

SINKING OF SEVASTOPOL.

Russian Battleship's Last Fierce Struggle at Port Arthur.

SPIES BETRAYED HER TO THE JAPS

Captain Von Essen Tells How, Encircled by Japanese Torpedo Boats, With Only One Hundred Men, He Fought With His Vesuvius to the End. Hussains Assailed by Enemy's Pearls—Incidents of the Siege.

Captain N. O. Von Essen of the Russian navy, who has been paroled by the Japanese government, commanded the battleship Sevastopol during the engagements at Port Arthur. He recently arrived in New York and thus related some of the details of the siege of Port Arthur to a reporter of the New York American.

Before I tell you of the conditions at Port Arthur let me recount my own experience on the Sevastopol, which will give you an idea of what we went through. Before the capture of Two Hundred and Three, the ship, which was the turning point in the siege, the Japanese had brought up huge guns and for weeks were shelling the harbor at random. You see, they could not tell the position of the ships, so that perhaps only I shell out of 200 would do any damage. As it was, we were hit five times, but not greatly crippled.

On Dec. 12 I was notified by General Stoesse that Two Hundred and Three-Meter hull had been lost and that this gave the Japanese a vantage point from which they could spit out their movements and direct the fire of their big guns. I determined to leave the harbor, but fortunately, owing to the fact that I was lying behind Liao Tishan hill, the enemy could get no clear view of my ship, and so for the time being at least I was comparatively safe. They could see only the tops of my masts, but the other ships were in plain view to them. They sent tremendous communique with ten inch guns, and one after the other the big battleships and cruisers listed over and went down in the shallow waters of the harbor. The officers and crews escaped.

On Dec. 17 they concentrated their fire on me, and I saw that I would have to abandon my position. It would have been useless for me to attempt to leave the harbor in the day, so I waited until darkness. The entrance to Port Arthur is very narrow and shallow, so that I had to wait till high tide, when I had to wait at midnight. In the blackness of the night we felt our way out and anchored behind the hills which shielded us completely from the fire of the enemy's guns.

At that time I had only 100 men on board. Of my total complement of 620, 300 had been killed or wounded or were lying sick at the hospital, and 200 had been sent ashore to re-entrench the army in working the batteries.

It was so dark that the Japanese did not see us as we left the harbor. It was two days before they discovered that we had gone. During that time they rained heavy shells, 300 or 400 a day, on the place where we had been. At the end of the second day they were informed of our location by spies. Again they turned their big guns upon us, but owing to our location this did little damage. We were struck by a number of six inch shells, but these did not explode in my cabin, but were not crippled to any extent. Finding it difficult to reach us from the shore, they sent a swarm of torpedo boats in to attack us.

I had lowered my nets and sent out booms, which gave us excellent protection. The first night twenty torpedo boats came at us from all sides. With the greatest daring they steamed in full speed on, and each launch threw from two to three torpedoes.

I was on the bridge at the time and only one of our searchlights, but those of the shore batteries, lit up the sea for miles. Our quick firing guns had been sent ashore, so that we only had our six and ten inch guns to work with, but the men fought them through all that long night until the whole ship shook from their tremendous discharges. I myself saw four Japanese torpedo boats go down from the effects of our shells. Twelve others, I learned afterward from reliable sources, were seriously damaged. The Japanese division commander, whose name I do not know, was killed.

Most of the torpedoes discharged at us were caught in our nets, and, while they all exploded, they did very little harm. What small damage was inflicted was repaired at once by our divers. Two days afterward they came at us again. Line ahead they passed within 1,200 yards or less, steaming in perfect order and launching their torpedoes as they went.

Once more we opened fire and beat them off, but again and again they returned to the attack with a fearlessness that I had never before witnessed in any war. One Japanese torpedo boat was so badly crippled that she became unmanageable, and I signaled to one of our boats to go after her. Unfortunately the men at our guns on shore could not distinguish our small boats from those of the enemy. My own men were exposed to a terrific fire from Stoesse's guns. In spite of this they managed to get up to the Japanese torpedo boat only to find that every soul on board had been killed by one of our great shells which had swept it from stem to stern. Our officer, seeing the conditions, backed away, sinking her with torpedoes.

The following night was one of the



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PREPARED, KAN., March 25, 1904.

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worst that we had. Nothing daunted by their two repulses, the Japanese swarmed in on us again from three sides, letting go torpedoes and firing at us with their machine guns. It was in the midst of a blinding snowstorm, while a heavy gale was whipping the sea, until it was almost impossible for the lighter craft to hold their own. Notwithstanding this small Japanese boat crept up within a few hundred yards of us, sending in a torpedo which struck the Sevastopol near the stern. It exploded with tremendous force. For a moment I thought that our ship was gone. Soon I realized that we were safe for the time being, but I found later that our steering gear had been badly crippled and that the officers' quarters had been wrecked. The Japanese, seeing that our ship was crippled, left us alone after this. I did the best I could to patch things up. I learned, however, that I could not restore the steering gear so as to give me a chance to escape to the open sea if I had so desired.

In the meantime General Stoesse had sent word to me that he desired me to take command of the batteries on Liao Tishan hill, with orders to bombard the Japanese position day and night. I ran a wire out from my vessel, connecting it with a telegraph. Thus

from my quarters on board I not only commanded the Sevastopol, but directed the men ashore. This went on for more than a week when on Jan. 1 General Stoesse telephoned me that it was all over.

He told me that it was useless to attempt to hold out longer and that he had sent word to the Japanese commander, making an offer of surrender. When I heard this I made up my mind at once that my ship should not fall into the hands of the enemy. I called my officers together, gave them their instructions and took my place on the bridge. Steering slowly with our engines, we heeled toward the open sea until we were about a mile offshore when I gave the order to slow down. Then I gave the order to open the sea valves, and gradually the water began to pour in. As I stood on the bridge I saw the huge hull slowly settle in the water. As she sank gradually the officers and crew left her in our boats, but I remained on deck until I felt her list starboard.

I gave her one last, long look and, going over the side, got into my launch. We stopped away probably 200 yards. When I looked back I saw her list suddenly to the air, turn bottom up and go down in thirty fathoms. The Japanese will never get her. She will rest on the bottom of the China sea for all time to come.

After the sinking of the ship we steamed into Port Arthur, where I immediately had an interview with General Stoesse. He told me that he had already arranged the terms of surrender and that the city in a few days was to pass into the hands of the Japanese. He was greatly affected, but declared that there was nothing else left for him to do. When he pointed out the conditions I realized that he was right. The story that he surrendered in spite of his officers is not true. General Stoesse is one of the bravest men in the Russian army, and if there had been any possible chance to hold out longer he would have been the last man to give up.

You cannot imagine the terrible condition of the city. The streets were literally plowed up from the rain of great shells from the Japanese guns, more than half the houses were demolished, the hospitals were packed with sick and wounded, many of the officers and men had not slept more than four hours a day for weeks, and what little provisions were left were of inferior quality and rapidly disappearing. General Stoesse explained that he considered that it would be simply torture to hold out longer. I agreed with him, and today I cannot but in those what he did.

After the surrender and before the Japanese took possession of the city I made a round of the new town, the docks and some of the fortifications. In the forts I found that the guns had been overthrown, the carriages smashed and the hillside torn up as if by an earthquake. Nobody will ever know how many thousands and thousands of shells, hundreds of thousands, I should say, had been poured in upon our soldiers during all these long weeks, until

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It was almost beyond human endurance to hold the position. The medical supplies had almost disappeared, 12,000 men had been killed or wounded and thousands more were sick. Nor must I forget the women. Led by General Stoesse's wife, they had worked as faithfully as the men. Among them were many widows whose husbands had been killed in action or had died of sickness, but they talked day after day, acting as nurses and tending to the wants of those who were unable to take care of themselves.

General Stoesse's wife brought away with her from Port Arthur more than twenty orphan children of her husband's officers, and I understand that she is taking them all back to Russia with her.

This war has taught us a great many new lessons. Europe had no idea of the strength of the Japanese; they are magnificent fighters, brave, determined and efficient in that is best in military science. Their sailors I do not believe have any superiors in the world.

More of French Dancing Masters. French dancing masters have formed a Societe Academique des Professeurs de Danse de France. The director of the association is Professor Desrat, who proposes, with his colleagues, to run the saloons in opposition to the "exotic and inartistic" performances borrowed from the black people of Santo Domingo and elsewhere," alias the cakewalk.

New Orleans' First Apartment House. Building operations to the extent of about \$2,000,000 were completed during 1904, including an apartment house, says the Manufacturers' Record, the first of its kind in New Orleans.

The cowboy element is in no danger of falling out of American life through race suicide, according to recent statistics of Cuppl's doings in the great range districts. It seems that no fewer than 4,200 white men have taken Sioux brides. Why dusky ladies are chosen in preference to palefaces is a nut for sociologists to crack. But there seems to be no reason other than a purely social one why Indians and whites should not intermarry. The Indians have been subjugated and are, in a sense, a subject race. In the past, however, Indian blood has made many strong characters among the whites. Since they have no social future, the Indians may be doomed to degeneracy. Inter-marriage might prevent total decay and preserve what was best in the once noble red man.

A proposition of the New York restaurant proprietors to do away with music at the dinner hour stirs up discussion as to the relation between music and digestion. The restaurant keepers doubtless took no thought beyond furnishing a novel attraction for patrons. What better "novel of sweet sounds" or improved digestion or both combined built up custom, the caterers didn't stop to inquire. If the music no longer pays, as alleged, and has to go, the interest of good digestion would be served by sending early waiters and tip tends into exile too.

The perfect railroad has yet to be constructed. What is called the "creeping" of the track is an evil which railway men are trying to surmount, says the Railway Age. Rails creep with the direction of the traffic, except on heavy grades. They creep faster under fast traffic or heavy traffic than they do under slow or light traffic. Among the prime causes are short rails, isolated supports, insufficient spikes, insufficient splices.

Thirty Minnesotans as Wolf Baiters. From the number of applications for wolf bounties which come from localities comparatively well settled it is reasoned that in some portions of Minnesota, says the St. Paul Pioneer-Press, wolves are being raised simply for the purpose of killing them after they become full grown in order to get the \$7.50 bounty which the state gives for each carcass. "I am convinced," said a state official, "that there are Indians in the northern counties who understand the value of a wolf carcass as well as does their pale faced brother. There is no doubt that they raise wolves for the bounty." It is stated that the bounties paid show that wolves are on the increase instead of decreasing.

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