

The Politician.

THE BRITISH PRESS.

From the London Morning Chronicle.

THE NEW MINISTRY.

The Palmerston ministry may be considered as reconstituted. The appointments of offices entitling their holders to take part in the deliberations of the cabinet are completed, by the accession of Mr Vernon Smith to the post of President of the Board of Control, his nomination to which we had already announced. Among the most important offices, not of the cabinet, those of the President and Vice-President of the Board of Trade demand a careful attention in the selection of their holders. For the former, Lord Stanley of Alderley is eminently fitted, as well by his talents as by his official antecedents. A long service in various departments of the government has given him a general experience which will be useful in his new office, for the duties of which, also, he has been specially prepared while discharging the duties of Vice-President of the same board. We do not comprehend the ground on which any comparisons unfavourable to the new President of the Board of Control have been hazarded. Those who have clamoured against the monopoly of the higher offices of state by "lords," can scarcely make this complaint against Mr Vernon Smith. In uprightness and parliamentary independence he can surely vie with any of the "new men" who were to have been thrust upon the country. Of this the records of parliament contain abundant proof. The right honourable gentleman has had various opportunities of obtaining official experience, having served at the Treasury and in the Colonial Department. For a short time, too, he filled the office lately held by Mr Sidney Herbert; and, in the department over which he is now called on to preside, during four years he held the office of secretary.—It is not always the most superficially brilliant men who make the best ministers. Mr Vernon Smith is a sound and practical man, one who thinks for himself, and is as unlikely to be the slave of influence as of tradition. He is also a practised debater, and, upon the whole, we do not see that Lord Palmerston, in the circumstances in which he is placed, could have made a choice which would have been more satisfactory to the public. The ministry will not have the advantage of the services of Mr Villiers, and the prestige attaching to him as a commercial reformer, as Vice-President of the Board of Trade, but the right honourable gentleman will still retain his office of Judge Advocate-General.—In the minor departments, some of the offices are not yet finally disposed of, but great progress has been made. The attention Mr Danby Seymour has devoted to Indian affairs points him out as well qualified for the office of secretary to the Board of Control. No new writ is necessitated by this appointment. A good successor to Mr Fitzroy is found in Mr W. Cowper, whose previous official experience will be of great service to him in the office of Under-Secretary to the Treasury. Should Sir Robert Peel finally have accepted the post for which he had been designated, Lord Palmerston will be enabled to count in his administration two of the sons of the deceased statesman who gives his name to the "Peelists," although deprived of the valuable services of so many of his successors. Mr Laing, having felt himself precluded by his various private engagements from accepting the post offered to him, and Mr Monckton Milnes, though a firm supporter of Lord Palmerston, having declined the Secretaryship to the Treasury, that post, together with a Lordship of the Admiralty, the Secretaryship of the Admiralty, and the office of Vice-President of the Board of Trade, remained undisposed of last evening, but will, in all probability, have been filled before the resumption of parliamentary business. One important office remains unfilled; not, however, that there has been any delay or difficulty on the part of Lord Palmerston. The Earl of St. Germans, acting, as it is understood, on a principle of political honour which public men will know how to appreciate, has tendered his resignation of the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland. That step had been anticipated, but it will not the less be regretted. It will not be easy to replace him as a viceroy. Without descending to the arts which have made some of his most conspicuous predecessors "popular," Lord St. Germans has commanded the respect of the people, whom he was sent to govern, by his unstudied courtesy, his amonity, his openness to complaint as to conviction, and his dignified impartiality. The Earl of Carlisle has been named for this appointment, and he has many qualities which would enable him to fill it worthily, not the least of which is the high character he left behind him in Ireland, when formerly there as Chief Secretary. In administrative ability, official experience, and parliamentary strength, his ministry may fairly compete with any of its predecessors, except, perhaps, with that of the Earl of Aberdeen. Of course, such men as those who have succeeded from the cabinet are not easily replaced. Yet Lord Panmure's matured official experience, his self-possession, and debating power, will be felt most advantageously in the upper house, where the most troublesome attacks on his de-

partment, judging from some recent events, will in all probability be made. Sir George Cronwall Lewis is not untried as a speaker; and in selecting for the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer a man of his high order of mind, Lord Palmerston has paid, perhaps not unconsciously, a tribute of respect to its late holder, by resolving that its credit shall be worthily sustained. Of Mr Vernon Smith we have already spoken, and would only add that positions of high responsibility often develop the latent powers of men. The present Prime Minister had been nearly 20 years in parliament and in office ere he took the parliamentary rank he has since held. In all other respects, the cabinet and the chief offices of state remain the same as under the government of Lord Aberdeen, and whatever praises that ministry deserved on the score of administrative ability ought, with the deductions and additions we have named, to be continued to that of Lord Palmerston. In the minor posts the ministry gains strength, not merely by the accession of able men, but also by the guarantees they bring that many causes of obstruction to legislative business will be discontinued.

From the London Morning Chronicle.

THE SINEWS OF WAR.

If there be one subject more than another upon which little or no difference of opinion prevails throughout England and France, it is that the war in the East be prosecuted with the utmost vigour. It is no part of the duty of a wise nation to go to war without counting the cost, and reckoning its ability to meet such under any state of circumstances. We apprehend that the Czar cannot, in this respect, be considered as representing the opinions of a wise nation. Although he cannot boast of having won a battle or a foot of territory, he has been compelled by the exigencies of his exchequer to have recourse to the issue of inconvertible paper money. His national flag is hoisted within the walls of Sebastopol, but no standard is known to his Councillor of the Exchequer, his merchants, or his people. The million sterling drawn from his former investment in British securities is no longer at his command, and his chances of procuring a loan in any State of Europe are about as good as those of any flyer of kites, whose name is placarded on every wall in the City of London, obtaining cash for them on presentation in Threadneedle-street or Lombard-street. We will not stop to enquire how far the financial position of the Emperor Nicholas is likely to be improved by the recent enforcement of a more rigorous blockade of his commerce, and the continuous and rapid withdrawal of large numbers of his people from the cultivation of the soil. It has been computed that in 1853 Russia was enabled to export 6,000,000 quarters of wheat; but whether this may have been so or not, it is beyond all question that she benefitted very largely by her abundant harvest of that year, whilst the harvests of England and France were fearfully deficient. If, so shortly after having been the recipient of these advantages, Russia is reduced to the necessity of issuing inconvertible paper money, it is not difficult to foresee what will be her financial state as the war progresses. The moment may not be inopportune to take a glance at the position, financial and social, of the allies. During the past year England was under the necessity of purchasing food for her people to the amount in money value probably of not less than £15,000,000. Yet she has had no monetary crisis.—The notes of the Bank of England continue convertible; bullion amounting to £12,000,000 is contained within her vaults; consols are at 91½; good mercantile paper is discounted at 5 per cent.; and if a loan of £20,000,000 were called for to-morrow, the money would readily be subscribed within a week. True the state of the trade and the commerce is not so satisfactory or prosperous as it would have been had we remained at peace. War is hostile to the interests of every mercantile community, and England must be content to bear her due portion of its penalties. We hear of duller markets, and a more depressed state of trade, in many of our great manufacturing and trading towns. These are not, however, of a character to occasion much uneasiness, or any serious apprehension of mercantile disasters. The social position of the country is thoroughly sound and loyal. We have no chartist meetings on Kennington-common—no distressed protectionist gatherings in Convent-garden Theatre—no alarming strikes, and but few cases of factories on "short time" in the north. The national expenditure for the year ending 5th of January, 1855, was but £3,209,059 in excess of its legitimate income, assuming, as we have every right to do, that the sums raised upon floating securities would be counterbalanced by the accruing produce of the new sources of revenue opened during the twelve months. The agricultural, monetary, and banking interests—interests almost uniformly benefitted by war—are in a state of great prosperity, and there is no scarcity of employment for labour. It may further be noted that the required amount of importations for grain is by no means so large as at the corresponding period of the year 1854—whilst the agricultural prospects are incomparably more promising. There was a very unfavourable autumn seed season, after the bad harvest of 1853—there was a most favourable autumn seed time after the bountiful harvest of 1854. Under

such circumstances, no apprehension need be felt in respect to the possession by England of the requisite materials of war. The position by our French ally is scarcely less auspicious.—The ease and promptitude with which she has recently subscribed a large loan is without a parallel in her history. Her harvest of 1854, and prospects for 1855, are analogous to those of our own country, if we except the loss consequent upon the failure in her vintage of last autumn. The amount of gold coined by our ally in 1854 is strongly indicative of a healthy financial state. In 1851 she coined 241,000,000f; in 1852, 270,000,000f; whilst in 1854 she coined no less than 526,500,000f. Thus far her trade has not suffered materially; and there are in the aggregate, good grounds for anticipating that the future trade of the two countries will be on a scale commensurate with their requirements, becoming at the same time daily more intimately connected by an alliance not less sincere and beneficial in commerce than cordial and powerful in war.

From the London Daily News.

ARMY REFORM.

At length the serious discussion of the subject of Army Reform has begun in parliament.—When will it end? The stone once set a rolling, who will pretend to stop its course?—The vis inertiae of government is great, but greater in the long-run will be found the power of public opinion. At what rate government will be moved in the direction of concession must depend on the people themselves. Lord Goderich's motion may be designated as the modest preface to the case which parliament will soon be forced to—ay, and to heed, too—on behalf of the gallantry of the middle and working classes of the nation. In times past, while men of all ranks have been called on to shed their blood in defence of country, those who belonged to the privileged order were alone rewarded. In more recent days the hearer of monopoly appears to have gradually waxed faint, and silently and patronisingly, scraps of justice have been flung out, in the hope of appeasing or stilling the demand of general right. As happened in the case of commercial reform, we had amendments in the tariff professedly brought forward without the least idea of bandoning the essential principle of the old system, and Canada Corn Bills supported with emphasis by the staunchest advocates of protection. A still more striking illustration may be derived from the history of electoral reform. In 1828 the present Premier of Mr Huskisson, believing that the days of the close boroughs were drawing to an end, proposed to let off the gathering steam by enfranchising Birmingham and Manchester. They failed to convince their colleagues and their party, however, that the steam was getting up on the subject. Sir Robert Peel and Lord Lyndhurst made merry with their warnings; the great towns remained a little longer unrepresented; and the explosion at length took place that blew conservative resistance to atoms for many a day. Lord Palmerston is now in the opposite position and his argument is the converse of what it then was—the subject of reform, being in the present instance the national army instead of the national representation. He cannot believe that a total change will be precipitated by the refusal of moderate concessions. He recognizes the principle of Lord Goderich's motion, but will not act upon it. He relies on what has already been done, just as his colleagues did in 1828 on the mere disfranchisement of East Retford and as they dreamed of thereby tranquillizing the public mind, so now it is imagined that the fact of one sergeant in each regiment having been given an ensigny in acknowledgment of his merit will reconcile the nation to the continuance of the system of promotion by purchase in all ranks of the service. The noble member for Huddersfield pointed out very clearly that to take a single individual from the ranks, and to place him among officers differently educated, without any hope or prospect of ever being able to raise himself further as a commissioned officer, was no fair trial of the system of fair play and no favour. Lord Goderich also, with praiseworthy firmness, refused to be mollified by Palmerston's "soft sawder," seeing that his colleagues held such different language.—But we think Lord Goderich, in his natural desire to conciliate support for his proposal, and to disarm antagonism, seemed disposed to yield too much when he said that all he asked was that such individuals should not hereafter be so few, and that, after this had obtained their first commission, government should continue to keep its eyes upon them, in order to promote them further whenever they should distinguish themselves. We fear that, were it possible to act effectually on this suggestion, it would give rise to jealousies and enmities that would soon embitter the lives of those in whose favour the plan of special favour had been devised. In a word, we are inclined to say that so long as you can only do justice by way of special grace and bounty, no healthy spirit of reform can be looked for in the army. The Under-Secretary for War, in the course of his dreary and inconsistent attempt at a reply, admitted that the system of purchase and the system of raising all who deserved commissions from the ranks were incompatible, and could never be made really to co-exist. In the French service every step

is open to promotion on the score of merit as the first: hence it works well. Seniority and merit are foamed into a kind of double or alternative claim. Of the lieutenants, two-thirds become captains by seniority, and one-third by merit. Of the captains, one-half are promoted to the grade above them by merit, and the other half by seniority—and so on to the highest ranks; merit becoming more and age less, influential as the aspirant to command ascends the ladder of promotion. This is a combination well worthy of consideration by army reformers generally; but it is undoubtedly too true that our system of advancement in the navy is tainted with a reproach quite as grave as that which it is sought to wipe away from the military branch of the profession of arms, although in the navy there is no such thing as purchase of commissions. The debate of last night will be read with anxiety by thousands of every class throughout the land. It will certainly not satisfy the enthusiastic friends of justice to our soldiery; nor will it, on the other hand, set at rest wholly the misgivings of those whose craft is in danger. But it will do good. It will set people thinking how the coming change may be most safely and equitably effected; and it will prove to the most haughty and overbearing defenders of the flippant phrase—"gentlemen for the army, and the army for gentlemen"—that they must expand their test to conduct, and intelligence, and worth, nor hope any longer to limit its meaning to birth and wealth. It is not by arguments like those of Lord Seymour—who, with his usual pride in facing unpopularity, seems resolved to stand by aristocratic exclusion to the last—that the spirit now unkindled amongst the thoughtful and disinterested community at large will be put down. The fact that the British army is the only one in Europe where commissions are bought and sold publicly and legally, is worth a world of doctrinaire dialectics; and the touching tribute of one witness like Sir De Lacy Evans to the worth of the unrewarded soldiery, and the withering effects of the present military regime, will outweigh in every fairly-constituted mind, all the sophistry and unreason that can be enlisted in its defence. Nevertheless, we must repeat what we have said already, that it lies with the people mainly to determine at what pace the question shall advance. The instincts of the existing House of Commons are inveterately opposed to any substantial change; and until the pressure of opinion in the constituencies shall have been brought steadily to bear upon sham liberals and inflexible Tories, no man, or set of men, will be able to force open the gates of promotion to military merit.

Incidents of the War.

Camp before Sebastopol, February 13.

It blew half a gale of wind all night, and the rain fell till 2 o'clock P.M. in the day, but the wind was warm and the temperature agreeable. The roads are very heavy, and the country is not easily traversed. The soil is not so tenacious, however, as it is when drying up in fine weather after heavy rains. It is then so sticky, that the wheels of artillery waggons actually "drag" in it, and the earth accumulates solidly between the spokes. It need not be said with what difficulty men get over the ground on foot. As to the condition of the horses, it is really pitiable. It is now four or five days that our cavalry and artillery horses have been without hay, and that all they have had to eat has been the ration of barley, and, now and then, a little chopped straw. The reason of this is simple. No hay has been received by the commissariat in harbour; and yet it is stated that Mr. Fidler wrote last September to the authorities at home to state that it would be absolutely necessary for them to take steps to send out forage for the horses from England. What is the result of our mode of doing business? No hay is in harbour; the horses are subjected to heavy work, without proper food; and at a recent board the veterinary surgeons condemned no less than 140 horses out of the Royal Artillery alone.

The French workmen, however, have made considerable progress with the new batteries on our right. On the left they were exposed to a heavy fire from 4 till half-past 4 o'clock, and the Russians blew up another French magazine inside the batteries. They at once opened fire along their lines with six tremendous salves of artillery, and rushed up on their parapets and gave three loud ringing cheers. The damage done by the explosion was, I am happy to say, very insignificant, and before the Russians had ceased cheering the French took their revenge, by discharging a tremendous volley of heavy shells, which burst on the walls of the admiral's house, and silenced for a time the guns in No. 3 Battery at the Flagstaff Fort.

The railway progresses very rapidly, and has now reached a point 300 yard from the town.—The enemy appears to have abandoned any attempt to annoy the workmen, and have not put guns on Canrobert's hill. As soon as the works are completed, a strong party of cavalry will be advanced every night into the plain before Bahaklava, to prevent the enemy coming down to injure the rails.

Two spies were found within in our lines last night between the extreme right and the Rus-