

SAMUEL GREIG,
GRAND ADMIRAL IN THE IMPERIAL RUSSIAN
NAVY.

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IT is a well-known fact that many British sailors have served in the Imperial Russian Navy and that they distinguished themselves in such a manner that they were an honour to the country of their adoption. Of these the most illustrious career is that of a Scot, named Samuel Greig, born 1736.

Thanks to original documents which were found in the family archives of Prince Esper Oukhtomsky, Editor of the *St. Vedomosty*, a relative of the famous Scot on his maternal side, we are in a position to throw some interesting light on the life of Samuel Greig and the part he played in the Russian service.

Prior to entering the Russian Navy, Greig, then a Lieutenant in the Navy of His Britannic Majesty King George III., applied to the Admiralty for leave to do so. In this connection it will be of interest to reproduce the following document received by Lieutenant Greig granting him the permission asked for, viz.:—

“ADMIRALTY OFFICE, 7 May, 1764.

“Sir,

“I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners
“of the Admiralty to acquaint you that, agreeable to
“your desire, they are pleased to give you leave to
“go into the Dominions of the Empress of Russia.

“And, in pursuance of His Majesty's Pleasure,
“their Lordships are also pleased to give you Leave to
“enter into the service of that Empress, if you think
“proper, taking care to transmit hither a certificate
“from the British Minister of the time you do so, as
“your half pay will be discontinued from that time.

“I am, Sir,

“Your very humble servant.

“(Sd.) STEPHENS.

“To Lieut. Saml. Greig, L. Town.”

The ordinance given by the Empress Catherine to the Admiralty (then called the Admiraltseitsv Collegia), enrolling Samuel Greig, Captain of the first rank, in the Russian Navy

on the 18 June, 1764, contained the following, viz.:—"For the purpose of acquainting himself with the order existing in the Russian Navy, Greig is appointed a volunteer, for the prospective summer campaign, to the squadron under the command of Admiral Poliansky, and should there take the oath to loyally serve Her Majesty Catherine the II., Empress of Russia."

In 1769 Greig, after taking an active part in preparing the squadron for action against Turkey—which country under outside influence was then hostile both to Russia and England—was appointed to the command of one of the divisions of the Fleet when it sailed for the Mediterranean, and he specially distinguished himself at the Battle of Chesme, near the Island of Khilos (24th and 26th June, 1770), which resulted in the complete destruction of the Turkish fleet. It was Greig who was the actual leading spirit of the fleet during that engagement, although, nominally, the fleet was under the command of General Count Orloff, a favourite of the Empress Catherine, who, seeing the rivalry and quarrels which were going on between the various Commanders of squadrons, put an end to it by hoisting his flag as Commander-in-Chief. As a reward for his services on this occasion Greig was awarded a large sum of money, the Orders of St. George and St. Vladimir, and promoted to the rank of Rear-Admiral. He continued to serve under Orloff while the war lasted, taking an important part in the battle of the 10th October, 1773, when a Turkish squadron of ten ships was completely defeated by an inferior Russian force.

On the 10th July, 1775, when peace was solemnly declared with the Ottoman Empire, Her Imperial Majesty was Graciously Pleased to appoint Rear-Admiral Greig to be Vice-Admiral of Her Imperial Majesty's Navy. The order to this effect from Her Majesty to the Admiralty is dated 30th July, 1775, No. 1745, and was found amongst the Admiral's papers. It bears the following inscription made by the late Admiral in his own handwriting: "Ukaz appointing me Vice-Admiral No. 16." A similar order to the Admiralty, dated 10th August, 1775, appointing Vice-Admiral Greig to the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Port of Cronstadt also bears an inscription in the Admiral's own hand, "Ukaz appointing me Commander-in-Chief at Cronstadt No. 16."

Greig now took in hand the work of reorganising the Russian Navy, and in his efforts for its improvement secured the services of many British officers, principally Scotchmen, with a result that certainly was of permanent benefit to the fleet; he remodelled the discipline, trained the officers, and gradually brought it up to a high state of efficiency. On the outbreak of the war with Sweden in 1788, he assumed command of the fleet in the Gulf of Finland, and on the 17th July

fought a severe action, which resulted in his triumphant victory, near the bank of Kalbodén Grund, which is west from the Hogland Island, over the Swedish fleet under the command of Prince Charles, Duke of Sudermanland. Owing to the defeat suffered by the Swedes they were compelled to seek shelter behind the forts of Sveaborg, and thus the intention of the King of Sweden, to whom the force displayed by the Russians came as an unpleasant surprise, and who had counted on having the command of the sea, to attack Cronstadt and even St. Petersburg, was frustrated, and the "wooden walls" saved the capital of Russia just in the same way as in bygone days they saved Greece. The strategical significance of this victory was, of course, very great, and Admiral Greig was promoted to Grand Admiral and received the highest Russian Imperial Order, that of Saint Andrew.

The following letter written by Her Imperial Majesty the Empress Catherine on the 20th June, 1788, and still kept in the original envelope on which the late Admiral made an inscription—"Letter from the Empress Catherine wishing success—in French—No. 2" will no doubt be of interest to our readers. We give a copy of its original French and a translation in English. It is remarked that the first two lines at the beginning of the letter are written very faint, which, perhaps, was due to the want of a fresh supply of ink in the ink-well. The original letter is covered with glittering spangles of sand which was used by the Empress:—

"Copy. Monsieur l'Admiral Greig. Je viens de recevoir votre lettre du 18 Juillet près de l'Isle de Seskar par la quelle vous me dites que les Vaisseaux que restaient avec vous sont presque réparés de tous les damages qui's ont reçu dans l'action du 6 Juillete, que le Pobedonossetz et le Pantelemon vous ont joint, et que vous attendez à tout coté il me revient qu'on regarde les démarches du dit était bon hier j'espérai qu'ils vous ont joint et que presentement Vous êtes déjà a chercher l'ennemis; je prie Dieu qu'il Vous bénisse. Je ne doute millement que les motifs du Roy de Suede ne soient tels que vous les supposeez, de tout coté il me revient qu'on regarde les démarches du Roy comme des vrais-extravagances, ce sont les propres paroles entre autre de my Lord Carmarthen; c'est à mes armées de terre et de mer à faire repentir S.M. Suédoise de ces démarches inconsidérées, aussi longtemps que vous êtes en Mer les descentes du côté de Reval seront moins a craindre; et vers l'hiver les troupes seront renforcées de coté la. Jamais l'ardeur de nos troupes ne fut plus grande que contre cet ennemi perfid, le nombre des recrues augmente tous les jours on m'en amène et m'en offre de toutes les Provinces, Si je les laissai faire toute la Russie

"ce mettrait a cheval. Je vois que la disposition des esprits
 "sur la flotte sous vos ordres est aussi conforme au bien
 "Public, j'ai la parfaite confiance en vous Monsieur
 "l'Admiral, que vous ne negligerez points les occasions
 "favorables qui ce presentemeront. Que le Ciel bénisse
 "toutes vos entreprises voila les voeux ardents que je fais
 "pour vous et la flotte qui est à vos ordres. Adieu, Mon-
 "sieur l'Admiral Greigh, portez vous bien personnellement
 "et soyez assuré, de mon estime de ma confiance et de ma
 "très sincère amitié,

CATHERINE.

"Ce 20 Juillet, 1788, a St Petersburg."

"Translation. Dear Admiral Greigh,—I have just re-
 "ceived your letter of the 18th July near the Island of
 "Seskar, with which you inform me that the ships under
 "your command are nearly repaired now of all the damages
 "which they received in action of the 6th July, that the
 "*Pobedonossetz* and the *Pantelemon* have joined you, and
 "that you are expecting every moment the Constantin and
 "the *Swetoslaw*; as the wind was favourable yesterday, I
 "hope that they have joined you, and that at present you
 "are also about to search for the enemy. I pray to God
 "that He will bless you. I do not doubt at all that the
 "motives of the King of Sweden are not such as you sup-
 "pose them to be. From all parts I hear that the steps
 "taken by the King are regarded as real extravagances.
 "These are the very words used among others by my Lord
 "Carmarthen. It is the duty of my forces on land and at
 "sea to make His Swedish Majesty repent of his incon-
 "sidered steps. As long as you are on sea the descents in
 "the neighbourhood of Reval are not to be feared; and in
 "the winter the troops will be reinforced in that part.
 "Never has the ardour of our troops been stronger than
 "against this perfidious enemy. The number of troops aug-
 "ments every day; they are coming from all the provinces.
 "If I should let them have their way all Russia would put
 "itself on horseback. I see that the disposition of the
 "spirit of the fleet under your command keeps in perfect
 "conformity with that which is good for the public. I
 "have entire confidence in you; Admiral, that you will not
 "omit any favourable occasion which could present itself.
 "May Heaven bless all your enterprises—that is my ardent
 "prayer which I offer for you and the fleet which is under
 "your command. Adieu, my Admiral Greigh; keep in
 "good health personally, and be assured of my esteem, of
 "my confidence, and of my very sincere friendship.

"(Sd.) CATHERINE.

"This 20th July, 1788, at St. Petersburg."

Admiral Greig was very actively engaged in preparing the fleet for a final victory over the Swedes and blockading their ships at Sweaborg, but unfortunately he contracted a chill from which he died on board of his flagship, the *Rostislav*, on the 15th October, 1788, and was buried at Reval. His memory was honoured by a general mourning, and in addition to a State funeral in the Cathedral, the Empress Catherine ordered a magnificent monument to be placed on his grave, on which is reproduced the fleet with flags at half mast and crossed yards. The memory of the late Admiral was officially honoured by the Government, and also a special lodge of mourning was held by the Freemasons. This lodge was very pompous, many very affecting speeches were delivered, and a special pamphlet dedicated to the memory of Admiral Greig, called "Am Grabe Greighs," was issued.

Greig was a Freemason. He reinstated the Neptune lodge at Cronstadt, and from minutes and lists of members lately discovered it is seen how tactfully he conducted the affairs of the lodge, which was designed by him to serve the object of bringing together the Russian and British officers in intimate and friendly relations. We see from the list for 1780 that the Master of the Lodge was Alexis Spiridoff, Captain of the first rank, the Deputy Master Jean Barsch, Vice-Admiral, and Samuel Greig, the superior officer of the fleet, held the office of Senior Warden. Later, in November, 1781, he was elected Master of the lodge. The minutes of the lodge contain entries praising the energy with which he handled the gavel. During the war with the Swedes the lodge from Cronstadt was transferred on board the Admiral's flagship *Rostislav*.

For the purpose of showing the charm and the grace with which the Empress Catherine rewarded those who assisted her in working for the glory of the country, it will, no doubt, be of interest to give below the following letter addressed to Admiral Greig by Count Alexander Bezborodko. It was written on the 22nd July, 1775, and runs as follows, viz. :—

"My dear Sir, Samuel Karlovitch,

"Her Imperial Majesty has not only affectionately
 "consented, but has also Graciously commended the desire
 "of your Excellency to send your two sons for education to
 "Scotland. Assuming, my dear Sir, that for your younger
 "son you will also choose service in the Navy in preference
 "to any other, Her Imperial Majesty has graciously ap-
 "pointed him to be Midshipman of the fleet. Of the above
 "I hasten to apprise His Illustrious Highness Count Ivan
 "Grigorievitch Tchernisheff, and beg to congratulate your
 "Excellency upon this Imperial favour."

Admiral Greig's son Alexis entered the Imperial Navy, as arranged, and eventually also became an Admiral and the Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea Fleet. At the very early age of 21 he distinguished himself whilst Captain of a line of battle-ship during the battle off the Texel, near the Dutch coast, where the Russian fleet was united with the British against a common foe.

Catherine's successors have also valued the services of their useful foreign assistants, and have lavishly rewarded them therefor, and the memory of such workers is still fresh and cherished in the Russian Navy.

There are also many descendants in Russia of other British officers who were in the Russian service, as well as descendants of those Russian officers who were sent for service in the British Navy, and have, side by side with the British, fought under Jervis and on the coasts of East India.

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