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An Antiwar Poem of the Last Century  
Edited by William Dunlap  
Introduction by Catherine B. Shannon

During the past six years the Vietnam War has been the catalyst of vociferous and bitter debate on United States foreign policy as well as of major political upheavals and party realignments. Our Vietnam embroglio has some interesting parallels with Britain's involvement in the Crimean War of 1854-55 against Russia. When the fighting commenced, British prestige and power seemed invincible, and yet she left the war with a reputation badly tarnished. The opening salvos of 1854 were accompanied by great public confidence that British imperial power would successfully defend Roman Christian rights to control Jerusalem against the claims of Russian Orthodoxy. The campaign to save the Holy Places initially whipped up public enthusiasm similar to that which the "Democracy for South Vietnam" slogan did in its early stages, despite the fact that in both cases the average man in the street had no notion of where on the globe the field of combat lay. British blood and power were sacrificed to protect a Turkish regime as corrupt and oppressive as that of Saigon. As ardour for the ideological cause began to wane, the British politicians invoked strategic justifications, and the Russian "bear" with its alleged dangers to British India were emphasized in a manner reminiscent of American apologists' references to monolithic communism and the domino theory.

While England's voice in the wilderness, John Bright, suffered an electoral fate similar to Senator Wayne Morse's, British public opinion was finally shaken from its complacency and self-righteousness by the impact of the contemporary communications revolution. The detailed and graphic despatches which William H. Russell, the Times correspondent in the Crimea, telegraphed to London for wide publication brought about a revulsion, disillusionment and finally public protest like that which the nightly television reports and film clips aired in American living rooms produced over Vietnam. The Crimean affair finished the career of the Prime Minister, Lord Aberdeen, just as Vietnam led to President Johnson's retirement. The parallels abound, but perhaps the most poignant is illustrated by the following manuscript which was recently acquired by the Westfield State College archives. Written by an anonymous British soldier who survived the bloody battle of Alma, this poem symbolizes and evokes the same anguish, suffering and sense of futility which characterize the pacifist poetry and song of contemporary America.

## Tears of England

They are weeping, weeping wildly in many an English home  
In many a vineclad cottage, in many a lordly home  
Mothers of fair haired striplings with bright swords just bound on  
With gay and springing footsteps life's journey just begun  
Oh many a shot hath served full many hearts fond lie  
And many a lance hath recommend a lean drop to the eye.

For they are weeping, weeping wildly within a curtained room  
On an infants natal hour falls the shadow of the tomb  
He breathed his first existance on the day his father fell (Lord  
Chewton Chuck Mid the conquering Britons by the flying Russians' shell  
His babes have caught the echc of their mother's sobbing woe  
As she weeps their hero father in his victor hour laid down

They are weeping, weeping wildly within a young wife's bower (Lady  
Younge whose life's sweet buds have blossomed droop like a faded flower  
Few moons have swept the heavens since a buds in white array  
She left her home and kindred seeking another day  
Once the solemn words were uttered the sacred promise plighted  
And till death should cut as under their lot in life united  
All her dreams how life time's pathway should be trodden by his side  
Are blighted now and vanished from that young and gentle bride

They are weeping, weeping wildly in many a proud old tower  
They are weeping, weeping wildly in many a maiden's bower  
They are weeping, weeping wildly for sons of honest toil  
They are weeping, weeping, wildly the masters of the soil  
For the heir of lordly acres for the widow wed mother's day  
For the father lover---band who have perished in the fray

They are resting, resting softly by Alma's flowing wase  
Who bore the front of battle our England's fallen brave  
The hand that clasped the hand is neverless now and still (Col Chewton  
And no voice awakes the echos that sleep on Alma's hill  
And sleep but not forgotten are their deeds of valor right

Their names shall bring a tear drop to many a British eye  
We shall rouse some spark of daring in after years to tell  
How the British legions fighting by the Alma waters fell  
They shall smile amid their weeping in England's bower and hall  
When they own their lust have fallen as heroes love to fall.