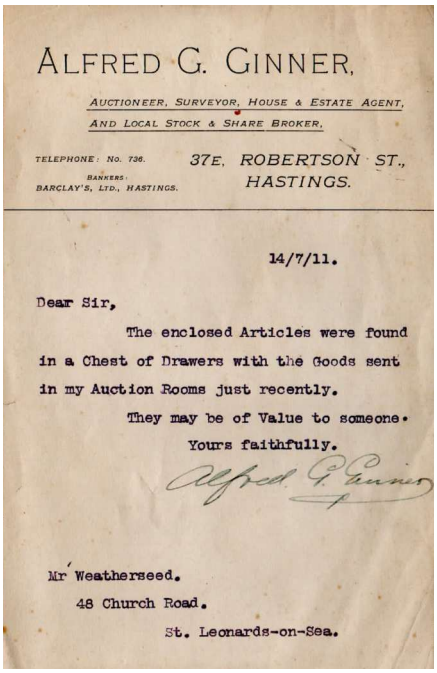
Major Samuel Philip Townsend [6B09]

Pre 1855 Royal Artillery uniform



Courtesy of Christopher Bryant, Manchester by the Sea Massachusetts, USA

The Auctioneer's Letter



ALFRED G. GINNER,

AUCTIONEER, SURVEYOR, HOUSE & ESTATE AGENT,
AND LOCAL STOCK & SHARE BROKER,

TELEPHONE: No. 736. 37E, ROBERTSON ST.,
BANKERS: HASTINGS.
BARCLAY'S, LTD., HASTINGS.

14/7/11.

Dear Sir,

The enclosed Articles were found in a Chest of Drawers with the Goods sent in my Auction Rooms just recently.

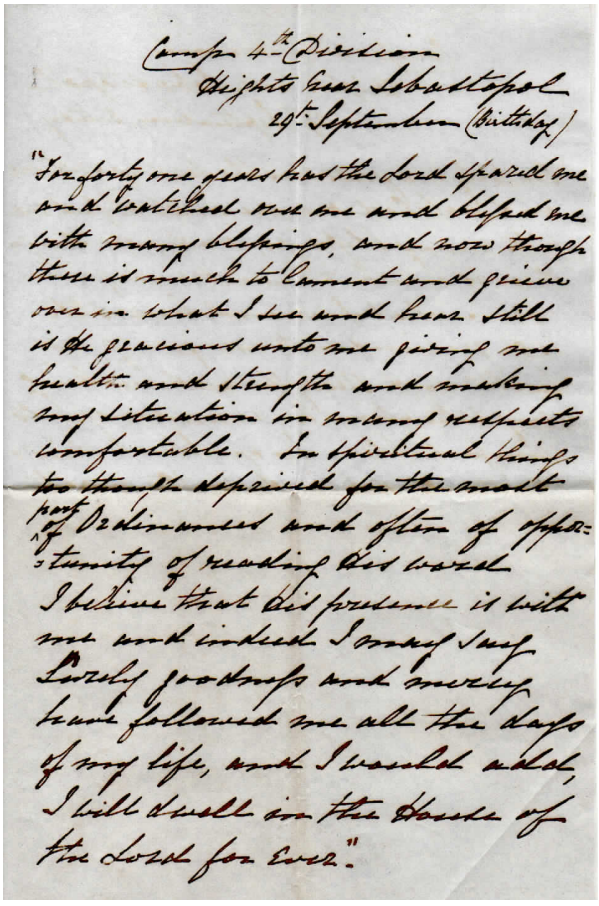
They may be of Value to someone.

Yours faithfully.

Alfred G. Ginner

Mr Weatherseed.
48 Church Road.
St. Leonards-on-Sea.

Samuel's Note written on his Birthday



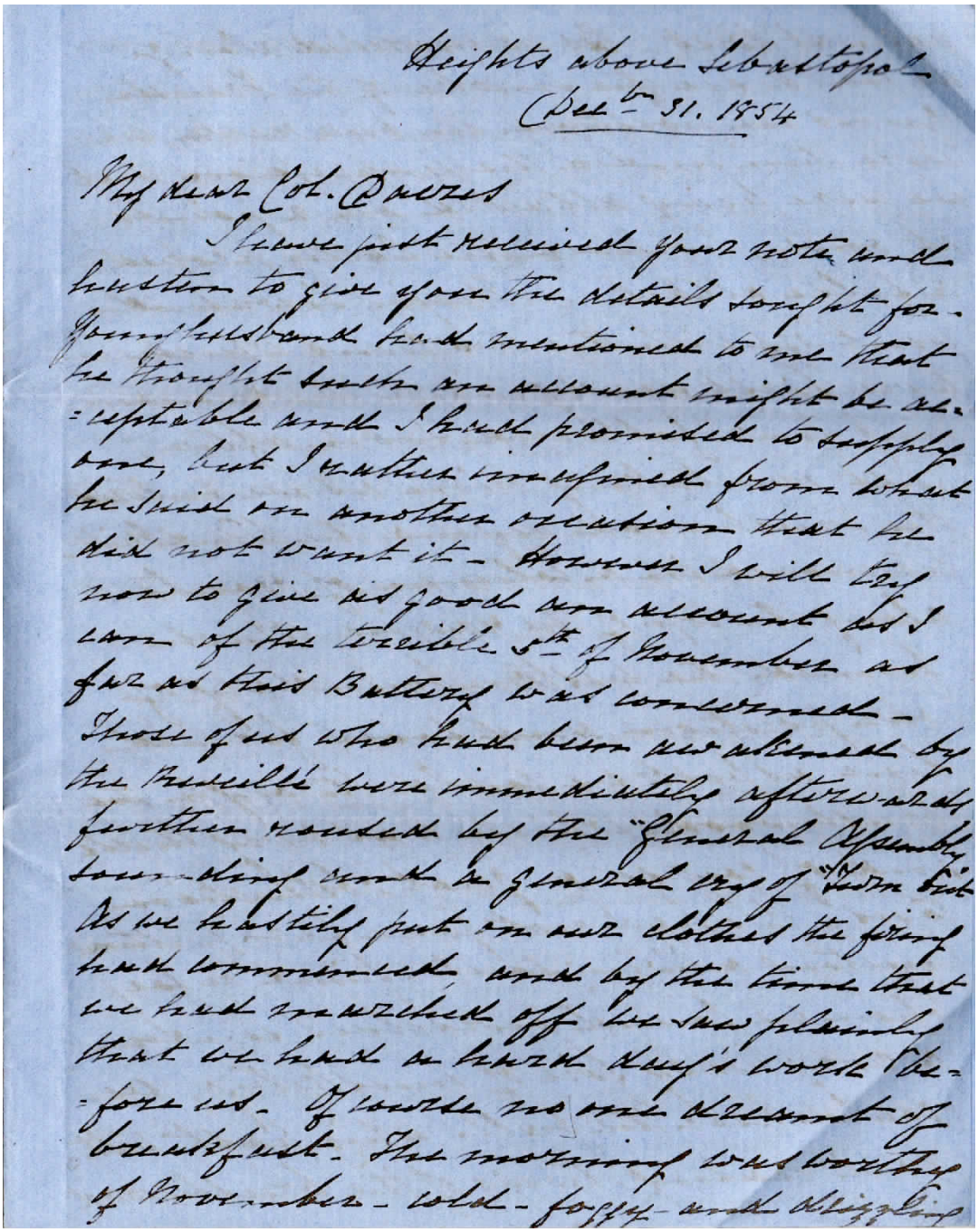
Camp 4th Division
Heights near Sebastopol
29th September (Birthday)

"For forty one years has the Lord spared me and watched over me and blessed me with many blessings, and now though there is much to lament and grieve over in what I see and hear. Still is the graciousness unto me giving me health and strength and making my situation in many respects comfortable. In Spiritual things too though deprived for the most part of Ordinances and often of opportunity of reading His word I believe that His providence is with me and indeed I may say Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I would added, I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever."

Camp 4th Division. Heights above Sebastopol. 29 September (Birthday)

"Forty one years has the Lord spared me and watched over me and blessed me with many blessings, and now though there is much to lament and grieve over in what I see and hear, still is He gracious unto me giving me health and strength and making my situation in many respects comfortable. In spiritual things too, though deprived for the most part of ordinariness and often of opportunity of reading His work, I believe that His presence is with me and indeed I may say lovely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I would add, I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever."

Letter from Major Dixon Hoste about Samuel's death



Heights above Sebastopol
Decbr 31. 1854

My dear Col. Daeres

I have just received your note and hasten to give you the details sought for. Young husband had mentioned to me that he thought such an account might be acceptable and I had promised to supply one, but I rather imagined from what he said on another occasion that he did not want it. However I will try now to give as good an account as I can of the terrible 5th of November as far as this Battery was concerned. Those of us who had been awakened by the Reveillé were immediately afterwards further roused by the "General Assembly" sounding and a general cry of "Turn out". As we hastily put on our clothes the firing had commenced, and by the time that we had marched off we saw plainly that we had a hard day's work before us. Of course no one dreamt of breakfast. The morning was worthy of November - cold - foggy - and drizzling

Heights above Sebastopol 31st December 1854

My dear Col. Downes

I have just received your note and hasten to give you the details sought for. Younghusband had mentioned to me that he thought that such an account might be acceptable and I had promised to supply one, but I rather gather from what he said on another occasion that he did not want it. However I will try now to give as good an account as I can of the terrible 5th of November as far as his battery was concerned. Those of us who had been awakened by the reveille were immediately afterwards further roused by the 'General Assembly' sounding a general cry of "Form First" (?) as we hastily put on our clothes had commenced and by the time we had marched off we saw plainly that we had a hard day's work before us. Of course no one dreamt of breakfast. This morning was worthy of November - cold, foggy and drizzling rain at first. As we marched along we could see the smoke of the French guns in position in our rear, we were then under the impression that we were being attacked on two points at once, however this latter proved a false attack. Major Townsend went off with the two guns which were first ready and then another four followed soon after, first overtaking him as we entered the brushwood beyond the Windmill. We moved in column of route along the top of the ravine which formed the western boundary of our position and soon formed line as best we could thereafter through the brushwood which was very thick and great obstruction to us. We had not gone far without meeting a living soul friend or foe, when we found ourselves under very heavy fire of musketry, we could hear the balls whiz past without ceasing; twigs of the brushwood were broken and splinters of stone knocked up from the ground. As we advanced through this perfect shower of balls the 55th Regiment were retreating in some disorder and on our requesting them to turn round and accompany us they said they had expended their ammunition. We then went on without them and almost immediately came into action. Before we could load with "Case" we could see the flat caps and brown greatcoats of the Russian Infantry who advancing in skirmishing order. The order to retire was given but the drivers of 3 guns had already done so. One howitzer and two guns were thus temporarily abandoned. The howitzer was left without a spring spike in it and one of the guns was not spiked at all, the third being spiked with a steel spike as the No1 could not lay his hand on a spring one. The 2nd howitzer was limbered up in splendid style the Russian Infantry being within a few yards of us at the time, how we all escaped, I know not. One man was killed at this time at No 6 gun and one of them was wounded. As we were retiring I saw Miller ride up on my left. He had his sword drawn and no cap on and, I understood, had been charging the Russians but as I was totally unaware of this at the time I am unable to do justice to the incident. His own account appears in The Times of 27th November. We retired about 150 yards, the brushwood hiding the enemy x x. Indeed I fancy (?) most of them stopped behind (?) their guns and did not advance further. We were however ready for them with canister should they appear. In a very few minutes some of the 88th Regt came up. Wood then advanced with them to recover our guns which we found in the same position as we had left them. The guns

we had left unspiked we found had been spiked with wood. We then formed in line on the left of the 21st Fusiliers a little in advance of where we had retired to. Col. Wood ordered Larkin (?) with two guns away to the right, and he stayed away from us till near the end of the day. Major Townsend was very anxious to get us into action again but Col. Wood had gone to the right with Larkin (?) and I believe eventually he took the battery into action again without orders. We soon found that we were in a very hot place, shot and shells never ceased to hiss past and over us. Soon after we came into action before indeed we had dismounted, I was standing immediately behind poor Townsend when a shot or shell whizzed past so close that we both felt the wind of it. He turned round to me and said "It very nearly took our heads off". He was just as cool all the time as if we had been drilling on Woolwich Common. The day was so dark and foggy that we could scarcely see anything but the smoke from the Russian guns meant it was quite impossible to see the effect of our own shot. After we had been in this position about an hour and as far as I can remember about 9 o'clock or half past an officer of the 57th Regiment came to the front and told me that the regiment was in advance of us but that it would not be able to hold its ground much longer as the enemy were advancing down the opposite slopes with their guns. I referred him to Major Townsend who went a few yards to the rear to tell Col. Wood. He was walking to the front again when a piece of shell struck him on the head and he was killed instantly. I shall never forget what dismay fell on us all when his death became known. "Poor Major Townsend" was on every lip and each man seemed to show by his looks how sadly his loss was felt.

Our battery continued in action until about 12 o'clock, the fire on us continuing very hot till close on that time. How any of us escaped unhurt seemed wonderful. Our loss however was heavy, 2 killed and 20 wounded of whom three died subsequently. When we retired we were not aware that our day's work was over as an attack on our centre was expected. However, after waiting about and hour and a half at the Windmill, we got orders to march home after the most terrible day's work which I trust may be my lot ever to witness.

We all followed his remains to the grave at 11 o'clock on the morning of Monday 6th. He was buried in a coffin made of rough but strong planking. His grave is at the south east corner of an old fort now in ruins. Sir George Cathcart, General Strangways and nearly 20 other officers are also buried within the same enclosure which is situate on the highest part of the camp overlooking Sebastopol.

I hope my dear Col. Downes that you will be able to extract from the forgoing definitive narrative something that you think may be of interest to Major Townsend's family.

Believe me, yours sincerely Dixon G Hoste (Major)

Samuel's Crimea Campaign Medal with Clasps



Press Cuttings

THE LATE BREVET MAJOR TOWNSEND.

We have already given some particulars respecting the death of this much regretted officer, the son of the Rev. W. Townsend, of Aghada; but to the many in county and city by whom he was known, and to the still greater number by whom valour and ability and devotion to duty are held in deserved estimation, a few others will be welcome. We subjoin, then, with pleasure, some passages from the letter of an officer of the Royal Artillery:—

"Poor Townsend was killed in a very severe action on the 5th, caused by a determined attempt of the Russians to turn our right position. It appears that our troops had already given way. Townsend's battery retreating as slowly as possible before overwhelming numbers, who had closed in upon them, had had 3 of its guns spiked, one by the Russians and two others by themselves. They, however, succeeded immediately in pressing forward the infantry, and recovering their ground and their guns, much of which was due, I am told, to poor Townsend's determined bravery. His battery was again in action: he went to the rear a few yards to communicate with Wood. In returning to the front a round shot struck him in the head. I hear, amid expressions of regret for his loss on all sides, but one opinion of his character, a brave soldier, an able officer, a good man. Imbued with strict Christian principles, he acted up to them in every relation of life. His body was brought off the field immediately, and yesterday was interred in a spot where, shortly afterwards, the bodies of Sir George Cathcart and General Strangways were laid."

An extract from a letter from a different pen will be an appropriate accompaniment to this. Speaking of friends and companions of whom the war had deprived him, another officer writes:—

"Last, not least, our dear friend, Townsend. He said to me once that his mind had never been so quiet and easy as since he left England. The Sunday before, just at the same hour that he was struck, I went to his tent, and he read and prayed so devoutly and appropriately, I can truly say his mind was stayed upon his God. After the battle I went to Townsend's tent to inquire about the battery, and found that he had just been brought out of action. I did not go in, preferring to retain the two impressions—the man of God I saw the evening before in full vigour, and the saint in glory."

That the feeling exhibited in these letters is not the mere indulgence of private friendship will be seen by an extract from a letter which we find in the London Papers, from a Scotch Sergeant of Artillery to his wife, and which the writer did not suppose likely to be seen by any one to whom Major Townsend was personally known:—

"*Camp near Sebastopol, Nov.* 7.

"My dear Anne—Since I wrote to you last we have been twice engaged with the enemy; the first time was on the 25th of last month; the last time was on Sunday, the 5th inst., and such a day I never wish to see again. Our loss was not great, but what we most lament was the loss of our commander, Major Townsend, who was shot dead. In him we mourn the loss of a friend and a brave soldier, and no doubt a sincere Christian. What a pleasure it was to hear him read the prayers of the English church to us on a Sunday, and then a short sermon after them, or a funeral service! There was no formality in it; the heart felt what the words expressed, and we all now fee the loss of a father. I hear no joyous laugh now, as wher he was with us, but I believe and hope he has only exchanged this world for a far better."