



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. V.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 3, 1855.

NO. 51.

DIARY OF THE SIEGE.

(From the Times.)

June 23.—The sad history of the 19th, which I was obliged to interrupt on the departure of the mail, is soon finished. The bodies of many a brave officer whom I knew in old times—old times of the war, for men's lives are short here, and the events of a life are compressed into a few hours—were borne past us in silence, and now and then, wonderful to relate, men with severe wounds were found still living and able to give expression to their sufferings by moans and sighs of pain. The spirit of some of these noble fellows triumphed over all their bodily agonies. "General!" exclaimed a sergeant of the 18th Royal Irish to Brigadier Eyre as he came near the place in the Cemetery where the poor fellow lay with both his legs broken by a round shot, "thank God, we did our work, any way. Had I another pair of legs, the country and you would be welcome to them!" Many men in hospital, after losing leg or arm, said they "would not have cared if they had only beaten the Russians." The tortures endured by the wounded were very great; they lay in holes made by shells, and were frequently fired at by the Russian riflemen when they rolled about in their misery. Some of our men, however, report that the enemy treated them kindly, and even brought them water out of the embrasures. They pulled all the bodies of our officers which lay within reach up to the abattis, and took off their epaulettes, when they had any, and their boots, but did not strip them. It was observed that the ditch of the abattis was in excellent order—that the chevaux-de-frise had been repaired, and were very strong, and that every effort had been used up to the moment before we assaulted to render it, as it was, a formidable obstacle to our advance. It is said that the bottom of the ditch was filled with bayonets, fixed firmly in the earth; and there is a report that the Russians were employed during the night of the 17th in repairing the abattis itself where it was injured by our cannon. I have already tried to describe the nature of the ground in the front of the abattis. It was in itself a considerable impediment to regularity of formation. A line of sentries was formed by the Russians as our burying parties came out, and they advanced so far in front of the abattis that General Airey was obliged to remonstrate with an aide-de-camp of General Osten-Sacken, who ordered them to retire nearer to the abattis. It was observed that these men were fine tall, muscular, and soldierlike fellows, and one could not but contrast them with some of the poor weakly-looking boys who were acting as privates in our regiments, or with the small undergrown men of the French line. They were unusually well dressed, in clean new uniforms, and were no doubt picked out to impose upon us. Many of them wore medals, and seemed veteran soldiers. Their officers had also turned out with unusual care, and wore white kid gloves, patent leather boots, and white linen. The mass of the Russians were gathered on the towering parapets of the Redan and Malakhoff, and were not permitted to come to the front. Their working parties brought out all our dead, and laid them in front of their line of sentries, whence our people carried them away. The precautions which had been taken to prevent officers and men getting through the lines, sufficed to keep any great crowd away, but the officers on duty and the lucky men, and some amateurs, who managed to get through the lines, formed groups in front of the Redan, and entered into conversation with a few of the Russian officers. There was, however, more reserve and gravity in the interview than has been the case on former occasions of the kind. One stout elderly Russian of rank asked one of our officers "How are you off for food?" "Oh! we get everything we want; our fleet secures that." "Yes," remarked the Russian, with a knowing wink, "Yes; but there's one thing you're not so well off for, and your fleet can't supply you, and that's sleep." "We're at least as well off for that as you are," was the rejoinder. Another officer, in the course of conversation, asked if we really thought, after our experience of the defence they could make, that we could take Sebastopol. "We must; France and England are determined to take it." "Ah! well," said the other, "Russia is determined France and England shall not have it, and we'll see who has the strongest will, and can lose most men." In the midst of these brief interviews, beginning and ending with bows and salutes, and inaugurated by the concession of favors relating to cigars and lights, the soldiers bore dead bodies by, consigning the privates to the burial-grounds near the trenches, and carrying off the wounded and the bodies of the officers to the camp. Poor Forman's body was one of the first found; it was far in advance of where he came of the trench with his company of the Rifle Brigade, and it was terribly torn with shot. It was generally observed by some of the surgeons, however, that the

wounds were cleaner than they have been in previous engagements. This is somewhat remarkable, for the Russians fired all kinds of missiles—bags of nails and fragments of bullets, and balls, as well as grape and canister. They were seen as we advanced "shovelling" the shot into the muzzles of the guns. No one can deny many of their officers the praise of extreme bravery and devotion. In the midst of our fire they got up on the top and on the outside of the parapets and directed the fire of their men upon us. Several of them were knocked over by round shot, shell, and rifle balls, while exposing themselves in this manner, but it scarcely speaks well for their soldiers that they felt it necessary to set them such examples. Colonel Dickson succeeded in obtaining Lord Raglan's permission to open on the Russians from the 21-gun battery, and swept them away in numbers as they crowded out to fire on our broken columns and on our wounded men and fugitives. The armistice lasted for upwards of two hours, and when it was over we retired from the spot so moistened with our blood. All the advantage we gained by the assault was the capture of the Cemetery, and even that we had nearly abandoned, owing to the timidity of one of our Generals. As you have already learnt, the men in the Cemetery and houses suffered severely during the 18th from the enemy's fire, and the soldiers in the latter were not able to withdraw till nightfall. It was left to one of the Generals of Division to say what should be done with the Cemetery, and he gave orders to abandon it. On the following morning an officer of Engineers, Lieutenant Donnelly, heard to his extreme surprise that the position for which we had paid so dearly was not in our possession. He appreciated its value—he saw that the Russians had not yet advanced to re-occupy it.—With the utmost zeal and energy he set to work among the officers in the trenches, and begged and borrowed some 30 men, with whom he crept down into the Cemetery, just before the flag of truce was hoisted. As soon as the armistice began the Russians flocked down to the Cemetery, which they supposed to be undefended, but to their great surprise they found our 30 men posted there as sentries, who warned them back, and in the evening the party was strengthened, and we are now constructing most valuable works and batteries there, in spite of a heavy fire, which occasions us considerable loss. Such is the story that is going the round of the camp. Lord Raglan is said to have found fault with General Eyre for losing so many men, but the latter observed, that he had done what he was ordered, and that he had taken the Cemetery. There can be no doubt but that our troops could have got into the town in the rear of the Redan from the houses on the 18th, had they been strong enough to advance from the Cemetery. Whether they could have maintained themselves there under the fire of forts, ships, and batteries is another question. It is now shrewdly suspected that inside the Redan, behind those outward and visible walls of earth, there is another very strong work—a kind of star fort of earth with sunken batteries—and it is certain that inside the Malakhoff works there are several lines of battery which have never been unmasked. The enemy have probably constructed large funnel-shaped pits behind these works, into which shells roll and burst, as such a "dodge" was found in the Margelon. Inside the latter work were splendid bombproofs for the men to retire into when our fire became hot. They were large pits with 10 feet of earth, and beams of wood across them, and were capable of holding a strong body of men. In one some new sacks marked with the broad arrow and B.O. were found, in which were packets of cartridges ready for use. Where did these sacks come from? It is almost as strange as the English bread found at Tchorgoun. There is talk of a spy being taken, or rather discovered, in a sub-interpreter to the Commissariat, who confesses he has been in communication with the Russians, and revealed our attack to them.

June 24.—General Estcourt, Adjutant-General of the Army, died this morning at half-past 9 o'clock, after three days' illness. His death has produced a profound impression of regret on all who knew him, for a kinder or a more amiable man did not exist.—He was unremitting in the discharge of his duties, and no officer ever applied himself to the labors of the desk, which constitute so large a portion of the business of the department over which he presided, with more assiduity and devotion. When others were gloomy and desponding, General Estcourt was cheerful and calm, and he possessed that equanimity in adverse circumstances which antiquity admired, and which we at least respect, and so long as the General Orders issued from his office they were written in pure English, and justified the pride which General Estcourt felt in the roundness of his periods, the choiceness of his phraseology, and the clearness of his directions. His loss is felt by the army—by none more than by the General who commands it,

whose affection for the deceased has been so rudely tested by death almost within his very doors. General Estcourt was taken ill with diarrhoea six days before he died, and at the end of the third day was attacked with cholera, which his strength of constitution and powerful frame enabled him to resist for three days more, but on Saturday night a crisis came on, a dangerous change supervened, and he expired in the morning, soothed by the presence of his wife and of a near female relative. Every care and attention were paid to him. He was attended by Dr. Prendergast and Dr. F. Smith with the utmost solicitude and skill.

June 25.—The storm which burst over the southeastern portion of the Chersonese on Saturday night has done more damage than we could have anticipated. Men were drowned in ravines converted by the tornado into angry watercourses, were carried off roads by mountain torrents, and dashed against hill sides; beasts were swept away into the harbor and borne to sea; huts were broken up and floated out into the ocean; the burial grounds near Balaklava were swept bare, and disclosed their grim army of the dead in ghastly resurrection, washed into strange shapes from out their shallow graves; and, greatest calamity of all, the railway was in various places decomposed, ripped up and broken down so as to be unserviceable at our greatest need. Orders have been sent down to urge on the necessary repairs, for the demands of the batteries for shot and shell are pressing, and the electric telegraph has been repeatedly in use to-day to force on the attention of the authorities at Balaklava the necessity there is for their promptest exertions, and to order them to send up supplies of matériel for our fifth bombardment as speedily as possible. The French say they are quite ready, and they have received from us 1,500 32-pound shot for their guns to-day. The railway fails at a critical period, but even if it were in its usual state we could not hope to be in a condition to begin a heavy fire for some time to come, and I believe it will be fully a fortnight or three weeks before the necessary supplies will be brought up to the front.—The repairs to the railway will be effected in ten days. Mr. Beatty and Mr. Campbell are away at Heraclea surveying the coal district, but their representatives are men of energy, and the only obstructions to be dreaded will arise from the "navvies," some of whom have been behaving very badly lately. They nearly all "struck work" a short time back, on the plea that they were not properly rationed or paid, or that, in other words, they were starved and cheated; but the Provost-Marshal brought some of them to a sense of their situation, and, indeed, the office of that active and worthy person and of his myrmidon sergeants has been by no means a sinecure between "navvies," Greeks, and scoundrels of all sorts. The Croat insurrection is suppressed, but the Croat idleness has not been by any means stimulated into usefulness. How England is squandering her money broadcast all over this part of the world!—The Eupatorians with their 2s 6d and 3s 6d a day, and the Croats with the same stipend, are indeed "beggars set on horseback," and they fulfil the rest of the proverb. The poor Turkish soldiers, who get scant pay, say that it would be much better for them to be those dogs of Croats, who receive as much as their own bimbashis, or majors, than to march in the armies of the Sultan; but Lord Stratford's hard bargain for us must be accomplished; and it was he who was the benevolent genius who deluged Croatian and Tartar hordes with this flood of wealth. No wonder Colonel M'Murdo finds it difficult to get men for the Land Transport Corps, although even he is obliged to pay 2s 6d and 3s a-day to native surd-jees, so completely have we ruined the market. The losses in the Land Transport Corps by death would be extraordinary did we not find a parallel to them in the Sardinian army of Tchorgoun, which has lost in three weeks nearly 1,000 men by cholera, dysentery, and diarrhoea. The Turks and French encamped in the valley suffer somewhat from the same diseases, but it is observable that the men who die are recruits and old men who are mostly unacclimated. At Yenikale the detachment of Land Transport Corps lost in a fortnight 50 men, of whom 25 were English and 25 native drivers. In its present state it cannot supply all the wants of our army.—We could not advance any body of troops without running risks of starvation, and even the 10th Hussars are said to have been unable to keep their horses so far from Balaklava, owing to the want of forage, and their retreat from their advanced position is attributed to that cause rather than to the field-pieces which the Russians brought to bear upon them from an adjoining height. To understand the difficulties in the way of what is called at home "taking the field," one must come out and stay out here. It would be much easier to take Sebastopol than to take the field. There are only three accessible passes, up the precipitous wall of rock which rises on

the north side of the Tchernaya, to the plateau on which the Russians are encamped, and the precipitous runs round to the Belbek. These passes are so steep that an army would have some difficulty in ascending them at its leisure, without resistance from any enemy. But they are occupied wherever engineering eyes detect the smallest weakness—they are commanded by batteries, intersected by positions threatened by overhanging cliffs all ready for the lever. March round and turn them! Where and how? We have no transport even if we could march, and we cannot march, because Napoleon himself would never lead an army into such debiles as guard the Russian position. Whether we are not strong enough to detach a great corps of 40,000 or 50,000 men to operate against the Russians north of Sebastopol is not for me to say; but it is certain that the base of operation for any such corps must be the sea, till ample transport is provided. The Crimea is to all intents and purports a desert—a Sahara, waterless and foodless before an invading army. There is no news of importance to-day. A long train of provisions came into Sebastopol to-day, and the mirror telegraph, which works by flashes from a mound over the Belbek, was exceedingly busy all the forenoon. Troops were also observed in motion on the hills opposite Inkermann. The weather is warm, but there is a strong breeze of wind, which tempers its heat. The rain has developed horrible effluvia in camp, and sickness is rather on the increase. With great regret and surprise we heard of Captain Lyon's death this evening.

June 26.—Lord Raglan is indisposed. A reconnaissance will be made, or has already been effected, to-day on the Russian left, towards the ridges beyond Mackenzie's farm and the Belbek, if it can be effected. If not, the troops will make an exploration towards Yalta. The mail is closing. There is no firing or anything of consequence in the front.

June 29.—Among the general orders promulgated yesterday afternoon was the following:—

"The Field-Marshal has the satisfaction of publishing to the army the following extract from a telegraphic despatch from Lord Panmure, dated the 22d of June.

"I have Her Majesty's commands to express her grief that so much bravery should not have been rewarded with merited success, and to assure her brave troops that Her Majesty's confidence in them is entire."

Within a very few hours after this order had appeared, the electric telegraph brought the melancholy and startling intelligence from head-quarters to the various divisions that the Field-Marshal was dead. It would appear that he has lately—no doubt from the constant strain on his mental and bodily energies—been far from well, and the death of General Estcourt, to whom he was much attached, the unsatisfactory result of the attack on the 18th ult., and the unhealthy weather since broke down a constitution already enfeebled by age and long service. The following tells its own melancholy story:—

"MORNING GENERAL ORDERS.

"Head quarters before Sebastopol, June 29.

"No. 1. It becomes my most painful duty to announce to the army the death of its beloved commander, Field-Marshal Lord Raglan, G.C.B., which melancholy event took place last night about 9 o'clock.

"No. 2. In the absence of Lieutenant-General Sir George Brown, the command of the troops devolves on me, as the next senior officer present, until further orders are received from England.

"No. 3. Generals of divisions and heads of departments will be pleased to conduct their respective duties as heretofore."

"J. SIMPSON, Lieutenant-General."

There is great feeling of regret evinced throughout the camp at the loss of Lord Raglan. His death appears to have at once stilled every other feeling but that of respect for his memory and remembrance of the many long years he faithfully and untiringly served his country. The cause of his death is stated to have been diarrhoea, which terminated in cholera. The body is to be conveyed to England in Her Majesty's ship *Caradoc*, and will leave very shortly. It will, I hear, be accompanied by the whole of his late Lordship's personal staff, whose duties will then, of course, cease. Colonel the Hon. W. L. Pakenham will conduct for the present the duties of the Adjutant-General's office. We have now but very few generals left to command divisions or to act as brigadiers. Sir George Brown left Kamiesch this morning for England; he had, I believe, previously heard of the death of the Field-Marshal, but his medical advisers insisted on the necessity of his at once leaving the Crimea. General Pennefather, as you are aware, has been gone for some days. Generals Estcourt, Sir John Campbell, and Colonels Yea, Shadforth, &c., are no more. General Codrington, on whom the command of the Light Division now devolves, is in anything but a satisfactory state of