

Incidents of the War.

THE SIEGE OF SEBASTOPOL.

Heights of Sebastopol, May 6.

I do not suppose another expedition to Kertch will be attempted, yet no other place is open to us. At Theodosia a blow might be struck, but to be effectual it should be done at once; for, as soon as Kertch is secured, the Russians will throw up strong works round Theodosia. The general opinion seems that 35,000 or 40,000 of the French will take the field, accompanied by the Turkish and English cavalry; but no one can for a moment conjecture in what direction they would or could move. It is impossible to go two miles in any direction from our lines without coming upon the entrenched camps of the enemy. In the meantime, however, the cavalry are being drilled and inspected as if something was really on the tap.

Yesterday the whole of the French cavalry were inspected by Canrobert and Raglan near the English head-quarters. They turned out between 4,000 and 5,000, effective horsemen, all, both men and animals, in good hard-working condition. To-day the Turkish cavalry were reviewed, and in point of discipline and efficiency made the best appearance of any. There were only about 800 of them, but the men were stout active fellows, clean, and well equipped; the horses small, but high spirited and in fine condition. There was one regiment of Turkish Dragoons, and one of Lancers. Both went round their evolutions slowly, but with a precision and good order which I have seldom seen surpassed; and the well-ordered compact, and rapid charge they made at the close of the day's manoeuvres was most brilliant.

May 10.

We have had our dullness enlivened by a brisk sortie which was made against the left attack last night. As usual, the enemy met with a severe repulse. The trench guard was mounted at the usual hour yesterday evening. Near the left attack a working party accompanied, part for the purpose of repairing the zig-zags, and part for the new advanced work, which is now nearly completed. Beyond an occasional shot or shell, Sebastopol was remarkably quiet and the officers in command congratulated themselves on the prospect of advancing the work without molestation. After dark, however, appearances altered much. The weather, which had been fine during the day, became quite tempestuous, the wind blew half a gale, it was pitchy dark, with blinding showers of rain; in fact, a sortie might be ventured on all doubt. To guard against surprise, our sentries were advanced beyond their customary posts, the supporting parties cautioned to be on the alert, and every necessary disposition made to meet and repulse an attack. 11 and 12 o'clock came and passed in perfect quiet—in fact, the quietness about Sebastopol was the most suspicious symptom, and but for that, the witching hour, when the enemy generally make their attacks, would have been thought past.

At 1 o'clock the weather seemed doing its worst. Nothing could be seen for the rain and darkness, and nothing could be heard for the howling of the wind. Suddenly, both wind and rain ceased; but the darkness was still intense. One of the out sentries thought he heard something unusual in the direction of the Redan, and instead of rushing in, with or without firing his musket, as our sentries too frequently do, he with the utmost coolness and judgment tried to discover the cause, before giving an alarm. He communicated his suspicions to two other sentries who were stationed here, and after a short deliberation they all advanced in the direction of the noise, creeping cautiously along the ground. As they approached the Russian work, the noise as of many men moving about, though not advancing, was distinctly heard. The steps appeared to be about 100 yards off, but it was impossible to distinguish anything. Suddenly the sound ceased. The three sentries were in doubt what to do, but eventually one of them returned to the advanced work to report what they had heard, and alarm the covering party. The instant the sentry had made his statement the trench guard was aroused—the men formed up in strict silence—the weapons looked to, and each detachment, under the command of its officers, proceeded to its appointed post. Orders were given that none were to fire until the general command was given.

Col. L. Yea, of the 7th, was field officer in command of the whole party. A brigadier-general was in command in chief of all the troops in the trenches, but he was stationed with the reserve. In the meantime the two sentries, who had remained in advance, waited quietly for some further indication of the enemy's presence. After about a quarter of an hour's anxious expectation, the head of a body of men, advancing quickly and cautiously, was distinctly heard. One of the sentries instantly returned to report it, the other remained at his post until the enemy got within 40 yards of where he lay. He then began retreating keeping close to the ground, neither going on too fast, or suffering the enemy to overtake him. When within a stone's throw of our trenches the Russians stopped; our sentry quietly entered our works and pointed out their precise position. All our

troops preserved a strict silence, and so quiet were the enemy that it was almost impossible to say that they had not altered their plan, and proceeded in another direction. A few moments passed in this manner, and then in an instant 50 shots were fired into our lines at a distance of six feet. It seems that when the Russians halted, they lay down upon their bellies and crawled forward unobserved until within a musket's length of our trenches, when a number of them fired and sprang upon their feet. Our men were in no way taken by surprise. Their positions were already assigned, and they lay so close under cover that only two men were struck by the enemy's volley—one man killed on the spot, another dangerously wounded. The Russians who had first risen, made an attempt to rush into the work under cover of their fire, which they believed had taken us entirely by surprise; but nearly all who tried were shot or bayoneted. The rest of the party, which now seemed about 1,000 strong, commenced a heavy fire, but it was totally inefficient against our troops, who were sheltered by the breast work. Our fire, on the contrary, was cool and well sustained, and at the short distance told with murderous effect on the crowds of Russians. They fell on all sides, while we scarcely lost a man. After a few minutes the enemy became confused, and fell back in disorder. It appears, however, to have been only a momentary panic, as after retreating a short distance, during the whole time of which they were skirmishing, they returned at the charge, and, with the utmost coolness and daring, moving more to the left tried to storm the breastwork at another point. In this they were as unsuccessful as in their first attempt. The troops reserved their fire until the Russians closed, and giving one tremendous volley prepared to meet those who might strive to cross the breastwork with the bayonet. But so severe that the enemy seemed paralysed. Their officers tried to lead them on, but the men, though they fired fast, seemed disinclined to follow. They were wavering fast, when a second force of Russians, about 500 strong, came upon the field. The reinforcement made no fresh effort to force our trenches, contenting themselves with skirmishing to cover the retreat of the attacking party. The English never quitted their breastwork, but fired with deadly accuracy into the enemy, who were trying to remove their killed and wounded. While effecting this they suffered a severe loss from our fire, which, from our very sheltered position, they were quite unable to return, at least with any effect, after about a quarter of an hour's skirmishing in this manner, the enemy fell back and got under cover of the Redan.

As usual the instant the attack was repulsed, and the Russians clear off, their batteries opened fire upon the portion of our lines on which the sortie had been made. They poured in regular volleys of round shot, grape, and shell. The heavy dark sky which lowered over everything seemed a perfect Aurora Borealis with the incessant flashes of the guns. This retaliation was fully expected, and all our troops lay down until the iron hail had passed. Only one man was killed by a round shot. None others were even wounded. In about half an hour the cannonade ceased, and except an occasional gun from the enemy, or a large mortar from ourselves and the French, all Sebastopol and the allied trenches were wrapt in perfect silence.

Our whole loss from this sortie was three men killed and 13 wounded, two of the latter very dangerously. Captain Lawrence of the 34th Regiment, was also wounded, but not, I am told severely. The 7th and 34th Regiments bore the brunt of the contest, and both behaved with distinguished gallantry. The prudence and courage of the out sentries are highly lauded. But for their precautions the Russians would never have met with such a severe defeat, and our loss would, most probably, have been much heavier.

The enemy appears to have suffered severely. In spite of their determined efforts to carry off their killed and wounded, one non-commissioned officer and 16 dead men were left behind, with two wounded skirmishers. The latter most probably fell while covering the retreat, and their loss was not noticed. One was very severely wounded, the other in probability mortally. The corpses of the dead still lie in front of our trenches; the two wounded men were brought in directly after the skirmish and forwarded to Balaklava this morning.

This afternoon the Russians sent in a flag of truce for permission to bury their dead. It was granted for half an hour, and the 17 bodies removed by a small working party from the Mamelon. During this time none, either of the allies or the enemy (except those actually engaged in removing the corpses), quitted their lines.

Beyond this affair nothing worthy of notice has occurred. Our batteries never fire more than once or twice in the course of the 24 hours just sufficient to show the enemy that we have both guns and ammunition, and no more. Fresh guns are still coming up daily, with immense supplies of powder, shot, and shell. Our advanced works are also being slowly completed and altogether the usual preparation for another bombardment are going forward with all speed. But there is not an officer or private out here who is deceived by these preparations. Every

man in the whole of the allied army knows well that no mere bombardment will ever drive the Russians from the south side, or advance the capture of Sebastopol by a single day, yet the allied commanders in chief push forward the preparations with unshaken faith. We have preparations, and nothing but preparations, and were it not for the attacks of the Russians we should be as idle here as ever we were at Chatham, or as they are likely to be at Aldershot. Apropos of the sortie of last night, I omitted to state that the light and 2nd divisions, with the 1st brigade of the 4th division, were turned out under arms, to the intense delight of the men, who seemed to expect that they were about to assault, or at least do battle with the enemy in some way or other. Our men seem literally burning to engage the Russians again, and their dissatisfaction at this continued inactivity is manifest throughout the army.

The weather since yesterday evening has been awful. It is not unlike the English November weather when very bad. We have cold north-east winds, with incessant heavy rains. Already the camp ground is half submerged with yellow clayey-looking ponds we only want the addition of half-thawed snow to make the camp look something like what it looked in December last.

May 11.

Again last night we had another sortie upon our working parties in the left attack. It was but a slight affair—in fact more a skirmish with sharpshooters than a sortie. About 60 of the enemy's riflemen issued from the Redan, and tried to annoy the troops so engaged in completing our advanced trench. After about half-an-hour's contest—a contest which never rose higher than a dropping fire of musketry, the Russians retreated. After their retreat the Redan opened with shell and round shot, and maintained such a heavy fire that our working parties were compelled to desist from their labour, and retire under the cover of our works. For the rest of the night they were unable to continue the trench. We lost, I am informed, 12 men killed and wounded—four killed and eight wounded. Five of the latter were wounded severely, either by round shot or splinters of shell. No officer was hurt. Beyond this cannonade there is nothing in the shape of fighting to report. The Russians are strengthening their batteries; we are getting up guns and ammunition to destroy. This though a very concise summary of what the allies and Russians are doing just now, I think says all that is to be told.

It is said that we require no less than 60 new guns in the advanced works for the next bombardment. An immense number of 13 and 10-inch mortars have also to be mounted. It is most improbable that we shall recommence our fire for at least another fortnight or three weeks.

The French have almost completed a most powerful battery of heavy guns and mortars, within 50 feet of the Flagstaff Battery. From the lodgment which they still maintain in front of it they are enabled to annoy the enemy with incessant musketry.

Every one looks upon the Flagstaff as entirely hors de combat. It will not stand four hours after the French re-open fire. The Russians are in the meantime endeavouring to warn off this misfortune by constructing another work still stronger, close in the rear of the Flagstaff, but more to the sea. It is not, however, expected that this will be able to offer any long resistance with the Flagstaff in the possession of the French.

The rain had been incessant throughout the whole of last night, and to-day everything is positively flooded, and the roads to and from the camp quite as bad as in the midst of winter. Just now the rain in the greatest blessing that could have happened to us, as at camp there was a decided scarcity of water beginning to be felt. The same rain will also serve the best interests of the enemy, by bringing forward their hay troops throughout the Crimea.

May 12.

Nothing has occurred during the night, nothing but torrents of rain, which still continue. The roads except the railroad, are quite impassable. Mud surrounds us on every side, and as far as we are able to judge this weather will continue for some days.

Omar Pasha is still with Lord Raglan, and General Canrobert is expected during the day. Some newly-arrived troops are visible on the north side of the town, in a fresh camp which had been formed further inland than the one which usually stands there. Judging from the tents, it at least seems a camp of 10,000 or 15,000 men.

There is no firing going forward; in fact, we are dull and idle beyond all expression. Anything would be better than such continued never varying monotony.—Correspondent of the Morning Herald.

Camp before Sebastopol, Tuesday, May 11.

May day in the Crimea! Worthy of the sweetest May Queen in merry England! A blue sky, dotted with milk-white clouds, a warm but not a too hot a sun, and a gentle breeze fanning the fluttering canvas of the wide spread streets of tents, here pitched on swelling mounds covered with fresh grass, there sunk in valleys of black mould, trodden up by innumerable feet and hoofs, and scattered broad-cast over

the vast plateau of the Chersonese. This bright sun, however, develops fever and malaria. The rocking earth, saturated with dew and rain, pours forth poisonous vapours and the sad rows of mounds covered with long lark grass which rise in all directions above the soil impregnate the air with disease. As the atmosphere is purged of clouds and vapour, the reports of the cannon and of the rifles become more distinct. The white houses, green roofs, and the domes and cupolas of Sebastopol stand out with tantalising distinctness against the sky, and the ruined suburbs and masses of rubbish inside the Russian batteries seem almost incorporated with the French entrenchments. The French on the left are indeed too near the enemy's lines; they are exposed to constant annoyance and loss by frequent volleys of hand grenades and coehorns, and their works are interrupted by little sorties of a few yards—out and back again. On the extreme right, however, the English works towards the Round Tower are in advance of the French works towards the Mamelon. On our proper left we can make no considerable approaches in advance of our actual work up to the Redan, in consequence of the deep ravine before our batteries. The French approach towards the Round Tower, is obstructed by the Mamelon, which is due south of it, and we cannot approach much nearer towards the Round Tower, working from our right, till the Mamelon is taken. The distance from the Mamelon to the Redan is about 550 yards. From the Round Tower to the sea (of the harbour) behind it the distance is about 1,700 yards. The French are now within a few hundred yards of the Mamelon, and our advanced parallel, which is connected with theirs, inclines forward of their line towards the Round Tower. Although the Mamelon is pierced for 11 guns, there are not apparently more than five guns mounted; but all the embrasures are screened. The Russians have been checked in their attempts to advance upon our right towards Inkermann, and as I have said the French on the left towards the sea have pushed their lines inside the old Russian outworks, but the centre, protected by the Garden Battery, Road Battery, Barrack Battery, and Redan still offers considerable difficulty to an approach, and presents a very strong position. At present there is an interregnum—nothing to report—nothing to write about except the movements of guns and waggons loads of shell, the arrivals of horses, and detachments of men, or the events of the race-course.

May 2

There was a very brilliant exploit performed by seven battalions of French infantry, in which the 66th Regiment were particularly distinguished, last night and this morning. They advanced before midnight and seized the Russian ambulances under a very heavy fire—the Russians came out to meet them in force—a tremendous conflict ensued, in which the French used the bayonet in repeated charges, and at last they forced the Russians back into the works, followed them, stormed the outworks of the Batterie Centrale, and took off eight coehorns, which they brought to General Pelissier. In this gallant affair, which lasted till 2 o'clock this morning, the French had 63 killed and 210 wounded, and 9 officers put hors de combat. The obstinacy of the combat was sufficiently evident from the spectacle presented by the ground between the French and the Batterie du Centre. The space of rubbish, broken earth, ruins of batteries, and the debris of outworks, was covered with gabions, fragments of arms, and dead bodies, and the Russians were busily engaged in burying the dead who had fallen inside their lines.

Early this morning a little flotilla of some 25 or 30 French vessels, most of them brigs and schooners, sailed from Kamiesh, and stood over to the south-west with a gentle breeze. They were visible all day, and could be readily seen from Sebastopol. At sunset some were hulled down. Several French men-of-war accompanied them. It is supposed that these vessels contained a portion of the troops and stores of the secret expedition. At 1.30 a body of Russian troops, in three divisions, and about 2,500 strong, were seen marching into Sebastopol from the camp over the Tchernaya. A very large convey of carts and pack animals also entered the town in the course of the day, and an equally numerous string of carts and horses left for the interior. The troops marched along by the road at the head of the harbour on the north side, and were lost to sight behind the rise of the cliffs on the south of the road. The day was so clear that one could almost see their faces through the glass. Their officers were well mounted, and the men marched solidly and well. A smaller body of troops subsequently marched out from the town and marched up towards the camp of the Belbec, taking a road more to the north than that by which their comrades entered. Most probably the movements of troops only indicated a relief of soldiers in garrison. About 4 o'clock it was observed by us on the right that the enemy's battalions were forming in columns in the rear of the Bastion du Mat, and in a few moments afterwards about 2,000 men, who were most likely volunteers, made a desperate rush out of the works close to the Batterie Centrale, and with a loud cheer flung themselves on the French advance. For a moment their numbers and