

The Politician.

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OUR SECRETARY AT WAR.

We are not surprised to find that the peculiar position in which Mr Sidney Herbert is placed is beginning to attract a large share of public attention. Mr S. Herbert's father, the late Earl of Pembroke, married the daughter of the Russian Count Woronzoff, and the Prince Woronzoff, who has been till lately in command of the Russian armies in Georgia, is his maternal uncle. It is therefore impossible but that Mr Sidney Herbert, if he be endowed with the ordinary feelings of a man and a gentleman, must deeply regret the war now being waged between two nations to which he is respectively bound by the closest ties. We do not blame him for having Russian sympathies; on the contrary, we do not see how it is possible for him to divest himself wholly of them. It is quite true that he is an Englishman, and that he has a larger amount of interest connected with England than with Russia; but we maintain, that if he be what he ought to be, he must witness with sincere sorrow two nations with whom he is so closely connected, engaged in a deadly struggle with each other. Such being the position of the half-English, half-Russian privy councillor, it has long been a matter of surprise to us that his own good taste and his own sense of the proprieties of life have not induced him to retire from a post in which, so soon as the war broke out, he could not discharge his duty to England without doing violence to those feelings which he must (if he be good for anything) entertain towards his mother's country. Would it, we ask, be creditable to him to rejoice over the defeat and humiliation of Russia with the same entirety of heart which an Englishman would do who had no family link with Russia? How, then, as a gentleman, he has consented to continue in an official post, in which he is called upon to take an active and prominent part in offensive hostilities against his maternal country, has ever been one of those curious problems on which one is content to speculate without the faintest hope of arriving at its solution. And if the matter concerned alone Mr Sidney Herbert's feelings, it might be well to let it rest, and to leave him to settle it as best he may with his own conscience; but unfortunately his peculiar position, in proportion as it becomes more generally known, excites a great deal of unavoidable suspicion. The cabinet to which he is a member is notoriously charged with having amongst its members men of Russian tendencies. Its head is familiarly designated as "the Czar's forty years' friend." It has been singularly forbearing and unsuccessful in its warlike operations against its country's foe. This forbearance has been the result of arowed and deliberate policy, and this want of success has been the result, if we do not say of deliberate and planned neglect, yet of such an extraordinary want of foresight as it is impossible to reconcile with a real, hearty *bona fide* resolution to deserve and to secure success. Under these circumstances, it is much to be regretted that such an additional ground for uneasiness should be presented to the public mind as that arising from a half-Russian cabinet minister being the identical minister to prepare our forces for the operations of war; more especially when his best friends cannot deny that he occupies a post which a man of delicate feeling, in his peculiar position, would not consent to retain for a day, however conscious he might be that he had chosen his side, and thrown to the winds his earliest and long-cherished predilections.

From the London Morning Herald.

APPROACHING MINISTERIAL CRISIS.

That which we have long anticipated is likely soon to take place. In well-informed circles the impression is general that a ministerial crisis is at hand, if it has not actually arrived. Lord John Russell, it appears, and the party who act with him in the cabinet, are determined not to incur the responsibility of acting further with the men to whom the management of the War Department has been confided. The vague rumour of cabinet dissension has at length assumed a definite shape. The Lord President of the Council has demanded, it is said, the removal of the Duke of Newcastle and Sir Sidney Herbert from the posts for which they have proved themselves so miserably disqualified, and the dismissal of those poor incapables involves the retirement of the remainder of the "gang," including, of course, the First Lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We do not pretend to be in the confidence of ministers, but it requires no peculiar penetration to see that the coalition has any moment liable to dislocation, and that latterly such an event had become inevitable. Lord John Russell can neither have forgotten nor forgiven the slight to himself and the great party he represents, of placing every office connected with the War Department in the hands of a Peelite clique, while Whigs have been carefully excluded. The few men of ability and experience in the cabinet have been compelled to look on, while their incompetent colleagues were blundering along their ruinous course; and they had the satisfac-

tion of reflecting, and although they were powerless to control the mischief daily accumulating through the ignorance and presumption of the War-office, they were held accountable for it by the country at large. It is not surprising, therefore, that Lord John Russell should have resolved no longer to peril the remnant of the expedition in the Crimea, and his own reputation as a statesman, by an association with the most incompetent and perverse ministers who ever scrambled for office. There is another indication of an imminent crisis. Cabinet Councils have been held almost daily since the commencement of the recess. These constant deliberations are not the evidence of stability in an administration. They are the result of constant dissensions, and as constant, but futile, efforts to repair them. A contemporary of yesterday confirms the statement we have so frequently and so emphatically made respecting the divisions of the cabinet on our foreign policy, and fully confirms our expressed belief that the foreign policy of Lord Aberdeen is, and ever has been, radically opposed to that of his ablest colleagues. We refer to the article in question, because it manifestly proceeds from an official source; it possesses at this critical juncture peculiar significance, and is an unerring index of the state of affairs in the coalition. We say, therefore, let the opposition be prepared. The coalition has been long enough in office to test its utter unfitness for the administration of the affairs of this great country in the hour of trial and of danger. Let the conservative party unite as one man, and support an administration capable, patriotic, and determined—jealous of the honor of England, and resolved to uphold it; and whose administrative abilities may restore order, and impart vigour to those departments where it is most needed. The materials for such an administration are at hand. One month's intelligence and vigorous management of the War Department will go far to repair the conceited blundering of the Duke of Newcastle, and the incapacity of the feeble Secretary at War. Upon a change of ministry, and such a one as we have indicated, depends the safety and success of the army before Sebastopol, and possibly the security of the French alliance—whether, in short, we shall be able to dictate terms to the Czar, or sacrifice all for which we have taken up arms, and with it our power, our prestige, and our unsullied national honour.

From the London Morning Chronicle.

OPERATIONS IN THE CRIMEA.

So, after all, matters are not quite so bad in the Crimea. The prospect of getting possession of the town of Sebastopol grows so hopeful, that it is necessary to warn the country against trusting Lord Raglan further. The bulk of mankind are apt to believe that success is a proof of merit; and if victory should crown our arms under the guidance of our present general, it is really to be feared that the nation may be so infatuated as to continue him in the command. Perhaps we are all mistaken in desiring the triumph of our soldiers. It may be that defeat would give us a salutary lesson.—Good fortune will but close our ears against good council; and we may find, after all, that we have been lured by prosperity to persevere in a frightful and disastrous mistake. This, it appears is the reasoning which induces a provident contemporary to entertain us with a catalogue of the evils that will arise out of the conquest of the southern portion of Sebastopol. Happily our monitor is but a blind Tiresias, or, at least, his mind's eye is so firmly fixed upon the future as to be somewhat unregarding of the present. We beg to assure him that there is no reason for his alarm at the prospect of such a speedy success as he patriotically fears. His exclusive information of the 13th ult. is a good deal depreciated by the arrival of intelligence 10 days later. We regret, indeed, that so much self-denial should have been uselessly exerted in suppressing what has really been no secret at all.—As soon as the elements, or, as others have it, the obstinate officials, permit, the batteries of the allies will open upon Sebastopol as the preliminary step to an assault. But, up to the latest dates, the mud was deep, and Lord Raglan and his staff is still in the Crimea, and, consequently, the preparations were as yet incomplete. This, however, is, as it turns out, extremely fortunate. Time still remains, to consider whether it be prudent to allow Lord Raglan to achieve a victory, which it is feared will lead him on to irreparable errors and ultimate disaster. The greater the opportunity of an imbecile, the more conspicuous and fatal his miscarriages; and it would be better to re-embark at once, and pocket the dishonour, than to bequeath to history the tale that England was ruined through conquering Sebastopol. We believe that the firm temper of the British nation can bear the sacrifice in this siege of its bravest or by the sword. The loss of many a gallant soldier from fatigue and exposure is as inevitable as the wound or death awaits a storming column. Thus it always was and will be; and the dignity of England is sadly compromised by this ceaseless maundering under the pitiless exigencies of war. Let us leave such mean language to the Peace Society, and rather imitate the calm demeanour of our allies, who do their best to alleviate the many miseries of warfare, and to what is irremediable oppose a silent and noble constancy.

It is certain the cry for more men will be often heard from the Crimea, and if we wish to uphold our country's name among the nations it must be amply and ungrudgingly responded to. It is said, indeed, that these reinforcements will be frittered away through unnecessary hardships, which it is alleged have been their predecessors' destruction. But such a random charge as this deserves no more notice than that of "wanton precipitation" and causeless delay," which is thrown in as a make-weight to the other.—When hardships have been endured, it may be possible to doubt whether they were or were not inevitable; but the new attempt to discredit the general plan of the campaign will not, we believe, obtain for one moment a single listener. Our contemporary should remember that several false charges do not make a true one, and that even in slander some method and judgment are necessary to success. Turning from these disturbed views to the honest testimony of eye witnesses, we find abundant reason for confidence that the worst is over, and that a bright and hopeful future is opening to the allies in the Crimea. We now possess intelligence down to the 23rd ult. And we know that the rainy weather had not latterly been continuous, and that the time was close at hand when it must yield altogether to the frost. A few fine dry days would speedily supply whatever was deficient for the health and comfort of our army. As soon as the roads are frozen hard the materials for hutting will be rapidly transmitted to the front, the transport of guns and ammunition will be rendered easier than at the beginning of the siege, and the ample supplies in the harbour of Balaklava will be regularly distributed to the troops. Not only will the ordinary rations be punctually furnished, but many tokens of the grateful kindness of countrymen and countrywomen at home will gradually be transmitted to the camp. The evidence thus afforded of the universal sympathy of all classes with the inevitable trials of the soldier on active service, will prove the most effectual antidote to writings which might otherwise be highly mischievous. Along with all that the duty of the government and the voluntary exertions of the people have provided for our army it will receive with some amazement copies of London journals, in some of which the Commander-in-Chief, in some the Minister of War, and in others authorities in general, are charged with incapacity, stupidity, and neglect of enormous and incredible proportions. We are tempted to inquire how the expectations thus excited can be even approximately realised.

The military readers of some of our contemporaries must, we think, be doomed to rather frequent disappointments. Where it will be asked, is the new Commander-in-Chief?—Where is the engineer that is to take Sebastopol?—Where is the successor of Sir Richard England? Can people at home seriously believe that things are so very wrong out here, and yet make no effort whatever to set them right? It may be truly answered, that people at home believe nothing of the kind; but it is the manner of certain journals, just to keep their hands in, to destroy a reputation periodically. But the attacks upon Lord Raglan will be contrasted, not only with their utter fruitlessness, but with the daily evidence that surrounds our soldiers of their want of the smallest justification. We may safely leave the imputations upon our general to the judgment of those who would be most effected by their truth. A jury of soldiers would be a fair tribunal to decide this controversy, and we are sure Lord Raglan's prudence and tenderness to all under his command, would be sufficiently asserted by their verdict. We feel no apprehension that Lord Raglan will order a premature assault for the sake of providing ministers with a sop for an angry parliament. Perhaps those who profess to feel this reasonable and well-founded anxiety may derive some comfort from reflecting that the consent of General Canrobert would be necessary to any decided movement of the allied army. The assailants of ministers will doubtless be very angry at being classed with those whose present game is the Commander-in-Chief; but we must venture to observe that the two methods of operating are wonderfully alike.—Never, surely, was there such a deal of bother about nothing, whilst the impeachment of the Duke of Newcastle and the recall of Lord Raglan seem equally subject to be indefinitely postponed.

We do not consider that the capture of Sebastopol is necessary to the justification either of the war minister or of the general; but perhaps we may hope, whenever that great event occurs, to be rid of the tedious controversies that have originated out of the siege. The end, however, is not yet, and if the time still remaining be well used, it may yet be possible to persuade the English public that the success of their mighty enterprise will be no proof of the capacity of their general.

INCIDENTS OF THE WAR.

HIGHTS ABOVE SEBASTOPOL, DEC. 23.

I am sorry to say that the most barefaced falsehoods are carried home by letters, and the severest attacks upon all departments, from the Commander of the Forces downwards. It is said by the stupid grumblers that Lord Raglan is slow and inefficient—the staff of every division

on thoroughly incapable—the engineers are bunglers—the medical management notoriously one of destruction instead of cure—and as to the commissariat, it ought to be decimated, beginning at the head. The abuse is sometimes concentrated in the sentence, "the whole thing has been from the beginning, and still is, utterly mismanaged."

As I have often affirmed, I am no judge on military matters; but I am not a fool. I walk about with my eyes open, and have quite sufficient discernment to discover that enormous exertions are being made in all quarters, which little deserve the severities so liberally provided by the mouths of stupid complainers. The fact is this, unless a general has some patent for taking mighty strongholds at any given moment, and gaining great victory without severe losses—unless he can provision troops comfortably, although the weather cripples transport—and defend his position by a vast army without sickness assailing the exposed, he is said not to be worthy the high position he occupies. "Look at the French," is the pet cry. "There everything is perfection." Yes, we may well look at the French, and learn one great lesson—and that is, not to be quite so presumptuous, and to bear our sufferings with a somewhat more dignified silence. The French know what are the ravages of war, and how bitterly soldiers must suffer, especially on such an expedition as this; but they do not, by means of hot-headed emissaries, or letters from Sergeant Le Febre or Corporal Chamont, declare to the whole of France that Canrobert is a noodle, and that thousands have died, and are still dying, martyrs of hardship. No, they are too sensible. They consider it unnecessary to blazon forth the trials which God has sent them. They rather encourage, by their patience and confidence, the general who is guiding their arms to victory. It would be well for us to take example by our allies. Let us do our utmost—let the authorities at home labour, as I am sure they do, to render the army as healthy and efficient as possible—let there be no hesitation as to expense, for a great stake is being played for, and then leave the rest to Providence.

As usual, we have had sorties, but always against the French, who appear each time to have given their visitors a warm reception, and sent them back fully satisfied with the attention shown them. The reason our noble allies have more than we have of this mighty fighting results from them being so much nearer their enemy. We never feel the least anxiety about the result when the firing begins, as we know that it will soon be over, and little destruction goes on in the dark. We are still as busy as we can be with the guns and ammunition but so long as the roads continue in their present state nothing can be done expeditiously. I am exceedingly glad to find that Mr Peto has taken the matter in hand, and that ere long we shall have a railroad from Balaklava to the heights. The whole thing sounds so strange that one can scarcely believe one's ears, and yet, so true is the matter, that within one month from this day it is quite possible that shot, shell, guns, mortars, nay regiments, will be running on rails, for the express purpose of amusing the army and navy of Sebastopol. As you go from camp to camp you constantly catch the cry, "Chariton, have you heard about the railway, and that we are soon to have pleasure trips, every Monday and Thursday to Balaklava, by way of a change?" "Yes," answers Chariton, "I have heard about it, and there is advertisement of Peto's in the papers, but I am sick of this fishing when the river's dry—why we ought to have had a tramroad at work two months ago; preparations should have been made when we were starting for the Crimea. I consider the government has a great deal to answer for."—Poor government! What a cry there would have been had rails been carried out for an unknown purpose, and ships laden with workmen to labour they knew not where; indeed, what could have been more ludicrous than the idea of a railway in connection with the Eastern expedition, until it was known that a siege would take place, and a road of several miles be required for the purpose of carrying it on with the necessary energy? This is only one more of the unreasonable accusations brought forward by the young and inconsiderate, or by the old and grumpy, against the poor powers that be. They also get it on the subject of huts. We are told that it is shameful to keep troops thus exposed when a little forethought would have rendered comparatively so comfortable. Do not be led away by the talking trash which is weekly heaped upon the public. We have now been three months in the Crimea, where the climate is notoriously mild, until the middle of January, when the severe weather sets in. It was quite possible that Sebastopol would have fallen ere this, and an order for huts until late in November would have been very premature. Circumstances have delayed the fall of the place, and the siege is still being carried on. Yet, with all this, we shall have our noble troops under cover before the frost and snow are upon them; for at this moment the Metropolitan and Cosmopolitan are, I hear, coming up the Sea of Marmora, and will be at Balaklava with their cargoes of houses by Christmas-day, and those houses will be standing on the heights above Sebastopol early in the month of January. What a time of rejoicing it will be when our brave soldiers shall have a covering which will shelter them