

The Great War

A chronology of the Crimean War 1853-1856

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
"Charge for the guns!" he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred

Alfred Tennyson,

The Charge of the Light Brigade, 1854



Survivors of the Light Brigade after the Battle of Balaklava
R. Fenton, 1855

The Crimean War was one of the most gruesome wars Europe had witnessed up until then, an object lesson in bad planning and even worse organization.

The first war of the modern world, the first industrial war, in which material superiority mattered more than brilliant tactics. Pure attrition warfare, where human lives even counted less than before, while new military technologies were put to the test: improved firearms and ammunition of longer range, trenches and curtain fire.

This kind of technical progress laid the foundation for the devastating outcome of subsequent wars like the American Civil War or World War I.

On the other hand, the paralleling progress in the care for the wounded and the ill - like in the military hospital of Scutari under Florence Nightingale - was not more than a drop in the ocean.

Some of the most important events of this war resp. the most relevant for the novel are listed here in chronological order; for a better orientation, prominent events in the novel's storyline, indicated in color, are also included.

1853

End of February	Prince Menschikow, envoy of the Tsar, travels on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople in order to issue an ultimatum by the Tsar to the Ottoman Empire: The holy sites in Jerusalem are to be guarded by Russia instead of France; Russia intends to control the Orthodox Church on the territory of the Ottoman Empire and demands the dismissal of high officials of the sultan - demands the sultan conceives unacceptable and as provocation.
May 31 st	After the refusal of the sultan to meet Russia's demands, the tsardom severs diplomatic relations with Constantinople.
July 2 nd	The Russian army invades Moldavia and Wallachia.
October 5 th	The Ottoman Empire declares war on Russia.
November 30 th	The Russian Black Sea Fleet destroys a Turkish naval squadron in the Battle of Sinope, resulting in the decision of Great Britain and France to take reprisals.
December 19 th	Jonathan returns to Black Hall on leave and brings Ralph Garrett with him as a guest.



Battle of Sinope - I. Aivazovsky, 1853

1854

January 4 th	Allied naval units arrive in the Black Sea.
January 8 th	Russia invades Dobruja (in the borderland between Romania and Bulgaria).
February 10 th	A British peace delegation meets with Tsar Nicholas I.
February 23 rd	First British troops set sail.
March 18 th	Aunt Dora's garden party in Summertown
March 19 th	French troops set sail. Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood reject Ralph's marriage proposal.
March 28 th	France and Great Britain declare war on Russia.
April 5 th	British troops arrive in Gallipoli.
April 14 th	Russian troops occupy Silistria.
Mid-April	Ralph und Maya elope and get married in Gretna Green.
April 20 th	Austria and Prussia declare their neutrality.
May	Ralph und Maya travel to Aden.
May 28 th	Allied troops leave Gallipoli for Varna.
May 31 st	First French and British troops land in Varna.
June 26 th	French and British naval units land at Kronstadt, near St. Petersburg.

- June 28th The French and the British government decide to destroy the Russian naval base in Sebastopol.
- September 12th-14th Allied forces land in Calamata Bay north of Sebastopol, soon ironically called *Calamity Bay* by the soldiers.
- September 19th First clash of Allied forces and Russian troops on the Crimea; the fight for Sebastopol begins.
- September 20th Battle of Alma.
 Great Britain: 26,000 infantry, 1,000 cavalry, 60 guns
 France: 28,000 Mann infantry, 72 guns
 Ottoman Empire: 7,000 Mann infantry, unknown number of guns
 Russia: 33,000 infantry, 3,400 Mann cavalry, 120 guns
 After the war, Alma became a popular name for British girls in remembrance of the battle; the Parisian bridge Pont de l' Alma, location of Princess Diana's fatal car accident in 1997, is also named after it.



French soldiers in the Battle of Alma

- October 9th Allied forces start to encircle Sebastopol.
- October *Burton und Maya visit the Tower of Silence.*
- October 25th Battle of Balaclava:
 Allied forces ca. 20,000 infantry, ca. 3,500 cavalry, 76 guns. Russia ca. 23,000 men.
 Casualties: Great Britain ca. 350, France ca. 250, Russia ca. 1,000
 This battle gained sad fame by a wrong decision leading to great losses among the Light Brigade under Lord Cardigan, only saved by French cavalry; this episode, symptomatic for the whole war, was immortalized by Alfred Tennyson's poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.
- November 5th Battle of Inkerman:
 Great Britain 8,500 men, 38 guns; France 7,500 men, 18 guns.

Russia 42,000 men, 134 guns.

Casualties: Great Britain 2,357 men, France 929 men. Russia 12,000 men.



Siege of Sebastopol

1855

January 26th

The Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont enters the war on the side of the Allied forces.

January 31st

Government of British premier minister Lord Aberdeen dissolved.

February 5th

Lord Palmerston forms new government.

February 23rd

J.A.G. (1826-1855)



Camp in Balaklava

March 2 nd	Tsar Nicholas I. dies, succeeded by his son Alexander II.
March 15 th	Peace conference in Vienna opens.
April 26 th	Negotiations for peace end without results.
May 8 th	<i>Maya's abduction</i>
June 16 th	First Russian attack on Kars (Armenia)
July 22 nd	<i>Aunt Elizabeth, Bath</i>
September 9 th	Russia starts to withdraw from Sebastopol.
December 16 th	Count Esterházy conveys an ultimatum by Austria to St. Petersburg.
December 23 rd	The British begin to dismantle their military installations at Sebastopol.



"The Valley of Death": Balaklava after the battle, ammunition on the ground – R. Fenton, 1855

1856

January 16 th	Tsar Alexander II. accepts Austria's demands.
February 25 th	Congress of Paris opens.
February 29 th	Armistice concluded
March 9 th	<i>Birth of Jonah</i>
March 30 th	Treaty of Paris is signed; the war is over.
April 27 th	Great Britain ratifies the Treaty of Paris.
July 12 th	The last of the British troops leave the Crimea.

Image source: Wikimedia Commons