

the clericals, it is needless to say, was a thing the thought of which could not for an instant be tolerated. It might probably lead to a revolutionary outbreak, but would certainly call at once for the intervention of Germany. The tendency of the actual Government was too suspiciously Bonapartist, and the Bonapartists themselves would not be endured, for the Empire re-established would mean reprisals for Sedan, against which Bismarck would be bound to take immediate precautions. Strange to say, for a like reason objections would rule against the triumph of the Radicals. If this party came into power, they would undoubtedly enter upon a violent persecution of the priests, and the feelings engendered by such a course would tend to draw all moderate men together into one body, which would result in the return of Napoleon IV., and as a consequence the breach of the armed truce that for the time prevails with Germany, for we can look upon it as little else. The moderate Republicans, then, who would allow the priests and their supporters to exist under a mild system of discouragement, who would outweigh the Bonapartists, afford the Government no excuse for a departure from the beaten track, and keep the Radicals in due subjection, would be the right men in the right place. But that there should be a continuance of moderate Republicans at all seemed to depend, in the judgment of our contemporaries, upon the leadership of M. Thiers, and now M. Thiers is no more. It was hardly expected that he would have been capable of once more presiding at the head of the State, supposing the Marshal to resign, but his experience was everything; it would avail to check any extreme tendency in his supporters, secure moderation, and guide France in safety across her stormy course. His death, therefore, has occurred at a most inopportune season, if this judgment to which we refer be correct, as there is good reason for supposing it to be, and it may prove that events have been precipitated which in any case we have long believed to loom in the future. Meantime the quarrel between M. Paul de Cassagnac and M. Rouher does not seem to have been attended by the serious consequences foretold. The party to which they belong has evidently been too wise to allow itself to be divided by the self-seeking policy of an individual, and M. Rouher, the individual to whom we allude, has, as we learn from a recent cablegram, made his recantation by declaring that for the time at least the interests of the Bonapartists are identical with those of the Government.

### THE SHIPKA PASS.

A *London News* correspondent writes:—"It is now a question of endurance, but I adhere to the impression that the Shipka Pass as now held by Radetzky is safe, and that, unless Suleiman Pasha can run a column through another pass, regarding the practicability of which I know nothing, he will wreck his army by thus dashing it continually against Shipka." He says that on the 21st August, when the fighting commenced, the Russians were probably a little over 3,000 strong, with 40 cannon. The Russians on that day had laid mines in front of their trenches, which exploded just as the head of the Turkish assaulting parties were massed above them, and it is reported that a number of Moslems were blown into fragments. By Thursday evening the Turks had worked around on both Russian flanks. At this supreme moment the two Russian generals, expecting momentarily to be environed, sent a last telegram to the Czar, telling him what they expected, how they tried to prevent it, and how, please God, when driven into their positions, they would hold these until reinforcements should arrive. At all events, they and their men would hold their ground to the last drop of blood.

At six o'clock there was a lull in the fighting, of which the Russians could take no advantage, since the reserves were all engaged. The men were beaten out with heat, fatigue, hunger and thirst. There was no water within the Russian lines, and the men lay panting on the bare ridge, reckless that it was swept by a Turkish rifle fire. Others doggedly fought on down among the rocks, but were forced to give ground. The cliffs resounded with the triumphant Turkish shouts. At this juncture reinforcements under Radetzky arrived. Radetzky took command of these, with others, who arrived subsequently, which brought up the number of defenders of the pass to about 13,000. The road, even in the rear of the Russian position, was swept by Turkish fire, and the reinforcements suffered heavily.

The object of Friday's battle was to clear the Turks from a well-wooded position, which flanked the Russians on the road. The fighting was solely confined to musketry, and continued all day most desperately. The Russians could make little impression by a front attack on the Turks. Occasionally at some point the Russians would be hurled back clear out of the woods altogether. "I could," says the correspondent, "mark the Turks following them eagerly to its edge, lying down while pouring out a galling fire. The troops charged with making this front attack merely succeeded in preventing the Turkish efforts to work round to the Russian rear. It was therefore decided at noon to deliver a counter flank movement. The two battalions executing this movement had to advance under a tremendous fire from the Turkish mountain guns. The fighting on the Turkish front and flank lasted fully an hour, but at last the Turks were seen withdrawing their battery of mountain guns near the right flank, which was a sure sign that danger menaced it, if it stayed longer. Their left battery followed their example, which showed that the Russians had gained the ridge on the Turkish left also. There remained but the central peak of the Turkish position. That carried the ridge would be ours, and our right flank be set free from the dangerous pressure on it."

### A REMARKABLE SEA-FIGHT.

THE fight between a merchantman and an iron-clad in the Black Sea on the 23rd of June was one of the most remarkable of war incidents. The Turkish iron-clad was of enormous power in guns, armour, and engines; she moved through the sea at the terrible speed of thirty miles an hour. The Russian merchantman, the *Vesta*, was a light iron steamer, carrying three 6-inch mortars and one 9-pound rifle canon. Her utmost speed was about twelve miles an hour. Yet these two ships, so unequal in everything else, were not only equalled, but the weak became the strong when the human hearts of the crew were brought to the test of fire. Never was there a nobler showing of what fearful odds courageous men can face and overcome. At eight o'clock in the morning the Russian captain saw the immense ram sweeping down on him. He put his little steamer to her full speed; but the ram closed on him with frightful rapidity. The officers of the small steamer were Russian artillerymen, for the ship had lately been pressed into the regular service. The guns were in charge of Lieutenant-Colonel Tchernoff, who pointed them himself. A rattling fire was kept up against the iron-clad; but the Turk came on as if determined to drive his spur into the side of the steamer. On seeing this, the captain of the *Vesta* veered off, upon which the Turk poured a hideous volley of shrapnel over his decks. One bomb set the steamer on fire near the powder magazine; this was at once extinguished. Another deluged the deck with blood, lacerating the neck and shoulder of one of the two officers at the guns, and mortally wounding Lieut. Col. Tchernoff, who had time only to turn to the crew with these words: "Farewell! fire from the right hand stern gun; it is pointed!" and fell dead. There were torpedoes on board the steamer, and at this time Lieut. Michael Perelchine asked permission of the captain for himself and another lieutenant to launch the sloop, and attack the enemy with the mines. The captain was about to grant the request, when he saw that the sea was too boisterous for the success of so perilous an adventure. The brave lieutenant turned from him disappointed, and at that moment was struck by a bomb which tore away his leg to the hip. "In this condition," writes Captain Baronoff, "he still endeavoured to speak to me about the use to be made of the steam sloop." Still the fight went on. The lieutenant who was pointing the guns of the steamer received seventeen wounds in a few minutes. Every man and boy in the ship stared grim death in the face, and never dreamt of giving in. But it must soon end: the heavy projectiles of the ironclad were literally knocking the steamer to pieces, but just at this moment the artillery officer got a good sight, burst in the porthole of the enemy's largest gun, and lodged a bomb in her chimney. Another bomb must have set fire to the ironclad, for a dense smoke arose. "A terrible confusion ensued on his deck; he drew out of the fight," turned tail, and steamed off at a tremendous rate. The Russian captain, with his little steamer shattered and torn, his officers dead or wounded, and his deck streaming with the blood of his brave crew, tried to keep up chase, but his rudder had been injured in the fight, and soon became useless.

The lesson of the battle is that there is hardly any emergency in which a commander should yield without a fight. If this brave captain had stopped to calculate chances, he would have struck his flag without firing a gun. His calculations would have been a mistake, as such calculations almost always are. He might count the guns of his enemy, and estimate the speed of the ram, and the number of the crew, and still leave out the principal consideration—the pluck of the hearts. Guns will not fire straight without steady aim, and strong bulwarks may be a shield for cowards. When we are hardest beset sometimes, and going to knock under, if we could only know, the odds may be heavily in our favour.—*Pilot*.

### THREATENING LETTERS IN IRELAND.

THE *Belfast Morning News*, in a most interesting article published a couple of years ago, gave some curious particulars as to threatening letters in Fermanagh. We quote the following extract:—

"The public at large are acquainted with the Fenian proceedings of Head Constable Talbot. There may be difference of opinion as to those proceedings, though we think there are not many who would like to play Talbot's part. But there is an episode in the life of that eminent spy that is not half so well known as his Fenian performances; but that is right well known to us, and we may as well tell. It is how Talbot treated D'Arcy Irvine, Esq., of Castle Irvine, in the County of Fermanagh. Mr. Irvine was a good, kindly man, with more than average intellectual ability, and more than average accomplishments. But he had strong feelings, and a somewhat wild imagination. He wrote many things in condemnation of the Government, and wrote them in the strange, strong way that attracted attention. Well, he was persuaded to believe that his life was in danger from the Fenians, and to employ Talbot at 30s. per week, to be a sort of game-keeper and body-guard. After Talbot (who had then finished his notorious Fenian affairs), came to Castle Irvine, Mr. D'Arcy Irvine was continually receiving threatening letters. He was continually telling us about them, and we often asked him if he had the envelopes. No: it happened somehow that he had none of the envelopes; and it happened also that the letters themselves (this is our belief) generally disappeared after doing the work of annoying the recipient. Mr. D'Arcy Irvine introduced us one time to his protector, Mr. Talbot, a fine-looking fellow, but we declined his acquaintance, and warned Mr. Irvine against him. He did not attend to the warning, and he was driven mad, we believe, by Talbot, the Government spy. He had to be arrested as a dangerous lunatic; and he soon died in the strange confinement. A gentleman of Fermanagh, who had a peculiar right to feel interested in the matter, remarked to us some time after—'If that honest fellow in Dublin had not shot Talbot, I'd have gone up and done it myself.' No one in Fermanagh, who understands anything of the circumstances, doubts that Talbot maddened Mr. D'Arcy Irvine. Who incited Talbot to that course of conduct?"