were forthwith called to arms, and stood patiently listening and gazing into the gloomy valley before them. Thus, for an hour or more, did they stand, while a few active riflemen were sent forward to reconnoitre. We had now no outposts; our cavalry had disappeared by famine, or had cut their way out on the night of the 3rd. An hour had thus passed, when the sounds which first attracted attention are again heard; they are unmistakable. Kmety applies his ear to the ground, and recognises the rumble of artillery wheels; while still the measured tread of infantry is heard advancing nearer and nearer up the valley. Again all is silent; but the listlessness of the tired and sleepy soldier has given place to intense vigilance. The riflemen, a splendid body of about a thousand Zebeks, armed with the carbine-à-tige, look well to their percussion caps, unbutton their cartridge pouches, and finger the triggers. The word is passed in a whisper to the artillerymen—*peshref* (grape)—and each gun is charged with that deadly missile. The advanced posts of riflemen creep into the lines with the ominous words, "*Ghiour gueliur*" (the infidels are coming.) Meantime each eye is strained to peer into the darkness, and messengers fly to other parts of the camp with the warning. A sharp-eyed soldier now points to a dark mass in the valley, faintly visible in the gloom; it is moving; it is a column of men. A gun is pointed in that direction—the match is applied—and a hissing shower of grape flies into the mass; an unearthly scream of agony from mingled human frames follows the thunder of the gun, when both are drowned by a loud hurrah, which arises on all sides; and soon the whole line of breastwork is assailed in front and flank. At that moment a horseman gallops furiously from the rear and flings himself into the most exposed battery; it is the Xaver Bey—it is Teesdale—who has just returned from his rounds. And now the fight commences.

They buried 6,300 Russians. Some pious Mussulmen of Kara had seen a sacred band of 10,000, clothed in green fighting with the defenders. And, strange to say, on the day and the morrow of that terrible crisis, the cholera intermitted. All was joy and congratulation in Kara. But still the Russians moved not; and the cholera came again. It is true, they see carts quitting the Russian camp; they scan the convoys with their telescopes; "feeling convinced" that the Russians must retreat, "we are becoming impatient." But no movement in their camp. In Kara the deaths from cholera alone rise to forty a day. On Oct. 6 "the troops have no more animal food." The days pass easily, in ominous quiet, one very like another, except in two points. One is the increasing famine. Already, on the 17th Oct., the garrison are no longer the stout and hardy soldiers who drove back the Russians after a seven hours' fight on Michaelmas Day. The hospitals are well tended; there was no typhus, no hospital gangrene; it is only that the men die, a hundred a day, of cold and hunger:—

"Nov. 4.—The emaciation is wonderful, yet, as most cases, no diarrhoea or other symptom of disease is observable. Their voices are excessively feeble, a

clammy cold perspiration pervades the surface of the body, and they die without a struggle. Several of these men are recovered by the administration of horse-broth. Surgeons are posted in every part of the camp with broth of horse-flesh, in the form and under the name of medicine. A search is made for surviving horses, and these are secured to make soup for the hospital. . . . We have scarcely any medicines available; castor oil and perfumes, sent us by our Constantinople purveyor, are not exactly what we should prescribe for these poor fellows. Nov. 10.—About 100 die in the hospital during the twenty-four hours. Still no epidemics of typhus, which is the usual accompaniment of cold and starvation. The Russians brought in scores to the hospital, many are recovered by horse-broth, but many die. Some military executions take place to-day. Every one seems trying to assume a cheerfulness which he scarcely feels."

The other point is the increasing clearness of the assurance of relief. Omar Pacha has taken Kums—he is marching on Tiflis. That is the reason why the Cossacks are leaving. Selim Pacha has landed at Trebizond with 20,000 men; he is at Baiduri—he is at Erzeroum, and his troops are first-rate and eager to march—"we have now but to wait a fortnight, and relief is certain"—cannon-shots have been heard on the distant mountains—Selim Pacha writes that he has defeated a Russian corps, and is marching straight for Kara—he must be about three days' march—everything is made ready to meet him—his advanced guard is already at Chipaki, only twenty miles off. Such were the reports chronicled day by day from the middle of October to the end of November. But no Selim Pacha came, or was coming. In vain they waited. In vain every night men were sent out to Erzeroum, disguised as peasants, carrying notes in cypher, rolled up and put into quills, that they might be dropped if Cossacks appeared, to urge him on. In vain all try to wear a cheerful look. In vain the patient soldiers watch their batteries at midnight, though so feeble that they can scarcely answer the challenge of the visiting officer; and in the agonies of hunger stand sentry over the stores there, of three days' provisions, without even in a single known instance touching a single biscuit. In vain citizens give up their houses and beds, and see their women and children sweeping up the dust from before the flour-depots to eat. In vain the troops cheer up, "and their eyes glisten with martial ardour, though their legs can scarcely carry them," at the thoughts of joining Selim's troops against the enemy. With all this quiet and calm endurance, it could not last much longer. Desolation, and the penalty of desolation, increased:—

"Nov. 18.—Twenty-one men deserted last night. Hussein Bey tells me that the most profound discontent exists throughout the city, and the people say they can bear their sufferings no longer. They exclaim, almost in the language of Scripture, 'In our watching we have watched for a nation which could not save us.' Mothers bring their children to the military council, and throw them at the feet of the officers, exclaiming, 'Take and keep these children, for we have nothing to give them.' . . . The rapid mountain stream which runs through the town is already most frozen over. The streets present a soul-harrowing appearance.

"Nov. 21.—A heavy fall of snow during the night. No more news to cheer us. We have almost reached the limits of human endurance; our soldiers lie dead and dying in every part of the camp. The citizens look reproachfully at us; 'their visage is blacker than a coal, and their skin cleaveth to their bones.' They exclaim, 'Let us go out and fight; why remain here to die?' 'They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger, for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.'"

Selim Pacha came not:—

"Nov. 22.—An alarm in the dark. The troops are called to arms; only six or seven manage to drag themselves from their tents. At 6 a.m. a messenger comes in with a despatch from Selim Pacha. He was to have left Erzeroum on the 16th, and would hasten on. Besides this veracious Turkish document, there is a little note in cipher from Mr. Brant; it is as follows:—'Selim Pacha won't advance, though Major Stuart is doing his best to make him. Omar Pacha has not advanced far from Soukhum Kalé. I fear you have no hope but in yourselves; you can depend on no help in this quarter.'"

Then on the 25th General Williams rode over to the Russian camp, and arranged the terms of capitulation with their truer and nobler enemy:—

"Nov. 25.—General Williams and his aide-de-camp,

Teesdale, rode over under a flag of truce to the Russian camp. They are well received by Mouravieff. The General tells his chivalrous enemy that he has no wish to rob him of his laurels; the fortress contains a large train of artillery, with numerous standards, and a variety of arms, but the army has not yet surrendered, nor will it without certain articles of capitulation. 'If you grant not these,' exclaimed the General, 'every gun shall be burst, every standard burnt, every trophy destroyed, and you may then work your will on a famished crowd.' 'I have no wish,' answered Mouravieff, 'to wreak an unworthy vengeance on a gallant and long-suffering army which has covered itself with glory, and only yields to famine.' 'Look here,' he exclaimed, pointing to a lump of bread and a handful of roots, 'what splendid troops must these be who can stand to their arms in this severe climate on such food as this?' General Williams, you have made yourself a name in history, and posterity will stand amazed at the endurance, the courage, and the discipline which this siege has called forth in the remains of an army. Let us arrange a capitulation that will satisfy the demands of war without outraging humanity.' I leave my readers to imagine anything more touching than the interview between these gallant leaders, whose eyes were suffused with tears, while their hearts were big with sentiments of high honour and graceful benevolence.

"The terms of capitulation arranged to-day, to be laid before the Turkish officers, were briefly as follows:—

"The officers and soldiers of the regular army were to pile arms in camp, and march out with their music and colours, and surrender themselves prisoners of war to the Russian army."

"And," here exclaimed General Mouravieff to the secretary, "write that, in admiration of the noble and devoted courage displayed by the army of Kara, the officers shall be allowed to retain their swords, as a mark of honour and respect."

And on the 27th the betrayed garrison and betrayed city gave up the trust which they had maintained so nobly for those who were not worthy of them:—

"The Russian officers treat us with the most delicate attentions, and show the most chivalrous bearing to their prisoners of war. They compliment each of us in turn on the gallantry, the endurance, and the humanity, which they are good to say has characterised our part of the struggle, while we, in all sincerity, attest the unflinching courage which led them up to our breastworks under a cross fire of artillery and volleys of musketry. One of these recognised Teesdale as having, under a deadly fire of grape and rifle-balls, leaped over our breastworks, and rescued from some marauding soldiers a wounded Russian officer. This little episode was not hitherto known to us, and I almost fear to shock the modesty of that gallant officer in thus recording it.

"Nov. 28.—Early this morning the sounds of musketry are heard in all parts of the camp. The soldiers are emptying their muskets and piling arms. The people and the army have now learned that they are to capitulate; the word *teslim* (capitulation) is in every mouth, and what a scene is this! The poor staggering soldiers obey their orders mechanically, but some there are who dash their muskets to pieces against the rocks, exclaiming, 'Thus perish our pashas, and the curse of God be with them! May their mothers be outraged!' Some of the officers break their swords, and, caring not who hears them, heap curses on the Sultan and the whole government of the empire—awful words, which I had never heard even whispered before. The citizens gather together in groups, exclaiming, 'God is great! and has it come to this? How is Islam fallen! Van, vai! (alas, alas!) and do my eyes behold it? Would to God we had never been born! Would to God we had died in battle! for then had we been translated to heaven, then had we been purified and acceptable. The Ghiaours are coming, and our arms drop from our hands! God is God, and Mahomed is his prophet. How has the All-Merciful forsaken his children, and delivered us up to be a prey to the spoiler!'

"Thus are the sounds of grief and indignation heard from each turbaned warrior, while women's softer soul in woe dissolves aloud. Let us draw a veil over this distressing scene; scarce was there a dry eye that witnessed it, while grey-bearded soldiers sobbed aloud.

"In the midst of these lamentations, General Williams rode through the camp. At once the citizens crowded round him, kissing his stirrup, and praying for blessings on his head. '*Neddi, neddi*' (where, where are you going, Pacha?) they asked. 'I am a prisoner,' he answered. 'Let us go with you; we will follow you,' was the universal cry.

"*Williams Pacha chok olan dur!*' (Williams Pacha is no end of a man,) was the sententious remark of a grey-beard, and he was voted quite right."