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land is ruled by a queen," retorted Chand Kaur "why should it be a disgrace to the Punjab to be governed by a rani?" and either her reasonings or other arguments prevailed so far that she was appointed regent until her grandchild should be born.

Then came disaster. Dhian Singh, who had been working all the while for his own ends, went to Jammu on a hunting expedition; the army, to whom the Rani had omitted to distribute largesse, began to mutiny. Sher Singh appeared at the gates of Lahore; most of the troops went over to his side, and the city surrendered to him. But Gulab Singh held the citadel for the Rani, and his nephew Hira Singh joined him, in spite of the fact that Dhian Singh was fighting upon Sher Singh's side. "The intent of this manœuvre was, that by ostensibly becoming enemies to each other they were enabled to become the leaders and controllers of the contending parties, whereby their object was secured, whichever side was successful."[1]

After seven days' siege, the citadel was surrendered with the honours of war. Chand Kaur renounced all claim to the regency, and was given a grant of lands in compensation.

The events of the next few days cannot be

[1] Carmichael Smyth.

GSL

described. Disappointed of the plunder of the fort, the troops fell upon the city and plundered and murdered indiscriminately. "Every man gratified his private revenge; officers were killed by their men; shopkeepers by their debtors. It was many days before the troops were pacified, and the licence which they then enjoyed, they never forgot."

In the meantime, Gulab Singh had loaded his ammunition-waggons with the treasure in the fort, and marched back to Jammu. The Koh-i-Nur was recovered from Chand Kaur and presented to Sher Singh, who was enthroned as Maharaja. To secure himself better, he renewed the offer he had made directly after Nao Nahal Singh's death, of marrying Chand Kaur by the Sikh rite called "throwing the sheet," which was used for widows and wives of inferior station. He was told by Dhian Singh that the Rani considered he must be mad or a fool to dream that one of the Kanheya clan would think of marrying the son of a washerman. Whether Chand Kaur really said it or not, the taunt was fatal. Sher Singh and Dhian Singh alike were anxious to get rid of her. When for a year she had been living at Lahore, secretly intriguing with the sirdars and the army to replace her upon the throne, and making overtures, through Ajit Singh, to the English, four

GSL

of her slave-girls were promised a large reward if they would kill her. At first they tried poisoning her drink, but she suspected the taste, and threw it away; then, while they were supposed to be dressing her hair, they battered her head to pieces with a heavy stone. Thus was avenged the dying agony of Ishar Kaur. The Rani died, unconscious, within two days, and the slave-girls disappeared; whether they also were put out of the way, or merely lost their hands, ears, and noses, is a disputed point.

The army by this time was thoroughly disorganised. The regimental officers had no authority, and took their orders from the "Panches"—"a deputation of the five cleverest blackguards in a Sikh regiment, who took their seats in the midnight parliaments of the Khalsa army, where measures were concerted for keeping the Lahore Government in the hands of the soldiers, putting up or deposing and murdering a Vizier, voting themselves extra pay, gold necklaces, &c."[1] There were continual mutinies and assassinations; General Ventura, and most of the European officers who had trained the army in Ranjit's day, left the Punjab. Dhian Singh, now paramount at Lahore, tried to mend matters by discharging some of the worst regiments and

[1] Edwardes.

GSL

enlisting men from the hills in their stead, with the result that the disbanded troops swelled the gangs of robbers that infested the country and sometimes raided into British territory.

Sher Singh was no match either for the army or for Dhian Singh, whom he had begun to suspect of a design to depose him. To propitiate the army, he recalled from exile the Sindhanwalia chiefs, Ranjit's kinsmen, Ajit Singh and Lahna Singh. Ajit Singh had been the lover of the Rani Chand Kaur, and had a score to pay off against her murderers. Adopting Dhian Singh's favourite tactics, the Sindhanwalias persuaded the Maharaja that his Minister was about to murder him, and brought him to sign a paper authorising them upon a certain day to murder Dhian Singh. Then they showed the paper to Dhian Singh, and arranged with him to substitute the Maharaja for the Minister. On the day appointed, they entered the summer-house beyond Lahore, where Sher Singh was listening to state papers, saying they had come to show him a new gun; as he put out his hand to take it, Ajit fired both barrels into his breast. Only four words did he gasp before he died—"What treachery is this?"

They killed or wounded his attendants before going on to the garden close by, where Pertab Singh, the Maharaja's son, the most promising

GSL

of all the royal family, was at prayer. Lahna Singh rushed upon him with a drawn sword, and the poor boy—who was only twelve years old—cried out, "Babaji, I will remain your servant." "Your father is slain," answered the sirdar, and ran him through the body.

Meanwhile Ajit Singh had ridden to meet Dhian Singh and tell him that all was well. The two rode back to Lahore side by side, and went up to the fort, talking of the succession. "Who is to reign?" asked Ajit; and Dhian answered, "Dhulip Singh shall be Maharaja and I Wazir, and the Sindhanwalias shall enjoy power." Again Ajit asked the same question, and again Dhian obstinately made the same reply. Then Ajit's fury broke forth. "You are the murderer of the Rani Sahib," he cried, and fired his pistol at the Minister. Dhian Singh fell dead from his horse, and the attendants hacked his body with their swords, and flung it into the rubbish-pit of the gun foundry in the fort.

An attempt to complete the day's work by inveigling Suchet Singh and Hira Singh to a conference in the fort, was a complete failure. The news of what had been done was flying through the district, and Hira Singh was haranguing the troops, promising gratuities and increase of pay to all who would follow him to

GSL

punish the murderers of his father, who had sworn to deliver the country to the English and disband the Khalsa army. Leaving the supper which the cooks were preparing at the moment, the indignant soldiers gathered round the fort, and before the close of another day it was carried by storm. Ajit Singh and Lahna Singh were killed, and Ajit Singh's head was taken to Dhian Singh's widow, who had sworn not to burn with her husband's corpse until his murderers lay dead at her feet.

Next day the Panches of the army proclaimed Hira Singh, "the lapdog of Ranjit," as Prime Minister, and the boy Dhulip Singh as Maharaja.

Of all the spurious children fathered upon Ranjit, Dhulip Singh was the most barefaced attempt at imposition. There was a certain woman in Ranjit's zenana named Jindan, the daughter of a trooper, or, as some said, a dog-keeper in the Maharaja's service. Shameless and abandoned, she enlivened the drinking-bouts at the palace with her coarse buffoonery, and was in great favour with Ranjit in his latter years, until her impudence went so far as to imitate her betters by presenting him with a "son." If Dhulip Singh were indeed her child, his father was a water-carrier at the Palace; but he may

GSL

have been procured from outside, like Sher Singh. He was certainly not the child of Ranjit, and Jindan was never married to the Maharaja.

Just before Dhian Singh's murder, he seemed to be meditating a *coup d'état*, to depose Sher Singh and set up the six-year-old boy in his stead, and now Hira Singh carried out his father's designs.

The new minister did not enjoy a long or a prosperous reign. The country was almost in a state of anarchy, the army entirely out of hand, and the woman whom he had raised to the rank of queen-mother was intriguing against him, aided by her worthless drunken brother, Jawahir Singh. It is impossible to tell all the story, which is unspeakably loathsome. The end of it was that, after little more than a year, there was another revolution at Lahore; Hira Singh was murdered, and the government was carried on by Jawahir Singh, the Rani Jindan, her lover, and her favourite slave-girl. Murders, revolts, and a terrible visitation of the cholera added to the misery and disorder of the country, while such scenes were passing at the Court as must be left undescribed. On several occasions no business could be done, because Jawahir Singh, the Rani, and even the little Maharaja, were all drunk. Then Jawahir Singh was murdered by

GSL

the soldiery, though he strove to protect himself by taking the young Maharaja on his elephant.

When Jawahir's widows came in the evening to burn upon his pyre, they were treated with brutality by the soldiers—although a *sati* is sacred, and her curse can drag down to all the hells. The money which they would have thrown among the crowd, according to rite and custom, was snatched out of their hands; their jewels, their ear-rings, and their nose-rings were torn from them when they mounted the pyre. As a crowning outrage, one of the soldiers tore the embroidery and gold fringes from the trousers of one of the women. Then, among the smoke and flames, a tall figure rose and cursed those who had insulted her last hour; ere the year was out, the Sikhs should be conquered, their land desolate, and the wives of the Khalsa army should be widows.

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XIX.

THE TAIL OF THE AFGHAN STORM—
1838-1843

"Cui licet finis, illi et media permissa sunt."

GSL

XIX.

THE TAIL OF THE AFGHAN STORM—1838-1843.

At a crisis in one of Great Britain's recent wars, timely help was given by certain reinforcements which had been embarked at Karachi.

It is due to the foresight and wisdom of Bartle Frere, Commissioner of Sind sixty years ago, that Karachi has a harbour ranking "among the most convenient as well as the most important in the world." That Sind itself, on the shortest route between England and India, and commanding the road through the Bolan Pass and onward to Central Asia, should be British territory, is due in the first instance to Lord Auckland's Afghan policy.

Except for strategic advantages, the triangle formed by the delta of the Indus was not a desirable territory. At the base was the sea, and on the other sides were rainless deserts.

GSL

Inland stretched mile after mile of sandy waste, where occasional patches of tamarisk jungle marked the beds of rivers filled only in the rains, or ridge after ridge of low undulating stony hills covered with prickly-pear bushes. Here and there were the ruins of ancient cities and forts crumbling to dust and forgotten. The annual rising of the Indus turned great part of the plain into a level flood, which, as it subsided, left wide tracts of swamp to breed malaria and fever.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century a Biluchi chief had established himself in Sind. He succeeded in having his title established by a firman from Kabul, and took his younger brothers into partnership with him. All but one of the "Four Friends" (Char Yar), as local history calls them, left male descendants, and these, known collectively as "the Amirs," were ruling Sind at the time of the Tripartite Treaty.

According to some authorities, the Amirs were good-natured, if hasty and not always to be trusted, and their government, though despotic, was patriarchal. According to others, the Amirs were monsters, as cowardly and treacherous as they were debauched and cruel. Without leaning to one side or the other, certain facts may be admitted. The Amirs did not profess to

GSL

govern Sind for its own good; their exactions were ruining the cultivators of the soil, who had to pay nearly two-thirds of the produce to the tax-collector. They laid waste fertile land to make preserves for their game, which it was death for any man but themselves to kill or injure. Neither they nor their Biluchi vassals, who were the upper class in Sind, saw any harm in cutting a wife to pieces, or in stifling a child whose further existence was inconvenient.

Uglier crimes than these were laid to the charge of the Amirs; if the worst that was said of them had been proved in every detail, it scarcely could justify the way in which they were treated by the British Government at the time of the Afghan war.

Already several commercial treaties had been made between the Amirs and the Company, by which free passage through Sind was granted for merchants and travellers, while it was laid down that ships of war and military stores were not to be carried on the Indus.

Unhappily for the Amirs, Ranjit Singh refused to allow the British army to pass through his territories on the way to Afghanistan. Lord Auckland durst not offend "our old and faithful ally," as he styled the Maharaja, so he directed Colonel Pottinger, the British Resident at Haidar-

GSL

abad, to inform the Amirs that the army must pass through Sind, and therefore "the article of the treaty with them prohibitory of using the Indus for the conveyance of military stores, must necessarily be suspended."

But more was to be taken from the Amirs than the control of the river of which they were keenly jealous; funds were wanted for the expedition. It was as impossible to get money from Ranjit, who had hoards of treasure, as from Shah Shuja, who was without resources. Accordingly, Pottinger was instructed that the Amirs must pay several lakhs of rupees to Shah Shuja as the price of his acknowledgment of their independence; the exact sum, he was told, had not been settled, but "the Amirs may be supposed wealthy."

This letter was written by William Macnaghten, then Secretary to the Governor-General. For any part that he may have played in this business he was to pay in full, some years later, upon the blood-stained snow on the plain of Kabul.

The Amirs protested indignantly that Shah Shuja was the puppet of the British, incapable of taking one rupee without their help. They produced releases from his supremacy, signed by himself upon the Koran in former days.

GSL

"How this is to be got over, I do not myself see," wrote Pottinger. He saw the method when a British force, having obtained possession of the island fort of Bakkar, the key of Sind, began its march southwards to Haidarabad, where another British force was making demonstrations.

The threat was enough; the Amirs submitted, hoping, said one who knew them, that when once the English army was in Afghanistan, they might prevent its return to India. It has been told how that army returned.

II.

Relations between the Amirs and the British Government became more and more strained after it had been decided to evacuate Afghanistan. For a time the Amirs of Upper and Lower Sind forgot their disagreements with each other, and combined against the hated English. "They interrupted the river navigation; they levied duties contrary to the treaties; they even passed an insolent decree that all the traders who had established themselves on the skirts of our cantonments should have their houses razed and their goods confiscated."[1] To some extent they had been checked by James Outram,

[1] A. Innes Shand.

GSL

the Political Agent in Upper Sind and Khelat, whose achievements in maintaining peace, in keeping open the road to Kandahar, and in sending supplies to the generals in Afghanistan, had been rewarded by removal from his post. In his stead, with full civil and military powers, had come a small peremptory man of sixty years old, with flowing grey hair and beard, hooked nose, and eyes as bright and fierce as those of a hawk, flashing behind a large pair of spectacles, which the Amirs amused themselves with trying on, at their first interview.

The Amirs did not like Sir Charles Napier, or his business with them. He had none of Outram's dignified courtesy and conciliatory manner. He was irascible, vehement, making no allowances for the tortuous methods of Eastern diplomacy. He upbraided them with treachery, denouncing their secret correspondence with the ruling powers at Lahore and Multan; he required them to sign another treaty, by which, though they were relieved from the payment of the tribute and subsidies, they were obliged to cede territory to the British, and to the Nawab of Bhawalpur to whom part of it had once belonged. There was much talk of "improvement in the administration," and the Amirs, like many better men, had no zeal for improvements that were to be carried

GSL

out at their expense. So they made their dispositions, hoping for the support of some of the neighbours whose wrath against the English they had been fanning since the beginning of the Afghan war.

In all time of trouble the Amirs of Upper Sind could take refuge in their fortress of Imamgarh, in the very heart of the desert. No European had ever beheld it, none knew exactly where it stood. Few Sindians would dare to attempt the way thither by the desert tracks that changed from time to time as the scanty watersprings disappeared from the wells, to trickle up again in some other patch of sand, far away. In the desert prowled the Biluchi horsemen, ready to attack all comers. Within the fortress was a garrison of two thousand, with food, water, and ammunition. Once in Imamgarh, the Amirs could defy any foe, since those who escaped from the horsemen would be smitten down by the sun, or perish more slowly of hunger and thirst among the whirling columns of dust that overwhelm camels and dry up waterskins.

Imamgarh, "the base and place of arms for the main army" of Upper Sind, was held by a son of the old Amir Rustam, lately the wearer of "the Turban" that gave pre-eminence in Sind. Rustam had been tricked into resigning

GSL

the Turban to an ambitious brother, Ali Murad, and believed that Napier, who had advised him to "trust to the care" of that brother, was responsible for his downfall. Napier considered the Amirs "the greatest ruffians he ever met with, without any exception," and was convinced that the annexation of Sind was inevitable and desirable—"a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality." But he was incapable of double-dealing, and the villain of the piece was Ali Murad, who studied how to embroil the other Amirs with Napier, and to represent their actions in the worst light, so that he might become sole ruler in the land.

Another son of Rustam was holding another fort in the eastern desert near the border of Jeysulmer. Rustam, when called upon to make his sons keep the peace, blandly replied that he had invested them with authority to hold the forts, and that his cession of the Turban to Ali Murad was null and void. Ali Murad announced an intention of reducing his kinsmen to order, but seemed in no haste.

The Biluchis were gathering in Upper Sind; Rustam himself hovered on the borders of the desert where food and water could be had, and other Amirs were said to be upon the road to Imamgarh with thousands of followers. It was

GSL

January 1843, and in a little while the fearful "hot weather" of Sind would begin.

Napier was as well aware of this as the Amirs could be. His own summary of the situation is not unfair to them, if unjust to Outram. "I found that all the politicals had gone on from the beginning, trifling. Sometimes letting the Amirs infringe the treaty without notice; at others pulling them up, and then dropping the matter: in short, I saw it was a long chain of infringement — denial — apology — pardon, over and over. I therefore resolved not to let this which old Indians call '*knowing the people*' go on. . . . As letters from the Ameers were intercepted, proposing to other powers to league and drive us out of Scinde; Lord Ellenborough thought, and I think justly, that a new treaty should be entered into, which he sent me. . . . I cannot enter upon our right to be *here at all* —that is Lord Auckland's affair. Well! I presented the draft of the new treaty. The Ameers bowed with their usual apparent compliance, but raised troops in all directions. These I was ordered by the Governor-General to disperse. To disperse irregular troops, they having a desert at their back, and four hundred miles of river to cross and run up the mountains, and all this with their chiefs swearing they submitted

GSL

to everything, to get me into the *hot* weather when I could not move, and thus cut off all our communications at their ease, was no trifle. In short, it was to attack a 'Will-o'-the-wisp.'"

The words were written as he returned from a chase after the "Will-o'-the-wisp."

Even the wild beasts—the hyæna, the boar, the deer—dared not penetrate far into the wastes surrounding Imamgarh. "The sandhills stretched north and south for hundreds of miles, in parallel ridges rounded at top, and most symmetrically plaited like the ripple on the sea-shore after a placid tide. The sand was mingled with shells, and run in great streams resembling numerous rivers."[1] Across the ridges toiled a small force of men, mounted upon camels—350 of the 22nd (Queen's) Regiment, 200 irregular cavalry, dragging two howitzers, and led by Napier himself, who was enjoying the desperate venture with all his heart. It cost him nothing to march light, since he had often demonstrated his maxim that no soldier needs much baggage beyond two towels and a cake of soap; but when the forage failed, and water was scarcely to be had, on the second day of his desert march he was obliged to cut off more than superfluities, and sent back 150 of his cavalry.

[1] W. Napier.

GSL

Rustam, with seven guns and a force ten times as large as Napier's, was on his flank, but still the march continued. Outram, sent back from Bombay by a sudden caprice of the Governor-General that he might help the negotiations for the treaty, had reached Napier's camp in time to take part in the expedition; he was sent to reason with Rustam, and Napier rode further and further "through an ocean of sandhills."

Water was not always to be found, the camels grew weak, and the men must help to drag the howitzers. They went by a way that they knew not, uncertain whether they went right; but on the eighth day they saw the walls and the round towers that encompassed the square keep of Imamgarh.

It was empty; the young Amir and his garrison had fled with their treasure, two days before, southwards to the Indus.

To save trouble in the future, having wrung an unwilling consent from Ali Murad, Napier used the powder left in the magazine to blow the fortress to pieces. Then he set off on the return march to the Indus, thinking not of war and battle, but of his dead mother. He notes in his diary, on the day when Imamgarh was destroyed, that in a dream he saw her "beauteous face"—that face which, eighty years before, had almost won a throne for Lady

GSL

Sarah Lennox when she played at making hay in the grounds of her uncle's house.

III.

While Napier was bringing his force back to camp by another way through the desert, without a single case of sickness or the loss of one man, Outram was traversing ninety miles of hostile country with an escort of two Biluchi horsemen, endeavouring at the eleventh hour to make the Amirs decide for peace. He could do little. Rustam received him civilly, but when assured that the territory remaining to the Amirs was to be settled, "as much as possible, fairly towards all parties," retorted, "What remains to be settled? Our means of livelihood are taken."

Not one Amir from Upper Sind came in answer to Outram's summons to meet him by January 25th. The Amirs of Lower Sind ostentatiously sent deputies to the British camp, while secretly commanding their allies and feudatories to come with all their fighting men to Haidarabad.

Outram prevailed upon Napier to allow him to go down to Haidarabad to plead with them, and to extend the time of grace until February 6th. Though Napier was the first to give Outram the

GSL

title of "the Bayard of India," he was finding that chivalry might be somewhat inconvenient. Having honestly made up his own mind that the Amirs intended treachery, and that they must be swept out of the way, he could not understand how any one could hold other views. "I confess not to like those who differ in opinion with me," he openly declared, at a time when he and Outram were in complete accord. Later on, it is: "Outram provokes me; he pities those rascals, who are such atrocious tyrants that it is virtuous to roll them over like ninepins." Nevertheless, he now wrote to Outram: "I am sure they" (the Amirs) "will not resist by force of arms, but I would omit no one step that you, or any one, thinks can prevent the chance of it." It was too late to persuade the Amirs that the General was not bent upon fighting them, whatever they might do. The nature of his methods of diplomacy was such as might be imagined from an order written soon after his arrival in India to the officer in command of a regiment reported to be in a state of mutiny: "I expect to hear by express that you have put down the mutiny within two hours after receipt of this letter."

At Haidarabad, Outram won the chiefs to a semblance of submission. A Durbar was summoned for February 12th, at which the Amirs would sign

GSL

and seal the treaty. Incidentally, they designed at the same time to murder Outram.

"Blindly went Outram to the intended slaughter-house, and if he escaped, it was only because the Ameers, thinking the General was as reckless as his Commissioner, hoped for a greater victim." Outram probably was not so blind as William Napier chose to consider him; he knew his influence over the savage Biluchis, and he trusted to it to bring him unscathed from his last attempt to ensure peace.

The treaty was signed by all the Amirs save one, who was absent, and Outram went back to the Residency through a howling, cursing mob, that was restrained from violence only by the armed escort sent by the Amirs.

Next day, the Amirs were bewailing their inability to control their soldiers, to which Outram replied that they would be responsible for their subjects' conduct, and that he had no intention of retiring from the Residency, and would not post one additional sentry at his door.

Two days after this, eight thousand horse and foot attacked the Residency with six guns, but failed to force the "imperfect low-walled enclosure of 200 yards square," although Outram had only a hundred men to defend it, and each man had only forty rounds of ammunition. After four hours'

GSL

fighting, "seeing nothing more could be done," the garrison crossed the few hundred yards dividing the Residency from the Indus, and embarked on the two little steamers belonging to the Company, which carried them up the river to the advanced guard of Napier's army.

They had given what Napier termed "a brilliant example of defending a military post," and the great battle for which he had been longing ever since his arrival in the country was now inevitable. There was probably not a happier man in India than the old General on the night of February 16th. "Not to be anxious about attacking such immensely superior numbers is impossible; but it is a delightful anxiety." "Let them be sixty or one hundred thousand," he exclaimed, when reports were brought in that the enemy were massing in increasing numbers, "I will fight!" He brought his journal up to date; he wrote last letters to kin and friends; he visited the outposts, and at midnight he lay down to sleep.

IV.

Over a level plain of smooth hard sand ran the road to Miani. Here and there a few stunted bushes broke the whiteness of the surface, and to

GSL

the right and left of the road, about three-quarters of a mile apart, were the Shikargahs, the woods which the Amirs had made for their hunting.

It was for other sport than hunting that they had brought out their army of thirty thousand men early on this February morning, and drawn it up within the dry bed of the Fuleli river. In front of the bank which sloped down to the plain were their guns; the right wing rested on an entrenched village, the left on a shikargah covered by a wall with one narrow opening.

Thus Captain Jacob of the Sind Horse found them, when Napier sent him on a scouting expedition at about seven o'clock on the morning of February 16th.

At three o'clock the bugles had sounded "Fall in," and Napier with his little army began the advance towards Miani. Outram was not with him, having been detached to set fire to the woods in which it was supposed that the enemy's left flank was posted. As the enemy had moved during the night, no one was the worse for the manœuvre save Outram himself, and the two hundred men with him, who missed the battle; but the smoke of the burning woods was the signal for Napier to form his line at nine o'clock.

The whole of Napier's force, including the officers, amounted to no more than two thousand four

GSL

hundred men; and some of these must be told off to guard the camp-followers, who were formed into a circle surrounded by recumbent camels and bales of stores. Only one European regiment was there, the 22nd.

The line was formed, and the General gave the signal to advance across the thousand yards that separated the two armies. Already the Biluchi guns were playing on his line, and shots from the marksmen who lay hidden in the dry watercourses that seamed the ground, were driving through clouds of dust. Eighteen hundred men were to be led in frontal attack against more than thirty thousand, who had nearly every advantage of position.

As he rode forward with his staff, the General noted the opening in the wall enclosing the Shikargah on the enemy's left. He "rode near this wall, and found it was nine or ten feet high; he rode nearer, and marked it had no loopholes for the enemy to shoot through; he rode into the opening under a play of matchlocks,"[1] and saw there was no scaffolding, and therefore that the enemy could not fire over the top of the wall. Calling Captain Tew, he bade him take the grenadiers of the 22nd; they must bar the way for the enemy who would try to issue from the

[1] W. Napier.

GSL

opening and fall on the British line in flank and rear. Tew was killed at his post, but his men held on, keeping six thousand Biluchis blocked within the wall.

Meanwhile the army had advanced across the plain, the charge was sounded by the bugler who ran all day at the General's stirrup, and the infantry dashed forward, regardless of the fire from the guns within fifteen yards of them. A shout and a rush, and the 22nd were on the top of the bank, looking down upon the mass of the enemy. "Thick as standing corn, and gorgeous as a field of flowers," the Biluchis filled the river-bed; "they clustered on both banks, and covered the plain beyond. Guarding their heads with their large dark shields, they shook their sharp swords, beaming in the sun, their shouts rolled like a peal of thunder"[1] as they dashed over the bank.

The battle raged round the bed of the Fuleli, as musket and bayonet met sword and matchlock. The Biluchis leaped the banks like a swelling river; "they gave their breasts to the shot, they leaped upon the guns and were blown away by twenties at a time; their dead went down the steep slope by hundreds; but the gaps in their masses were continually filled up from the rear." The 22nd and the sepoys could not hold their ground against the

[1] W. Napier.

GSL

sheer weight of numbers; they were broken, they were driven back, but they rallied, and stubbornly regained their place. Wherever the fight was fiercest could be seen the little wiry figure of the General, cheering his men by voice and gesture, his waving grey hair singed by the guns. He was unable to defend himself because a day or two before the battle, seeing a camel-driver brutally ill-treating an animal, he had clouted him over the head, thereby dislocating his right wrist, without making any impression upon the offender. Once, in the press of the fight, he was separated from all his men, and surrounded by several of the enemy, "who stalked around him with raised shields and scowling eyes," but forbore to touch him, so that he came back unhurt amid the wild cheering of the 22nd.

After three hours of this work, Napier recognised that his men could not stand much more. Nearly all the European officers were killed or wounded, and the sepoys, as brave as the bravest when led by the men whom they knew and trusted, could not stand without them. The men's muskets were clogged with powder. Where ten of the enemy had fallen, it seemed that twenty swarmed in their stead. "There was no time to be lost," wrote Sir Charles in his despatch, "and I sent orders to the cavalry to force the right of the enemy's line."

GSL

Across the plain galloped the 9th Bengal Cavalry and the Sind Horse, and drove the Biluchis from the entrenched village. The ground was intersected with nullahs and ditches, and fifty men were thrown from their saddles in the charge, yet they rode through the guns, and over the high bank of the river, through the mud and water that filled its bed, up the bank on the opposite side, to divide on the plain beyond. The 9th fell upon the infantry to the left, the Sind Horse crashed into the camp of the Amirs, "spreading confusion along the rear of the line of battle." Then at last the Biluchi centre began to waver. "The 22nd first saw their masses shake, and leaping forward with the shout of victory, pushed them backwards into the deep ravine, and there closed in combat again." Sepoys and Madras Sappers crowded after them, and the forces within the Shikargah joined them in the river-bed for the last struggle. Through the clouds of dust and smoke now emerged the bright-coloured turban of a Biluchi, now the dirty white cotton cover that shaded the forage cap of a soldier of the 22nd.

Then from the choking haze began to thrust masses of Biluchi swordsmen at a swinging stride which they would not break into a run, though grape and shells were pouring upon them from the English guns. The flying cavalry were pursued by the

GSL

triumphant Sind Horse for three miles, but the infantry yielded their ground so slowly that Napier thought it well to leave them alone, when once they were full in retreat.

He made his camp beyond the river, and rode over the battlefield at night while his soldiers slept. Nearly a sixth of his force had been killed or wounded, but more than five thousand of the enemy lay stretched on the plain, or heaped one upon another in the river-bed. After returning to his tent, he slept so soundly that when a false alarm roused the camp, Outram was obliged to pull him off his bed before he could be awakened.

Next morning the Amirs sent messengers to ask what terms he would grant. "Life, and nothing more," was the General's reply; "and I want your decision by twelve o'clock, as I shall by that time have buried my dead, and given my soldiers their breakfasts." Six Amirs thereupon rode into camp and laid their swords at his feet. The swords were for ornament rather than use; none of the wearers had exposed himself on the field of battle where their soldiers had fought to the death.

V.

The campaign was not finished when Napier occupied Haidarabad a few days later. One of

GSL

the Amirs, "the Lion," Sher Mohammad,[1] who had not been present at Miani, was at large, and gathering an army. His skirmishers raided up to the city gates, and drove away camels from under the noses of the pickets.

"Quit this land and your life shall be spared," was the message that his envoy brought to Napier in March, "provided you restore all that you have taken." As the words were spoken, the evening gun was fired. "You hear that sound?" answered Napier. "It is my answer to your chief. Begone!" And he turned his back upon them.

A friendly proposal to assassinate Sher Mohammad, made by "the Lion's" own brother, met with no gratitude from Napier, who sent warning at once to the chief. His own position was none of the pleasantest, with Sher Mohammad's forces surrounding his camp and dividing him from the reinforcements for which he was waiting, but he played the game of bluff, and played it well. With the help once more of Jacob and the Sind Horse, he succeeded in getting eight hundred sepoys, several squadrons of cavalry, and a battery of horse artillery, past the enemy into his lines. The day after their arrival, sitting at breakfast with his staff, he suddenly exclaimed, "Now my luck would be great if I could get my other

[1] Sher = Lion.

CSL

reinforcements; but that cannot be—they will not be here for a week, and I will not let 'the Lion' bully me any longer, I will fight him to-morrow." The words were hardly out of his mouth when an officer exclaimed, "There are boats coming up the river!" All ran out of the tent; the reinforcements from Bombay, coming up-stream, were entering the port, and in the distance, coming down-stream, were boats bringing other reinforcements.

Next day, March 24th, at another spot on the banks of the Fuleli, within a few miles of the field of Miani, the promised battle[1] was fought, and "the Lion" was put to flight

He fled into the desert, whence he was hunted by Jacob, who broke up his force, and drove him back to the Indus. The news of this victory reached Sir Charles at the time when he had dropped down with sunstroke, on going out of his tent. Thirty-three European soldiers who fell at the same moment, as from the discharge of a shell, were dead in three hours; the intrepid old General, having been bled in both arms, was making a hard struggle for life, when the horseman came with Jacob's despatch. "I felt life come back," said Napier.

[1] Generally known in history as the battle of Dubba, but inscribed as "Hyderabad" on the colours of the regiments engaged.

CSL

"The tail of the Afghan storm," as he called it, had now passed away, and he turned all his energy to civil administration. "I have to collect revenue, administer justice, arrange the troops, survey the country, project improvements, form civil officers, and appoint proper functionaries." He organised police, he forbade the carrying of weapons by any but the chiefs, and he put down wife-murder with a strong hand, to the bewilderment of the culprits and their friends, acting always on his own maxim that "the great recipe for quieting a country is a good thrashing first, and great kindness afterwards."

Meanwhile the Amirs were prisoners of state, and Outram vainly pleaded their cause in England. Nothing could be done. The Court of Directors passed resolutions condemning the policy which had resulted in the annexation of Sind, but Sind henceforth remained part of British India. Outram could only record his protest, and give all his share of prize-money—three thousand pounds—to charities in India.

For more than three years Napier governed Sind, a terror to evil-doers. Then, after a few months' holiday, came his appointment as Commander-in-Chief in India. Always at strife with some one or other, his chief antagonist was now Lord Dalhousie, who would pay no attention to his

GSL

prophecies of a mutiny in the sepoy army, and their contention rose to such a pitch that he resigned his post. There were two years of peace at home, and then Charles Napier died quietly on his camp-bed, surrounded by those who loved him, while his son-in-law waved over his head the colours that the 22nd had carried to victory in Sind.

GL
424

XX.

ON THE BANKS OF THE SUTLEJ—1845-1846

"I don't think that men ever could have been more attached to any commander than to old Gough, and there is little wonder he was looked upon as a father more than as a military superior."

—Sergeant P. KEAY, Bengal Artillery.

GSL

XX.

ON THE BANKS OF THE SUTLEJ—1845-1846.

THE Sikh army had an overweening belief in their own strength, trained as they had been under Ranjit's eye by European officers, and the recent disaster in Afghanistan had shown that the English were not invincible. In every revolution at Lahore it had been proclaimed that the vanquished party were intriguing with the English to disband the army of the Khalsa. The army was athirst for vengeance upon the English, and the Rani Jindan, who for all her sins "had more wit and daring than any man of her nation," made no effort to restrain them, believing that, if thoroughly defeated, they would give her less trouble in the future. In December 1845, sixty thousand Sikhs crossed the Sutlej and invaded British territory.

It was an anxious moment for the Government

GSL

of India. The sepoys of the Company's army were for the most part Bengali Brahmans, whose caste rules were a continual hindrance to their efficiency, incapable of enduring the hardships and fatigues of which the Sikhs made light, and no longer confident that their Sahibs would lead them to victory. That experiment in Afghanistan had lost us our prestige, as well as a few millions of money and many valuable lives.

Through all the revolutions that had distracted the Punjab the last six years, the Government of India had exercised continual forbearance. "It is desirable," wrote Sir Henry Hardinge, the Governor-General, "that nothing should be done by us to indicate that the internal affairs of the state of Lahore are matter for our concern." Certain preparations had been made unostentatiously; Gulab Singh, now Raja of Jammu, and suddenly become our friend and ally, sent warning that war was inevitable. With the Sikhs encamped near Ferozepore, it was impossible to avert it by any feat of diplomacy. On December 12th, Sir Hugh Gough, the Commander-in-Chief in India, started on his march through sand and jungle to Mudki, about twenty miles from Ferozepore.

Sir Hugh was a tried soldier. He had begun his career in his father's militia corps at the age

GSL

of thirteen, and, after obtaining his commission, had seen service at the Cape, in the Peninsula, in China, and lately in the Gwalior campaign. Impetuous, fearless, with a quick temper that sometimes exploded when he was furious, "as only Sir Hugh Gough could be furious," and a generous spirit that neither danger, calumny, nor injustice could quench, he was respected by all who knew him, and adored by his soldiers. He may not have been a complete military strategist, but his men followed wherever he led; and even when his leading seemed to have cost them dearly, their faith in him never wavered, and wounded and dying cheered him "when they had scarcely heads left upon their shoulders to cheer with."

It was on the 18th of December that his forces arrived at Mudki, soon after noon. The cooks were busy preparing dinner for the weary men, the camp was being made upon the sandy plain, when clouds of dust began to rise in the distance, and gradually came nearer. The Sikhs had detached 10,000 cavalry and 2000 infantry to cut off Sir Hugh's army before it could be reinforced by Sir John Littler, who was at Ferozepore.

It was plain from the first that the Bengalis could not stand against the men of the Khalsa. It was the English cavalry and infantry that

GSL

drove back the enemy with cold steel. The Sikhs fought desperately, neither giving nor taking quarter. When night brought an end to the slaughter, after the fighting had been carried on for an hour and a half in the dim starlight, amid clouds of dust, the Khalsa had been driven from every position, and had left seventeen pieces of artillery behind them.

Our troops, too exhausted to follow up their victory, rested upon the plain and buried their dead. Reinforcements came in, and on the 21st Sir Hugh led out his army to attack the entrenched camp of Lal Singh at Ferozepore. Another portion of the Sikh army, under Tej Singh, was mounting guard over Littler at Ferozepore, and Sir Hugh's instructions were that Littler should effect a junction with him, unperceived by this force.

It is a question for the military experts—who have decided it variously—who was to blame for the errors of that day. Unfortunately for Sir Hugh's plans, Sir Henry Hardinge had accompanied our forces, and had been so much impressed by the bravery and discipline of the Khalsa at Mudki that he forbade the Commander-in-Chief to engage the enemy when they found themselves face to face with Lal Singh's entrenchments, on the morning of the 21st, until Littler's

GSL

contingent should arrive. The men, who had only snatched a hasty breakfast after counter-marching and being arrayed in new formation, were tired and hungry when the action at last began, about half-past three in the afternoon.

The enemy's guns were more numerous and heavier than our own. Littler's division made a premature attack, and was so fearfully punished that it had to retire. When part of our forces by repeated charges had won their way into the Sikh camp, a powder magazine exploded, and increased the damage already wrought by shot and shell. Sir Harry Smith succeeded in taking the village of Ferozeshah, in the middle of the Sikh position, but after holding it for several hours, was dislodged between two and three in the morning.

As darkness fell, the Sikh camp took fire in many places, from the explosion of packets of ammunition. The English army was recalled to a position between the burning camp and a low scrubby jungle, within reach of the Sikh artillery, which played upon them occasionally through the long winter night. Most of our men had been under arms for four-and-twenty hours; they suffered cruelly from hunger, and still more cruelly from thirst. Even some of the officers "of rank and in important situations" lost heart, and two

GSL

came to Sir Hugh, as from the Governor-General, to urge retreat upon Ferozepore. "I shall go to the Governor-General," he replied, "but my determination is taken rather to leave my bones to bleach honourably at Ferozeshah, than that they should rot dishonourably at Ferozepore." Sir Henry Hardinge denied having sent any such message, and was resolute as Gough himself not to retreat, though he had little hope to do more than make a good end. He sent away the sword of Napoleon, given to him by the Duke of Wellington, and wrote instructions to his secretary to destroy all the State Papers left at Mudki, in the event of defeat at Ferozeshah.

In spite of his harassed night, Sir Hugh avowedly saw nothing to make him despond when the daylight showed him friend from foe. The infantry formed line, the Sikh entrenchments were once more attacked, and the enemy dislodged from the whole position. Then "the line halted as on a day of manœuvre, receiving its two leaders" (Gough and Hardinge) "as they rode along its front with a gratifying cheer, and displaying the captured standards of the Khalsa."

It was towards the evening of that day that intelligence was brought that Tej Singh was marching from Ferozepore with fresh battalions

GSL

and a large field of artillery. Owing to the explosions in the past night, not a shot was left to our artillery, and the cavalry horses were "thoroughly done up." "For a moment then I felt a regret as each passing shot left me on horseback," says Sir Hugh. "But it was only for a moment."

The storm of shot and shell that now broke over our forces was too much for the sepoys, and even the English troops were staggered. Then Gough, in the white coat that he insisted upon wearing in the day of battle, rushed forward, his A.D.C. at his side, an easy mark "to draw a portion of the artillery fire on us from our hard-pressed infantry." "We, thank God, succeeded, and saved many unhurt," wrote the Commander-in-Chief to his son.

The day was saved by what seemed an irreparable disaster. The British lines still doggedly held their ground; the Sikhs, always more ready to entrench than to attack, had lost their impetuosity. An officer on the staff, dressed in pyjamas, because, he said, "his overalls had been so riddled with bullets that they had dropped off," delivered an order to our artillery and cavalry to retire on Ferozepore. The poor man was suffering from sunstroke, and the order was the invention of his own crazed brain; but it

GSL

was obeyed. Tej Singh took it into his head that the movement was part of an elaborate device to cut off his retreat, turned tail, and left the British forces upon the stricken field.

We buried our dead—nearly seven hundred—at Ferozepore, while the Sikhs fled back to Lahore. They left many men in the Sutlej, many more were robbed, abused, and beaten by the country people of the districts through which they had to pass, "even the women of the villages turning out to rail at them and strike them as they hurried along."

By January they had regained their spirits, and were massing again near Ludhiana. Sir Harry Smith routed them at Aliwal, and they fled back over the river. "Never was victory more complete," he wrote, "and never was one fought under more happy circumstances, literally with all the pomp of a field-day; and right well did all behave." The sound of the cannonading was heard near Sobraon, where Gough and Hardinge were watching the fortified camp of the Sikhs, on the right bank of the river. An officer asked the Commander-in-Chief what he thought of it. "Think of it! why, that 'tis the most glorious thing I ever heard. I know by the sound of the guns that Smith has carried the position and silenced their artillery." When

GSL

the news of the victory reached him, "he was nearly frantic with joy"; two minutes afterwards an officer found him on his knees in his tent returning thanks to the God of Battles.

II.

The Sikh camp at Sobraon was garrisoned with not less than thirty thousand men; its seventy pieces of cannon were supported by batteries on the other side of the river, and a good bridge ran from bank to bank. Nevertheless, others besides the Commander-in-Chief were of opinion that it could be taken by a direct attack. The weakest place was on the right of the Sikh entrenchments, and hither Sir Robert Dick led his division on the morning of February 10th, as soon as the heavy river-mists had cleared away.

The battle began with an artillery duel, in which the sixty British guns were no match for the Sikh artillery. After two hours' cannonading, an officer hurried to tell the Commander-in-Chief that only a few rounds of shot were left. "Thank God!" was Sir Hugh's ejaculation; "then I'll be at them with the bayonet!"

At this point, an officer on the Governor-General's staff rode up to urge, in Sir Henry

GSL

Hardinge's name, that if Gough were not sure of success, and anticipated much loss, he should withdraw his men and work up to the entrenchments by regular approaches.

"Loss there will be, of course," returned Sir Hugh. "Look at those works bristling with guns, and defended as they will be; but, by God's blessing, I feel confident of success."

The officer rode back, and presently returned to repeat the same message, to which Sir Hugh made the same reply. But when the messenger returned again, Sir Hugh rounded upon him, his silvery hair bristling, his small figure quivering with impatience. "What! withdraw the troops after the action has commenced, and when I feel confident of success? Indeed I will not! Tell Sir Robert Dick to move on in the name of God!"

It was nine o'clock in the morning when Dick's first line began the advance. Dick was killed, but his division was established within the entrenchments. Sir Harry Smith's division on the right was less fortunate; the way led over rough ground, intersected by water-courses; their first advance was repelled, and as they formed up again under heavy fire they could see the Sikhs butchering the wounded whom they had left behind them. Once more they charged, and this time they were not driven back.

GSL

Meanwhile the central attack had been repulsed twice, with heavy loss. The entrenchments could not be climbed without scaling-ladders; so they turned to the left, where the defences were not so high: one man climbed on the shoulders of another, and the guns were taken.

For nearly an hour the battle raged hand to hand at every point. The Sikhs stood their ground, even regaining some of their guns for an interval. Then the British cavalry swept through the openings that the sappers had made in the entrenchments, and the 3rd Light Dragoons, "whom no obstacle usually held formidable by horse appears to check,"[1] cut down the Sikh gunners, who, as in former actions, were resolved to die at their posts. The fire slackened, then ceased, and what remained of the Sikh host was in flight to the Sutlej, which had risen seven inches, while our horse artillery mowed them down. "Hundreds fell under this cannonade; hundreds upon hundreds were drowned in attempting the perilous passage." By eleven o'clock the battle of Sobraon was over.

More than once on that day was it proved that all the Khalsa was not composed of the dissolute ruffians who had torn the kingdom of Ranjit Singh to pieces, and made the name of Sikh

[1] Gough.

GSL

abhorrent from the banks of the Sutlej to the hills of Kashmir. There was a white-clad figure in the Sikh camp that for honour, loyalty, and dauntless courage might have stood beside the white-coated Commander-in-Chief. Sirdar Sham Singh was the son of a father who had given his life for Ranjit by taking a sickness of the Maharaja's upon himself, as Babar did long ago for Humayun. He had been one of the first in the breach at Multan, and had fought in many engagements. Though his daughter was married to Nao Nahal Singh, he took no part in politics, and from first to last had protested against the war with the English, pointing out that it would be the destruction of the Khalsa. In answer to his warnings, he only received the taunt that he was a coward, and afraid to die. So he rode to the camp at Sobraon, knowing that he rode to his death. On the night before the battle Tej Singh sent for him, and advised that they should fly together when the English made their first attack, and when he rejected the advice, said in anger, "If you are so brave, you had better take your oath about it, for I believe you will come with me after all." Then Sham Singh swore upon the Granth never to leave the trenches alive. Next morning, dressed in white and mounted on his white mare, he exhorted his

GSL

followers to die as became sons of the Khalsa rather than to give back before the enemy. In the thick of the fight his voice called upon the Sikhs to quit themselves like men. "It was not till he saw that all was lost that he spurred forward against the 50th Regiment, waving his sword, and calling on his men to follow him. Some fifty of them obeyed the call, but were driven back into the river, and Sham Singh fell dead from his horse, pierced with seven balls."[1]

After the battle, when his servants swam back across the river to search for his body, it lay where the dead were thickest, marked out by the white dress and long white beard. His widow knew he was sworn not to outlive a defeat, and when the news of the battle came to her, she burned herself with the clothes that he had worn on their marriage day — the last *Sati* in the Punjab.

After Sobraon, the way was clear. The British army crossed the Sutlej, and the young Maharaja, accompanied by Gulab Singh and some dozen other chiefs, came to make submission to the Governor-General.

The terms of peace were not hard. The Government of India had no wish to annex the Punjab, and only desired that their territory and that of

[1] L. Griffin.

GSL

their allies should be secure from raids in future. Some of the worst disturbers of the peace were dead, and it was hoped that under proper guidance Dhulip Singh might grow up to rule with more credit to himself and less inconvenience to his subjects. Lahore, for the present, was to be garrisoned by English troops; the country between the Beas and the Sutlej was to be ceded to the Company; and an indemnity of a million and a half sterling was to be paid.

When this treaty was ratified, at a Durbar held in Hardinge's tent, "a small tin box enveloped in a shabby cloth" was passed from hand to hand. Within it was the Koh-i-Nur, which Dhulip Singh, as Maharaja of Lahore, had the right to wear.

In great state he was escorted back to his capital; the courtezans of the Sikh soldiers looked from every window as British troops marched through the narrow dirty streets; "and on every roof and in every gateway the soldiers themselves were throwing dice, and gambling away the memory of their defeats."[1]

[1] H. Edwardes.

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XXI.

THE ADVENTURES OF A SUBALTERN—
1847-1849

"The Heroical Vein of Mankind runs much in the Souldiery, and courageous part of the World; and in that form we oftenest find Men above Men."
—Sir THOMAS BROWNE, *Christian Morals.*

GL 4

XXI.

THE ADVENTURES OF A SUBALTERN—1847-1849.

HAVING shattered the Khalsa, the English, with their usual stolidity, began to put the pieces together again.

The Rani Jindan was still to be nominal head of the Durbar, with Lal Singh as Wazir, and two British officers to support and advise them. One of these was Major George Macgregor, who as Political Agent at Jalalabad, had been one of the heads of the "Illustrious Garrison," and his superior was Colonel Henry Montgomery Lawrence, to be remembered for all time as the defender of Lucknow in a still more desperate siege. Sir John Littler was in command of the British forces at Lahore. With three such men at his back, if Lal Singh had set himself to reorganise the army, and reduce the power of the Sikh chieftains, he might have established a government worthy of the

GSL

name. But "he reformed with one hand and peculated with the other." Having discharged some soldiers without paying them, their clamour terrified him so greatly that he dared discharge no more; and his confiscations of the chieftains' lands failed of their moral effect, because all the fiefs were transferred to himself.

As soon as the war indemnity began to be considered, it was evident that two millions and a half could not be paid from an empty Treasury, with the pay of the army in arrears, and the civil population already stripped bare with cess and dues and customs. It was therefore decided that instead of paying the indemnity in money, the Government of Lahore should cede the districts of Hazara and Kashmir to the British.

At this point Gulab Singh, still posing as the friend of law and the ally of the English, came forward with an offer: let them give Kashmir to him, and he would undertake to pay three-quarters of a million sterling for it. Seeing that the greater part of his resources had been derived from his plunder of the citadel at Lahore after the death of Nao Nahal Singh, the audacity of the proposal would have overpowered any one except the Government of India, who actually—upon a notion that Kashmir was too far off to be garrisoned—

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delivered the country over to a man whose cruelties were as notorious as his treachery.

It was doubtless wrong of Lal Singh to bribe the Governer of Kashmir to hold the province for the Sikhs, instead of surrendering it to Gulab Singh, and to deny the proceeding in the face of his own letters with which he was confronted. At the same time, if all his shortcomings had had as much excuse, there would have been more regret when he was deposed after this, in favour of a "Council of Regency composed of leading chiefs and sirdars, acting under the control and guidance of the British Resident." To those who know the English manner of dealing with a fallen enemy, it will not seem remarkable that this Council included Tej Singh, who had commanded the army of the Khalsa at Sobraon, and several others who avowedly detested the English. The Rani had no longer any share in the government, but was given a pension.

One of the first subjects brought before the Durbar was "the outstanding revenue" of Bannu. "The Chancellor represented generally that Bannu was a place on the other side of the river Indus, in the midst of the hills, and peopled by Afghan tribes, whose peculiarly barbarous ideas of freedom had hitherto rendered it impossible to confer on