

SOURCE B: In 1855, Mary Seacole, a nurse, volunteered to help tend to the British and French forces fighting Russia in the Crimean war. Initially denied involvement, she made her own way to the frontlines. The following is an extract from her account of her time there, published in 1857.

The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands

1 The weather changed, as it often did in the Crimea, most capriciously; and the morning of the
memorable 8th of September broke cold and wintry. The same little bird which had let me into so
many secrets, also gave me a hint of what this day was pregnant with; and very early in the
morning I was on horseback, with my bandages and refreshments, ready to repeat the work of the
5 18th of June last. A line of sentries forbade all strangers passing through without orders, even to
Cathcart's Hill; but once more I found that my reputation served as a permit, and the officers
relaxed the rule in my favour everywhere. So, early in the day, I was in my old spot, with my old
appliances for the wounded and fatigued; little expecting, however, that this day would so closely
resemble the day of the last attack in its disastrous results.

10 It was noon before the cannonading suddenly ceased; and we saw, with a strange feeling of
excitement, the French tumble out of their advanced trenches, and roll onto the Malakhoff* like a
12 human flood. Onward they seemed to go into the dust and smoke, swallowed up by hundreds; but
they never returned, and before long we saw workmen levelling parapets and filling up ditches,
15 over which they drove, with headlong speed and impetuosity, artillery and ammunition-waggons,
until there could be no doubt that the Malakhoff was taken, although the tide of battle still surged
around it with violence, and wounded men were borne from it in large numbers.

I was soon too busy to see much, for the wounded were borne in even greater numbers than at the
last assault; whilst stragglers, slightly hurt, limped in, in fast-increasing numbers, and engrossed our
20 attention. I now and then found time to ask them rapid questions; but they did not appear to know
anything more than that everything had gone wrong. The sailors, as before, showed their gallantry,
and even recklessness, conspicuously. The wounded of the ladder and sandbag parties came up
even with a laugh, and joked about their hurts in the happiest conceivable manner.

I saw many officers of the 97th wounded: I dressed the wound of one of its officers, seriously hit in
the mouth; I attended to another wounded in the throat, and bandaged the hand of a third,
25 terribly crushed by a rifle-bullet. In the midst of this we were often interrupted by those
unwelcome and impartial Russian visitors—the shells. One fell so near that I thought my last hour
was come; and, although I had sufficient firmness to throw myself upon the ground, I was so
seriously frightened that I never thought of rising from my recumbent position until the hearty
30 laugh of those around convinced me that the danger had passed by. Afterwards I picked up a piece
of this huge shell, and brought it home with me.

I remained on Cathcart's Hill far into the night, and watched the city blazing beneath us, awe-struck
at the terrible sight, until the bitter wind found its way through my thin clothing, and chilled me to
the bone; not till then did I leave for Spring Hill. I had little sleep, as the night was made a ruddy
lurid day with the glare of the blazing town; while every now and then came reports which shook
35 the earth to its centre. And yet I believe very many of the soldiers, wearied with their day's labour,
slept soundly throughout that terrible night, and awoke to find their work completed: for in the
night, covered by the burning city, Sebastopol was left, a heap of ruins, to its victors; and before
noon on the following day, none but dead and dying Russians were in the south side of the once
famous and beautiful mistress-city of the Euxine.

Malakhoff = a hill on the outskirts of Sebastopol, a fortress and naval base in the Crimea