



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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DIARY OF THE SIEGE.

(From Correspondents of London Papers.)

April 30.—Our new battery, which is only 700 yards from the enemy's guns, is nearly completed, and, as its armament is very heavy, great results are expected from its fire. Of course, the effect of the enemy's fire against it will be increased, and we must expect a larger proportion of casualties as the advances are pushed on. To my mind, however, the superiority in guns and gunners must be very decided both in number and position before we can hope to silence artillery in earthworks by artillery similarly placed. To a certain extent the damage done to our batteries by the Russians is a test of the effects we have produced on their batteries. If it were an accurate test, we might very reasonably conclude that our fire had done but little harm, and had not caused any very great loss of life; but, as our fire converges on batteries behind which are houses, walls and heaps of stones, where a certain portion of the garrison, of the reliefs and working parties, must be placed, in addition to the positive loss of life in the Russian batteries, we must reckon frequent casualties from the shot and shell flying beyond and behind them, and from fragments of stones struck by the shot. That consideration is, however, of very little consequence so long as the enemy can feed their garrison from the army without the city, and adds only the useless but inevitable slaughter of a siege. In fact, we do these enormous earthworks of twenty and thirty feet in thickness very little injury of an irreparable nature by any amount of shot we may direct against them, and the enemy appears able to remount guns and place new pieces in position as fast as we can dismount or destroy them. It is, however, tolerably evident that the Russian gunners do not stand to their guns in heavy fire as well as our own. As long as they are left alone they make splendid practice, but as soon as they are exposed to the storm of shot and shell flying through the embrasures they fire somewhat wildly, and lose precision and range. Notwithstanding this, I cannot think (judging by what I have seen) that we shall ever be able to silence a larger proportion of the Russian ordnance than we did between the 17th and 20th of last October, and it is not, I suppose, contemplated by any person that we can ever make a breach in any part of their entrenchments or batteries. Our object, then, must be to reduce the fire of those batteries which command the points selected for assault. In order to estimate our chance of doing this, we have only to look at what has been already done.—We have at first always succeeded in reducing the Russian fire, but as we go on and wear out our guns, and exhaust our ammunition to such an extent that we must reduce our number of rounds and charges of powder, our superiority is gradually diminished, and continues decreasing till it reaches zero, and the enemy begin to recover themselves and their position.—The observation on this siege ought to produce an immense effect on fortifications, for it has been demonstrated, one would think, that earthworks are far better fortresses than any masonry. The solid mass of stone of which the Malakoff Tower consisted was smashed, rent up, and split from top to bottom at our very first day's fire. It is now a heap of ruins. The earthwork beneath it is as firm as it was the very first day we fired at it. The maximum penetration of a 13-inch shell into a compact earthwork is about 3 feet; of a 24-pounder, at 700 yards, the shot penetrates about 6 feet; of a 56-pounder, at the same distance, about 8 feet. The penetration of a 68-pounder is somewhat more. But granting that every shot we fire has such an effect, and attains the maximum of penetration, what result can we hope to achieve against earthworks thirty feet thick, capable of being banked up from behind, and defended by an enemy with endless supplies of laborers, of earth and sand, of gabions and timber? Our artillery has done as much as could have been expected of it, both last year and the last time we opened fire. It remains now to be seen what will be done when the artillery has accomplished its mission once more. But, meantime, the siege ought to be going on, and as far as our cannon and mortars are concerned, it is suspended. What is the principal reason? Simply, because Woolwich is not next door to us, and shell and fuses are not forthcoming. There are no fuses of such shells as we have, and we have plenty of fuses for shells which we have not. There are plenty of 13-inch shells and no fuses for them, and there are lots of 10-inch fuses and no shells for them. Where are the shells that belonged to the fuses, and where are the fuses that belonged to the shells? It may be only just to remark, that it is only in shells of a particular kind, and in fuses of a certain description, that we are short, but that very kind of shell and that very sort of fuse have both most useful in the siege. (We cannot be deficient in supplies of shot, for I am glad to be able to mention that we have

within the last few days lent the French two thousand shot, with which they are now prosecuting their attack against the town. It is about six months since it was first known that our army would have to re-open fire (when the spring came) against Sebastopol. We have the largest, the most powerful, the most numerous fleet of steamers in the world—we have Malta as a half-way house—a great fortress in which to accumulate all the engines and matériel of war—we have Woolwich, the admiration of foreign potentates, and the special wonder of the late Czar himself, when he visited England, all he saw there—and here are our mortars, short of shells, and our shells short of fuses, after a week's practice! We have railways and steamers, a secure haven, a transport corps, horses, mules, ponies, buffaloes, camels, oxen, drivers of all kinds of beasts of burden, collected from all parts of the habitable globe within 3000 miles of us, and yet the supply of matériel has run out, and our military Oliver Twists are asking for 'more' to the great astonishment, no doubt, of our overseers at home. In reference to the actual work done by the railway, it appears that so far from its services having been less than they were estimated, they have been considerably greater. The supply of ammunition which our authorities relied upon from the railway has been far exceeded, and it has not only carried up more than the estimated quantity of shot and shell, &c., but a very great amount of stores and cargoes of all kinds, in addition, moreover, to throwing obligations broadcast all over the army, from the generosity, kindness, and zeal of Mr. Beatty, to promote the comfort of every officer who had any baggage to be sent to the front. Up to the week ending the 28th of April the average amount of tonnage sent up from Balaklava to the terminus, was 240 tons per diem; and on that day 180 tons of ammunition alone were forwarded by rail towards the batteries, and deposited at the terminus. Twenty more laborers have been handed over to the warehouse department, fifty having recently arrived. The warm clothing (furs, &c.) is being collected and packed up, to be sent to Constantinople to be cleaned, &c., and made fit for reuse. A large number of sheepskin coats have been destroyed, which, it is believed, had competent persons been consulted, might have been saved. Captain Gordon has consulted Mr. Pratt, who has advised that a staff to re-dress and clean the furs should be sent from England, and a communication to the Home Government has been made for this purpose. A saving, it is hoped, will thus be effected of at least £40,000, in addition to the great advantage of having the warm clothing ready to re-ship to any part. The Imperial Guard were marched down to the trenches on the night of our right attack this evening. It is now 12 o'clock at night, and there is no firing on the right, but a very severe cannonade and incessant musketry have been going on the left, opposite the Flagstaff Battery. It is now affirmed that our fire will not re-open for 10 days at least! Not only is our supply of shell and fuses insufficient, but we cannot mount the new guns and complete our new batteries in time.

May 1.—May-day in the Crimea! Worthy of the sweetest May Queen in merry England! It is enough to make one credulous of peace, and to listen to the pleasant whispers of home, notwithstanding the rude interruption of the cannon before Sebastopol. This bright sun, however, develops fever and malaria. The reeking earth, saturated with dew and rain, pours forth poisonous vapors, and the sad rows of mounds covered with long rank grass which rise in all directions above the soil impregnate the air with disease. As the atmosphere is purged of clouds and vapor, the reports of the cannon and of the rifles become more distinct. The white houses, green roofs, and the domes and cupolas of Sebastopol stand out with tantalizing distinctness against the sky, and the ruined suburbs and masses of rubbish inside the Russian batteries seem almost incorporated with the French entrenchments. The French on the left are indeed exposed to constant annoyance and loss by frequent volleys of hand grenades and coehorns, and their works are interrupted by little sorties of a few yards—out and back again. On the extreme right, however, the English works towards the round tower are in advance of the French works toward the Mamelon. On our proper left we can make no considerable approaches in advance of our actual works up to the Redan, in consequence of the deep ravine before our batteries. The French are now within a few hundred yards of the Mamelon; and our advanced parallel, which is connected with theirs, inclines forward of their line towards the Round Tower. Although the Mamelon is pierced for eleven guns, there are not apparently more than five mounted, but all the embrasures are screened. The Russians have been checked in their attempts to advance upon our right towards Inkermann, and the French on the left towards the sea have pushed their lines

inside the old Russian outworks, but the centre, protected by the Garden Battery, Road Battery, Barrack Battery, and the Redan, still offers some difficulty to an approach, and presents a very strong position. Not only must we have ample guns and ammunition to fight the Russian batteries again, but we must be prepared with a siege train and matériel to move up to the heights inside the town, commanding the fleet and the northern forts and batteries, as soon as we get into the south side, which must be entered by hook or by crook—by window if not by the door, to use the idiom of General Conrobert. At present there is an interregnum—nothing to report. There is, however, one melancholy item of intelligence.—Poor Captain Christie, lately in charge of the transport service, who has been the mark of so much well-meant but unjust vituperation, is lying sick on board ship, without the smallest chance of recovery. An expedition from the British and French fleets, consisting of the smaller heavy armed steamers and gunboats, is to sail this evening for Kertch, to test the strength of the fortifications there and at Yenikale. It is stated that Sir Edmund Lyon will accompany and direct the British expedition, and that Admiral Brunt will take command of the French ships.

May 2.—We are progressing fast with our batteries on both attacks, and hope, when we open fire next time, we shall in a few hours silence the Russians' fire, although they have made a battery within 140 yards of the trenches; but as we have now 8 and 10 mortars and 68-pounder guns, we hope to be able to do wonders. We have about 140 guns and mortars ready, and all of them heavy. The Buffs have arrived; their ship had caught fire, but it was got under, and they are all right.

DESPATCH FROM LORD RAGLAN.

War-Department, May 18. Lord Panmure has this day received the following despatch from Field-Marshal Lord Raglan, G.C.B.:

"Before Sebastopol, May 5. "My Lord—Since I wrote to your lordship on the 1st inst. nothing of importance has arisen. The enemy still appear to be collecting troops upon the high ground on the opposite side of the Tchernaya, in the neighborhood of Sebastopol, and convoys are constantly seen moving in that direction.

"The fire from the place upon our trenches has not been heavy, but notwithstanding I have some casualties to report to you as known in the accompanying return; and I have to lament the death of three promising young officers—Lieutenant Carter, of the Royal Engineers, Curtis, of the 46th, and White, of the 62nd regiments.

"On the night of the 1st instant the French attacked a kind of counter-guard which the Russians had established in front of the central bastion. The operation was quite successful, and the enemy were driven out with great loss, leaving behind them nine small mortars.

"Our allies have remained in the work notwithstanding the heavy fire to which they have been exposed, and have established themselves therein, frustrating the efforts made by their adversaries to dispossess them of it on the following day, when a vigorous sortie was repulsed, and the Russians were again great sufferers. The conduct of the French troops was very brilliant.—I have, &c.,

"The Lord Panmure." "RAGLAN.

LIFE IN THE TRENCHES.

One of the surgeons attached to the British Expedition gives this graphic description of life (and death) in the trenches:—

CAMP BEFORE SEBASTOPOL, APRIL 15.—In my last letter I told you that I was going to the trenches; well, I went, and I had enough of it. But I suppose you would like to hear the whole story, so I shall begin at the beginning. We paraded at a quarter past six p.m. I had a bandsman attached to me, to carry the pack containing lint, &c. As we are not allowed to take down our servants with our breakfasts now, I had to take everything I wanted myself. I accordingly took in my haversack a tin canteen to boil water in; and in it some tea, sugar, butter, and a hot mug; also in the haversack some red herrings, biscuits, rum, and a plate and knife and fork, a little firewood, a candle, and some matches. I also had my wooden barrel, with water in it, slung on the other side, my telescope, cloak, and mackintosh; altogether, I was in heavy marching order.—My orders were, to stay in the surgeons' hut, and to do the best I could with the wounded. There are four assistant-surgeons in the trenches—one, an artillery man, who goes wherever he is most wanted; a naval man, and two line assistant-surgeons, who stay in the first parallel. The firing stopped for the night shortly after I went down, so I walked over to the trenches, to see what had been done. I did not think there was much harm, except to the battery in

the advanced trench (No. 7), which had been a good deal knocked about—in fact, smashed almost entirely. The artillery surgeon told me he had to go there the next day, and I must say I did not envy him. I came back to the hut, and seeing a nice soft board, I took possession and was soon sound asleep. I got up about six o'clock, when the firing commenced. About seven o'clock in walked the artillery surgeon, with his face bandaged up. He had gone to the advanced battery at daybreak, where he had a number of men wounded, and he had got hit himself. He also said that some one must go there, as the men were being hit every minute. Well, I was rather in a fix. Being senior medical officer, I was of course asked to send some one. Now, I had been told that we were to stay in the hut, and not to leave it, and if I sent any one forward and he got hit, the authorities would have come down on me for doing so, and if any man got hit and no help at hand they would equally be down on me; so I thought the best thing I could do was to go myself. I accordingly went forward and found that during the short time the other surgeon had been away five new men had been wounded.

There are two batteries there, Nos. 7 and 8.—No. 7 battery is much the most dangerous. So, after doing what was wanted there, I went to No. 8. The ground of it is composed of gravel and large stones, and, of course, the battery is constructed of the same material. The consequence was, that every shot fired by the enemy threw up a perfect shower of stones, some of them very large; and as they fired at us all day, every one was hit more or less, some very severely; fortunately, although this morning I am black and blue, and my back aches from a large stone that fell on it, I was not hurt. They kept me running between the two batteries all day, and most disagreeable work it was, as in one place there was no cover at all, and in getting into No. 7 there was a sort of channel which we had to run through that was always getting balls through it.

The escape we had were most wonderful. One time it was almost miraculous. I was leaning on the carriage of a gun that was loaded and run out, speaking to the artillery officer who was pointing it. He had his face on the gun looking through the sight, a shot came from the Russians, hit our gun in the bore, and knocked off two feet of the muzzle, wounding by the splinter every man of the gun's crew except two and the artillery officer and myself, four out of nine—the men literary fell all round me. Most of them were slightly wounded; but how any escaped, particularly the officer who had his face on the gun, I cannot tell.

Of course we have to dress the men, or the worst cases, where they lie, and, the Russians having got your range, most likely send another shot nearly in the same place as the first. This is so well known that the rule is, in such cases, to run behind a traverse or any shelter. So does every one except the non-combatant, the doctor, who must go to his men; no matter where. To give you an instance of this: A man got his hand blown off in No. 7. They sent for me at once, as the man was bleeding. At this time there was a perfect storm of shot coming on the unfortunate battery. I had to dart into it the best way I could. When I got there the wounded man was lying where he was hit, with another beside him, and all the rest were snugly placed behind traverses and parapets. I had to go to the unfortunate, and it took me nearly a quarter of an hour to dress the wound, it was such a bad one, and I am sure, if one shot came past me, twenty did.

This nice work lasted till about half-past six, when, as they had nearly stopped firing, I thought I might go back to the first parallel, and when I got there I found my relief had come, so I started home, precious glad to get away, and very hungry, as I had nothing but some rum and biscuit for 24 hours, cooking being quite out of the question in such a target as the advanced battery. It would be quite impossible to tell all the narrow escapes we had. A shell fell into the middle of us, but fortunately did not burst; we screwed out the fuse and found it was an English one, probably a shell of ours that had not burst, and was returned by the enemy. The noise all day was terrific. The shells from our batteries and the shot from theirs, about 300 yards distant never ceased. We were in a capital position for hearing everything. Their practice was much better than ours. I used to climb up in an embrasure and watch our shot, which always went over their battery. This was quite safe, as they had withdrawn their riflemen, and one could always jump into the battery after they fired a gun before the shot came. You saw the flash. Our shot went too high, because the embrasures were too high, and the guns consequently could not be sufficiently depressed. And now you have the experience of a non-combatant of the trenches under fire. I suppose you would like to know how I felt yesterday. Of