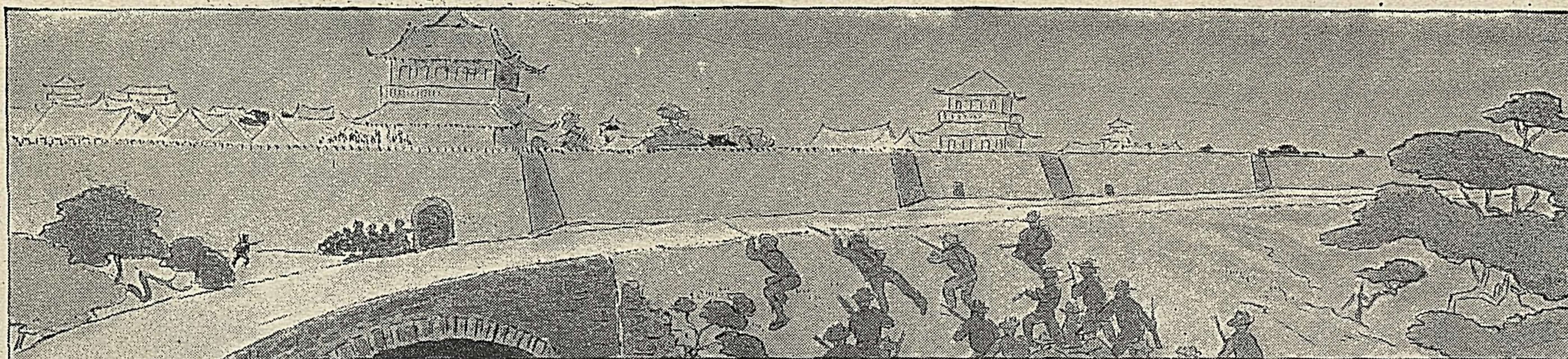




The civilians in the fortified compound banded themselves into a sort of Rough-rider regiment, called, because they had butcher-knife bayonets lashed to their multiform guns, the "Carving Knife Brigade." In the face of what seemed certain death the most amusing incidents constantly arose in this polyglot force of defence. French commands were often answered in a strong Irish brogue, and confusion reigned in consequence. Throughout all of the bloody days and days of weary waiting which followed, the thought that relief was at Tien-tsin, only four hours' ride by rail, must have made the isolation doubly hard to bear. Sir Claude Macdonald planned to destroy all the buildings around the fortified legation grounds by which fires could reach the legation buildings. As this would have necessitated the destruction of the ancient Hanlin Academy, the plan was voted down at a meeting of the ministers, after all that had happened, for fear of wounding the susceptibilities of the Chinese Government. The ministers could not conceive that on that very day the Chinese would themselves set fire to this venerated pile, with its priceless libraries, in the mad hope of reaching the British Legation. The fire was prevented from spreading to the legations only by the most arduous labor. On this day also a Krupp gun was mounted on the Chien Men gate, opposite to the Forbidden City, and shells thrown into the legations from a range of 1,000 yards. The first shell struck the American Legation. Bomb-proof shelters were at once erected for the women and children, the Chinese and coolie converts taking a brave share in all the work done under heavy fire. The most marvellous sand-bags known to any siege were made out of beautiful brocaded silks and velvets, which topped off the trenches with all manner of gorgeous coloring.

Continuous efforts were made to set fire to the legations by petroleum fireballs thrown at all hours of the day and night. On June 25th in the afternoon the incessant firing suddenly ceased at the sound of clearly heard bugle commands, showing plainly that the attack was not being made by a lawless mob. Some feint was then made at a truce and negotiations meant to deceive the defenders of the legations while an advance was made. They were not to be lured from their posts, however, and when at midnight the attack was renewed with redoubled energy, they were ready to receive it.

