

ON THE SHORES OF THE WHITE SEA

FROM THE LETTERS OF LIEUT.-
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It is very hard to give you any idea of what the situation is in Northern Russia. It is so variable; everything changes from day to day. Besides, the distances are so great that what applies to one part of the coast cannot be assumed to be true of another. Generally speaking, the northern part (Pechenga, Murman, etc.), which has lately been threatened by Finns and Germans, was under Bolshevik government (sovdep, soviets, etc.) in earlier days. After the revolution, although nominally still allies of Russia, we had little influence there, and English subjects and English stores were imperiled, until the arrival of our soldiers afforded them protection. Whether the Bolsheviks would have let us into Archangel at all then, I don't know. Anyhow, Archangel, in the spring, was blocked with ice, and ten diplomats in trawlers, who were sent to find out, were unsuccessful in getting into the town. About a month after our arrival, Lenine and Trotzky ordered us to clear out. Up to that time they had so completely fooled us, that we really did not know on whose side they were. The next thing that happened was a sort of monarchical uprising in Kem. Fortunately, the three biggest scoundrels in the place were shot, but this did not tend to increase the good feeling toward us. When the Karelian coast was cleared of the Red Army, who were by this time more or less open enemies of ours, the German Finns, a third element, came threatening to turn us out. So it was a three-cornered contest. The rabid, and, one might say, the more genuine Bolsheviks, hate the 'German capitalist' no less than

the 'Franco-English,' but the more wily element is forming up German prisoners to fight for him, while at the same time, in other localities, there is practically a state of war between Germany and Russia. So that we were never sure what reception we should have in the various ports we visited, and I was sent ashore to make speeches to the people, and find out, by experimental trips, whether they were friendly or not. One of these was to the Solvetski Island, which has the oldest and most beautiful monastery in Russia. When I had finished my work, I was received in the monastery by the senior monk, an Archimandrite, with whom I had a Russian conversation, lasting at least two hours, and put in a lot of good work. On the next day, too, I had another long business talk with him, and borrowed a large ship. After business, I went to the evening service in one of the most gorgeous churches I have ever seen — all gold and blue. There were sixteen monks to be admitted, and I witnessed the old mediæval ceremony with intense interest. It is all Russia of two or three hundred years ago. No man cuts his hair or shaves; and the singing, in rich, deep — phenomenally deep — voices, was very inspiring. The Archimandrite himself wore green and gold vestments, with a gold crown. He was assisted by sixteen priests in green, gold, and scarlet vestments. All around were the wild unkempt monks with long beards — hair down to their waists — singing songs in the old Bulgarian Church Slavonic, which may be hundreds of years old. The scene was beyond words impressive. The monastery is wonderfully beautiful — all white with green cupolas, some with golden stars — and I was delighted to have had the opportunity of seeing it, especially as my mission proved so successful.

But as regards Archangel. We left under the most depressing conditions of fog and rain, and were very nearly in sight of Modguga Island before things began to clear up; even then there was a coldish wind. The first thing we did was to go alongside the light vessel not far off and remove all pilots. Then we called on the island to surrender by telephone, giving them half an hour to think it over. In the last three minutes they agreed, and the commander promised to meet our people on the beach; so we approached and prepared soldiers for landing. During the delay in doing this, some brave individual at Archangel inspired them to retract their promise, so they did not hoist the white flag, but made us a signal not to land. About this time aeroplanes reported that the guns were all trained upon us, and it was becoming a very unpleasant situation, as we had large numbers of men in boats on our engaged side, so that we could not fire our guns. Fortunately, they did not open fire, and we drew off to a distance a little over three miles at slow speed and anchored. I was actually walking along the port side of the upper deck when the two foremost four-inch opened fire. Hearing them, I immediately went to my bombarding station on the fore-bridge, and weighed in with my two six-inch. At first we went over, and fires began to break out in the wood behind. It was rather difficult to find them, because their opening shots were falling short too. But they were not idle, and by degrees the shots began to come up. At first they were only fountains in the distance; but soon one began to hear the crack as the shells exploded, and to feel things whizzing. It was just beginning to get rather unpleasant, when the aeroplanes appeared and dropped an enormous bomb very close to their battery, and gave them a good dose of small ones.

About this time a six-inch shell burst in our foremost funnel, and destroyed the voice-pipe to after-control. As my guns ceased firing, I dashed along fore-and-aft bridge to after-control, and soon got them going again. Our firing was then very accurate; every shell was finding them, and it was a treat to see the way they burst. Their fire soon slacked off, especially after a few more heavy bombs had been dropped. As soon as they ceased firing we went to the north end of the island, landed our troops, and followed them as they swept down the island.

It was a good long job, and it was quite late before we finished, including securing the observation mine-houses. In the distance we saw two armed ice-breakers, Siratoga and Mikula Selyaninovitch. We did not approach them for fear of mines, but fancied they would come out to fight. As they showed no signs of moving, at 11 P.M., we got to sleep after a long and tiring day, but as I had the morning watch (*i.e.*, from 4 A.M.), I did not get much. Next morning we approached the ships, flying the signal to surrender, until we found they were deserted. There was another large steamer, close by, with a heavy list, which sank, most dramatically, before our eyes. We had a good deal of delay here, sounding the channel, and looking out for mines, and during this time we received a message that a revolt had taken place in our favor at Archangel, and after a conference it was decided to press on there at all costs.

The procession was led by a trawler; after that we followed, and the remaining ships in order. Fugitives from Modguga had spread terrible stories of our bombardment, and the Red Army had left the town in a panic, but were reported as 'likely to return.' The whole way down was like a trip on the

Broads, through lovely green fields and woods. As we got to the more populated parts, it was like a triumphal progress, and in Archangel itself we were received with tremendous cheering, all the steamboats hooting furiously.

We anchored, and hoped for a peaceful evening; but it was not long before we were disturbed. The armed yacht, *Gorislava*, opened fire on a tug-load of men, who were sent to arrest her crew. We went alongside, and found two of their crew dead, and the yacht under arrest. We took it back to Archangel, and again hoped for peace, and a good night's rest, but it was not to be. We had an urgent signal that the Red Army was returning to Bakharitsa Island, the main rail-head of Archangel, where all the quays are, on the opposite side of the river Dwina.

I was sent away in charge of a landing party from our ship, which we had previously drilled and exercised. As soon as we got to the landing place (it was about three miles off), we saw an excited crowd of local Russian pirates, all giving news of large approaching forces. We got into a train, and succeeded in getting some life into the driver, who had bad 'cold feet,' with the result that we were taken to a place about a mile and a half from a hill, where I supposed the enemy would be. My suppositions were correct. As soon as the matelot began to shuffle out, in his usual casual way, they began a brisk little fusillade, which made him skip under cover pretty soon. We crept along the embankment to within one thousand yards of the hill, and just as I was wondering what to do next, the ship opened a brisk bombardment on the railway cutting, along which, unknown to us, about three hundred Bolsheviks were advancing. The cap-

tain had seen them from the ship. The shooting was very good indeed, and soon scattered the enemy; we were able to occupy the hill with little opposition. I sent out Russian parties to examine the wireless station, and then occupied it. After that we were able to advance, and hold the railway station, but we had an anxious time, as we heard news of armored trains. However, as soon as we saw any trains approaching, we signaled off to the ship to bombard, whereupon they disappeared at once. We occupied the station so quickly that telegraphic communication to the (Bolshevik) staff was still intact, and I received an order from Trotzky to burn all coal, and destroy shipping at Archangel. I also got a telephone from Kedrov, the Red Army chief, but I said the Red Army staff was not at home, and would return at five.

Just an hour later, the General and Admiral arrived, and told me to impersonate a Bolshevik *komisar*, and give the commander a fake message, when he rang up at five.

We had a rather trying day, for we were a small party, and I kept on receiving all kinds of alarming reports, which I knew were founded on fact. I knew that five hundred Bolsheviks had been scattered, but where — as I knew that they had not gone off by train? There were the most extraordinary scenes in the station. All the inhabitants flocked there, each with a rifle and fixed bayonet, even the most peaceful. Everyone came to me. I ran all the train traffic, and also the local defense forces, collected information from scouts and patrols, and chased all round the town telephoning. Of course one has to assume something, and I assumed it was all right. The local native has a great respect for the British uniform.

People cannot realize what it is like

now in Russia. All organization has gone. The only thing that remains is a sort of town guard, which carries rifles and bayonets, but usually this works in three sections, each highly suspicious of the other — town guard, railway-workers' guard, and saw-mills' guard. Every town is stiff with rifles and machine guns, unfortunately, all in the most beautiful working order. There are no police, no relief for the poor. As for the sick they are pushed from place to place till they die. '*Bolnikh nam ne nado.*' ('We don't want sick people.') People in Archangel are not so badly off for food; but Petrograd is literally starving, and poor are dying in the streets. Tariff for droskies is 25 rubles a journey, 50 rubles when there is rifle firing going on, 100 when there is machine-gun firing. The Bolsheviki are simply lunatics; you should see their papers. They have had a terrible reign of terror. I have talked to a lot of people, who have all been sentenced to death, but, being warned, were out when the executioner called. One of our officers was sent on a special mission. When he reached within twenty yards of the shore, a man rushed out saying, '*Eedi syuda, tovarishah*' ('Come here, friend'), and in a moment machine guns and rifles were turned upon him, killing one of the crew, and wounding three others.

The country is now physically and morally dead, and the poisonous products of her decay appear in the form of 'undesirable elements,' who form up in bands and go round eradicating bourgeois. The Russians strike one as being absolutely weary of all revolutions and disorders; but there does not seem to be the least chance of the Bolshevik government falling, as long as their policy of 'nationalizing' every article of value is so acceptable to the undisciplined rabble of the late

army. The country is full of 'undesirable elements,' who go about in bands, holding up and destroying villages, while the towns are full of soldiers of different types — Circassians in Cossack rig, with an enormous collection of knives for various purposes, and Serbians (whom I admire immensely), besides the ordinary Russians. The Serbians are very keen soldiers, but talk very bad Russian. On one occasion I gave an 'undesirable element' to a troop of Serbians, and said: 'Take him away; see that he goes over the bridge, and tell him if he comes back, he will be shot at once.' The sergeant only heard the words 'shoot him,' and started galloping off with a smile all over his face. It went to my heart to have to call him back, and stop his acting at once.

But the ordinary Russian is sick to death of war and revolution, and when it comes to fighting, he is not to be relied on. In one case some leading Bolsheviki had just left a town, when their opponents arrived. 'They must be brought back at once; get an engine.' One was brought with full steam up. But no sooner did it appear to be gaining on the Bolsheviki's train than the occupants became alarmed, and made the driver slacken his pace, and finally stop and return whence he came. They had no taste for possible unpleasantness.

Russia, as far as I have seen it, is at present the land of mingled tragedy and comic opera. Comic opera is represented by the marchings and countermarchings of the Red, White, Blue, and Green armies, which pervade these coasts; and tragedy by the devilish 'Council of Social Intelligence' which sits at Moscow, and defines the amount of education a man may possess without being taken away and shot.

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THE YOUNG SOLDIER AND THE UNIVERSITIES

WHAT do they feel, those crowds of young men who are now returning to the old Universities from scenes of war? They are returning, we are told, in swarms so numerous that two men have to be stuffed into each set of rooms. That may not sound very terrible to men accustomed to sleeping sixteen in a tent, or four in a dugout, but to the academic mind it is revolutionary; it is almost Bolshevik. Two rooms for two men! One man one room! It savors of the lower classes. Why, then, do the soldiers swarm back, reducing the recognized standard of University existence? And what do they feel like now that they have come?

Take old Oxford, for instance, as having been once familiar to the writer. Her appearance has been renewed, it is true, like an aging beauty's face. Her buildings have been scraped, and hoary stones which used to peel away like the lichens on rocks, now look clean and brown and fresh as paint. New buildings have arisen, some in studious imitation of the old, some elaborate with the finials and decorations of four-post beds. About the very quadrangles there is an air of youth renewed, and if only axes were laid to the roots of the Virginia creepers, even the most thickly obscured architecture might emerge into definite beauty from the blurred and effeminate picturesqueness of the colored post card. The city also has developed a vitality of her own, and her most sanctified streets are thronged with men and women occupying their business in other things than books. Far out on every side but one, where Thames and all her tributaries set some limit, extend the red and yellow suburbs, some

sheltering in gardens the homes of married dons, hopeful nurseries of the Oxford accent; others serving as coverts for unknown working classes who toil like other people in the world; as at the manufacture of marmalade, for instance, which has characteristically become a leading Oxford industry. Nothing remains the same. All is in growth, or slides away like the river. Seldom and more seldom appear the shapeless and maundering figures muttering Latin tags or outbursts of scholarly spleen as they shuffle along the pavements, oblivious to the outer world. Perhaps more seldom, too, trips the introspective priest, delicately treading the *Via Media* under a King in all things ecclesiastical as well as civil supreme. It is even whispered that the established and endowed robbery of Undergraduates is passing away, and 'scouts' boil with indignation at the thought that they may no longer steal. Can it be true that the relics of vast breakfasts and lunches shall no longer be swept away with the tablecloth, never to be seen again by the Undergrad, who might have lived on them in luxury for a fortnight, or sent them by post to the parents who pay his bills? Can it be true that dim and shadowy women will no longer glide through the porter's lodge as evening falls, and, as though by miraculous multiplication, bear away twelve baskets full?

Thus all things change, and many a fond student, returning from the war at the age of twenty-three or twenty-five, must feel like the hero upon whom divine affection bestowed the questionable gift of immortality. All the more because at a University the generations last but three or four years instead of twenty-five, and at forty a don is an old fogey who has outlived six or seven generations since his youth. The returning hero, fresh from battle-