



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. V.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1855.

NO. 28.

HOW THE WAR GOES.

JOURNAL OF THE SIEGE.—There is nothing doing except getting up shot shell and provisions. The French and Russians exchange a few shots now and then, and keep up a constant fire of riflemen.

Jan 13.—Last night the wind changed round to the southward, and the thermometer rose to 34°. A speedy thaw followed, and the roads and camp will once more suffer from the ravages of our old enemy—the mud. The Russians, who had been active inside the town during the day, and who had lighted great watch fires on the north side of the place, illuminated the heights over the Tchernaya with rows of lights, which shone brilliant through the darkness of the cold winter's night, and were evidently with all possible pomp and ostentation celebrating the opening of their peculiar new year. Lights shone from the windows of the public buildings, and our lonely sentries in the valleys and ravines, and the *enfants perdus*—the French sharpshooters—lying in their lairs with watchful eye on every embassage before them—might almost fancy that the inhabitants and garrison of the beleaguered city were tantalizing them with the aspect of their gaiety. At midnight all the chapel bells of the city began ringing and it was evident that a religious ceremony of extraordinary solemnity was about to take place. On our side the sentries and picquets were warned to be on the alert, and the advanced post were strengthened wherever it was practicable. About a quarter past 1 o'clock this morning the Russians inside the line of works gave a loud cheer. The French replied by opening fire, and the Russians in return instantly began one of the fiercest cannonades along the front of their position which we have yet heard. In the mean time while the firing was going on, a strong body of men had been pushed out of the town up to the face of the hill towards our works in front and on the flank of the left attack. As it was expected that some attempt of the kind would be made, one of the steadiest sergeants in the service was posted here with 13 men. Every reliance was placed on his vigilance and on his strict attention to his duties, but, somehow or other, the enemy crept up on the little party, surprised, and took them prisoners, and then advanced on the covering parties with such rapidity and suddenness that the party of the Sixty—th, and of the Twenty—st Regiments, which were on duty in the trenches, were obliged to retire almost without firing a shot. They rallied, however, and fired, and being supported by the regiments in rear, they advanced, and the Russians were driven back close to the town. In this affair one officer and nine men were severely wounded, six men were killed and fourteen are now missing. The French had to resist a strong sortie nearly at the same time, and for a short time the Russians were within the parapet of one of their mortar batteries, and spiked, it is said, two or three mortars with wooden plugs, but the French soon drove them back with loss, and in the pursuit got inside the lines of the Russian advanced batteries. The soldiers, indeed, say they could have taken the place that night, if they had been permitted to do so. At two o'clock this morning all was silent once more, and the allied armies had opened their new Russian year on Crimean soil.

A heavy gale of wind blew nearly all day, but the thermometer rose to 33 deg., and the snow thawed so rapidly that the tracks to the camp became rivulets of mud. The establishment of a central depot for provisions has, however, done much to diminish the labors and alleviate the sufferings of the men engaged in the duties of the siege; but the formation of the depot and the accumulation of the stores have worn out and exhausted many of our best men.

The mortality of the Turkish troops, which had, as I stated some time ago, assumed the dimensions of the plague, has now begun to be attended with much of the physical appearances of the same terrible disease, and their sanitary condition has excited the liveliest apprehensions of our medical officers in Balaklava, who have, over and over again, represented to the authorities the danger of allowing the Turks to remain in the town. Their small force is losing men at the rate of twenty or thirty a-day.

January 14.—The 39th Regiment, Colonel Munro, and the draughts from England sent on board the *Golden Fleece* from her Majesty's ship *Leopard* were at last disembarked from the former vessel to-day. The 39th marched up to the head of the creek of Balaklava, and occupied ground close to the late encampment of the 18th Royal Irish, where they pitched their tents. The 18th this morning marched out to the front, so as to leave the ground clear for the 39th. The draughts went up to their respective regiments. Although the camping ground of the 39th is so near the town, there is only one hut pitched for them as yet, and the process of getting up the pieces is very slow and by no means sure.

There was a very heavy fall of snow last night, but there was not much wind, and the thermometer

stands at 29 deg. The snow is about two feet deep, but it has been drifted to twice that depth in the ravines. The camps have a most curious appearance. Tents, horses, men, huts—all seem jet black by contrast with the painfully bright white sheets of snow which hurt and dazzle the eye on every side. The weather is, however, tolerably mild, and exercise and warm clothing render it agreeable. The look of the ships in Balaklava puts one in mind of the ordinary incidents in Arctic exploring expeditions, when vessels are frozen up. The yards and rigging and every rope and stay are covered with thick ridges of fleecy snow, which hangs in flakes or broken masses from the blocks, and spearlike icicles depend from all the larger spars.

The temperature of the weather fell towards evening, and the thaw was arrested. Frequent showers of snow fell during the day. It was a weary walk for our poor sailors across from the batteries to Kamiesch, where they are going to join their ships. I met some detachments of the men of the *London* and other ships going up to the front from Balaklava to take the places of the men who had been sent away, and they offered a striking contrast in their strong healthy look to the Jacks who have been so long and who have behaved so nobly in the trenches. The French waggons were busy to-day in carrying up shot and powder for us to the depots. Sometimes our artillery waggons, with French horses and drivers, were employed in the same manner. Our officers are full of admiration for their allies. They are never tired of speaking of the gaiety, *bonhomie*, and civility of these gallant fellows.—This evening a party of 400 of them came down to Balaklava to take up shot, and the officer in charge observed to them it would be very late ere they got back to their camps. "Oh! don't say a word about it; we would work all night to oblige our good friends the English," was the reply. The aid we have given our allies in transporting them to the scene of their labors and their glories is, indeed, amply repaid by their co-operation. The French have their share of the sickness which afflicts us in this winter campaign, but the percentage of deaths and men unfit for duty is not so great among them as it is in our camps. The diseases which pursue our men are aggravated by a peculiar condition of mind which the medical men have remarked very frequently in their patients—an extreme listlessness and indifference to life—a languor which induces the convalescent to regard "rest" as the greatest happiness, and deprives them of any inclination to make the least effort or even to take food and nourishment. There was nothing done worth notice to-day in front. The French batteries were silent, and the Russians scarcely fired a shot all day. The usual small-arm practice went on in front of the lines between the sharpshooters.

The *Simla* has arrived, with about 400 horses and some convalescents. Thermometer 34 deg., this evening at sunset.

Jan. 15.—A heavy fall of snow during the night. It is 6 feet deep in some places in the ravines, and on an average is 3½ feet deep over all the plain, but it is so hard that one can walk over it without sinking more than a foot into it. The thermometer marked 24 degrees at 8 o'clock this morning, but it is almost a dead calm, and the sun shines brightly at times. At noon the thermometer rose to 34 degrees. Her Majesty's ship *Firebrand* went out of harbor this morning. The preparations for our renewed bombardment and cannonade are progressing rapidly.—Upwards of 50 fine new 32lb. guns, 13 of the largest sized mortars, and some very heavy siege guns are all up at the depot, and elsewhere, and can be placed in the new batteries at a very short notice. Up to the present date about 14,000 shot and shell of all sort, have been conveyed from Balaklava to our artillery parks, and in that number is not included 4,000 naval shells (with brass fuses.) When the batteries open each gun will be provided with 300 rounds of ammunition. There is one mortar at Balaklava which weighs four tons. How it is to be got to the front is not very easy to determine. A Polish officer who deserted recently has given us most valuable information respecting the range of our batteries, and there is reason to believe that when our fire reopens the effect will be so tremendous that the destruction of the place will be inevitable in a very short time.

It is reported that a deserter came in from the Russians to-day in an exhausted condition. There was a considerable movement visible among the Russians towards Baidar and along Mackenzie's Farm-rod to-day, and it is positively stated that Liprandi has received a reinforcement of considerable strength. The guns were silent nearly all day.

(From Correspondent of Morning Herald.)

JAN. 12TH.—I have lately been heading letters from here with "The Siege of Sebastopol," when our condition would have been more aptly described

as the "siege of the besiegers," for up to the last fortnight we certainly did but little to annoy the enemy, who, in return, were doing their utmost to damage us. Now, however, there is more in the announcement, as the French are, to say the least of it, fully occupying the attention of the garrison of Sebastopol. Our allies have long since been quite ready to open on the town with fifty 10 and 13 inch mortars, and have only been waiting until all the English mortars were in position, and sufficiently supplied with ammunition to support their fire. Pending this happy consummation, and to divert the enemy in the meanwhile, our allies three days since commenced firing from a distant battery with ten 13 inch mortars upon the town and strongest of the Russian works. Each of these mortars fires fifty rounds a day, and any one who has ever seen the effect produced by the bursting of a "Whistling Dick," of thirteen inches, will know at once that 500 per diem cannot fall in the enemy's lines without doing fearful mischief to all around. All their missiles are certain at 4,000 yards, and for destructive purposes can be used at 5,000; consequently, even the defences on the north side of the harbor come under fire. Where they have been thrown in the town, the stately and strong built houses on which they fall are mere ruins; 240lbs. weight of iron falling upon the roof of a house, from the height of a mile, penetrates to the very foundation, when the explosion of a well-confined bursting charge of 20lbs. of powder settles everything about the structure, from foundation to roof, for ever. Not many shells have yet been thrown among the houses—perhaps not more than twenty—yet when they have fallen buildings which throughout the siege have never shown a mark, are now mere piles of rubbish. The French, for the present, are principally directing their efforts to injuring the Garden Battery and Redan: and 495 out of the 500 shells fired each day fall in the centre of these ill-starred defences. Already no less than eleven guns have been silenced in these works, and though generally the cannon is replaced during the night, it still shows that the bombs are telling severely. On the average fifty men will be killed and wounded before a gun is injured by the bursting of bombs. The rest of the French mortars (forty), with about forty heavy guns, are, as I have said, kept in reserve until our preparations are completed. When the English commence they will do so with eighty-five mortars and sixty heavy guns, all of which, with the exception of two or three of the latter, are already in position, and only waiting for sufficient stores of ammunition to open fire. This, it is said, we are likely to do about the 17th inst., but so much depends on the state of the weather, and the consequent facility of forwarding shot and shell, that the precise date still remains wide open to conjecture; and I cannot help fearing that it will yet be another month before anything of importance is attempted. When the bombardment is commenced fifty rounds every twelve hours are to be fired from each piece of ordnance, until all the ammunition is expended. According to this arrangement about 20,000 rounds of shot and shell will be thrown into Sebastopol every twenty-four hours, and the Russians must surely be made of sterner stuff than bronze or granite if they stand fifty or sixty hours of such a cannonade. When the bombardment has done its worst it is said we are to storm. The Russians reply to the fire of the French from their batteries, in which are three mortars: Their long guns have no effect on our allies, as all their mortars are, of course, concealed by banks. From all that can be seen until now, the enemy appear but ill-provided with ordnance of the latter kind. They are using but three to reply to a destructive fire; and if, as there is every reason to believe, they possess few, if any others, the effect of our final bombardment becomes a matter of certainty. The late severity of the weather appears to have mollified the hostile feelings of the out-pickets most amazingly. At night our sentries are pushed forward considerably in advance of the Ovens, in order to give early notice of any sortie. For the same reason the Russian soldiers are sent out to within six feet of our men, in order to guard against an assault. Habit, I suppose, has lessened the aversion with which the hostile pickets at first regarded each other, and now I am informed that between our men and the French and Muscovite guards as large an amount of politeness and small talk goes forward as the mutual ignorance of one another's language will permit. All parties agree that the English are "bono," the French "bono," and the Russians "bono;" but the Turks are condemned *nem. con.* Out-pickets can only fire in case of a sortie or attack, when their alarm arouses the covering parties, who, in turn, arouse the batteries, which, by firing, turn out either the garrison or camp. All these fraternising sentries are withdrawn on both sides at daybreak; any sentry after that are fired upon by the batteries without the least compunction.

SUFFERINGS OF THE TROOPS.—During the late severe weather I am sorry to say that, besides the deaths from charcoal, two officers were frozen to death while on duty. One of these gentlemen was Lieutenant Dent, of the 9th, who had been in charge of a fatigue party to carry up provisions from Balaklava to Lord Raglan. On leaving head-quarters poor Dent, who had previously been suffering from diarrhoea, became quite exhausted, and separated from his party, when it is supposed that he sat down to rest himself and perished from the extreme cold. That night the thermometer stood at seventeen degrees, with a bitter, keen wind sweeping over the hills. The name of the other officer is not yet known, as the body, when found in a drift of snow, had been stripped of the coat and cloak, so that no regimental marks remained. During the 9th and 10th there was a smart thaw and about twenty hours' incessant rain. The effect of this upon a camp covered with ice and snow to the depth of a foot can, perhaps, be imagined; it certainly can never be described. No terms, however strong, can convey an idea of the state of slush to which we were all reduced. Previous mud faded into insignificance before the tremendous deluge which then set in. It was literally two and three feet deep everywhere, soft but horribly tenacious, produced by a thaw yet colder and more penetrating than the most severe frost. Any amount of more cold would be better and more endurable than such another liquid ordeal. Of course from all these changes the men suffer much—from the cold, from being ragged and ill clad; and from the wet, from having no change of clothes—indeed, nothing but the saturated muddy uniforms in which they stand. It is with reluctance that I say anything which can in any manner tend to damp the feeling of satisfaction which the English people must feel after having made such efforts in our behalf; but the truth must be told, and I firmly believe that all these noble exertions will be utterly useless without some sweeping change in the management of affairs out here. Lord Raglan visited Balaklava on Monday afternoon. This is the first time his lordship has visited the place since the 2nd of October last, and I am sure I am speaking within the mark when I say that it is the first time (except at the battle of Inkerman) that he has been seen out at all for the last two months. His lordship rode round Balaklava, and examined to the right of our line of defences where the marines and rifles are encamped upon the hills, and then returned to head-quarters, leaving all impressed with a firm conviction (which has not yet worn off) that something tremendous was about to happen as the consequence of his lordship's extraordinary visit.

MISMANAGEMENT AT BALAKLAVA.—At Balaklava everything remains in much the same state.—There is the same dirt, the same misery, the same suffering, and the same want of everything approaching to arrangement and system or organisation. Biscuits, warm clothing, hay and provisions of every kind, are still landed in the mud, and saturated by the rain when it falls. It would be impossible for a worse state of things to exist if we were only the remnants of a badly-levied force, which had been beaten, routed, and all but destroyed.—*Cor. of the London Morning Herald.*

THE TURKS AT BALAKLAVA.—The *Times* writes—"There is a rumor that Omer Pasha remonstrated strongly with Lord Raglan against the use of the lash by our authorities on the Turkish troops for disobedience, &c., in the town of Balaklava, and that his Excellency obtained from Lord Raglan a promise that in future the punishment would not be resorted to. The Turks who worked on the roads have refused to receive any payment, though it was at first understood that they were to get four pence each a day for their labor. The colonels of regiments have refused to let their men take the money. They said, 'We have come to fight with you on equal terms—we do not come here as a subsidised army of laborers.' However, their stomachs are entirely subsidised by us, for our commissariat feed them. I regret to say that on some occasions poor Bono Johnny is not well treated by our men, and that even some officers disgrace themselves by striking the miserable sickly creatures in the street. A strict order has now been issued that no Turkish soldier shall be struck or insulted on any pretext, and the offenders will be flogged if they are detected."

(From the London Times.)

STATE OF THE TROOPS.—The *Times* correspondent writes:—"With respect to Sebastopol, it is doubted by military men whether, after all, it may not be better to attempt to take it by assault. The defences are, they allege, still too formidable to be attacked in the manner that has been proposed even with a greater force. They give it as their opinion that our final object can be attained with greater chance of success, and much less loss of life, by