The Siege of Sebastopol by W. E. Baker

Sold



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REF: 83116

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Height: 58.4 cm (23")

Width: 84.42 cm (33.2")

Depth: 1.9 cm (0.7")

Description

A watercolour bird's eye view of the siege of Sebastopol by W. E. Baker.

The Crimean War was documented like no other war before it. It was covered by a number of illustrative artists and journalists to feed the thirst for information back home. Added to this, soldiers used their spare time to paint camp and battle scenes. Panorama pictures were popular at the time and this one lays out the siege for the viewer to quickly comprehend the task that faced the British and French armies. The picture is annotated to be easily identified. The Russian positions such as the Redan, the Malemon and the Malakoff Works it protected, the Second Line of Defence, Batteries and Barracks are some of the strategic points shown. For the Allies we can clearly see the French Trenches, the English Works, the Sailor's and Chapman Batteries. The Great and Inner Harbours, Inkerman Lighthouse (West), the coastal forts, the sunken ships and booms to protect the harbour entrance are also illustrated.

The painting is mostly monotone but is highlighted with light blue for the sea with red and darker blue for the allies' flags and the uniforms of the naively painted soldiers. The painting of the soldiers suggests an amateur hand but the bold title to the top and W. E. Baker. Del Et Pinx. (Sua Manu) is laid out as if for a print. We have not discovered if a print was ever published from the watercolour but there is a comparable lithograph of Sebastopol, dated 18th June 1855. It shows the view from the Inkerman Lighthouse East with the West Lighthouse in front of it to the left. Although the artist is unknown, it is very similar to Baker's work.

Sevastopol was finally taken on the 9th September 1855 with Russia unable to continue the war after its loss. This picture was painted 18 days later. We have not managed to identify the artist and unfortunately William Baker is not an uncommon name. There are a number that fought for the British in the Crimea including Lt. Corporal Baker of the Royal Sappers and Miners, Private Baker of the Coldstream Guards and two Gunners called William Baker in the Royal Artillery. It may have been one of these soldiers, a sailor, a civilian or an engraver in England. There was a William Baker of 26, Upper Parade, Bristol who was an engraver in this period but his work was aimed more at tradesmen than fine art.

The picture is detailed and something new is noticed each time it is viewed. It has suffered some tears to the paper but has been well restored so that they are hardly noticeable and is backed onto card. It is also a good size and a fascinating watercolour whether you are interested in the Crimean War or not. Dated 27th September 1855.

Frame size is given.

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