

# Some Fortresses That Have Been Death Traps

**S**INCE the Russo-Japanese war began the Japanese have believed that the fall of Port Arthur would mean the realization of everything they have sought, the abundant occupation of their hearts' desire. The occupation of this fortress by the Russians and their stubborn refusal to abide by terms which were practically of their own making were the cardinal points of their offense, and the earnest, dominant heart of the island nation was an ever patient unit in its determination to repair the wrong and punish the perpetrator of it. There is no form of defeat so unbearable, so utterly repulsive to national pride, as that which is achieved by diplomatic trickery. No accession of Manchurian victories could serve to appease Japan's national amour propre. Port Arthur was the only remedy that could heal this stubborn wound. This was the spirit in which the doughty little empire, having taken stock of its resources and weighed with infinite precision the advantages and disadvantages of the Gibraltar and began that conflict which it knew meant in the event of the most favorable issue only a costly revenge. Since that memorable February day when the Japanese fleet appeared in the Port Arthur cove there has never been a moment of hesitation. With all her cleverness in masking her footsteps and compelling speculation to take the place of certainty, Japan has been childlike in her frankness with regard to her intention to make the capture of the coveted fortress the main feature of the war.

Russia, although she had thus obtained possession of an open seaport on the east Asian coast, was not unconscious of the slender tenure of her enforced holding. That this was the fact is proved by the feverish haste with which she set about to strengthen her position. First, the great Transiberian railroad was pushed down to the new base. Fabulous sums of money were lavished on new fortifications. A vast naval scheme involving the building of a fleet which should easily dominate the Pacific was set in motion. Thousands of Chinese coolies were put to work to construct the largest docks in the world. New forts were erected and equipped with the most modern ordnance. Naval depots were provided at Vladivostok and the new city of Dalny. Military depots sprang up at Harbin and Mukden. Strategic points on the Yalu were garrisoned. Under the pretense of promoting commercialism several ports—some of them in Korea—were seized, fortified and garrisoned.

Now and then faint diplomatic protests were forwarded to St. Petersburg, but for the most part the nations of the world held aloof and wondered. It is characteristic of the moral frailty of humankind that they even admitted. No one was deceived, least of all the former occupants of Port Arthur. The senseless national eye of Russia's island enemies was never turned aside. It was no part of Japan's intention to be precipitate. She saw that her enemy's class of preparation was ever on the increase, and she bore in mind the burden of her proverb—that a surfeited sea has no defense. She could well afford to wait, but not too long.

A paltry subsidy of a million dollars longer would have given that really energetic Muscovite an opportunity to perfect his details. Japan waited until that fateful breaking off of diplomatic relations on Feb. 6. Within the next four hours her fleet, which had been unostentatiously gathering in Saicho harbor, put an end to the waiting and two days later put an end to Russia's ill-fated dream.

Instead of a safe haven into which the fleet and garrison might withdraw in perfect security it has proved to be a veritable death trap. Better a thousand times for Russia's men and warships if this fortified military toy had never been constructed. It is a well established fact that fortresses some times become sources of greater danger to the nation that erects and maintains them than to any enemy against whom they have been designed. Most of the disasters which have befallen the Russian standard in Manchuria are on account of the investment of Port Arthur, and the successes that have come to the Japanese are directly referable to the same cause. But for Port Arthur—and in a lesser degree Vladivostok—the Japanese might have had to fight on land, and at times and in places of Russia's own choosing. As it was, Russia had deprived herself of all volition in the matter because she was compelled to defend her costly fortress. As a matter of fact, the average fortress is not unlikely to prove to be a most disappointing affair. It sometimes fails utterly to accomplish the purpose for which it was erected, and not infrequently, instead of becoming an actual protector, it turns out to be a point, which requires a great deal of protection, often at much inconve-

nience and with loss of life. Fortresses are designed and built in time of peace and are fashioned to meet a theory of what is likely to occur when war makes its appearance. When war comes it is so frequently unlike what has been anticipated that the costly defensive structure is found to be practically useless.

Toulon, for instance, was designed as a stronghold which was to be capable of withstanding any force that might be brought against it from seaward. The best French engineers were engaged in its construction, and infinite pains were taken to prevent any error of construction. It seems never to have occurred to the experts who had bestowed such scrupulous care upon its seaward side

that it might be attacked from landward. That was precisely the manner in which it was approached. The young French Republicans, with whom was a lieutenant of artillery named Napoleon Bonaparte, besieged and bombarded it from the land side, and it was taken without difficulty.

An instance of the fallibility of judgment displayed by American strategists during the civil war may be found in the case of the taking of Fort Sumter. That fortress was built originally to protect the city of Charleston from the attack of a hostile fleet. The possibility of the city falling into the hands of the hostiles had not been provided for, and the Confederate forces, with great lack of consideration for the plans of the builders, bombarded the fort from landward and speedily effected its capture with slight loss to themselves.

A military man who has been entrusted with the conduct of a campaign may find himself sorely hampered at the very outset by having to look out for the safety of this or that expensive for-

ness. Instead of being entirely free to formulate his own scheme of managing the campaign and to make what he believes to be the best preparations to thwart the enemy he is obliged to modify his course by the necessity which arises for him to send troops and munitions either to relieve or to hold secure some distant stronghold which at the moment is of no possible advantage and is likely to prove a burden. The loss of Sedan in the Franco-Prussian war was a remarkable example of this state of affairs.

Another of the ways in which a great fortress may contribute to a nation's undoing is by inspiring a disastrous overconfidence. Some strongholds appear so formidable that the nations possessing them are likely to place overreliance in them as barriers against all coming foes and to neglect other necessary means of defense. It is also a fact that troops trained to garrison duty within fortifications are not remarkably efficient when employed in the open field.

Sevastopol was an example of a fortress that in the end was more injuri-

ous to its owners than to their enemies. Russia, having built the great stronghold at a cost which taxed the resources of even that mighty despotism, was compelled to mass her armies and fleets in the vicinity for its protection when the French and English landed in the Crimea. No other arrangement could have given more satisfaction to

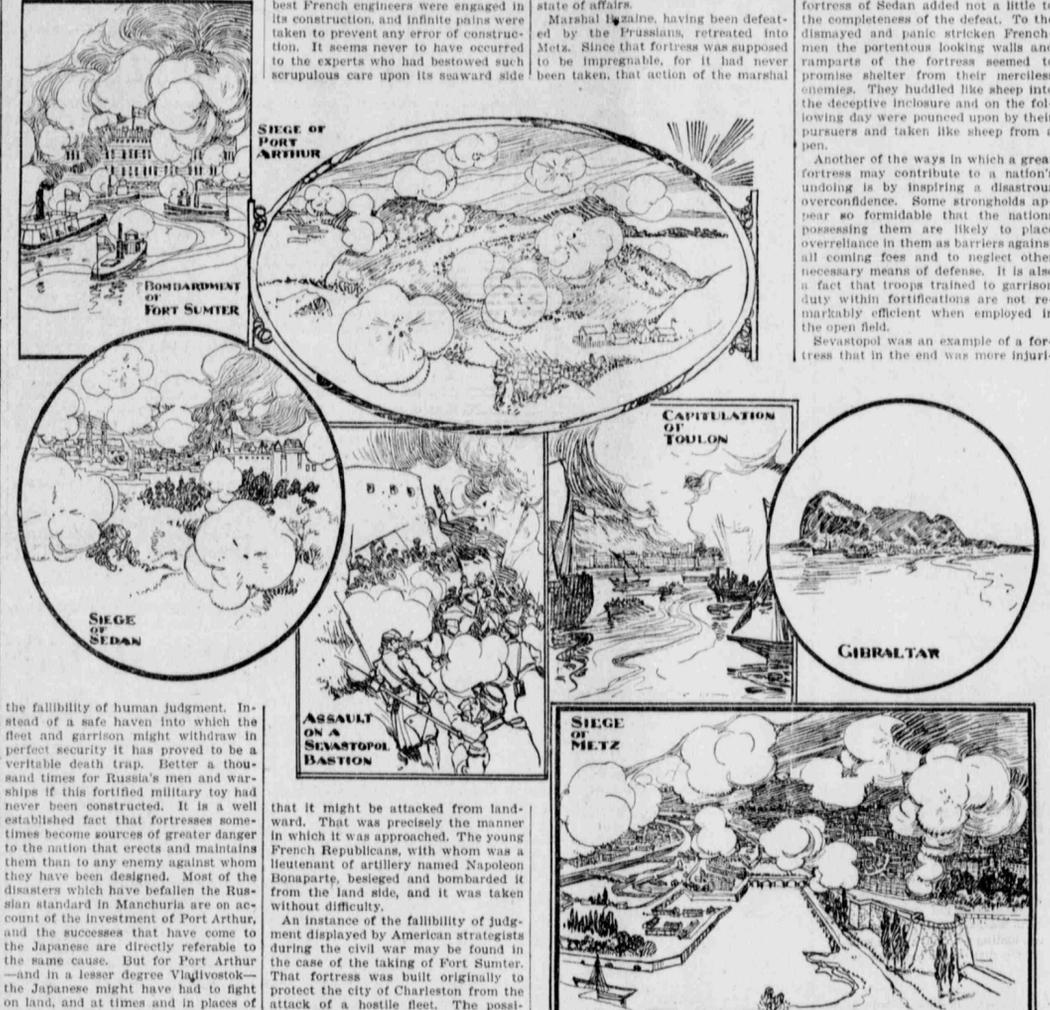
the allies. It gave them something tangible and concentrated to strike at. To this was added the great advantage of the open sea as a base. Their defeat should have served as a useful lesson to the Muscovites against the folly of concentrating their fighting strength at a single point.

There are two fortresses which have never been taken since they were well fortified—Cronstadt and Gibraltar. These are the only examples of permanent and elaborate strongholds which have thus far answered all expectations and have never been captured, though one of them—Gibraltar—has been violently assailed. It is possible that Russia's confidence in her ability to transform Port Arthur into an unconquerable fortress was inspired by her pride in Cronstadt. This redoubtable fortification is built on the island of Kotlin, in the gulf of Finland. It is only thirty-one miles from St. Petersburg and would be of good service in the event of a Finnish insurrection as a check to any sudden move on the capital. It was founded by Peter the Great in 1710 and still contains the little cabin in which that sturdy despot lived. It has three harbors accommodating 1,000 vessels. It fairly bristles with earthworks, forts and batteries.

The strategic worth of Gibraltar was known to the ancients. It was one of the Pillars of Hercules, which were crowned by the Phoenician mariners with silver columns to mark what they believed to be the limits of navigation. In the year 711 an Arab chief built a fortress on the rock. The Castilians and the Moors were tenants for variable periods. In 1540 Charles V. built extensive defenses on the promontory. In 1704 the rock was captured by the Dutch and English fleet which was in the service of Archduke Charles of Austria. But the Archduke did not get it; it was seized by the English shortly after the fashion of the Russian occupation of Port Arthur. The British proceeded to erect the famous stronghold as it now appears, and it has never been taken, although it has had some stirring experiences. One siege lasted three years, seven months and twelve days.

Mafeking and Ladysmith, although little more in a strictly military sense than fortified camps, may be cited as examples of long and heroic endurance. Neither of these famous places was either reduced or stormed, both holding out heroically until relieved. The position of Ladysmith was not an ideal spot for an encampment. On three sides of it, at a distance of three or four miles, were numerous hills. On the summits of these the Boers had mounted their guns. The town was the railway terminus from Durban, and there seemed to be no especial reason why it should be held. In the old days of the first Transvaal war it was a garrison town, and afterward the troops were withdrawn. In 1897 it was again made a camp, and earthworks were built. It was jokingly remarked at the time that the new activity was due to the necessity of providing some distraction for the soldiers, who were on the point of succumbing from ennui. There were always about 2,000 men at the camp, and they lived under canvas.

It would be absurd to suppose that Ladysmith was impregnable. It has been likened to a hamlet built in a teacup. To show how stubbornly it was held it is sufficient to state that the Boers began the siege on Nov. 2, 1899, and it was defended by General Buller and his gallant troops until the following May, when a relief force under Lord Dundonald rescued it from what was speedily becoming a perilous situation. As for Mafeking, it was still less entitled to be dignified with the name of fortress. It was a small border camp



SOME FAMOUS SIEGES.

## Chairmen of the Two Great National Committees

**T**HERE are at least two qualities which must be a part of the composition of the successful chairman of a national committee—personal magnetism and a capacity for unlimited work. Nor must these qualities be present in a barely appreciable or even a qualified degree. They must be in excess—so dominant, in fact, that all other human attributes are dwarfed into comparative insignificance. It has been affirmed of this all important individual, rather indecantly, but not less forcibly, that he must handle the all can, examine the joints and pull the lever of the party machine. Liberally translated, that means that he must be possessed of an insight that is almost superhuman, a persuasiveness that is as subtle as it is potent and a judgment that is faultless.

In conducting a presidential campaign one of the earliest and the most important of the duties of the national chairman after the candidates have been notified of their nominations is to appoint an executive committee of three and to make himself chairman of that wheel within a wheel. Thereafter the party's fortunes are in the hands of that powerful triumvirate. It may be a rational machine, amenable to reason, open to conviction, responsive to suggestion, but as far as all practical purposes are concerned its decisions are beyond appeal. The active and responsible head of it all is the chairman, and he must indeed prove himself a veritable political thaumaturgus if at the close of the campaign he can count more friends than remain than enemies that have risen.

This year both of the great political machines have entrusted the business management of the campaign to men who, although comparatively untried at this species of executive requirement, have furnished abundant evidence of their fitness.

Thomas Taggart, the new chairman of the Democratic national committee, is a native of Ireland, born Nov. 17, 1856, in County Monaghan. At the age of four years he was brought to America by his parents, who settled in Ohio. In 1877 young Taggart removed to Indianapolis and entered the service of the proprietors of a chain of popular restaurants. In 1889 he was appointed superintendent of his employers' interests in the Indianapolis business and eventually became the principal owner of the concern.

In 1888 Mr. Taggart made his first political venture. He sought and obtained the Democratic nomination for county auditor of Marion county. At that time both city and county were considered hopelessly Republican, but of managing a campaign has long been the admiration of both political parties. He is famous as a conciliator. It is a common saying in Indiana that any political tangle that Tom Taggart cannot unravel is too hopeless for further consideration. As an evidence of the confidence which he has won from

New York's social and business circles of a past generation. As a boy young Cortelyou studied at various public and private schools in New York city and accented himself favorably in each of them, being studious as well as unusually bright. When he was seventeen he was graduated from the Hempstead

notable unselfishness. That the president's confidence in his former secretary had not diminished during Mr. Cortelyou's short oversight of the new department was evidenced by his selection for the trying and most difficult position of chairman of the national committee.

The Cortelyous have established a very satisfactory position in Washington's social life. There are four children, three boys and a small girl, and the modest home in Maryland avenue is one of the most popular gathering places on Capitol hill. It is especially frequented by the musical and literary set.

GEORGE W. SLOANE.

**LOUISE OF ARGYLL.**

Princess Louise is the most retiring member of the British royal family; so much so, in fact, that she has a curious objection to being photographed, and there are but one or two portraits of her in circulation. When visiting any health resort both the duke and duchess prefer to go incognito and like to be treated as ordinary visitors. As showing her royal highness' great objection to "fuss" it is interesting to record that when she desired to indulge in cycling several years ago she became a member of a cyclists' club established at Chelsea under an assumed name and thus learned to ride. Skating is the only other physical recreation of which the Duchess of Argyll is fond. She is a singularly graceful skater, possessing a knowledge of every trick in the way of fancy skating, and, for a woman, is an exceedingly good speed skater. It was in Canada during her husband's term of office as governor general that the princess acquired her great skill on the ice, and even among the native born Canadians she was noted for her cleverness in this direction.

THOMAS TAGGART, CHAIRMAN OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

GEORGE B. CORTELYOU, CHAIRMAN OF THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

Taggart had made so many friends that he was elected by a handsome majority. He served two terms as auditor, and in 1892 he was made chairman of the state central committee. In this trying position he quickly demonstrated his special faculty for organizing.

Mr. Taggart has made more reputation as a shrewd political manager than as an officeholder. He is held

in high esteem in his home city by all parties and has established a reputation for uprightness that will serve him admirably in his political elevation. He is a married man, with his wife and six children, lives in a beautiful home at 819 North Capitol avenue.

George Bruce Cortelyou, chosen by

**AT HOME AND ABROAD.**

Every fifth boy in India is at school and only every fifth girl.

Paris has the biggest debt of any city in the world. It amounts to \$400,000,000.

The largest serpent ever measured was a Mexican anaconda, which was found to be thirty-seven feet in length.

The common house fly sounds the note F in flying. This means that its

wings vibrate 335 times a second. The honeybee sounds A, implying 440 vibrations to the second.

Durham, England, possesses four dogs to every pig, while in Lincolnshire there are four pigs to every dog. In Lincolnshire there are more pigs than in any other county, the number reaching no fewer than 116,948.

In the tropical northern territory of

South Australia travelers need not carry a compass. The district abounds with the nests of the magnetic or meridian ant. The longer axes of these nests point due north and south.

Pawnbrokers and bankers in Russia are suffering from the blows administered to them by the state bank. The bank advances money on all kinds of goods at an annual interest of 4% per cent.

Some of the interesting exhibits of

Wyoming in the miners' department at the world's fair is a single piece of soda weighing 6,000 pounds. It was cut from Soda Lake, in Albany county, and is the largest single piece of soda ever exhibited.

Having been restored in white marble at a cost of over \$500,000, the ancient Stadium of Athens has been opened for athletic sports.

A public school teacher at Baireuth, Germany, was condemned the other

day in court to pay a fine of \$22 for cruelty to pupils. Among other things he had compelled one boy to kneel for five successive days during all the school hours.

Fresh operations against the porpoises, which are spoiling the sardine fishery on the coast of Brittany, are to be undertaken by a French torpedo boat.

Another innovation in the Russian department of commerce and naviga-

tion is the determination to open the department to the employment of women as bookkeepers, correspondents and typewriters independent of the proportion of men employed.

The Marquis of Breadalbane owns a service of gold plate which is one of the finest in the world. It is valued at \$600,000. That of Lord Rothschild is worth about \$500,000.

The largest tree in the eastern hemisphere, if not in the world, is a mon-

ster chestnut standing at the foot of Mount Etna. The circumference of the main trunk at sixty feet from the ground is 212 feet.

The amount of money annually received in Greece from Greek emigrants to the United States is assuming proportions that have attracted the attention of the Greek government, bankers and public. Greek officials estimate that over \$1,930,501.93 thus reached Greece during 1903.