



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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HOW THE WAR GOES.

We continue our diary of the siege, interrupted by the non-arrival of the steamer *Pacific*:—

Feb. 3rd. A very sudden change in the weather, quite characteristic of the climate and of its extreme variations, occurred about one o'clock this morning. A bitter cold wind sprung up and blew with violence, and the thermometer fell to eighteen degrees. A deep fall of snow took place, and the whole landscape is once more clothed in white. It is now freezing intensely. This will put impediments in the way of our railroad making. The navies are hard at work picking, and growling, and fighting among themselves. There was a regular battle on board one of their ships last night, and the Provost-Marshal will have to give a few of them a taste of his quality ere they are brought to a sense of their responsibility in a state of martial law.

There was little firing on the trenches last night. The French had as usual a couple of smart fusillades during the night. Our third parallel, in front of Chapman's Battery, is to be strengthened at last. Every day strengthens the correctness of Sir John Burgoyne's homely saying about Sebastopol, "The more you look at it, the less you will like it." Three months ago that officer declared his "opinion" to be that the place ought to be assaulted. Now General Niel comes, and we hear that he laughs at the notion of our reducing the place by the fire of artillery. However, we shall have a tremendous fire for them, and a shower of 13-inch shells, each of which weighs about 200 lbs., will be an extremely unpleasant addition to the storm we shall direct upon the Russians. The French are extremely anxious for the assault. Our army has long been in a condition which induces it to prefer anything to the trenches. It may easily be imagined that General Canrobert is becoming less popular among his soldiers than he was. General Bosquet, who commanded the French movement at Inkermann, is rising in favor, as he is known to be in favor of the bayonet.

In a regiment which has been out here for some time, "the state," a few days ago, was as follows:—Original strength, 855 men; present fit for duty, 125; in hospital, or unfit for duty, at camp, 360; at Scutari, 83 sick in hospital; deficit 287 men. There is no news of any decided movement among the Russians. The guns of our new battery outside Balaklava are in position. About three miles of the line of rail have been marked by the engineers from Balaklava beyond Kadikoi, and a line of white sticks in the ground denotes so much of the route at present. The arming of our batteries in front goes on every night. Both the Diamond and Wasp have been warped into position to sweep the road into Balaklava, and their guns cover the whole approach to the town from the valley outside.

The commissariat supplies are sufficient in most respects, and three of the generals here sent in statements as to the manner in which the men under his charge have been supplied, which must be very gratifying to the commissariat officers. The officers of the commissariat attached to the Guards and the 2nd division have been particularly successful in their efforts to supply the men.

February 5th.—Our preparations for the final attack are progressing but very slowly. Each day we make some advance, but so small that each day only serves to show the truth of the assertion I made some time since, that it would be months before Sebastopol was captured. Now we have about fifty new guns placed, which leaves fifty-eight still to be got into position. This work, in the way it goes forward, might be completed in a fortnight or ten days; but it has lately been determined to erect an additional mortar battery on the Inkermann heights, which it is expected will command the Careening Bay and every part of the harbor. Until this battery is completed the allies will certainly not attempt to open fire, and at least three weeks must elapse before all its ordnance is placed. It is intended to mount five 13-inch and six 10-inch mortars, which will be worked and manned entirely by the French. As I remarked in my last letter, it is by no means the placing of the guns which occupies most time, but supplying those guns with sufficient quantities of powder and shot form the chief difficulty. The English lines alone will fire away 420 tons of shot in twelve hours, and the French lines nearly 800 tons, so your readers will easily be able to calculate the amount required for an incessant bombardment of fifty or sixty hours, and to judge of the obstacles to be overcome before such a mass of iron can be moved from Balaklava to the trenches. The English have already about 1,400 tons of shot and shell at camp, and when about 600 tons more are added to that we shall commence firing. Judging from these facts I should say that it will at least be well towards the end of this month before we shall be in a condition to answer the Russian guns effectively. The new battery, which it has been decided to throw

up at Inkermann, is evidently much disapproved of by the Russians. A small steamer of theirs, called the *Spitfire*, and mounting five or six heavy guns, comes from under the shelter of the land every two or three minutes, and gives the working party the whole benefit of the well-directed broadside, and then returns close in shore the instant she has fired. As it is no part of the plan of the allies to show the enemy the strength and position of their works, the steamer is enabled to do this with almost perfect impunity. In the careening creek, which is immediately under the intended battery, the enemy have also constructed two large rafts of solid timber, and mounted each with two 15-inch mortars. These are in turn rapidly hauled round into the centre of the creek by means of warps, and throw their shells with terrible accuracy upon the Inkermann heights. As yet they have done little mischief, beyond rendering the progress of the work slower, by compelling the men to throw themselves on their face the instant the shell falls near. Both the shot and shell practice of the enemy in this direction is described as beautiful, and as quite equalling the best of the kind at Woolwich. All this time the Russians continue daily to strengthen their defences by all the arts known to modern warfare. Most of the batteries now bristle with stockades and abattis, and are protected in front with wide and deep ditches. What their resources are inside their lines we can only guess; but if they at all resemble the exteriors in any manner, the storming of the place will, beyond all doubt, prove one of the bloodiest on record. It seems now determined that an assault will be tried after the bombardment; but I confess I look forward to the result of such an attempt not only with anxiety but positive doubt. At a fearful sacrifice of life the south side can, and, no doubt, will, be taken at the proper time; but how the allies are to hold it, or how we can even do more than ruin the defences to which we are now opposed, seems impossible, while the immense range of forts and batteries to the north, against which not a shot has yet been fired, remain in the hands of the enemy, and command the town and south side in every direction. Every one out here sees that very little can be achieved by storming under such circumstances, and a doubt of the success of the whole plan prevails in the minds of most persons well acquainted with such subjects.

The "navies" are working away heartily, pulling down the ricketty houses and fragments of houses, near the Post-Office of Balaklava, so as to form the terminus of the first bit of the Grand Crimean Central Railway (with branch line to Sebastopol). They have landed a large quantity of barrows, beams, rails, spades, shovels, picks, and others materials. The frail houses soon dissolve into heaps of rubbish under their vigorous blows, and the more friable remains are carted off and shot into and over the ineffable horrors and nastinesses of the Turkish plague and cholera houses. Unless we have a sanitary officer, and a corps to assist him, sent out, or organized here, the fine weather will be a curse instead of a blessing, and the sun will develop maladies even more terrible than those which have hitherto scourged our armies. It is sickening to think of it, but it is nevertheless true, the wells in the town of Balaklava, down by the seaside, must be filled with water that has trickled through the earth down the hill, from and through the layers of Turkish corpses that lie festering above, barely covered from sight by a few inches of earth. The neighborhood of the French camps is very filthy. It is surprising that such acute and active men as our allies should permit these dirty habits to exist, and that their able surgeons do not point out the danger arising from them to the whole army. They leave their dead horses unburied close to their tents. The Turks pay greater apparent regard to cleanliness when in the field, but at the best of times a camp is a strong-smelling place, and must necessarily be somewhat dirty. All we can do is to make it as little offensive as possible. On the other hand the French display the greatest regard to cleanliness of person, and take opportunities (of which our men do not or cannot) to wash their clothes wherever there is a running brook or a supply of water.

February 6th.—The cold and frost have almost disappeared; the only traces of winter remaining to us are patches of snow on the hill sides and in the ravines, and the blanched mountain ridges in the far distance, or the rotten roads in which the blackened snow still lies in masses perforated by deep holes, dangerous to horse and man. The thermometer is up to 52 degrees. The birds are singing around us; the sun is generally bright and warm for several hours in the day. It is in fact one of those Crimean proto-springs of not unfrequent occurrence, wherein even the trees, and vines, and grass are deceived for a short time, and think they may put forth their young buds and shoots. But the inhabitants warn us not to be misled by this transient calm; March is still to be

endured, and we hear that he comes in and remains in with bitter cold and very strong winds, and heavy falls of rain, sleet, and snow. The month of March is in fact like the month of November in the Crimea, and we all know what disasters we endured during the terrible twenty days of that month in 1854. The climate, indeed, is beyond all conception fickle. Warm clothing has been served out to most of the army. It must be observed that the articles most essential to the health and comfort are of the most disgraceful description. I was told by the principal medical officer of one of the divisions of this army that the surgeons of the various regiments had complained to him that the "ammunition boots" served out to the men were not only too small, but "that the soles dropped off after a week's wear." The long waterproof boots are generally of better quality, and last very well, but the "ammunition boots," as they are called, have been infamously made out of bad materials. The health of the camp is improving a little, but there is still a great number of men in hospital. In the light division, which now consists of eight regiments (as the 90th, and 34th, and some marines, have been added to its veteran regiments), the 7th, 19th, 23rd, 33rd, 77th, and 88th, and the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade, the sick to-day amount to about 1,100. The 34th are remarkably healthy, but they have not been long here, nor have they done much hard work. The 7th and 77th regiments are also healthy—and as far as General Codrington can secure the health of all the division he does it; but still they have more than 1,000 men unfit for duty. A low fever, a kind of bilious attack, arising from a disordered liver, prevails rather extensively. Even yet there is little or no fuel to be had by the men in front. The supplies of charcoal are scanty, and infrequent and irregular. The men are obliged to grub out of the soil by the most painful labor the roots of brushwood or of vines, and they are obliged often to go down the hill sides right under the enemy's fire in order to gather enough to cook their meals. The 7th and 77th regiments are fully provided with hospital huts, and the 19th, 23rd, 33rd, 34th, 88th, 90th, and Rifles are either partially furnished with the means of housing their sick and of keeping them off the earth, or are getting up the wood as fast as they can, and erecting the huts daily. Now, the light division, though it has been the hardest worked, is one of the healthiest in the army, and yet such is its condition reviewed under the very favorable aspect it at present offers to the spectator. The Guards are now reduced to 500 men fit for duty; they are coming down to Balaklava, and the brigade will be relieved by the 39th Regiment. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th divisions have *pro rata* perhaps a little more, with the exception of the 3rd division, than the light division, and are much in the same state as to huts and fuel.

Yesterday Lieutenant Colonel Collingwood Dickson, who has commanded the siege train in the right attack since the beginning of the siege, and who did such good service with the two 18 pounders at Inkermann, was shot by a Russian rifleman whilst he was on duty in the trenches. The wound is not serious.

There was a murderous fire kept for about an hour yesterday morning between the French and Russians. The cannonade and roll of small arms was incessant. The Russians had cut into the gallery of a French mine, and had destroyed an officer of engineers and some men by smoke balls, after which they blew up the mine. Our allies had their revenge. When the Russians came out, as usual, last night the French got three 18 pounders in readiness, and carefully laid them on the approach to the sally port, nicely stored with grape and canister. The enemy made their sortie under a tremendous cannonade from the batteries, and then rushed in amongst the works, but they were received with such destructive volleys of Minies and musketry that they were speedily driven over the trench towards the town. The three guns were fired right into their retreating columns at short ranges, and continued to plough them up with round shot till they got under cover of their works. It is conjectured that 250 or 300 were killed and wounded before they reached the town. The French lost about fifty in killed and wounded.

February 7.—There was an extremely hot contest last night between the French and Russians; the cannonade, which sounded all over the camp, lasted about an hour. The enemy are still laboring hard at the works in the rear of Malakhoff (or the Round Tower), and at three o'clock to-day they had about 1,200 men employed at the earth slopes and parapets of the batteries. It is believed that the neighborhood of this tower is being extensively mined. The French mortars have already begun to tell on the stonework of the buildings opposite their batteries—in a few days our allies will be able to inflict tremendous damage on the town. Lord Raglan has ordered ten of our 13-inch mortars to be lent to the French. A formidable fire will be opened by bombs alone, and

stone itself must at last give way before it. As the severity of the bombardment increases it may be expected that the efforts of the Russians to destroy the works will be made night after night with greater inveteracy and vigor, but the mortar platforms are well covered and are retired behind numerous works, though the greater part of the southern side of the Valle Curile of Sebastopol lies within 2,500 yards of them. The French engineer, General Niel, who visited the English trenches recently, expressed a decided opinion that the batteries were too far to produce any substantial results. When we first sat down before this place it was proposed that the first parallel should be at the usual distance—of from 600 to 800 yards from the defences; but to this it was objected, that there would be great loss of life in making it so near, and that the old rule of war, which fixed the distance of the lines of the besiegers from those of the besieged, was abrogated by recent improvements in gunnery, and by the increased power and range of siege guns. Our batteries were constructed at upwards of 1,000 and 1,200 yards from the enemy. Sir John Burgoyne is said to have been in favor of nearer approaches when the lines were first drawn. Major General Jones has now arrived. We hear that batteries are to be erected in front of our right attack, and that a heavy convergent fire will be directed on Malakhoff and its defences when the bombardment re-opens.

February 8.—General Rumour is a very efficient officer in the management of "alertes." This morning he turned out all the troops in and about Balaklava, manned his gun, roused up Admiral Boxer, awakened Captain Christie, landed the seamen, mercantile and naval, and taking Sir Colin Campbell and his staff out on the hills, awaited an attack which never was made, but which, no doubt, would have been repelled with signal energy and success.

Feb. 9.—Omer Pasha arrived at Kamiesch last night, in the Colombo, and to-day his Highness visited General Canrobert and Lord Raglan, and had lengthened interviews with them. The weather was fine to-day. At night, however, the rain—the most active of General Fevrier's lieutenants—came down incessantly. The Russians are moving about on the hills in our rear, and a column of infantry was seen to march along over the Tchernaya heights towards Sebastopol yesterday. This morning all our troops at the heights over Balaklava were out under arms from half-past 4 o'clock till 7 o'clock in a dense fog, and drizzling mist—the same force as before.—The Russians made no sign, and the men were dismissed to their tents soon after daylight. There was an awful cannonade last night all along the Russian lines, and a sortie was made, which was repulsed by the French, while a feint on our lines was equally unsuccessful.

Feb. 10.—One of those sudden changes which render this climate the most peculiar in the world took place last night. The day had been warm and beautiful, the night was cold, and the rain fell in torrents. This morning the ground is partially covered with snow, which descended heavily towards morning, but which thawed fast. The roads will be in a very bad condition.

Feb. 11.—A day quite worthy of "General Fevrier's gratitude"—bleak, raw, and stormy. In the front all was silent—not a gun was fired the greater part of the day, and the popping of rifles nearly ceased also.

Feb. 12.—Sir George Brown arrived to-day, and Lord Raglan went down to meet him, and returned with him to headquarters. The weather has changed again. The sun is out, the rain is over, and a cold drying wind is blowing over the plain. The French are arming our right attack. The left attack is completely armed. There is no appearance of any considerable force of Russians either to the north of Sebastopol or over the heights of Balaklava. All danger of attack from Baidar seems very trifling. The plain is impassable for artillery. The Tchernaya is now our great line of defence, and it is a line which defends itself. There is only one bridge over it, descending from Mackenzie's Farm, and that is not fit for the transport of either artillery or cavalry. Towards Inkermann the whole valley is flooded, and turned into marsh and bog. The preparations to remedy our great error in the plan of our first attack proceed rapidly. It is now said that we ought to have stormed the Redan and the Round Tower (Malakhoff) the very first day, as soon as our fire had nearly silenced their batteries. The French are in high spirits, and say they will be ready to march into the place in fifteen days. Our troops are in better condition, and huts are being erected on every side.

FEBRUARY 13.—The siege makes slow progress on our side. The French have been bombarding from ten large mortars for the last twenty-four hours, without producing any apparent effect commensurate with the weight of such a tremendous mass of metal