

THE BATTLES OF THE CRIMEA: INCLUDING AN HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE RUSSIAN WAR

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The Battles of the Crimea: Including an Historical Summary of the Russian War by Various

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VARIOUS

**THE BATTLES OF THE
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HISTORICAL SUMMARY
OF THE RUSSIAN WAR**

P R E F A C E .

If the most intelligent man moving in common society were asked to give a brief, clear, and connected account of all the transactions of the Russian War, from the beginning to its present stage, he would first perhaps be surprised that any body should need such information. But he would immediately be still more surprised to find how difficult it was for him to furnish it; that instead of being able to state off-hand, in their real order and due arrangement, the facts required, he would be obliged to ask time for reflection; and then even, time to make references. He would discover that his impressions, though very vivid respecting the principal particulars, were, after all, a mass of anachronous entanglement and historical confusion.

Perhaps, indeed, the very facilities which now exist for publishing diurnally every premature version which may arrive of affairs interesting to the public, have contributed to heap upon the progressive reports of this great war a burden of crude messages and announcements which confuse the true chronicle of facts; and, in short, we have not so much to *learn the story* as to recall it succinctly and to *unlearn the many successive mis-statements of it*. Already the newspaper records of a single

year—stimulating, and, to our generation, novel and portentous intelligence—with second versions, and third versions, and corrections, and alterations—exceed in bulk the immense history in which Gibbon chronicles the stupendous revolutions, the many memorable conflicts, and the countless European vicissitudes of *fifteen centuries*.

It is time to weed this literary wilderness; to preserve only what is valuable; to put even that in its right place; and to supply a compendious, lucid, and reliable narrative of a conflict which might be said to have been long impending, and yet which virtually took Europe by surprise.

CONTENTS.

ORIGIN OF THE WAR,	PAGE
FIRST PERIOD: INVASION OF MOLDO-WALLACHIA, AND STATE OF RUSSIAN TROOPS,	12
MEASURES TAKEN BY THE DIVAN, AND FIRST PROCEEDINGS OF THE CEAR,	17
SECOND PERIOD: HOSTILITIES AFTER TURKEY, BUT BEFORE ENGLAND AND FRANCE, HAD DECLARED WAR,	19
BATTLE OF OLUTENITZA,	21
MASSACRE AT SINOPÉ,	21
BATTLE AT CITADE,	24
SUBSEQUENT OPERATIONS, AND THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE EUROPEAN POWERS,	26
DESULTORY CONFLICTS ON THE DANUBE,	28
MEASURES TAKEN BY ENGLAND AND FRANCE,	31
FINANCIAL CONDITION OF RUSSIA,	32
ACTIVE ENTRANCE OF ENGLAND AND FRANCE INTO THE WAR,	33
BOMBARDMENT OF ODESSA,	34
PASSAGE OF THE DANUBE BY LUDERS AND GORTCHAKOFF,	34
SIEGE OF SILISTRIA,	35
OPERATIONS IN THE BALTIC,	37
INVASION OF THE CRIMEA,	41
BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CRIMEA,	43
CONCENTRATION OF THE ALLIED TROOPS,	43
EMBARKATION AND VOYAGE,	44
THE LANDING,	44
MARCH TO THE ALMA,	45
BATTLE OF THE ALMA,	47
HOBBOES OF THE BATTLE-FIELD,	48
INCIDENTS OF THE BATTLE OF THE ALMA,	52
MARCHING FOR SEBASTOPOL,	54
	57

	PAGE
TAKING POSSESSION OF BALAKLAVA,	60
DEATH OF MARSHAL ST. ARNAUD,	60
SIEGE OF SEBASTOPOL,	61
FORCE OF THE COMBATANTS,	61
POSITION OF THE ALLIES AROUND SEBASTOPOL,	62
OPENING FIRE UPON SEBASTOPOL,	62
THE ATTACK ON LAND,	63
BATTLE OF BALAKLAVA,	65
THE DISASTROUS CAVALRY CHARGE,	71
LETTERS FROM THE COMBATANTS,	75
BADLY CUT UP—THE SURGEONS AT WORK,	76
SORTIE THE NEXT DAY,	77
THE SIEGE CONTINUED,	77
BATTLE OF INKERMANN,	78
FEROACITY OF THE COMBATANTS,	88
AFTER THE BATTLE, A TERRIBLE PICTURE,	89
ENGLISH OFFICERS—HAIL-BREADTH ESCAPES AND MORTAL DISASTERS,	91
REGIMENTS BADLY CUT UP,	92
RUSSIAN BRUTALITIES,	93
FATALITY OF THE MINE RIFLE,	93
PERSONNEL OF THE RUSSIAN SOLDIERS,	94
A GALLANT DEED,	95
GETTING ACCUSTOMED TO BULLETS, AND TAKING THINGS COOLLY,	96
A DRAGOON CAPTAIN'S SENSATIONS IN A CAVALRY CHARGE,	96
HORSE INCIDENTS,	97
SIEGE CONTINUED,	98
A FRENCH RUSE,	98
THE GREAT STORM OF NOVEMBER 14; THE WAR SPIRIT SUCCOMBING TO THE ELEMENTS; WHOLESALE SHIPWRECK OF THE ALLIED FLEETS,	99
A SERIES OF SHARP ENCOUNTERS,	101
ORDER OF THE ENTERTAINMENT,	102
MINUTES OF LIFE IN CAMP,	103
INCIDENTS OF THE SIEGE, ETC.,	106
GENERAL PROSPECTS OF THE SIEGE,	107
PROGRESS OF THE WAR,	108
DEATH OF THE EMPEROR NICHOLAS,	109
ACCESSION OF ALEXANDER,	110
MILITARY TERMS,	111

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

OF THE

RUSSIAN WAR,

FROM ITS COMMENCEMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME.

THE ORIGIN OF THE WAR.

So lengthy have been the official documents from which the alleged causes of the war were to be obtained, and so confused their details, that the mass of Americans have found it a discouraging task to study them. Hence we have heard, on all sides, inquiries as to the "grounds of the dispute," the "pretexts for the invasion," etc., indicating the necessity of the present publication, affording a clear, however brief, statement of the historical facts, so far as accessible to us. These will show that religious bigotry has had much to do with the matter, as has been the truth of too many of the conflicts that have desolated the earth. The various churches of Jerusalem, and "the region round about Jordan" generally, have been always objects of veneration to the Roman Catholics as well as to the members of the Greek Church. The guardianship of their holy shrines had been shared between them, the Greek Christians claiming under the protection of the Sultan, and the Roman Catholic Christians under France. The claim of this religious protectorate by the French was based on a treaty made in 1740. A number of conventions had been "concluded" by the interested parties, to use the language of diplomacy; but this, as is too often the result of treaties, proved only a technical "conclusion" of the difficulty. None of the conventional arrangements had defined the rights of the churches with sufficient clearness to prevent contentions. Con-

sequently these were constantly springing up. The Sublime Porte issued his *firmans*, defining the religious privileges of his Grecian subjects, while France as pertinaciously insisted upon the rights for the Catholics. The dispute finally assumed a temper which showed it to be religious only in name, and became a foolishly stubborn contest between hierarchies, urged forward and stimulated by political intrigue. The Revolutionary Government of the First Republic was as warm in the contest as the Catholic House of Orleans, and the Protestant Guizot as either; and Louis Napoleon, when President of the Republic, showed an active desire to conciliate the clergy by vigorously asserting the privileges of the Catholic Church. Violent disputes having arisen as to the abstraction of a large silver star, placed above the Shrine of the Nativity, and the question as to which Church was bound to repair the cupola of the Holy Sepulchre, which was fast falling into decay, in 1850, General Aupich, the French Ambassador at Constantinople, received orders to institute an inquiry into the matter; and obtained the appointment of a mixed commission to consider the dispute. The Latins claimed the exclusive possession of twelve "Holy Places," of which the four principal were the great cupola of the Holy Sepulchre, the Tomb of the Virgin, the great church at Bethlehem, and part of the garden of Gethsemane. This claim the Greeks disputed; but the commission considered the right as firmly established, the places having been specially named in *firmans* granted to the Latins. The Emperor of Russia now interfered, and, in an autograph letter to the Sultan, claimed for the Greeks the preservation of all their ancient privileges in Jerusalem, and condemned the Turkish ministry for countenancing the pretensions of the Latins. Unwilling to offend so powerful a neighbor, the Sultan dismissed the "mixed" commission, and appointed a new one, composed exclusively of Ottoman functionaries. While this new commission was engaged in reinvestigating the dispute, Nicholas proposed to the French President that they should themselves settle the question, leaving to Turkey simply the office of carrying out their wishes. To this suggestion Louis Napoleon returned a decided negative, and shortly afterwards the commission presented their report. They proposed that the great cupola of the Holy Sepulchre should be common property, that the Latins should have access to the Tomb of the Virgin, and a key of the church of Bethlehem. This arrangement was communicated to France in a somewhat apologetic manner, and was accepted under a protest by France, reserving the discussion of the rights of the Latins should the question be reopened. The Emperor of Russia now demanded,

and the Porte conceded, the publication of a firman throughout the Sultan's dominion, announcing the new arrangement. This step greatly offended the French Government, and M. Lavalette was dispatched to Constantinople to demand the recall of the firman. The Russian Ambassador, mixing in the dispute, insisted that the key granted to the Latins should be the key of a side-gate only; but the Porte adhered to its decision that they should have access to the principal entrance, thus placing the contending sects on an equality. At length the French Government conceded the issuing of the firman, on condition that it should be promulgated with as little publicity as possible. But here was a new difficulty. Ali Bey, the officer charged with the commission, upon arriving at Jerusalem, was met by a clamorous demand from the Greeks for a public reading of the document, with all the usual parade and ceremony. Ali Bey wrote home for instructions, and the Russian Ambassador supported the claims of the Greeks, and the Porte sent new orders to Jerusalem for the public reading of the firman. The delivery of the promised key now became the subject of renewed discord and much anxious consultation. Again was the whole question discussed at Constantinople, and finally the previous decision was confirmed, and the key of the great portal of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre handed to the Latin monks. Nicholas was but little disposed to brook this resistance to his wishes; and it was at length announced that a special ambassador was to be dispatched from St. Petersburg to Constantinople, with specific demands and extraordinary powers. Prince Menchikoff was intrusted with this mission; and thus, from the dispute of the "Holy Places," became developed the germ of an European war. Prince Menchikoff entered Constantinople on March 1st, 1853, and, on the following day obtained an interview with the Sultan. His first step was characterized by an act of insolence, which marked his whole proceedings. According to diplomatic etiquette, an ambassador is bound to visit the Foreign Minister; this Menchikoff omitted to do, and Fuad Effendi, who then held that office, a high-spirited man, strongly opposed to Russian influence, immediately resigned. A ministerial crisis was the result, and so alarming did matters become, that Colonel Rose, then the only British representative at the Porte, wrote to the Admiral of the Mediterranean fleet, requesting his presence in the Turkish waters. Admiral Dundas, however, did not deem it prudent to comply with the request; and, in a few weeks, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe resumed his position as ambassador at Constantinople.

There was now a new aspect of affairs. On the 5th of May