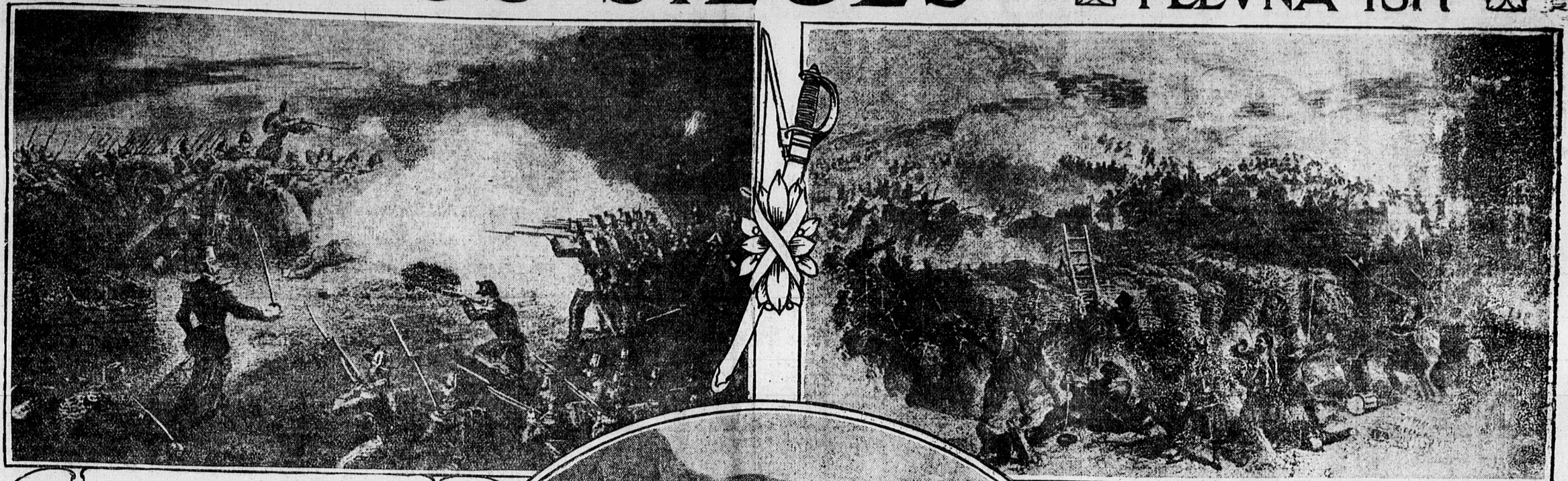


DEFENCE OF MODERN CITIES FAMOUS SIEGES

SEVASTOPOL-1856
PLEVNA-1877



A Night Attack on the Russians by French at Sevastopol.
From a Contemporary Sketch.

Storming of the Malakoff Tower, Sevastopol.
From a Contemporary Sketch.

By Henry M. Sneyly.



SEVASTOPOL and Plevna are names synonymous with dogged, enduring resistance in the face of famine, chivalrous courage, relentless aggression in the face of staggering losses, and marvellous engineering skill. In the one case Russians heroically defended a city, in the other they formed a circle of impenetrable steel about a foe who, in the end, capitulated to starvation as much as to overpowering odds.

With the exception of Port Arthur, probably the siege of greatest magnitude in modern times was that of Sevastopol.

It required eleven months for the French, English and Sardinians to reduce the Russian garrison, who put up a superb defence under the direction of Todleben, perhaps the greatest military engineer of his age. There was not a device known to warfare that Todleben did not bring to the defence of Sevastopol. The allied armies had 800 cannon, which was considered a great number at the time of the Crimean War, and some diligent statisticians of the times reckoned that in all 1,400,000 shells and solid shot were fired.

In 1856 the effective range of an ordinary siege piece was not much greater than the distance travelled by a projectile in the first two seconds after leaving the mouth of a modern breech-loader, and the initial velocity of shells was so low that the eye could follow their trajectory almost from the mouth of the piece, and men were able to dodge to a place of safety after seeing where the missile would fall.

Every avenue of entry or egress from Sevastopol was closed by the allied armies and fleet and the siege soon became a question of whether the Russians could hold out against famine, disease and losses from gunfire until relief should come.

So deadly was the fire from the besieging cannon that the defenders dug pits for safety, and Tolstoy, who was within the Russian lines, has graphically described them.

According to him they were mere excavations in the earth, the entrances to which were steep tunnels, narrow at the openings and broadening as they descended. Above some of the larger pits masts from dismantled Russian vessels were laid as beams, a sort of flooring was made, and the whole covered with earth to such thickness that neither shells nor solid shot penetrated it. Men lived in these pits for weeks, and the descriptions of conditions were sheltered, where important officers were, even were not suitable to reprint. Disease lurked in every corner and crevice. In places the walls were damp where men had been shot to pieces, and there was not always time to remove either the dead or the wounded.

While the bombardment was carried on continually, the French, under the direction of General Niel, whose engineering ability was second only to Todleben's, had sapped so close to the Russian works that a man might reach from the end of their tunnels and lay his hand upon the battis of the Malakoff works. Malakoff, it was agreed by the generals of the allies, was the key to the works.

The French saps, which were far superior to those of the British in this case, were made by men who were kept digging day and night. About half of those who went into the pits never returned, and it is estimated that in every twenty-four hours 150 sappers were killed or disabled by wounds.

At a conference of the commanders of the three armies it was decided that on September 25 a bombardment should be opened with 500 guns and that it should be sustained day and night for three days, when a grand assault should be made. At dawn of the appointed day the French batteries roared, and an unparalleled storm of shot and shell swept the Russian works. Smoke like a heavy blanket hung over the attacking batteries and earth spouted like spray from the face of the Russian defences as the shells exploded against them.

At first the Sevastopol batteries replied feebly, but as though the besieged were stunned with the deafening roar and the maelstrom of iron that surged about them, they soon ceased to work their guns and the allies hammered away at silent forts and earthworks.

The English did not join the bombardment until noon of the first day, showing once more that they were not prepared to the extent to which the French were. Military experts say that the fire directed against the defences of Sevastopol after the English batteries swelled the chorus was greater than any cannonading which the world had then known.

In their re-embark 29,000 Frenchmen waited breathlessly for the order to charge. The French are noted for their brilliant charging, and at Sevastopol they outdid themselves. At the appointed moment no exact had the French preparations been that the watches of the officers were set according to a single piece—three mines were exploded against the side of the Malakoff.

A roar, the muzzling of the fighting passions of 29,000 men, rose even above the cannonading. Through rifts in the smoke curtain the sun glinted on keen steel, with bayonets fixed, the charging column, an army in itself, thundered across the open ground toward the Malakoff.

The Russian guns cut loose. Rank after rank of the forward, crashing French went down, but the ranks beyond swept over them as a wave plays over the backwash of its predecessor from a breaker.

In the trenches there was fighting which has not been excelled. Immovable as rocks the Russians stood, and, irresistible, the French crashed upon them. Then the Russians wavered. It was steel against steel, and in the end men fought with bare hands and with teeth, but the French were not to be denied, and at last the Malakoff was theirs.

The English, attacking the Little Redan, had been slow in getting their charge under way. Again it was the fault not of the men, but of their officers. The Ninety-seventh infantry had shortly before wavered under fire and as a punishment it was selected to lead the charge against the Russians. Not only was this a great tactical mistake but an injustice, for the Ninety-seventh was a raw organization and had scarcely ever been under fire, while almost every regiment in the British forces was clamoring for the honor of leading the assault.



Plevna Pass. The Defence of Plevna by Osman Pasha, the Turkish General, in 1877, is One of the Most Famous Incidents in Balkan Annals.

At Sevastopol Russian military genius at its best was pitted against French ability of a brand as excellent and in the end was created by force of numbers and by the fighting qualities and valor of sometimes mismanaged troops.

At Plevna things were somewhat reversed. The Russians were the besiegers and superior in numbers. For the most part they suffered from mismanagement, while the Turks, under Osman Pasha, exhibited staying qualities that aroused the admiration of the world and were directed by a commander whose military ability is ranked with that of the world's greatest captains. The Russians at Plevna showed aggressiveness and initiative quite equal to the stubbornness in defeat with which they are generally credited.

In 1877 the Russians, driving the garrison was forced to evacuate the city.

At Sevastopol Russian military genius at its best was pitted against French ability of a brand as excellent and in the end was created by force of numbers and by the fighting qualities and valor of sometimes mismanaged troops.

At Plevna things were somewhat reversed. The Russians were the besiegers and superior in numbers. For the most part they suffered from mismanagement, while the Turks, under Osman Pasha, exhibited staying qualities that aroused the admiration of the world and were directed by a commander whose military ability is ranked with that of the world's greatest captains.

The Americans not only worked regularly and faithfully, but they were ready for any emergency. For instance, at five o'clock one evening word came to the Savoy Hotel that the Tennessee was bringing Americans from Havre and that they would arrive at Southampton that evening.

For those who had German steamship tickets and checks, which seemed as useless as the paper they were printed on, there was the information that they could get at least a part of the money they had paid out and that the remainder required would be obtained for them through some of the activities of the versatile committee. After the Tennessee had distributed American money on the Continent some Americans arrived with no other money and the American committee immediately exchanged it for English money, so that the holders could supply their immediate needs.

Two women had been robbed of money, checks and steamship tickets. They hadn't a penny to pay bus fare. Moreover, it was important that they start for home that week. They were in a panic, but one of the members of the committee took them home for the night and in two days they were fixed up with money and tickets and departed full of courage and gratitude.

Not every one was so easy to deal with. Some were almost hysterical and were unappeased by all efforts made in their behalf, but even this attitude failed to disturb the equanimity of the workers. The Americans were not the only ones who met trains and disposed money and

works. Shabofsky gathered the remnants of his command and in the face of an almost unbearable fire again took the hill, but the Turkish artillery pounded him and the infantry pressed him so closely that had it not been for Skobeleff and his Cossacks the brigades would have been lost.

The Russians suffered terribly in this assault, but the losses of the Turks, who were already in frightful condition from hunger, were even more severe. The black bread and encumbers on which Osman's army subsisted were practically gone and so inadequate were facilities for caring for the wounded that the mosques could not attend, and in the streets the starving dogs gnawed those too weak to escape them.

On August 31 Osman Pasha made his one attempt to assume an offensive, but he was driven back. September 11 was the fete day of the Tsar, who was in the field. A grand assault was arranged, as though it were the occasion for manoeuvres and all done for show. At daybreak the cannon began a thunderous bombardment, which endured until eleven o'clock. After a lull the cannonading began again and continued until one o'clock, when it was interrupted until half-past two, and then resumed until three o'clock. As though set in motion by clockwork, as the last gun boomed three columns of Roumanians charged the Grivitzas. Turkish cannon moved down rank after rank. The defenders leaped over the battered walls and charged against the attacking columns, and all the while a merciless rifle fire decimated the Roumanian regiments, but they carried the works.

Four thousand men were killed or disabled in this superb charge, and then it was found the Turks had constructed a heavy line of fortifications in the rear of the redoubt.

At redoubt No. 10 charge and counter charge followed each other in deadly rapidity, but the Russians in the end were unable to take it. Skobeleff, under cover of a fog, took Redoubts Nos. 11 and 12, but his superiors sent him no assistance, although he had worked himself in as an entering wedge, and properly supported and reinforced could have split the Turkish defences. A few Russian cannon supported him in a ding-dong manner, but while the big Turkish guns threw shells into his position, the infantry advanced steadily, pouring in a fire that all but annihilated his command.

Skobeleff and his men built ramparts of their dead, and he himself used a musket, but the charging Turks would not be denied, and the remnants of his command were obliged to retreat across open ground, where scores more were left dead or wounded.

Osman Pasha, however, was ahead of him, and where he had found nothing but a block house he had thrown up a system of defensive works by the time the Russian advance reached the town. Nevertheless, Krudener's intelligence staff was not aware that Osman Pasha had occupied Plevna, and 6,500 infantry with seven batteries were sent ahead. Straight into the town the advance guard rode, and the soldiers were already cheering over what they thought a bloodless victory when the Turks, from concealed positions, opened a deadly fire. The streets were crammed with confused fighting masses, and the Russians were slowly expelled from the city and driven back on their main body.

This showed the Russians they dealt with no passive foe, and reinforcements were sent to Krudener, but during the delay Osman built the famous Grivitzas Redoubt. The excellence of the Turkish defensive works at Plevna is testified to by the statement of a military expert that their most valuable weapon was the shovel.

Reinforced, the Russians, under orders issued by Grand Duke Nicholas, hurled eighteen battalions of infantry and ten batteries at the Grivitzas Redoubt, but with great slaughter they were repelled. Prince Shabofsky, whose impetuosity continually caused him to blunder, advanced with three brigades and took an important position on a hill, but the general orders for the assault had not included this move and before reinforcements could be sent him the Turks made a counter charge and with lead and steel drove the Russians out of the captured

In the assault the Russians had utilized 80,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry and 440 guns. Their loss—dead, wounded and missing—was 18,000 men.

The Russian staff decided that the only method was to starve out the Turks, and the Tsar sent Todleben, who had served so well at Sevastopol, to direct the operations. Every channel, no matter how trivial, through which the Turks might obtain supplies or food was closed. Men died in the streets of Plevna from sheer hunger. Osman Pasha himself was so weak that when he walked abroad he had to be supported by his aids.

On October 10 the Russians again assaulted the Grivitzas, but were repulsed and settled down again to starve the garrison. By December 11 Osman Pasha faced the alternative of seeing his army annihilated by hunger or making a desperate attempt to break through the Russian lines, and he chose the latter course. Under cover of an artillery action the Turks retired by night across the Vid, but they were confronted by a division of Siberians on the Sophia road, and after some of the fiercest fighting of the siege were hurled back on the main body. The Russians, awake at last to what the Turks were doing, succeeded in surrounding Osman and the gallant Turk was obliged to surrender.

The operations around Plevna had extended over 142 days, during which the Russians lost 40,000 and the Turks 30,000.

Nightly Vigils of American Relief Workers in England's Capital

By Cora Rigby.

OUTSIDE the London railway station crowds hung expectant. The police kept them back to let taxicabs roll in and out. A body of young fellows in new khaki uniforms swung through whistling "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary." The crowd cheered, then lapsed into silent waiting.

"Show your colors," admonished men selling the little flags of the Allies, and "For God's sake buy a flower so I can get food for the children," beseezed a flower woman, offering fresh roses for a penny and lucky white heather for tuppence halfpenny.

Men, women and children with strange looking faces and bedding came out of the station and filled several taxicabs. They were fleeing from the destruction of their homes in Belgium and the English murmured their sympathy.

This was the scene that passengers saw from the tops of buses on the Strand as they sped outside Charing Cross daily. The conditions were similar at the Victoria Station. The men and women, the boys and girls were at these places because they thought that wounded soldiers were coming. For a sight of men touched by the cruel finger of war, they were willing to stand through many weary hours. They paid no heed to the aspersions of the police that no wounded were to arrive there that day, and only when a man who had been at the Waterloo Station called out, "They are all coming in at Waterloo; I saw them!" did they reluctantly disperse.

of the words "American Relief Committee" which appeared on their conspicuous badges inspired persons who had been battling with the perils of travel and the difficulties of obtaining sustenance in lands suddenly precipitated into war—with banks closed, agencies out of business, traffic demoralized and all the accustomed facilities of travel suddenly cut off.

While meeting trains was only one of the many activities of the American Relief Committee, which was organized as soon as the war was declared, it was a very important one. The railway schedules were so demoralized that not even the station masters were willing to predict when trains would arrive or how many passengers they would carry. All that was certain was that there would be unhappy, frightened, homeless Americans arriving and that it was never out of time or strength they must be met and helped by their fellow countrymen who were familiar with London and who had ample resources to draw upon for their assistance.

One night, after the war had been in progress several weeks and the number of Americans arriving in London was supposed to have diminished, the little band was waiting from seven in the evening until midnight, when the first section of the boat train pulled in, bringing only the vanguard of hundreds set to sea. It was Saturday night, the end of a particularly hard and trying week, but there was to be no rest for the committee that night. Section after section rolled in, filled with tired human beings claiming the sympathy and assistance of their compatriots. Some were so exhausted and dispirited by their experiences that they immediately sank down on the platform and would have remained there if there had been no one to care for them. Many were of foreign birth and had been in Germany, Austria and Hungary visiting their relatives. They had had return tickets on the German steamship lines

and money had been sent to them which had never been received.

One woman, with a child in her arms and another clinging to her skirts, had been eight days on the way and most of that time had had to stand. The baby was pale and thin. "He was fat when I started," she said. "My brother was coming with me, but they took him for the army. My husband sent me money, but I did not get it. I have not heard from America for more than a month." It was the tale of hundreds. Of the twelve hundred who arrived that night four-fifths were practically helpless. The committee might have been pardoned if it had been so, too, in the face of such an unexpected arrival, but it merely became more energetic and capable. Until after three o'clock the members were busy seeking additional accommodations in hotels and boarding houses and in distributing the money they had.

"Stiff job, don't you want help?" asked an Englishman who had been watching the crowded buses and taxicabs rolling away. "I have my motor car here, and I can carry a few for you." His example was followed by four other Englishmen who ran their automobiles in the American service until the last unfortunate had been housed and food guaranteed by the American committee.

Every boarding and lodging house to which the American committee sent people was carefully investigated beforehand. Young girls were especially well safeguarded in this respect. As to payment, those who had money paid and those who had none were paid for. Serving on the committee meeting the trains were several women possessed of unusual tact and sympathy, as well as worldly wisdom and a knowledge of London. Their presence not only inspired courage but prevented many a tragedy that otherwise would have been added to others for which the war was responsible.

There was no emergency for which the

men and women who kept the nightly vigils were unprepared. The ill were tended and the sorrowing comforted. A wife who had been separated from her husband was assured that he would be found and courage came back for the first time since this terrible thing had befallen her. A party had lost trunks and hand luggage. They had nothing but the clothes they wore. They were assured that the committee had clothes of all kinds and sizes for distribution and that it had facilities for looking up and recovering baggage on the Continent.

For those who had German steamship tickets and checks, which seemed as useless as the paper they were printed on, there was the information that they could get at least a part of the money they had paid out and that the remainder required would be obtained for them through some of the activities of the versatile committee. After the Tennessee had distributed American money on the Continent some Americans arrived with no other money and the American committee immediately exchanged it for English money, so that the holders could supply their immediate needs.

Two women had been robbed of money, checks and steamship tickets. They hadn't a penny to pay bus fare. Moreover, it was important that they start for home that week. They were in a panic, but one of the members of the committee took them home for the night and in two days they were fixed up with money and tickets and departed full of courage and gratitude.

Not every one was so easy to deal with. Some were almost hysterical and were unappeased by all efforts made in their behalf, but even this attitude failed to disturb the equanimity of the workers. The Americans were not the only ones who met trains and disposed money and