

and five batteries of artillery, were then on the point of anchorage off Sebastopol for Kertch, and my message by electric telegraph will have announced the complete success of that expedition; but it now remains for me to give an account of our proceedings for their lordships' information:—

The fleet, which consisted of thirty-three of her Majesty's ships and a French fleet of nearly equal force under the command of my very gallant and energetic colleague, Vice-Admiral Bruat, assembled off the Straits of Kertch at early dawn on the birthday of her most gracious Majesty the Queen, and both armies and navies confidently anticipated a successful celebration of that auspicious day. The fleets steamed rapidly up to Kamiesch, where the army landed under cover of the guns of the steam frigates, and immediately ascended the heights without opposition, while the steamers of light draught of water pushed on towards Kertch and Yenikale; and the enemy, apparently taken by surprise at the rapidity of these movements, and the imposing appearance of the expedition, blew up his fortifications on both sides of the Straits, mounting not less than 50 guns (new and of heavy calibre,) which had fallen into our possession, and retired after having destroyed three steamers and several other heavily-armed vessels, as well as large quantities of provisions, ammunition, and stores, thus leaving us masters of the entrance into the Sea of Azoff, without our having sustained any loss whatever.

As the disembarkation was unopposed, in consequence of the fire of the steam frigate having arrested the advance of the enemy, there was no field for the gallantry that animated every one in the expedition; but the duties they had to perform were arduous, and I should be doing injustice to them and to my own feelings if I were not to say that no Commander-in-Chief was ever more ably assisted than I am by the captains and those under their command; one and all follow the amiable example of the zealous and talented second in command, Rear-Admiral Stewart, and they could not possibly do better. There was, however, an incident during the day that called forth the admiration of both fleets, and which deserves to be particularly noticed. Lieutenant M-Killip, whose gunvessel, the Snake, was not employed like the others in landing troops, dashed past the forts after an enemy's steamer, and, although he soon found himself engaged, not only with her, also with two others who came to her support, he persevered, and by the cleverness and extreme rapidity of his manœuvres, prevented the escape of all three, and they were consequently destroyed by the enemy, and the Snake had not a man hurt, though shots passed through the vessel.

Yesterday Admiral Bruat and I accompanied the combined steam flotilla into the sea of Azoff, and despatched them, under the orders of Capt. Lyons, of the Miranda, on the interesting and important service they have before them.

Had this expedition been deferred but a short time longer, there would have been many and great difficulties to overcome, for the enemy was actively strengthening the sea defences, and in replacing the sunken vessels which had been carried away by the current during the winter months.

Of the 40 vessels sunk last year some still remain, and a French steamer touched upon one of them yesterday. It appears that the enemy did not succeed in destroying the coals, either at Kertch or Yenikale, so that about 17,000 tons remain, which will be available for our steamers.

It will be evident to their lordships that the rapid operations which I have had the honor and happiness to describe to them could not have been brought to so satisfactory a conclusion if the most perfect understanding and the most hearty good will towards each other had not prevailed throughout the allied fleets and armies.—I am, &c., EDWARD LYONS, Rear-Admiral and Commander-in-Chief, To the Secretary of the Admiralty, London.

THE CAPTURE OF THE RUSSIAN TRENCHES.

Heights of Sebastopol, May 23.

The intense interest and anxiety with which we were all waiting news of the Kertch expedition has been considerably diverted by a desperate attempt which our allies made last night to capture one of the enemy's advanced trenches and which, after gaining possession of, they were, after a long and most bloody encounter, compelled to evacuate.

A few nights since the French sprang two or three small mines, not only for the purpose of injuring the Flagstaff, but to aid in the formation of a new parallel, which was intended to take part of the battery in flank. The mines were perfectly successful, and on the night following this explosion the French proceeded to construct this flank work the progress of the latter, however the enemy offered the most determined. On the night of the 21st the French working parties, strongly supported, made an attempt to continue their parallel, but without success. Two or three times in the course of the same night the French repeated their efforts, but were always compelled to retire. During the whole of this time the enemy's fatigues never slackened for an instant, and by the morning of yesterday, the 22d, they had entirely completed a new advanced trench, which at

a distance of 20 yards, crossed at right angles the intended new French parallel, the further progress which was by this manœuvre completely hindered. The formation of this trench was instantly reported to General Pelissier, who came and inspected it himself, when a close survey discovered that not only had the cross trench itself been completed, but that two flanking covering trenches, placed so as to completely enfilade the most advanced one, had likewise been thrown up, though apparently they seemed incomplete, and barely fit for service. The result of the reconnaissance of the whole position was, that it was considered of such importance to the progress of siege works of our allies, and soon likely to become of such strength that not a moment was to be lost in capturing it at any cost. Yesterday evening, at 9 o'clock, was fixed upon for the attempt. 500 Chasseurs, 200 of the Imperial Guard, with about 1,200 Zouaves, were told off as the assaulting party, with a reserve of 2,500 men of the Guard and Zouaves. Everything was arranged with the utmost secrecy, only the night, which was fine, clear, and calm, seemed slightly against the success of the attack—at least as a surprise.

The force quitted the French trenches in two strong columns, about 200 yards apart. The plan of the attack was to enter the trench as its two angles, so as not only to secure the advanced trench itself, but to enfilade and command the flanking ways which led to it. Unfortunately the plan does not appear to have been well carried out. From ignorance of the ground, which was still further disfigured by the springing of the mines, one column went too much to the left, while that on the right mistook its way altogether, and did not come into action until some time after the left column had been deeply in want of its assistance. The attacking party on the left proceeded some distance without seeking any indications of the advanced trench. A halt was called, and doubts were expressed as to have deviated from their proper track. In the midst of the conversation which this led to, the Russians appear to have completed all their defensive preparations and now from the trench on the left fired a tremendous volley into the French. At this attack, the doubts of the latter were instantly solved; and mistaking the flanking trench on the left for the advanced trench, they commenced their attack on it, striving to close with the bayonet; but the natural difficulties of the ground with which our allies had to contend were almost insurmountable. Broken masses of stones, pits, mounds, gabions, and fascines, cumbered the earth in all directions. Amidst those obstructions the French Guards and Zouaves got involved for a considerable time, exposed to a murderous fire from the enemy, which they were almost entirely unable to return. Our allies fell in all directions, yet still gallantly pressing on they reached the breastwork. At this point a series of most desperate encounters took place. Four or five times the French crossed the breastwork and got a strong footing in the trench, but the heavy file fire which, from under cover of the different breastworks, the Russians were able to keep up, prevented their retaining their conquest. To add still farther to their disadvantages the Russian batteries had now got their precise range, and threw regular volleys of grape and shell into their ranks. Nevertheless the assailants did not abandon the attack, but dispatching messengers for reinforcements, continued their onset with determined courage.— Suddenly, in the midst of the melee, the column which had departed to the right, attracted by the firing, now returned, and joining with the reserve column of upwards of 2,000 men, which had advanced to support the attack, poured in upon the advanced trench.

Had this onset been made with the left column an hour or two sooner, there is no doubt it would have been completely successful; but as it was, the continued fighting had thoroughly alarmed the enemy, and strong columns of their troops lined every part of the work.— Nevertheless, the attack was so impetuous that the French succeeded, after a close and bloody contest, in getting a footing in several parts of the trench, and then commenced a fight for its possession such as has not, for ferocity and bloodshed, been equalled during the siege. By mere dint of bayonetting and stabbing, the French managed to clear the advanced trench of the enemy and effect a junction with the left column, which had maintained a footing in one of the covering trenches. From the latter point, however, they were compelled to retire. The two covering trenches remained in the hands of the enemy, but the advanced cross trench the French held completely. The hand to hand struggle then ceased. The French strove to throw up a breastwork, so as to cover them from the fire of the enemy. In this they were unsuccessful. From every point of the Russian batteries, commanding the trench, a fire of artillery was poured upon them with such density and effect, that whole companies were swept away before it. Still they held their ground, though under the fire of the batteries they fell by scores. Strong parties of the enemy occupied the covering trenches, and from their position were enabled to enfilade the advanced trench with a murderous fire of infantry. It was a mere slaughter of the French. Twice driven to desperation by the cross fire of the trenches, they sallied out and attempted to carry them at the point of the bayonet, but

these mere ebullitions of valour were of no avail against the strong works and well-organised resistance of the enemy. In both cases the French were driven back with loss, and retired to the cross trench, where they still continued to melt away under the devastating fire of artillery and musketry. It was close on dawn when a message was sent to the French General, informing him that nearly half the column had fallen in the attempt to hold the place; that it was a mere useless waste of life, as by daylight it would be utterly untenable.— The answer was returned that they were to gather their dead and wounded, and retire.— This they accordingly did at about 4 in the morning, after having maintained the sanguinary and unequal contest for more than six hours, and lost, it is said the awful number of 1,300 men, killed, wounded and missing.

The Russian loss must have been most severe, but from the fact of their men fighting entirely under cover, it is not supposed to be as heavy as that of the French. The latter failed, not from want of courage or discipline, as one half of the valour and constancy they displayed would have been sufficient to have captured any of the Russian batteries, but simply from their mistaking the route and attacking the trench at a wrong point, where the work, if carried, was untenable. The affair has cast rather a gloom over the French. No less than 31 of their officers are said to be killed or wounded. It is said that if it costs 10,000 men, the place must be taken, and that another attempt will be made this evening.

May 24.

As was anticipated, the French made another attack upon the advanced trench last night, which was completely successful.

This time the plan was better arranged, under the immediate care of General Pelissier himself, who informed the troops that if they failed then, they must attack again at daybreak, and continue to attack until the trench was in their possession.

Three columns—each 3,000 strong—were chosen for the assault, and started just as dusk was commencing, two slightly in advance for the capture of the covering trenches on each side, and the centre column for the cross trench itself. In spite of all the vigilance of the enemy, the right and left columns closed with the covering trenches before they were discovered and instantly attacked them, for a moment the enemy seemed bent on an obstinate resistance, but the attack at such an early hour of the evening (a little after 8) evidently took them by surprise, and after a short struggle both trenches were captured, the enemy flying in all directions. Numbers of them were shot and bayoneted on the spot. Almost at the same time the centre column attacked the cross trench; but here the enemy, being prepared and in greater force, a desperate contest took place, and it was not until after about 20 minutes' hard fighting that the French were enabled to get possession of it. As its defenders retired they were completely decimated by the cross fire to which they were exposed from the French in the covering trenches.

The instant that possession was obtained, half of the troops were set to work to remove the gabions and breastwork from one side of the trench to the other, so as to shelter the assailants from the fire of the batteries, while the remainder formed into two strong columns, advanced to attack the Russian soldiers who had been driven from the position, and who were halted at a short distance in the rear, evidently waiting for reinforcements to attempt a recapture. Upon these the French rapidly advanced, and the Russians, though inferior in numbers, did not decline the contest. As our allies came on, the enemy deployed, and received them with a smart file fire, to which the French never returned a shot until within pistol range, when they, too, deployed, and firing one heavy volley, charged with the bayonet. The Russians fell into confusion, and, as I am informed, after shouting for a few minutes, threw away their arms and fled, the great mass of them keeping to the right in the direction of the Cemetery, which lies outside the town, on the left of the Redan. The French, who were now thoroughly roused, and bent upon revenge, followed them closely, and bayoneted the fugitives by dozens. No quarter was asked or given.— In this manner our allies pursued them for nearly half-a-mile, till both Russians and French arrived at a deep trench and breastwork on the left of the Redan, beneath the Garden battery. Into this the flying enemy scrambled, and the French after them. A strong force of Russians seemed to hold this trench, but they appeared perfectly panic-stricken by the flight of their comrades, and after discharging their muskets in an irregular fusillade, fled with the rest, leaving the French in an undisturbed position of the second trench. At this point the commander of the French columns wisely called a halt. They had already penetrated into the enemy's lines further than any of the allies had been before, and to continue the advance with such a small force, and without support, would have been mere madness. As it was, they might have great difficulty in effecting their retreat.— A hasty examination was made of the trench, and one of the soldiers, who had advanced further than the rest up the parallel on the right, came running back, and reported that there was a new battery there. The whole force instantly

advanced in the direction intimated, and truly enough found that in a large obtuse angle of the breastwork a new battery had been formed, and was totally abandoned. It mounted some eight or ten heavy long guns, four mortars, and a number of coehorns. Not a moment was lost in turning the discovery to account. Half the force was instantly formed out in columns, without pickets to give notice of the approach of the enemy, who was now momentarily expected, and keep them, if possible, in check till the destruction of the battery was completed. The rest of the troops, piling their arms, commenced the work of destruction. The long guns were instantly spiked, overturned, the trunions of the guns knocked off, and the spokes of the carriage wheels chopped to pieces. Some, which were ships' guns, had their small wooden wheels split up, and the carriages thrown over the breastwork. The timber tram ways of the guns were levered up and carried away. The mortars were spiked, their beds overturned, and the trunions of two knocked off. The coehorns were captured and sent away immediately. But bad as this was, it was by no means all the mischief that was effected. No more than 100 men were employed about the guns—the rest (upwards of 2,000) were engaged in destroying the earthwork. All the gabions were dragged out, pulled to pieces, and their earth and stones scattered about. The sand-bags were piled down and cut in two, and altogether the whole parapet of the battery was levelled with the earth.

While this was going on, all the Russian batteries had opened and were in full play, though principally upon the advanced trenches, which had been captured early in the evening. In their demolition of the battery the French were hardly disturbed by a shot. Large masses of Russian infantry were, however, collecting near the Redan and Garden works, evidently for the purpose of attacking the French. Their skirmishers constantly advanced, and exchanged shots with the French Guards, but while unaware of their strength, the enemy seemed by no means desirous for a closer contest. The French who had now accomplished all they wanted, and far more than they expected to accomplish when they started, took advantage of the indecision of the enemy to retreat and thus they did with such rapidity and skill as to reach the captured trench from which they had sallied forth without the loss of a man. The Russian fire upon the advanced trench was then terrific, and continued so for more than an hour, but the French had sheltered themselves with their breastwork, so that it did but little damage, and eventually the enemy discontinued it altogether.

No attempt was made to recapture the trenches, which still remain in the hands of our allies. In the whole affair of last night about 400 French were killed and wounded. The total loss of the Russians is supposed to be from 1,000 to 1,500 killed and wounded, the greater part of them were killed, as no quarter was given. Nearly 200 Russian bodies remain in the neighbourhood of the captured trenches.— The French are deservedly proud of the capture and destruction of the battery. It is decidedly one of the most brilliant affairs of the siege.

May 25.

To-day the English and French cavalry, with 20,000 French infantry, 10,000 Sardinians, and 10,000 Turks, moved across the plains of Balaklava toward the Woronzow road. The Russian picquets on the hill of course fell back before this overwhelming force, which immediately proceeded to occupy the hills beyond the Woronzow, in advance of the old Turkish redoubts.—

In the afternoon a force was detached towards Tchourgoum, and took up their position on the heights commanding the village, while part advanced upon the bridge which crossed the Tchernaya at this place. Near the village a capture was made of about 500 head of cattle, with some 300 or 400 sheep. On the other side of the Tchernaya, the Russians showed some 4,000 or 5,000 strong, and fired repeatedly from a distant redoubt. Two of the Sardinians were killed by the round shot. But in spite of this appearance of opposition, the bridge was crossed, and the country reconnoitred on the other side, where appearances of redoubts and strong entrenched works were distinctly visible in the road leading up the heights towards Mackenzie's Farm. No attempt was made to advance on these positions, as, though the enemy did not show in great force, it is generally supposed that they have ample troops to defend these works to the utmost, and from the immense size, position and extent, the attack on them, if made from the front, will be one of the most bloody struggles of the siege. Two redoubts, one for six and the other for eight guns, both near Tchourgoum were taken and occupied by the Sardinians, and works thrown up in the rear so as to protect them against any attempt at recapture.

Towards the close of the day the enemy opened a new battery on the other side of the Tchernaya. It seems to contain six guns, and is situated literally on the face of a steep cliff, about a mile to the left of Tchourgoum. How the enemy ever got their guns there is a marvel to our engineers.

All troops encamped on the ground on which they halted. Our lines now, therefore, extend from the hills, beyond the Woronzow