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THE CRIMEA REVISITED

BY MAJOR-GENERAL H. T. ARBUTHNOT, C.B.

On Wednesday, 1st March, 1911.

General LORD WILLIAM F. SEYMOUR, K.C.V.O.
in the Chair.

BEFORE I commence my lecture, I should like to say how much pleased I am to see so many of my old comrades of the Crimea here this afternoon. I do not know if any of the men who are here were in any regiment or battery attached to the Second Division. If they were, it is just possible that some of them were on picket together during that eventful winter. I see that some of them have the four clasps; therefore some, at all events, were at Inkerman, and were, no doubt, engaged in the field attack. I hope some of them may have been with me during that period.

I joined at Woolwich as a 2nd-Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery in August, 1853, and was posted to the second company, then on the Roster for foreign service. Quite early in the year 1854 the company was converted into a Field Battery (there was no Field Artillery proper in those days) and placed under orders for the East to join the Expeditionary Force which was being sent out. We embarked at Woolwich on March 29th, 1854, arrived at the Bosphorus on May 6th, and landed at Scutari on May 8th. We were first quartered with other

troops in a large Turkish barrack at Coolali; there was nothing remarkable about that barrack except its extreme filth and the extraordinary number of fleas which pervaded the whole place. We were therefore very glad when in about ten days' time we were moved out and encamped in a very shady position near a cypress grove; the Battery was then attached to the 2nd Division under Sir de Lacey Evans. In June and July the Army was moved up to Bulgaria. The 2nd Division was encamped near the village of Pravadi, about 20 miles from Varna, on the extreme left of the English lines facing North. Towards the end of August the Army embarked for the Crimea, and after sailing about in the Black Sea for a fortnight or more, the disembarkation commenced on September 14th, but owing to a storm which sprang up on the night of the 14th, which made it impossible to land horses, it was not completed till the 18th, and on the 19th the march towards Sevastopol commenced, and on the next day, the 20th, was fought the battle of the Alma. I always had a hankering to revisit the spot where I spent so many months of my early soldiering days, but the opportunity for doing so only occurred last year, and I propose this afternoon to give you an account of the wonderful reception I met with on the part of the Russians, and to give you my impression of the ground as it now is, as compared to what it was when covered with the English Army in 1854-55, with some account of the stirring events in those years.

I was saying just now that the opportunity for revisiting the Crimea only occurred last year, and it came about in this way: A brother officer of mine, Colonel Jocelyn, is engaged in writing a history of the Royal Artillery from the year 1853 to 1863, and as I have the great good fortune to be one of the few surviving Royal Artillery officers who went through the whole of the Crimean War, he was constantly asking me questions about it, and I suggested to him that he ought to go out and see the ground for himself, and it was arranged that we should go out together in the spring of last year. I put myself in communication with Lieutenant-General Yermoloff, the Military Attaché to the Russian Embassy in London; he took the greatest interest in my proposed visit, and at once communicated with the authorities at St. Petersburg, and did everything in his power to ensure that my visit should be both agreeable and instructive, and it was largely due to his good offices that I met with such a splendid reception. At the last moment circumstances prevented Colonel Jocelyn from accompanying me; but I had gone too far to draw back, and I was afraid I should have to go alone, but luckily my son, who is a Major in the Royal Berkshire Regiment, the 1st Battalion of which, the old 49th, was one of the Regiments of the 2nd Division, arrived home from India on long leave a fortnight before my departure, and he agreed to

go with me, and to him I am indebted for the photographs which I shall presently show you on the screen.

ARRIVAL IN THE CRIMEA

We proceeded *viâ* Marseilles to Constantinople and thence by a Russian steamer direct to Sevastopol, and on arrival there were met by the British Consul, who took us to our hotel. Early the next morning I was visited by Captain Dobrovolsky of the Russian Navy, who had been deputed by the Governor of the Crimea, under directions from St. Petersburg, to wait upon me, with instructions to show me everything I wanted to see, and to take me anywhere I wanted to go; at the same time I was to be at perfect liberty to go alone anywhere I liked and to take what photographs I liked, and during the whole time I was at Sevastopol there was not the slightest vestige of espionage in any way whatever. The selection of Captain Dobrovolsky to wait on me was a great compliment, as he is the officer attached to the Court when the Czar visits the Crimea. The Grand Duke Alexander Michaelovitch, who is in charge of the Crimean battlefields and relics, also wired to his Chamberlain Gordinski to do all he could to make my visit as agreeable as possible, so it began under the happiest auspices. After a little general conversation, Captain Dobrovolsky asked me what I should like to do on that first day of my visit. I naturally replied that my first duty would be to call on the Governor and others in authority; but he replied: "Not to-day; we will do that to-morrow." At the time I could not understand his reason for this, but I ascertained afterwards it was because he wished to apprise the Governor and others of my intended visit, so that I might be received with all due honour. He suggested that we should go to the Museum in the morning, and in the afternoon go round the original defences of Sevastopol as they existed at the time of the Siege. Chamberlain Gordinski did the honours of the Museum, of which he is in charge. It is an interesting museum, consisting entirely of reminiscences of the war—all the projectiles and munitions of war used at that period—articles picked up on the battlefields—portraits of the Generals in command—models of the forts and ships and so on.

THE DEFENCES OF SEVASTOPOL

In the afternoon Chamberlain Gordinski, accompanied by the Engineer Officer in charge of the lines, arrived at my hotel with two carriages to take us round the defences. I should mention here that it had been intended to celebrate the Jubilee of the war in 1904, but the Japanese War prevented it, and it is now proposed to have a Diamond Jubilee in 1914. But with a view to the Jubilee, the lines defending Sevastopol

were restored exactly as they were at the time of the siege, and one of the forts, the Flagstaff Battery or Bastion-du-Mât, was also restored, built up with gabions and fascinès, and mounted with old guns of that period. At the time of the siege every regiment in Sevastopol had its allotted place in the defence, and now a brass plate with the name of the regiment on it is let into the parapet of that part of the lines which that particular regiment had to defend. We drove right along the lines, commencing at the extreme left of the Russian position, resting on the Harbour, to the Flagstaff Battery, which was where the English left attack ended and the French attack began, visiting the Malakoff and the Redan as we went along. I was immensely struck with the extraordinary strength of the Malakoff Tower, with the bomb-proof casemates slightly in rear, where the defenders could remain in perfect safety until called out to repel an attack, but once the attacking party got a firm footing in the Tower, they would be able to hold it because it was not open in the rear, so that when the defenders were driven out no fire could be brought to bear on the attacking party. But not so the Redan; this work was open in the rear, so that if the attacking party got a footing in the work an overwhelming fire could be brought to bear upon them from the rear. It is very easy to be wise after the event, but it seems to me to have been an error of judgment to have attacked the Redan at all. The Redan is commanded both by the Malakoff and Flagstaff Battery. On the day of the assault the Flagstaff Battery was left practically unmolested, but had a successful attack been made on it by French and English, in combination, the Redan would have been untenable. The visit to these Russian defences, as they were 56 years ago, was most interesting, for it shows what a formidable task the Allies undertook in attacking so strongly defended a position with the means then at their disposal. Close to the Flagstaff Battery there is a public garden called the "Boulevard Historique"—why, I do not know. Chamberlain Gordinski had ordered tea for us there, so after completing the inspection of the defences we repaired there and partook of a most sumptuous tea; after the tea champagne was brought, and Gordinski proposed toast after toast as an excuse for another glass of champagne. This was the beginning of the Russian hospitality so freely extended to us; and before I proceed further I wish to emphasise the extraordinary cordiality with which we were everywhere received. Nothing could exceed the extreme friendliness shown to us on all occasions. I do not wish for one moment to imply that this was personal to myself. It had a far deeper significance: it was due to the great satisfaction of the Army and Navy with the *Entente* which has been arrived at between Russia and Great Britain, and every officer

with whom I conversed made no secret of his wish that this *Entente* would develop into an alliance.

VISIT TO THE BLACK SEA FLEET

On the following day, accompanied by Captain Dobrovolsky and the British Consul, we spent the morning in paying visits of ceremony to the Governor of the Crimea, the General Officer Commanding at Sevastopol and the Commandant of Artillery, by all of whom we were most cordially received and hospitably entertained. In the afternoon we called on the Admiral Commanding the Black Sea Fleet on his Flagship. He sent a steam launch to the landing stage to bring us off to his ship. On reaching the ship we were received by the Admiral and his Flag-Captain at the head of the companion ladder. The whole ship's company was mustered on deck. The guard presented arms and the officers saluted. We were shown all over the ship—men's quarters, sick bay, guns, magazines, cook house—in fact, everything. Whilst going round the Admiral remarked: "Of course, this is nothing to you; our ships cannot compare with yours, we know, but I thought perhaps you would like to see what our ships are like." After completing the round of the ship, the Admiral entertained us at tea in his state cabin, and when I was preparing to leave, the Commander came forward and said the Ward Room officers hoped we would honour them by visiting the Ward Room. I naturally accepted such a friendly invitation, and on reaching the Ward Room we found a most sumptuous repast prepared for us, with the inevitable champagne and usual toasts. Eventually we were able to get away. Again the whole ship's company was mustered on deck, and we received the same salutes as on arrival. There is a custom in the Russian Service that when a Commanding Officer has a parade, either ashore or afloat, he greets his men with a friendly "Good morning, brothers!" to which the men reply. I was told what the reply is, but I forget it; and the same ceremony is gone through on leaving. Knowing this custom in the Russian Service, I took care to observe it, and the extreme heartiness with which the men responded to my salutation showed me that they fully appreciated my action. On leaving the ship I fully expected to be taken back to the landing stage; but no, I was taken round the whole of the Black Sea Fleet, steaming round every ship, and as we passed each ship, the same ceremony was gone through as on the flagship; the crews were mustered on deck, the guard presented arms, and the officers saluted. Altogether we had a most splendid reception from the Fleet; I had never for one moment anticipated anything like it.

VISIT TO A RUSSIAN BARRACK

On my visit to the General Officer Commanding in the morning, he asked me whether I would like to see a Russian barrack. I said, "Yes, I would"; so he said he would send carriages for us in the morning to take us to the barracks of the Bialostok Regiment, now garrisoning Sevastopol. Accordingly, on the following morning two carriages came to the hotel to take our party, consisting of myself and son, Captain Dobrovolsky and the British Consul to the Barracks. On arrival there we were received by the General and the Colonel of the Regiment, with his Adjutant. A Russian Regiment, as probably most of you are aware, is more like an English Brigade, consisting of four Battalions, the whole being commanded by a Colonel, who is equivalent to our Brigadier-General. We were first taken to the barrack rooms, where everything was well arranged, scrupulously clean—the men, the beds, the rooms, all as neat and clean as possible. We were then taken to the kitchens, where the men's dinners were being prepared; we tasted the various foods, of which there was a great variety, and which were all excellent. We then saw the field kitchen, which appeared to me to be excellent in design and, from what I hear, superior to anything in our own service; and I was glad to read in the papers one day last summer that a field kitchen on the Russian model was to be tried at Aldershot. We then visited the workshops, the stables, the stores and the schools. A Russian Regiment is complete in itself; it has its own stores, its own transport, and its own camp equipment. The interior economy appeared to me to be perfect, and I was very much impressed with all I saw. When the inspection was over the Colonel asked me if I would like to see a squad at physical drill. On my answering in the affirmative, a squad of 120 men was drawn up in the barrack square and put through the course, which they did with great precision. Their drill is somewhat different to ours, and, I should think, rather more severe as a test of physique and endurance. When this was over a photographic group was taken of ourselves, the General, all the officers of the Regiment, and as many of the men as could be got on to the plate. We then repaired to the messroom for lunch, where the whole of the officers of the four battalions were assembled. It was a most sumptuous banquet and the splendid band of the Regiment played in an adjoining room during the repast. When my health was drunk the band played the English National Anthem, and the cheers were so persistent and continuous, and the band kept on playing so long, that I thought it was never going to stop. The Colonel, who proposed the toast, referred to me as "once our enemy, now our friend." Two incidents in particular with regard to that banquet deserve to be recorded as showing the extremely

friendly feeling now pervading the Russian Army towards us. In the course of conversation my son happened to remark as a curious coincidence that the members of the Old Comrades' Association of the Royal Berkshire Regiment were holding their annual dinner in London that day. This was repeated to the Colonel, and he at once caused to be despatched the following telegram :

Secretary, Berkshires, Holborn Restaurant, London.

"Following from Colonel Bialostockski Regiment.

"Bialostockski Regiment in Sevastopol entertaining at

"luncheon Major Arbuthnot; drink health of Crimean
"comrades, 49th Regt."

I think this shows a true soldierly spirit of camaraderie, as the 49th and the Bialostok Regiment were, in years gone by, opposed to one another before Sevastopol. I have been unable unfortunately to obtain a copy of the reply, but I need hardly tell you that it fully reciprocated this friendly feeling.

The other incident is still more striking. In one of the sorties from Sevastopol during the siege, an officer of the Bialostok Regiment picked up an English Bible in the trenches. It has been treasured ever since as a Regimental Relic, and at the time of my visit was in possession of the grandson of the man who first found it. When he heard that I was to be entertained by the Regiment, he brought the Bible to the Colonel with a request that he would return it to me as a mark of esteem for the English Army. I think that is one of the most touching incidents I can call to mind. I shall now always treasure that Bible, not only as a mark of esteem for the Russian Army, but also as a memento of the splendid hospitality extended to me and my son by the Bialostok Regiment.

After the repast the men of the Regiment were called in and sang Russian songs, and showed us some Russian dances. We then, having spent a most enjoyable day, took our departure amidst much cheering and other manifestations of goodwill; and with this ended the ceremonial part of my visit.

THE BATTLEFIELD OF THE ALMA

The next day, the Admiral having placed his motor at my disposal, we went out to the Alma. The main features of the ground are, of course, unaltered; but the village of Bourliouk has been rebuilt and extended, and many country villas have been built which were non-existent on the day of the battle. This made it difficult for me to locate the exact spot where my battery had been in action; but from the position of the grand redoubt I could form a good general idea of the position occupied by the English artillery. The wooden bridge by

which we crossed the river is still there. We went up to the position of the grand redoubt where the Russians had their battery of 18 guns, and standing on that hill, and looking down to the river one can realise what a magnificent feat of arms it was for that redoubt to have been captured by assault, the attacking column having to charge 400 or 500 yards up hill in face of a murderous fire. The 23rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers, to which regiment the honour of capturing that redoubt is due, lost heavily, 9 officers killed and 6 wounded, and a monument is erected on the spot to the memory of those who fell. The regiment captured a Russian gun and team complete. That gun is now in the barracks of the depot of the regiment at Wrexham, and I have here a photo of the gun.

BALAKLAVA

The following day we drove to Balaklava, stopping on our way in to visit the house which Lord Raglan made his headquarters. There is a brass plate let into the wall of the room in which he died, with the following simple inscription:—

"In this Room died F.M. Lord Raglan, G.C.B., Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in the Crimea, on the 28th June, 1855."

On the door of the room in which he died the names of the three Generals, who successively commanded the British Army in the Crimea are cut, and in the garden there is a stone tablet with the following inscription:—

"To the memory of Field-Marshal Lord Raglan, K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in the Crimea, died 28th June, 1855."

What a pretty spot Balaklava Harbour is; so quiet and peaceful, so different to what it was as I knew it 56 years ago when it was crowded with shipping, and was all confusion and bustle. The wharves put up by the English to facilitate unloading are still kept up, although there can be very little use for them now. The road between the wharves and the houses of the village of Balaklava is very narrow, and the houses, if not the same as were in existence at the time of the war, are built on the same site. We returned from Balaklava to Sevastopol by the track leading up from the plain to the Col; how it recalled to my mind the many weary trudges I made up that track, bringing up forage and provisions to the battery. We had no difficulty in identifying the positions of the several Turkish redoubts captured by the Russians, nor the sites of the cavalry charges of the Heavy and Light Brigades on that memorable day, October 25th, 1854. There is a monument

put up to the memory of those who fell on that day with the following inscriptions :

South face.—"In memory of those who fell in the Battle of Balaklava, 25th October, 1854."

West face.—"Erected by the British Army, A.D. 1854."

North face.—Russian inscription.

East face.—A cross.

THE BATTLEFIELD OF INKERMANN

The day following our visit to Balaklava was, to me, the most interesting of all, for on that day we visited the battlefield of Inkermann. Those of you who have read Kinglake's history of the war will remember that the Russians brought up four distinct columns to the attack, two of these columns being intended to turn the right flank of the English position, and drive the 2nd Division, to which my battery was attached so, I thought, in order to get a good idea of the Russian attack, I would approach the battlefield by the route followed by one of the Russian attacking columns; so we took a boat and sailed up the harbour to the Tchemaya River, and up the river as far as the bridge by which the Russian column crossed the river; from there we followed the route taken by the Russians and walked up the Quarry Ravine.

Where the track up the ravine joins the Post Road to Sevastopol a barrier of loose stones, known as the 2nd Division Picket, had been thrown up. On the 26th of October the Russians made a reconnaissance in force, evidently with the view of ascertaining our strength on our right flank; bringing some guns on to Shell Hill. It was therefore, thought desirable to throw up a breastwork of earth 700 or 800 yards further back from the barrier, and about 200 yards in front of the 2nd Division Camp, as a slight protection to the guns of the 2nd Division, which, in the event of a serious attack, were to come into action behind it, one battery on either side of the Post Road. On debouching from the Quarry Ravine we found no trace of the barrier left; being only made of loose stones, they had probably been utilised for mending the road. But walking back down the Post Road about 700 or 800 yards, there, sure enough, was the very breastwork to which I have referred, just as we left it on evacuating the Crimea, and only slightly washed down by rain. How the whole scene came back to me in a flash; there was the position of the 2nd Division camp; there was the breastwork behind which my battery was in action from half-past six in the morning till half-past two in the afternoon, firing away over 800 rounds of ammunition; there to my left front was Shell Hill where the Russian artillery was posted, from whence they pounded us the whole

day, causing us to lose 49 horses and 22 men killed and wounded—rather a hot day's work for one field battery. But the Russians ought never to have been allowed to occupy Shell Hill, the height of which is 580 feet; there is a hill to the right of the 2nd Division camp, the height of which is 646 feet. After the battle a redoubt was erected on this hill, and it was armed with 18 pounder guns. Had that redoubt been in existence on the day of the battle, its 18 pounders could have prevented the Russian artillery from ever establishing themselves on Shell Hill.

I may say here that it fell to my lot to fire the first shot at the battle of Inkerman, which came about in this way. On the morning of that day I was going on picket with two guns to our outlying picket on Shell Hill, which was strengthened by two guns in the day time. I had not proceeded far when I heard firing in the direction of Shell Hill. I could see nothing as it was a very foggy morning, and the ground was covered with thick brushwood. I hesitated for a moment whether I should go on or not, but as the sound of the firing kept getting nearer and nearer to me, I knew that our picket was being driven in; so I trotted back to the breastwork, and at once opened fire on Shell Hill, the position and the distance of which I knew exactly.

Well, after finding that the breastwork was still in existence, I thought I would try to find the remains, if any, of the Sandbag battery, so I walked off in the direction in which I knew it ought to be, and again I was gratified to find it still in existence. This battery was erected to silence two Russian guns, which had been placed in position on the Inkerman heights on the opposite side of the Tchemaya Valley to prevent our foraging parties from carrying off meadow hay, which was stacked in the valley below the 2nd Division camp. The battery was armed with two 18 pounders, and it fell to my lot to have to work them. I had very little difficulty in silencing the Russian guns, but I noticed that after firing their gun the gunners ran down a path in the rock, and took shelter in a building cut out in the face of the rock. I thought I ought to have them out of that building, so I laid a gun on the door through which they entered it. To my astonishment the very first shot went bang through the door—a marvellous shot for a smooth-bore 18 pounder, at a range of 1,700 yards. Out ran the gunners, followed by a priest. I then found that quite unwittingly I had fired into a church; but it was not I who desecrated the building, but the able-bodied fighting men, who had no business to use a church as an asylum of refuge. But now for the sequel. I naturally went over to see this little church on my recent visit, and there to my astonishment and delight are the very two round shot, which I fired into the building, placed on two

pillars at the entrance to the chancel. They have been blessed as having been fired into a sacred edifice without doing it any harm. I was pleased to see them there, as I like a story of this sort to be confirmed, otherwise one might be accused of telling travellers' tales.

After photographing the Sandbag Battery, we retraced our steps to the breastwork, and walked down a road laid out straight from the breastwork to Shell Hill, in preparation for the Jubilee to which I have referred. On Shell Hill the Russians have erected a monument to the memory of those who fell at Inkerman, and the English monument is close by with the following inscription.

South face.—"In memory of the English, French, and Russians who fell in the battle of Inkerman, 5th Novr., 1854."

North face.—Russian inscription.

East face.—A cross.

West face.—"Erected by the British Army, A.D. 1856."

We also walked over the ground occupied by the 2nd and Light Divisions and the Guards' Brigade, which were all close together, and it was perfectly easy to trace where the lines of tents had been, as the stone paths between them which the men had made are still perfectly visible. After this we returned to Sevastopol, having spent a most thoroughly interesting day.

THE SIEGE WORKS

Having completed my inspection of the battlefields, I next turned my attention to the siege works and approaches, commencing with the French attack on the Mamelon and Malakoff. The parallels and zig-zags for the attack on the Mamelon, as well as the sites of the breaching Batteries, and also the approaches from the Mamelon to the Malakoff, are all quite distinct, and it is easy to follow the line of the French attack. It is surprising to see how very near the French had crept up to the Malakoff before the final assault; the distance they had to cover in the open certainly not exceeding 40 yards at the very outside. A monument to the memory of the Russians and French who fell on September 7th, 1855, is erected just outside the Tower, and from there you can get a very good view of the town and harbour of Sevastopol.

Leaving the Malakoff, we went back to the English Right attack, and worked our way right along to the Left attack. We were able to locate the position of Gordon's 21-gun Battery, as well as Chapman's Battery. The parallels and approaches are also quite distinct, and the parallel connecting the English Right and Left attacks is as plain as if it had only been made a year or two ago. We walked right along it, going down one

side of the ravine and up the other side to Chapman's Battery. But it was more difficult to find the sites of the more advanced Batteries, as a great deal of quarrying has been, and is still, going on, so that in many cases the sites of the breaching Batteries are entirely obliterated. The nearest parallel to the Redan, from which the final rush for the assault was made, is quite 200 yards from that work and uphill all the way; and now, after a lapse of over 50 years, looking at the work from the English side, and having also seen it from the Russian side, one can easily realise why it was the English were unable to hold it after having gained a footing in it. The English have erected a monument in the Redan to the memory of those who fell in the assault.

It was difficult to locate the exact position of the siege train park or of the windmill which was used as a magazine, and which blew up on November 15th, 1855. The ground about there is not so rocky as on other parts of the upland, so it is more cultivated. But the sites of the camps of the 3rd and 4th Divisions are even more distinguishable than those of the 2nd and Light Divisions and Guards' Brigade, the reason probably being that the 2nd and Light Divisions and the Guards bore the brunt of the fighting at the Alma and Inkerman, and suffered far more severely than the 3rd and 4th Divisions, and therefore had not so many men available for making roads, etc., in the camps.

THE CEMETERIES

A few words now with regard to the cemeteries in the Crimea and at Scutari. When the Board of Works heard that I was about to visit the Crimea, I was requested to inspect the cemeteries and to report as to their condition, and to make such recommendations with regard to them as might occur to me. It was a source of great satisfaction to me to be able to make a most favourable report as to their condition. The cemetery on Cathcart's Hill is very pretty, and is beautifully kept under very difficult circumstances on account of the want of water, without a good supply of which the plants cannot be kept alive. Every drop of water now has to be brought up in a water barrow from a stream of water running through a ravine below the cemetery, thus entailing a great expenditure of time, labour and money; whereas for an expenditure of about £300 water could be laid on by means of a force pump. This would be a saving in the end, as the services of a man could be dispensed with. I have urged this strongly on the Board of Works, but whether my recommendation will be attended to or not I do not know. Most of the monuments in the cemetery are in good preservation, but others are decaying and require renovation.

The cemetery at Scutari is very prettily situated, overlooking the Bosphorus, and it also is very beautifully kept. A handsome monument has been erected in the centre of the cemetery, and the following inscription has been engraved on the four sides of the base in the languages of the four Allied Powers engaged in the war—England, France, Turkey and Sardinia :—

TO THE MEMORY
OF THE
OFFICERS AND MEN
AND OF THE SAILORS
OF THE ENGLISH ARMY AND FLEET
WHO DIED FOR THEIR COUNTRY
IN THE WAR AGAINST RUSSIA
1854—1855—1856
THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED
BY
QUEEN VICTORIA
AND HER PEOPLE
1857

The English inscription, being on the side most exposed to the weather, is almost illegible, and I could only gather what the inscription was by reading it in French. I have urged the necessity of renovating this inscription on the Board of Works, but with what result I know not.

With regard to the town of Sevastopol itself I have not much to say. It is a well-built town, with good streets and good shops, well kept, very clean and orderly, with a good public garden, and embellished with statues of the leading Generals and Admirals engaged in the war. I was shown the spot where the Bridge of Boats, by which the garrison retreated on the night of September 7th, 1855, was thrown across the harbour to the North side. The Karabelnaia suburb, which suffered most during the bombardment, has been entirely rebuilt, and now shows no signs of the way in which it was knocked about in 1854-1855. New docks also have been built on the site of the old docks, which were blown up early in 1855.

And I have now only to say in conclusion that the visit I paid to the Crimea last April was the most interesting trip I ever made in my life; and I can never forget as long as I live

the great kindness shown to me and my son on all sides, and the extreme cordiality and hospitality extended to us.

DISCUSSION.

MAJOR-GENERAL A. K. RIDEOUT, C.B., late R.A. :—General Owen and I went out to the Crimea in '54, but General Arbuthnot embarked for the Crimea a month before I did, at Woolwich. I remember perfectly seeing him off at the dockyard. I have been most interested in hearing the state of the old country that we fought over, and of the glorious and hospitable reception he met with from those gallant friends of ours of the Russian Army. Personally I received great kindness from the Russians after the peace. I was most hospitably entertained by them both at Simpheropol and Baktchiserai by a great friend of mine in the Russian cavalry, Captain Dombrowski; and also by Captain Vallaeff. I want to ask my old friend, General Arbuthnot, if he saw anything of an old building that I lived in for some weeks and months, the old monastery of St. George, where we had a convalescent hospital after a time, and where we had as prisoners of war the family of Captain Stomati. He was the Commandant at Balaklava and when we marched round, he wanted to show fight, but it was impossible against the allied forces, so he surrendered. The family of "Stomati" were taken care of by the British, and were accommodated in a house in the monastery of St. George, half way between Cape Kheronese and Balaklava.

MAJOR-GENERAL C. H. OWEN, late R.A. :—We have all listened with the greatest interest to the description the lecturer has given of the Crimea, especially those of us who were there at the time. There is one thing that must have struck us all in the lecturer's dealings with the Russians, and that is not only the immense hospitality and respect which has been shown to General Arbuthnot, but the tremendous pride that the Russians took in their magnificent defence. I should like to ask: Where is the pride of the British public, or even of the British soldier, in the grand deeds that we did in the Crimea? Nothing was supposed to be worth looking at a few years ago, except the great Franco-German War of 1870; but I think those present will agree with me that there is far less to be learned from the war of 1870, as far as we British soldiers are concerned, than there is from the war in the Crimea. We are not going abroad with seven or eight army corps to fight in the Plains of Europe, but there is every probability that we may take part in a combined naval and military expedition not so very far off, perhaps in Belgium, say, and therefore it is a great pity, I think—of course I may be wrong—that the Crimea War as a campaign, and all the difficulties that we overcame there, and the deeds that we did, do not receive more attention.

NEGLECT OF THE ARMY BEFORE THE CRIMEAN WAR

Long before the Crimean War, the army had been reduced to a mere skeleton. In 1851 we had the great Exhibition, and after that we were all to live in peace in a sort of commercial heaven. There was to be no more war at all. What was the consequence? When the army was sent out to the Crimea, I venture to say that no finer body of 25,000

men had ever left this country as soldiers. They were splendid men, well disciplined, fine-hearted, and strong; and they were well armed, considerably better armed than any of the other nations employed. When our force arrived out there, it was not an army, for there was no commissariat, no transport, no hospital corps, and, what was more important still, no reserves. All those had to be made during the war at enormous expense. Mr. Gladstone supposed that he was going to pay for the cost of the war out of the revenue of the year, but as a matter of fact it cost eighty millions.

THE SIEGE OPERATIONS

I do not want to take up too much of your time to-day, so I shall not touch on the battles that were fought. What I want to impress upon you is this, that the general idea of the public in England is, that the Crimean War consisted of four battles, in three of which the Allies defeated the Russians; but that all the rest of the campaign was tedious ill-managed siege work. Lord Wolseley in his "Story of a Soldier's Life" says, "Never was any great siege more stupidly planned; we floundered along upon archaic principles." I think that is very hard upon our army in the Crimea. I was very much surprised to see in a report of what was said by General Sir Robert Biddulph, when another paper on this subject was read at Woolwich, that he made the statement: "It is perfectly true the guns were exactly the same as had been used in the Peninsula." Why, in the Peninsula they used 18 pounders and 24 pounders as siege guns.

MAJOR-GENERAL ARBUTHNOT:—The guns I had in my battery at the Crimea were actually used at Waterloo.

MAJOR-GENERAL OWEN:—The 6 pr. of the Horse Artillery was a toy gun. I am confining my remarks now to what is after all the main feature of the campaign, namely, the siege operations. Well, as far as the siege guns were concerned, instead of 18 pounders and 24 pounders we had 24 pounders and 32 pounders, and some quite new 8-inch shell guns; and we got from the navy some 10-inch guns and 68 pounder guns. We had 10-inch mortars, and we got some 13-inch mortars from Malta.* The French siege guns were 24 pounders and 16 pounders—very small—but they got some heavy guns from their fleet, and they had some 8½-inch howitzers, and 8½ and 10½-inch mortars. Their field gun was a 12 pounder shell gun. The Russian guns and mortars were very heavy pieces, because they had the fleet and arsenal behind them; and the Russian field guns and howitzers considerably exceeded ours in weight of metal. At Inkerman those pieces overpowered our troops and batteries, until the arrival of our position guns, which the lecturer has mentioned.

Then I may call your attention to the fact that Lord Wolseley has said in his "Life," speaking of the officers of the Royal Engineers, "Few knew much of the world, and by their training at Woolwich and Chatham they were small minded. All would have gone better had they never read Jones's 'Sieges in Spain', revered as the sappers 'Book of the Law.'" In the first bombardment the batteries constructed were no disgrace to our engineers. The French batteries, which were much

* The British had also some six 8-pr. guns rifled on the Lancaster system. C.H.O.

lighter, were put on flat ground, and they were all placed together. Therefore the fire instead of being converging, as it ought to be, was diverging, and the Russians converged their fire on them. Not only that, Todleben put out a battery near the Quarantine Ravine, which enfiladed the French batteries. The English batteries were very skilfully placed on two separate hills. Colonel Todleben, one of the greatest engineers of the century, said that the French batteries were inferior to the English batteries in their weight of metal, disposition, and sites chosen; that their fire diverged on the Russians, while that of the latter concentrated on them. It was otherwise, said Todleben, with regard to the English batteries: "The advantages offered by the ground were seized, so that while firing directly on one face of a work they could at the same time enfilade and take in reverse an adjacent face." When we come to the first bombardment, what happened? It was commenced about half past six in the morning, and by half past ten the French were completely shut up. Todleben's counter battery blew up the magazine; and they did not open fire for three days afterwards. Then the whole of the fire was diverted to our batteries. Our batteries on that day did some most wonderful work. They reduced the Redan and the Malakoff to ruins. Out of 22 guns on the Redan only two remained, and Todleben gave a most touching account of the condition of these works. There is little doubt that the Redan might have been attacked that night before any repairs had been made, but that was impracticable for various reasons. The French, having failed, would not join with us, and we had not enough troops of our own.

MAJOR-GENERAL RIDEOUT :—The French magazines blew up at 8 o'clock in the morning.

MAJOR-GENERAL OWEN :—I said their fire was shut up at half past 10—that they did not fire a shot after half past ten, and I think I am right.

I should like you to realise what the Siege Train had to do while we were in the Crimea. We only had two reliefs of eight hours during the day, and, as it took an hour to go to, and an hour to come back from, the battery, we only had six hours in which to eat, drink and sleep, and if anybody has tried that sort of life for ten days they will know what hard work is, especially on the food that we had. We simply had salt beef and biscuit, and rum and water. Throughout that winter we suffered tremendous privations. We had to do a lot of heavy work, such as mounting guns, and conveying ammunition, etc. The snow was on the ground for two months. You have all read over and over again of the hardships we had to bear because all the winter clothing went down in the *Prince*.

THE GENIUS OF TODLEBEN

What I should like to point out, although the lecturer says it has nothing to do with his paper, is that we had there a great opponent, who was the greatest genius as an engineer of the last century, namely, Colonel Todleben. In the spring, Todleben developed quite a new system of siege tactics. He made pits, extended them to trenches, and then made works. He made an advance on the besiegers of 400 yards. First of all he constructed the two White Works, which appeared quite unexpectedly on the 23rd February. Then on the 10th of March he seized the Mamelon while the French were thinking about it, and made a formidable work, and he also converted the quarries under the Redan into a

work. Those all had to be retaken afterwards, and it entailed several months of hard work to drive him back into the main works again.

THE EFFECT OF THE BRITISH ARTILLERY FIRE

I will only refer to another subject, and that is, the tremendous effect of our fire upon the Russians. It is the fashion in these days to say that the chief effect of artillery is its moral effect. As a matter of fact, after the fourth bombardment, a Russian officer said to a British officer during a truce, "Our losses are from 1,000 to 1,500 a day. You should see our batteries; the dead lie in heaps and heaps. Troops cannot live under such a fire of hell as you poured upon us." After the fifth bombardment, a Russian officer remarked that the state of the Russians was terrible; the parapets were in huge fragments; the interiors in holes from shells so that no gabions or sand bags could be erected, and guns could not be replaced under such deadly fire. The defenders were in caves under the parapets, and the gunners who were lying dead, and could not be removed under fire. The daily losses were from 800 to 900. It was this deadly fire which enabled the French to take the Malakoff. We found out that, owing to there being such a tremendous fire, the Russians only relieved their troops in the middle of the day, and they did not bring in the relief until those that were in the Malakoff had gone out.

THE ASSAULT ON THE MALAKOFF

The French had only 25 yards to go to reach this work. They poured men into the works; they sent thousands to fill them up, and the work being enclosed, they could not be dislodged; and our battery in the quarries did immense service by preventing the Russians coming to the relief and attempting the re-taking of the Malakoff.

THE CHAIRMAN:—Had we not on our side, so far as the construction of the trenches is concerned, to which you drew attention just now, two of the finest officers of the Royal Engineers who had previously gained their experience in the Peninsula, that is Sir John Burgoyne and Sir Harry Jones?

MAJOR-GENERAL OWEN:—Yes, that is so. We had Sir John Burgoyne, and afterwards Sir Harry Jones relieved him, but the latter was hardly on a level with Todleben. We had also many good engineer officers of lower rank.

THE CHAIRMAN:—I only said that because your previous remarks rather intimated that we suffered from not having engineer officers of sufficient experience there.

MAJOR-GENERAL OWEN:—Oh no: Lord Wolseley said that. We had also some General officers of reputation and experience in warfare, such as Sir de Lacy Evans, Sir G. Cathcart, &c., and among Brigadiers, Sir Colin Campbell. The French had two Generals whom I have very great pleasure in mentioning, because they were active, resolute and capable soldiers, namely, Pélassier and Bosquet. Pélassier quite changed the face of things. General Canrobert had been so much hampered by orders from the Emperor of the French, conveyed through General Niel, who had been sent out as adviser, that he resigned the command of the French army; and Pélassier was appointed to succeed him. The latter paid no

attention to the advice of General Niel, but determined on a regular and systematic plan of advance on the Malakoff from the right (the main French attack had before been on the left), which, with the co-operation of our right attack, succeeded in capturing the Russian outworks, and eventually in taking the Malakoff by assault, causing the fall of the place.

Before sitting down I should like to make a few remarks about the difficulties of the siege. You must remember that during this siege we were thousands of miles from our base, and then we experienced considerable difficulty owing to the divided French and English command. Then there was another very important thing which had its bearing on the campaign, and that was the interference of the French Emperor. Another great difficulty was the hard ground we had to work over; and then we had such few troops, and no transport, except the teams of the horse and field artillery, until the rail road was made. The greatest difficulty of all was, that Sevastopol was not invested. The enemy had an arsenal and dockyard at their disposal, and they could replace every gun we dismounted, and supply themselves with ammunition and stores of all kinds. The Russians had every reason to be proud of such a prolonged and terribly disastrous defence, and the Allies had as much cause for pride, in capturing the place after such a stout resistance.

CAPTAIN E. C. RASON, R.N. :—I should like to say that I spent five months in Russia learning the language, and during that time I saw the whole of the Crimea; I should like to be allowed to refer in the few remarks I have to make to the reception which the lecturer received from the Russians during his visit to the Crimea.

RUSSIAN FRIENDSHIP FOR ENGLAND.

There seems to be some idea prevalent that he received it for his own sake, and that the *entente cordiale* or friendship for the Russians has only been recently begun. I can assure you, however, that I have known Russia for 25 years, and have travelled all over it. I have lived in a Russian family; I have gone into Russian society. I was always treated absolutely as a friend and a comrade. I was at Sevastopol just at the time when there was so much trouble about Fashoda, and war appeared likely between England, and France assisted by Russia. I was very doubtful whether I ought to go to Moscow, and I told my friends so. I went back to my hotel, and found that a very distinguished Russian officer had called upon me. I waited for him, and when he came he said "I have come to see you, because I have heard that you are afraid to go to Moscow because there is some difficulty between England and Russia. I assure you there is no difficulty, and that you can go to Moscow or anywhere else you like." When he shook hands with me he put his hand on my shoulder and "I can tell you one thing: we, the Russians, will never go to war with England."

This friendship of Russia which General Arbutnot has told us about, and of which he received such a striking example in the Crimea, is not a new friendship at all. It is a friendship that has existed for hundreds of years before the Crimean war. I have been from the north to the south and from the east to the west of Russia, and wherever I have gone I have always been treated—although they knew I was an Englishman—as a Russian would treat a brother. I remember saying once to a Russian lady "You are always most hospitable and friendly to English people," and she said "Yes, you carry your passport with you. We are always

very glad to meet an English gentleman, and we are more especially glad to meet him when he shows his sympathy with Russia by knowing our language." I have done all I could for the last 25 years to get a better feeling created in England towards Russia, and I therefore feel I owe my personal gratitude to the lecturer for having brought to the notice of the English people, through the medium of this lecture, the sentiment which exists in Russia in favour of England.

THE CHAIRMAN, LORD W. F. G. SEYMOUR :—After what we have heard I do not think there will be any difficulty in my asking you to pass a cordial vote of thanks to General Arbuthnot for the lecture he has given us to-day, and also to the gentlemen who followed him, and who have explained certain points that I will not say were left out by him, because he left out nothing, but for slightly amplifying the lecture. We have had very great pleasure in listening to those artillery officers who took such a mighty share in the siege of Sevastopol. I heartily agree with General Owen in thinking that the Crimean campaign was not confined to those three battles that have been mentioned. All those who served in the trenches—unfortunately I was not one of them—know well enough that—whether they were artillerymen working batteries or whether they were infantrymen in the trenches—the work there was as severe, as dangerous, and as glorious as in the three battles that had previously been fought.

I was so very glad to hear, both from the lecturer and from Captain Rason, of the good feeling that has since been brought about between the two nations. I was in Russia twelve years ago, and nothing could exceed the kindness with which we were all treated. I will not say anything about myself personally, but anyone going, as we did, to see their army could not but be struck with the interest they took in individual regiments of our service, and also in our particular ships. I found that the present Emperor took a most vivid interest in a reconnaissance that was made by Her Majesty's ship *Driver*, which came right up almost to the gates of Kronstadt. The Emperor said "How could that be done now?" for which I do not think I had a ready answer, considering that the batteries that have been built since that time are ten times as strong as they were in the days of the *Driver* under Captain Cochrane. One of the Grand Dukes said to me "What regiment were you in?" On my naming it he said that was the regiment that lost so many officers at Inkerman, where he, the Grand Duke Nicholas, had obtained his baptism of fire. Then they asked some questions of two fine old veterans who had served in the brigades there, who have been given excellent appointments in the Royal palaces. There is no Chelsea Hospital at St. Petersburg, but in the Royal palaces, both at St. Petersburg and Moscow, the Emperor told me there are certain places which are always filled, if possible, by men who served during the defence of Sevastopol, showing that they look after their old soldiers, just in the same way that these men here from Chelsea Hospital this afternoon have always been looked after by the Sovereigns ever since those days in England. It now gives me the greatest possible pleasure to ask you to record a vote of thanks to General Arbuthnot for the very valuable and interesting lecture he has given this afternoon, which has raised such an interesting discussion. I am afraid, as General Owen hinted, that some of us may be too old to go out to the Crimea again, but I always regret not having re-visited it. I had a chance to go with my eldest brother when he went out there; he

told me that he has experienced the same warm hospitable reception from the Russians that General Arbuthnot received on the present occasion.

MAJOR-GENERAL H. T. ARBUTHNOT, in reply, said: I beg to thank you very heartily for the cordial vote of thanks you have just passed. I purposely left out of my lecture all reference to the war itself, because I knew it would make the lecture a great deal too long. I am sorry I did not have time to visit the monastery of St. George, nor the French lines down as far as Kamiesch, nor could I go into the interior to Simpheropol and Baktcheray. I hope to visit them on a future occasion, because I have been invited to go to the Diamond Jubilee in 1914, when I hope Lord William will come with me. He says he is too old; but he really is not, and I hope he will come.

FLAG STAFF BATTERY, SEVASTOPOL.
Restored 1904.

INTERIOR FLAG STAFF BATTERY, SEVASTOPOL.
Restored 1904.