

THREE YEARS AGO THIS MONTH THE JAPANESE GAVE THE WORLD A TERRIFIC DEMONSTRATION, WHICH



THE DESTRUCTION BY DYNAMITE MINES OF THE EAST URHLUNG FORT AT PORT ARTHUR ON DECEMBER 28, 1904. The photograph was taken at the moment of the explosion of five separate Japanese mines under the largest of the guarding forts in the Russian fort line. On the left of the picture Japanese troops can be seen advancing to the attack under a heavy shell fire from the Russian fortress artillery. The front slope of the fort hill shows a section of the Japanese sapping trenches, by which the soldiers of the Mikado approached under cover the powerful Russian fort in order to undermine it.



THE BLOWING UP OF THE WEST THE RUSSIAN BATTERY POSITION OF ARTHUR, AFTER ITS CAPTURE BY 1905

SIEGE BY MINING.

How the Japanese Took Port Arthur Three Years Ago.

Three years ago this month the soldiers of the Emperor of Japan, upon the bloodstained hills about the Russian fortress at Port Arthur, gave the world a practical demonstration of what it cost in lives and toll and explosives to capture modern forts by the accepted methods of siege operations, before the aid of the airship could be counted on.

For five long months, in the terrible heat of a Manchurian summer and in the even more distressing cold of winter, the troops of the Third Imperial Japanese Army, under command of General Baron Nogi, burrowed their way by means of sapping trenches to the walls of the most important of the guarding points in the Russian fortress belt about the beleaguered city.

The Wangtai Hill was their goal, for it meant Port Arthur, because from its lofty crest the big guns of the Mikado's soldiers could dominate not only the various strong points in the enemy's line of defence, but the city and harbor of Port Arthur as well. In the early months of the siege the Japanese had sought this same goal by a series of assaults against the powerful modern forts that stood sentinel in front of Wangtai's slopes, but in every case they were hurled back, crushed and broken. Realizing finally that he had underestimated the spirit and strength of the garrison, as well as the enormous defensive power of the forts that stood in the way of a successful advance, General Nogi fell back upon the slower but more certain methods of reducing the guarding forts by scientific siege operations.

By the middle of December all but two of these forts had been captured by the besieging army, but the two that remained in the way of an effective advance up Wangtai's slopes, were the most powerful of the group. This was known to the Japanese, and care was taken to secure their capture at any cost. Tunnels were run underneath both forts, and in these tunnels were placed mines of dynamite and guncotton of sufficient power to convert them into masses of ruins.

The story of the destruction of the last two of these forts and the subsequent successful assault upon Wangtai Hill is told by W. Richmond Smith, who acted as war correspondent with General Nogi's army for The Associated Press, of this city, and the Reuter's Telegram Company, of London, in his book "The Siege and Fall of Port Arthur."

"The difficult work of piercing mine shafts under the East Uhlung fort was completed," says the author, "on December 27, and the mines were laid ready for the explosion, which had been fixed for the following morning. The engineers and sappers had run two main shafts under the fort walls from the moat for a distance of about fifty feet, and at the further end three smaller branch tunnels. Five mines, containing a total charge of about two tons of explosive—dynamite and guncotton—were safely laid.

"This fort was the largest and had the strongest garrison of any of the guarding forts upon this section of the enemy's line of defence east

of the city. The interior defences were arranged in what might be called two tiers, the second upon a slightly higher level than the first. Upon the lower level were several lines of infantry trenches and protected casemates for machine and automatic quick-firing guns, while upon the higher level were the casemates for the guns of heavier calibre. The strength of the garrison was not accurately known, but it was estimated at near its actual strength of five hundred men.

"It was expected that even if the explosion of the mines resulted successfully there would be a fierce struggle before the garrison was overpowered and the fort taken. Consequently great precautions were taken that the assaults which were to follow the setting off of the mines should result successfully.

"Before 10 o'clock on the morning of the 28th, the hour fixed for the explosion of the mines, the sapping trenches leading to the fort hill were crowded with troops. It was arranged that there should be two storming parties of one battalion each, while two more battalions were held in reserve. The assaulting parties had been carefully instructed, and the officers were determined that the fort should be taken at all hazards.

"From a spectacular point of view this was by all means the most terrible of the explosions that had taken place during the siege. The five mines were fired one after another with a few seconds' interval, so that the result to the spectator was the same as if they had been all fired together. The detonations were deafening, and a huge column of black smoke rose up over the fort several hundred feet into the air, while showers of rock and debris of all kinds descended upon every part of the fort hill. Though it lasted only a few seconds the scene resembled the eruption of a volcano more than anything else.

"As the great cloud of smoke and dust rolled slowly away it became evident that the results came up to expectations. The north end and a portion of the east and west walls had been entirely wrecked, and the north section of the interior converted into a twisted, broken mass of ruins; but the rear sections remained partly intact.

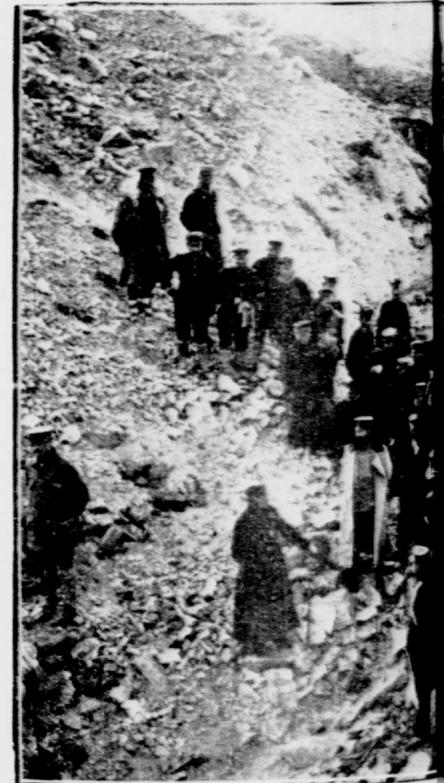
"Although the heads of the sapping trenches as well as the fort moat had been filled with debris from the explosions, small assaulting parties made their way over the open ground to the ruined fort walls. They were met by a heavy rifle and machine gun fire as soon as they reached the crest of the parapets, and were practically annihilated. In the mean time the main bodies of the storming force gained the moat and advanced toward the crest of the parapets in five large detachments. They were also met by a heavy fire, but, taking cover in the openings made by the explosions, they succeeded by 3 o'clock in the afternoon in securely intrenching themselves upon the crest.

"With great difficulty the mountain gun which had been brought up the sapping trenches early in the day was taken in sections to an emplacement prepared for it upon the top of the parapet. Two or three machine guns were also mounted in the same place. Under cover of the direct fire of these guns a small assaulting party succeeded in gaining a foothold in the interior of the fort close to the machine gun casemates, which were carried with a splendid rush. This enabled the rest of the two

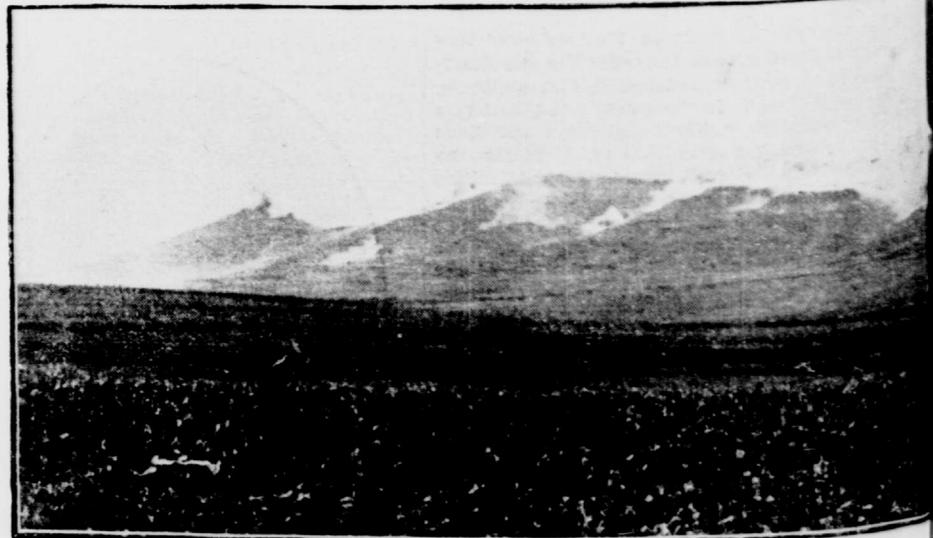
battalions to push forward into the interior. Twice attempts were made to take the line of heavier guns without success, but finally, about six o'clock in the evening, the assaults succeeded, and gained the concrete barracks in rear of the fort, from which the remnant of the garrison, about two hundred men, made good their escape through the windows.

"It had been a hard fight at close quarters, principally with dynamite hand grenades. The Russian garrison consisted of five hundred men from the East Siberian Sharpshooters, and about one hundred marines from the warships which were lying disabled in the harbor. Nearly two hundred had been killed in the explosion and their bodies buried in the debris. About two hundred had been killed in the assaults which had followed, and somewhere about two hundred more made good their escape. There were no prisoners taken except two or three wounded soldiers. The Japanese losses were about one thousand killed and wounded. Before retiring the enemy sprinkled the woodwork in the barracks at the rear of the fort with petroleum and set fire to it. This fire burned all night and part of the following day.

"The West Uhlung fort was now the only serious obstacle that stood in the way of a successful assault being made upon Wangtai Hill. Like its immediate neighbor to the east, this fort had been mined after months of terrible work and awful slaughter. Two main shafts had been driven from the moat under the north walls. Time and time again the direction of these shafts had to be altered to avoid coming in contact with the countermines of the garrison. The work was, however, finally completed and the mines placed in position on the morning of December 30. It was announced that the explosions would take place the fol-



WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE EAST THE picture shows the ruins of the fort being Two hundred of the Russian



A SECTION OF THE RUSSIAN FORT-RIDGE AT PORT ARTHUR BEING The lower hills in the forefront of the picture show the guarding forts which cost the lives of the Russian soldiers. The hills, can faintly be seen the old Chinese Wall, which was converted by the Russian garrison upon the crests of the higher hills of the ridge. The highest point among the peaks on the capture during the siege. Its possession meant the capture of the Russian position. The of shells from the Japanese batteries.