

tween 2,000 and 3,000 strong, forming in heavy column in the rear of the battery. He instantly returned, but in doing so was seen and fired at by the enemy, who began to move forward in the direction of the French earthwork. Fortunately, however, by that time all in it were on the alert, and instead of waiting, as they should have done, firing on the enemy from under cover, they determined upon sallying out and meeting the Russians on the glacis. With this view, the French, who were not more than 700 strong, mounted the parapet of the battery and awaited the assault. The foremost ranks of the Russians, as they ran up, discharged their muskets pour encourager les autres; but the volley was so utterly confused and ill-directed that not a single bullet struck the French. The musketry instantly showed to our allies the precise position of the enemy, and taking cool aim from the parapet of the battery, they gave, in return, three murderous volleys, which told with fearful effect among their crowded ranks. The whole column of Russians wavered and halted, and the French with more bravery than prudence, rushed from the battery and charged them with the bayonet. As they closed with their antagonists the Russians who had been rallied with the voice and example of their officers, fired a volley, which, had it been well and steadily directed would almost have destroyed the French. As it was, however, it did comparatively but little mischief. Before they had time to repeat it the French were among them with the bayonet, and a short but desperate struggle ensued. Each man used the bayonet or clubbed his musket according to his strength and the exigencies of his position, and after a regular "scrimmage," which lasted about ten minutes, the enemy gave way and rushed back to the town in all directions. The French pursued them past the arsenal houses to the very ditches of their batteries, but which from the smallness of their force, they dare not then attempt to meddle with, and knowing from all experience that they would open fire the instant their own men were under cover, our gallant allies made all haste to return to the shelter of their own trenches. Some, however, in their return (indefatigable Zouaves of course) found time to plunder the enemy's guard-houses of beds, blankets, cooking utensils, and so forth, all of which were much wanted by themselves.

Hardly had they got back to their batteries when all the Russian earthworks, as if in revenge for the defeat, opened a tremendous cannonade, and shot and shell were indiscriminately hurled against the English and French lines for the space of half an hour. This exhibition of valour was perfectly harmless; all the allies were under cover, but never returned a single shot, and without showing their position, allowed the storm to subside of itself. This it did gradually at a little after 1 o'clock in the morning, by which time the enemy had wasted 500 rounds of shot and shell, and, as far as I have been able to ascertain, without killing or wounding a single man on the side of the allies. In the actual contest, with the sortie party, the French lost five officers and 91 men killed and wounded. The Russians left the bodies of one officer and upwards of 250 men in front of the battery. The whole affair must have cost the enemy some 600, or 700 men hors de combat, the allies were no further molested until yesterday morning, when they tried their luck upon the English, but with no better result. Equally distant between the right and left attacks of the English are some broken-down huts, close under the walls of Sebastopol called indiscriminately the "ovens" or the "kitchens" because at the commencement of the siege the ruins were the head quarters of the enemy's riflemen, and were used as places in which to cook their rations. In my letter of the 23rd, I mentioned the gallant dash made by the 1st Rifle Battalion, which resulted in the total defeat of the Russian sharpshooters and consequent capture of the "ovens." When the position was taken it was found to be one of considerable importance, as, under cover of the huts and broken ground, our men were enabled to approach within 80 yards of some of the Russian batteries. The redoubt and redan wall in particular were exposed to a harassing fire from this spot, and of course it was determined to retain it. A covered way was accordingly constructed from our left attack, and the men to approach and leave it unobserved, and by this means a strong picquet was always maintained there. During the night their strong and sheltered position effectually guarded against sorties of the enemy from that quarter, and during the day their Minies kept up a constant fire upon any who were indiscreet enough to show in the batteries. So deadly had the fire become, that for the last four or five days neither the redan nor redoubt have fired a shot, for not a Russian could appear on the embrasures without instantly becoming a target for a dozen Minie bullets, and accordingly yesterday morning they made an ineffectual attempt to retake the place. The sortie was made at 6 in the morning, when about 350 of the 1st Royals held the place.—The hour was singularly ill-chosen, for it was precisely at the time when the picquet was

being relieved by 350 of the 50th regiment so that double our usual garrison occupied the ovens. During the darkness about 1,500 of the Russian infantry issued from the circular battery, and in the confusion of relieving the picquet contrived to approach within 50 yards of the position before they were discovered. In an instant our men was in position and remaining under cover of the ruins and broken ground, kept up a constant fire from all points upon the enemy as they advanced. The Russians, contrary to their usual custom, never returned a shot, but strove to close with the place, and drive our picquet from their shelter. Only about 100 succeeded in the attempt, and instantly retreated again appalled by the continuous fire which their unseen foes maintained. After a moment's pause they returned to the charge again, but with less spirit than at first, and, after a vain attempt to rally under the fire, retreated in disorder. Then, and not till then, our picquets advanced, and pursued them with the bayonet, making a few prisoners. Of course they were not able to pursue them far, as the Russian batteries were close at hand.

On our side the loss was only 4 men killed and 17 wounded—the enemy in prisoners, killed and wounded, must have lost at the least 200 men. Prisoners say three officers were severely wounded. Perhaps two sorties of a strong garrison were never so vigorously repulsed, and with such comparatively slight loss to the besieging force, as these two attacks on the English and French lines. For the next week or fortnight at least they are likely to let us alone.

Beyond these two affairs the actual progress of the siege has not advanced. The enemy has finished the two new earthworks mentioned in my last letter, and repaired the old ones. The fire from all these batteries, when provoked by the victories of the allies, seem, to say the least, as strong as ever; indeed, judging from an attentive survey of the place, I am sure I am within the mark when I say that to the south the defences of Sebastopol are fully a 100 guns stronger than when we opened our fire on the 17th of October. We may starve out the town or carry it by assault, but mere battering will never reduce it, if we kept on firing for the next 12 months.

The French battery on the heights of Inkerman (on our extreme right) is quite completed, as far as the earthwork is concerned, but since my last letter, owing to the heavy state of the ground, it has only been possible to mount one more gun. Five out of the 10 long 82-pounders are now in position, and arrangements, which it is not for the interest of the service to detail, have been completed by which it is expected that all the rest will be placed before the 6th instant. Great hopes are entertained from this battery, and certainly not without reason. Situated on a most commanding eminence on the north of the valley of Inkerman, it looks down on every house in the town and every ship in the harbour. The rear of the Russian works is will injure—the shipping it is almost certain to destroy. Yet, as I have seen batteries from which even more was expected than from this Inkerman Battery, turn out complete failures, I do not allow myself to over-sanguine as to the results. On one point, however, I am much pleased with this battery—namely, that it is, though far from the town, on the north side of the valley of Inkerman, and this is one more step towards the complete investiture of the whole place. Until that is done I fear it will be a long time before I shall have to inform your readers of the Capture of Sebastopol." Only one Russian deserter came over to us this week, but two French and three English soldiers I am sorry to say, have deserted to them. Our renegades, I am informed, were a private from the 79th Highlanders, a private from the 33rd (or Duke of Wellington's) Regiment, and a private from the 88th or Connaught Rangers.—This makes about 20 of our soldiers and one sailor who have behaved with similar baseness and treachery since the siege commenced. All the three men I have mentioned left upon the night of the 1st of this month, and it is to their information that the attack upon our picquet in the ovens is attributed.—If this is so, after finding an unusual strong force in the place, and the lamentable failure of the attack upon it, the deserters are sure to be hanged by the Russians, as spies sent for the purpose of giving false information.

The Russian deserter seemed a plain, sensible man. He stated that though provisions were not abundant in the town, they were by no means scarce as yet. Powder and ammunition were getting very scarce and that to supply the wants of the former the Russians had withdrawn all their mines which had been placed under the earthworks, in case of being carried by assault. The latter statement it just probable, as the Russians have certainly fired away an incalculable quantity of powder, shot, and shell since the siege began. By some, however, the story is regarded with extreme suspicion and as a ruse of the enemy, who being really short of provisions wish to end the matter by enticing us to an assault. This conjecture is

very probable, for it is well known that the Russians have all the mills and apparatus in Sebastopol for making any amount of powder and shot; and if they were short of the materials for either, I scarcely think they would waste their ammunition in the reckless manner they do, not only when there is no necessity for it, but when it does not and cannot do us the least harm.

I am glad to say that yesterday an official inquiry was made into the dreadful state of the Avon hospital-ship, to which I alluded at the close of my last letter. It has resulted in her being ordered to be cleaned, and proceed at once with the sick and wounded on board to Scutaria. Had this order been issued a fortnight ago, I believe it would have saved many lives.

Balaklava, 1, P. M., Dec. 3.

The Turkish garrison of this place are dying off at the rate of some 150 a day. It is not at all uncommon to see corpses of these unfortunate beings, who have been stricken down by cholera on the way to the hospital, lying along the road side. Besides this dreadful disease, typhus fever and dysentery are making terrible havoc among their ranks. Half the huts in this place are filled with their dead and dying. I have neither the time nor the inclination to narrate the horrors of this kind which I witness daily; and if I were to do so, I am sure your readers would be but very little obliged to me for such a disheartening tale of woe and suffering. Out here, God help us, we have all got accustomed to these horrors of war. All the Russian peasantry, men and women, taken in the two villages round Balaklava, have been put on board the Ardent, to be sent round and landed to the north of Sebastopol. The poor wretches seemed delighted to get away.—Correspondent of the Morning Herald.

## Communications.

### CHRISTMAS.

A merry Christmas to you all! Friends or foes, old or young! We would not that any at this season should have the blue devils. The Poet saith of old December:

"He sings of darkness and of storm,  
Of icy cold, and lonely ways;  
But, gay the room, the hearth more warm,  
And brighter is the taper's blaze.  
Then let the merry tale go round,  
And airy songs the hours deceive;  
And let our heartfelt laughs resound  
In-welcome to old Christmas's Eve."

But here we hold no Christmas revelry—'tis a tame affair. Our imagination wafts us naturally and instinctively to brave old England—the only country where we have seen it duly honoured—and we fancy we see the great Yule Log, of our younger days, blazing on the old hearth to which it was borne with all due honors—being the stump of some brave old oak, which will burn uninterruptedly from Christmas Eve to the day after Christmas.

We hear the Church Bells ringing a merry peal—and we see the fine old Church decked with evergreens to commemorate our greatest Christian festival. All is joy and gladness.—From Grand-father to Grand-child, servants and dependents—on all and every countenance smiles are beaming.

We see the old kitchen decorated with Holly and other Evergreens, and the miseltoe bough as it was wont to hang suspended from the old oak beam across the kitchen. We hear the merry laugh of the children and the boisterous mirth of the rustics, when some rosy, blue eyed maiden pays the forfeit for standing beneath the miseltoe! Aye! and we see the Christmas tree with its mysterious packets, and we hear the merry laugh or joyous shout, as each is opened and its contents ascertained.

A supper worthy of the occasion, is served, both in the dining room and kitchen or servants hall. We see the venerable patriarch of the family, a genuine specimen of "the fine old English Gentleman," sitting at the head of the table—his somewhat dimmed though still bright eye, beaming with parental pleasure and delight as he looks around, on either side, upon his numerous olive branches. Besides him stands a massive silver tankard—and anon he raises it to his lips, and wishes them all "a Merry Christmas!" This is the "Wassal Bowl" which goes round, young and old alike sipping from the tankard.

This good old custom is thus accounted for in ancient chronicles, "At a Banquet prepared by Hengist, King of Kent, in honor of Vortigern, King of Britain; Rowena, the Niece of Hengist, instructed by her Uncle, presented to the aged Prince, a cup of spiced wine, and with a smile welcomed him in these words "Waes heal Halford Cyning"—or "Be of health Lord King"—to which, through his interpreter he answered—"Drink heal," or "I drink your health." The event as recorded by Robert of Gloucester has been thus paraphrased:

"Health, my Lord King, the sweet Rowena said,  
Health cried the Chieftain to the Saxon maid;  
Then gaily rose, and mid the concourse wide;

Kiss'd her hale lips, and placed her by his side.  
At the soft scene such gentle thoughts abound,  
That healths and kisses 'mongst the guests went round.

From this the social custom took its rise,  
We still retain and still must keep the prize."

From that period "Waes heal" became the name of the drinking cups of the Anglo Saxons in their entertainments, and the friendly salutation of wishing health became an established custom.

But, hark! What have we here—the Waits—Aye they are going their rounds, All the Musical and Vocal talent of the Village has been enlisted—and we hear the Anthem:

"Hark the Herald Angels sing,  
Glory to the new-born King."

Then our National Anthem which the Boys conclude with a verse of their own—as follows—

"Give us good beef in store,  
And the key of the cellar door,  
When that's gone send us more.  
God save the Queen."

Such is the Christmas Eves of our Father Land. Then comes the morrow—Hurrah!—for the Roast Beef and Plum Pudding of Old England. Few we believe throughout the length and breadth of the land but will enjoy a good Christmas dinner. The poor are not forgotten—and such as do not partake of the good cheer of their wealthier neighbours, have their share supplied with no niggard hand on the eve. Whole Oxen are thus distributed. In short 'tis truly a great Christian Festival, where none are forgotten, not even the dum portion of Creation. 'Tis a period when every Englishman's heart, appears, at least, to feel for his fellow man—when his purse strings are loosened, and he wishes all around him to be happy and merry. Sons and daughters dispersed throughout the land, assemble once more beneath the paternal roof, and the fine old English Gentleman eyes with pride his yearly increasing progeny as they sit around the festive board.

We like these good old customs—we look back with pleasure to the good old times of our younger days, and have no regard or affection for new fangled genteel, heartless, Christmas times.

A merry Christmas to you and yours, friend Pierce, Good Night.

MERCATOR.

New Carlisle, December 23, 1854.

### THE WAR IN THE EAST.

Mr. Pierce.

The Crimea is now the cynosure in every eye. It appears to be honored, as the great battlefield of Europe, and its soil is getting well crimsoned with blood. Every man who has the least spark of patriotism within him, must feel a thrill of no ordinary intensity, at the splendid achievements that have already distinguished the Allies at the seat of war. The Battle of Alma, will in bravery and honor to our troops, compare with any record in history. In comparison the "Bridge of Lodi," is a tame affair, and the decisive charge on the "old guards" at Waterloo, appears with a dimmed lustre. In the subsequent battle, when the wily Menschikoff taking the advantage of the enthusiasm occasioned by the arrival of the Czar's sons—opened the gates and sallied out in apparently overwhelming numbers,—how nobly was the prowess of England and France sustained and how terribly was the enemy convinced, of the superiority of the foe against whom they have to contend. Soon must the intelligence reach us, of the fall of their giant fortress, and the Czar humbled by the loss of the key of the Crimea. But amidst the almost general feeling of honest patriotism for England's present success and ultimate triumph, we now and again hear a discordant note squaking out a sympathy for Russia. The men who are dastards enough to entertain such a feeling for the great despot, are afraid to give expression to their sentiments in a frank and candid manner, but by innuendoes, and under the cover of a traitorous sympathy for England, affect to deplore the "calamitous reverses" which have befallen her. Battles that were never fought—reverses that never happened, are made the subject of expatiation, and the Russian sympathising press of the United States, aids them in their un-British and rebellious views. One paper in this Province, (*a sui generis* by the way,) has followed in the tract of its American contemporaries. It regales its readers from week to week with a lot of Meagher and Mitchell trash, which must eventually sink it "beyond the low reach of compare," in the estimation of every thinking mind. What is it those Russian serfs or sympathizers want. Is it the success of the despot's arms in the present war against France and England, who are the great bulwarks of civil and religious liberty, no,—no,—the fact is patent to all. They wish—ardently wish, to see England punished, it matters not who deals the blow. The feeling does not arise from any love for the Czar. They do not "hate Russia less but England more," and if England was crushed beneath the iron heel of the northern despot, they would feel that kind of triumph ascribed to Beelzebub when he exclaimed—

"Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven."

It requires not the spirit of prophecy to foresee the final success of the Allies, and the proud autocrat completely humbled for all future time,