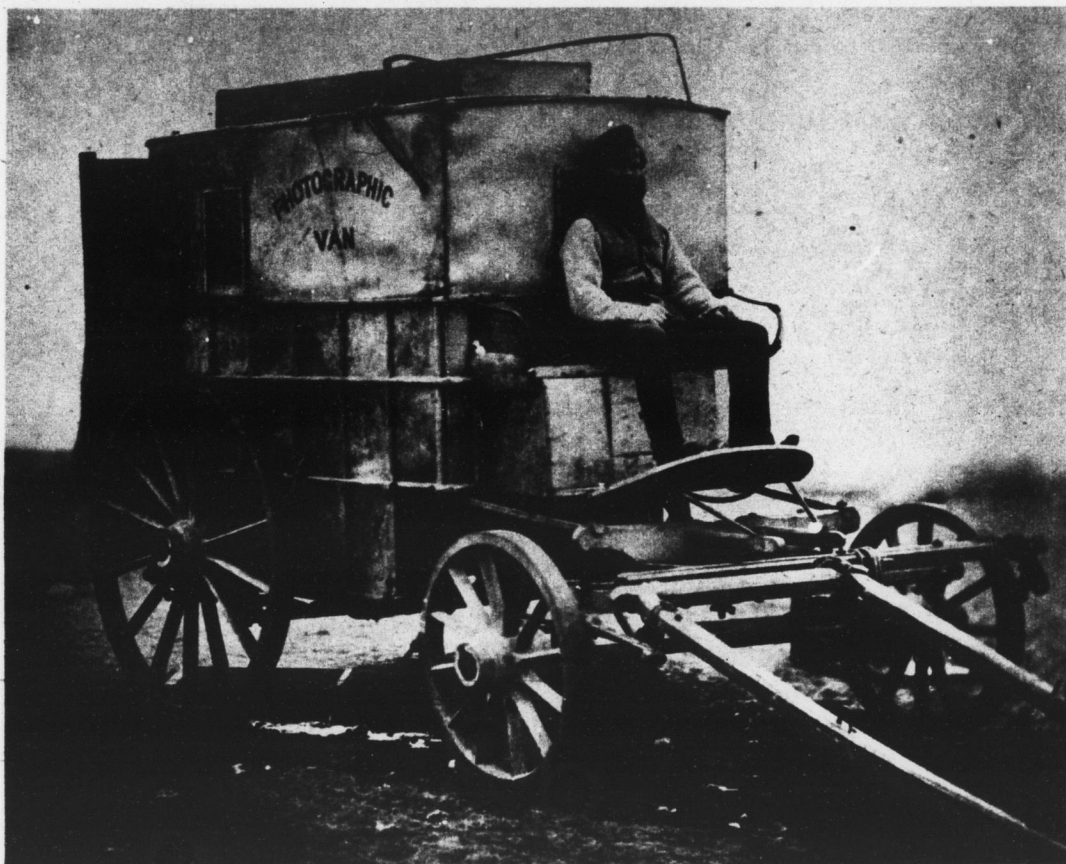




Cavalry camp, looking toward Kadekai (near Istanbul).



The Valley of the Shadow of Death.



The artist's van. (The driver is unidentified.)



A Zouave (Roger Fenton himself dressed up).

Crimean War Was First To Be Photographed

By Harold J. Flecknoe

MATHEW BRADY, the Civil War photographer, is generally considered to be the first combat photographer. Actually, an Englishman named Roger Fenton photographed the Crimean War in 1855, six years before the Civil War broke out.

Fenton made about 350 photos, using cameras and plates that were bulky and slow, even compared with those used by Brady. The pictures reproduced here and on page 12 have been selected from the 269 acquired by the Library of Congress from a Fenton descendant. They can be seen in the Library's Prints and Photographs Division from 9 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

After the outbreak of the war (in which England, France and Turkey were allied against Russia), Fenton became intrigued with the idea of making a record of it. He discussed the project with Agnew & Sons of Manchester and was commissioned to go to Crimea.

Fenton's first move was to hire an assistant, one Marcus Sparling, a photographer who was familiar with military life. Next, he had a studio on wheels constructed from a wine carriage. Then, packing five cameras, 700 glass plates, chemicals, a small still, preserved meats, wine and other supplies into 36 large boxes, the two men sailed aboard the Hecla in mid-February.

Arriving at Balaklava, the photographers got their baptism of fire as artillery shells whistled over the harbor, which was jammed with hundreds of ships. That was bad enough, but when military red tape prevented the unloading of the equipment, Fenton was about ready to give up. In disgust, he said that Sevastopol would be taken "Vi et armis" (with force and arms) but not by photography.

Fenton made his first photos in and around Balaklava; then, with six artillery horses dragging his photographic van, he moved to the front, where he made pictures for several months.

Although several of the photos purport to show battles being fought, they are rather uninspiring, distant scenes. One reason for this is that the plates had to be exposed for minutes rather than fractions of a second.

The strange-looking studio van fascinated the Russian artillerymen. It looked important, so they blasted away at it. One well-directed shell tore off part of the van's roof.

In a letter to a friend, Fenton said: "I get along very slowly with my work here. The labour is in itself great & many pictures are spoilt by the dust & heat, still more by the crowd of people of all ranks who flock around. . . ."

Later, in another letter, he

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