

The Place of the Balloon in Military Science.

To the Editor of the New-York Times:

The achievement of Mr. LOWE in his telegraphic cooperation from the balloon at the battle of Fair Oaks is an event of such importance as to merit more than a passing mention. The following letter from Mr. PARKER SPRING, Superintendent of telegraph construction in Gen. McCLELLAN'S army, gives an account sufficiently detailed to show how great services may be reasonably expected from the perfection of this branch of military service. He says:

"The battle had commenced. When it had reached its zenith, Prof. LOWE and myself, with the telegraph, had reached an altitude of two thousand feet. With the aid of good glasses we were enabled to view the whole affair between these powerful contending armies.

As the fight progressed, hasty observations were made by the Professor and given to me verbally, all of which I instantly forwarded to Gen. McCLELLAN and division commanders through the agency of the obedient field instrument which stood by our side in the bottom of the car. Occasionally a masked rebel battery would open upon our brave fellows. In such cases the occupants of the balloon would inform our artillerists of its position, and the next shot or two would, in every case, silence the masked and annoying customer.

For hours, and until quite dark, we remained in the air, the telegraph keeping up constant communication with some point. From the balloon to Fortress Monroe, a distance of over one hundred miles, this wire worked beautifully. A number of messages were sent and received between these two points, and had it not been for the tremendous rush of business on the wire I should have telegraphed you directly from the balloon while the battle was raging.

Sunday morning at daybreak we again ascended. Early in the morning the battle was again renewed and with more fierceness than the day before. Incessant firing of musketry and artillery was kept up until noon, when I had the extreme pleasure to announce by telegraph from the balloon, that we could see the enemy retreating rapidly toward Richmond.

The streets of Richmond in the morning presented a deserted appearance, but very few people to be seen in the streets. During the afternoon and evening of Sunday, nothing of interest transpired beyond the removal of the rebel dead and wounded, all of which we could distinctly see from the balloon. Every available machine that had wheels was brought into requisition for that purpose. From the scene of battle into the city of Richmond, the road was literally lined with ambulances, wagons and carts, conveying dead and wounded.

About twilight we saw camp fires innumerable around the city; smoke issued from all their hospitals and barracks, which showed us for a certainty that the main body of their army had fallen back to Richmond."

To Mr. LOWE belongs, in great measure, the credit of having rendered practically useful to our army the various suggestions that from time to time have appeared, and the further credit of having reduced to comparative simplicity the contrivances for inflating and transporting the balloon. He is also entitled to the honor of having been the first to share in the conduct of an actual engagement from a balloon.

But while awarding these honors to Mr. LOWE, it is proper to assign to others whatever instrumentality they have had in making the balloon a useful adjunct in military service.

At the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in August, 1860, Capt. HUNT, of the United States Engineers, presented a paper on the balloon telegraph, from which the following is an extract:

"The use of balloons for military purposes clearly ought to be reduced to system. After the important influence on the issue of the battle of Fleurus, which observations from a balloon actually did exercise, it has been a just matter of wonder that in so proper a case for using this resource as the Sebastopol operations actually offered, it should have been untried. Siege operations would be specially advantaged by balloon observations steadily maintained. One element which has hitherto been lacking would, I conceive, greatly conduce to success. Were the cord by which the balloon observatory is held captive, a telegraphic wire, with a finger-key in the car, instant reports of all observations could be made at headquarters. The use of telegraphic captive balloons in a shore cordon, to report the approach of invading fleets, would, I fancy, grow promptly to perfection in this country in case of war. By sending up these sentinels from swift vessels far to seaward, we should much enlarge our sphere of supervision; and it is possible that balloon telegraphic observations may be found serviceable in time of peace for reporting the approach of steamers and sailing vessels. The ob-

server should, of course, be aided by the greatest serviceable telescopic power."

It will be seen that Capt. HUNT very accurately pointed out the employment of the telegraph in connection with the balloon, and may be said to have anticipated the actual use which was made of the instrument by Mr. PARKER and Mr. LOWE at the battle of Fair Oaks.

Capt. HUNT suggested other uses that, in time of difficulty with foreign Powers, are not unlikely to be called into service.

E. N. H.

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