

Literature, &c.

RUSSIA AND TURKEY.

STRONGHOLDS OF THE BALTIC.

VIBORG.

The port of Viborg is of great extent, and is enclosed by two large islands, which form as it were, two natural break waters. As a fortress it ranks high, both for position and strength:—The sea washes nearly the whole length of the outer walls, while battery upon battery commands every approach. Between the lines and the city there flows a broad arm of the sea, in the midst of which stands a solitary rock, crowned with a fine old tower of other days, rearing its still proud head, high and imposing above all around it. The view of this frontier fortress, with its churches and domes flashing in the sun, and its long line of batteries and bastions rising in massive strength from the water's edge, is very striking. The castle of Viborg, destroyed by fire and now in ruins, was built in 1293, by the brave Tarkel Knudstan, one of the most illustrious Swedes mentioned in history. Viborg was then one of the chief cities of Finland, and the seat of a bishop. Attacked on several occasions by the Russians, it defended itself with great bravery. In 1710, the place was besieged by Peter the Great, and taken after a hard struggle, which occupied several weeks. The peace in 1721, known as the treaty of Nystad, put the Czar in possession of it and the surrounding country; and in 1745, the treaty of Abo enlarged still further this conquest. The Swedes, since the days of Peter, have always played a losing game when at war with Russia, particularly as the latter have almost always succeeded in gaining the assistance of the Germanic Kings of Denmark; and in the desperate battle fought near Abo, between the two fleets, in 1790, the Swedes lost nine ships of the line, three frigates, and upwards of twenty galleys. For nearly a century the conquered portions of Finland, distinguished as Gama Finland, or Ancient Finland, were subject to the same regulations in civil matters as the rest of the Russian empire.

FREDERIKSHAM.

In this circle lies also, on a peninsula in the Bay of Finland, Frederiksham, a town with about 1,500 inhabitants. The fortress was constructed on Vaaban's principle; but judging by the neglected aspect of the place, Russia has very little use for the stronghold. Originally it was a place of great strength, and inaccessible on two sides; the approaches are covered and protected by field-works to a considerable distance; and the only entrance to the town, which looks as deserted as the fortifications, is by a narrow passage winding round the angle of a bastion, enfiladed in every direction by the works from the body of the place. Frederiksham was, in former days, the residence of the governor of the province; a massive tower, constructed in the middle of the square, overlooked the whole town, and from this every street diverged like the spokes of a wheel. It was in this tower, and on the 5th of September 1809 that the treaty of peace was signed, by which Sweden surrendered Finland to Russia. A fire consumed this tower and several of the streets some few years since.

ST. MICHAEL.

St. Michael, north west of the preceding circle, contains a small town of the same name, and Nyslot, another small town, with a strong castle on a rock in the middle of a deep stream. The town lies about 75 miles north of Viborg, on two islands in Lake Harpavesi or Ootroufs, and communicates with the mainland by a bridge. It was ceded to Russia at the peace of Abo in 1743.

HELSINGFORS.

In Nyland, to the west of Viborg, is Helsingfors, the present capital of the Duchy, on a tongue of land in the gulf of Finland, with about 16,000 inhabitants, and the strong fortress of Sveaborg protecting the entrance of the harbour. Helsingfors lies in latitude 60 deg. 9 min. 42 sec. N., long. 24 deg. 57 min. 30 sec. E., at the mouth of the Vanna, about 180 miles W. N. W. of St. Petersburg. The town is, historically speaking, comparatively of modern creation, having been founded by Gustavus Vassa, in the sixteenth century; its name came from a colony of the province of Helsingland, which had been established in the neighbourhood for several centuries. In 1839, however, the town changed its site, and the inhabitants moved their wooden houses nearer the sea shore, and on the spot where Helsingfors now stands; war, plague, famine, and fire ravaged it, each in its turn, and the end of a century found it with only a population of 5000 souls. At the present moment it numbers 16,000, exclusive of the garrison.—The Russians have greatly augmented and improved Helsingfors since it came into their possession, more particularly since the year 1819, when it became the capital of Finland, the removal to it of the University of Abo, and the Senate, after the conflagration of that town in 1827, also materially increased its

importance. The streets are long, large, and laid out at right angles as in most other Russian towns.

The remains of the library saved from the fire of Abo, is at present preserved in this building. It consists of about 80,000 volumes, chiefly editions of the classics taken by Charles the Twelfth from the monasteries during the Seven Years' War. An extensive collection of Sagas and historical documents of the history of Finland unfortunately fell a prey to the flames. The number of students who matriculated at the University of Helsingfors in the winter term of 1851, was 491. The celebrated Arabian scholar and traveller, Professor Wallin, died lately at this University.

The harbor is capacious and ranks as one of the best in the Baltic, and an important trade is carried on in timber, corn, and fish. Helsingfors is the residence of the Governor General, and the seat of important courts and public offices:—it contains the senate house, several churches, and has manufactures of linen, sailcloth and tobacco. There are several agreeable walks in the neighborhood, amongst which the forests of Sandsvik, the solitary coast near Mailand, and the verdant gardens of Traeskenda are chiefly noticeable.

The approach to Helsingfors by water is exceedingly striking. The harbour is well protected by the works and fortress of Sveaborg, which are built upon seven islands.—The fortifications are said to mount 800 cannon, with barracks and casemates for a garrison of 12,000 men. The strength of the fortress is such that it has been termed the Gibraltar of the North. The original fortress was erected by Count Ehrensvaerd, Field Marshal of Sweden, by command of Gustavus the First; it was destroyed in the Russian war, and a Swedish army under Count Levenhaupt surrendered by capitulation to the Russians. The last stone of the new citadel was laid in 1758, and after the conquest of Viborg and Ingermania by Peter the Great, this fortress was the last rampart Sweden had against the Russians, and the rallying point of the troops and fleet. In March, 1808, it was besieged by the Russians, and two months after, Admiral Cronstadt, who defended the place with 1,500 men, and two frigates, capitulated, though well furnished with every munition of war. The secret of this capitulation, without example in history, was never known.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF THE BLACK SEA.

The Black Sea is an inland basin with a margin of coast generally elevated and rocky, having a transverse diameter of about 650 miles from west to east, and conjugate one of more than 300, and an area of 172,000 square miles. Its modern name is supposed to originate from the dense fogs which occasionally cover it, or the danger of its navigation arising from these fogs; at all events it was much dreaded by the ancients, who placed their Cimerian land of utter darkness on its northern shores. Besides the fresh water from Asia Minor, it receives some of the largest rivers in Europe, including the Danube, Dneiper, and Dneister, the Don and the Kouban; its waters are in consequence only brackish, and it is singular that, with such a large and constant accession of fresh streams continually pouring into it, any saltiness should be retained. Its depth in general is great, no bottom being struck with 150 fathoms of line; but off the mouth of the Danube the water deepens very gradually, and nearly as much so from Serpent's Isle by Odessa to the Crimea. The streams of the great rivers produce strong currents, particularly in the beginning of summer, when they are increased by the melting of the snows; and, when strong winds act against these flowings, a chopping sea is produced, which in foggy weather is dangerous to small craft. Independently, however, of such chances, the Black Sea is free from any dangers; having with a trivial exception or two, neither islands, rocks nor reefs in the general track of navigation; and almost every where there are excellent anchorages, affording good riding for the largest ships. Its trade consists of grain, wine, timber, charcoal, pitch, potash, fish, caviar, isinglass, shagreen, salted provisions, cheese, poultry, butter, wool, hides, hemp tallow, honey, tobacco, salt, iron, copper, and salt-petre; but especially corn.

The large body of water on the north-east of the Euxine, called the sea of Asof, the Azak-denz-i of the Turks, has a surface of rather more than 13,000 square miles; and from the action of its rivers, its waters are rather brackish than salt. The navigation of this subdivision of the Black Sea is impeded by the freshets of the Don, its general shallowness, numerous shoals, and occasional ice; nor can it be entered by shipping otherwise than by the narrow straits of Tamen or Yenikaleh, the ancient Cimmerian Bosphorus.—But notwithstanding these physical impediments, such are the advantages of moral exertions, that Taganrog, its chief port, is a place of considerable and increasing consequence, the value of its import trade in 1850 being upwards of £330,000, and its exports about half a million.

It seems agreed among cosmogonists, that the Black Sea, at a remote period, extended

much further to the east and north than it does now, occupying the whole of the vast plains and steppes that surrounded the Caspian and the sea of Aral, neither of which had then a separate existence; the difference of their levels having arisen at later periods.—Their depth must probably alter materially, since the beds of the rivers above-mentioned are charged with an extraordinary quantity of sand and slime, which from the rapidity of their course they hold in suspension till they approach the sea, where, spreading over a wider area, and flowing in a more gentle current, they deposit the substance brought down so gradually that the elevation of their beds is almost imperceptible. Polybius, who states this as a cause for predicting the filling up of the Euxine in process of time, describes a shoal one thousand stadia in length before the mouth of the Ister, at one day's sail from land; this having long since disappeared, has no doubt become a part of the Delta of the Danube. The Sea of Azof has manifestly contracted its boundaries.

EGYPTIANS AT ST. PETERSBURG.

Letters from Alexandria of the 8th state that the Egyptian officers of the Seri-Pervas steamer, who had fallen into the hands of the Russians at Sinope, had just been brought from Constantinople to Alexandria by the Austrian steamer. They had been taken to St. Petersburg by order of the Czar, and were very kindly received by him. He conversed with them for some time through an interpreter, and expressed his surprise, since he was not at war with Egypt, to see them fighting against Russia. The officers replied that the war which his Majesty was waging on Turkey, was menacing not only for Egypt, but for every other country, and that he ought not to be astonished to see their nation in arms against him for so legitimate a cause. The Czar, nevertheless, presented them to the Empress, and then informed them they were free to return home on condition of not bearing arms against Russia for the space of one year.

NEWS FOR ENGLISHMEN FROM ST. PETERSBURG.

A St Petersburg paper of the 10th gives details from London of the attempts now making in England to raise forces capable of meeting those of Russia. According to this authority old men of 60 are ordered on board to make up the full complement of a ship's crew; the recruits too have had the greatest difficulty in beating up volunteers; then, again, children of 9, 10, and 12 years have been coaxed into the naval service; "hugh" bounties have been offered to natives and foreign mariners as an inducement for them to enter the Royal Navy; never had it been so difficult to collect sailors in England, and never were there so few seamen as at present.

THE CIRCASSIANS AS SOLDIERS.

When the Russian soldier is isolated he is lost, and when a charge *en masse*, or the repulse of a mass is not the affair of a moment, he is bewildered. The war of guerrillas and skirmishes takes him at a disadvantage.—Against such an adversary the Caucasian is a hero of fable. Sober and abstemious, inured to privations as to fatigue, he seldom or never carries provisions with him. If the chase does not supply him with provisions, which seldom occurs in that country, he has a right to take one's sheep out of every flock he meets on his march, and in case of necessity he can do without food for forty eight hours. At night he takes shelter under the first cliff.—His large cloak of felt serves him for mattress and blanket. If he happen to be surprised by the enemy with superior force, and it be impossible to escape, he stabs himself to the heart rather than surrender; but if he can fight he does so to the last. He handles his arms with equal dexterity on foot or on horseback. When his steed is at full gallop, he draws his musket from its sheath, takes aim and fires without ever missing his object; flings the weapon back again into its sheath, seizes his pistol, his sabre, or his yataghan, and all done with marvellous rapidity. His musket is excessively long, but of admirable precision.

The bullet is small, and of copper, as not only powder but lead also is very scarce, and it frequently happens that a bullock is given in exchange for a pound of powder. The most desperate attacks are made on forts, or magazines, with the hope of procuring a supply of these valuable articles. The sabre used by these warriors is of the finest temper; it is bent in form, and has no guard to protect the hand. The Russians have introduced the latter weapon among some of the cavalry regiments that serve in the Caucasus and the officers seldom have any other. Of the Russian army the Cossacks of the Line are the troops who can best resist the mountaineers. Dwelling near them, they have adopted their usages, their costume, and their arms, and almost equal them in address and rapidity of movement. The Cossacks of the Black Sea, although less capable to resist than those of the Line, yet are not to be despised. Their brethren of the Don, are however, a subject of railery to the Tcherkesses, as well on account of their red jackets as of

what these term their effeminacy. When they fall into the hands of the mountaineers they are massacred without pity.

It is a curious thing to see these opposed to the Cossacks of the Line. They spare their cartridges, at first through economy and then to have advantage of the last volley, they employ in single encounters as much cunning as agility in guiding their horses.—They sometimes pretend to be mortally wounded by a bullet and drop from their saddle, and suspended to the stirrup allow themselves to be dragged along by the horse.—When a Cossack approaches to despatch him, the Circassian rises suddenly, and fires his pistol point-black in his head.

News of the Week.

From English papers to the 1st of April.

DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST RUSSIA.

It is with deep regret that her Majesty announces the failure of her anxious and protracted endeavours to preserve for her people and for Europe the blessings of peace.

The unprovoked aggression of the Emperor of Russia against the Sublime Porte has been persisted in with such disregard of consequences, that after the rejection by the Emperor of Russia of terms which the Emperor of Austria, the Emperor of the French, and the King of Prussia, as well as her Majesty, considered just and equitable, her Majesty is compelled by a sense of what is due to the honour of her crown, to the interests of her people, and to the independence of the states of Europe, to come forward in defence of an ally whose territory is invaded, and whose dignity and independence are assailed.

Her Majesty, in justification of the course she is about to pursue, refers to the transactions in which her Majesty has been engaged.

The Emperor of Russia had some cause of complaint against the Sultan with reference to the settlement, which his Highness had sanctioned, of the conflicting claims of the Greek and Latin churches to a portion of the Holy Places of Jerusalem and its neighbourhood. To the complaint of the Emperor of Russia on this head justice was done; and her Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople had the satisfaction of promoting an arrangement to which no exception was taken by the Russian government.

But while the Russian repeatedly assured the government of her Majesty that the mission of Prince Menchikoff to Constantinople was exclusively directed to the settlement of the question of the Holy Places at Jerusalem, Prince Menchikoff himself pressed upon the Porte other demands of a far more serious and important character, the nature of which he in the first instance endeavoured, as far as possible, to conceal from her Majesty's Ambassador. And these demands, thus studiously concealed, affected not the privileges of the Greek Church at Jerusalem, but the position of many millions of Turkish subjects in their relations to their sovereign the Sultan.

These demands were rejected by the spontaneous decision of the Sublime Porte.

Two assurances had been given to her Majesty—one that the mission of Prince Menchikoff only regarded the Holy Places; the other that his mission would be of a conciliatory character.

In both respects her Majesty's just expectations were disappointed.

Demands were made which, in the opinion of the Sultan, extended to the substitution of the Emperor of Russia's authority for his own over a large portion of his subjects, and those demands were enforced by a threat; and when her Majesty learnt that, on announcing the termination of his mission, Prince Menchikoff declared that the refusal of his demands would impose upon the imperial government the necessity of seeking a guarantee by its own power, her Majesty thought proper that her fleet should leave Malta, and, in cooperating with this of his Majesty the Emperor of the French, take up its station in the neighbourhood of the Dardanelles.

So long as the negotiation bore an amicable character, her Majesty refrained from any demonstration of force. But when, in addition to the assemblage of large military forces on the frontier of Turkey, the ambassador of Russia intimated that serious consequences would ensue from the refusal of the Sultan to comply with unwarrantable demands her Majesty deemed it right, in conjunction with the Emperor of the French, to give an unquestionable proof of her determination to support the sovereign rights of the Sultan.

The Russian government has maintained that the determination of the Emperor to occupy the Principalities was taken in consequence of the advance of the fleets of England and France. But the menace of invasion of the Turkish territory was conveyed in Count Nesselrode's Note to Rechid Pacha, of the 19th (31st) May, and re-stated in his despatch to Baron Brunnow, of the 20th May