

They had seen the mine dug, and the sacks of powder lodged in it, yet they kept their accustomed guard over the place, expecting from hour to hour to be blown into the air, and torn into a thousand pieces by the explosion; and thus it befell a company which had only just relieved the guard at that point. The roar was terrible, so solid was the wall, and so great the quantity of powder, and the city was shaken as by an earthquake. The Turks charged at once over the ruins made by the explosion, and joined battle, which raged for more than five hours with great fierceness, fresh reinforcements constantly coming up on both sides. So great was the eagerness of our soldiers to close with the enemy, and not to fall without giving some proof of their courage, or taking some vengeance on the foe, that every point of danger was hotly disputed. Everyone tried to be in the midst of every important engagement, of every attack. The very women, vying with the men in manly valour, kept coming up to the walls, and bringing necessaries to the soldiers. In this skirmish we lost over one hundred and sixty men, and among them Bernardino da Ugubio, who had performed many feats of daring, while Pietro Conte, Ercole Malatesta and other brave commanders were wounded and maimed.

The besieged retired from the place which the mine had breached. Their shelters were constructed with great skill, but were too cramped to be of much use, and the soldiers were greatly straitened in their movements by having to stand upon plank bridges. Here especial praise is due to the engineer Mormori, and Marco Crivellatore, a Venetian, Captain of Infantry, after whose plans were set up two rows of Candioli casks, full of earth, one close to the other, and on them two more rows of sacks full of moistened earth, well stamped down: between these were proper spaces, and the whole work formed a kind of parapet behind which the musketeers could fire in perfect security. It proved of the greatest service to our men: for the cannon shots struck nothing solid or continuous, and if a sack were carried away, this was all the damage done, and the vacant space could immediately and easily be filled by another. This expedient, and the singular courage of our men, kept the enemy long at bay: their assaults were frequently repulsed, and they began to despair of so taking the city. They betook themselves to new expedients, and began to build forts nearer the walls, from which they could the easier destroy the shelters and platforms, and so annihilate our last line of defence and their last obstacle. Meanwhile they kept up an incessant fire from mortars (a kind of cannon of very large calibre, now old-fashioned), throwing into the city itself balls of enormous weight, which fell on the houses, destroyed the roofs and killed the inmates. They shot off also a very shower of arrows, aiming high, so that the weapons fell perpendicularly on the heads of those who stood within and near the walls. They kept sounding an alarm, especially at night time, as though they were coming to the attack, and in short never left to the besieged an hour's rest, with the object of weakening their bodies and crushing their spirits with labour, danger and sleeplessness. Finally, when they saw that the damage done by the mines was not enough to open a safe and easy way for their attacks, they set to work with spades and pickaxes to pull down the walls, and to curtail, to the sorest inconvenience of the besieged, the space, already too narrow, on which they could work.

When the Turks had carried their works so far that they could easily cross the wall at several points, their commanders decided that they ought to make one supreme effort, and at the same moment to attack the besieged at different places, on the ground that being few, and engaged on different guards, they could not long sustain the fury of the assault. Mustafa made his preparations with the greatest care, and tried to be present himself at them all. He went about trying to encourage his soldiers, addressing by name those already distinguished