

Incidents of the War.

EXPLOSION OF A MAGAZINE.

The great incident of the week, says a letter dated September 1. has been the explosion of the French magazine in the Mamelon, about one o'clock on Wednesday morning, involving casualties to the extent of about 200 killed and wounded, besides important injury to the works at the redoubt itself. I had turned in about midnight on Tuesday, and—kept awake partly by the sharp, chill, night wind, which came whistling through the under-flaps of the tent, and partly also by the brisk cannonade which was waging in and before the trenches—lay musing on the pleasures of campaigning, and endeavouring to rub up my memory as to the almost forgotten enjoyment of clean sheets and a quiet English bed-room, when a thundering rattle of sound—not to be described by any one word I know of—came rolling up in one heavy volume on the midnight air. The noise was so utterly unlike the usual salvos of the common siege artillery that I jumped out of bed and looked out of the tent door in the direction whence it had come; but nothing was to be seen in the sky but the grey darkness that precedes dawn, after the setting of the moon. A brisk mortar fire, to be sure, speedily followed from along the whole line of our own, and the French right attack; but beyond this, there was nothing to give any clue as to the nature of the thundering explosions I had heard. On Wednesday morning, however, it was known all over the camp that the Mamelon had blown up, and that a disastrous amount of mischief had occurred. The fact appears to have been, that in the carriage of ammunition from the magazine to the guns, a small train of gunpowder had been carelessly allowed to leak out of the cartridge-bags and remain on the ground, and a Russian shell falling on this, ignited it, and carried the flame into the magazine, when the whole blew up with a terrific noise I have mentioned. Such was the force of the shock, that stones from the redoubt were thrown up as far as the Victoria rocket battery, in front of our light division; whilst heavy pieces of the shattered wood-work were blown into our advanced trenches before the quarries, where they fell with such violence as to kill four men, and severely wound several others. Besides the damage done to life and limb in this part of our works—which is a good half mile from the scene of the explosion—a number of other wounds were inflicted in some of our other trenches near the Mamelon, though fortunately none of them were fatal. According to the version of the accident current amongst the French themselves, their own loss amounted to thirty-three killed, and one hundred and fifty wounded; but the belief is general in our own camp that their casualties were much greater. If their statement of the loss, however, be correct, it seems marvellous that the injury done should have been so limited, when we consider how closely packed the redoubt itself and the new works in front of, and around it, are, artillerymen, working parties and trench guards.

Amongst the French killed were four officers, of whom one, I believe, was a general; but I have been unable to learn his name. As soon as the confusion and noise attending the explosion had in some degree subsided, the Russians hailed the 'providential blow' with loud and repeated salvos of cheering, and opened a brisk fire from the Malakoff and its adjoining redoubts on the luckless scene of the accident; but this was very speedily answered, and after awhile silenced, by our own twenty-one and eight-gun batteries, whose pieces promptly came to the rescue, and drew off the enemy's fire from our allies. It strikes every one with surprise, however, that the Russians made no attempt at an attack on the Mamelon, under circumstances which would have so favoured a sally in that direction. Had such been promptly made and vigorously supported, the loss of a couple of men killed and wounded might not have been the smallest of those consequent on this disastrous result of carelessness; for, thrown into confusion, as everything was in the neighbourhood of the redoubt, incalculable mischief might easily have been done to the works long before the distant supports could have been brought up to drive back the assailants.

A WALK THROUGH THE PARALLELS.

A walk through the parallels and their connecting zigzags is much more exciting than easy; since, in the first place, the average lowness of the parapets compels a constant stooping, which, as an Irish soldier remarked as I passed along yesterday, 'bedad, sir, is mighty sore upon the small of the back.' To be sure, 'there's fine shootin' as the same lively observer added, by way of apology for the same situation; but for those who, like myself, have a constitutional dislike for gunpowder in all its combinations, the 'sport' has but few attractions and one feeble chance of knocking over a Russian could hardly ever reconcile to the fifty set-offs, of being myself knocked over before I could accomplish that praiseworthy and patriotic act. Eels, however, are said to become reconciled to skinning—though I could never

believe it—and custom appears in like manner to render one insensible to the exciting chances and contingencies attending a twenty four hours' turn in these trenches before Sebastopol. With rifle bullets without number 'pinging' over their heads—and, not seldom, into them—round shot bowling through them, and shell bursting on every side, our men lie stretched out along the bottom of the trenches, some sleeping, others spinning home yarns or cracking lively jokes, whilst others again, attentive to the suggestions of a well sharpened appetite, are clustered round small fires making coffee or superintending extemporised stews or roasts—all with as much sang froid as if they were picnicking at Chobham or Aldershot, instead of doing duty within fifty perches of the round Tower and the Redan.

NARRATIVE OF THE FALL OF SEBASTOPOL.

Sebastopol has fallen—the Russians no longer hold possession of that once powerful fortress, now a heap of "blood-stained ruins." All the bastions, earthworks, and granite forts, south of the great harbour—Malakoff, great and Little Redan, Flagstaff, and Central Tower, and Quarantine battery;—the sea defences—Forts Alexander, St. Nicholas, and St. Paul; the second line of defence—the Garden and Barrack batteries, The Dockyard, Harbour, and Careening bay, with the full cannon sweep of Sebastopol roads—all are in the power of the allies.—The Russian Black sea fleet has perished utterly. How many war ships have been sunk and how many burned we must wait to know that it matters little for all have been destroyed.

To enable our reader to form as clear a conception of the process by which this important issue has been obtained as the curt telegraph despatches admit of, we submit to them a resume of the operations from the moment of reopening the bombardment. The French and English batteries opened their fire at daybreak on the 5th inst. The bombardment was continued all that day and the next without slackening. On the night between the 5th and 6th a Russian two decker was set on fire by a shell and burst to the water's edge. On the afternoon of the 7th, another Russian frigate was set on fire and destroyed. A great explosion was heard from the Russian works about midnight—supposed to have been a magazine on the north side. On the morning of the 9th a great fire was observed to be burning about the middle of the town of Sebastopol.

At noon on the same day, within a few hours of the anniversary of the landing of the allied forces in the Crimea and 316 days after the besieging batteries against Sebastopol on the 17th of October, 1854, a final and victorious assault was made on the Malakoff, the Careening-bay Redan, and the Central bastion by the French; on the Redan by the English. Then ensued what is historically known to be the most fearful scene in the hideous progress of war. Thousands of gallant men rushed to an almost certain destruction—the more terrible in appearance that it was concentrated in so small a space.

The attack on the Malakoff was alone successful from causes which our readers will at once appreciate, and which we are most happy in being able to state, as such elucidation at once clears away the apparent disparity of success between ourselves and our noble allies.

The Malakoff tower is, as is well known, the highest part of the fortifications which defended Sebastopol. It is flanked on either side by the grand Redan, the object of the English attack, and the Redan of Careening bay. Now behind these forts the Russians had constructed a formidable second line of earthworks, heavily armed, which commanded all the works in front, with the exception of the Malakoff-tower, and this exception was due to the ever-care of the Russians who, in their anxiety to strengthen the Malakoff, had built its works in three tiers, the one rising above the other, whereas the Redans were constructed with only one tier of guns.

The consequence of this was, that when the French swarmed on the first tier of the Malakoff the second tier saved them from being hurt by the fire of the works in the rear of the tower; and in like manner, when they attained the second tier, the third saved them in its turn. Consequently thousands of men thronged its ramparts, protected from the Russian fire. The combat raged on the flanks, where the enemy could only attack them with his musketry, and their own rifles and brilliant impetuosity were too much for him. Under the protection of a galling fire from the French, their sappers slipped round the work, threw up an entrenchment, and thus, effectually covered on all points, the whole work was theirs.

Here, then, to brave men success was as natural as their own enthusiastic courage; but alas upon other points courage availed not.—The gallant assailants of the Redan and the Central bastion no sooner had carried these works, as they did triumphantly, than they found themselves exposed to a terrific fire of grape, which rendered life impossible. The forts, built in one exposed tier, were open to the full range of the second line of earthworks, and in vain our gallant men, in vain our chivalrous allies, tried to hold their position. They would not retreat, but were swept away, as corpses by the pitiless storm of grape. The tenacity

of our struggle may be easily conceived when it is known that in carrying, and endeavouring to hold, that one Redan, our loss amounted to two thousand men.

Our allies, and we ourselves had, therefore to retire from these points; but the Malakoff was in the hands of the French, and that was everything.

The Russians on their side unquestionably defended the place with the utmost determination, and on more than one point they had the advantage over the besiegers, but it was the courage of desperation, for this effort was their last. No sooner were the outer works taken, which laid the town and the port at the mercy of the allied forces, than the men-of-war and steamers in the harbour were all set on fire, blown up, sunk, or destroyed, either by the fire of the allied batteries or by the orders of the Russian authorities.

The Russians then escaped en masse, to the north side. Means of retreat had been secured by a long bridge of rafts across the great harbour, and for many hours large masses of troops were removed by this passage to the northern side; but at eight o'clock in the morning of the 9th this communication was stopped, the whole of the works and town being then evacuated.—If, as is probable, any of the Russians remained on the south bank after that hour, they must either have perished in the fire or fallen into the hands of the besiegers. About 500 of the wounded, we know, remained in the fort St. Paul, and for them an armistice was asked; but with their accustomed indifference to the preservation of life and property, the Russians were determined to destroy the city rather than capitulate, and they executed their design.

The shades of night were lit up by the lurid glare of a burning town and a burning fleet.—The broad waters of the gulf were interposed between the combatants of the preceding day, and their surface was only dotted at rare intervals by a few small steamers, the fragment of a broken bridge, and the top-masts of sunken ships. The silence of exhaustion settled down on the scene of strife, where for four continuous days the roar of artillery, the crash of explosions, and the shouts of men perpetually excited by the awful contest, reverberated through the hollow ravines with deafening effect.

We are unable to form an adequate conception of the magnitude of the loss which the Russians have sustained, in consequence of their being compelled to evacuate the south side of Sebastopol inlet. General Pelissier, after having made a tour of inspection through the town and its defences, intimates, on the night of the 10th, that nothing but ocular observations can convey an adequate idea of the multiplicity of the works of defence and the accumulation of warlike stores that the enemy have left behind them. The allied armies were to occupy Karabelnaia and the town of Sebastopol on the 11th, and as soon as this had been effected a mixed commission of French and English officers was to be appointed to take an account of the materials abandoned by the Russians.

Yet the enemy must have removed no inconsiderable portion of his stores previous to the evacuation. General Simpson writes on the 1st instant, 'Great activity prevails on the part of the garrison in making use of the new raft bridge across the harbour, and stores of all kinds are daily transported to the north side.' This preparatory retrograde movement on the part of the Russians, adds to the probability of the reports alluded to by General Simpson, that 'great discontent prevails in the ranks of the enemy.' General Pelissier's account of the state of the defences shows that a longer stand might have been made but for the discouragement of the defenders; and the withdrawal of stores to the north so early as the end of August, shows that Prince Gortschakoff felt he could not rely upon his men. The actual evacuation of the south side cannot but have added to the demoralisation of the Russian army, while our troops are confident and flushed with victory—as General Pelissier expresses himself, 'full of joy.'

General Simpson's despatch of the 1st instant contains a passage which seems to throw light on the intentions of Gortschakoff:—'Large working parties are employed in throwing up works on the north side, but as yet they are in too unfinished a state to judge of their exact nature. From the information we continue to receive, it appears that the enemy is concentrating his force between the Mackenzie heights and fort Constantine.' These indications would seem to imply that it was the contemplation of the Russian general to make as obstinate a stand on the north side as he has done on the south. But it is extremely doubtful whether, with the discouragement that pervades his army, and the incomplete state of his new defensive works, he will be able to carry out his intentions.

POSITION OF GORTSCHAKOFF'S ARMY.

The position of Prince Gortschakoff's army, after the main body had effected its retreat across the harbour (says the Times), was as follows:—

The extreme right, consisting of the corps, most actively engaged in the defence of the place, rests upon the Careening works, or Starfort, and holds the strongly intersected positions

for the north shore, where, no doubt, considerable preparations have been made for this emergency. His centre covers the Belbek, and is protected in front by the fieldworks thrown up along the ridge of Inkermann. His left wing consists of Liprandi's corps, occupying the ground from Mackenzie's farm to the heights of Artodei on the Bakshi-Serai road. The attempt was made by the relieving army under Liprandi to effect a diversion during the assault of the Redan, and the severe defeat of the 16th of August, appears to have satisfied the enemy that the lines of the Tchernaya were not to be carried. But the result of the general assault and the occupation of the southern side by the allies entirely changes the strategic positions of the combatants, and also the objects of the campaign. The struggle for the possession of Sebastopol is now at an end. That prize is in our hands, and, as the defence of the fortress and the harbour was the grand object of the Russians, they have nothing left on that spot to contend for. The mere occupation of the north side of the port is a barren advantage for, though it might hold a garrison, it cannot shelter a defeated army; and it is obvious that after the failure of the main object, all the ability and generalship of the Russians will be required to save the whole body of their forces in the Crimea from destruction. We therefore infer that the northern forts will either be held for a time by a limited garrison, or more probably, altogether abandoned, in the hope of saving the army. Never was an army in a more critical position. They are confined within a peninsula which affords them no other fortified position, no sustenance for the troops, and no water beyond a certain line. The sea, covered with hostile vessels, surrounds three sides of the theatre of war, and the fourth is separated from the Russian base of operations by steppes and marshes. The allied armies already occupy strong positions at Eupatoria and Yenikale, which can be reinforced in a few hours by sea, so as to threaten the Russians in their flank and rear; and while it is impossible for the enemy to hold his ground in the south of the Crimea—for which, indeed, there is now no further object—to retreat in this season across the country is a formidable undertaking, while the loss of a battle in the open field would be absolute destruction. The Russians are in a trap, from which the Tchongar road and the Isthmus of Perekop are the only means of escape, and even there their communications may possibly be intercepted.

No doubt all these contingencies have been foreseen; Prince Gortschakoff's plan of campaign has long since been made; judging, therefore, from the accustomed tactics of the Russian army, as well as from the extreme difficulty of present position, we incline to the opinion that he will adopt the course of a general and immediate retreat. To hold the Crimea without Sebastopol, and even after the harbour of Sebastopol itself has been transformed by conquest into the base of operations of the invading armies, would be a bootless and unprofitable task, and the danger is greatly aggravated by the fact that the whole body of the allies, with unlimited means of naval transport at their command, will shortly be at liberty to advance upon any part of the peninsula which is accessible from the coast. These immediate consequences of their own success in the siege operations must have been considered by the allied generals, and the moment is now arrived when they may proceed to open the campaign of which the reduction of Sebastopol was the first preliminary.—That field operations of this nature have long been contemplated by the allied governments is obvious from the large cavalry forces they have continued to send to the Crimea. The British army alone can bring upwards of 3,000 sabres and lances into the field, and the French cavalry is still more numerous and impatient of the inaction to which it has hitherto been condemned. Hitherto the contest in the Crimea has been confined to one single object, and, with the exception of the action of the 20th September on the Alma, and the flank march to Balaclava, it has been a war without a single tactical movement. General Pelissier has shown, in our humble opinion, very admirable military qualities since he assumed the command, and he has been most ably supported by General Simpson; but the present state of our affairs deserves to call forth abilities of a still higher and more brilliant order. The Russian army in the Crimea is probably not superior to the force of the allies in numbers, and it is immeasurably inferior in resources and supplies, as well as in those moral qualities which at once constitute and enhance the prestige of victory. On every occasion on which they have encountered an enemy in this war—whether Turks, French, English, or Sardinians—the fortune of war has deserted the Russian eagles. For them to advance is impossible for the whole coast is guarded by the enemy, and no Russian vessels float on those waters. The stronghold in which the czars had accumulated during the last two reigns an incalculable amount of warlike stores for the subjugation of the east, has been reduced to a blood stained ruin by the troops who were glad to escape with life from its burning walls; and the question on which the attention of Europe is now fixed is no longer the fate of Sebastopol, but how is the Russian army to escape from the Crimea, or to maintain itself there? To give the campaign its full effect, its success must