

FAMOUS SIEGES LADYSMITH 1899-1900 PORT ARTHUR 1904



An Infantry Attack on 203-Metre Hill, Where 12,500 Men Were Lost by the Boer Army. By a Japanese Artist.

By Henry M. Snevily.
SOUTH AFRICA, politicians and military experts say, is the keystone of the British Empire. At one stage of the Boer war Ladysmith was the keystone of South Africa, and when that defenseless town was besieged the Empire tottered. Ladysmith was eventually relieved, but had it fallen, according to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, it would have been necessary to reconquer all of South Africa. The investment of Ladysmith while it fades into insignificance so far as magnitude of operations is concerned, might readily have been the most momentous siege of history had its outcome been different. It might have marked the beginning of the disintegration of the greatest empire the world has known.

After the battle of Ladysmith, in October, 1899, the detached right wing of the main British army was driven into Ladysmith, a town situated in a bow shaped valley surrounded by concentric circles of hills. For some reason upon which military critics have not been able to agree, the British did not fortify the outer rim of hills, probably because the circumference was about fourteen miles and their lines would have been too thin. The outer hills left unfortified, most of the inner ridges became untenable, and the entire force, including cavalry, was bottled up in the town, which the Boers, in their usual slow but certain fashion, began to invest.

Sir George White, the commanding British general, realizing that Ladysmith if held would block the sweep of the Boer forces to the south, seemed content to hold the town if he could. Before the bombardment began General Joubert allowed all non-combatants to be removed to the neutral camp Intombi, but the majority of able bodied men of the town declined to take advantage of this, preferring to render what assistance they could to the garrison.

Where the river runs through Ladysmith it had cut a deep channel, and as at Vicksburg the inhabitants burrowed into the steep banks and remained in their caves, comparatively safe from shell fire or shrapnel, six days a week. The Boers were a religious people as a whole, and on Sundays the cannoning invariably ceased and the cave dwellers went back to their homes for a short day of respite.

Having surrounded Ladysmith, the Boers apparently thought that the British would have no choice but to surrender, and the first infantry attacks were half-hearted affairs, in which only small bodies of the besieging force took part.

On one occasion the Boer riflemen made their way by night to within eight hundred yards of the trenches of the Sixtieth Manchester on Wagon Hill. The British made ready to repel an attack, but the Boers seemed unwilling to leave their shallow cover and remained all day exposed to the rifle fire of the Sixtieth Manchester and the shrapnel of the Forty-second battery, retiring at night after sustaining heavy losses. The British killed and wounded totalled thirty.

General Joubert soon realized that his most potent allies were starvation and disease, so he contented himself with strengthening his trenches about the town and bombarding continuously.

On the night of December 8, under Generals Hunter, Edwards and Royston, a picked body of colonial troops made a sortie on Gun Hill, drove the Boers away from their battery long enough to blow up a Creusot and a howitzer with gunpowder, and retired into Ladysmith with a captured Maxim, losing but one man.

Considerable feeling was evinced by the regulars over the selection of colonial troops for this enterprise, and accordingly three days later another sortie was made with regular troops and another battery destroyed, although owing to a delay in the explosion of the gunpowder a number of men were lost.

Throughout the siege the troops and inhabitants of Ladysmith had been heartened by the sound of Buller's guns,

which continually promised relief, but Buller was forced to retire from Colenso and even this encouragement was denied the besieged.

On January 8, 1900, the Boers hurled all their available forces against the town, and some of the fiercest fighting of the three years war occurred. Back and forth over the contested ground the two armies surged, and many a wounded man unable to rise served as a shield for an enemy who lay prone behind him and reared his rifle barrel on the powerless body.

One Englishman is known to have been shot six times by his own comrades in their attempts to hit a Boer rifleman who was directing a deadly fire from behind the body.

Although the assaulting force was driven off, the siege of Ladysmith was by no means at an end, and it was not until March 3 that Buller's relief column arrived. Even horseflesh, which was the staple meat diet, was at an ebb by then.

As Buller's troops marched into the town the beleaguered garrison was drawn up on either side of the road. At the head of the relief column were the five surviving officers and a handful of men of the Irish Fusiliers. At this stirring testimony to the cost at which Ladysmith had been relieved scores of the men who had gone unremoved through the hardships and terrors of the siege leaped upon their rifles and sobbed pitifully.

The siege of Ladysmith endured 118 days during which it is calculated 16,000 shells fell in the city. A little more than ten years ago Port Arthur fell before the science of the engineers which made effective the feats of unexcelled bravery that alone could not have carried the most wonderful fortification of the day.

In the present war weapons of offense have so far outstripped devices for defense that Europe's greatest forts are laid in ruins in a few hours by cannon emplacements perhaps seven miles from the barriers they wreck. In the Russo-Japanese conflict, the last war of great magnitude, all the batteries of siege guns, all the reckless, fiendish charges of men who would die, were not sufficient in themselves to carry the wonderful network of defenses the Russians had built. After three costly attempts at assault the Japanese dug their way into Port Arthur, their engineers and sappers tunnelling under the very parapets and blowing them up with dynamite to make breaches through which the infantry could storm. In the last analysis steel clashed against steel, and men fought with hands and with teeth, but it was the slow engineering process which put the fighting men of Nippon where they could use steel and tusk after three heroic assaults, covered by unprecedented artillery fire, had failed.

Roughly speaking, the Kwang Tung peninsula on which Port Arthur is situated is backed by two concentric ranges of hills which curve across the neck of land from sea to sea. The sky line of these ridges is broken here and there by high conical peaks which played an important part in the siege. The harbor itself is flanked by hills, and eighteen miles north of the city the peninsula narrows to a three-mile strip of land across which another ridge extends.

With consummate skill the Russian engineers, who foresaw that the "Saur" would one day have to fight for his foothold on the Dragon's shores, had constructed a system of fortifications adapted to the natural lay of the land and which military experts declared could never be wrested from European soldiers by any other race of men. So carefully were the plans of the Port Arthur forts drawn that, one position being taken from the enemy, the guns of other positions could be brought to bear upon it from a side or rear, and it was this that thousands of Japanese found that war's death for which they long.

The terrain before the parapets was



"Tommy's" Seeking Shelter from Artillery Fire at Ladysmith. From "With Both Armies in South Africa," by Richard Harding Davis. Copyright by Charles Scribner's Sons.



A Japanese Artist's Conception of How the Russian War Ships at Port Arthur Were Sunk by Coast Defense Guns Firing from Behind Two Ranges of Hills.

smooth and devoid of natural cover and the glacis were steep and bare, so that machine guns and rifle fire might now down by hundreds the fighting men who would scramble up them.

The parapets proper were of masonry so tough that the mortars and heavy cannon of the besieging army did not damage them to any dangerous extent. It remained for the mines of the engineers to breach them.

From the inner line of defenses eighteen miles north to the narrowest part of the peninsula the fortifications extended, and masses of barbed wire, often electrified, were strung where they entangled hundreds of men while the machine guns and shrapnel literally tore them into shreds.

A book might be written on the siege of Port Arthur without going into important details, and no attempt can

as had been sacrificed in defending the positions against the Japanese assault. Early in August the investing army took Takshan and Shichoshan and the Russians were driven into what they termed their semi-permanent fortifications.

So far the Japanese had carried everything by assault. They were flushed with victory. Perhaps, too, they had come to somewhat underestimate the ability of the Russians and the strength of their works, but it is probable that the chief reason for the series of costly assaults on the inner works which followed was the popular sentiment in Japan which demanded the fall of Port Arthur by the Mikado's birthday, and which insisted that the city must be carried by storm.

At any rate, on August 19 the first attempt to carry the semi-permanent



Taking Horses Into Ladysmith To Be Made Into Soup. From "With Both Armies in South Africa," by Richard Harding Davis. Copyright by Charles Scribner's Sons.

General Nogi, who expressed the greatest admiration for General Stoessel, who surrendered to him.

carry Port Arthur by storm before their mining and sapping had been carried to a proper extent. On broad lines the siege operations were these:—Parallel to the Russian works and 1,000 yards from them, the Japanese dug deep trenches, covered by boards hidden under sod. From this parallel three zig-zag trenches were carried toward Ehrlung, Keewan and Panlung. They were six feet deep and eight feet wide and they could be seen through the trenches on stretchers and disposed of where it would not be seen by the Russians, who would at once realize what the offensive force was doing.

At last a great parallel was dug all around the foot of the fortified eastern front and the work of tunneling under the hills to the parapets of the forts, which were the objectives, was begun. Tons of dynamite were placed in cross tunnels under the walls and when these were exploded the infantry poured through the trenches to the attack and stormed up the glacis and through the broad walls.

Some of the fiercest fighting of the siege was at 203 Metre Hill, a position which the Japanese desired in order that their range finders might direct artillery fire to destroy the Russian field guns in the harbor and the very innermost defenses of the city.

More than a thousand five hundred men were killed or wounded in the fighting at this hill, which continued night and day by moonlight and under the rays of the skillfully manipulated searchlights. Once taken, the Japanese stationed observers on the hill and the range finders found by means of hypsometers, telescope-like instruments which, by a system of mirrors and lenses, enable a man to see what is before him, although he may be behind an embankment higher than his head.

Once in possession of this position, the besieging force commanded the entire city and harbor, and from behind two ranges of hills the great Japanese coast defense guns, which had been placed three miles away, sent shells high in the air and dropped them down through the decks and out the bottoms of the Russian ships, destroying the entire fleet in the harbor.

These guns were originally intended for coast defence in the Straits of Shimoneki and the Bay of Yezo, but they were transported to Dalny, whence they were taken by railroad fifteen miles to the range of hills. They were mounted by hand over muddy roads to the concrete foundations which had been constructed for them under the greatest difficulties. It required 800 men to haul one gun, the rifle alone weighing eight tons.

At an angle of sixty degrees elevation the range of these mortars was seven miles, but the Japanese were using them to fire at vessels only three miles away, and this is what enabled them to drop the shells down through the decks of the war ships.

At half-past four in the afternoon of January 1 General Stoessel wrote to General Nogi, offering to capitulate. The subsequent meeting of the two generals was private, but it is known that both complimented the other on the conduct of the operations and particularly on the bravery of their men.

General Stoessel asked General Nogi to accept his white Arabian charger, but the Japanese expressed his regret that with the capitulation all horses, arms and other equipment became the property of the Japanese nation, but he pledged his word to the vanquished Russian that the horse would be well taken care of.

Port Arthur is the greatest siege known to history and it has yet to be equalled in the present war. It may be that there is prophecy in the words of David James, written after he viewed the trenches of 203 Metre Hill:—

"What man has done, man will do again, and human shambles will not be confined to this solitary instance, although they may never exceed its greatness."

carry Port Arthur by storm before their mining and sapping had been carried to a proper extent.

On broad lines the siege operations were these:—Parallel to the Russian works and 1,000 yards from them, the Japanese dug deep trenches, covered by boards hidden under sod. From this parallel three zig-zag trenches were carried toward Ehrlung, Keewan and Panlung. They were six feet deep and eight feet wide and they could be seen through the trenches on stretchers and disposed of where it would not be seen by the Russians, who would at once realize what the offensive force was doing.

At last a great parallel was dug all around the foot of the fortified eastern front and the work of tunneling under the hills to the parapets of the forts, which were the objectives, was begun. Tons of dynamite were placed in cross tunnels under the walls and when these were exploded the infantry poured through the trenches to the attack and stormed up the glacis and through the broad walls.

Some of the fiercest fighting of the siege was at 203 Metre Hill, a position which the Japanese desired in order that their range finders might direct artillery fire to destroy the Russian field guns in the harbor and the very innermost defenses of the city.

More than a thousand five hundred men were killed or wounded in the fighting at this hill, which continued night and day by moonlight and under the rays of the skillfully manipulated searchlights. Once taken, the Japanese stationed observers on the hill and the range finders found by means of hypsometers, telescope-like instruments which, by a system of mirrors and lenses, enable a man to see what is before him, although he may be behind an embankment higher than his head.

Once in possession of this position, the besieging force commanded the entire city and harbor, and from behind two ranges of hills the great Japanese coast defense guns, which had been placed three miles away, sent shells high in the air and dropped them down through the decks and out the bottoms of the Russian ships, destroying the entire fleet in the harbor.

These guns were originally intended for coast defence in the Straits of Shimoneki and the Bay of Yezo, but they were transported to Dalny, whence they were taken by railroad fifteen miles to the range of hills. They were mounted by hand over muddy roads to the concrete foundations which had been constructed for them under the greatest difficulties. It required 800 men to haul one gun, the rifle alone weighing eight tons.

At an angle of sixty degrees elevation the range of these mortars was seven miles, but the Japanese were using them to fire at vessels only three miles away, and this is what enabled them to drop the shells down through the decks of the war ships.

At half-past four in the afternoon of January 1 General Stoessel wrote to General Nogi, offering to capitulate. The subsequent meeting of the two generals was private, but it is known that both complimented the other on the conduct of the operations and particularly on the bravery of their men.

General Stoessel asked General Nogi to accept his white Arabian charger, but the Japanese expressed his regret that with the capitulation all horses, arms and other equipment became the property of the Japanese nation, but he pledged his word to the vanquished Russian that the horse would be well taken care of.

Port Arthur is the greatest siege known to history and it has yet to be equalled in the present war. It may be that there is prophecy in the words of David James, written after he viewed the trenches of 203 Metre Hill:—

"What man has done, man will do again, and human shambles will not be confined to this solitary instance, although they may never exceed its greatness."

Prophets and the European War.

By Martin Petry.

THAT prophecy is a lost art is again exemplified by the European war, which was not predicted by a single one of the numerous astrologers who are constantly studying the stars. The only prophet who came anywhere near it was a young mathematician of Rochester, Mr. E. L. Johnson, who early in June predicted that the relations between Austria, Servia and Russia would be very much strained in August. He added, however, that diplomacy would settle the difficulty and that no real European war would come until 1918, and would then last three years.

Madame Thebes, the much talked of Parisian prophet, some time ago said that this would be a bad year for the Kaiser and predicted that his death would occur on September 29 of this year, but nothing happened to the Kaiser and Madame Thebes announced that she had made a mistake in her calculation, and so put the date of his demise in November of this year. Why or how she does this is a mystery to any one who knows anything about astrology.

Some English astrologers after the war started announced that it would last for a few months and that the Allies would be victorious. German astrologers stated that Germany would win, and so it goes. With many of these prophets the wish is father to the thought.

However, despite all this there really is a germ of truth in astrology, as any student of it can testify. The fault is not so much with astrology as with astrologers, who often disavow in their interpretation of a horoscope just as interpreters hold different opinions in their diagnoses of a case. The difficulty is that much of the ancient lore regarding astrology has been lost, and modern prophets are stumbling about in the dark hoping again to find the secret.

As it is, all that any astrologer can do is to point out fortunate or unfortunate periods, and that is all. For instance, when the malefic Saturn moves to an inharmonious aspect in an individual's

chart it is absolutely certain that it will have a harmful effect—it may bring illness to himself, financial troubles or have other baneful effects—but no astrologer can definitely state what it will be, and any prophet who does so simply guesses at it. It is the same way with a benefic planet, which may bring sudden good fortune, increase in health and vitality, and to one's prestige, &c. &c.

As with individuals so with countries. The zodiacal sign Gemini rules the United States, and an evil planet in that sign has always brought some difficulty for this country. Since 1912, when Saturn entered this sign, the United States has been in a delicate position as regards Mexico, and in 1898 when Saturn was in Scitarius, opposing Gemini, we had the war with Spain. In September Saturn passed out of Gemini and since then the Mexican question has gradually simmered down.

There are many aspects of the planets which it is known will positively produce certain results, but astrology has not yet risen to that point of efficiency and perfection where it can be definitely predicted when and what will take place. By taking the month an individual is born in, the disposition, temperament and general trend of his life can be stated with reasonable certainty. For instance, Leo persons are invariably light-hearted, luxury-loving persons who seldom have to resort to manual labor, while Scorpio persons are quiet, deep, secretive and carry out their plans in life with diplomatic skill. Thus the zodiacal signs run the gamut of every human emotion and trait of character, and these can be generally stated, but when it comes to figuring with mathematical accuracy when an event is to take place, that is as yet impossible, and any astrologer who attempts it deceives not only others but himself.

The characters of the planets is also pretty well known. For instance, there is the ponderous Uranus, known as the celestial ice-cream, which tears down only to build up anew. In evil aspect

this planet may cause serious and chronic diseases, or it may change an individual's views of life, and he may suddenly become radical after years of conservative living and thinking, and vice versa. Calculated by the procession of the equinoxes, Uranus was in the watery sign Pisces—the fishes—when Christ was born and gave the world a new religion. A few years ago Uranus entered the airy sign Aquarius, where this planet will remain for 2,000 years. While in this sign the best astrologers have long predicted a new era which "will have something to do with the air." Wireless telegraphy and the coming of the aeroplanes show how well they scented the matter.

Saturn affects the health principally when in bad aspect to the sun, and yet again it may bring financial loss. Jupiter rules wealth principally, while Mars is constantly associated with war. Yet a man may have Mars strong in his horoscope and have nothing at all to do with warfare; he will, however, be a fighter in whatever line of activity he may be engaged in during his life.

As for this European war, no astrologer can tell how long it will last, as the astrological signs are so complex that a Chinese puzzle is an easy task to solve in comparison. Jupiter just now is in Aquarius, which represents Prussia, but this planet will pass out of that sign within a few months. According to all known rules, Jupiter will assist Prussia's plans, but during the winter his benefic rays will no longer assist her. To properly study out the whole matter the horoscopes of every ruler, general, army brigade, naval fleet and admiral would have to be worked out mathematically correct, and this data is hard to get, and even if obtained, the task would be too monumental for any human mind. However, time will solve the whole matter. Meanwhile, it is well to remember that no prophet can definitely tell the result; that, while there is something in astrology, it will take years of careful study by superior minds to put it on a correct and definite basis.

The Seventh Infantry of the Ninth division was the organization which finally inserted a thin wedge in the Russian line, a wedge which, however, the Japanese were powerless to drive in. A group of men from the Seventh effected a lodgement in a dip of land between the East Panlung and "E" fortification.

A volunteer company of the West Panlung entered the airy sign Aquarius, where this planet will remain for 2,000 years. While in this sign the best astrologers have long predicted a new era which "will have something to do with the air." Wireless telegraphy and the coming of the aeroplanes show how well they scented the matter.

Saturn affects the health principally when in bad aspect to the sun, and yet again it may bring financial loss. Jupiter rules wealth principally, while Mars is constantly associated with war. Yet a man may have Mars strong in his horoscope and have nothing at all to do with warfare; he will, however, be a fighter in whatever line of activity he may be engaged in during his life.

As for this European war, no astrologer can tell how long it will last, as the astrological signs are so complex that a Chinese puzzle is an easy task to solve in comparison. Jupiter just now is in Aquarius, which represents Prussia, but this planet will pass out of that sign within a few months. According to all known rules, Jupiter will assist Prussia's plans, but during the winter his benefic rays will no longer assist her. To properly study out the whole matter the horoscopes of every ruler, general, army brigade, naval fleet and admiral would have to be worked out mathematically correct, and this data is hard to get, and even if obtained, the task would be too monumental for any human mind. However, time will solve the whole matter. Meanwhile, it is well to remember that no prophet can definitely tell the result; that, while there is something in astrology, it will take years of careful study by superior minds to put it on a correct and definite basis.

As with individuals so with countries. The zodiacal sign Gemini rules the United States, and an evil planet in that sign has always brought some difficulty for this country. Since 1912, when Saturn entered this sign, the United States has been in a delicate position as regards Mexico, and in 1898 when Saturn was in Scitarius, opposing Gemini, we had the war with Spain. In September Saturn passed out of Gemini and since then the Mexican question has gradually simmered down.

There are many aspects of the planets which it is known will positively produce certain results, but astrology has not yet risen to that point of efficiency and perfection where it can be definitely predicted when and what will take place. By taking the month an individual is born in, the disposition, temperament and general trend of his life can be stated with reasonable certainty. For instance, Leo persons are invariably light-hearted, luxury-loving persons who seldom have to resort to manual labor, while Scorpio persons are quiet, deep, secretive and carry out their plans in life with diplomatic skill. Thus the zodiacal signs run the gamut of every human emotion and trait of character, and these can be generally stated, but when it comes to figuring with mathematical accuracy when an event is to take place, that is as yet impossible, and any astrologer who attempts it deceives not only others but himself.

The characters of the planets is also pretty well known. For instance, there is the ponderous Uranus, known as the celestial ice-cream, which tears down only to build up anew. In evil aspect



Believed That Shell Dropped and Exploded.

Saddest Feature Loss is Nurture of Lives.

(By Special Wire to the COURIER.) SHEERNESS, Eng., via London, Nov. 27.—It is believed that the explosion of the Buwark was caused by the falling of a 12-inch lyddite shell magazine.

LONDON, Nov. 27.—The cable correspondent at Sheerness writes that the explosion of the Buwark, which occurred yesterday, was the saddest feature of the loss of lives.

ONLY FOURTEEN SAILED. Lying at her moorings in the harbor at Sheerness, the Buwark was literally torn to pieces by an explosion. There was a huge flame, a dense cloud of smoke, the battleship had vanished completely as though she had never existed. It is a sad sight, indeed, some of the vessels near the pier of glass or crockery were left. Even half inch plate glass windows were shattered, while the deck were hurled several yards from the ship.

RESCUE WORK USEFUL. Being lowered from the various ships and the rescue boats were called up from all directions came, however, on an almost errand. A warship cleared the way for the Buwark, and the work that there is nothing to float, and the vast mass of mangled metal and twisted wreckage before had vanished almost completely as though she never existed. It is a sad sight, indeed, some of the vessels near the pier of glass or crockery were left. Even half inch plate glass windows were shattered, while the deck were hurled several yards from the ship.

WORKMEN SEE EXPLOSION. Workmen ashore waiting for the Buwark to be raised, were looking casually at the harbor, not expecting anything in particular, when a flash of light in the sky, followed by a cloud of smoke, and a few brief minutes a ball of fire, and then the Buwark was seen to be floating in the water. The explosion was so sudden that the workmen were dazed by the severity of the explosion for a few moments credited their own senses amongst themselves as to whether they had counted before the explosion.

SAVED WERE ON LIFEBOATS. At once the harbor was filled with lifeboats. On all sides crews rushed on deck, some half stunned by the terrible explosion. The victims were removed to Sheerness pier where ambulances from Chatham were taken to the Buwark. The living number only 147. Over-night leave had been granted to a number of men from the ship, and these were returning to the Buwark to rejoin the Buwark. The explosion occurred. This ill-fated ship was at the dockyard. Just before noon ambulances bearing a number of the Buwark's crew were taken to the Buwark. At the time of the disaster the men were below deck and only a few on deck. Slightest chance of life. A shipbuilder, who was in the Buwark, was in the Buwark. No significance was attached to the Buwark's being accustomed as it is to heavy