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DIARY OF THE SIEGE.

(From the Times' Correspondent.)

April 21.—Our firing has now been reduced till further orders to 30 rounds per gun, and the bombardment is nearly suspended, partly from want of fuses, and partly from considerations of a military character which have weight in the councils of our Generals. The French still continue to cannonade with energy, and to push on their saps on the extreme right and left of our position with vigor and considerable success; and it has been satisfactorily ascertained that the Russians have a very insignificant force at Tchorgoun, though their position is extremely strong, and is immediately connected with that held by the army on the heights between the Belbek and the Tchernaya. We have still two batteries which have not opened fire. There is no such thing to be talked of as taking the field against the army covering Sebastopol. Any operations against that army must be commenced by forcing a series of batteries, of intrenchments, of fortified camps placed on the ridges of ravines or elevated grounds, and in mountain passes. The town itself is as open to us externally as ever it was any time after the 17th of October, but inside the lines of rubbish and ruins created by our guns, amid high houses and in spacious, though tortuous streets, the Russians have erected earthworks pierced for guns, which are, no doubt, ready to be put in position at a moment's notice. As to the question of assault, it puzzles better strategists than most of our officers profess to be to say whether it would be advisable or not. Some say we could "go in" to-morrow if the order was given, others that an assault would be madness, and that, though we might get in, we could not be able to hold our ground, owing to the fire of the ships and of the northern forts. Certain it is that the men would prefer the storm to one night's work in the trenches. In addition to the advance made by the French, we have pushed forward a sap in face of our right attack, and our parallel is now connected with that of the French, and we have also formed the rifle pit we took into a portion of our advanced work, and have connected it with the parallel. More guns, 8-inch and 32's, have been sent up from the ships at Balaklava for the new batteries, and there is talk of sending for more, as well as for shot and shell, to Malta. The weather is fine. There have been, I regret to say, however, several cases not only of fever, but of cholera. The terrible disease appeared on board the Diamond, and hospital gangrene has also broken out in the same vessel. When there are such healthy sites for hospital huts, and when the Sanitarium has been found to answer so well, it is a serious mistake to huddle sick and wounded men into a small ship like the Diamond along with a healthy crew, who are likely to become the victims of disease in consequence. There is a terrible stench at the head of the harbor, at the Turkish burialground, and at parts of the cavalry camp, in spite of all our sanitary precautions. To show the great alteration that has taken place in the sanitary state of the regiments in front I send you an extract from a letter received from a friend, who is an officer in a distinguished regiment in the Light Division:—

"Everything is most flourishing here. We turned out 322 men under arms to-day. I left my company six weeks ago with about 30 odd sick in it, and now I have but three sick present, with only 17 at Scutari, and the three present are all convalescent. It is quite cheering and delightful; the whole army and all the camps seem to have risen by magic from the grave. Our men turn out for parade now as clean as if they were in Dublin, or very nearly so, and I have ceased to be surprised at the cleanliness of the Guards at Balaklava, who have nothing, comparatively speaking, to do, except clean themselves, and who have all their new clothing, when I see our men in the front turn out in the same state who have only the old clothing that went through the severe campaign of the winter. We were turned out last night about 11 o'clock, the French on the right, as usual. The firing was sharp and short, and we were turned in again, not before the General had sent his Brigade-Major to compliment the regiment for the rapidity with which it turned out. We were inspected by General Buller to-day. He kept us knocking about in the sun for about two hours, and expressed his entire satisfaction at the general appearance, smartness, cleanliness, and steadiness of the men, and said he should make a point of reporting it to the higher powers. The men certainly made a wonderful show, and I almost fancied I saw the old —th in Dublin again. We have very few sick here now, and the hospitals are almost empty now in comparison with what they were, and kept as clean and airy as possible. The men have got most excellent care

of shells. The French did their best to keep it alive by constant discharges of shell from their Picket-house Battery. The firing was very heavy, almost as vigorous, indeed, as that on the second evening of the bombardment, when 23 shells were counted twinkling up among the stars as they swept down from the French batteries upon the Russian works. During the fire upon our batteries we have had 25 guns more or less damaged. We have masked our 95-cwt. gun for prudential reasons. One 10-inch gun has been smashed to pieces, and the platform of another has been destroyed, but we have silenced a far greater number of the enemy's guns, and our damages will be made good in a very short time.

April 25.—Our fire is very much diminished to-day. The Russian fire is also slackened just in proportion as they find our guns do not play on them.—The French batteries have also relaxed a little in their energies. Even were there no considerations connected with the state of the siege and of our supplies of ammunition involved in this diminution of the weight of our bombardment and cannonade, it must be remembered that, unless with constant reliefs, four hour spells at working heavy guns in the heat, dust, and blood of the trenches will wear out the strongest men. At present the men are employed in repairing damages, in replacing injured guns and platforms, &c.

April 26.—A reconnaissance was made by a strong division of Turkish troops under the command of his Excellency Omar Pasha, assisted by French and English cavalry and artillery, this morning. The Turks marched in dense columns, bristling with steel, and the sunlight flashing on the polished barrels of their firelocks and on their bayonets, relieved the sombre hue of the mass, for their dark blue uniforms, but little relieved by facings or gay shoulder straps and cuffs, look quite black when the men are together. The Chasseurs d'Afrique, clad in light powder blue jackets, with white castrouch belts, and in bright red pantaloons, mounted on white Arabs, caught the eye like a bed of flowers scattered over the plain. Nor did the rich verdure indeed require any such borrowed beauty, for the soil produces an abundance of wild flowering shrubs and beautiful plants. Dahlias, anemones, sweetbriar, whitethorn, wild parsley, mint thyme, sage, asparagus, and a hundred other different citizens of the vegetable kingdom spring up all over the plain, and as the Turkish infantry moved along their feet crushed the sweet flowers, and the air was filled with delicate odours, which overcame the sweltering atmosphere around the columns. Rectangular patches of long, rank, rich grass, waving high above the more natural green meadow, marked the mounds where the slain of the 25th of October are reposing for ever, and the snorting horse refuses to eat the unwholesome shoots. As the force moved on evidences of that fatal and glorious day became thick and painful. The skeleton of an English Dragoon, said to be one of the Royals, lay still extended on the plain, with tattered bits of red cloth hanging to the bones of his arms. All the buttons had been cut off the jackets. The man must have fallen early in the day, when the heavy cavalry were close up to Canrobert's hill and came under the fire of the Russian artillery. There was also a Russian skeleton close at hand in ghastly companionship. The small bullet-skull, round as a cannon-ball, had been picked bare all save the scalp, which was still covered with grisly red locks. Further on, amid fragments of shells and round shot, the body of another Russian seemed starting out of the grave, which scarcely covered his lower extremities. The half-decayed skeletons of artillery and cavalry horses covered with rotting trappings, harness, and saddles, lay as they fell in the agonies of death, or had crumbled away into a *débris* of bone and skin, and leather straps, cloth, and buckles. From the numerous graves, the uncovered bones of the tenants had started up through the soil, as if to appeal against the haste with which they had been buried. With the clash of drums and the shrill strains of the fife, with the clamping of bits and ringing of steel, man and horse swept over the remnants of their fellows in all the pride of life. Not the least interesting part of the spectacle was furnished by the relics of the Heavy Cavalry Brigade passing over the scene of their grand encounter with the Muscovite cavalry. Scots Grays and Enniskillens, Royals, 4th Dragoon Guards and 5th Dragoon Guards, all had been there; and the survivors might well feel proud when they thought of that day. These regiments were not larger than troops, and some of them, indeed, were not nearly equal in strength to a troop on war footing, for some of their men have been sent away for remount horses (a proceeding which strikes a civilian as rather curious, seeing that the horses might as well, one would think, have been brought up to them), and others of the men who were left have no horses to mount. The 10th Hussars were conspicuous for the

soldierly and efficient look of the men, and the fine condition of their light sinewy and showy horses. As the force descended into the plain they extended their right flank, and marched towards Kamara, spreading across the ground in front of Canrobert's-hill from No. 2 Turkish Redoubt up to the slope which leads to the ruined village. A party of Turkish infantry followed the cavalry in skirmishing order, and on approaching the village the column immediately in their rear halted, and Bono Johnny proceeded with great activity to cover the high wooded hill which overhangs the village to the right. This they did without resistance, as the few Cossacks in the village had abandoned it after firing a few straggling shots at the advanced skirmishers. One fellow had been so completely taken by surprise that he left his lance leaning against a wall. An officer of the 71st espied it just as the Cossack was making a bolt back for it. They both rode their best, but the Briton was first, and carried off the lance in triumph, while the Cossack retreated with effective pantomime, representing rage and despair. I aim told that the Turks discovered a wretched man armed with a bow and arrows, who said he was a Tchergess, lurking among the ruins of the village, and that he had a near escape of his life, as the Osmanli would not believe he was indeed a soldier. In addition to his bow and arrows, he carried a quaint old pistol, and his coat-breast was wadded with cartridges. I did not, however, see the man, and only report this from hearsay. I looked into the church, the floor of which had formerly been covered an inch in depth with copper money, thrown there by the inhabitants when the expedition first came to Balaklava. The simple faith of the poor people in the protection of their church had not been violated by us, but the Cossacks appeared to have had no such scruples, for not a copeck was to be seen, and the church was bare and desolate, and stripped of every adornment, even to the woodwork. The rest of the place is a heap of ruins, but the Cossacks have burrowed here and there into the stores, and have made sleeping places and stables in the walls of the houses. As soon as the Turks on the right had gained the summit of the hill above Kamara three of the columns advanced and took possession of the ruins, and then drew up in front of the church. A few men were sent further on towards Baidar, but could see no enemy, and they contented themselves with burning a building which the Cossacks had left standing, the smoke from which led some of us to believe that a little skirmish was going on among the hills. Meantime the great bulk of the force, leaving three columns halted at Kamara, marched on past Canrobert's-hill, the sides of which are covered with the wigwags of the Russians—some recent, others those which were partially burnt when Liprandi retired last year. They passed by the old Turkish redoubts Nos. 1 and 2 towards a very steep and rocky conical hill covered with loose stones, near the top of which the Russians threw up a wall of rubbish about 2½ feet high. A group of Cossacks and some Russian officers had assembled on the top of this hill to examine our strength and watch our movements. As the Turkish skirmishers advanced, the French rocket troop accompanied them. The Turks ascended the hill with ardor and with great agility, firing their pieces as they advanced, to which the Cossacks replied by a petty fusillade. Suddenly an arch of thick white smoke rises from the ground with a fierce, hissing, rushing noise, and throws itself like a great snake towards the crest of the hill—as it flies onward the smoke disappears and the fiery trail is lost, but in a second a puff of smoke bursts out with a slight explosion on the hill top and the Cossacks and Russians disappear with precipitation. In fact, the French had begun their rocket practice with great accuracy and success. Nothing can be better for such work as this than these light rocket troops. The apparatus is simple and portable—a few mules, with panniers on each side, carry the whole of tubes, cases, sticks, fuses, &c., and the effect of rockets, though uncertain, is very great, especially against irregular and ill-disciplined cavalry. The skirmishers now crowned this hill also; and the generals and officers of the staff, and numerous idlers and amateurs, followed them. The Russians rode rapidly down the hill-side, and crossed the Tchernaya by the bridge and at one or two fords near Tchorgoun. Omar Pasha, Lord Raglan, and the French Generals then spent some time in surveying the country, while the troops were halted in the rear, the artillery and cavalry first, supported by four battalions of Egyptians. At 2 o'clock the reconnaissance was over, and the troops slowly retired to the camp, the skirmishers of the French cavalry being followed by the Cossacks at a prudent distance, and exchanging long shots with them from time to time. Before the troops moved off the ground the 10th Hussars filed past Omar Pasha, who seemed very much gratified and pleased at the appearance of men and horses. He then in-

spected his own battalions, and on the march homeward followed the Turks, moving off in good style to the music of their own bands, to the great distress of those who heard them. As the Cossacks retired they managed to pick up one of our followers, and I only wonder they did not get more of them, for they loitered about the place in spite of all remonstrance. The man they took was, I believe, a Commissariat mule driver. A few of the French Chasseurs made a charge to get him from his captors, but the Cossacks were too quick. In the twinkling of an eye one of them had hoisted up the muleteer to his saddle, and lashed him there across the bow, and, setting spurs to his horse, he was lost to sight in a ravine in a few seconds. The Cossacks fired some shots at the troops as they retired but hit no one, and a Russian officer and his staff came so close to observe us that they got under the fire of a battery over the Woronzow road, and received a slight shower of rockets, but were not hurt. Altogether, the reconnaissance was a most welcome and delightful interlude in the dull, monotonous "performances" of the siege. Every one felt as if he had beaten the Cossacks and got out of prison at last, and I never saw more cheering, joyous faces at a cover side than were to be seen at Canrobert's-hill. It was a fillip to our spirits to get a gallop across the green sward once more, and to escape from the hateful feeling of constraint and confinement which bores us to death in the camp. A little expedition of the kind now and then would be of more use to the men, if it could be properly managed, than a cargo of physic.

April 27.—If the language addressed to his officers by General Canrobert on Thursday is to be taken as the announcement of our future strategical policy before Sebastopol, it is certain that no very decisive blow will be struck against the place and the armies which defend it until the allies shall have been reinforced by some 70,000 or 80,000 French troops, of whom we are told there are already 25,000 at Constantinople on their way to the Crimea, as the *avant-garde* of the second great army that France has poured from her shores to take part in this great contest. When these new French come where will they be stowed away? The Chersonese is almost as full as it can hold. There is really no room for more men except on the stony hills between Karanyi and St. George, which are far removed from active operations. To place men in such a position would be to deprive the allies of all advantage from their presence. A French force of the magnitude promised by General Canrobert is amply sufficient to win another Alma, or to immortalize by new victories the name of the Katcha or the Belbek. It is one of the misfortunes of our isolated position that we cannot move out to ascertain the exact nature of the fortifications thrown up by the enemy on the north and eastern faces of the place, or along the banks of the Katcha and of the Belbek. The banks of the latter river are under the command of the guns in the northern forts, but it is not known, I think, whether the south bank is fortified higher up the river, so as to enable the Generals to decide that an army would be justified in deserting the sea and making a march to the eastward, to force its way through the Russian columns, and cut-off the communication of Sebastopol with Simpheropol, Bakshiserai, and the rest of the Crimea. The cavalry cannot reconnoitre in a country which is all like the mountainous parts of Derbyshire, or like the Dargle, in the county of Wicklow, on a gigantic scale. The Tchernaya is like an Alpine torrent after you ascend its course between the hills which spring from the plain of Balaklava, and all the heights over it are covered with earthworks, and the approaches to them scarped, and under the fire of redoubts and intrenchments. It is not possible to turn this position. At present the Russians on the north side of the Tchernaya are safer from us than if the Atlantic were between us. We can see their wigwags, count their horses, watch their men cooking, cutting wood, parading, and drilling across the great gulf which is fixed between us, with feelings very much akin to those with which a hungry lion must watch the fat little boy who is always aggravating hungry lions at the Zoological gardens. It is the opinion of the best informed military men that it would not be only useless but impossible, as we are at present circumstanced, to make an excursion into the country with sufficient force to operate against the Russian army with permanent advantage. It may have been an imprudent step to have sat down before (or behind) Sebastopol, but once there, we cannot retire. If we were to withdraw our guns and stores it would take weeks of labour, during which the enemy would redouble their exertions in fortifying the heights around us, to re-embark our *matériel*, and no one, I suppose, for a moment thinks it would be advisable to abandon them. It would require a very considerable force to hold these heights. If we left them the enemy would most

April 24.—The fire in the town last night is supposed to have been caused by the ships' broadsides