

Incidents of the War.

From the Correspondent of the London Times.
BATTLE OF THE TCHERNAYA.

Camp of the Allied Armies on the Tchernaya,
August 16.

The long threatened attack of the Russians on the Tchernaya line has at last taken place, and ended in the complete defeat of the enemy. During the last few days the sign of an impending attack became more and more frequent—Movements of large numbers of troops in the neighbourhood of Sebastopol, the unanimous reports of the deserters, of whom several came in every day, and, lastly, information gained from numbers of Tartars who bring in continually news from the Russian lines, were all to the effect, that the Russians, having received part of the reinforcements which they were expecting, intended to try their luck once more in an offensive operation. Although at first the line of the Tchernaya suggested itself as the point which the Russians would most probably attack, a supposition which was moreover confirmed by all the deserters yet, as there were large numbers of newly arrived troops seen concentrated in and about the Russian works, apprehensions were entertained that perhaps the Russians might attempt something against the position of the allied armies before Sebastopol, and the chief attention was consequently directed to that point. Yesterday again several deserters came in, and spoke with the utmost certainty of an intended attack on the Tchernaya lines; but as this had been the case several times during the last fortnight, no particular attention was paid to their reports, and no special orders were given to the troops, except to be prepared for an attack; and this had been so often repeated that it made no impression.—In addition to this, our intention was drawn off from the lower Tchernaya by the news from Baidar. I wrote in my last letter that when the arrival of fresh troops in Sebastopol became known, the four troops of English light cavalry were withdrawn from Baidar, and only two regiments of heavy French cavalry and a few Chasseurs and Zouaves remained in the valley until all the hay collected should be carried away. Yesterday afternoon General Allonville sent news from Baidar by telegraph that large numbers of Russian troops were concentrated on the heights above the valley, and that he expected to be attacked. The telegraphic message was interrupted by the dense fog which prevailed in the afternoon, but late in the evening notice of this message of General Allonville was sent to General de la Marmora and Osman Pacha. As the cavalry at Baidar would be exposed to be cut off by a considerable force, on account of the great number of carts which are down in the valley for the transport of hay, and which would encumber the Woronzoff road, an attack on that side seemed not at all improbable. From all these circumstances it followed that no additional precautions were taken on the Tchernaya line, and that the attack was scarcely less a surprise than that of Inkermann. The first news of an actual attack was brought about daybreak by some French Chasseurs, who forming part of a patrol, fell into an ambush of the Russians, and narrowly escaped while their comrades were taken prisoners. Soon afterwards the outposts, which were across the Tchernaya, were driven in, and about daybreak the cannonade began.

For the better understanding of the movements, I must give you some description of the locality. The Tchernaya, coming out at the tower of Karlovka from the narrow gorge in which it runs after leaving the valley of Baidar, flows between a succession of hillocks on both sides. These hillocks from the basis of the position of the allied armies. On the extreme right, beginning where the Tchernaya comes out of the gorge down to the little mountain streams which fall into the Tchernaya from the south, are the Turks. They occupy two hillocks, and between them are two roads which lead from Higher Tchorgoun and the tower of Karlovka into the Woronzoff road. The Sardinian position leans to the right on the little mountain stream which limits the Turkish position to the left. They occupy the large solitary standing hillock which used to be held by the Cossacks, and which extends down to the open ground over which the road from Balaklava to Tchorgoun leads. This hillock has been lately considerably strengthened and provided with batteries, and, as it has a very commanding position, was of the utmost importance in defence of the Tchernaya line. In front of this hillock, and divided from it by the aqueduct which begins there, is another smaller but equally steep hillock, accessible from the first by a stone bridge, and on this hillock the Sardinians had a small epaulement guarded by a detachment of infantry. Beyond both these hillocks, on the other side of the Tchernaya, they had moreover on the hillock nearest to the Mackenzie road their outposts, which could thus watch the movements of the enemy and give timely alarm in case of an attack. The French occupy the last series of hillocks to the left of the Sardinians, and guard the road which leads from Balaklava over the Traktir bridge, up to Mackenzie's farm. The hillocks occupied by them are three in number; the first, to the right, is

separated from the others by the great road leading to the bridge; and the last, to the left, is protected by the basin which the aqueduct forms here, and is separated by another open ground, similar to that on the right of the French position, from the ridge on which the army of observation was during the winter. In front of the bridge the French had constructed a small epaulement to guard the passage of the river, beyond which they had their outposts.

The first movement of the Russians was against the outposts of Sardinians on the opposite bank of the river. Corresponding to the hillocks on this side of the Tchernaya are three plateaux on the opposite bank. These were chosen for the left of the Russian position against the Turks and Sardinians. These plateaux were, therefore first to be secured, for the guns could command from them not only the hillocks opposite, occupied by the Sardinians and Turks, but likewise the plain which opens towards the French position. A company of infantry of the line, and a company of Bersaglieri formed the Sardinian outposts. These were attacked at dawn by the Russians. As the troops were not yet under arms, it was necessary to hold this position for a while, and General della Marmora sent over Major Govour, of the *etat-major*, with a company of Bersaglieri, to reinforce the two companies already there. They crossed the aqueduct and the river, and went up the plateau; but when they arrived on the crest of it, the two companies had the epaulement, behind which they had until then defended themselves gallantly against the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, but which can become untenable, as it was swept by the guns which the Russians had brought upon the other plateaux, and besides was exposed to be taken in the rear. So the troops retired in good order across the river, and went to reinforce the post which occupied the second hillock on the banks of the aqueduct. In the meantime the cannonade on both sides had begun. The Russians left us not long in doubt where they would attack, for, scarcely had the cannonade begun when three compact masses of infantry were seen advancing towards the plain opposite to the French position. The points chosen were the bridge and the hillock to the right. The masses, which in the morning sun looked like glittering waves, protected by the fire of their artillery, moved in excellent order down to the river side, notwithstanding the heavy fire of artillery which greeted them in front from the French, and in flank from the Sardinians. At the river the first column detached itself from the rest, and, dividing into two columns, crossed the river, which is now nearly everywhere easily fordable. Men carrying moveable wooden bridges preceded, but in the first rush the Russians, without waiting for bridges, went over wherever they could, and dispersing like a swarm of bees, rushed forward in columns, some against the bridge the other against the hillock on the right. As I said above, the continual apprehension of an impending attack had at last benumbed the interest for it and notwithstanding the signs which seemed to indicate some movement on the part of the Russians, everybody slept as soundly as possible until awakened by the Russian guns. Before the troops were properly under arms the Russians were at the bridge and at the foot of the hillock.—The 20th leger and the second battalion of Zouaves had to stand the first shock, and they certainly stood it gallantly. The rush of the Russians was splendid. Without losing their time with firing, they advanced with an *elan* scarcely ever seen in Russian troops. Some French soldiers of Camou's division, who have during the winter guarded the trenches towards the Quarantine, and have had nearly daily skirmishes with the Russians, assured me that they never saw them moving on in such a style. They were new troops, belonging, according to the prisoners and wounded, to the 5th division of the 2nd corps d'armee lately arrived from Poland. But their ardour was soon broken.—They could not carry their point, and were, after a short trial, repulsed both on the bridge and the hillock. The aqueduct which supplies the Turks, and which runs close to the foot of the hillock, formed the chief defence of the French. About nine or ten feet wide and several feet deep, it skirts the steep hills so close, that it is nearly in all places supported by a high embankment, offering considerable difficulties for an advancing force, and exposing it, as soon as it reaches the top of it, to the musketry fire from the heights. Notwithstanding this difficulty, the Russians crossed it on the right, and were beginning to scale the heights, when taken in flank by the Sardinian batteries, which fired with admirable precision, they were swept down wholesale and rolled into the aqueduct below. This first rush did not last more than ten minutes. The Russians fell back, but they had scarcely gone a hundred yards when they were met by the second column, which was advancing a *pas de charge* to support the first, and both united and again rushed forward.—This second attempt was more successful than the first. At the bridge they forded the river on the right and left, and forced the defenders of it to fall back. Scarcely was the bridge free when two guns of the 6th Light Brigade of Artillery crossed it and took up a position on the opposite side in an open space which divides two of the hillocks and through which the road leads to the plain of Balaklava. While those

two guns passed the bridge a third crossed the river by a ford, and all three began to sweep the road and the heights. The infantry, in the meantime, without waiting for the portable bridges which had moreover been thrown away in great part during the advance, rushed breast-deep into the water, climbed up the embankment, and began to scale the heights on both sides. They succeeded on this point in getting up more than one-half of the ascent, where the dead and wounded afterwards showed clearly the mark which they reached; but by the time they arrived there, the French were fully prepared, and met them in the most gallant style. Notwithstanding the exertions and the perseverance of the Russians, they were by degrees forced back and driven, after an obstinate resistance, across the bridge, carrying away their guns.

While this attack took place on the bridge the other column again attacked the French right. This time they came on in such a swarm that they were neither kept back by the aqueduct, nor cowed by the Sardinian guns, which were ploughing long lanes through their scattered lines. On they came, as it seemed, irresistible, and rushed up the steep hill with such fury that the Zouaves, who lined the sides of it, were obliged to fall back for a moment before the multitude. You could plainly see the officers leading the way, and animating their soldiers. I particularly observed one gallant fellow, who, at least 20 yards in advance of the whole column, was the first across the aqueduct, and I could still see him on the side of the hill. This furious rush brought the advancing column in an incredibly short time to the crest of the hillock, where it stopped to form.—But the French had not been idle during the time that the Russians were ascending the hill. The Zouaves had only fallen back from the side of the hillock to the main body, which had been drawn up behind the top. Scarcely did the column of the enemy show its head, when the guns opened on it with grape, and a murderous fire was poured down upon it by the French infantry. This immediately stopped the advance of the column, which began to waver, but the impetus from those behind was so powerful that the head of it, notwithstanding the unexpected reception, was pushed forward a few yards more, when the French, giving one mighty cheer, rushed upon the advancing enemy, who, shaken already, immediately turned round and ran down, if possible faster than they had come up. But the mass was so great that all the hurry could not save them, and more than 200 prisoners were taken on the spot, while the hillside, the banks of the aqueduct, the aqueduct itself, and the riverside were filled with dead and wounded. The Sardinian and French artillery poured, moreover, a murderous crossfire into the scattered remains of the column, of which scarcely a shot missed. It was a complete rout. The French rushed down the hill and drove them far across the plain. This defeat seems to have so completely cowed them that nothing more was attempted against this side.

Not so on the bridge. Notwithstanding the heavy loss suffered by the second attack the Russians concentrated once more all their forces, collected the scattered remains of the column which had been routed on the right of the French position, and brought up all their reserves to attempt one more attack. They again crossed the river, and the aqueduct too, and tried to take the heights—but in vain; the French were now thoroughly prepared, and the tenacity of the Russians served only to augment their losses. They were soon seen flying in all directions, followed by the French. This last attack was decisive, and immediately the usual Russian preparation for retreat—namely, the advance of the artillery—showed clearly that the Russians acknowledged themselves defeated and were on the point of retiring. Three batteries each of twelve guns, which during the greatest part of the attack had been nearly silent, began to open their fire while the scattered remains of the infantry columns rallied behind a rising ground, leading up towards the plateau of Akyer, or Mackenzie's height.

The Sardinians, who, with the exception of the little outpost fight on the opposite side of the Tchernaya, had confined themselves to support the French by their admirable artillery, which entirely subdued the Russian fire on the opposite plateaux, began now to move across the aqueduct. The Russian riflemen, after the last defeat on the right, had retired behind the banks of the Tchernaya, whence they kept up a brisk but ineffective fire. A battalion of Piedmontese, preceded by a company of Bersaglieri, advanced in beautiful order, as if on parade, and soon drove these riflemen from their position. It even advanced some way towards the plateaux; but, as if it was not intended to force the heights, it contented itself, supported by other troops, with following the enemy, who was already in full retreat.

The French had during the battle brought up a new division (Duc's). Besides this, the whole English and French cavalry were in readiness on the plain leading to the river, the ground of the light cavalry charge last year, ready to receive the enemy if he should force the passage of the river and debouch on the plain. But General Morris would not risk the cavalry on the plain, intersected as it was by the branches of the river, and defended

as it was still by the Russian guns on the heights; so only two squadrons of Chasseurs d'Afrique followed the enemy. The guns which the Russians had brought up to cover their retreat suffered so much by the fire from our side which was increased by Captain Mowbray's batteries opening upon them from the open ground between the Sardinian and the French positions, they made off in a hurry. Scarcely a shot was thrown away, and so admirable was the practice that all the shot fell at or close to the guns, which we could plainly distinguish, as a slight breeze carrying off the smoke left a beautiful view over the whole battle-field. But the Russian guns returned only for a moment under cover, and soon after you could see a brilliant line of cavalry debouching from the rising ground, where it had been hitherto hidden. I could distinguish five regiments—three in one line, and two other regiments on the flanks in second line. They advanced at a gallop, and wheeling round, allowed 12 guns to pass, which again opened their fire, but only for a short time, and at half-past nine o'clock the dust on the Mackenzie road and the back lines moving off were the only traces which remained of the so long threatened attack of the Russians.

Everybody now rushed to the battle field, and one look was sufficient to convince them that the allies had won a real battle on the Tchernaya. Although not quite so obstinate and sanguinary as the battle of Inkermann, which this affair resembles in many points, it was a pitched battle. The Russians, as in the battle of Inkermann, gave up manoeuvring, and confided entirely in the valour of their troops. The essential difference was in the manner of fighting. At the battle of Inkermann the great mass of the Russians fell under the file firing and the bayonets of the infantry, while on the Tchernaya it was the guns which did the greatest execution. Most of the wounded and dead showed frightful traces of round shot, grape, shell, and canister, so that as a battle-field one could scarcely imagine anything more terrible. Nearly all the wounds were on the legs and the head. On the banks of the aqueduct particularly the sight was appalling; the Russians, when scaling the embankment of the aqueduct, were taken in flank by the Sardinian batteries, and the dead and wounded rolled down the embankment, sometimes more than 20 feet in height. The French made every possible despatch to collect the wounded. They were laid on the open space about the bridge until the ambulances arrived. While there, the Russians, who could see plainly that the French were engaged in bringing help to their own wretched countrymen, suddenly began to open with their guns upon them, repeating the barbarous practice which they had already often previously shown to the troops. A gentleman was with me at the moment, and who speaks Russian, asked one of the poor fellows who was trying to trudge along with deep flesh wounds on both his thighs, what he thought of the behaviour of the Russians in firing among their own wounded? He answered, "they are accustomed to beat us when we are with them, and there is no wonder that they should try to ill-treat us when we are on the point of escaping their power."

According to the accounts of the prisoners, and judging from the straps on the shoulders of the wounded and dead, three divisions were engaged in the actual attack—the 5th of the 2nd corps d'armee (of General Panutin,) lately arrived from Poland, under the command of General Wrangle; the 12th division of the 4th corps d'armee (Osten Sacken's) formerly under the command of General Liprandi, now under General Martinolep; and the 17th division of the 6th corps d'armee (Liprandi's) under Major-General Wassielosky. The prisoners say that even the reserves took part in the action. I saw a soldier who said he belonged to the last battalion of the reserves, who said that before the battle began, General Gortschakoff, who commanded in person, had a letter of the Emperor read before them, in which he expressed a hope that they would prove as valourous as last year when they took the heights of Balaklava, and then there was a large distribution of brandy. Not a soldier I saw who had not his bottle lying empty near him, and good sized bottles they were too. The brandy distribution was, however, only for the infantry, whom they wished to excite to madness. The artillery got only the usual rations. Besides the three divisions which attacked, there was another, the 7th, which occupied Tchorgoun and the heights, but which did not attack except in the small outpost affair of the Sardinians.

Aug. 18.—The attack has not been renewed, and the French have been for the last two days busy in bringing in the wounded Russians and burying the dead. Up to yesterday evening, 1800 wounded and prisoners have been brought in. The number of dead, of whom I have not heard any official account, cannot be less than from 1200 to 1500. Of course, the bridge and banks of the aqueduct are the spots most crowded with them. The latter is quite choked up with them, so that it has been forbidden to water the horses from it for fear it should be injurious to their health. The French had three divisions engaged: Fauchoux's division to the right, d'Herbillon's division in the centre of the bridge, and Camou's division on the left, their loss is about 1000 in dead and wounded. The Sardinians had only one division engaged, Tre-