

**THE BATTLE OF TSU-SHIMA,
BETWEEN THE JAPANESE
AND RUSSIAN FLEETS,
FOUGHT ON 27TH MAY 1905**

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The battle of Tsu-Shima, between the Japanese and Russian fleets, fought on 27th May 1905 by Vladimir Semenov

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VLADIMIR SEMENOFF

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THE BATTLE OF TSU-SHIMA

BETWEEN THE JAPANESE AND RUSSIAN
FLEETS, FOUGHT ON 27TH MAY 1905

BY CAPTAIN VLADIMIR SEMENOFF
(ONE OF THE SURVIVORS)

TRANSLATED BY
CAPTAIN A. B. LINDSAY
2ND KING EDWARD'S OWN GURKHA RIFLES

WITH A PREFACE BY
SIR GEORGE SYDENHAM CLARKE
G.C.M.G., F.R.S.

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“ Captain Semenoff’s little volume, which would well
“ repay translation, is a remarkably graphic and luminous
“ account of Admiral Togo’s great victory, compiled from
“ notes taken by the author during the engagement. His
“ account is all the more interesting as he was also on the
“ *Cesarevitch* when Admiral Vitoft made his unsuccessful
“ attempt to escape from Port Arthur on 10th August
“ 1904. . . . Every word of this little volume bears the
“ impress of reality, and enables the reader to form a
“ vivid picture of the various phases of the battle. There
“ is a plan showing the positions of the contending fleets
“ from 1.20 till 7 P.M.”

—*Times Literary Supplement*, 17th August 1906.

PREFACE

THE paucity of war experience since the introduction of the steam-driven armoured ship invests the battle of Tsu-shima with supreme importance. Between Trafalgar and the 27th May 1905, there had been only two fleet actions on a large scale—those of Lissa and of the Yalu—and the first was fought before the wooden vessel had disappeared and the rifled gun had become universal. The various minor engagements which occurred during this long period were either destitute of teaching, or failed to

provide an adequate basis for conclusions capable of serving as guides to a rational system of tactics or to a scientific ship-building policy.

It has, therefore, followed, in this country especially, that the evolution of the warship has been frequently capricious, indicating the absence of any clear principles, and entailing an immense total expenditure upon vessels unsuited to our national requirements, but happily not forced to demonstrate their inutility.

In all wars, whether by sea or land, some few general lessons stand out unmistakably; but the difficulty of arriving at a just estimate of the relative significance of the causes which have led to victory or to defeat is always extreme. Genius, which may be defined as an un-

erring sense of proportion, is necessarily rare, and the person with an *idée fixe* in favour of some particular method or weapon will generally discover, in every conflict, evidence in support of his faith. This tendency will be most marked when national experience of war is lacking, and we are, therefore, compelled to draw our inspirations from fighting carried on by other peoples.

In the long series of wars which culminated in the Nelson era, broad principles had been evolved and had been grasped by the leaders of naval thought. More than ninety years have elapsed since the British Navy was called upon to fight a great fleet action, and meanwhile technical progress of all kinds, advancing by giant strides, has opened out new possibilities tending to

bewilder the imagination and to invite mistakes and impolicy.

Even when, as now, valuable war experience is available, there is always a risk of false deductions. Conditions differ so greatly that generalisations based upon special episodes may be misleading and even dangerous. Thus the American Navy and our own have unquestionably suffered from shallow reasoning derived from the peculiar operations of the Civil War. Similarly, the action off Lissa led to a cult of the ram which has left a deep impress upon shipbuilding, while a few isolated successes obtained by torpedoes, in exceptional circumstances, have given rise to exaggerated claims on behalf of this weapon which can only end in disappointment.

Instances could be multiplied, and the