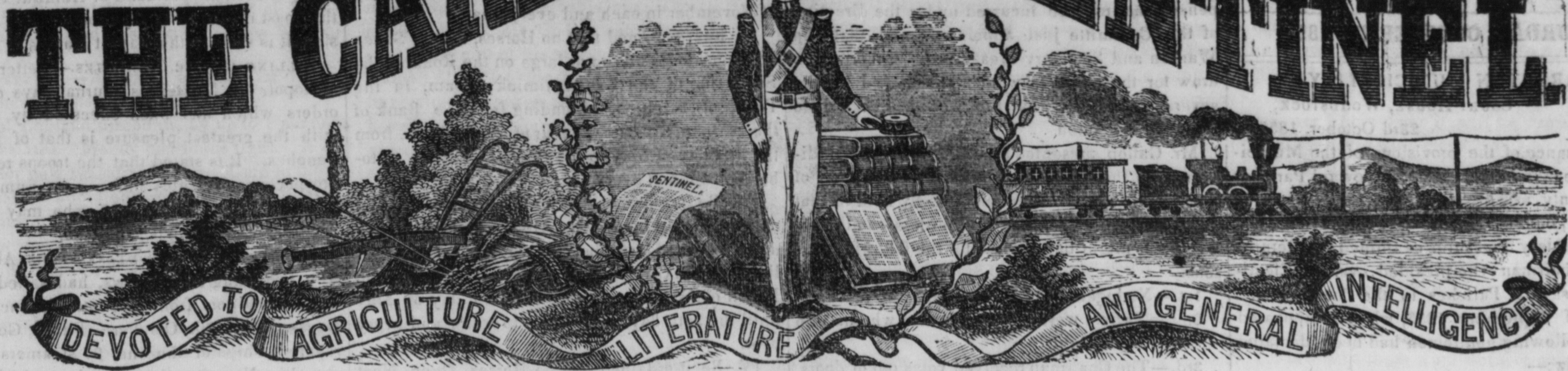


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[By JAMES McLAUCHLAN.

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FALL OF SEBASTOPOL.

(The following is published in the *Morning Herald*, and is written by the gentleman who lately acted as Crimean correspondent to that journal.)

In my communication of yesterday I argued against the absurdity of those who clamoured for "a march to the north side of Sebastopol, and who seemed to think that such a feat involved nothing but a "march," and one that might be undertaken immediately. I then said that the formidable nature of the obstacles the allies would have to surmount ere the north forts could be attacked at all would be so great that the winter would very probably be allowed to pass ere it was attempted. This conjecture will doubtless, appear unreasonable and unsatisfactory to those unacquainted by actual observation with the real positions of the combatants; but I think when they see the reasons on which I have formed my opinions, they will agree with me, that though the south side is captured and destroyed, the allies have still some of the greatest difficulties to overcome. When the famous flank march was made from Belbek to Balaklava, it was of course, intended to take the enemy by surprise and assault the south side of the town at once. The flank march must have had this object in view or none at all. When, however, the allied generals arrived at the south side, the first glance at Sebastopol showed them that nothing like a coup de main could be attempted. Then, also, was discovered the total and entire inaccuracy of all the information on which the English government had acted with regard to their preparations for the siege. From the disclosures of Mr. Roebuck's committee we see that the English government relied on only 40,000 Russian troops being in the Crimea. Admiral Dundas said there were upwards of 100,000 and he was right, though no one believed him at that time. The English Government believed that the south side was defenceless, and were actually ignorant of the fact that from the beginning of June 1854, the Russians had been throwing up earthworks on that side, and had completed a trench round the town and the Flagstaff and Great Redan Batteries, before the end of July,—six weeks previous to the allied expedition leaving Varna.

Let your readers then imagine, if they can, what must have been the feelings of Generals Canrobert and Raglan, when they found themselves, on the approach of winter, with barely 40,000 men and a siege train of 54 light guns, committed irrevocably to the siege and capture of one of the strongest fortresses in the world, defended by a garrison twice as numerous as their own army. These however, were not all the faults. The French held their positions by the sea shore, and had, therefore, nothing to do with the roads, or means of communication with the interior of the Crimea. On the English who encamped up the country, this important duty devolved. The English quarter-master-general (Airey) was by his position bound to know all the roads and facilities, either on our side or the enemy's, for advancing troops and munitions of war to Sebastopol. It was above all things of vital importance that he should be well aware of the enemy's resources in this respect. Yet, though every man in the English army knows the truth of what I am now going to assert, it will scarcely be believed in England that General Airey was so ignorant of the roads in the Crimea, that after the landing at Kalamita we were dependent on the information and guidance of captured Tartars for knowledge of the routes by which we marched from Alma. This lamentable

deficiency, it will be seen, exercised a most important influence on the fortunes of the allies, cost some thousands of brave men their lives, and at this very hour still acts in hindering the "march" round to the north side.

When the allies took up their position on the southern heights, General Airey was still at fault and in spite of the reiterated and unanimous testimony of Tartars, deserters, and prisoners, he persisted in maintaining that the Woronzow road, which crossed the plain of Balaklava to the south was the only road which connected Simpheropol and Baktchi Serai with Sebastopol. Acting upon this information—as how could he do otherwise?—Lord Raglan, though sorely straitened for men, proceeded to occupy it, and as neither French nor English could be spared, the Turks held it in the redoubts which were lost at the battle of Balaklava. This is the real secret of the false and ill-judged position which was taken up on the Woronzow road, which all the generals of division saw and spoke of as too extended for our small army, but which General Airey persisted was necessary to cut off the supplies from Sebastopol. The battle of Balaklava gave the Woronzow road and its redoubts to the enemy, and brought them in force close to the actual harbour and town. They maintained their position, and kept the allies in such continual apprehensions of an attack that a battery of artillery, with the Rifle Brigade, the Highland Brigade, and a brigade of Zouaves, had to be detached from the army in front already insufficient for the task it had to accomplish. These were the first fruits of General Airey's want of knowledge. About this time it began to be whispered that there was another route of communication between Simpheropol and Sebastopol, in addition to the Woronzow road, and that this route ran from the north side of Sebastopol past the upper Inkerman height into Baktchi Serai; but to all offers of information on this point General Airey was deaf. He said he knew the Russians had contemplated and had actually begun a fine military traffic:— "A courier or a light mail cart might probably get along it; but he was assured (he said) that for the purpose of conveying munitions of war into Sebastopol, it was, and must be for some time, useless." Yet as is now well known, this great military road was publicly opened in the beginning of June, 1854 and has since that date been always used by the Russians. By means of this road not only were the communications with Sebastopol kept open but the enemy were enabled in the beginning of November to collect an immense mass of troops—an guns upon the English right of Inkerman.

The bloody struggle of the 5th of November, which his ignorance and disbelief in the existence of the road occasioned the allies, at last removed his incredulity, General Airey then coolly acknowledged that he had been misled by false information. These are not charges brought from mere hearsay; I derive my knowledge of them from General Airey's sworn evidence, given before a court of enquiry ordered for a particular purpose in April last, at Balaklava, in which he stated on oath "that he was misled as to the existence of the north road, and that that false information he attributed the battles of Balaklava and Inkerman." So much for the knowledge of the English quarter-master general, and so much for the information on which the English government undertook the invasion of the Crimea. When General Airey could no longer deny his fault, it was too late to repair the mischief it had caused. After the battle of Inkerman, the allies were so much reduced in numbers, that throughout the camp it was gravely doubted whether they would be able to maintain their ground even till rein-

forcements arrived. The lines on all points were contracted as much as possible, and the men employed in entrenching them with additional defences. For want of the troops who were thus engaged, the siege was virtually raised during the winter, and the road from Balaklava to the camp—the want of which causes all our miseries—could not be made.

The garrison of Sebastopol, thus left to itself, was enabled to proceed unmolested in their work of leisurely trenching us round; and, as it were, enclosing the allies within their own lines. They were enabled to complete and perfect a line of earthworks stretching on the north side from the Belbek to the Valley of Inkerman, and above all, to throw up the tremendous works which cover the road leading to the north side by Traktir Bridge and Mackenzie's Farm. They were also able to fortify the rocky pass which leads from Baktchi-Serai to Sebastopol, and to cover with new batteries and earthworks the whole ridge of the heights of Alma. Thus they secured themselves from any movement of the allies towards the north side—from any advance upon Baktchi-Serai by way of Kerch, and from any attempts of the Turks from Eupatoria. With these defences the allies will now have to cope in their advance upon the north side. In a letter like this—already too long—I cannot describe all the difficulties which lie in the way of attacks upon the three points I have mentioned. I shall, therefore, close it by only detailing, as briefly as possible, the hindrances to the "march to the north side," by Mackenzie's Farm—a "march" which too many seem to think ought to be commenced forthwith.

Your readers, I presume, are already well acquainted with the fact that the plain of Balaklava is enclosed by a steep, precipitous ridge of chalk cliffs, which, varying from 500 to 2,000 feet high, stretch almost from the water's edge at the head of the harbour of Sebastopol, across the plain to the bridge of Traktir. The heights thus far run due north and south. At Traktir bridge they fall back a little, and, turning at a right angle, run east and west for about three miles, when they again form an angle, and bend away to the south to Yalta. The first angle, therefore, where they turn to the south, is Mackenzie's Farm. The space of ground enclosed in the angle which Mackenzie's Farm dominates is a level waste, productive, apparently, of nothing but large stones.—Crossing Traktir, the road wends across the waste I have mentioned, and under the heights. Every part of this road, I need not say, is commanded by Russian redoubts and batteries on the summits of the cliffs. To take these heights from the front would be utterly impossible; they are too steep to be even scaled by any but expert climbers.—They could only be turned—and that could only be accomplished by forcing the Mackenzie road. This famous road is distant from Traktir Bridge about two miles. Formerly all communication with the north side of Sebastopol by this route was shut out by the cliffs, and it was only about 15 years ago that the Russian troops were employed in cutting the Mackenzie road. It commences at the foot and in the centre of the chain of cliffs which run east and west from the bridge to the farm. It is cut in the face of the cliff a path about 12 feet wide, and stretching upwards from the plain in a perfectly straight line into the angle in which Mackenzie's Farm is situated.—Therefore, in ascending the road [which is so steep as to be almost useless for the purposes of ordinary traffic] the cliffs tower above on the left hand, while on the right is a sheer descent to the plain below, varying in depth from 100 to 600 feet. It is this road which the Russians covered with redoubts and batteries during the winter. Cut a-

cross it are no less than eight batteries, each rising above the other at a distance of about 200 yards apart. When the road reaches the top of the ridge a whole mass of guns from the heights on the left, and the heights of Mackenzie's Farm in front bear full upon it. Once the top is gained opposition would cease, and well it might. Any army attempting to force this road must march from Traktir Bridge, with his left flank exposed to such a mitraille as would annihilate even bronze troops, to the foot of the Mackenzie road—a distance of two miles—without returning a shot. Then, while the main body of the army stands under this fire, the storming columns (which can only go twelve abreast at the most) must advance up the Mackenzie path against the works I have already mentioned. There is no other way of turning these formidable heights, or gaining the north side of Sebastopol, from Balaklava by land. There is a little sheep-track over the mountains from Yalta, but so steep and dangerous as to be almost impracticable for infantry, and utterly so for guns, cavalry, or stores of any description.—Now do your readers think that, in the face of these obstacles, the "march" round to the north side will be undertaken in the off-hand style our military critics at home seem to expect? Or do they think that the allies will ever try to force their way by this route at all? I certainly doubt that they will, and give the allied commanders credit for possessing more judgment than ever to attempt it. For though the troops that took the south side of Sebastopol might dare anything, yet I think even Pelissier will pause before attacking the Mackenzie road. In such an attack we might be unsuccessful, and we must be prepared to lose half our army. No; the campaign is virtually closed for this summer, and your readers may rely upon it they will hear of no attempt to force the Mackenzie road. When the campaign is recommenced I believe the allies will land again at Kalamita, and the glory of the first battle of the Alma will then be eclipsed in the desperate struggle of the second. In the meantime the Russians will gain no strength by wintering in huts around the north forts. If it is true they are short of provisions now, every day their huge garrison remains there serves the cause of the allies. If you can find space for another communication from me on this subject, I shall endeavour in my next letter to point out the obstacles which render any immediate movement on the north side from Eupatoria or Kalmita impossible at this late season of the year.

INTERNAL SUFFERINGS OF RUSSIA.—There are three articles relating to Russia and the Russian war, in Blackwood for August. One of them is particularly interesting. It gives a description of what it calls the "Internal Sufferings of Russia during the War, by an eye-witness." The author is said to have returned during the course of the present summer from Russia, where he had passed so many years that he had learned to write bad English. It represents the owners of real estate in Russia as reduced to poverty, the labouring class as starving, the whole country as exhausted, the government uneasy and all classes desiring peace.

Cholera carried off 11,000 persons in Florence in the month of August last. The population, originally 100,000, has been reduced to 60,000 by death and flight. The Grand Duke remains, and in the veil of the Fraternity of Mercy, sometimes assists at the burial of the dead. A letter in the London News positively affirms that ten persons were recently buried alive.

At most of the metropolitan churches, on Sunday, reference was made by the ministers to the late victory in the Crimea, and forms of thanksgiving were read.