

## THE WAR.

## STATE OF THE SIEGE.

[Correspondence of The London Times.]

BEFORE SEVASTOPOL, Jan. 28, 1855.

Sunday was celebrated by an extremely heavy fire of musketry between the Russians and the French covering parties and sharpshooters. The volleys, which rolled through the less massive reports of the continual rifle practice, were as heavy as those we heard at the Alma or Inkermann, and, from the numbers of Russian infantry thrown in to the work, it is evident the enemy intend to dispute the small space of ground between the last French trench and the broken outworks of their late batteries with the greatest vigor and obstinacy.

Possibly, indeed, orders have been received, instructing the commanding officer to resist any nearer approaches on the part of the French, who have now burrowed up, trenched, zig-zagged, paralleled and parapeted the whole of the country, from the shore below the Quarantine Fort, to the rising ground close to the Flagstaff Fort, for two miles in depth, by five or six miles in length.

These works the French have executed under very heavy fire and continued obstructions from the enemy—shelling from gun, mortar, and cohorn, nightly sorties, musketry, direct attack, and the fire of outflanking parties from the works.

As a general rule, they are not so solidly and finely-finished as our own works, nor are they so thick as the more carefully constructed portions of Chapman's and Gordon's Batteries. But these works are of enormous extent, and the very slight defects in their construction may be attributed to the loose way in which our allies construct their gabions. They are not so strongly, neatly, or carefully made as our gabions, and we have had, in fact, to reconstruct a portion of trench and parapet made for us by the French in one of our attacks, owing to that very circumstance.

It must not be forgotten that the success of our first attack was materially impeded by the failure of the French in maintaining their fire, and that the failure itself arose from the imperfect construction of the powder magazines in rear of their batteries, and by the weakness of their works.

These defects have been made good by our allies with rare energy and assiduity. Their parapets have been made of great solidity, and their officers now construct their magazines on the English principle.

A magazine which the French built for us was struck by a shell the other day, and the roof was at once destroyed. Fortunately it was not charged. This fact shows that even now their workmanship is somewhat slight at times in the construction of magazines; but the new parapets and earthworks of their advanced attack seem of extreme solidity and excellence.

It is stated that the new French batteries will open fire with—guns, which will be more than twice as many as they had on the 17th of October. The guns of Russian batteries inside the Flagstaff Fort are not plainly discernible, but the French have counted, on two or three occasions, when the enemy opened a general fire, about 200 bouches a feu, including the newly-erected batteries by the Quarantine Fort. The storm of musketry never ceased last night upon these advanced works, and the constant flashes of the heavy guns lighted up the sky till daylight.

The French replied by small arms, and scarcely returned a cannon shot. Many of their guns are as yet masked, but nearly all of them are in position, and each gun will be provided with 250 rounds of ammunition.

The Russians have discovered some of the guns, and their fire has been particularly directed upon those pieces, but they have done little damage.

It cannot be expected that such an affair as last night's can take place without considerable loss on both sides. After daybreak the fire recommenced with great fury, and at about 8 o'clock a regular battle was raging in the trenches between the French and Russians.

There could not have been less than 3,000 men on each side firing as hard as they could load and pull trigger, and the lines of the works were marked by thick curling banks of smoke. The fire slackened on both sides about 9 o'clock simultaneously.

It is said the Russians fired the crenellated wall, and were enabled to fire down into the trenches. It is strange enough that this said wall should have stood so long and so well. The last time I saw it—and that was very recently—I could not see any sign of a breach in it, though it is nearly opposite the French center attack.

We further hear that the French drove the Russians back, and effected a lodgment inside their first parallel at a point where it is partially covered by the angle of the ruins of the Flagstaff Battery; but I very much doubt the correctness of that statement.

Every night, after unusually heavy firing, some such report is sure to circulate through the camp, and now not a night passes without severe skirmishing, or, rather, sharp-shooting, behind the parapets and in the broken ground between the lines.

The works are, indeed, almost into the town, and dominate its suburbs, but the ruined houses of these suburbs are turned into defenses for riflemen, and the town itself is almost one formidable battery, from the glacis up to the ridge over the sea on which the south side of the town is situated.

Our own batteries are in very good order, and are ready for the reception of the—pieces of artillery, which can be put into them in three nights. To-morrow night our troops begin to arm one attack. To-night the working parties will begin to place the guns in position in the other attack, and we have a fine battery ready to open on the steamer which is anchored toward the head of the creek near Inkermann, and which has caused us so much annoyance by her shells. The Russians, on their side, have made the heights over Inkermann bristle with batteries, some of which will probably take our more advanced works in reverse, or will at least enfilade them. If we do not stop their fire. They must have large command of horse power to enable them to draw up their heavy guns and 14-inch mortars into such difficult positions.

The French have relieved all our pickets in front of our right attack, and our extreme right picket is now situated in what is called the Middle Picket Ravine. This is a great relief to our exhausted force.

In return for this service, which might have been extended to us before, our Commissariat rations a large body of the French army. If all goes well, the Allies will be

able to reopen fire with about—guns and mortars, each with ammunition for 48 hours' sharp firing.

It is to be feared there will be great difficulty in subduing the fire of Malakhof and of the Inkermann batteries, but the effort must be made, and, if it fails, there only remains what we had in much greater efficiency and force last November—the bayonet—to do the work.

It is reported that Sir John Burgoyne recommended the use of this simple weapon long ago, and that, after the gradual slackening of our fire, he stated that every day we abstained from its use would give increased strength to the enemy, and would cost us many additional lives.

However that may be, one week more will test the value of all our labors, and enable us to form an estimate of the strength of the Russian position. They have been amusing themselves lately with shelling the French in the Reloubt Canrobert from a five-gun battery of great strength across the Tchernaya, on the brow of the Inkermann height.

They have scarped the little road up the ravine round by the ruins to the north side, and have thrown up formidable intrenchments to resist any attempt to get round the north side by Inkermann.

The Paris Presse publishes letters dated before Sevastopol, 22d January, from which we extract the following:—[N. Y. Tribune.]

"The Russians have modified their system of attack. Their sorties, which were from the beginning and until last month executed in a slovenly and irresolute manner, are now admirably conducted. In the attack on the 15th, they displayed great intrepidity. The snow appears to have excited their warlike ardor and military recollections. Perhaps it is solely owing to the change of their commanders, which, according to the deserters, is very frequent.

Toward 11 o'clock on the night of the 14th our advanced pickets gave notice of the approach of the enemy. There were then in the trenches two companies of the 96th Regiment of Infantry, and two others of the 74th, under the orders of Commander Roumejoux.

Our works are so near the Russians on that point that they came down upon us nearly as soon as the news of their approach, with extraordinary boldness, their officers marching at their head. We coolly awaited them, and when sufficiently close we charged them with the bayonet. A dreadful melee ensued, but the Russians, unable to resist when attacked with a bayonet, were speedily driven back, notwithstanding the strenuous exertions they made to maintain themselves on our line and penetrate into the battery. The melee continued during their retreat, which does honor to their officers, three of whom were killed at the first rank.

You will remark, probably, that this account pretty nearly resembles what I already wrote to you respecting the sorties of the Russians. They are no longer the men we had to contend with at the beginning of the siege, and I can assure you that we have now opposed to us adversaries not to be despised.

Moreover, our losses indicate the fierceness of the affair. We had two captains and several men killed, and fifteen wounded, among whom were Commander Roumejoux and two other officers. The commander is still living, which is truly miraculous, for the upper part of his lungs has been perforated by a bayonet.

The Russians left 30 killed in our trenches. The assailants formed a strong column, and were supported by a corps of reserve of a novel description. That corps, composed of men specially chosen for their agility and dexterity, was only armed with slight but solid ropes, at the extremity of which was a running noose. On arriving within reach of the batteries, and during the engagement, they threw on our ranks those lasso, which they handled with much skill. They did not even spare our wounded. We have been told this new weapon was used in Caucasus. This may be the case; but, as we are not the half-savage populations of Caucasus, we could not help branding that barbarous proceeding as unworthy of a European army. Publish the fact in your journal.

It will be a reply to the fine sentiment expressed by the Emperor Nicholas, which we read to-day in the papers. Everything in that sortie was strange, indeed. It was evidently organized by a man of great skill and boldness.

Those lasso, the peculiar arms borne by the officers—long, straight swords, with poinard hilts—the nails and hammers for spiking the guns, found in their pockets, all showed that the attack was planned and conducted by men who were determined to die or succeed in the attempt.

One of the officers, in his despair at not being able to climb on the epaulement, ran his long sword through the gabions to wound the soldiers placed behind them. One of the latter broke the sword in two with his spade, and then, leaping over the parapet, attacked the officer, who had only his broken sword to defend himself, and killed him. No doubt exists as to the worth and rank of the brave chief who commanded the coup de main.

The next morning a flag of truce presented himself with a letter from Gen. Osten-Sacken to General Forey, in which he expressed his deepest regret for the death of that most distinguished officer, and requested the commander of the besieging corps to give up his body to him. Gen. Forey immediately acquiesced in his desire, and by the same opportunity delivered to the Russians the bodies of twenty-six of their comrades who had not yet been interred.

This delivery took place within the buildings of the Quarantine, in the presence of an officer of an eccentric character, who spoke French very fluently, and said to us, "This is a shocking work we are engaged in! What hinders you from taking the town? All this cannot amuse you. For our part, we are heartily tired of it." What did he mean by putting to us such questions? I cannot tell; I merely repeat his expressions verbatim.

The artillery of the place has modified its firing, and has of late adopted the strange system of letting off several mortars at a time. This produces an extraordinary commotion in the air. The plan is not a bad one, for it is easier to avoid one bomb than ten.

Since the return of the fine weather the sanitary condition of the army has sensibly improved. The arrival of an immense supply of winter clothing, and leather and wooden shoes, will hereafter protect our soldiers from cold and damp. One would suppose that we had Turks to command. All our men wear the red fez, which has been given to them in lieu of nightcaps.

They have, besides, received wooden shoes, with excellent socks and woolen gloves. These particulars will

afford you an idea of the minute care taken of our soldiers. A large cargo of charcoal has just been landed at Kamlesch for distribution among the divisions. Some vessels laden with firewood have also arrived there. The Government, you see, does not let us want for anything.

Since the night of the 14th we have not heard of nor seen the Russians. They have only retained posts of observation in the valley of the Chernay. Since their last unsuccessful attempt to penetrate by Inkermann into Sebastopol, they can only communicate with the army outside along the roadstead. Nevertheless, from our positions we can see them regularly attending to their usual occupations. They establish works of defence, carry gabions, and, like us, often blow on their fingers to warm them.

On the 12th of January (the first day of the Russian year), I was standing in our new battery, (the one we received from the English, and which is to batter the tower of Malakhoff) whence I had a full view, between the Flagstaff Fort and the city, of the fine promenade on which the theatre stands.

With my long glass I perfectly beheld five or six female figures, dressed nearly alike, enjoying a morning walk. Everybody was anxious to have a peep at them, for it is now eight months since such a sight relieved our eyes. Two of them appeared handsome. We followed their movements with a certain pleasure, when they were accosted with many demonstrations of politeness by two officers, in whose company they shortly afterward disappeared."

## Decline of the Aristocracy.

[From the London Times, Feb. 14.]

From different circumstances it came to pass that at no period since the Reform bill had the aristocratic families obtained so firm a hold on office, place, and patronage as in the commencement of the year 1854. They had conducted our business for many years without any extraordinary miscarriage or misfortune, and we were content to leave them the field of politics as their peculiar vocation and monopoly. But war has always been noted as an unsparing innovator, the destroyer of conventional respectabilities, and the overthrower of all manner of snug and comfortable cliques and coteries. The experience of the last few months has awakened the people of England from their dreams of wealth and prosperity, from their traditional self-gratulations over the naval and military exploits of the late war, and from the supposition that men invested with high rank and clothed with great office are possessed of faculties equal to the direction of our affairs whenever there is more than an ordinary strain on the vessel of the State. Our eyes are open, and we behold that we are naked. We ask for talent sufficient to conduct great affairs to successful conclusions, and instead of talent we are offered title and pedigree. We ask for merit, and we are offered in exchange high connections, or, at best, seniority. The cold shade of aristocracy is over us all, and nothing can grow beneath it except the offshoots of the tree itself. Up to the middle of November this country believed itself to have armies, generals, statesmen, departments, all equal to their several duties, all of the very best the world could afford; and now, in the middle of February, in three short months, all is changed, or rather all is reversed. We have awoke from our dream of hope, prosperity, and success, to disaster and dismay. Our generals have turned out worse than useless, our ministers something more than incapable; every public department has been crushed into hopeless imbecility by the weight of unbending routine and worthless formalities, and on no one occasion, that we are aware of, has the right man been selected to fill the right place. Everything has been mismanaged to a degree which, if predicted, would have been deemed incredible; yet, so far as the public are aware, no single official has yet been recalled, and, after a week's interregnum, Government has been reconstituted and strengthened only by the omission of three of its leading members, and the promotion of one who is at least as guilty as any of those omitted.

The people of England have remained quiet under all these things. They have felt—as how should they not feel?—the mortality which has brought mourning to every hearth. They have noted—as how should they not note?—the incredible and inexplicable confusion and stupidity which have presided over every department, giving reality to absurdities such as the most extravagant imagination could never have painted, and occasioning miseries such as the gloomiest prophet could never have foreboded. Why the people have been so long silent has been to most reflecting men a matter of wonder and astonishment. They feel most acutely, but they have remained hitherto passive spectators of the method in which their best hopes and dearest interests have been squandered and betrayed. Perhaps they have cherished a hope that at the meeting of Parliament all things would be well. Perhaps they have been content to read their sentiments faithfully reflected in the columns of the press.

Whatever be the cause of their silence, that cause exists no longer, and we have to look for an expression of public opinion from one end of this country to the other which will convey to our governing classes a most clear and intelligible warning that the patience of the nation is exhausted, and that the necessity of widening the area from which our Executive is to be taken is great and paramount. The enthusiastic meeting at the town of Derby has led the way, and the remaining towns of England will not be slow to follow. The cry is for practical statesmanship, for opening a free career to talent, for placing our resources in hands equal to the emergency. The Derby petitioners hold no extravagant or exaggerated language, they declare their confidence in the justice of the war; they express their humiliation and regret at the disasters which have occurred; they pray for a searching inquiry into their causes, and suggest remedies adequate to the emergency which we have to meet. While Ministers are debating how to fill up the most important offices with the least competent persons, and considering the claims of rank, of family, and of connection—of everything except merit and capacity—while the friends of "rising young statesmen" of the true breed are indefatigably soliciting their advancement from office to office, the people of England, who care for none of these things, are gravely taking the matter into their serious consideration, and coming to conclusions but little favorable to the stability of the present governing classes.

We have been ready to allow place and patronage to be monopolized by a few great families. We have been

content to live in our own country, strangers to our own Government, excluded from the working of our own institutions; but it was only on condition that our national pride should be respected, and our interests and position in the great family of nations remain inviolate. This our aristocracy have failed to secure to us, and therefore the people of England will, we hope, demand, in no spirit of wild and theoretical leveling, in no spirits of hatred or animosity to any portion of the community, but in the spirit of practical reform of an urgent and intolerable grievance, that the system which excludes plebeian talent from high office shall henceforth be discontinued, and that in the army, at the desk, and in the council, those men shall be called to the public service who are best able to serve the public. We wish all success to this movement. It has been our painful lot to witness more nearly than others, and to obtain more ample information as to the manner in which this war has been conducted, and we do not hesitate to express the opinion that without an entire change of system, a substitution of youth and energy for age and decrepitude—unless some plan can be hit upon by which merit shall be the only criterion in the filling up of civil and military offices,—without, in fact, a complete abandonment of the claims of wealth, of family, and of interest, in favor of that higher nobility which the hand of God has impressed on the forehead of every man of talent, it is vain for us to continue the present contest, and better to accept any conditions, however degrading and nowever humiliating, since no degradation and no humiliations offered at the hands of the enemy can exceed those which our own servility and meanness have inflicted, and are about to inflict, upon ourselves.

## A Week of Railroad Suffering.

Mr. Chester, editor of the Kankakee (Ill.) Gazette was among those who were on a train of the Chicago and Mississippi Railroad, en route for Springfield, during the late storm.—The following are extracts from his journal.

Thursday, Jan. 25.

At sunset became imbedded in snow-drift, and 350 persons on board of train.

3 o'clock, Friday morning.

Wood all gone. Commenced breaking up the seats and other portions of the cars, for fuel. Passengers crowding around the stoves shivering with cold.

Sunrise—on a vast ocean of prairie, wild and stormy—our windows covered with a thick glazing of ice, and the snow driven into the cars at every crevice. Passengers gazing upon each other with anxious faces. The cold and storm too severe to venture far from the cars; one or two houses seen mile distant; no wood or timber in sight.

9 o'clock, a.m. Signals of distress. Messengers gone out to communicate our condition to the nearest dwellings. Express agents commence breaking open boxes and distributing cans of oysters. Gentlemen and ladies cooking, by cutting open one side of cans and settling them on the stoves—nothing, even pepper or salt to eat with them.

12 o'clock, m. Passengers thirsty—no water—oyster cans cleaned with snow, then filled with the same, and placed on the stoves to procure water to drink.

1 o'clock, p.m. Two men thoroughly muffled in blankets, appeared on horseback, inquiring into our condition, and left on full gallop to provide assistance. Found a few railroad ties to cut for wood. The inside of one car, seats and partitions, burned up to keep warm. Conductor directed the passengers to begin with the poorest car and destroy it for fuel, and then the next, rather than suffer suffer with the cold.

5 o'clock. Children crying for food—some crackers and cheese arrive, met a joyful reception. Each one with a handful of crackers—a short allowance of cheese, many unable to get any.

4 o'clock p.m. More provisions, but not sufficient for each. Divided among the ladies and children first. Engines gone and frozen up.—Men gone in different directions in pursuit of houses. Our number reduced—deer seen on the prairie—one man goes in pursuit. Conductor reports that he can do nothing more towards advancing us on our journey. Two men from the country arrive with teams. The members of the Legislature make large offers to be taken by teams to Bloomington. One teamsters offers to take a load to Pontiac (13 miles) for ten dollars apiece, some started on foot; arrangements made for another gloomy night on the cars; efforts to make the ladies and children as comfortable as possible. The fires in two of the cars put out, and the passengers crowded into the remainder for greater warmth: an attempt made to haul one car by oxen back to Dwight station, six miles, but failed; much complaining among the passengers.

Saturday morning, 9 o'clock. Conductor distributing some broken fragments of bread and fried cakes among the passengers; no person allowed to take more than one piece; sent for more provisions. Nearly everything purchased, paid for at exorbitant rates. Passengers at work shovelling snow; and numbers who have left the cars are severely frozen. Members of the Legislature very anxious to reach Springfield; offering almost any terms that may be demanded to enable them to reach Bloomington; no teamster willing to risk it; have been out in the midst of the tempest to find teams, but failed.

Cigars nearly gone; gentlemen smoking very carefully the last end until it burns their lips.

Gentlemen begging tobacco to chew; are shown little wads of it carefully and economically saved, and are unwilling to divide.

1 o'clock, p.m. No dinner; started myself for Dwight station on foot; there found a dinner prepared; refreshed myself and started on foot for Washington, 20 miles distant. Three others joined me; met two engines from Joliet, about 3 miles from Dwight, in search of our party; took us on board and plowed through the snow-drifts, being well stocked with wood and provisions arrived at Dwight about 7 o'clock: great excitement among the passengers who had arrived at Dwight station, at the appearance of the engines. Prepared with an additional supply of wood and water, started for the scene of distress; great joy on board the cars; were soon extricated from the snow-drift and returned to Dwight Station.

Supper prepared, passengers were seated once more, after a long interval, to a supper table.

Monday morning, 9 o'clock. Members of the Legislature making arrangements at extravagant prices to go through to Bloomington, by sleighs, charges twenty-five cents per mile; two sleigh loads leave; a quarter of a hour later and all return: teams unable to proceed; the members determining to proceed on foot; dissuaded from it; efforts to procure other teams.