

# GORDON CHARLES ALEXANDER

RECOLLECTIONS OF  
THIRTY-NINE YEARS IN  
THE ARMY

**Charles Gordon**  
**Recollections of Thirty-  
nine Years in the Army**

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# Charles Alexander Gordon

## Recollections of Thirty-nine Years in the Army

### CHAPTER I

#### *1841–1842. GAZETTED TO THE BUFFS. ARRIVE IN INDIA*

First Affghan War – Chatham – Fort Pitt – Supernumeraries – How appointed – Gazetted – Breaking in – Orders of readiness – Ship inspected – Embark – First days on board – Typical characters – Warmth – Our “tub” – Reduced allowances – Conditions on board – Amusements for men – For officers – “Speaking” ships – A dismasted vessel – First sense of responsibility – Indiscipline – Neptune – On board – Table Bay – Shore boats – Cape Town – Vicinity – Official duties – The ship *Lloyds* – An “old friend” – The 25th Regiment – The contractor – Botanic Garden – Eastward – Mutinous crew – Land ahoy – Terrible news – The Hooghly.

In 1841 British and Indian troops occupied Cabul; but throughout Affghanistan the aspect of things political was alarming. In Scinde the Ameers were defiant and hostile.

The Punjab in a state of disturbance and convulsion; law and order had ceased; isolated murders and massacres instigated by opposing claimants to the throne left vacant in 1839, and since that time occupied by a prince against whom the insurrectionary movement was now directed by chiefs, some of whom were inimical to British interests.

Military reinforcements on a large scale were dispatched from England. Great, accordingly, the activity at Chatham, then the only depot whence recruits and young officers were sent to regiments serving in India. The depot then at Warley was for soldiers of the Honourable Company's service.

Into the General Hospital at Fort Pitt were received military invalids from India as from all other foreign stations. There they were treated for their several ailments; thence discharged to join their respective depots, or from the service on such pensions as they were deemed entitled to by length of service and regimental character. Then the period of engagement was for life, otherwise twenty-one years in the infantry, twenty-four in the mounted branches.

There young medical men nominated for appointment to the army underwent a course of training, more or less long, according to individual circumstances, for the special duties before them; meanwhile they received no pay, wore no uniform; they dined at mess, paid mess subscriptions, and were subject to martial law.

Professional education included requirements for diplomas,

and in addition, special subjects relating to military medicine, surgery, and management of troops. Nominations for appointments were given by old officers or other men whose social position was a guarantee in regard to character and fitness of their nominees for the position sought by them; certificates by professors and teachers under whom they studied were submitted to the responsible authority<sup>1</sup> at the War Office, with whom rested their selection. Thus in effect a combined system of patronage and competition was in force.

With anxious interest a small group of expectants awaited the arrival of the coach by which in those days afternoon letters and evening papers from the metropolis were conveyed. Eagerly was *The Gazette* scanned when, close upon the hour of midnight, the papers were delivered. Great was the pride and rejoicing with which some of our number read the announcement relating to them; great the disappointment of those who were not so included. The regiment to which I had the honour of being appointed was the 3rd, or “Buffs,” the depot of which formed part of the Provisional Battalion then occupying Forton Barracks.<sup>2</sup>

The duties assigned to young medical officers were unimportant – initiatory rather than definite in kind. Careful watch and superintendence on the part of official seniors gave

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<sup>1</sup> Sir James McGrigor, Bart., Director-General.

<sup>2</sup> The date of appointment as Assistant Surgeon, June 8, 1841. My diplomas – L.R.C.S.E.; M.D. St. Andrews; both April, 1840.

us an opportunity of learning various points relative to practice, as well as to routine and discipline, to be turned to account – or otherwise – in the career upon which we were entering. But the process of “breaking in” was not without its disagreeables. Courtesy towards young officers on the part of their seniors, military or medical, was a quality rare at Chatham, but where met with in isolated instances was the more appreciated, and remembered in subsequent years. The “system” of training in force tended rather to break than bend the sapling.

Thus did three months pass away. Then came an order of readiness to embark with the detachment of recruits next to sail. Although about to proceed with those pertaining to what was now “my own regiment,” official regulations required that my appointment to charge of them should have the authority of “The Honourable Court of Directors,” and that to obtain it, personal application must be made at their old historical house in Leadenhall Street – a formality which was gone through with ease and success. This is what the appointment in question implied: – Not only did I receive the free passage to which I was entitled, my daily rate of pay<sup>3</sup> running on the while, minus £5 deducted “for messing,” but was privileged to occupy the second best cabin on board, and at the end of the voyage to receive in rupees a sum equivalent to fifteen shillings per head for officers and soldiers landed, and half a guinea for each woman and child. In those “golden days” the sterling value of the rupee was at par.

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<sup>3</sup> 7s. 6d.

The ordeal of “inspection” was duly performed, the requirements on board declared “satisfactory,” the formal report to that effect transmitted to the authorities. My personal knowledge of those requirements was absolutely *nil*. How much more definite that of other members of the Inspecting Committee, was soon to be judged of. For example: side or stern ports there were none, deck ventilators being considered sufficient. Food stores comprised casks of salted beef and pork; tins of soup and bouill  , potatoes and other vegetables, some dried, some tinned; pickles and lime juice, bread, otherwise hard biscuit, destined ere many weeks had elapsed to become mouldy and honeycombed by weevils. There were bags of flour, peas, and raisins; an ample supply of tobacco; also of rum and porter, to be issued to the troops as a daily ration. The water tanks and a series of casks on deck had been filled – so it was said – from the Thames below London Bridge, when the tide was at its lowest.

The day of departure arrived. The detachment of which I was an unit marched away from Chatham Barracks, through Rochester, Strood, and so by road to Gravesend. There it was conveyed on board the *Indian*; twenty-four hours allowed us to settle down on board; the ship then taken in tow by steamer; we are on our voyage.

A fortnight elapsed; we were no farther on our way than off the coast of Spain. The novelties of first experience afforded subject of observation and thought: those which most impressed us, the clear moonlight, the starry galaxy of the heavens, the Milky Way,



the cloudless sky, the phosphorescence of the undulating sea through which our ship slowly glided; the masses of living things, chiefly medusæ, that floated fathoms deep in ocean. During daylight many land birds flew over us or rested on the rigging.

Small though our party was, it comprised its proportion of men typical in their several ways. The commander of the vessel, soured with life, disappointed in career, tired of sea life, but unable to quit his profession. One of the ship's officers, a young man of deeply religious convictions. An ancient subaltern, inured to the chagrin of having been several times purchased over by men of less service but more fortunate than himself in worldly means. The lady's man, pretentious and vapid, given to solos on a guitar; the instrument adorned with many coloured ribbons, to each of which he attached a legend; his cabin decorated with little bits of "work," cards, and trinkets, for as yet photographs had not been invented. The irascible person, ready to take offence at trifles, and in other ways uncertain.

A month on board; the Canary Islands faintly seen in the distance. Already heat and stuffiness 'tween decks so unpleasant that carpenters were set to work to cut out stern ports for ventilation. Our progress so slow that with all sails set a ship's boat was launched, in which some of our numbers amused themselves by rowing round the vessel.

Two months, and we still north of the Equator. Various reasons given for tedious progress, among others light airs, contrary winds, adverse currents. But none of these explained the

fact of our being passed by vessels, some of which, on the horizon astern of us in the morning, were hull down on that ahead ere daylight vanished. That our ship was alluded to as “a worthless old tub” need now be no matter of surprise.

Not more than one-third of our distance to be run as yet got over; prospects as regarded the remainder by no means happy. The unwelcome announcement made that all hands, including crew and troops, must submit to reduced allowance of food and water. Of the latter, the full allowance per head per day for cooking and all other purposes was seven pints, now to be reduced to six. No wonder that the announcement was not received with tokens of approval.

Looking back to conditions as described in notes taken at the time, the contrast so presented between those which were then deemed sufficient for troops on board ship, and those which now exist may not be without some historical interest. Space 'tween decks so limited,<sup>4</sup> that with men's hammocks slung, those who on duty had to make their way along at night were forced to stoop almost to the attitude of the ordinary quadruped. The “sick bay” on the port side, close to the main hatch, directly exposed to rain from starboard; except a canvas screen, no separation between the quarters of unmarried and those of married; no separate accommodation for sick women or children; no prison set apart for the refractory. All over the ship myriads of cockroaches; these insects, especially lively at night, supplied to men and

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<sup>4</sup> The hammock space per man was 9 feet × 1½.

officers excitement and exercise, as, slipper in hand, they hunted them whenever the pale light given by the ship's lamps enabled them to do so. Cleanliness of decks and fittings was to some extent effected by means of dry scrubbing. The use of Burnett's Solution<sup>5</sup> substituted the odour of the compound so named for that of humanity. By means of iron fumigators in which was burning tar, the atmosphere of 'tween decks was purified, due precautions taken to minimise the risks of fire attending the process. Tubs and hose on deck supplied ample means for the morning "souse."

A carefully chosen library provided for the use of our men was placed on board by the Indian authorities; it was highly appreciated and generally made use of. Among the troops, games of all sorts were encouraged, their selection left to men's own choice. In working the ship ready hands were at all times available. Gymnastics and feats of strength were in high favour, and so, with the routine of guards, parades, inspections, and so forth, daytime was filled up. In the evenings, songs, recitations, theatrical performances, and instrumental music were indulged till the bugle sounded "lights out."

Officers had their ways of passing the time. They included games, gymnastics, bets, practical jokes (of all degrees of silliness), cock fighting, wild and dangerous adventures in the rigging, and on Saturday evenings, toasts, then usual on such occasions, enthusiastically "honoured." A weekly newspaper was

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<sup>5</sup> Solution of chloride of zinc.

set on foot; the works of Scott, Shakespeare, and Pope, among other authors, carefully studied, and discussions, more or less profitable, held on their contents.

Sighting, signalling, and hailing ships was a favourite amusement as opportunity occurred. By some of those homeward bound we dispatched letters, with passengers on board others we exchanged visits, strange as such ceremonies may seem to those now acquainted only with modern twenty-knot floating steam palaces. While paying such a visit to a ship five months out from China, we learned the “news” that Canton had been captured (on May 25–27, 1841) by the forces under command of Sir Hugh Gough.

In near proximity to the Equator we came upon a ship, the *Cambridge*, disabled, her topmasts carried away in a sudden squall two nights previous. The resolve to stand by and give assistance was quickly taken. Boats were lowered, parties of sailors and recruits, accompanied by some officers, were soon on board. Within a few hours defects were made good as far as that was practicable; meantime night had closed in, a somewhat fresh breeze sprung up, clouds obscured the sky, and so the return to our ship was by no means accomplished without danger.

The distance to be got over was still great before the ship could reach Table Bay and renewed supplies obtained. The health of all on board had so far remained good, notwithstanding all the drawbacks experienced. The likelihood, however, that this happy state of things might suddenly come to an end became to me a

source of what was the first sense of official anxiety with which I had been acquainted.

Excepting two somewhat elderly non-commissioned officers, specially put on board the better to ensure discipline among our recruits, all others were as yet but partly tutored in military duties and order. Unwilling obedience had from the first been shown by several of their number; then came irregularities, quarrels, and fights among themselves. Nor were the few married women on board ideal patterns of gentleness, either in speech or behaviour.

Among the crew were men whose antecedents, so far as they could be ascertained, were of the most questionable kind, and whose conduct on board had, from the first, been suspicious. Between them and kindred spirits among the recruits, it appeared that an understanding had been come to to have what they called "a disturbance" on board. Those intentions having come to the ears of the officers, with the further information that fully ninety men were implicated, preparations were made for emergencies: arm-racks fitted up in the saloon; fire-arms burnished; ammunition seen to; non-commissioned officers instructed as to their duties. But an occurrence which now happened distracted attention from the so-called plot, whether real or imaginary did not transpire.

Our entrance into tropical latitudes, some three weeks previous, had been duly announced by "Neptune," who, selecting the period of first night watch for the ceremony, welcomed us from amidst a flare of blue lights on the forecastle, on our coming

to his dominions. Having done so, he returned to his element; his car a burning tar-barrel, which we continued to watch as it seemed to float astern, until all was darkness again. On board, "offerings" had to be made to the sea-god, half-sovereigns and bottles of rum, sent to the fo'c's'le, being those most appreciated.

While yet in the first degree of south latitude, the sea-god, accompanied by his court officials, announced their arrival on board, the whole personified by members of the ship's crew, appropriately attired in accordance with their respective official positions. The ceremony of "initiating" the "children" was quickly in progress, the chief ceremonies connected therewith including shaving, "bathing," besides some others by no means pleasant to their subjects. One of our young recruits strongly resisted the ordeal through which several of his comrades had passed. He succeeded in making his escape from his captors, and quickly mounting the ship's railing, thence plunged into the sea, to the consternation and horror of us all. The vessel was instantly "put about," a boat lowered, but search for him was in vain. The occurrence was, indeed, a melancholy outcome of what was intended to be a scene of amusement. But the spirits of young men were light, and ere many hours had elapsed, the song and dance were in progress, as if the event had not occurred. A Court of Inquiry followed in due time, and then the incident was forgotten.

We were now approaching Table Bay. Great was the interest and admiration with which we looked upon Table Mountain, as

its grandeur became more and more distinctly revealed. Hardly less was our estimate of the Blue Berg range, by which the distant view was bounded. Soon we were among the shipping, and at anchor.

Our ship was soon surrounded by boats, that seemed to come in shoals from shore; some conveying fruit and curiosities for sale, others suspected of carrying commodities less innocuous in kind. But sentries, already placed at gangways and other points on deck, prevented traffic between our men and the small craft. The aspect of boats and their crews was alike new and strange to most of us: the former, striped with gaudy colours, red, black, and white; the latter, representing several nationalities, including English, Dutch, Malay, East Indian, and typical African, their several styles of costume no less various than themselves.

Some of our number, proceeding ashore, stood for the first time on foreign ground. Cape Town presented a series of wide, regularly arranged streets, intersecting each other, their sides sheltered by foliage trees. Flat-roofed houses, coated with white plaster, were nearly invariable in their uniformity. Great wagons, drawn by teams of oxen, from six to twelve in number – and even more – were being driven along by Malays, armed with whips of alarming proportions; though, fortunately for the beasts of burthen, they were little used. Crowds of pedestrians were on the thoroughfares, interspersed with guardians of the peace, the latter dressed after the manner of their kind in London. It was the month of December; but the temperature was that of summer;

the heat oppressive, as we continued our excursion.

Part of that excursion was to Constantia. On the right, the great mountain, rising to a height of three thousand feet; the space between its base and the road along which we drove thickly covered by forest and undergrowth, the whole comprising oaks, silver and other pines, geraniums, pomegranates, and heaths, interspersed with herbaceous plants bearing gorgeously coloured flowers. At intervals there were richly cultivated fields and valleys; on or near them attractive-looking houses, many having attached to the latter no less handsome gardens. The road was thickly occupied by vehicles and pedestrians; among the whites, a considerable proportion of well-looking individuals of the fair sex. There was, in fact, a general aspect of activity and of prosperity.

The ordeal of "reporting ourselves" to the authorities was gone through: our reception by one, whose surname indicated Dutch origin, ungracious and supercilious; by the departmental chief so kindly, as by contrast to make an impression upon us, but partially inured to official ways as we then were. Meanwhile, the necessary steps were in progress for placing on board our ship the much-needed supplies of food materials and of water.

Among vessels that anchored in the bay during our detention, there was the ship *Lloyds*, having on board emigrants from England to New Zealand. When first they began their voyage, they numbered eighty women and 117 children; but so appalling had been the mortality among them that, of the children, fifty-



seven had died. In all parts of the space occupied by passengers, sickness and distress in various shapes prevailed. Children, apparently near to death, lay in cots by the side of their prostrate mothers, whose feebleness rendered them unable to give the necessary aid to their infants. A state of indescribable filth existed everywhere; ventilation there was none in the proper sense. Women and children affected with measles in very severe form, that disease having been brought on board in the persons of some of those embarking; others suffered from low fever, and some from scurvy, which had recently appeared among them. The family of the medical man on board had suffered like the others, one of his children having died. On the deck of the ship lay two coffins, containing bodies of the dead, preparatory to being taken on shore for burial. The entire scene presented by the ship, the saddest with which, so far, I had become acquainted.

In Table Bay we again met the *Cambridge* already mentioned, that vessel arriving shortly after our own had anchored. In a sense we, the passengers of both, greeted each other as old friends; visits were interchanged, then leave was taken of each other with expressions of good wishes. By-and-by there came to anchor the ship *Nanking*, having on board recruits belonging to the service of the Honourable Company. Greetings and cheers were interchanged; for were we not all alike proceeding on a career, hopeful indeed, but as yet uncertain?

In the Castle, a short distance from Cape Town, the 25th Regiment, or Borderers, was stationed, and in accordance with

the hospitable custom of the time, an invitation to dinner with the officers was received on board. The party on that festive occasion numbered seventy, the majority guests like ourselves, and now the circumstance is mentioned as showing the scale upon which such entertainments were given.

Invited to the house of an Afrikander Dutchman<sup>6</sup>, we found ourselves in large airy rooms, destitute of carpets, with polished floors; wall space reduced to a series of intervals between doors and windows; the arrangements new to us, but suited to climatic conditions of the place. Little attentions shown by, added to personal attractions of, lady members of the family naturally enough left their impression on young susceptibilities.

Very interesting also, though in a different way, was our visit to the house of Baron von Ludovigberg. Elegantly furnished, rooms so arranged as to be readily transformed into one large hall, everything in and around marking a life of ease and comfort. His garden, situated in Kolf Street, extensive, elegantly laid out, with large collection of plants indigenous and foreign; at intervals fountains and ornamental lakes. In the latter were thousands of gold fish, so tame as to approach and feed from the hand of an attendant; to the sound of a handbell rung by him they crowded, though on seeing us they kept at a distance. To the sound of the same bell when rung by us they would approach, but not come near the strangers.

Our voyage resumed, away eastward we sailed. Sixteen

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<sup>6</sup> Mr. Mechi.

days without noteworthy incident; then sighted the island of Amsterdam, from which point, as the captain expressed it, he began to make his northing.

Another interval of monotonous sea life. At daybreak we found that in close proximity to us was a barque, the *Vanguard*, on board of which there was disturbance amounting to mutiny among the crew. The captain<sup>7</sup> signalled for assistance. A party of our young soldiers, under command of an officer, proceeded on board, removed the recalcitrant men to our ship, some of our sailors taking their place, and so both vessels continued their way to Calcutta.

Again was the unwelcome announcement made that short allowance of food and water was imminent, to be averted by progress of our vessel becoming more rapid than it had hitherto been. The tedium of the voyage had told upon us; idleness had produced its usual effect. Chafing against authority and slow decay of active good fellowship became too apparent; all were tired of each other.

Another interval. From the mast-head comes the welcome sound, "Land on the starboard bow." Soon we come in view of low-lying shore, over which hangs a haze in which outlines of objects are indistinct. What is seen, however, indicates that our ship is out of reckoning; that, as for some time past suspected, something has gone wrong with the chronometers. Wisely, the captain determines to proceed no farther for the present, until

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<sup>7</sup> Captain Gurwood.

able to determine our precise position. A day and night pass, then is descried a ship in the distance westward. We proceed in that direction, and ere many hours are over exchange signals with a pilot brig.

Twenty-four weeks had elapsed since the pilot left us in the Downs; now the corresponding functionary boards our ship off the Sandheads. We are eager for news. He has much to tell, but of a nature sad as unexpected. The envoy at Cabul, Sir William Macnaughten, murdered by the hand of Akbar Khan; the 44th Regiment annihilated, part of a force comprising 4,500 fighting men and 12,000 camp-followers who had started on their disastrous retreat from Cabul towards the Khyber Pass; one only survivor, Dr. Bryden, who carried tidings of the disaster to Jellalabad. Another item was that several officers, ladies, and children were in the hands of the Affghan chief.

Progress against the current of Hooghly River was slow, steam employed only while crossing the dreaded "James and Mary" shoal; for then tugs were scarce, their use expensive. Three days so passed; the first experience of tropical scenery pleasant to the eye, furnishing at the same time ample subject for remark and talk. On either side jungle, cultivated plots of ground, palms, bamboos, buffaloes and cattle of other kinds. In slimy ooze gigantic gavials; in the river dead bodies of animals and human beings, vultures and crows perched upon and tearing their decomposing flesh. Native boats come alongside; their swarthy, semi-naked crews scream and gesticulate wildly as they offer for

sale fruit and other commodities. Our rigging is crowded with brahminee kites and other birds; gulls and terns swarm around. The prevailing damp heat is oppressive. Now the beautiful suburb of Garden Reach is on our right; on our left the Botanic Garden; the City of Palaces is ahead of us; we are at anchor off Princep's Ghat.

The "details," as in official language our troops collectively are called, were transferred to country boats of uncouth look, and so conveyed to Chinsurah, then a depot for newly arrived recruits. Our actual numbers so transferred equalled those originally embarked, two lives lost during our voyage being made up for by two births on board. Sanitation, in modern significance of the term, had as substitute the arrangements – or want of them – already mentioned; yet no special illness occurred; my first charge ended satisfactorily.

## CHAPTER II

### *1842–1843. IN PROGRESS TO JOIN*

Chinsurah – Cholera – Start – Omissions – Relics of mortality – Collision – Fire – Panic – Berhampore – The “garrison” – Crime and punishment – Civilities – Progress resumed – A hurricane – Cawnpore – Attached to 50th Regiment – The troops – Agra – Sind – Gwalior – 39th Regiment.

First impressions of this our first station in India, recorded at the time, were: – Houses of mud, roofs consisting of reeds, fronts open from end to end; members of families within squatting, infants sprawling, in a state of nudity, upon earthen floors made smooth and polished by means of cowdung applied in a liquid state; while to outside walls cakes of the same material are in process of drying, to be thereafter used as fuel by Hindoos. Gardens and cultivated fields abound; flowering trees and shrubs, cocoa palms, banana bushes, clumps of bamboo, rise above dense undergrowth of succulent plants. A heavy, oppressive atmosphere, pervaded by odours, sweet and otherwise, has a depressing effect, as if conditions were not altogether wholesome. European houses according to Holland model, terraces and gardens giving to them an attractive and elegant appearance, indicating the importance of the place while

in the hands of the Dutch, prior to date<sup>8</sup> of the treaty in accordance with which it was by them exchanged for Java. An extensive range of spacious barracks and supplementary buildings added much to the beauty of the station.

Before many days were over several of our young lads had fallen victims to cholera. In this our first experience of that disease we had access to no one capable of giving aid and advice; we were left to individual judgment, and it altogether astray as to the appropriate method in our emergency. For a time, out of our small party death claimed several daily victims; young wives were thus left widows, young children orphans.

Glad to receive orders of readiness to resume progress by river to next stage of our journey. Then arrived two senior officers, – one to take military command;<sup>9</sup> the other, departmental charge of our detachment. Country boats provided as before, others of better kind for officers. Our unwieldy fleet started at the appointed time;<sup>10</sup> the boats comprising it straggled irregularly across the river, and having gained the opposite bank, there made fast for the night.

Early next morning it was in movement. Mid-day heat became oppressive. One of the soldiers was prostrated by cholera, another by sun fever. Inquiry revealed the unpleasant fact that the “experienced” officer recently appointed for the purpose had

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<sup>8</sup> 1815.

<sup>9</sup> Captain Astier, 62nd Regiment.

<sup>10</sup> March 28, 1842.

made no arrangements whatever for sick. Those fallen ill were now sent in small boats back towards Chinsurah; and so we continued our river progress, steps being taken to have deficient requirements sent on without delay.

Next evening was far advanced ere they arrived. The numbers of our sick had increased, several deaths taken place, some with appalling rapidity in the absence of means of help. The great heat prevailing made early interment necessary. Graves had to be hastily made in groves of trees near the river bank; to them the dead were committed, our fleet continuing its progress, sailing or tracking<sup>11</sup> according to wind and current. After night had fallen, the blaze of funeral pyres on the river banks told their tale of pestilence.

For several days mortality was great in our small party, and among the native boatmen. As deaths occurred among the latter, the bodies were simply left on the bank to be devoured by jackals, dogs, and vultures, numbers of which were in wait for prey. Some of our boats sprung leaks, and so became useless; nor was it an easy matter to get them replaced. Men and stores had to be got out as best they could and disposed of among others – proceedings by no means easy under then present circumstances.

At last there came an interval in which the malign influence of our invisible enemy seemed as if withheld. While gliding upwards against the silent river current, suddenly from one of the men's boats there burst a mass of thick smoke, speedily followed

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<sup>11</sup> *i. e.*, drawn by means of ropes attached to their masts.



by flame, and within the space of a few minutes nothing except the charred framework remained. How, or by what means, the occupants of the boat escaped did not transpire; that they did so was fortunate for themselves and satisfactory to all, though the accident, subsequently ascertained to have resulted from their own carelessness, destroyed their entire kits and other belongings.

Short was our respite. Suddenly and fatally was our detachment again struck, several deaths by cholera occurring in quick succession. Our somewhat eventful “voyage” was near its end, when in mid-stream two of our boats came violently in collision with each other, considerable mutual damage being the result. An unfortunate panic occurred among the recruits on board, one of whom leapt overboard and so disappeared. Soon afterwards our journey was at an end, it having occupied eleven days; we arrived at Berhampore.

Near to the spacious range of barracks in which our young soldiers were accommodated were lines occupied by a native regiment,<sup>12</sup>— at that time reputed to be of distinguished loyalty to Jân Kompanee, with whose liberal dealings towards its own proper servants all were so well pleased. In others were invalids, soldiers’ wives and children pertaining to regiments<sup>13</sup> employed in the war proceeding against China; many as yet unaware that they had been made widows and orphans by the climate of

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<sup>12</sup> 21st.

<sup>13</sup> Namely, 26th, 49th, and 55th.

Chusan and coast generally.

Here the conduct of our lads – for they had scarcely become men – became so reckless that military discipline had to be rigidly enforced, while in many instances severe or fatal illness seemed to be the direct result of their own misconduct. As a ready, and as thought at the time effectual, means of coercion, corporal punishment was awarded by courts-martial. The ordeal of being present during its infliction was nauseating; but constituted as the detachment was, the punishment seemed to have been in all cases well deserved.

General Raper was the officer in political charge of the Nawab of Moorshedabad, then a boy of some ten years old. Several civilians high in rank, and a few non-official residents, for the most part connected with the manufacture of tussar<sup>14</sup> silk, resided at Berhampore. From several of them we young officers received much attention and kindness, not only in their own houses but on excursions organized by them for our special benefit. Prominent among those who thus befriended us, young “griffs” as we were, General Raper and Charles Du Pré Russell are remembered gratefully – even while these notes are penned, many years after the date and incidents referred to.

In due time the order arrived for us to resume our river journey, our destination Cawnpore; again country-made boats our means of transport. In the early days of August we started on what was to be in many respects a monotonous voyage, though

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<sup>14</sup> *i. e.*, silk produced by the *Antherea paphia*, and allied species.

not altogether without its excitement and stirring incidents. The general manner of our progress was that with which we were now acquainted. We were doomed, as before, to be at intervals stricken by cholera, which seemed to have its favourite lurking-places, generally at the foot of a somewhat precipitous alluvial bank. Night after night rest was disturbed or altogether banished by the sound of tom-toms, songs, barking of dogs, cries of jackals; sight and smell offended by funeral fires as they blazed in near proximity to us.

More than half our journey was got over without special mishap. Our boatmen observe that signs of coming storm appear in the sky; they prepare as best they can, but soon the hurricane is upon us. Boats are dashed against each other, and against the river bank; waves break over them, tearing away their flimsy gear, battering some to pieces, their inmates obliged to escape and save themselves as best they could. After a time there came a downpour of rain; then gradually the storm ceased, leaving several of our number boatless, and destitute of greater or smaller portions of our respective kits. Among others, I suffered considerably. A friend in need, more fortunate than myself, gave me hospitality on his boat until sometime thereafter, when, with others similarly situated, I chartered a budgerow. A few days after our mishap news reached us that a similar fleet to our own, with troops,<sup>15</sup> some thirty miles ahead of us, suffered

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<sup>15</sup> Of the 50th and 62nd Regiments; more than 100 men were lost at Seckreegulle, that being the place where the typhoon occurred.

very severely from the same hurricane that had struck us, a considerable number of the men in it having perished in the river.

Without further incident of importance we arrived at Cawnpore in the early days of November, our journey by river having occupied more than two months and a half, the date fourteen years before the terrible year 1857, when that station was to acquire the sad memory ever since associated with it. Anticipating the return to India of the force commanded by General Pollock from Jellalabad, the march to which place had restored British prestige from the temporary eclipse at Jugdulluck, orders were issued to honour that army by an appropriate military display on the left bank of the Sutlej. Among the regiments assembled for that purpose, at Ferozepore, the then frontier station, were the Buffs. Orders had also directed that on completion of that duty they should march towards Allahabad and there occupy the fort, the detachment with which I was connected joining headquarters *en route*. For the time being we were attached to the 50th Regiment, and so continued during the remaining four months of the cold season.

Here took place the first initiation into their several duties connected with regimental life of the young men belonging to our detachment, myself among them. Among the officers in the "Dirty Half-Hundred" who had served with it during the Peninsular War, when, on account of the continuous severe work performed by it, the corps obtained its honourable soubriquet,

three<sup>16</sup> remained, looked up to with the respect due to, and then accorded to, distinguished veterans. Alternate with duties assigned to us, amusements filled up our time pleasantly. Gaiety was in full flow. Many were the joyous gatherings by which were filled the Assembly rooms – some years thereafter to be the scene of very terrible doings. Outdoor games and sports were the order of the day, the tract of jungle in Oude that stretched along the opposite river bank proving our most happy hunting ground. So it was that time passed pleasantly, if in an intellectual sense not very profitably. At the time alluded to traffic and communication with Oude was by means of a long bridge of boats, that bridge from their attack on which in subsequent days the Gwalior mutineers were to be driven by the forces under Sir Colin Campbell.<sup>17</sup>

A large force, comprising all arms, then occupied that important station. The impression made upon us, as for the first time we beheld the magnificent spectacle presented by general field-day parades and exercises, was never to be forgotten. The swarthy visages of the sepoys; their quaint uniforms attracted our notice. The solidarity of the 50th gave the impression of irresistible force. The rush of cavalry, as, like a whirlwind, they went at full charge, to a great extent concealed in a cloud of dust raised by their horses' hoofs; the magnificent and unsurpassed Bengal Horse Artillery, in performing the evolutions pertaining

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<sup>16</sup> Colonel Wodehouse, Major Ryan, and Captain Tew.

<sup>17</sup> December 28 and 29, 1857.

to them, – these incidents struck us with amazement and admiration. Little did we think that not many months thereafter we were to be even more struck with admiration at the brilliant performance of some of those very troops in actual fight.

A trip to Agra<sup>18</sup> introduced me to the experiences of *palkee dâk*. Travelling by night, the distance got over was about fifty miles; alongside trotted torch-carriers, the odours from those “pillars of flame” foul and offensive. During the day a halt was made at bungalows provided by Government for the use of travellers. Thus were four days occupied in making a journey of two hundred miles. In and near Agra various excursions were made and places of interest visited. In the fort had recently been deposited the gates of Somnath,<sup>19</sup> in connection with the removal of which from Ghuznee the bombastic proclamation by Lord Ellenborough was still subject of comment. The tomb of Akbar<sup>20</sup> and the exquisite Taj Mahal<sup>21</sup> were visited on several occasions. The scene presented by the latter, more especially as seen by moonlight, was extremely beautiful. The minarets and domes of the mausoleum, consisting of pure white marble; the long avenue

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<sup>18</sup> On the invitation of my friend, L. C. Stewart, 39th Regiment.

<sup>19</sup> Gates of Somnath – carried thence, A.D. 1024, by the conqueror, Mahmood of Guznee.

<sup>20</sup> Akbar the Great, A.D. 1556–1605.

<sup>21</sup> Taj Mahal-Bibi ke Roza, or Crown Lady's tomb, erected over the remains of Mumtaz Mahal, the Pride of the Palace, wife of Shah Jehan. She died in childbed of her eighth child, A.D. 1629, at Berhampore in the Deccan, whence her body was carried and buried where the Taj now stands.

of cypress trees by which it is approached; the fountains in full play; the ornamental flower pots, – made upon us an impression never afterwards to be forgotten.

With the regiments returned recently from Kandahar, aided by troops from Bombay and Bengal, Sir Charles Napier undertook an expedition against the disaffected Ameers of Scinde. In February, 1843, the battles of Meeanee and Hyderabad ended in defeat of their forces, Hyderabad occupied, the country being conquered during the succeeding month of March. Of that war it was said: “The Muhamadan rulers of Sind, known as the Ameers, whose chief fault was that they would not surrender their independence, were crushed.”

In the neighbouring State of Gwalior events were in progress, the issue of which was destined to affect the 39th, the 50th, and the Buffs in a way not at the moment anticipated by either of those regiments. Early in February, the distant boom of heavy guns intimated to us at Agra that the Maharajah of Gwalior was dead, and had been succeeded on his throne by his adopted son<sup>22</sup> in the absence of a lineal heir. In such events there did not appear anything to interfere with the routine of pleasure in which so many young officers indulged; that routine went on uninterrupted, for as yet with them the serious business of life was in the future.

Those were indeed the days of India’s hospitality, alike in

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<sup>22</sup> The story of these events is concisely given in Sewell’s *Analytical History of India*, page 244.

respect to individuals and regiments. For example: Three weeks had I been an honorary member of the “Dorsets” mess, when the time of my departure arrived; yet to my request for my mess bill I received the reply, “There is none.” Among the officers whose hospitality I had so long unconsciously enjoyed were two, father and son, both of whom I was shortly to meet under circumstances very different from those in which I had made their acquaintance.



# CHAPTER III

## *1843. AT ALLAHABAD*

I join the Buffs – An execution parade – Remnants of 44th Regiment – Allahabad – Sickness – Papamow – Cobra bite – Accident – Natural history – Agriculture – Locusts – Hindoo girl's song – Society – Lord Sahibs – Their staffs – Rumours of war – Preparations – The start – Affairs in Gwalior – The Punjab.

Eighteen months had elapsed since the day when we left Chatham to that on which we joined the distinguished regiment<sup>23</sup> of which I was a member, the manner of my reception kind and friendly. As the regiment passed through Cawnpore, a short halt was ordered to take place; the camp to be pitched on that part of the parade ground, afterwards to be occupied by the defences in connection with which the story of General Wheeler and his party has left so many sad associations. The object of that halt appeared in Division Orders – the carrying into execution of sentence of death passed by General Court-Martial on a soldier of the regiment convicted of murdering a comrade. This was to be the first regimental parade on which I was to appear. By sunrise the troops were in their places, so as to form three sides of a square, the fourth being partly occupied by the construction

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<sup>23</sup> At the time commanded by Colonel Clunie.

above which the fatal beam and its supports stood prominent. The procession of death began its march, the regimental band wailing forth the Dead March; then came the coffin, carried by low-caste natives; then the condemned man, ghastly pale, strongly guarded. Thus did they proceed until they arrived at the place of execution. The eyes of most of us were averted, and so we saw not the further details of the sad drama. Regiment after regiment marched past the structure, from which dangled the body of a man; thence to their respective barracks or tents, their bands playing “rollicking” tunes.

Pleasant as novel were the incidents of our march eastward along that most excellent highway, the Grand Trunk Road. The early rouse, “striking” tents, the “fall in,” the start while as yet stars glistened in the sky and dawn had not appeared; then came the wild note of the coel<sup>24</sup> as herald of coming day; the gleam of blazing fire far ahead, indicating where the midway halt was to take place, and morning coffee with biscuits was in readiness for all. Resuming the day’s journey, we reached the appointed camp ground by 8 a.m. Tents were quickly pitched on lines previously drawn by the Quarter-master and his staff. Bath, a hearty breakfast, duty, shooting, and other excursions occupied the day, then early dinner, early to bed, and so ready to undergo similar routine on the morrow. In our progress we passed through Futtehpoore, a place to be subsequently the scene of stubborn fight against mutineers in 1857.

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<sup>24</sup> *Eudynemus Orientalis*.

Attached to the Buffs were the remnants of what had been the 44th Regiment, now consisting of a few men of whom the majority were mutilated or suffering from bodily illness; the party under command of Captain Souter, by whose gallant devotion to duty the regimental colour was saved two years previous when our force was annihilated near the Khyber by Affghans, directed by Akbar Khan.

Pârâg, as the locality of Allahabad was anciently called, is closely connected with Hindoo tradition, and still retains a sacred character. At the date referred to in the Ramayana it was a residence of a Rajah of "the powerful Kosalas," whose capital was Ajudyia, their country the modern Oude. Here it was that Rama and Seeta crossed the Ganges in their progress to the jungles of Dandaka, where shortly afterwards she was captured by Ravana and carried away by him to Lunka, otherwise Ceylon. Within the fort, now occupied by our regiment, is an underground temple dedicated to Siva, its position believed to indicate the point where the mythical Suruswatee joins the still sacred Ganges. On an enclosed piece of ground stands one of six pillars assigned to Asoka, B.C. 240, bearing an inscription of the period of Samudra Gupta, 2nd century A.D. That pillar, having fallen, was restored by Jehangir, A.D. 1605; the fort itself captured by the English from Shah Alum, A.D. 1765.

As the hot season advanced, severe and fatal disease prevailed alarmingly among our men, cholera and heat fever claiming victims after a few hours' illness. Treatment applied by the

younger medical officers in accordance with theoretical school teaching was useless, nor was it till the regimental surgeon (Dr. Macqueen) directed us to more practical methods that anything approaching favourable results were attained. In these notes, however, the intention is to omit professional matters.

A full company of our men was sent to Papamow, situated on the right bank of the Ganges, six miles distant, the object being to afford additional space to those within the fort. Captain Airey, in command of the detachment, had been one of the hostages in Affghanistan to Akbar Khan, and utilised on that occasion his culinary talents by acting as cook to the party. For a time the men enjoyed, and benefited by their change to country quarters. Towards the end of the rainy season, however, malarial diseases attacked them to a degree larger in proportion than their comrades in the fort; consequently our detachment was ordered to rejoin Headquarters.

A good deal of freedom was allowed to the soldiers when first sent to the country place above mentioned, one result being that crime was next to absent from among them. A favourite amusement was shooting in the adjoining woods and fields, and, unhappily for some of them, of bathing, notwithstanding strict orders to the contrary, in the Ganges, then in full flood. On one of those shooting excursions a soldier got bitten in the hand by a cobra, the reptile being immediately killed, and brought in with him. That the teeth penetrated was manifest by the wounds; yet, strange to say, no serious results followed – a circumstance

accounted for only by supposing that the poison sacs must by some means have been emptied immediately previous. Of those who insisted on entering the river, some fell victims to their temerity.

The pursuit and study of subjects relative to natural history furnished those of us whose leanings were in those directions with continuous enjoyment and profitable occupation. Visits by friends and small attempts at hospitality came in as so many pleasant interludes. When neither of these was practicable, a good supply of books and papers gave us variety in the way of reading.

So time passed until the month of September, when the cultivated fields were covered by heavy crops special to this part of India. A sudden outburst of discordant noises induces us to quit our quarters in search of the wherefore. A dense cloud is seen in rapid advance from the south-east; myriads of locusts, for of those insects it is composed, alight upon and by their accumulated weight bear down the stems to which they cling. Next day a similar flight is upon us, devouring every green thing; eight days thereafter, a third, but it passed over the locality, obscuring the sky as it did so.

The regimental mess house occupied an elevated position adjoining and overlooking the Jumna, a short distance above the confluence of that river with the Ganges, a terrace pertaining to the building being a favourite resort whereon, in the cool of the evening, it was usual for the officers to enjoy the refreshing

breeze, when there was any, and contemplate the unrippled surface of the deep stream as it glided past. On one such evening, while a number of us were so enjoying the scene, watching the lights of native boats secured for the night to either bank, and listening to that strange mixture of sounds to which natives give the name of music, a series of what appeared to be floating lamps emerged from where the boats lay thickest and glided along the stream. Here we witnessed the scene alluded to, and so graphically described by L.E.L.<sup>25</sup> in her version of “The Hindoo Girl’s Song.”<sup>26</sup> It was, in fact, the Dewalee Festival.<sup>27</sup>

Allahabad was the chief civil station in the provinces; the principal courts were situated there, the higher officials connected with criminal and with revenue administration having their residences scattered over what was an extensive and ornamental settlement. Some of their houses were noted for hospitality, and for more homely entertainments given for the special benefit of the younger officers. Of the latter, that of Mrs. Tayler<sup>28</sup> has left most pleasant recollections, the good influence

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<sup>25</sup> Poor L.E.L.! Further memories of her will recur hereafter.

<sup>26</sup> The words are so beautiful and pathetic that I transcribe them. Float on, float on, my haunted bark, Above the midnight tide; Bear softly o’er the waters dark The hopes that with thee glide. Float on, float on, thy freight is flowers, And every flower reveals The dreaming of my lonely hours, The hope my spirit feels. Float on, float on, thy shining lamp, The light of love is there; If lost beneath the waters damp, That love must then despair. Float on, beneath the moonlight float, The sacred billows o’er; Ah! some kind spirit guards my boat, For it has gained the shore.

<sup>27</sup> *Dewalee*— Festival to Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and fortune.

<sup>28</sup> Mrs. Tayler, mother of Lady Hope Grant, then a young girl in England at school.

exerted by that lady making its mark on some of us who might otherwise have had remembrances very different in kind. Among the most esteemed of the residents was Dr. Angus, "The Good Samaritan," as he was called. Hospitable to all; considerate to juniors; his good advice, and help in other ways, readily given to all who in difficulties applied to him.

Early in October, the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Hugh Gough, arrived *en route* north-westward. New colours were presented by His Excellency to a native regiment<sup>29</sup> of distinguished service in Affghanistan, the event celebrated by festive gatherings, in accordance with customary usage. On the staff of His Excellency were two officers, both of whom subsequently attained high military distinction; the one Sir Harry Smith, the other Sir Patrick Grant.

Reports were "in the air" that a Camp of Exercise was about to assemble at Agra, as an experiment then tried in India for the first time. Bazaar report had it that the Buffs were about to be ordered on service, the scene and nature of which did not just then transpire. Meanwhile, responsible officers "saw to" the state of "brown Bess," with which weapon our men were then armed; to that of ammunition, and other necessary items of equipment. The arrival of part of the 29th Regiment, to take our place, next followed, and, simultaneously, came an order directing the Buffs to proceed to Kalpee, on the Jumna, thirteen days' march distant. A few days thereafter, published orders directed the organization

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<sup>29</sup> 37th.

of “the Army of Exercise” into divisions and brigades; still, there was no inkling of what was about to happen.

For some time previous evidences were manifest that all was not right in Gwalior; latterly report said that things in that State had settled down, terms having been come to between the young Maharajah and leaders of the disaffected. A few days thereafter, our preparations were renewed; our weakly men, together with soldiers’ wives and children, arranged for to be left behind, and with a fighting strength of 739 powerful and seasoned soldiers, the regiment started fit and ready for whatever service might be required of it.

The actual state of affairs, above referred to, was briefly this: – The young Maharajah, known as “Ali Jah Jyajee Scindia,” owed his selection to the widow of the deceased monarch of the same name, who died childless, she a girl aged thirteen, named Tara Bye. To the post of Regent, Mama Sahib, an uncle of the deceased monarch, was acknowledged by Lord Ellenborough through the Resident, against the wishes of the Maharanee; Dada Khasjee, steward of the Household, by the Maharanee. Thereupon, the Resident was ordered by His Excellency to quit Gwalior, and the Dada prepared his troops to oppose forces of the Company, if sent against him; hence the campaign now about to take place.

In the Punjab, conditions were at the same time most serious, giving rise to expectations of armed intervention there. For example: – On the 15th of September, 1843, was perpetrated



the double murder of the Maharajah Shere Singh<sup>30</sup> and his son Pertab, at the northern gate of Lahore, the conspiracy which led up to that deed having been formed by Dyhan Singh.<sup>31</sup> Next day Ajeet Singh, by whose hand the crime was committed, together with his followers, were attacked and put to death by Heera Singh, son of the deceased vizier, and his party. For a time a state of anarchy, with its attendant slaughter and rapine, prevailed within the capital. These having run their course, Dhuleep Singh, only surviving son of Runjeet, was placed upon the throne of his father, Heera Singh making himself vizier. Meanwhile, the Sikh or Khalasa army had become formidable under Lal Singh, a favourite of the Ranee;<sup>32</sup> as an outcome of a conspiracy among them, Heera was murdered, his place taken by Lal.<sup>33</sup> Nothing could then restrain their ardour but an expedition into British territory, for which it was well understood that preparations were in progress. The proceedings thus alluded to supplied ample subject for comment in the papers, and talk at social gatherings.

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<sup>30</sup> Shere Singh, an unacknowledged son of Runjeet, "the Lion of the Punjab."

<sup>31</sup> Dyhan Singh, vizier of the above.

<sup>32</sup> The Ranee Jinda, mother of Dhuleep. She was now Regent.

<sup>33</sup> Subsequently Sikh commander at the battle of Ferozeshah, December 21, 1845.

# CHAPTER IV

## *1843–1844. CAMPAIGN IN GWALIOR. HURDWAR*

16th Lancers – Delhi – The city – Kutub – Feroze's Lath – Divers – Muttra – Affairs in Gwalior – Army of Exercise – Halt – City of Krishna – River Chumbul – Across – Sehoree – Before the battle – Battle of Maharajpore – The 16th – "The Brigadier" – Search for wounded – General Churchill – Lieutenant Cavanagh – The muster-roll – Next night – The killed and wounded – Resume the advance – News of Punniar – Queen Regent – Around our camp – Gwalior – The fort – Disarming the conquered – Breaking up – Repassing the field of battle – Meerut – The welcome – Writing to the papers – Native troops – Hurdwar – Religious festival – The Dhoon – Return – Batta – A native regiment disbanded – Unrest in Punjab – Rejoin the Buffs.

On the day the Buffs began their march, I proceeded to join the 16th Lancers, to which distinguished regiment I had been, by General Orders, attached for duty. Ten nights were passed in travelling by palkee dâk. In early morning of the eleventh day the Kutub was seen in bold relief against the indistinct horizon, for the atmosphere was laden with dust. After a little time, the Jumna was crossed by a bridge of boats; then another interval, and I was

hospitably received by Dr. Ross, to whom I had an introduction.

Various places of interest in the imperial city were visited in turn. The Jumna Musjid, or chief mosque, its domes and minarets imposing in their grandeur; the balcony in the Chandee Chouk, whereon, in 1739, Nadir Shah sat witnessing the massacre of the inhabitants; the palace of the once "Great Mogul"; the smaller building in its garden, within which had stood "the Peacock Throne"; the remnants of the crystal seat upon which, in ancient times, monarchs were crowned; those of numerous fountains; the Persian inscription, to the effect that "If there is an Elysium upon earth, it is this." But from the ruins around, frogs and lizards stared at us; the once gorgeous palaces, and all that pertained to them, were smeared over with filth.

At a distance of twelve miles from the city stands the Kutub, surrounded by numerous remains of buildings, the road through all that way being along a space covered by ruins of various kinds. The Cashmere gate of Delhi by which we emerged was then noted as the place where Mr. Fraser, Resident at the Court of the Emperor, was murdered, and where Shumshodeen, the instigator of that crime, was executed; it was to become famous as the scene of severe but victorious struggle against the mutineers in 1857. About two miles onwards stood the ruins of an astronomical observatory, one of two of their kind in India, the other being at Benares. A little farther on was the tomb of Sufter Jung, minister to the princes of Delhi; then continuous ranges of ruins until we arrive at Feroze's Lath, a metal pillar,

the history of which is somewhat obscure, but on which marks of shot indicate attempts by Nadir Shah to destroy it. Now we reach the Kutub, a pillar sixty-five yards in circumference at the base, the ascent within it comprising three hundred and twenty-nine steps, the exterior interrupted by four terraces. Legend relates that it is Hindoo in origin; history that its exterior ornamentation was seriously damaged by the Mahomedan conquerors. Not far from it are the ruins of what would seem to have been a tower of still larger dimensions. In the vicinity of the latter a deep well, into which from a height of sixty feet natives dived, performing strange evolutions in mid-air as they did so.

From Delhi to Muttra the journey was made along by-paths across country. In camp near the latter-named city were the 16th, commanded by Colonel Cureton, and there I joined them. The fact had meantime been promulgated that the destination of "the Army of Exercise" was to be Gwalior. The force so named, 30,000 strong, was to be divided into two wings or corps, to enter that State simultaneously from two directions. That from the south and eastward comprised the Buffs, 50th Regiment, 9th Lancers, Artillery, Native Cavalry, and Native Infantry; that from the west, the 16th Lancers, 39th and 40th Regiments, a strong force of Artillery, 1st and 10th Regiments of Native Cavalry, 4th Irregulars, and several regiments of Native Infantry.

While arrangements for active movements were being matured, those of us on whom as yet cares of office had not descended, passed our time in visiting places of interest in and

near the cities of Muttra and Bindrabund, both held sacred by Hindoos in relation to the life of Krishna. In the last-named city we were only permitted to approach the principal temple that stood close to its entrance gate, but from the distance we could see, stretching far away as it seemed to us, the vista of its interior, dimly lighted by hanging lamps; at its extreme end the emblem of the deity to whom it was dedicated, resplendent with gems and precious stones. Everywhere along the narrow streets and from the flat roofs of their houses armies of “sacred” baboons grinned and chattered at us. A picnic to some characteristically Indian gardens<sup>34</sup> adjoining the banks of the Jumna furnished us with another pleasant interlude.

The division of the force of which the 16th were part resumed its march; in three days arrived at its assigned position not far from Agra and there encamped, pending the result of an ultimatum dispatched by the Governor-General to the disaffected Gwalior leaders. Meanwhile, arrivals of the high civil and military officials, additions to the force, salutes and festivities afforded all of us pleasant occupation and variety.

The answer of the chiefs arrives; its terms are defiant. War against the State immediately proclaimed<sup>35</sup> by Lord Ellenborough; portions of the force put in motion towards the river Chumbul, among them the 16th. The appointed rendezvous near Dholpore is speedily reached, and there we encamp.

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<sup>34</sup> Belonging to Luckimchund, at one time a Government contractor.

<sup>35</sup> December 20, 1843.

A vakeel arrives in camp, bearer of a dispatch by which the leaders of Gwalior rebels submit proposals for peace, on their own terms. They are at once refused. By daybreak next morning the force is in motion. Three hours suffice for crossing the Chumbul, an operation effected without important incident, establishments follow without delay; camp is pitched on hostile territory. The aspect of our position and immediate vicinity presents uneven ground, intersected by deep ravines, destitute of roadways. Our halt is of short duration. Early next morning the force emerged on open country; in due time arrived in near proximity to the village of Sehoree, and there encamped.

Meanwhile, information was received that Gwalior forces were rapidly concentrating in our front. Officers on the staff of our Quartermaster-General reconnoitred the country to a radius of ten miles and more around our camp. Soon the "Chief"<sup>36</sup> issued orders that the march should be resumed next day, and the Mahrattas attacked if met with.

Conversation at mess turned upon the probable events so soon to transpire; extemporised plans by individual officers indicated the several views they entertained of what was to happen. The very young expressed hopes that the enemy would show good fight; some of their number speculated on the chances of promotion before them. Then broke in one of the seniors, who had gained experience of war in Affghanistan: "I have just been employed in making a few little arrangements in case

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<sup>36</sup> Sir Hugh Gough.

of accidents.” “Highly proper,” remarked another “for no one knows what to-morrow may bring forth.”

At daylight on December 29 our force began its advance, its manner of distribution to make an attack simultaneously on front and flank of the position known to have been occupied by the Mahrattas the previous evening. But during the night they had taken up a new position, considerably in advance, and from it unexpectedly opened fire on our leading columns. The general force was at once directed upon the new position. Horse Artillery commanded by Captain Grant<sup>37</sup> at full gallop rode directly at the Gwalior battery; opened fire upon it with crushing effect, and within the space of a few minutes reduced it to silence. Having done so, away again at full gallop Captain Grant led his battery against one on the left of the former, that had meanwhile opened upon us, our infantry columns plodding their way, slowly but steadily, against its line of fire. Very soon that battery also was silenced. The infantry were at work with the bayonet with terrible effect upon the enemy, with very heavy loss to our own forces, in men, horses, and ammunition. A third battery began its deadly work upon other bodies of infantry, in motion onwards. Again Captain Grant led his troop against it with the same result; then arrived the infantry, including the 39th and 40th British regiments; then hand-to-hand conflict, and then – the positions were in the grasp of our forces.

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<sup>37</sup> Charley Grant Sahib, as he continued to be called many years afterwards when as a General Officer he commanded a Division.

While thus the conflict raged fiercely, the 16th, led by Colonel Rowland Smyth,<sup>38</sup> together with the two cavalry regiments<sup>39</sup> brigaded with them, were ordered to sweep round the rebel camp, cut off, destroy, or disperse those who, driven from their guns, might take to flight. The Lancers dashed onwards at the charge, the bright steel and showy pennants of their weapons seeming to skim the ground, while at intervals stray rebels fell lifeless. The Gwalior men, anticipating such a manœuvre, had taken precautions against its complete success; the position for heaviest guns selected by them had along its front a ravine of great breadth and depth. Upon its edge the cavalry suddenly came, nor is it clear by what means they escaped being precipitated into it. There was for a moment some confusion as the halt was sounded; eighteen guns directly in front, six others in flank sent their missiles through our ranks or high above them. To remain exposed to risks of more perfect practice would serve no good purpose; there was no alternative but to retire. The infantry were seen advancing; down one side of the ravine, lost to sight; up the further side, then onwards, into the batteries, and then – the fight was won.

When at first the 16th took the position assigned to them on the field, it may have been that my endeavours to discover what was subsequently called “the first line of assistance” were unsuccessful; it may have been that they were not very keenly

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<sup>38</sup> Colonel Cureton now acted as Brigadier in command of the cavalry.

<sup>39</sup> 10th Bengal and 4th Irregular Cavalry.



made, at any rate “the Brigadier” – for so was named the troop horse I rode – knew his right place in the ranks, and so enabled me to witness the events now described.

Returning to my proper duties, I joined the parties who traversed the field of battle in search of wounded. Great, alas, was the number who lay prostrate, – many dead, many more suffering from wounds. Among the latter was General Churchill, his injuries of a nature to make him aware that speedy death was inevitable. While being attended to with all possible care, he requested me to take charge of the valuable watch he wore, and after his demise to send it to his son-in-law, Captain Mitchell<sup>40</sup> of the 6th Foot, at that time serving in South Africa. During the night he died, and his request was carried out by me.

At a short distance lay, in the growing crop that covered the field of battle, Lieutenant Cavanagh of the 4th Irregulars, loudly calling to attract attention, supporting by his hands a limb from which dangled the foot and part of the leg, his other limb grazed by a round shot which inflicted both wounds, and passed through his horse, now lying dead beside him. He was taken to the hospital tents, where meanwhile wounded soldiers and officers in considerable numbers had accumulated. The surgeons’ work begun, three<sup>41</sup> of us mutually assisted each other. The turn of Lieutenant Cavanagh to be attended to having come, he made a request that we should “just wait a bit while he wrote

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<sup>40</sup> Afterwards General Sir John Mitchell, G.C.B.

<sup>41</sup> Namely, Dr. Walker of the Body Guard, Currie of 16th Lancers, and myself.

to his wife,” for he had recently been married. This done, he submitted to amputation, and during that process uttered no cry or groan, though nothing in the shape of anæsthetic was given, nor had chloroform as such been discovered; then, during the interval purposely permitted to elapse between the operation and final dressing, he continued his letter to his young wife, these circumstances illustrating the courage and endurance so characteristic among men (and women) at the time referred to. His case was one of many men who had to be succoured that day.

Meanwhile the force was in process of encamping on the field so gallantly won; the 16th paraded for roll call, the band of the regiment playing “The Convent Bells,” the notes of which long years thereafter recalled the day and occasion. Casualties<sup>42</sup> among the men were only nine; but among the horses more numerous than they had been at Waterloo, where as Light Dragoons the 16th so highly distinguished themselves.<sup>43</sup>

The arduous and responsible work of the day over, those of us who could do so withdrew to our tents, our hearts full of gratitude to the Almighty for individual safety, there to obtain

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<sup>42</sup> The strength of the opposing forces at the commencement of battle was: *British*, 14,000, with 40 guns; *Mahrattas*, 18,000, including 3,000 cavalry and 100 guns. The losses were: *British*, 106 killed, 648 wounded, 7 missing; total, 797. Seven officers were killed on the field or died of wounds. The *Mahrattas* sustained losses estimated at 3,000 to 4,000.

<sup>43</sup> In repulsing a body of French Lancers in pursuit of a party of Scots Greys, for which, as marks of appreciation by the king, they were made Lancers and granted scarlet uniform.

such measure of rest and quiet as under the circumstances was procurable; for all through the evening and early hours of night the bright glare from burning villages, the dense smoke from others, the dull heavy sound of exploding mines made the hours hideous. Such was the battle of “Maharajpore.”

During the evening the mangled remains of what in the morning had been a band of brave men were committed to earth. With returning daylight the same sad task was continued, all possible honour being shown to the dead according to the rank they had held, from that of General Officer in the person of General Churchill, who had succumbed in the course of the night, to that of the private soldier. Meantime, in tents the work of attending to the wounded went steadily on. There, officers and men whom we personally knew, lay helpless; among them Major Bray, of the 39th, and his son in adjoining cots, the former terribly burnt by the explosion of a mine, the life-blood of the latter ebbing through a bullet-wound in his chest.<sup>44</sup> And there were many other very painful instances, to the aid of whom our best endeavours had to be directed.

It was for the time being impossible to carry on with the army, in its further advance, the large number of wounded with which it was now encumbered. A guard sufficiently strong to protect the extemporised field hospital having been detailed, the general

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<sup>44</sup> Many years thereafter I became acquainted with Colonel Bray, who obtained his commission “without purchase” in acknowledgment of services rendered by his father and brother.

force resumed its march, the intention being to press on as rapidly as possible to the capital. Along a tract of soft sandy country, oppressed by heat, exhausted by the fatigue of the previous day, the troops plodded their weary way, in their progress passing many relics of the recent fight, including shot, arms, shreds of clothing, dead bodies of animals and of men, etc.

At last the halt resounded from trumpet and bugle; for a time we rested as best we could, and then the tents having arrived we encamped. Some further delay was rendered necessary by circumstances. During that and the succeeding day information was received in camp that while the battle was proceeding in the vicinity of Maharajpore, an engagement equally formidable took place between the Mahrattas and the force under General Grey at Punniar, on the eastern border of the Gwalior State; that in it the Buffs had sustained a loss in killed of one officer and thirteen men, in wounded of three officers and sixty men, – the casualties in the 50th being equally numerous.

The arrival in camp of the Queen Regent, together with her Sirdars, and the young Maharajah, the salute on the accession of whom some ten months previous has been already mentioned, caused no little excitement, and at the same time much speculation among us. Later on, however, the report spread that the result of their interview with the Governor-General was by both parties deemed satisfactory.

As some among us took rides in different directions around our camp, not an armed man was met with. In some of the

villages visited individuals who had escaped the carnage of the previous day were found lying more or less completely stripped of clothing, and wounded, some of them dead. The villagers had fallen upon the fugitives, robbed them of all they possessed, then turned them adrift. They had failed, and they paid the penalty of failure.

The march resumed, the force in due time reached the immediate vicinity of Gwalior, and there encamped. The huge fortress seemed to tower above us, while the neighbouring hills looked as if from their summits a well-directed fire could have swept the country to a considerable distance around. Within a couple of days arrived the force under General Grey and the Seepree contingent under Brigadier Stubbs. Negotiations had so far advanced that the latter took possession of the fort, the camp of the former adding very considerably to the dimensions of the great canvas city already existing. Rapidly and completely did the routine of life to which for some time past we had been accustomed undergo a change: complimentary visits and entertainments, each regiment entertaining every one else and being in turn entertained by them. By the high officials durbars and receptions were held, to which ceremonials Representatives of Gwalior having given their presence, the fact that they did so indicated that the end of our expedition was approaching.

Connected with the strong fortress by which the city of Gwalior is dominated were many points of interest; among them the general aspect of decay as seen from without, the tortuous

narrow lane that leads to it, the steep and difficult flight of stone steps by which the ascent must be made, and powerful gates that seemed to lead but to a mass of ruins. Within the defences we were face to face with remains of temples, pillars, and arches pertaining to edifices of the Jains;<sup>45</sup> there were remains of what had been reservoirs of large dimensions and beautiful workmanship, in some portions of which clear water glistened in the sunlight. Only one piece of ordnance was met with; it was an ancient gun, seventeen feet in length, and apparently capable of discharging a fifty-eight pound shot.

The process of disarming the Gwalior troops was next performed – somewhat slowly at first, and not without some risk of difficulty, but more rapidly as information circulated among them that they were to receive all arrears of pay due, and a certain number of them taken into the service of “the Company.”<sup>46</sup> Then did they march to the places assigned to them in battalions, their bands playing what was intended to be “God Save the Queen”; finally laying down their arms and surrendering their colours, all of which, packed on elephants, were taken to the fort. The artillery and cavalry gave theirs up elsewhere.

The wounded from different regiments were collected in camp, those among them fit to undergo the journey towards

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<sup>45</sup> *Jains*. The origin of the sect of Buddhists so called dates from sixth or seventh century A.D., its decay in the twelfth or thirteenth.

<sup>46</sup> The “Gwalior Contingent” so established joined the mutineers in 1857, and took prominent part in the investment of Cawnpore.

Allahabad being dispatched thither by means of doolies and native carts (hackeries), – the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, as expressed by himself, being that their progress thither should be by “easy stages and intermediate halts.” From Allahabad they were to be conveyed by means of native boats to Calcutta, and there embarked on board one or more of the most comfortably and well-equipped ships proceeding viâ the Cape to England. For those whose condition was more serious, accommodation was provided in camp, and in public buildings outside the city of Gwalior. Among those so left were three respected officers of the Buffs. Of these, Captain Chatterton and Dr. Macqueen shortly afterwards succumbed to the disease – induced by the trials of active service. The death of the third – namely, Captain Magrath – was attended by a little circumstance which showed that the spirit of romance persisted to the last in him. During the battle at Punniar, he, together with thirteen men of his company, were blown up by the explosion of a tumbril that they were in the act of capturing. Captain Magrath and twelve of the soldiers with him speedily succumbed, or were instantly killed. When his body was being prepared for burial, there, over the region of the heart, was found a lady’s glove; nor was it difficult, bearing in mind some of the most pleasant incidents at Allahabad already recorded, to indicate the hand to which the memento originally pertained.

A general parade of the combined forces now took place. On that occasion the young Maharajah accompanied the Governor-

General, by whom, in the course of his address, sufficient was expressed to raise hopes that further service on the Punjab frontier was to be immediately undertaken. But this was not to be.

Disintegration of "the Army of Exercise" forthwith began, in obedience to orders issued. Starting on their return march, the 16th traversed the field on which, twenty-nine days previous, the battle already mentioned had taken place. At short distances over its extent lay bodies of men and horses far advanced in decomposition; fragments of natives and equipments everywhere. The village of Maharajpore reduced to charred ruins; in their midst numbers of dead bodies of those who had so manfully stood their ground and perished as they did so. In what had been a room or enclosure a confused heap of what had been men further testified to the obstinacy of the defence. In some places miserable-looking inhabitants were searching among the ruins for property and houses. Such was the wreck of battle.

Thence to Meerut the march of the Lancers was uneventful. Halts for a day were made respectively at Hattras and Alighur, associated as those places are with early campaigns of the century. At the latter fortress we visited the gate and approach thereto through which was made the historic charge by the 76th Regiment;<sup>47</sup> then the monument to officers and men who fell on that occasion, and at Laswaree soon thereafter. Twenty days *en route*; the 16th re-enter Meerut, whence they had started on

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<sup>47</sup> Under Lord Lake, September 3, 1803.



service now happily performed. Very touching were meetings between wives and their husbands; though to younger and less thoughtful men the full significance of husband and father restored to those dependent on him had yet to be realized.

A series of entertainments, including regimental dinners and a station ball, welcomed the return to cantonments of the 16th and troop of Horse Artillery, now under Captain Alexander, that had so much distinguished itself at Maharajpore. Preparations rapidly pushed on for the annual race for "the Lancer Cup," and all seemed to settle down for the hot season of 1844, then fast approaching.

A young (Artillery) officer had the indiscretion to write to the papers a severe criticism – from his point of view – on the tactics to which, according to himself, was due the heavy cost in killed and wounded at which the recent victory had been gained. A second officer made open boast of the help he had given in preparing that letter, and both of them boasted pretentiously of what they had done. But soon the attention of the "authorities," including the venerable Commander-in-Chief, was drawn to the comments in question, with the result to the subalterns concerned that, as expressed at the time, they were "come down upon like a sledge-hammer." Popular verdict declared that the example set by them, if followed, would destroy all discipline.

The date on which, according to ancient custom, the great Hindoo religious festival of the year was to be held at Hurdwar was near at hand. As on similar occasions, arrangements were

made to send to that place a small body of native troops, those detailed for the purpose being men of the 53rd N.I. and 10th Cavalry, I placed in departmental charge. Our march thither began in the middle of March. As we proceeded, we went along through a highly cultivated country, many of the fields covered with "golden grain," for it was the season of barley harvest. More and more distinct became the snowy peaks and precipices of the Himalayahs; denser and more dense the masses of pilgrims toiling their weary way to the sacred shrine, for the occasion was that of the greater fair known as Kumbh Mela, held every twelfth year.<sup>48</sup>

Situated directly on the right bank of the Ganges, where that river emerges from the Himalayahs, the surroundings of Hurdwar are extremely beautiful, comprising hill, valley, forest, and stream. At short intervals temples stand; ghats or steps that lead downward to the sacred stream are crowded with devotees. In the clear, rapid stream, men, women, children, and fish commingle – for, like the river, the fish are sacred. The hills immediately behind the town are of the Sewalik range. Along their face occur a series of what were roads, though now scarcely deserving the name; on either side of them are veritable rock dwellings, now occupied by Fakeers. To the geologist the

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<sup>48</sup> The festival takes place on the first day of the (Hindoo) month Baishakh, that is, commencement of the Solar year (March-April) and anniversary of the day on which the river Ganges first appeared on earth. Every twelfth year the planet Jupiter being in Aquarius, a feast of peculiar sanctity occurs; the great bathing day, or Maha Mela, coinciding with the new moon.

same range has interest connected with the remains of extinct animals contained therein; among them, of Ganesa's elephant, that lived, died, and became imbedded in marshes subsequently to be upheaved and so form the range referred to.

On this occasion<sup>49</sup> an estimated number of two hundred thousand persons were assembled on and in the immediate neighbourhood of the ghats to take part in what was called "the great celebration." At a given signal by the Brahmin priests, the masses precipitated themselves into the river, there to perform their religious ceremonies. Of the number who did so, about fifteen thousand were women; but it was said that during some previous years female devotees had been fewer than heretofore. After nightfall the river was illuminated by floating lamps as already described in reference to the Jumna at Allahabad, the scene presented being, as on that occasion, very beautiful.

An excursion to a distance of twenty miles or so up the valley of the Dhoon, undertaken for the combined purposes of shooting small game and relaxation, introduced us to surroundings very beautiful in themselves, full also of living things, animal and vegetable, most interesting to lovers of Nature. From the point reached by us a striking view was obtained of the ranges on which stand respectively the sanatoria of Landour and Mussoorie, and in the further distance snow-covered peaks of the Himalayahs.

The *mela* or festival, over, without mishap or outbreak of special sickness, our return march took place. The mid-day heat

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<sup>49</sup> April 11.

had become great; we were therefore glad to be again within comfortable houses at Meerut, provided with thermantadotes and tatties;<sup>50</sup> and so the temperature reduced from 105° F. in the open to 76° F. indoors.

Not long thereafter the greater number, if indeed not all of us, were gratified on reading, in Government Orders, the announcement that officers and men who had been present at the battles of Meeanee or Hyderabad, recently fought in Scinde, Punniar, or Maharajpore in Gwalior, were granted as a donation one years' batta, amounting in my instance, with relative rank of lieutenant, to Rs.700 – a very welcome windfall.

Certain native regiments were at this time ordered to the first-named country. Rumour spread that peace having been established therein, the extra allowances granted to troops while war was in progress was to be discontinued. In the regiments alluded to insubordination immediately showed itself, in at least one of them to a degree bordering on mutiny. A general parade was ordered; the disaffected corps so placed as to be in face of artillery, on either side cavalry and infantry; thereupon the sepoys belonging to it laid down their arms, after which they were paid up to date and escorted out of the station. The officer commanding another corps took upon himself to get rid of the ringleaders without waiting for official authority for so doing. Thus was suppressed what for the moment threatened to become a somewhat difficult state of matters. This was in 1844. The

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<sup>50</sup> Prepared from the roots of *Andropogon*.

terrible events of 1857 at the same station were in the future.

The state of unrest with reference to affairs in the Punjab continued to increase, the likelihood of war next cold season appearing the greater from the facts that military stores were ordered to be collected at Umballah and Ferozepore, means of transport arranged for, and troops of various arms warned to proceed towards the frontier. Meanwhile, Lord Ellenborough was recalled, and Lord Hardinge reigned as Governor-General in his stead.

At the end of April, in obedience to orders, I started away to rejoin the Buffs, who had returned to Allahabad. The first part of the journey thither was performed by horse transit, then recently introduced – the palanquin placed upon a four-wheeled truck or cart, drawn by a single horse at the rate of seven miles per hour; for as yet railways had not been introduced into India. The latter part of the journey was by ordinary “palkee dâk”; and so, in due course, I was again with the happy regiment to which properly I belonged.

# CHAPTER V

## *1844–1845. ALLAHABAD TO ENGLAND*

In charge – Routine – Orders for England – Volunteering – Getting ready – Departure – Chunar – Benares – Sarnath – Ramdeela – 29th Regiment – Ghazepore – Buxar – Dinapore – Patna – Granary – 62nd Regiment – Cholera – Monghyr – Hospitality – Bhaugulpore – Rajmahal – A reckless soldier – Corporal punishment – Berhampore – A Gwalior hostage – Plassee – Transport – Party of 10th Regiment – “Rejected” – Chandernagore – Calcutta – Preparations – The bronze star – The “Monarch” – St. Helena – Garrison – Slave ships – Longwood – Napoleon’s grave – Courage at sea – England.

Routine of duty, and responsibilities connected with what was called “full charge” of the regiment, now devolved upon me. Much had to be learnt in respect to official matters relating to my new position, nor could it be so except from so-called “subordinates” attached in those days to hospitals pertaining to British troops; to them I had, therefore, to refer, and from them gain needed information.

The aspect of cantonments during the next few months much resembled that of the previous hot season: pleasure and gaiety at

suitable times, but not to interfere with duty. Among the soldiers unhappily there occurred, as before, great sickness and mortality, the line of new-made graves in the cemetery filled the previous year, and then numbering sixty, being duplicated and exceeded by one on this occasion.

Late in September, orders of readiness to proceed to Calcutta, there to embark for England, were appreciated in different senses by the younger officers and by the older, the latter contrasting in their minds their relative rates of pay in India, where the rupee had its standard value, and at home. With few exceptions the juniors expressed themselves as delighted at the prospect.

Then came the customary order that, prior to its departure, men who so desired should be given the opportunity to *volunteer* from the regiment to certain specified corps whose period of service in India had yet some years to run. A special officer was appointed to superintend the proceeding. Applicants for the privilege were subjected to physical examination; their defaulter sheets and “small books” looked at, after which, if deemed eligible, and under forty years of age, they were accepted, and received a bounty equivalent in amount to £3 sterling. To those whose age exceeded that limit no bounty was officially given, but a corresponding sum was granted from regimental funds as they existed at the time. As an unfortunate part of the system the canteen was kept open throughout; there the bounty money was quickly spent, with the result that throughout the week devoted to “volunteering” scenes of irregularity became numerous; parades

and discipline were in abeyance, drunkenness and riot took their places.

As the arrival of our regiment, and its return from active service, had been made the occasion for a round of entertainments, so was now its prospective departure; civil officials and officers of native regiments joined in turn to show attention to the Buffs, and thus testify good fellowship and friendly sentiments towards the corps. Then came the final official ordeal; namely, inspection by the venerable officer commanding the Division. General Watson, then said to be of the old school, had seen much war service; personally amiable, but so full of years that, on the occasion of the parade in question, he was unable to mount a horse, and so perforce witnessed the formality of the march past while he remained on foot.

Boats of the kinds already described now lay ready moored to the bank of the Jumna for our reception. The General gave as a last entertainment a sumptuous *déjeûner*, to which were invited the principal officers, civil and military, of the station. Healths proposed and drunk to in champagne; good wishes expressed; leave-takings gone through; then all take their respective places; bands play "Auld lang syne," "The girls we left behind us," "Home, sweet home," etc.; we are speedily on board; the moorings untied; the "fleet" in movement with the placid stream; from the ramparts of the fort heavy guns fire a "Royal salute" in honour of our regiment. Thus begins the



journey homewards.<sup>51</sup>

We are speedily at the fort of Chunar, built by the Mahomedan conquerors of India, from Hindoo temples destroyed for that purpose; captured by Major – afterwards Sir Hector Monro in 1764,<sup>52</sup> but still held semi-sacred by the descendants of those whose shrines were so desecrated. On an open tract of ground in its near vicinity, a series of barracks and small houses were occupied by pensioners of the East India Company.

Benares, viewed from the Ganges, is picturesque, and in some respects beautiful. Houses of red sandstone, their fanciful windows, projecting balconies, and flat roofs, giving to them a character all their own. The city extends from the very edge of the river; its numerous temples and ghats – the latter crowded with devotees and others, wearing garments of many colours, giving the scene a picturesque aspect. Some of the temples and ghats present a dilapidated appearance; but others, especially that of Visheswar – dedicated to Siva – is resplendent with gold gilding. Another striking object is the Mosque of Arungzebe, erected in the reign of that monarch from Hindoo temples destroyed for that purpose. Near the golden temple, in the heart of the city, is the no less famous well, named after Manic Karnik, believed by votaries to be filled with “the sudor of Vishnu,” and at its bottom to contain Truth. At a short distance is the Astronomical Observatory, erected by Jai Singh, A.D. 1693.

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<sup>51</sup> October 16, 1844.

<sup>52</sup> Or rather, fell into his hands as a result of his victory at Buxar.

History records that this ancient city continued during many generations to be the metropolis of Aryan civilization in India. It was at Sarnath, a suburb of Kasi, as Benares was then called, that in the sixth century B.C. Gautama preached the doctrines of Karma<sup>53</sup> and Nirvana.<sup>54</sup> There Buddhism assumed its sway, which it retained till the fourth century A.D., when it gave way before a revival of Hindooism, in regard to which religion Benares has ever since been considered its most sacred city.

Here we first witnessed the celebration of the Ramdeela festival. It consists in a representation of the more important incidents connected with the abduction of Sita; the chase, the siege, and capture of Ravanu's stronghold; her rescue, the ordeal of fire, to test her purity, and reception by Rama. As noted at the time, the performances, interpreted by the light of legend, gave to them considerable interest.

Resuming our river journey, we met a fleet of boats similar to our own, having on board a party of the 29th Regiment, in progress towards the north-west. The effective portion of the regiment was marching to its destination from Ghazepore, at which place it had been stationed during the two years it had been in India. From a strength of close upon 1,200, it had been in that short time reduced, by fever and cholera, to little over 400 effectives. Alas! out of those remaining, great were to be the losses at Ferozeshah, and other frontier battles, then in the

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<sup>53</sup> That each act in this life bears its fruit in the next.

<sup>54</sup> The attainment of a sinless state of existence.

near future.

There was nothing in the aspect of Ghazepore, or the buildings connected with it, to account for the havoc in life and health sustained by the 29th Regiment. A large extent of grass-covered plain separates the station proper from the river. On it stands a monument, erected in memory of Lord Cornwallis,<sup>55</sup> who died near this place, while in progress up the Ganges. That monument, surrounded by tamarisk bushes, above which its summit rises, bears upon it a memorial figure by Flaxman. The range of barracks and the church are the only other buildings that are immediately seen. A visit to the native town brought us to the ruins of what had been the palace of Mir Cossim Ali Khan, whose forces were defeated, and power destroyed, at Buxar, in 1764, by Major Munro. The graceful proportion of its pillars, arches, and general aspect struck us forcibly, though the building itself is in a state of decay, as are also the numerous smaller ranges by which, in former days, it was surrounded; nor is it more than eighty years since that decay began. Other points of interest connected with Ghazepore include the growth and manufacture of poppy and opium, roses and their otto. A breeding stud for cavalry and artillery horses is here maintained by Government.

Buxar, our next halting place, was one of three places at which breeding studs were maintained by "the Company," the other two being Ghazepore, already mentioned, and Haupur. It would appear, however, that all these are insufficient to meet the

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<sup>55</sup> Died 1805.

requirements of the army, and that consequently importation of horses from the Cape and Australia has had to be resorted to.

Dinapore, then occupied by European<sup>56</sup> artillery, one British and three native regiments of infantry, for the assigned purpose of guarding against possible incursion by the Nepaulese, whose relations towards the Government of India were somewhat strained. It was said that for a number of years the terms of the Treaty of 1816 between Sir David Ochterlony and the chief of the Ghoorkas were faithfully adhered to by the latter; but that in recent times signs of disaffection had begun to show themselves. As an outcome of the Treaty in question, some of the Nepaulese took military service under the Company, they being enrolled in what became known as Ghoorka regiments. For some reason, the nature of which did not transpire, several days elapsed before our journey was resumed.

Impressions of the place were not particularly favourable; that it has attractions of a kind, however, seems evident, as families and various retired officers were said to make it their residence. A few miles distant is the city of Patna – Pataliputra of the Hindoos, and Palibothra of the Greeks – famous in relation to British history as the scene of murder by Kossim Khan, in 1763, of 200 Englishmen, besides 2,000 sepoys; to become again noted in connection with events of 1857. On our way to and from

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<sup>56</sup> During the early wars by the East India Company the troops employed by it comprised men of various European nationalities, besides natives of the United Kingdom.

that city we noticed by the roadside the now disused grain store, erected in 1769–70, to receive grain against the great famine then prevailing in Behar, in respect to which it is related that “the tanks were dried up, the springs ceased to reach the surface, and within the first nine months of 1770 one-third of the population of Lower Bengal were carried off by want of food.”

The 62nd, occupying barracks at Dinapore, entertained the officers of the Buffs on a scale of hospitality and in a manner to be compared only with regimental festivities pictured in the works of Charles Lever. “The Springers,” as in those days they loved to be called, were under orders for Umballah, much delighted at prospects of service therein implied; for the state of affairs in the Punjab, already mentioned, had from day to day continued to increase in gravity. The feeling of gallant hilarity was expressed in a somewhat demonstrative manner in extemporary song by one of their officers in early morning hours, while mess had not yet broken up.<sup>57</sup> Of our festive hosts on that occasion scarcely one was alive fourteen months thereafter.

Resuming our journey, our fleet was moored about sunset under a somewhat high alluvial bank, such as in this part of the river course are of frequent occurrence. To several of our soldiers the result was fatal; during the night cholera attacked with violence, and claimed them as victims. As we continued on

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<sup>57</sup> The officer alluded to, familiarly known as “Paddy” Graves, parodied a well-known soldiers’ song of Peninsular days after this manner: —The Sixty-second Springers all – areGoing to march unto Umballah – r;And the Buffs, that gallant band – areGoing to their native land – are.Love, farewell.”

our way next day the malady seemed to be left behind us.

Monghyr, at which we speedily arrived, is interesting in several respects. To the cession of its rather imposing fort was immediately ascribed the massacre of our countrymen at Patna, as already mentioned. Near this place, in the year of that occurrence, 1763, a mutiny occurred, in which not only native but also European troops were concerned, nor was it until several of their number had been blown from guns by order of Major Munro, already mentioned, that the outbreak was suppressed.

At this place more hospitality was shown us. While yet at some distance from our halting ground, an invitation reached the regiment from Mr. Hodson, then occupying the position of Joint Magistrate and Collector, that officers should dine with him; while to the soldiers, “refreshments” would be served on tables arranged for the purpose as near as possible to the boats. Thus did our host express the compliment he desired to show the regiment, and very highly were his successful endeavours appreciated.

Our next halting place was Bhaugulpore. There, in 1827, the Buffs were stationed, while as yet our frontier line was comparatively little advanced, – Bhurtpore only the previous year captured. In the range of hills that thence extend in a south-westerly direction are various wild Santhal tribes, very low in civilization, devil-worshippers by custom;<sup>58</sup> their weapons were chiefly bows and arrows; their own ethnic alliance believed to be

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<sup>58</sup> In subsequent years large numbers of them were converted to Christianity; colonies established by them in Cachar and Assam.

Dravidian.

At the time referred to the number of steamers on the Ganges was small; the length of inland voyage from three to four weeks. Officers and others availing themselves of that mode of transit considered that they were travelling "by express." It was customary with some to spend the period of sick leave, extending in certain instances to six months, on board comfortably fitted up "budgerows" on the river; tradesmen also arranged the kind of boat so called as travelling shops, and these different classes of persons and craft gave certain variety to our river voyage. Arrived at Rajmahal, the former capital of Northern Bengal, but now a ruined mass out of which stood a few broken shafts of what had been pillars of black marble. The ruined palace dates back only to A.D. 1630. Sultan Shujah, by whom it was founded, elder brother of Arungzebe, was at the time Governor of Bengal. He was soon thereafter deposed by the latter-named monarch; fled to Arracan, and there perished miserably. When visited by Bishop Heber, the ruins of the palace were in comparatively good preservation; subsequently, however, their materials were utilised in the construction of the magnificent palace of Moorshedabad.

Two incidents now occurred, each characteristic in its way. A soldier having clandestinely obtained bazaar spirit, was thereby rendered drunk and desperate; boasting of his courageous deeds, he was challenged to "take a header" into the Ganges. He did so, and appeared no more. The other was the infliction of one hundred lashes on the back of a hardened old offender, simply as

punishment, for none of those who knew the man expected that it would have any deterrent effect in the future.

Entering the Bhauguruttee branch of the Ganges, our fleet was soon at Berhampore,<sup>59</sup> whence I had started up the river little more than two years previous. Again, but now as one of a body of officers, I partook of hospitality shown to the whole regiment by General Raper. A breakfast given at the palace of the Nawab;<sup>60</sup> excursions by land and river, presentation to His Highness, permission to visit different parts of his palace, including jewel-room and its contents, were so many items connected with ovation given to us as representatives of a distinguished regiment. All this was wound up by dinner at the house of the General, followed by a “Reception,” during which I had the pleasure of again meeting some “old” friends.

Among the guests at that Reception was “the Khasjeewalla of Gwalior,” implicated, as we have seen, in the disturbances

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<sup>59</sup> In 1757 a stately range of two-storied barracks for “European” troops were erected at a cost of £302,278, the rupee then worth 2s. In 1834 they were abandoned on account of high rates of sickness and mortality among their occupants; average admission rate of 13 years per 1,000 strength, admissions 2,196, deaths 82. Of certain endemic diseases treated the rates of deaths to admissions were: – fever, 1 in 21; dysentery, 1 in 10; hepatitis, 1 in 9.

<sup>60</sup> Then sixteen years of age. His grandfather, Jaffer Ali, Wuzzeer of Suraj ood Dowlah, Nawab of Bengal, a member of the Imperial family of Delhi, whom Lord Clive defeated at Plassee in 1757. It is related that on that occasion Jaffer Ali bribed a number of Suraj ood Dowlah’s troops; with them he deserted his chief and went over to the English side. Subsequently the Nawab was assassinated, and Jaffer Ali raised to a position he had no right to claim. Thenceforward the Nawab of Moorshedabad was an “ally” of the British Government.



that led to the recent campaign in that State. For a time he was interned at Agra, but latterly had been “at large,” under surveillance of our host; his demeanour towards those by whom the victory at Punniar was gained, by no means agreeable; but under the circumstances anything else could hardly have been looked for.

Resuming our journey, we soon arrived at and glided past the village of Plassee,<sup>61</sup> but the actual field so named had long since been swept away by the river by which we were being carried along. At Kulnah,<sup>62</sup> indications of flow and reflux of the tide were evident. There we met the fleet of boats, similar to our own, by which the 10th Regiment was being conveyed inland. Mutual salutations passed between us, but little at the time thought I of close association subsequently in store for me in relation to it. A short distance more, and we passed the village of Balaghurree, its inhabitants, those and their descendants, who, having been left by their relatives to die by the side of the river, were rescued through the good offices of missionaries.

We were nearing the end of this river journey. In quick succession our fleet glided past the important native towns of Bandel, noted on account of its Roman Catholic convent; Hooghly, for its college; and Chinsurah, already mentioned. Now we were off Chandernagore, on the battlements of which waved the tricolour. In 1757 that little settlement was captured from the

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<sup>61</sup> Plassee. From Palasa, “dâk tree,” or *Butea frondosa*.

<sup>62</sup> Kulnah is 164 miles from the Sandheads.

French by Clive, aided by Admiral Watson, who, for the attack, brought thither his frigate carrying seventy-four guns – a feat not now possible because of the silting up of the river. The place was shortly afterwards restored to the French, to again fall to the British during the Revolutionary War, and finally to be ceded to them in accordance with the Peace Treaty of 1816.

We are well within the influence of the tide. As it recedes we are borne towards Calcutta. A forest of masts becomes more and more dense; tall chimneys on either bank tell of factories; the clang of hammers, of ship-building yards; the odour of tar, that we are nearing our port; and great is the surprise with which our north-country servants and followers look upon the unwonted sight. We pass the Armenian Ghat. It is an open space, on which various funeral pyres blaze and smoke; vultures and adjutant-birds are waiting for such human remains as may be left: the scene most unpleasant to look at. For many years past that which has just been alluded to has ceased to exist, a crematorium having taken its place. We arrive at Calcutta; the regiment lands, and marches into Fort William.

Preparations for departure proceeded rapidly, and with a will. Hospitality to the regiment and attentions in other ways were shown by some of the higher officials. At Government House some of us had an opportunity of being present at the dinners and balls, for which it was then, as since, well and favourably known; also at parties given by the Chief Justice Sir Lawrence Peel, in the spacious house occupied by him at Garden Reach.

The issue to men and officers of the Bronze Star respectively for Punniar and Maharajpore took place, but without pomp and circumstance such as most properly at the present time are observed on similar occasions. Being informed that the stars in question, composed of metal of Mahratta cannon that had wrought heavy injury to our regiments, were in readiness, in company with my friend Maude,<sup>63</sup> I drove to the Mint, and there, from two heaps on the floor, of those decorations, selected one each, leaving both for the purpose of our respective names being engraved on them. A few days thereafter we returned, and having received from an employé of that establishment the much-prized decorations, we placed them in our pockets, and drove back to Fort William.

Soon thereafter,<sup>64</sup> the Headquarter portion of the regiment was on board the *Monarch*, and away from India homeward bound. Our ship, one of a class by which troops were wont in favoured instances to be conveyed between England and her great Eastern dependency: graceful to look at, roomy, well fitted up, sumptuously provided – veritable floating palaces. The comfort of the soldier, his wife and children, secured to an extent that under subsequent regulations became impossible. With regard to officers, “stoppages” for messing was on the scale already mentioned. I became entitled to “head money,” as on the outward

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<sup>63</sup> Now, after an interval of fifty-two years, I still am proud to call him friend. Alas! since the above was written he has passed away.

<sup>64</sup> January 19, 1845.

voyage, notwithstanding that I was in the performance of my ordinary duties with my own regiment.

Nine weeks of uneventful life passed, and our ship was at St. Helena. Very shortly thereafter, parties of us, arranged for the purpose, landed at James's Town, the population of which seemed to consist almost entirely of mulattoes of low type, physically and intellectually; the balance were of pure negro type. We learned, moreover, that slave ships with their human cargo on board were from time to time brought to the island by British ships of war, very harrowing details being given of the sufferings of the unfortunate captives on board. At the time of our visit the garrison of the island comprised the St. Helena regiment and a battery of artillery.

An excursion to Longwood proved to be a somewhat arduous undertaking – carriages rickety, horses like living skeletons, lame, and weak, the ascent steep, rugged. The six or seven miles to be traversed required several hours for completion of the task. At last we were at and within the barn-like, dilapidated building in which took place the closing life scenes of Napoleon; its surroundings a tangled mass of brambles and other shrubs. In the building itself his library room, then partly filled with hay; near it the stable, having stalls for six horses. In a pretty valley close by, under the shade of the then famous willow, was the open tomb whence the remains of the great Frenchman were removed in 1840 for transport to the banks of the Seine.

Continuing our voyage, an incident which happened during

its further progress deserves record. While sailing under the influence of the trade winds, a sailor fell from aloft into the sea. Quickly were life-buoys slipped, the ship brought round, a boat lowered, while from top-gallant cross-trees an officer directed the crew towards the man struggling in mid ocean. Soon, from the bows of the boat one of its crew dived, for the drowning man had already begun to sink; a brief interval, and both rescuer and rescued were hauled on board. With no loss of time the boat was alongside and on board ship, the man restored to animation and life by means used to that end. Many years thereafter, meeting Mr. Cloete, who performed the gallant act, we talked over the incident and its surrounding circumstances.

Another month at sea, and the *Monarch* swings at anchor off Gravesend; the Buffs, absent from England since 1821, disembark;<sup>65</sup> the ordeal of the Custom House gone through; the march on foot begun, for as yet a railway had not been opened. Evening was far advanced when the regiment arrived at Chatham, where it was to be temporarily quartered. In accordance with the routine of that day, nothing whatever had been prepared in barracks for our men, save that doors were open, displaying bare walls, bed cots devoid of mattress or bedding; while for the officers, not even quarters had been assigned; they were expected to look after themselves. Night had far advanced before duty rendered necessary by such a state of things was so far complete as to allow of our going in search

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<sup>65</sup> On April 29, 1845.

of hotels in which to spend the few hours that remained till daylight. It was not till two o'clock in the morning that we had "dinner," in course of which various allusions were made to the "hospitality" accorded to us as a body on the occasion of our return, as contrasted with what we had experienced in India. Two days had to elapse before the regimental baggage arrived, though the distance over which it had to be conveyed was no more than ten miles; nor was it till then that straw for the men's cots was issued by the barrack stores, and they initiated into the art of stuffing their allotted quantities into their palliasses. This was the beginning of our Home Service.

# CHAPTER VI

## *1845–1846. HOME SERVICE*

Leave Chatham – First railway experience – March continued – A comparison – Chichester – Soldiers’ tea – Winchester – Forton and Haslar – Naval Hospital – Sikh invasion – Regiments to India – Experimental Squadron – Russians – Ibrahim Pasha – Regiments – Volunteer for West Coast of Africa – Leave the Buffs – Hounslow flogging case – Clarkson and slavery – Abolition.

Time-expired and some other classes of men not conducive to regimental efficiency being discharged, soldiers and officers “set up” in respect to kits and equipments, the order to proceed to Chichester was received with acclamation, for in those days the reputation accorded to Chatham as a station was by no means flattering. At the end of May the Buffs marched merrily away; that is, marched on foot, for railway communication had not yet connected Chatham with the outside world. A few miles got over, and we were at Blue Bell Hill, the ascent of which revealed to us in great variety and luxuriance forest, flowers, and grass-covered patches; the summit reached, an extensive view of the lovely vale of Kent stretched away beneath us, and in our near vicinity the cromlech called “Kittscotty House”<sup>66</sup> attracted the notice of

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<sup>66</sup> It is related that in A.D. 455 a battle took place near this spot between the Saxons

those among us who were of antiquarian tastes.

At Maidstone the regiment had its first experience of transit by rail. The art of “training” and detraining troops had not yet been learnt; hence delay such as would now be culpable was unavoidable before soldiers and their baggage were in their places, and a start made. The line being open only to Redhill, all had there to alight, the short journey to Reigate being performed on foot. Arrived at that pretty town, we had our initiation into the system of billeting, the officers being “told off” to the principal hotel, the comforts of which made us speedily forget whatever disagreeables had attended the proceedings of the day. Continuing our journey, we arrived in succession at Petworth and Horsham, at each of which towns we similarly enjoyed our billets; thence to Chichester. The approach of a country gentleman to our Commanding Officer attracted our attention; the “halt” was sounded; the word passed on that, on hospitality intent, he had provided “refreshments” for all of us. His kind attention was highly appreciated, acknowledgments expressed, he himself invited to dinner with the officers at our new destination; then the march resumed, the Buffs marching into quarters at Chichester on the fourth day of their very pleasant journey.

Compared and contrasted with a march in India, that now

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under Hengist and Horsa, and the Britons under Vertimer, the latter being victorious; that among the killed were Horsa, the Saxon, and Catigern, the brother of Vertimer. One account relates that the cromlech alluded to is that of Catigern, Horsa having been killed at Horsted near Rochester.



over presented some striking points of difference, not the least of which were the absence of hackeries, bullocks, camels, elephants, and that heterogeneous collection of “followers” comprised under the name of “the bazaar.” Instead of tents and camp fare we had comfortable if expensive entertainment at hotels, while our daily line of route lay through rich, varied, and beautiful English scenery. But some of our party looked back with fond remembrances to the freedom and feeling of exhilaration attending the early morning march in India, dusty roads and sundry other drawbacks notwithstanding.

The huts, literally “baragues,” assigned to us were old, dating from the Peninsular War. From the restoration of peace they had been left unoccupied until quite recently, when they were utilised in the first instance for the temporary reception of men enlisted to form a new 44th Regiment, and subsequently by the 55th on its return from China. The officer<sup>67</sup> who held the position of Barrack-master boasted of a very honourable military “record,” he having been, if not the very first, among the first to mount the breach at Badajos; yet, like many others of his day, he had been thrown on half-pay at the conclusion of the war, and so deprived of the chance of rising in the service. From the residents of the cathedral city and its neighbourhood our officers received much civility and hospitality. The cathedral, used as a stable in the days of Cromwell, but long since “restored,” was often visited, the circumstance that it had been transported from Selsey to its

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<sup>67</sup> Lieutenant Graham.

present site adding to it many points of historical interest. But to some among us Chichester had the great disadvantage of not yet being in direct communication by railway with London, the journey to and from the metropolis having to be performed by coach. A Bill had then only recently been passed authorizing such a railway.

An event occurred while we occupied those huts which marked in its way a stage in the advance of comfort and well-being of the soldier. Hitherto his "regulation" daily meals were only two; namely, breakfast at 8 a.m., dinner at 1 p.m. – an interval of nineteen hours being thus left during which he had to be without food, unless he happened to have spare money wherewith to supply himself at the regimental canteen or public-house in town. The obvious drawbacks of such a state of things had long been subject of representation, but hitherto unsuccessfully. Now, however, in 1845, authority was issued granting the issue to the men of a tea meal at 4 p.m. For a time the order was resented; that a soldier should condescend to *tea* was held to be against the natural order of things, and to mark effeminacy. Soon, however, the measure was appreciated by all, and drunkenness, at that time the bane of the soldier, underwent a remarkable decrease.

Winchester, to which we next proceeded, had "for ages" been looked upon as a favourite station by regiments. To some of us the many historical associations connected with that ancient city became so many sources of interest and objects of study. The

commodious barracks, occupied by the Buffs and Scots Fusilier Guards stood upon the site of what had been a royal palace, and still earlier a castle. The city itself dates back to B.C. 800. The cathedral – to which our visits became very frequent – occupies a site whereon stood, during the years of Roman occupation, an altar to Apollo, and, in times still more ancient, one devoted to sun worship. Among other places of interest in and around the city were the buildings to which more particularly are referred the legendary stories of Saint Swithin of rainy fame; the ancient hospital of St. Cross, at which travellers might claim a dole of bread and beer; the world-famous school and college, both founded by William of Wykeham, A.D. 1324–1404. Among favourite walks was that to “the Labyrinth,” on the summit of St. Catherine’s Hill; several alongside the banks of the Itchin, sacred to the memory of Izaak Walton, and that to Twyford. In the churchyard of that place stood a remarkably fine specimen of a yew tree, such as, in times long gone by, were preserved in burial places, and so held in a manner sacred – for the purpose of supplying yeomen with long-bows, in the use of which weapon those of England so much excelled. The hill from which, in Cromwell’s time, the city was bombarded was a favourite walk among us. So was the village of Horsely, some few miles distant; its church associated with the author of *The Christian Year*, the choir, consisting of various very ordinary musical instruments, including a violin and clarionet.

On a day late in January, 1846, the Buffs proceeded by rail

to Portsmouth. Bitterly cold, wet and windy, was the weather; the streets of that great naval port in some places inundated by the tide, so that progress along them was by no means pleasant. By the floating steam bridge the harbour was crossed, our regiment divided so as to occupy barracks at Forton and Haslar respectively. With the companies proceeding to the latter place I was detailed for duty. The quarters consisted of huts, the one assigned to me so situated as to afford from its window a near view of Spithead, and of the magnificent and graceful sailing men-of-war vessels anchored there or manœuvring in the Solent.

An early opportunity was taken to visit the great Naval Hospital, near to which my temporary residence was situated; and although in these notes professional recollections are for the most part avoided, one of the results of that visit was sufficiently interesting to be made an exception to that rule. On a portion of the adjoining grounds, and set apart for the purpose, a considerable number of mentally afflicted patients, together with their attendants or keepers – their costumes in every respect similar to those worn by the patients – were engaged with apparent heartiness in what was a “rollicking” dance, to the notes of several violins, the performers on which were presumably patients and attendants. In the treatment of the patients all coercive measures were absent; free association among them was permitted from time to time, as we had seen; such of them as desired to work or labour were given every opportunity of doing so, and for the special benefit of those who

desired to follow – in imagination – their seafaring life, a lake with its fleet of boats was provided. Such were some of the measures adopted in respect to this class of patients in 1846. The *Victory* and other “sights” connected with the great naval port were visited; but in respect to these it appears unnecessary to enter into details, except that all associations on board relating to England’s naval hero were duly venerated.

Without previous warning news circulated that the Sikhs, in great force, had crossed the Sutlej, and thus invaded British territory. Then quickly followed intelligence that four severely contested battles against them had been fought, their forces defeated, Lahore occupied; Dhuleep Singh, a child, brought by his mother, the Maharanee, to the camp of Lord Hardinge, the Governor-General, by whom his “submission” was accepted. In those battles many officers fell, with whom, collectively or individually, we had but recently, as already mentioned, been most pleasantly associated, and whose fate we now mourned. As fuller details became known, it appeared that on December 12, 1845, the Sikh armies, under the command of Lal Singh, crossed the Sutlej, and by the 16th had strongly fortified a position taken up by them on the left bank of that river. On the 13th the forces under Sir Hugh Gough attacked and drove them from their position at Moodkee. Following them to Ferozeshuhur, at which place they had meanwhile entrenched themselves, he renewed his attack upon them on the 21st, the terrible battle which was to ensue continuing during that and two following days, – the

issue, for some time uncertain, ultimately being in favour of our troops. There it was that the 62nd, with whom but lately we had been happy at Dinapore, having begun its advance against those entrenchments with 23 officers, lost 17 of that number – 8 killed on the field and 9 wounded. But still another position, and it at Aliwal, was taken up by the retreating Sikhs, where, on January 28, 1846, they were attacked by the forces under Sir Harry Smith. There the 16th Lancers performed the gallant deed of charging through a ghola (or mass) of Sikhs, their substitute for a square; then repeated the charge, destroying the enemy thus rode down. In the performance of that heroic feat the regiment lost upwards of one hundred men killed and wounded – that is, nearly one-third of their effective strength. On February 10 the Sikhs were defeated, their forces destroyed up at Sobraon, though at very heavy cost in killed and wounded to the British. On that occasion the 50th lost in killed and wounded 12 officers, nearly all of whom were personal acquaintances, more or less intimate of my own, and in addition 227 men. The 10th Foot, with which I was destined to be subsequently associated, had in killed and wounded 3 officers, 3 non-commissioned officers, and 127 rank and file. Other regiments engaged suffered heavily, for the Sikhs contended for their nationality and class interests. The facts related give significance to the intentions of Lord Ellenborough expressed in Gwalior, to lead the troops thither direct upon the Punjab frontier. That plan was disallowed, and so two years were given to the Sikh leaders wherein to complete

their arrangements for taking the offensive.

Orders from the Horse Guards directed that three infantry regiments – namely, the 8th, 24th, and 32nd – should proceed to India without delay. No less than six weeks elapsed, however, before they sailed, the circumstance itself illustrating the state of unreadiness for emergencies which then existed. The three regiments named were destined to take their parts in arduous service in India, the first at Mooltan, the second at Chilianwalla, the third at Lucknow.

The establishment of what was to be called our “Experimental Squadron” at this time was justly looked upon as an event of great importance. The fleet so designated consisted for the most part of sailing ships of war, but comprised also several steam vessels, propelled by paddles, the whole providing for spectators an unusual and magnificent sight as they lay anchored at Spithead.<sup>68</sup> Between the lines passed the Royal yacht, having on board Her Majesty the Queen. From the sides of each successive ship thundered salutes; from their decks rose strains of the National Anthem; from their yards, manned for the occasion, came hearty cheers of loyalty. A brief interval succeeded; then simultaneously, as if by combined movement, dropped the huge white sails; these gradually filled to the breeze; away glided the fleet, followed by hundreds of yachts, boats, and craft of all sorts. About this time also the then strange sight was for the first time witnessed of a war ship, the *Rattler*, sliding, as it were, out of

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<sup>68</sup> July 15 – under command of Sir Hyde Parker.

Portsmouth Harbour, destitute of sail or paddle, the first of her kind propelled by the Archimedean screw.

The arrival at Spithead of the Russian war-ship *Prince of Warsaw*, having on board the Grand Duke Constantine, escorted by two other vessels, was to Portsmouth an event of interest and political importance. The officers of the Imperial frigate were entertained at dinner by those of the Buffs: an attention much appreciated by them. Next day a party of us were most civilly received on board their ship; in the course of that visit the circumstance made clear that our hosts were well acquainted with the English language, as also with insular manners and customs. But great was the contrast between conditions on board and those of the "Experimental Squadron." The Russian sailors untidy and slovenly in appearance, the terms of their service severe, inasmuch as after a period of twenty years in the Navy or Army the reward to which they had to look forward was – emancipation; for as yet they were serfs. According to their own accounts, the period of obligatory service by officers was twenty-one years. Leave of absence, if exceeding a total of one year during that period, had to be made up by them; and if on any occasion absent from their ships or regiments for more than four days, their pay for that time is withheld from them. We congratulated ourselves that our position was in those respects more fortunate than theirs.

About the same time Ibrahim Pasha came among us. The circumstance that the comfort or otherwise of travellers across



the desert between Cairo and Suez depended much on measures directed by the Viceroy of Egypt, added to other considerations, no doubt moved Admiralty and Horse Guards to order that every attention should be shown to His Highness. Among other displays for his gratification the troops in garrison were paraded on Southsea Common. As he rode along the line, the impression produced by his appearance and style was by no means favourable; about fifty years of age, bloated in aspect, cruel and relentless in expression, he looked in these respects a true descendant of his father, Mehemet Ali.

In quarters at Portsmouth were the 13th Light Infantry, then recently returned from India, their honours thick upon them, as "The Illustrious Garrison." The 74th, re-converted into Highlanders, paraded for the first time in their newly-acquired uniform. In those regiments and in the Buffs there was a large leaven of old soldiers who had not risen beyond the ranks; the majority of the non-commissioned officers were men whose locks were grey, some with sons serving as soldiers; recruits were relatively few in number; barrack-room courts-martial in full operation; crime, at least that *officially* brought forward, comparatively rare, though what in reality is quite another thing. That the regiments so constituted were capable of the most arduous service was proved by that of the Buffs in Gwalior, the 13th in Affghanistan.

The receipt from the War Office of a letter containing an offer of promotion conditional on proceeding to the West Coast of

Africa, though a surprise, was not altogether an agreeable one, for hitherto the usual designation of that part of the world had been “The White Man’s Grave.” Official reports<sup>69</sup> regarding it referred to no later date than 1825; but this is the result of reference to them: – In February of that year a party of white soldiers, 105 strong, arrived at the Isles de Loss, near Sierra Leone; at the end of eighteen months 54 of their number were dead by fever, 8 by other diseases, 21 invalided back to England, 20 remained on those islands, scarcely any of them fit for duty. Then followed a table by which, at the Gambia, the annual mortality of white men was shown to have been at the rate of 1,500 per 1,000 average strength. On the other hand, the proffered promotion would advance me over one hundred and forty of my seniors; increased pay<sup>70</sup> would be an immediate advantage, and, in the event of survival, increased departmental position. The upshot of thought given to the subject was that, in the expression common to the time, I volunteered for the West Coast.

With regret and sorrow I ceased<sup>71</sup> to be a member of the distinguished old<sup>72</sup> regiment, with the traditions and history of which, like all its other members, I had become familiar. I had,

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<sup>69</sup> Statistical Reports by Major Tulloch.

<sup>70</sup> Regimental pay, 7s. 6d. per day; mess and band subscriptions deducted from it.

<sup>71</sup> July 10, 1846, Staff-Surgeon, 2nd class.

<sup>72</sup> Dating back to A.D. 1572, when, under Elizabeth, the regiment was formed out of the Trained Bands of London, its uniforms of Buff leather, whence its name, now a proud title.

moreover, formed friendships<sup>73</sup> such as subsequent experience taught me existed only between regimental officers during early life. The kindly expressions addressed to me by the Commanding Officer on the occasion of the farewell dinner, to which I was invited, impressed me in a manner not to be forgotten, and are here alluded to as indicating the relations then existing between medical and battalion officers.

No regular line of communication existed between England and the West Coast of Africa; consequently, when orders to embark were received, passage had to be negotiated for through the medium of a ship's broker, and so advantage taken of trading brigs or other small craft proceeding, at irregular times, on voyages thither, either from the Thames or Mersey. Several months elapsed before transport was obtained, and, meanwhile, time was spent in visiting places interesting in themselves or by reason of past associations.

At this time public attention became aroused to a state of ferment, ostensibly because of the death of a soldier of the 7th Hussars at Hounslow, after having been flogged to the extent of 150 lashes, in pursuance of a sentence to that effect by court-martial, for having violently and dangerously assaulted a non-commissioned officer of his regiment. Medical opinion differed *in toto* as to whether the death was, or was not, the effect of the

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<sup>73</sup> Now, alas! while these notes are being transcribed, only one remains; namely, General Sir Frederick Francis Maude, G.C.B. Only lately did my other great friend, Deputy Surgeon-General Bostock, C.B., Q.H.S., die. While the notes are under revision, Maude has passed away.

corporal punishment. But the case was taken up and energetically debated, not only at public meetings convened for the purpose, but also in both Houses of Parliament. Whatever may have been its intrinsic merits, the case in question undoubtedly led to the introduction of a Bill, the outcome of which was that the maximum number of lashes to be inflicted was thenceforward reduced to fifty. Instead of “unlimited” service as heretofore, the period of a soldier’s engagement was reduced to ten years; and so, it was hoped, encouragement held out for a better class of recruits to join the ranks; desertion would be diminished, and the general efficiency of the service increased.

In September, 1846, the death of Thomas Clarkson, at the age of eighty-six, recalled attention to the subjects of slavery and the slave trade, against both of which, for many years, his energies had been directed. It was in 1720 that English opinion was first drawn to the horrors incidental to that traffic. In 1787, by the efforts of Clarkson and Granville Sharp, a Society for total abolition of the system was formed. In the following year a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the entire system; but not for a considerable time could the objects of that Society be carried out, or members of influence be induced to take interest in the Anti-Slavery Association and its work. Suddenly, and as if through an accidental occurrence, public opinion was aroused; that accident, the seizure in the streets of London of an escaped slave, named Somerset – his late master, the captor. In 1792, Wilberforce carried a Bill for

the gradual abolition of the slave trade. In 1805 the importation of slaves into British Colonies, recently taken from Holland, was prohibited; a Bill carried, by which such traffic after 1808 was declared illegal. In 1811 it was declared to be felony; in 1824 it was made piracy. In 1837, made punishable by transportation for life. In 1838, complete emancipation of slaves throughout all British possessions took place. We were soon to see the results of those measures in what had once been one of slavery's most active spheres.

# CHAPTER VII

## *1847–1848. COAST OF GUINEA.*

### *BARBADOS. ENGLAND*

Sail for Guinea – Arrive – Cape Coast Castle – Fantees – Some characteristics – Domestic “slaves” – Obsequies – First impressions – Tornado season – Sickness and mortality – Personal – Husband of L.E.L. – “Healthy” season – Amusements – Natural history pursuits – Snakes – King Aggary – Chiefs – Accra – Apollonia – Burying the peace-drum – Axim – River Encobra – The “royal” capital – Savage displays – Prisoners released – Scarcity of fresh water – The king surrendered – Brought in manacled – His atrocities – Retribution – Return march – Cape Coast – Fantee women – Force disbanded – “Reliefs” – Departure – Incident on board – Barbados – The island and its people – Compared with tropical India – Homeward bound – Arrive in England – Comments – Chartists – Leave of absence.

Cold, misty, and raw was the day in the first week of January, 1847, when, at Gravesend, a small party, of which I was one, embarked on the brig *Emily*, bound to Cape Coast Castle. Still more miserable the four following days and nights, during which the little vessel remained at anchor, a thick dark fog enveloping us; horns and gongs sounding at intervals, to avert a collision,

if possible. At last the pall lifted, and we were on our way. My fellow-passengers, four in number, were three junior officers of the 1st West India Regiment, and the wife of one of them. The ship had a burthen of only 130 tons; no separate cabins, no accommodation suitable for officers, and none whatever for a lady. Around the cuddy, as the “saloon” was called, a series of bunks were arranged; one of these was told off to each of us, ingress being attained either feet or head foremost, according to individual fancy and agility. Every possible consideration was shown by all on board to the lady, whose sorry plight we all commiserated; hers was indeed a sad example of the discomforts to which a subaltern’s wife was exposed. Our prospects so far were by no means happy, for the circumstance became increasingly plain that only “black sheep” were considered to be sent to “the Coast”; many years had to elapse before Africa was to spring into fashion.

Fifty-two days at sea – for steam communication with the West Coast was a thing of the future – and then the headland of Grand Drewin came in sight. That point sighted, our little ship glided along the coast, carried southward by the oceanic current at the rate of three knots an hour or thereabouts. Arrived in the roads of Elmina, at the time a Dutch settlement, we disembarked by means of small canoes, made by hollowing out a branch of the bombax or silk cotton tree, each canoe “manned” by three black boys, the eldest of whom did not apparently exceed twelve years of age. We made direct for the house of Mr. Bartels, not

that we had an introduction to that well-known gentleman, but for the double reason that “everybody” did so, and that Elmina boasted neither of hotel nor other public place to which new arrivals could resort. The hospitable gentleman on whom we had thus thrown ourselves showed us every kindness. Next day means of conveyance to our destination were provided for us. Mine consisted of a long narrow basket, carried on the heads of two strong Africans, one at either end. In that way we travelled over some miles of roadless ground; in others along the sea beach left dry by the receded tide, and so arrived at Cape Coast Castle, the capital of our settlements on the Coast of Guinea.<sup>74</sup>

The fortress had in its day been used for many purposes, from the time when in 1610 it was erected by the Portuguese, and by them made use of as a slave hold, down to the present (1847). Captured by the Dutch from its original possessors in 1643, it was taken from the latter by Admiral Holmes in 1661; recaptured by the Dutch fleet under De Ruyter in 1665, but the same year ceded to England. In 1757 it was attacked unsuccessfully by the French, since which it has remained free from the din of war, although from time to time conflicts have occurred between the native tribes occupying the neighbouring districts. In 1672 the first African Company received a charter from Charles II. From

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<sup>74</sup> When the first Europeans trading between Benin and Palmas asked where the gold and produce offered them for sale came from, the natives answered, “From Jenné” (on the Niger, near Timbuctoo). Her name was thus given to the Gulf of Guinea, and, indirectly, to the English coin, the guinea. (*Timbuctoo the Mysterious*, by Felix Dubois, p. 172.)



that date till 1844 the fort continued in the possession of that Company and its successors; in the year named it came directly under the administration of the Colonial Office, as a dependency of Sierra Leone. At the time of our sojourn there, Cape Coast Castle was occupied by a portion of a West India regiment by officers belonging thereto, and to military departments; by the Governor, also by the “mixed court,” by which law or justice, or both, were administered. A school for African children, the apartment being used for Divine service on Sundays, was in close proximity to the billiard-room. An annexe of the fort was utilised as a prison for the worst class of malefactors, and the native police in charge of them, the prisoners being engaged in chain gangs by day, working on roads and public works within the settlement. Since the days of slavery, what had been “barracoons” for captives have been transformed into water tanks for the supply abundantly provided by the rainy season.

The inhabitants of the territory around Cape Coast Castle and of the Gold Coast generally are in the mass known as Fantees. Originally dwellers in the regions beyond the river Prah, they were forced to cross it, and driven to the coast line by the people now called Ashantees, who took possession of and gave their name to the country so conquered. Although under protection of the British Government, the Fantee chiefs (in 1847) pay tribute to the Ashantee king, who still assumes suzerainty over them. That suzerainty, since 1826, has been maintained without right on their part, the Ashantees having in that year been defeated at

Doodwa, near Accra, by a Fantee force, led by British officers. In the same year, however, though earlier in it, a small force,<sup>75</sup> under Sir Charles Macarthy, was disastrously beaten by the Ashantees. That officer, rather than fall alive into the hands of his enemies, is said to have shot himself; they to have devoured his heart, in the belief that by that act of cannibalism they might become endowed with the high attributes which they admired in him.

A noticeable characteristic of the people was the total absence among them of ceremony, rite, or other observance pertaining to religious worship. That certain phases of superstitious impressions existed among them was evident by their belief in “lucky” and “unlucky” days. Neither a fisherman nor bushman would proceed on their avocations on a Friday, as it was by them devoted to their “Fetish.”<sup>76</sup> Although caste as understood in India is unknown among Fantees, the existence of septs or families approaches in some respects the social and religious divisions of the Hindoos. Each Fantee sept is distinguished by its special badge or armorial bearing, taken usually from some wild animal of the forest, as among Scottish Highlanders and other civilized nations, ancient and modern.

Ten years had nearly elapsed since slavery on the Gold Coast, as in all other British dominions, was abolished. In all but name conditions remained unchanged; former domestic slaves, now

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<sup>75</sup> Mr. Barnes, with whom I was acquainted in 1847, had been with that force in 1826.

<sup>76</sup> From the Portuguese *Fetisso*, a spell, or charm.

called servants, remained with their former owners, by whom they were housed, clothed, and fed as heretofore. It was related that when, in 1838,<sup>77</sup> emancipation was proclaimed, the negroes here appealed against being “sent away,” on the plea that they and their children had ever been cared for; that as freed men and women they were without country to return to, or means of earning their living, save with their old masters and mistresses. Their appeal was listened to, and now (1847), when asked jokingly, rather than in earnest, to whom do they belong, they answer proudly that they are “slave” of, say Mrs. Jackson, Mr. Barnes, Mr. Hutton, and so on, all highly respected residents of Cape Coast.

A “slave” girl of the class alluded to having died, ceremonies, elaborate in kind, took place over her body. Placed in a sitting posture, and so supported in a corner of a room, it was enveloped in a shroud of costly damask; the feet rested upon a cushion similarly covered; neck and arms decorated with heavy ornaments of solid gold; the body embellished by more or less artistic designs composed of gold dust applied to some adhesive material. In the mouth was a twig of shrub; on an adjoining table a goodly supply of rum and tobacco. On the floor of the room sat a crowd of female mourners, whose dirge was loud if not melodious. These ceremonies over, the dead, still covered with ornaments, was deposited in the grave prepared for it in the floor of the dwelling-house of the survivors; but, as stated to us, at the

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<sup>77</sup> From August 1, 1838, slaves became free.

end of a year, the body would be “turned on its side to make it comfortable,” and then the golden ornaments removed.

Two months had elapsed since our arrival, and impressions of the place were noted after this manner: – At the end of February, temperature in the shade between the moderate extremes of 84° F. and 86° F.; sky clear and cloudless, sea breeze recurring each morning, and continuing during the hours of daylight. Behind, and from close proximity to the town, the “bush” or dense forest begins; two inconsiderable hills, each surmounted by a “fort,” dominate us. Some few roads or pathways extend in various directions inland and along the beach side to the Salt Pond, their borders lined with cacti and with flowering shrubs,<sup>78</sup> the occurrence of reptiles of various kinds, and creeping things innumerable, adding to our walks of interest and excitement in giving the former chase. Among the forest trees a species of bombax was a striking object, its branches so thickly covered with nests of the tailor-bird (*Ploceus*) that they touched each other, and looked not unlike a series of gigantic honeycombs. The absence of the bamboo was noted with surprise, considering the latitude of the locality. Nor was any cultivated field to be seen, the explanation being that each year small patches of the bush are cut down, the ground cleared, crops sown or planted, and once gathered in the “field” is quickly restored to its original wild state till again required for agricultural purposes. Birds and butterflies,

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<sup>78</sup> Thespesia, acacias, including the sensitive plant, abrus, convolvuli, palms, wild figs, tamarind, etc.

some of both highly coloured, dashed through or fluttered among the herbage, but no voice of song properly so called as yet came from the former.

With the advent of the tornado season, the face of nature underwent a sudden change. From the south-east came rapidly a mass of dense black cloud. As it seemed arrested overhead, it assumed the form of an arch; from its concavity forked lightning flashed, then heavy thunder rolled. The previous stillness gave place to a rush of wind at hurricane speed, followed by such a downfall of rain as we had never previously seen, even in India. A few repetitions of these, and the rainy season was upon us. Then suddenly cultivation was begun in places previously covered by bush; crops of Indian corn, yams (*Convolvulus Batatas*), ground-nuts (*Arachis hypogea*), and the castor-oil plant sprang up with a rapidity truly astonishing.

With the first regular downpour of rain came a serious change in health of our small party within the fort, also of the few settlers whose places of business were in the town immediately outside; and for a few succeeding months we were destined to realize the true significance of a sickly season on the Coast of Guinea. Fever in one or other of its local forms made its appearance, affecting the older residents in that of ague, while the newly arrived were attacked by the more violent form, called at the time their "seasoning," from which the chances of recovery were considerably less than those of death. Of the three officers and the wife of one who had been my fellow-passengers, one of the

former speedily succumbed. The other two, together with the lady, suffered severely, and made imperfect recoveries, while outside the fort conditions were no less serious. The blanks so made in our numbers were sadly apparent, and yet the survivors from attacks, and those who had not been struck down, found in each successive death this rather ghastly consolation, that, as the ratio of mortality was “being made up,” so did their chances of escape increase. All this while the few of us who were capable of the exertion took our walk morning and evening when the weather permitted, our one promenade that towards “the Salt Pond.” As we did so, the melancholy sight presented itself, of a small number of newly arrived missionaries<sup>79</sup> gloomily pursuing the same route, “waiting,” as we were informed, “for their seasoning,” before being sent inland to their respective stations. One after another was missed; it was announced that “he was down with his seasoning”; and then – the receipt of a black-edged envelope told the rest.

Meantime I retained my health to a degree that under the circumstances was remarkable. As a result of this happy exemption from sickness, various duties devolved upon me in addition to those within my proper sphere, among those extra responsibilities being professional work in the Colonial Hospital, and charge of the Commissariat Department for the troops – the latter altogether alien to my training or tastes. So conditions went on till July, a month which proved to be the most unhealthy and

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<sup>79</sup> Of the Wesleyans.

deadly of any throughout the year. It was then that, night after night, I was the solitary member of "our mess" who took his place at table. I made the acquaintance of, and speedily became on friendly terms with, some mice, whose place of residence was under the floor, but which freely communicated with the messroom by numerous apertures, and was in other respects dilapidated; nor did it take long before some of the little animals acquired sufficient confidence to scramble up my leg and so on to the table, partake of dinner with myself, thus calling to my mind the story of the Prisoner of Chillon. With the month of August came improved health conditions, and for the four or five succeeding months all was cheerful in that particular and important respect.

Among those who succumbed during the sickly months was Captain Maclean, husband of the poetess, L. E. L. – Letitia Elizabeth Landon, who died at Cape Coast Castle in 1838, under circumstances of great mystery. It was hoped that among his papers would be found some containing his own account of the sad occurrence, but that hope was not realized. From careful inquiries, however, I was led to the belief that her death was due to natural causes, and to them alone. Now the body of the deceased husband was laid in the grave close to that of the wife,<sup>80</sup> and both rest under the pavement of the castle quadrangle.

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<sup>80</sup> Some account of L. E. L. is given in my separate book, *Life on the Gold Coast*. I consider that the cause of her death was disease of the heart, with which she was known to have been affected several years.

The story of the gifted lady interested some of our number, as incidents connected with her short life on the Coast were related by Mr. Hutton and others who had enjoyed her acquaintance.

The occurrence of the “healthy season” was hailed as such event could only be in a locality where every man had to run the gauntlet for life during four to five out of the twelve months which make up the year. Amusements of different kinds were instituted, short excursions taken in various directions along such roads or pathways as existed for purposes of communication along the coast and to places inland. In the absence of horses – for these most useful animals when brought to the coast rapidly pine away and die – our means of transport consisted, for the most part, of a chair so placed between two poles as to be thus carried by two or four Africans, according to the weight of the individual. There were a few small light carriages, in some respects like a Bath chair, in others like a victoria, drawn by Africans, who, to judge by their antics and shouts as they raced against each other, must have enjoyed the work immensely. Picnics became “the order of the day”; Saints’ days, birthdays, and holidays were most “religiously” kept, and for the most part very enthusiastically celebrated. On one of these occasions we visited what at one time had been a coffee plantation in the near vicinity, but then deserted; the buildings reduced to ruin, the coffee bushes choked by the ordinary bush, the natural impression being that the owner had fallen a victim to his “seasoning,” that he had no successors



on his estate;<sup>81</sup> or, if he had, that they had also succumbed.

Pursuits relating to natural history became so many sources of pleasant and intellectual occupation. Ornithology was especially interesting, combining as it did observation of birds in their natural haunts and conditions. A large number of specimens were shot, one portion being subsequently given to the Natural History Museum of Edinburgh, another to Sir William Jardine, by whom notes taken at the time were published.<sup>82</sup> A song bird (*Drymoica mentalis*) that fell to my gun was for the first time, I believe, given as an illustration in that brochure; another illustration being that of a large and handsome swallow named after me, *Hirundo Gordoni*.

On one occasion, while combining ornithological study and “sport,” I had an unpleasant experience with one of several kinds of poisonous snakes that here abound, frequenting chiefly prickly herbage in immediate proximity to such roads and pathways as then existed, as also the sedgy tract of open ground near the Salt Pond, a little way westward of the settlement. While traversing that tract I came suddenly face to face with a large black cobra. One barrel of my fowling-piece had been already discharged. The remaining shot – a mixture of Nos. 6 and 9 – was fired, more as a result of instinctive action than steady aim, by me, but with good effect. The charge traversed the body of the reptile as if it were a bullet, so close was it to me; then its writhings

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<sup>81</sup> Still called “Napoleon.”

<sup>82</sup> Under the title of *Contributions to Ornithology*.

were such that I came within them, not a little to my own horror. In the emergency my Fantee “boy” speedily dispatched it by means of the heavy stick he carried for the purpose of beating the bush. The skin – considerably over six feet long – ornamented the wall of my barrack-room while I remained on the coast. Puff-adders are numerous, and from their sluggish movements are easily killed. On one occasion I killed six partially-grown individuals during a morning’s walk on the Salt Pond road.

When, as already stated, administration of British settlements on the Gold Coast was taken over by the Colonial Office, it was made immediately subordinate to that of Sierra Leone. The inconvenience of that arrangement was soon made manifest. The force with which the oceanic current runs southward along the coast is sufficient during some months of the year to prevent sailing brigs from beating up against it; and as at the time alluded to a regular line of steamers had not been introduced, the outcome of that state of things was the inconvenient necessity of letters and dispatches for the headquarters of the Government and Command being sent *viâ* England, several months becoming thus necessary before answers could be received. Cape Coast Castle and its dependencies had a Governor and Colonial Secretary, both of whom were resident. Justice was administered by a court presided over by a British official designated Judicial Assessor, assisted by selected native chiefs. Of them, “King Aggary,” then upwards of eighty years of age, was the most prominent and distinguished. As a young man he had served on

board a British man-of-war, in accordance with the custom of the time, and so, according to his own manner of expression, he “had learned sense.”

For a long time past native rulers whose “kingdoms” adjoined British settlements along the Gold Coast had voluntarily placed themselves under protection of our flag, and thus in a manner become British subjects. Their several laws and customs were retained, with the exception of human sacrifice, a practice abandoned many years ago. Succession to rank and property descended through the female line; that is, the eldest son of the eldest daughter became heir-apparent. In the kingdom of Akim the sovereign is a female, the succession being also in the female line.

A visit to Accra occupied two days, and a similar time to return. The path along which I travelled – for no road existed – led for the most part through the bush close to the beach; at times it was by the beach itself, so that only when the tide was low was it practicable to proceed at all. At intervals the occurrence of rugged promontories and heaps of boulders rendered it by no means an easy undertaking to get over them. Arriving at the river Sekoom, its borders were lined by mangrove trees (*Rhizophora*), the long tendril-like roots of which interlaced above the soft mud alternately covered and left exposed as the tide flows and ebbs. In some places the trunks of those trees were covered within tide mark by a small species of oyster, and presented the additional peculiarity of a few small fish – the climbing

perch (*Anabas scandens*) laboriously ascending to the height of a couple of feet or so from the water level, there "holding on" for a little, then dropping into the muddy river after basking in the sun. At Accra, three forts, belonging respectively to England, Holland, and Denmark, were in close proximity to each other: the first occupied by some twenty black soldiers and half a dozen native militiamen, the guns old and useless, the fortress itself dilapidated; the second nothing more than a trading store of the Governor; the third, the strongest of the three, but noted for its extreme unhealthiness. Subsequently we learned that it was completely destroyed by an earthquake.

Several of the forts that had belonged to the former African Company were abandoned some years previous to the present date (1848); among others that of Amelycha, or Apollonia, about seventy miles to windward of Cape Coast Castle. For a time matters in the district so called progressed very well under the rule of a humane and otherwise good native chief named Yansu Acko; but having died in 1830, he was succeeded by Quako Acko, a man of cruel and tyrannical disposition, who, although he continued to fly the British flag, gradually became less and less loyal, and finally withdrew allegiance altogether. Meanwhile he was in a continual state of warfare with the States adjoining his own, extending his depredations to Asinee and Axim, respectively belonging to France and Holland. In 1835 his conduct had become so outrageous that a force from Cape Coast Castle was sent against him, and for his misconduct he was

subjected to a fine of 300 ounces of gold dust. So little effect had this upon him, however, that in 1838 a second expedition was sent against him, and a further fine of 800 ounces inflicted upon him. From that time to the present he has persisted in annoying the adjoining States. Within his own “kingdom” his word was absolute, his great ambition apparently to surround his palace with festoons composed of skulls of enemies slain in battle or of captives butchered. With increasing boldness as time went on, he destroyed several villages within Dutch territory, and carried away some of their inhabitants. He maltreated officers and men belonging to French and British ships, who landed at his capital for purposes of trade. Finally, when remonstrated with by the Governor of Cape Coast,<sup>83</sup> he insulted and otherwise maltreated the members of the embassy sent to him, certain of whom he retained as captives. The Governor took action against the recalcitrant chief. Orders were issued directing the formation of a contingent force, some thousands strong, to consist of men pertaining to vassal tribes. A brig was chartered for the occasion; ammunition and stores of various kinds, including casks of fresh water, placed on board; for it was known that the scene of coming operations was destitute of that necessary element. Ammunition was issued to the “volunteer” contingent, to whom pay in advance was distributed. At this point the officer<sup>84</sup> named to command fell ill and speedily died of coast fever, and his place had to

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<sup>83</sup> Commander, afterwards Sir W. Winniett, R.N. He died on the Coast.

<sup>84</sup> Captain Losack.

be taken by a lieutenant<sup>85</sup> of the 1st West India Regiment; the Commissariat officer<sup>86</sup> being non-effective from sickness, the duties pertaining to his office fell upon me in addition to my own.

The resources of the colony in respect to white men limited the number of those available for the present expedition to six only, the “regular” troops to no more than about half a company of the 1st West India Regiment. Four of us by ship;<sup>87</sup> two accompanied the levies proceeding by land, their forces increasing as they advanced. Arrived off Dixcove, we landed at that place, to witness the native ceremony, and excitement attending thereon, of “burying the peace-drum.” The unusual noise and tumult connected with the ordeal seem to have attracted the notice of wild denizens of the adjoining forest, one of which, a baboon of large size, “assisted” with his presence on the occasion; he was declared to be “the great Fetish”; his advent to be a happy augury for the undertaking before us. Our next point was Axim, at that time Dutch, but now British. There we landed; there the entire force at our disposal assembled, and arrangements were completed to enter hostile territory. The small party of whites was accommodated within the fort, the native forces bivouacking in and around the town, – the town consisting chiefly of sheds or huts composed of palm branches

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<sup>85</sup> Lieutenant Bingham. He lost his health during the expedition, and shortly thereafter died in England.

<sup>86</sup> C. Swaine.

<sup>87</sup> The brig *Governor Maclean*.

inartistically tied together. In the open space or market place in its centre stood a pole to which were fixed portions of human skeletons, remains of freebooters from Apollonia, who having been caught were “disposed of” according to African fashion. In the vicinity roads were non-existent; some rugged pathways were all the thoroughfares with which the place was provided.

Between Axim and the river Encobra stretched a sea beach two miles in extent, broken at intervals by irregular masses and boulders of primitive rocks; beyond it to a similar distance a belt of impenetrable forest, pathways through which, formerly existing, had for some years past become obliterated. Through that tract of bush we had to make a way, not only for ourselves, but also for our “forces.” Armed with an axe and long knife such as bush men in this part of Africa use, we cut a path for ourselves to the summit of a promontory from which it was practicable to take bearings for further progress. Meanwhile, and all through the following night, large numbers of men were busy clearing a road by which the mass of our contingent could advance. At daybreak our strange body of irregulars was mustered, and what a sight it presented! War dresses, wild in character, grotesque in aspect; umbrellas of many colours, carried over particular chiefs; uncouth gesticulations in the performance of war dances; strange sounds from drums, horns, trumpets, and other “musical” instruments, the chief ornaments on which were jawbones and other fragments of human mortality, combined to impress us with the aspect of savagery so presented. At the head of one of

the “companies,” and in command, was a lady, who thus asserted her hereditary position as chief of her tribe.

In the early hours of a day in the first week of April (1848), our “army” began its march towards the left bank of the Encobra. By previous arrangement a number of canoes, sufficient to take the force across that river, were already outside the bar at its mouth, and these were quickly utilised for our purpose. A dense mass of natives crowded the opposite side of the river, its dimensions quickly increasing as others emerged from the bush. Our “artillery” consisted of two twelve-pounder rocket tubes, and two others of smaller calibre. In the absence of a “combatant” officer, I had been put in “command” of these, and having previously indulged in the necessary practice, was in a position to open fire upon the “enemy” as soon as the necessary order was given by the Governor, who was in supreme command. A few missiles were discharged; a few lanes ploughed among them, and then pell-mell the mass vanished in the forest. Having got across the river, we speedily reached an Apollonian village, deserted by its ordinary occupants, who in their haste had left behind their flocks and herds, both of which were quickly annexed by our “contingent.” Continuing what proved to be an extremely fatiguing march along the sea beach, – often having to wade more than knee-deep in the rippling tide, – we passed on the border of the forest a succession of villages, from all of which their occupants had fled. Towards evening we reached a town of considerable size. Our day’s march had



been extremely exhausting, so that rest for the night was most welcome, especially to us white men.

In the course of the succeeding night, such snatches of sleep as we obtained were several times interrupted by the beating of tom-toms, braying of trumpets, the rushing hither and thither of considerable portions of our army. Now it was an alarm of night attack by “the enemy”; then the noisy return of a foraging party, bearing with them as trophies the heads of two Apollonians, which they cast before the Governor as tokens of their prowess. Resuming our march early the following morning, we arrived at the river Abimoosoo, across which we were floated by means of canoes that had so far followed by sea, keeping just outside the line of breakers. Shortly thereafter we were met by a messenger from “the king” against whom we were in progress; his office to express the desire of his Majesty to know with what object the Governor had brought an army into his country. The reply was a ball cartridge (according to the custom of the coast), together with a reply that if the king surrendered, then “a palaver” would be held, but not till then. Meantime we pressed on, and in the early part of the afternoon entered the capital of the king, to find it completely abandoned. Never before had I felt so “done up” and exhausted as now. I was, moreover, ill, and had every reason to believe that an attack of the much-dreaded fever of the coast was upon me.

As if to celebrate the entry of our “army” into the royal city, arrangements were speedily made by the native leaders to have

a grand procession. When it did take place, no more wild and “savage” display could well be imagined than that presented by it. All around us were ghastly relics of death and murder. The palace garnished with festoons of human skulls, of which I counted one hundred and eighty after the greater part of such ornaments had been torn from their places and kicked about as playthings by our “soldiers.” The avenue leading to the palace was formed by palm-trees growing at short distances from each other along either side of the roadway. From time to time the king had disposed of a certain number of his enemies by living sepulture in a standing position; a cocoa nut placed on the head of each, the earth thrown in, and as in the progress of time the plume of palm grew higher and higher, each tree received the name of the particular enemy represented by it. At different points around, the larger trees were ornamented with various relics of humanity, skeleton hands and other fragments being nailed or otherwise attached to stems and branches.

During the few following days different portions of our contingent were variously employed. An expedition, led by two of our white associates,<sup>88</sup> started inland, with a view, if possible, to capture the fugitive king; another, consisting entirely of blacks, having started independently into the bush, returned in triumph, with “music,” war dances, and much discordant noise, bearing with them gory heads of three Apollonians who had fallen into their power. A third party of our people, having proceeded on

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<sup>88</sup> Messrs. Brodie Cruickshank and Frank Swanzy.

an independent expedition, came upon two men who had been made prisoners by order of that chief, each of them laden with three sets of heavy irons, which they had worn continuously during the two previous years. The manacles were removed after much labour; but their unhappy bearers, when relieved of them, were unable to stand erect. So long had they been kept in a sitting posture by sheer weight of their fetters, that the joints had become accommodated to it. Shortly afterwards eighty-eight other prisoners were discovered, their fetters similarly removed, but they themselves fixed in the sitting posture to which they had for longer or shorter periods been borne down by iron manacles.

Everywhere around the town the bush was impenetrable, for all communication with neighbouring tribes had been cut off for some years past, the pathways thus become obliterated by the forest. Attempts to cut new ones were but partially successful. Meanwhile serious difficulties beset us in respect to water, for the lagoons and rivers within available distance being brackish, they quickly ceased to be resorted to. A few casks of fresh water from our chartered ship thrown overboard were washed ashore, their contents carefully distributed among ourselves; but the fact became very evident that this supply being extremely limited, our "occupation" of the town must be short indeed, whether the object of our expedition was obtained or not.

Most fortunate for us there was treason in the king's camp. By reason of his cruelty and tyranny, he had rendered himself hated by and hateful to his subjects. Now their opportunity had arrived.

Three of their chiefs having tendered their submission, so far imitated certain civilized nations as to negotiate for the surrender of their king – their terms by no means exorbitant, namely one hundred ounces of gold dust, and a flag to them respectively. And so the bargain was closed.

A few more days passed, during which “palavers” of all sorts took place, and parties dispatched in various directions, though seemingly without result. Evening approaches; there is unusual tumult among our contingent. Discordant noises, emitted from drums, horns, and human mouths, announce the approach of large bodies of men; they are the former subjects of the king,<sup>89</sup> whom they carry manacled and give over to the British leader. We feel relieved by the prospect of speedy ending of our privations and fatigues; for of our number, four are prostrate by sickness. So long as our prisoner, savage as he is, continued out of sight, we did our best to follow him up relentlessly. Now that he is in our presence, bound hand and foot, an object of abject misery, big tears rolling down his coarse black face, some of us were unable to smother a shade of sympathy for the man, monster of cruelty as he was.

Of atrocities committed by him the record of two will here suffice. He caused his mother to be secured to a stake at low-water mark when the tide was out, her eyelids to be cut off, her face turned towards the sun, – so left until overwhelmed by the returning flood, and her sufferings put an end to. His pregnant

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<sup>89</sup> Quako Acko by name.

sister he caused to be cut open while alive, that he might see the position in her womb of the unborn infant, then directed that according to native custom her body should be buried within the palace.

In the room under the floor of which the remains were interred, bearing upon them her golden ornaments, the captive king was placed under guard, and so remained during the following night. With the return of daylight it was seen that the floor had been opened by the guard, the remains exhumed, all ornaments wrenched therefrom; the body itself, considerably advanced in decay, offensive to sight and smell, thrown back into the still open grave. Thus the king had spent the night side by side as it were with the remains of his murdered sister, witness to the acts of savagery to which they were subjected.

Our object attained, the return march began at midnight; our prisoner, several of his wives, together with other members of his family, being under the charge of a strong guard. The four sick white men, unable to take their proper places in the ranks, were carried, country fashion, in the long baskets already described, our bearers being subjects of the king whom we were carrying away prisoner. Again the beach, left dry by the receded tide, was our highway, and along it our "brave" men proceeded. How the sick fared is illustrated in my own experience. As the fierce tropical sun ascended in the heavens, the fever from which I suffered increased, headache was severe; fresh water there was none wherewith to moisten the parched mouth. In this plight,

having by signs indicated my desire that my basket should be placed on the ground, I endeavoured to make my way to the ripples left by the recurring waves; but in so doing strength gave way, and I fell prostrate on the sand. Immediately I found myself being gently lifted back to the basket by my carriers. One of them climbing a cocoa-nut tree that grew in our immediate vicinity, cut off a large specimen of its fruit, which was speedily opened by a companion beside me, its “milk” emptied over my face and given me to drink. At the time and often since I have thought gratefully of that act by the wild African, and have contrasted it with its counterpart met with among “civilized” peoples.

Arrived at Axim, and the necessary arrangements completed, we re-embarked on the little brig that had already done good service in connection with our expedition. The captive chief, or “king” as he was called, was speedily on board, under the care of a guard, the anchor raised. Wind and current favoured us, and so we quickly arrived off Cape Coast. In the early hours of morning we landed. Our prisoner was securely placed in a cell of that fortress. The populace of the native town, on hearing the news, were in great commotion; our friends, merchants and others, from whom we had parted a month before, were full of congratulations. Then followed invitations to dinner, picnics, and so forth, until the rainy season, already threatening, fairly broke upon us and put a stop to all.

Among other characteristic incidents related to us was that, as soon as our expedition had marched away, the women of Cape

Coast, omitting the slight costume usually worn by them, went about their ordinary occupations in a state of nudity. One of the oldest of the foreign residents, astonished at the circumstance, inquired as to the reason for such an extraordinary proceeding; he received as answer from the perambulating statue so addressed the Fantee equivalent of "What does it matter? All the *men* have started for the war," much emphasis being given to the word "men."

The work of paying up and disbanding the contingent portion of the force was quickly carried out. In the former, gold dust was the currency employed, of which the equivalent value of three-halfpence was the daily rate given, no allowance being required for food. Years passed away, and then I learned that the wretched king, having lost his reason in his confinement, pined away, and died a drivelling idiot in his prison. One by one our party of white men engaged in this small but extremely trying piece of service dropped away, and for many years before the time when the present notes are transferred to these pages I have been the sole survivor. The expedition was mentioned approvingly in the *Times* some months after it had become a thing of the past. Medals and decorations for similar services in West Africa were then in the future.

Fifteen months on the Gold Coast; then came the welcome news that a ship with "reliefs" on board was sighted. Great was the excitement as we watched her gradual approach; great the zest with which their arrival was welcomed; hospitable the reception

accorded to them; great the marks of kindness in various ways shown to us by residents. It was long since news had reached us from England, for regular mail communication did not exist. Papers now received were eagerly read, for they were filled with details illustrative of a threatening political aspect in various kingdoms of Europe.

Taught by experience how treacherous and dangerous was the climate of Cape Coast, I determined to proceed by the first ship to sail, irrespective of immediate destination, the chief object being “to get away.” The arrival of the transport *Baretto Junior*, with reliefs of West Indian soldiers and African recruits for regiments in the West Indies, afforded me the desired opportunity. On 24th of May we embarked, the ship dropped with the current to Accra, and then sailed for Barbados.

Glad and thankful to have successfully run the gauntlet as it were against the climate of Guinea, the clear sea air, notwithstanding its temperature of 83° F., had its usual beneficial effect on health impaired on the Coast. The transport in which we sailed had on board three hundred Africans, of whom about one-half were soldiers, the remainder recruits, that is, captured slaves, selected from among those in the Adjudication Yard<sup>90</sup> at Sierra Leone, and duly “enlisted” into West India regiments. A good many of the soldiers were accompanied by their wives and children. Among the “recruits” was a very strong athletic African

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<sup>90</sup> Slave-ships captured by British men-of-war were taken to Sierra Leone, their cargoes there transferred to the establishment so-named.



named Kakungee, one of a cargo of slaves, the vessel conveying whom had recently been captured by a British man-of-war. A fellow-slave, but now “recruit,” gave information of the violent and uncontrollable temper of Kakungee while on board the slave ship; that on two occasions he had suddenly attacked fellow-slaves, killing his victims before a rescue could be effected. With a view to guard against similar occurrences on board the *Baretto Junior*, he having speedily shown the violence of his disposition, he was secured to the deck by means of a cask – in one end of which was a hole sufficiently large to let through his head, but not his shoulders – being put over him and cleated down. In that manner he was kept during the early part of our voyage, food and liquids given to him, but his hands prevented from being made use of for either purpose. His imploring requests to be relieved, and promises of good behaviour, led to his release, and being allowed to mix with his fellow-countrymen. Suddenly and without provocation he attacked a comrade. A Yorruba man of great physical strength came to the rescue; dealt the assailant such a blow that he reeled to leeward, and striking his head against a stanchion, lay insensible in the scupper. For nine days he remained in that condition, notwithstanding means used for his restoration; at the end of that time he died – a victim to his own incorrigible violence.

Twenty-nine days from Accra, our ship lay at anchor in Carlisle Bay, Barbados.<sup>91</sup> Proceeding on shore to make the usual

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<sup>91</sup> On June 22, 1848.

official reports to the military authorities, we gained particulars in regard to the widespread revolutionary spirit through the nations of Europe; that in London serious demonstrations were threatened. Unhappily we also learned that an outbreak of yellow fever had occurred among the troops occupying barracks on the Savannah; that among victims of the disease were some medical officers. The upshot was that I was ordered on shore for duty. That afternoon I “took over” the barrack-room assigned to me, vacated very shortly before through death of its occupant. Disinfection and other means of modern sanitation were little if at all thought of in those days; nor, up to the present, close upon half a century since the event, has the malady extended to me.

The general aspect of Barbados is at first sight very beautiful. Approaching the island from the northward, it appears as a mass of rich green vegetation, the border of sea grape trees,<sup>92</sup> like so many bearded men, – whence its name was taken, – becoming more distinct as we approach. Towards its interior a succession of hills rise to a height of eight hundred or a thousand feet, their sides mostly covered with turf, with here and there clumps of trees, the intervening valleys divided by different estates and lots upon which are grown sugar-cane and guinea-corn.<sup>93</sup> The houses have such a home-like look that the name of “Little Scotland,” long since given to the island, seems appropriate, more especially when the landscape is viewed from the summit

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<sup>92</sup> *Coccoloba uvifera*.

<sup>93</sup> *Sorghum vulgare*.

of one of those hills inland, to which in one of our excursions we proceeded. Unhappily a check – temporarily, it is hoped – has been brought upon the once flourishing sugar industry of the island. Since the emancipation of slaves took place, properties have altogether fallen in value, proprietors have been ruined, the universal complaint being that the freed slaves cannot be got to work. Geologically the chief component rocks of Barbados consist of coral limestone and coral. In respect to its fauna, it has the peculiarity of possessing but a small proportion of venomous snakes as compared with the other islands of the West India group. The people who have been born on the island are known as “Bims.” Their colour is a mixture of red and albinoid white; their special characteristic said to be pride.

Comparing the climate of Barbados with that of tropical India, the former has various advantages. To a certain extent it is bracing and exhilarating; the prevailing breeze, as it comes across the Savannah, pleasant to the sensations, so that officers and other persons ride out at all hours of the day, their faces ruddy, themselves to all appearance in robust health. At intervals of seven to eight years, epidemics of yellow fever occur, such as that which recently attacked the 66th and 72nd Regiments, and after a temporary decrease in its severity, recurred with more than usual intensity and mortality. With regard to physical conditions, geological and otherwise, there is to all appearance nothing of a kind to supply explanation, whether of the advent, increase, temporary cessation, sudden return with increased intensity, and

final cessation; neither can explanation be drawn from those conditions for the lengthened duration of non-epidemic intervals, or of the cyclical return of the disease in pestilential form.

Embarked on board the *Prince Royal* transport, I sailed for England. During the homeward voyage only one incident deserving notice occurred. In a clear moonlit night we became aware that we were in collision with a vessel of no great size. As we rushed on deck, we were shocked to observe that the craft suddenly disappeared a short distance astern of us. No less to his own surprise than ours, a sailor belonging to her was found on our deck, cast upon us in a portion of her rigging that lay across it. He was carefully seen to by us, taken to Portsmouth, and there handed over to the Spanish Consul, for we had ascertained that the ship run down had sailed from Corunna.

Gravesend reached, we disembarked; in due time reported our arrival at Headquarters. The authorities granted the usual period of leave of absence in accordance with Regulations at the time in force. From them also I received a letter conveying the thanks of Earl Grey for services performed in Africa. A few days thereafter I learned that of our "reliefs," three in number, two had died within a month after landing at Cape Coast, one of them my own successor. Fortunate, therefore, was my resolve not to delay departure.

Often is the statement made, but nearly always by persons who live at home at ease, that deaths of British officers in Africa and other tropical countries are due to their irregularities and vices,

not to combined conditions collectively constituting climate. The officers with whom I was associated on the Gold Coast were in their habits and general manner of life as nearly as possible like their contemporaries in England; nor did the few who at times exceeded somewhat appear to suffer in any respect more than did those of more temperate habits. It is the climate of Guinea, and it alone, that kills the white man, and in yet greater proportion the white woman.

An incident which occurred shortly after I had arrived in London was in its way illustrative of the state of public feeling at the time. It was while spending an evening in Portman Street Barracks,<sup>94</sup> then occupied by the Scots Fusilier Guards, that orders from the Horse Guards directed that the battalion should be kept within barracks and under arms; information at the same time circulated that on the previous day there had been a “rising” of the Chartists at Ashton, near Birmingham, and that a similar outbreak in London was intended. Subsequently we learned that the Duke of Wellington, then Commander-in-Chief, had made ample arrangements for such a contingency, though with so much secrecy and discretion that not a soldier was to be seen on the street. But the anticipated outbreak did not take place.

A portion of leave granted was devoted by me to the combined objects of restoring health and gaining knowledge. At the beginning of the winter session I re-entered at Edinburgh University to benefit by the lectures of Sir George Ballingall.

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<sup>94</sup> With my friend J. A. Bostock.

Meanwhile, a friend<sup>95</sup> was interesting himself in appropriate quarters in view to my being released from further service on “the Coast.”

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<sup>95</sup> General Sir Henry King, K.C.B.

# CHAPTER VIII

## *1848–1851. IRELAND*

57th Regiment – Enniskillen – War in Punjab – Weeding out – Routine – “Albuhera day” – Ballyshannon – Sligo – Monro of the Blues – Orange festival – General conditions – An execution – Surprise inspections – Married – March to Dublin – Clones – Kells – Trim – Dangan – Maynooth – Dublin – Duties, etc. – Civilities – Donnybrook – Medical staff and Order of the Bath – Kaffir War – Adieu to 57th.

Gazetted<sup>96</sup> to the 57th, I joined that distinguished regiment at Enniskillen, receiving from members of the “Die-hards” much civility and courtesy as a new-comer among them. A few months passed, and newspapers contained details of victory over the Sikhs at Chilianwallah,<sup>97</sup> though at a British cost in killed and wounded of 89 officers and 2,268 soldiers. With a sense of relief, intelligence by the following mail was read that crushing defeat had been inflicted upon the enemy at Goojerat,<sup>98</sup> though with a loss to our forces of 29 officers and 778 men; the dispersion of the beaten army, the flight of their Affghan allies towards the Khyber Pass – for disaffection on the part of Dost Mahomed had

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<sup>96</sup> December 22, 1848.

<sup>97</sup> January 13, 1849.

<sup>98</sup> February 21.

not yet been completely appeased.

During winter the weekly route march, with its attendant little incidents, furnished about the only events of regimental life that need be alluded to. As an outcome of what was looked upon as a scheme of “economical” administration proposed for political reasons, a reduction in regimental strength was ordered, several soldiers weeded out of the ranks in accordance with orders received. Not long thereafter public attention was drawn to “The Defenceless State of Great Britain” by Sir Francis Head, to whose book, so named, credit was given for measures speedily taken to reverse the schemes of reductions in *personnel* and *matériel* alluded to.

With the return of summer the routine of regimental life became again pleasant as compared with the monotony incidental to the dreary months of winter. The leave season over, the process of preparing for inspection seemed the only object for which the regiment existed, men and officers lived; for no sooner was the dreaded ordeal past and over, than the process was resumed for that which was to come six months later on. As so many interludes, entertainments given and received, games, and “matches” of various kinds became so frequent as to be looked upon as somewhat monotonous.

Exceptional in these respects was the anniversary, on May 16, of the battle of Albuhera in 1811, on which occasion the 57th Regiment earned the soubriquet of “The Die-hards,”<sup>99</sup> of which

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<sup>99</sup> Out of 570 officers and men who went into action at Albuhera, the commanding



it is so justly proud, the *esprit de corps* maintained thereby as well as through anniversary celebration being among its most valuable heritages. Then came the birthday of Her Majesty; after it, the celebration of Waterloo, “the credit of the regiment” being fully maintained on these occasions.

Trips in various directions by water and land proved to be most enjoyable. Boating on the beautiful Loch Erne became a favourite pastime, picnics on some of the many islands with which it is dotted acquiring an interest of their own. Of those islands one has<sup>100</sup> a semi-sacred character; upon it stand ruins of an ancient church,<sup>101</sup> and, as believed, a still more ancient round tower. By road to Beleek<sup>102</sup> and Ballyshannon was no less pleasant and interesting. Around the promontory on which the first-named stands, the river Erne rushes as a magnificent torrent; the second noted on account of its “salmon leap,” and legendary story connected with the islet<sup>103</sup> at a little distance seaward from the cataract. Extending our trip to Sligo, we visited the ecclesiastical ruins and buildings pertaining to that city. In proximity to one of them, several small heaps of human bones lay among the grass, exposed to wind and weather. Inquiry elicited that they were exhumed remains of dead prior to 1832, the great

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officer, 22 other officers, and more than 200 men were placed *hors de combat*. The “dead were found lying as they fought in ranks; every wound was in front.”

<sup>100</sup> Davenish.

<sup>101</sup> Dedicated to St. Molash, who died A.D. 563.

<sup>102</sup> The manufacture of Beleek ware was then a thing of the future.

<sup>103</sup> See *Illustrated London News*, October 12, 1849.

mortality by cholera in that year rendering it necessary thus to “make room” for interment of the numerous victims. But the necessity for leaving exposed the vestiges of mortality was not apparent to us at the time.

At Bundoran I made the acquaintance of Lieutenant Monro, late of the Blues, living in retirement, his prospects ruined as a result of the duel into which he was forced with his brother-in-law, Lieut. – Colonel Fawcett, 55th Regiment, whom he killed on that occasion. Coming as that duel did not long after the “meeting” between Hawkey and Seton, in which the latter received a wound that resulted in his death, public opinion became aroused against the practice. Within two years thereafter the Articles of War were so modified as to declare it to be a military offence on the part of an officer to fight a duel or fail to take measures to prevent one from taking place. For a considerable time past there had been a growing feeling in the army and in civil life against a system by which it was possible for the bully and the aggressor to have an advantage as a “professed duellist” over the less experienced adversary whom he might see fit to “call out.”

The celebration of the victory of the Boyne, July 1, 1690, and that of Auchrim on 12th of the same month, 1691, was enthusiastically observed. Processions of men, bedecked with the distinctive colour of their party, led by bands of music and bearing with them a profusion of flags, paraded the streets of Enniskillen. From many windows orange flags and other party

emblems were displayed; from the church steeple festoons of orange-coloured ribbons waved in the breeze. In other respects much of what was “demonstrative” in character took place, but the general impression produced upon strangers and uninterested spectators was not unlike that experienced as we looked in India upon “religious” festivals.

The visit of Her Majesty to Ireland, and the prospect of a Levée to take place in Dublin, attracted to that capital every officer whose duties and position admitted of his being temporarily absent from his regiment. The question of expediency of the Royal visit had for some time previous been subject of conversation, nor was there an absence of curiosity and anxiety in regard to the reception the Queen might meet with on the occasion of her traversing the streets. Everywhere it was enthusiastic, so much so that Her Majesty was much impressed. The following day the Levée was held; some two thousand presentations were made, and in the list of those who had that honour my name was included.

At this time the general state of things in our immediate neighbourhood was this: – The intensity of famine by reason of the potato blight of 1847–8 had to some degree become lessened; favourable summer weather had brought about an abundant crop of grain, relief works were in progress, the expenses of administration out of proportion to the meagre sums which actually reached the workers. All the while political and religious antipathies manifested themselves in violent forms; murders

perpetrated in the close vicinity of our county town.

Some of the alleged perpetrators of those crimes underwent their trial at the County Assizes. Two were convicted and condemned to death. On the day of their execution a guard provided by the 57th was drawn up at a little distance from the main entrance of the prison, where the apparatus for carrying out the extreme sentence of the law was kept in readiness. Behind the soldiers the large open space then existing was crowded with interested spectators, the proportion of women being estimated as four to one of men. The dread ordeal over, one of our men was brought to the regimental hospital in a condition of delirious terror, his delusion that one of the men executed was dangling over his head. All means used to soothe or relieve him failed; his horrible delirium continued with little or no interruption through some few days and nights, only ceasing with his own existence, for the same terrible impression haunted him to the very last.

The system of "surprise inspections," at the time in force, applied to regiments and departments; inspecting officers were wont to appear without warning, such ordeals being over and above those held in ordinary course of routine. That the higher authorities saw good reasons for their action in this respect is not to be doubted. Those reasons, however, did not transpire; but among our soldiers the irritation caused by unusual proceeding went far to overbalance whatever good might have accrued from it.

On the 14th of March, 1850, the most sacred event of a

man's life occurred in mine – that event, my marriage<sup>104</sup> to Annie, daughter of John Mackintosh, Esq., of Torrich. Time was pressing, for rumours were in the air that the regiment was well up the roster for foreign service. Leave of absence had accordingly to be curtailed; but, on rejoining the 57th with my young bride, she was received with the same kindness that had been shown to myself. Not many days thereafter, she proceeded to Dublin, where, pending the arrival of the regiment, including myself, she was most hospitably received by the family of a brother officer.<sup>105</sup>

Our progress to the Irish capital included several days' march; for, although railway communication could have been made use of for part of the distance, the authorities had decided that it should not be so. In our march, we passed through or were billeted for a night at places in relation to which history records a good deal of what is interesting. For example, Clones has an ecclesiastical history dating back to the sixth century; Kells, otherwise *Kenlis*, boasts of ruins of a monastery, said to have owed its foundation to St. Columba; in near proximity to Trim stands the rectory of Larour, the former residence of Dean Swift, and near it a fragment of what had been the house of Stella. The ruins of Dangan Castle in the near neighbourhood were interesting, in that in them was shown to us an apartment said to have been the actual birthplace of the Duke of Wellington – with

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<sup>104</sup> The ceremony solemnized by the Rev. J. A. Grant, of Nairn.

<sup>105</sup> Major and Mrs. Shadforth.

what degree of truth it was not deemed necessary to inquire.<sup>106</sup>

The village of Maynooth, at the time of our march through it, was in appearance wretched and decayed, even as compared to others along our line of route. At its eastern end is the avenue that leads to Carton, seat of Ireland's only duke.<sup>107</sup> But the name of the village has become associated with its Roman Catholic College, which dates from 1795, and was endowed by Sir Robert Peel<sup>108</sup> with an income yearly of £30,000 – a measure much discussed at the time of our visit, as indeed it has continued since to be.

Arrived in Dublin, the barracks assigned to the 57th were the Linen Hall – old, and long before then condemned as unfit for occupation; accommodation for all ranks insufficient. Thus my experience in searching for lodgings began. Some months elapsed; then the regiment was “broken up,” small parties distributed among various barracks, to be, after another interval, collected in the Royal Barracks – large, spacious, and, at the time, looked upon as well adapted for their purpose.

Duty, relaxation, pleasure, as represented in Ireland's capital, succeeded each other among our officers. In accordance with rules then in force, much of my own time was taken up in connection with the more military functions of parades, drills, field days, and ceremonial “trooping the colours.” Regimental

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<sup>106</sup> Another statement is that his birth took place in Upper Merrion Street, Dublin; his baptism in St. Peter's Church.

<sup>107</sup> That was in 1850.

<sup>108</sup> Parliament, June, 1845.

entertainments, levées, and “receptions” at the Castle were so many interludes in our general routine.

In accordance also with the custom of the time, civility and attention in various ways by learned societies and institutions were extended to medical officers of the garrison, myself included. Access to lectures in the Colleges was placed at our disposal; so was admission to the Botanical and Zoological Gardens. Invitations to picnics and to boating excursions in the beautiful bay further helped to render pleasant our stay in Dublin.

The once famous Donnybrook Fair<sup>109</sup> had not then become a thing of the past, although its extinction was approaching. The assemblage of people on the occasion comprised the wild in aspect, dirty in person, squalid, imperfectly clothed, all more or less strongly smelling of whisky, some dancing to music of their pipes; but so far as we saw, without the mirth, laughter, and other signs of Irish life of which we had heard so much.

Through the advocacy of Sir De Lacy Evans, and almost by it alone, officers of the Medical and Commissariat Departments were admitted to the second and third grades of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath.<sup>110</sup> In battles connected with recent campaigns, surgeons of British regiments were exposed to fire of the enemy in a degree only second to that of combatants, the casualties in killed and wounded among them testifying to the risks ran by them in the performance of their duties on

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<sup>109</sup> August 31, 1850.

<sup>110</sup> *London Gazette*, August 12, 1850.

those occasions. Other circumstances of military life tell more against medical officers of regiments than those whose duties are merely “combatant.” The combat over, the latter, if unscathed, takes his rest, such as it may be under the circumstances, but the most arduous duties of the former then begin. On marches incidental to campaigns, the halting ground reached, requirements of the sick and wounded must be attended to, often under great difficulties. In times of epidemics, the combatant runs risks common to all; the surgeon, in addition to them, is exposed to those incidental to close association with subjects of those epidemics, together with mental and physical wear and tear in the performance of professional duties. Hence arises the proportionately high rates of mortality that prevail among junior departmental ranks.

Some time thereafter, war was undertaken against the Kaffirs under Sandilli, their chief. Eight infantry regiments were hastily dispatched to take part in the coming campaign, and so the 57th was placed among the first to proceed to the same destination in the event of reinforcements becoming necessary. Married officers, therefore, lost no time in forecasting arrangements to be made by them respectively in the event of the anticipated contingency becoming a reality.

My personal arrangements in that respect became hastened by the birth to me of a son.<sup>111</sup> Anticipating such an event, I had already opened negotiations for exchange to a regiment serving

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<sup>111</sup> Born on April 12, 1851.



in India, conscious that colonial rates of pay and allowances were inadequate to meet the needs of double establishments during war time. By-and-by the time arrived when connection had to be severed with a regiment to which I had become much attached, and of its traditions proud as any other of its members. A farewell dinner, by invitation of Colonel Goldie<sup>112</sup> and officers, and then adieu.

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<sup>112</sup> Killed at Inkerman.

## CHAPTER IX

### *1851–1852. DUBLIN TO WUZZEERABAD*

10th Foot – International Exhibition – Sail for India – Incidents – Battened down – Chinsurah again – Sunderbunds – Purbootpore – Kurumnassa – Incidents of the river trip – By Grand Trunk Road – Hospitable Brahmins – Louis Napoleon – Deobund – Saharunpore – Jugadree – Umballah – Noormahal – Loodianah – Ferozeshah – Ferozepore – Lahore – Googeranwallah – Arrive at regimental headquarters.

Among regiments stationed throughout the Punjab, then but recently annexed, was the 10th Foot, to which, by exchange,<sup>113</sup> I was now appointed. Towards that province I accordingly started without delay. Arrived in London, we visited the great novelty of that day, the palace of glass situated in Hyde Park, in which was held the International Exhibition, progenitor of a long series as it was destined to be. No time was lost in completing arrangements for the coming sea voyage in so far as restricted pecuniary means permitted. Early in June we embarked on board the *Lord George Bentinck*

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<sup>113</sup> *London Gazette*, May 23, 1851.

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