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 978-1-108-05194-1 - The War: From the Death of Lord Raglan
 to the Evacuation of the Crimea
 William Howard Russell
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THE WAR.

CHAPTER I.

OMINOUS CHANGES.

Changes caused by the death of Lord Raglan—Fresh appointments—Condition of the rival armies—False move on the part of the English—The attack on the Malakhoff left to the French—Mistakes—Incapacity of General Simpson—Preparations for the assault—Omar Pasha's proposal—The author at Therapia—Sick and wounded officers—The attack on the Redan criticised—Prospect of another winter in the trenches—Cholera—Recapitulation—Position of the contending forces.

DURING the interval that elapsed between the lamented death of Lord Raglan, on the 28th June, and the middle of the month of July, no very decided progress was made by the English in the siege approaches, and the Russians contented themselves with strenuous preparations to meet another assault. But as sickness diminished, and reinforcements and fresh supplies of material were poured into the Crimea later in the month, the allies set to work with renewed energy, and not only gained ground before Sebastopol, but began to feel their way towards the left of the enemy's position on the Belbek. At the same time they extended their operations in the direction of Mangoup-Kale, and Kutchuk Sevren, first by way of reconnoissance, and finally by the establishment of standing camps of sufficient strength to defy a sudden attack by any force short of an army. In these operations the French performed most of the active work. They were aided to some extent by the Sardinians encamped at Komara, and by the Turks, who completed the friendly investment of Balaklava from the Sardinian right to the cliffs over the sea near Cape Aiya. General Simpson, on whom the command of the English army devolved, was a veteran who had seen a year's service in the Peninsula in 1812-13, and in the campaign of 1815, and who thirty years afterwards held the post of Quartermaster-General to Sir C. Napier, in his Indian war of 1845; and it was supposed, in spite of his own repre-

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sentations to the contrary, that he was physically and mentally able to take the command of an army which was rapidly assuming the form and functions of a contingent in face of the reinforcements so lavishly given to our allies. Lord Raglan had, at all events, by the dignity of his personal character, secured a position for the troops he commanded, to which they were not numerically entitled; but no one can say by what sacrifices that position was maintained till the battle of Inkerman forced us to abandon it. The time is not yet come for the disclosure of all the truth, but it may even now be asked, how it was that on 6th February, 1855, we abandoned our ground opposite the Malakhoff to the French, if we really knew it to be the key of the Russian position? A change was indeed necessary, and it was evident that the English army was much too weak to occupy the space from the Dockyard Creek ravine on the left, to the valley of the Tchernaya on the right. But why, instead of allowing the French (I use that word "allowing," inasmuch as we are given to understand that Sir John Burgoyne objected to the change,) why, instead of allowing the French to take from us the favourable ground on our right attack, did we not move to our right, and leave the French to occupy the spot held by our left, which we maintained to the end of the siege? It seems but natural that as we had defended the right of the Allied Army at Inkerman, with so much loss, and so much courage, we should have continued to occupy a position we had rendered glorious for ever. A cession of it to the French appears to be a tacit reproach to our plan of defence. By concentrating our left on our right attack, we could have readily carried on the siege works, and have preserved to ourselves the attack against the Malakhoff, which was originally opened by us on the 17th October, 1854. It is said that the French objected to take Chapman's attack, on the plea that they could not serve our artillery. Sir John Burgoyne then offered that our artillery-men should be left to work the English guns; but the objection, if ever it was made, was futile, inasmuch as at a subsequent period of the siege the French demanded and received the loan of more than twenty-four 32-pounders, which they used with great vigour at the final bombardment. The compliance of Sir John Burgoyne on this point is the more to be wondered at, inasmuch as it was he who discovered the great importance of the position we so readily yielded, and it was he who announced that the Malakhoff, of which he relinquished the attack

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CAUSES OF FAILURE.

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to our allies, was the veritable key of the whole of the defences of Sebastopol. After the 18th June, 1855, it became quite evident that our left attack was utterly useless for the purposes of an assault, and accordingly one would have thought that the whole energy of the chiefs of the British army and of the Engineers, would be directed to push on our saps in the direction of the only point of attack the British army had to deal with, but in effect the Redan was not approached much more closely by our Engineers subsequently to the 18th than it had been previously, and most of our efforts were directed to the augmentation of the weight and vigour of our fire from batteries already established, or to the strengthening of the Quarries battery, which we took on 7th of June. In fact we seemed determined to take the place by the fire of Artillery alone, and yet when the time came we combined with it an assault, which was of course an interference with, and an abandonment of that determination. Although our officers had the Mamelon before their eyes, they overlooked the fact that the Russians could screen a very large body of men inside their casemates and bomb-proofs, and that their garrison would suffer very little from our fire so long as it failed to search out and destroy those retreats. When the garrison of these casemates was warned, by the cessation of our fire, of the coming assault, they swarmed out in masses more numerous than the assailants, who were besides broken, and almost breathless, owing to their run from the trenches, and repulsed them ere they reached the abattis. Whenever the Russians felt our fire was overpowering them at any one particular point, they withdrew their guns behind the traverse or parapet, and trusted to the strength of their earthworks, so that it was difficult to say what was the exact effect of our cannonade upon their guns. Thus, on the 18th June, our soldiers were raked with grape and canister, from points where we had imagined the guns were dismantled and silenced, and it was evident that our artillery had not gained that mastery over the enemies' pieces which was requisite to ensure success. We subsequently endeavoured to secure a better chance for our troops, at the next assault, by establishing batteries to crush the flanking fire of the angles of the Redan, and of the curtains in the direction of the salient; but our tackles broke in raising the guns, and these batteries were never armed. The arrival of Sir Harry Jones to replace Sir John Burgoyne was regarded with hope, but no change in the plan of attack was originated by that officer, nor did the

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OMINOUS CHANGES.

French engineers at any time appear to appreciate the importance of the ground between them and the Malakhoff, till the Russians significantly demonstrated the value of the Mamelon by seizing upon and fortifying it in the spring of the year. Sir Harry Jones, although younger than Sir John Burgoyne, was not blest with the health of that veteran soldier, and for some time the works were carried on without the benefit of his personal supervision, although no one could doubt the ability and zeal of Colonel Gordon, R.E., of Colonel Chapman, R.E., and of Lieut. Cowell, A.D.C., or of the numerous staff of Engineer-officers engaged upon the works. If the ground in front of our trenches and saps towards the Redan was difficult, that through which the French drove their approaches close to the Bastion *du Mat*, and notably to the Bastion *Centrale*, was literally a mass of oolite and hard rock, and our engineers will yet have to explain in the "aide memoire" what were the causes which stayed the advance of our saps, and prevented their establishing a Place d'Armes for our assaulting columns. The death of Lord Raglan, which produced in the army a sentiment of profound regret, and which gave to the nation at home a sensible shock, deprived the British army of a leader whose personal character and dignity of manner exercised considerable influence on the councils of the allied generals, however he might have failed to maintain the proper position of that army after the 5th November; but General Simpson, who was appointed to succeed him, although it had been understood when he came out as Chief of the Staff that he would not become Commander-in-Chief in case of a vacancy, was certainly not suited to resist any pressure which our allies might think fit to apply; and he was destitute of those acquirements and personal characteristics which in Lord Raglan compensated for a certain apathy and marble calmness which admirers extolled as virtues. It was believed at the time, and it is now almost notorious, that General Simpson opposed his own appointment, and bore testimony to his own incapacity, but the Government, or Lord Hardinge and Lord Panmure insisted; and General Simpson became Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. He was succeeded in his post as Chief of the Staff by an intelligent officer, Major-General Barnard; who displayed great personal activity in his execution of its duties. The vacancy created in the Adjutant-General's Department by the lamented death of Major-General Estcourt was filled by Colonel Pakenham, who had been his second in command, and who was a good man of business, however defi-

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OUR ARMAMENT.

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oient in that personal courtesy and politeness which distinguish the officers of the corresponding department of the French Army. The changes created by death or wounds on the 18th having thus been satisfactorily effected, the army resumed its usual attitude of laborious watchfulness in the trenches and of expectation in the camp; and for many long weeks we were amused by confident announcements that our batteries would open in "*n* days, *n* being a very small number;" batteries were constructed by the English and the French on the commanding points in their possession to drive away the Russian shipping which covered the front of our trenches with a deadly fire on the occasion of an assault, and which were handled with skill and a great deal of boldness throughout the siege. All these batteries failed in their object. The ships up to the last continued to render able and energetic co-operation to the besieged.

On the 17th June, our armament consisted of thirty 13-inch mortars, seventeen 10-inch mortars, and eight 8-inch mortars; of forty-nine 32-pounders, of forty-six 8-inch guns, of eight 10-inch, and eight 68-pounder guns—an increase of thirty guns and mortars on the armament with which we opened fire on the 7th June; and 2286 13-inch bombs, 884 10-inch bombs, 9746 32-lb. shot, 6712 8-inch shot, 1706 10-inch shot, 1350 68-pounder shot, were fired into the town, in the bombardment, previous to the assault. Still, this weight of metal, although it caused an enormous loss, did not crush the fire of the place, and the enemy were enabled to continue to reply, and to mount fresh guns, owing to the constant command of men from the armies outside the town. The capture of Kertch and Yenikale, the command of the Sea of Azov, the partial possession of the Spit of Arabat, had not produced the results we expected on the resources of the garrison; and it was evident that they received supplies of men and food by Perekop and Tchongar—no matter by what exertions, or at what sacrifices the communications might be effected. The Allies were unable in any way to intercept the supplies. They had advanced from Eupatoria towards Simpheropol on various occasions, but had invariably found the enemy in superior force, in strong positions, except on the single occasion of General d'Allonville's brilliant affair with the Russian cavalry, under General Korte, near Sak, which ended in the utter rout of the latter, and the loss of a battery of field artillery. The nature of the country, the difficulty of transport, and the

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distance of the base of operations, have all been pleaded as reasons for the failure of the attempts to advance from Eupatoria; but it seems rather strange that no effort was made to march, by either the Duljanak or the Alma, to the capital of the Crimea; and the troops of Omar Pasha, instead of being kept idle at Komara or Eupatoria, could have been employed with the French and English in making a serious diversion, which would have paralysed the energies of the enemy, and which might have led to the fall of Sebastopol, north and south, and the surrender or total flight of all the Russian army. It was not till the 11th July that Omar Pasha, dispirited at the inactivity to which he and his army were doomed, proposed to General Simpson to embark the Turks from the Crimea, and to land near Kutais, in order to relieve Kars by a menacing march upon Tiflis. On the 15th of July, there was a conference of the allied generals at General Pelissier's, to consider the position of the Turks in Asia Minor, and the proposition of the Turkish Generalissimo; and it was with much difficulty that he succeeded in persuading them that 25,000 Turks operating in Asia were much better employed than if they were doing nothing at Komara. However, it was long ere he could obtain the means of carrying out his plans; and there is no doubt but that his assistance in operating from Eupatoria would have been of the utmost importance during the time he was compelled to maintain an attitude of hopeless inactivity. At this period of the siege I was relieved for a short time by a colleague, and I proceeded to enjoy my holidays at Therapia in the society of my wife, but I was attacked by Crimean fever soon after my arrival, and was not able to return to the camp till the beginning of August. During the time I was at Therapia, the Hotel d'Angleterre presented a melancholy aspect from the number of sick and wounded officers at the table-d'hôte. Colonel Gordon, of the Engineers, was there on his way home, after a long and anxious charge in the Crimea—Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar and Lord George Paget were also there; Major Browne of the Royal Engineers, wounded on the 18th June; Captain Browne, 88th, who lost his arm on the same occasion, and many others, some of whom have since fallen or have been badly wounded. The Turkish Contingent, encamped at Buyukdereh, under General Vivian, was in the course of being organized, but the efforts of its Commander and of General Cunynghame to

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THERAPIA.

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get it into shape, were for some time frustrated by the outbreak of an epidemic among the troops. Meantime, we heard of the advance of the Russians in Asia Minor, and of our own inactivity, and I am bound to say, that the feeling among the English residents at Therapia was one of despondency for some time after the defeat on the 18th June—old officers shook their heads, and there was a great desire among young and old to get away from the Crimea on any pretence, in order to escape for a time from the sanguinary monotony of trench duties, the harassing sounds of cannon and rifle, which beat on the ear day and night, and the contagious influence of gloomy thoughts. Major-General Dacres came down about this time from the Crimea, to see his wife, and his presence was a sure proof that the artillery were not likely to be called upon for some time to come, inasmuch as he was not the kind of man who would willingly run the chance of losing any official mention tending to his promotion. The attack on the Redan was the one subject of conversation—the arrival of news from the Crimea, the one great event to be looked forward to daily. No one at that time appeared to think that we ought not to have attacked the Redan—that is a doctrine which was propounded much later,—but it seemed to be imagined that even if we took it, the French would not be able to maintain themselves inside any other part of the enemy's lines, and that we should consequently be exposed to the whole brunt of their concentrated attacks in a very difficult position. The first great phase in the siege had been passed—we found that the Russians could resist the allied forces with vigour, and that they were capable of acting on the defensive with greater energy than we gave them credit for, from their conduct at the Alma. The constant passage up the Bosphorus of vessels with troops on board from France, and artillery and material from England, evinced the preparations made by the Allies for the renewal of the struggle; but there were many who thought that the siege would not be over till the following year, and that the Allies would have to undergo the miseries of another winter in the open trenches. Sir George Brown, who had ever entertained a most gloomy view of our position, the falseness and danger of which, in a military sense, he rather exaggerated than undervalued, left the army on sick certificate two days after Lord Raglan's death, and the generals in command were new and untried men, in comparison with those who first led our army to the Crimean campaign.

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On the 30th June, Major-General Codrington was appointed to the command of the Light Division; and at the same date, Major-General Barnard was nominated to the Second Division. By these changes and promotions, Colonel Van Straubenzee, of the 3rd Buffs, became Brigadier of the 1st Brigade, Light Division; Colonel Spencer, of the 44th Regiment, became Brigadier of the 1st Brigade, 4th Division; and Colonel Barlow, of the 14th, assumed the command of the 1st Brigade of the 3rd Division. We received about this time the 3rd, 13th, 31st, and 72nd Regiments, which were attached to the 2nd, 4th, and 1st Divisions. But as reinforcements slowly poured in, a great drain on the strength of the army was steadily increasing in the trenches—our losses began to reach 300 men *hors de combat* in every week.

The cholera also was diminishing the numbers of the daily tales of effective men, and there was reason to believe that the Russians were receiving large reinforcements just at the time that our strength was failing. The losses of the enemy were, indeed, enormous; but so was the army which supplied the garrison, and held the positions outside the city. General Simpson, under such circumstances, had a most difficult duty to fulfil. Constant demands were made upon us by the French general to take such and such rifle pits, which annoyed them, or to construct batteries and parallels for the purpose of relieving their siege works; and although it is quite true that they aided us materially on several points, by diverting and checking the enemy's fire upon us, it will be found, I think, that we rendered them a greater amount of assistance than we received. The principal events of the siege, and the military movements of the army, will be found detailed in the following abstract, which will, I fear, prove dry and uninteresting to any but military people, and lovers of dates and facts:—From the attack of the 18th June to 10th July, the enemy were employed in strengthening their works; and they made such progress at the Redan, that it was judged expedient to open a heavy fire upon them from the allied batteries. This commenced at five o'clock on the morning of the 10th, and lasted for four hours; two embrasures were destroyed, and the enemy's reply was feeble,—but they did not cease from their labours, and we were obliged to reserve our ammunition for a more general bombardment. An alteration was made in the trench service at the same time, and it was ordered that the

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APPOINTMENTS.

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generals of the day should not be named in General Orders, but that the duties in each attack should be done by divisions alternately. Thus, for example, the First Division took the left, and the Second Division took the right attack, on one day; the Third Division took the left, and the Fourth Division took the right attack next day, and so on in rotation; but the arrangements were left to the Generals of Division as much as possible. The English cavalry, long inactive, began to look forward to service in the field, as hopes were held out that a strong movement would be made against the Russian corps on the Upper Belbek; and Colonel Shewell, who commanded the Light Cavalry Brigade, in Lord George Paget's absence, was an officer who showed, on the 25th of October, that he only needed an opportunity to handle cavalry with intelligence and effect. On the 12th July, General Barnard was appointed Chief of the Staff, and on the 15th Colonel Warren assumed the command of the First Brigade and Colonel Trollope was named Brigadier of the Second Brigade of the Second Division. General Simpson had, unfortunately, on several occasions, the opportunity of proving that he was disposed to punish, with great severity, the crime of drunkenness on the part of officers; and no less than three gentlemen were cashiered, by court-martial, for that offence, in a few days, one after the other. Major-General Markham arrived on the 19th July, and assumed the command of the Second Division: but he had materially injured his health by the exertions he made in travelling through India to get to the Crimea, and on no subsequent occasion did he add to the high reputation he had gained in the East. The position of the contending parties at this period was as follows:—The enemy held Sebastopol from the sea north of Quarantine Bay to Careening Creek, their communication with the north side being kept up solely by boats and rafts. They were overlapped by the French, who were in possession of the works at Mount Saporine, and who held trenches and works on the south-western side of Quarantine Bay; but the Saporine works were much exposed to a cross fire from the Russian works across the Tchernaya, at Inkermann, from the north side, from the Little Redan, and from the shipping. On the rear of our position the Turks held the south-eastern defences of Balaklava, from the sea to Kamara, where they lay with their left on the Highland Division. The Highlanders had the Sardinians on their left again, facing towards the

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Tchernaya; and the French army of observation was encamped on the left of the Sardinians, along the Fedioukine heights, on the plain of Balaklava, extending along the Woronzow road till they communicated with the French army on our right flank at Inkerman, and on the verge of the plateau in our rear. The Russians held the northern side of the Tchernaya, the Mackenzie ridge, the mountainous country from Mangoup-Kale towards Ozembash, the position at Aitodor, and the mountain ridges overlooking Ourkusta Chutiou and other Tartar villages. Here they were watching the French corps, which had been pushed beyond our lines into the valley of Bardar. The high mountains between the enemy and the sea are not suitable for the passage of artillery, which could only be brought against us from the coast by way of the Phoros pass. This pass was occupied by the French, and the road was deeply scarped; but it was nevertheless necessary to keep a constant watch on the enemy in this direction, as he was known to have a force of infantry and artillery at Alupka.

On the 21st July, General Simpson published the following order:—

“General Simpson announces to the army that he has had the honour to receive from Her Majesty the Queen the appointment of Commander-in-Chief of the Army in the Crimea.

“The Lieutenant-General, though deeply impressed with the responsibility of the position in which he is placed, is most proud of the high and distinguished honour, and of the confidence thus reposed in him by his Sovereign.

“It will be the Lieutenant-General’s duty to endeavour to follow in the steps of his great predecessor, and he feels confident of the support of the generals, and of the officers and soldiers, in maintaining unimpaired the honour and discipline of this noble army.

(Signed) “JAMES SIMPSON,
“Lieutenant-General Commanding.”

The personal Staff of His Excellency consisted of Captain Colville, Rifle Brigade; Captain Lindsay, Scots Fusileer Guards; Major Dowbiggen, 4th Foot (appointed by electric telegraph). Lieut.-Colonel Stephenson was appointed Military Secretary, although Colonel Steele still remained at head-quarters; and Colonel Pakenham was confirmed as Adjutant-General, at the request of Lord Raglan, in the last dispatch he ever penned.