



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. VI.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 31, 1855.

NO. 3.

DIARY OF THE SIEGE.

(From Correspondents of London Journals.)

CAMP BEFORE SEBASTOPOL, July 23.—Our new batteries are completed and armed. The principal battery, occupying a very advanced position on the right, in front of Frenchman's hill, is fitted with a most powerful armament, a considerable proportion of which consists of land and sea service 13 inch mortars. This is more especially to act, it is said, and its position renders the statement probable, against the line-of-battle ships, which still retain their threatening attitude, broadside toward the Karabelnata suburb. It is remarkable that neither the three-deckers nor the two-deckers have yet been observed to discharge a shot or shell against our works; this duty hitherto has been continued to the man-of-war steamers. The largest of the ships, which is seen lying out to our left of Fort Paul, appears to be partly careened over, and it would appear as if she might easily acquire elevation enough to try her range over the low ground about the south harbor and Dockyard Creek. The distance at which she is now anchored appears to be about three thousand yards from the sloping line of the Malakoff hill as its side dips towards the barrack buildings, but it is difficult to estimate this with accuracy while she is lying out in the roadstead. The report has been so industriously circulated in camp, of the enemy having been necessitated to take the guns out of these vessels for use in the land batteries, that their constant silence may be a ruse to invite credence to this very important story, until, having gained possession and effected our judgments on the Malakoff and other commanding positions, we should receive a more authentic account of their powers and armament.—There is a story that a sailor has volunteered to start from Careening Bay on the first favorable opportunity, and, single handed, to destroy each ship successively. He asserts that he is in possession of a secret method by which he can move along beneath the surface of the water and breathe as easily as if he were in a diving apparatus supplied with air by a pump, and that he can carry with him an explosive machine of sufficient power to drive a hole through the bottom of the largest ship. All this may end in smoke, as so many other assertions of possessing secret powers of destruction appear to have ended. A few afternoons since a small skiff, fitted at its sides with what appeared to be not unlike a life-boat apparatus, was carried down by the French towards Careening Bay, and perhaps this gave some coloring of truth to the story. Besides, the sailor gave a proof on the night of the 19th instant, that at any rate he was clever enough to approach a ship undetected, notwithstanding a very careful guard being established to mark his coming. As a proof of still further ability, he announced to the officers of Her Majesty's ship "London" that he would come in the course of that night and chalk up the name of the ship on her side, just above the water-mark, do what they might to prevent him. The challenge was accepted, double sentries were posted, and some volunteers among the officers kept a look out, but no one was observed to come near, and all on board were convinced that no one had come near the vessel. Daylight, however, showed the letters conspicuously chalked on the ship's side, as the sailor said they would be. It has been suggested that the means by which his feat was accomplished was an atmospheric boat, capable of being guided when sunk beneath the surface of the water, and supplied with a reserve of air enough to last a given time for the support of its adventurous owner. It is stated that he could not have swam alongside without being observed.

July 24.—Another hot sunny morning, with an atmosphere equally as oppressive and sultry as it has been for some days past. The empty condition of the water tanks and reservoirs, and the gradually diminishing flow from the springs near the front, are becoming a source of great inconvenience and anxiety. A great part of the water carried down for use in the trenches last night had to be brought from the large reservoir in the Tchernaya valley, connected with the aqueduct to Sebastopol. The distance of this water is so great, nearly three miles, and the descent to the low ground and subsequent ascent so tedious and difficult, that the expenditure of time and labor is rendered a serious matter. Stringent regulations are enforced to prevent the use of the water at the springs excepting for the most urgent purposes of consumption. Captain Bentinck Gilby, of the 77th Regiment, was buried to-day, amidst the regret of a large circle of companions and friends. He died after a very brief illness, the immediate cause of his decease being erysipelas of the head.—He had been wounded in the leg by a piece of shell when the attack was made on the Quarries in front of the Redan on the 7th of June, and his health had suffered during the necessary confinement which fol-

lowed while he was under treatment for the injury. He had resumed his duty, however, and exposure to the glare of the sun in the trenches is said to have brought on the erysipelas, under which he so rapidly died. This officer, who had been with his regiment ever since it arrived in Turkey, had distinguished himself on several occasions. Notwithstanding the excessive heat, and the exposure to which the troops are necessarily submitted during their 24 hours' turn of duty in the trenches, there has not been any increase in the number of cases of cholera. Dysenteric disease and fever seem to be the only prevailing diseases of a serious character at present among the camps in front. The former malady attacks newcomers especially—persons who have not become inured to live under canvas and to camp dieting. A young officer of the 34th Regiment, Lieutenant Norman Ramsay, fell a victim to it yesterday. Many officers and men have had to leave camp from the same cause, for even when the dysentery is controlled, an amount of debility remains which renders restoration to health almost impossible without a complete change of air and scene.

July 25.—There was a heavy fire all night from the batteries, and about midnight the enemy made a sortie against the ambulances and advanced trenches of the French on the Malakoff hill. The moon had been shining brightly, and about five minutes after it had set and there was general obscurity, the Russians sallied out. The French were on the alert, and must have perceived the enemy advancing, for the first notice in the English attack of the sortie were the French bugles sounding the alarm. They were immediately followed by the usual sharp cry of the Russians as they rushed forward to attack mixed with the sound of their bugles and the shouts of officers. A very heavy fire of musketry followed, and all the batteries opened with terrible effect. The Russian steamers were very active in throwing shells over into the French works. It is said that the new French battery near Careening Bay did not open her fire against the steamers, reserving it for a simultaneous operation with other works on the left, which is to be carried into effect against the enemy's fleet in a few days. The flight of shells from our right attack, in the direction of the Malakoff works, and the ground in their rear, was unceasing. As many as eight or nine shells from this attack might be counted in the air at one time. Some of the 13-inch mortars in our new advanced battery was also fired in the direction of the low ground between the Redan and Malakoff hills, along which it might be presumed troops would advance towards our own works, but the enemy exhibited no intention of making an attack on our trenches. After a period of fifteen or twenty minutes the musketry ceased. The enemy had not gained any advantage. The French sap, which is now fast approaching the ditch of the Malakoff, was not injured. Our allies have also some rifle pits close to the edge of the ditch, the fire from which causes great annoyance to the enemy, and they are so completely under the parapets of the works above, that the larger guns cannot be sufficiently depressed to reach them. The enemy, it is supposed, sought particularly the destruction of these ambulances, but the alertness of the French prevented them from achieving this object.

July 26.—Light rain continued to fall during the whole night. The atmosphere is still clouded. As a proof of the heedless indifference to danger which some of the men acquire from constantly moving amongst shot and shell, the following example, which occurred last evening, may be mentioned.—A large shell had been thrown from the Redan into our right attack, and during its passage the fuze had accidentally dropped out. The shell fell, therefore, like a round shot into part of the approach connected with the old advanced or third parallel. Some men of the 47th regiment were near, waiting for the reliefs to arrive, and ready to return to camp. One of these soldiers after examining the unexploded shell, actually had the foolhardiness to jerk the ashes of the tobacco in his pipe, which he had just finished smoking, into the fuze-hole. Another of the men standing by, and observing the action, had only just time to utter an exclamation when the shell burst. The reckless author of the mischief suffered severely—both his legs were shattered, and he was frightfully scorched about the head and face. Five other men were wounded, but fortunately none were dangerously hurt. It is presumed that the man had no idea of any of the pipe-ash being sufficiently hot to cause ignition of the powder in the shell. Instances of men exposing themselves to imminent hazard by showing their position to the enemy occur daily even in the most advanced works, and it often requires the greatest watchfulness on the part of the officers to make them sufficiently thoughtful of their own safety, and that of others around them. The cavalry division have been kept under arms all day; the several regiments being here ready to turn out at a moment's

notice. It is said that an attack was looked for in the direction of the Tchernaya. A deserter from the enemy had reported that the Russians were making preparations to make against the allied forces in the plain of Balaklava, and that they had provided themselves with a large number of pontoon bridges for effecting the passage of the Tchernaya river.—A body of Sardinian and French light troops were thrown out to make a reconnoissance, but returned without observing any appearances indicating such an intention on the part of the enemy. They exchanged a few shots with some Russian outposts.—Rain has fallen at intervals during the day but not to be any considerable depth. It has had the beneficial effect, however, of cooling the atmosphere, and already some, though only a slight, increase has taken place in the quantity of water flowing from the springs. Had the weather continued hot and dry, the drought by this time must have been the source of very serious inconvenience. The fire from the batteries on both sides was very incessant during the whole night. The Russians not only threw a vast amount of shells into various parts of the works, but kept up a constant discharge of grape and "bouquets" against the advanced trenches. These bouquets consist of a number of small shells or grenades; they are thrown from a mortar, about ten or twelve at one discharge; they burst closely together, and their fragments are scattered in all directions.—A constant fire of this kind is going on against the French works on the Malakoff Hill, and in addition the sharpshooters maintain an unceasing fusillade.—The loss of our allies, from casualties of all kinds, is now said to be equal in numbers to a regiment per month, or nearly one hundred men per diem. This seems to be a very large number, but the great extent of ground they occupy, and the strength of force employed in guarding the trenches and in working parties, with the closeness to the enemy's lines, will sufficiently explain the apparent improbability of the statement. The proportion of our own casualties has greatly increased of late, though the majority have not been providentially of a very grave character. From the great weight of our shells, and the superior power and comparative proximity of our guns, the loss in the ranks of the enemy must also be very great. A constant fire has been kept up all day in the batteries.

July 27.—The fire in the batteries was very heavy, and continued incessantly all night. A Circassian chief, apparently of very high rank, with a staff of five or six attendants, was escorted over the works on the Mamelon Vert by a French general officer to day. The novelty of his costume, equally with that of his followers, who all carried the cartridges for their pistols slung in a row like a necklace, and dependent upon their highly embroidered vests, attracted general attention as they rode through the camps. They were powerfully framed men, and bore a spirited and soldierlike bearing. The officers of Engineers in the field are very much reduced in numbers. The arrival of others is said to be daily expected. The sad losses in this corps, both on the 7th and 18th of June—no less than five being killed in the two attacks, and several wounded—greatly reduced their already diminished numbers. Colonel Tylden, who was dangerously wounded on the 18th of June, and to whose "eminent services" the late Commander-in-Chief called particular attention in one of his despatches, left yesterday for England, in the William Jackson, transport. It is said to relate that he is reported to be in a very precarious state. From the commencement of the siege Colonel Tylden has been most active, and his gallant conduct on more than one occasion, in repulsing the enemy when making an attack on our works, was so conspicuous as to attract general attention. He had previously distinguished himself at the Cape of Good Hope during the Kaffir war. Colonel Gordon is also absent on account of ill health. Although the bombardment has not as yet commenced officially, yet our batteries are far from remaining idle either by night or by day. The report asserts that an order was delivered from head-quarters to the effect that no shot from the enemy was to remain unacknowledged, but in every practicable position he was to receive, if possible, two for one. We are too near his stronghold for Johnny Ruskny to leave us unnoticed, and as soon as the clink of some unlucky pickaxe rings in his ears a shower of grape or canister, a light ball and a bouquet of shells, give us notice that we are not sufficiently careful. The French have withstood the brunt of two assaults on their position in front of the Malakoff. Their advanced trenches now within one hundred paces of the counterscarp of the work and the Russians evidently calculate on their gaining a footing there, as they are at present occupying themselves in throwing up a cavalier work in rear of the former parapet. This may enable them to make a more protracted defence, but it will also cramp their movements, and prevent them replacing their guns

and repairing their works, as they could more effectually do were their space less confined. It is a most direct advantage to us, as, in the event of our taking the outer work, this new parapet will afford us good cover from the fire of the ships, and prevent us from suffering so severely while endeavoring to force inside. Those who have seen the rear works of the Malakoff from our shipping outside say that the form is somewhat heart-shaped; the two semi-circular portions are facing the besiegers, and the sides are formed en crémaillère so as to secure a flanking fire along the whole front and flanks. Two entrenchments are drawn within it; but although such sieges as those of Saragossa and Silistria warn us that a town must not necessarily fall with its outworks, or regular defences, yet, if the allies once succeed in introducing one thousand men within the fortifications of either the Redan or Round Tower, the fate of this Armageddon is sealed.

As far as we can see there are at present very few troops on the plateau of the north side; they seem to have all been drawn towards Sebastopol, and there is consequently a large display of canvas in its vicinity. Many are of opinion that the greater part of the camp is required as a hospital. Rumor even now mentions the regiments intended for the approaching assault. In the French army the Imperial Guard and the 1st regiment of Zouaves are named, and General Bosquet named as their leader. Our allies have proved the necessity of keeping their plans more guarded and secret than before; the circumstances of the defeat of the 18th would seem to warrant the belief of traitors in the camp. The French General has now no confidant, he scrupulously avoids those expedients of vacillating timidity—councils of war. We all suppose that our next assault will take place at some moment when he least expect it, or as a French officer remarked, no further notice will be given beyond "Fix bayonets," "Forward." Our allies manifest an originality in the minor branches of military strategy which we sadly want. At the attack on the Mamelon on the 7th, the signal given was six rockets from the Victoria Redoubt. Under the impression that the besieged would probably for the future keep a good look out for demonstrations of this nature, the French not many days since made the same signal, and accompanied it with the roll of drums in the trenches towards the front, and words of command given in a loud tone. The result justified their anticipations, as the Russian bugles sounded the assembly, and their troops were seen crowding into the Malakoff, ready to repel the supposed premeditated attack. Immediately the guns and mortars bearing on the threatened point poured forth their iron hail. Grape, canister, and shells fell amongst the besieged "fast and furious," and only ceased when the fire from the enemy showed that the panic had passed away. On the whole, the *ruse de guerre* was satisfactory in the extreme to all concerned, except the sufferers. We were surprised a few evenings since to see, while it was yet day, a number of Russian sailors suddenly debouch from the ravine under the Malakoff, and running up the hill, endeavor to shelter themselves behind some rocks and bushes *en tirailleur*. They evidently imagine from their position they could turn the flank of the French sap by the left, while they themselves remained unexposed. Our soldiers, however, crawling down, succeeded in getting within two hundred paces of these sharpshooters, and turned the tables on them most completely, as before the Russians could correct their unfortunate error we shot down about ten of them. Most probably they had been sent out as a punishment for some offence against military discipline. Many reforms have taken place in the interior economy of our routine since the change at our head-quarters; they give universal satisfaction. Our new commander-in-chief seems determined to view all things for himself, and will take nothing on hearsay. He was nearly taken as a spy by some soldier ignorant of his rank not long since, as the latter could not understand what business an officer in a very shabby uniform, and without any attendants, had in promenading through the most advanced and exposed trenches, looking into the magazines, taking the directions of the mortar batteries, and making himself master of the whole plan of our attack.

July 28.—Several days have been named for the commencement of the new bombardment and attack. It is not probable that the event will be postponed to a much later date. The number of casualties in the trenches and new works is a subject of serious consideration, and though hardly so great as might be expected from the relative position of the besieged and besiegers, must act as a strong incentive to the commanders to perfect as speedily as possible the preparations for the renewed attack. Some of the new batteries of our allies, destined to act against the Russian marine, are not yet finished, and a change is also being made in the armament of certain portions of our works, which is not likely to be cou-