



them the blessing of a Sikh governor. Consequently, no tax-gatherer found it convenient to reside in that part of the kingdom, and the revenue (which was 65,000 rupees a-year) was always allowed to fall into arrear for two or three years, until the amount was worth collecting, when a force was sent from Lahore to *ask* for it; and if the answer was either short or evasive, they just took what they could, and came away again. 'Now,' said the Chancellor in conclusion, glancing at his notes, 'there are two and a half years' revenues due at this moment, so it is high time to send an army.'

Colonel Lawrence agreed that as Bannu was part of the Maharaja's dominions (having been part of the territory ceded by Shah Shuja to Ranjit Singh), it was lawful to enforce the payment of revenue; but he advocated conciliation, if possible, and to that end the force sent to Bannu was to be accompanied by a British officer. The man whom Lawrence chose for the work was a young subaltern in the Company's service, Herbert Edwardes.

It was not an easy task. The expedition started in February; it was a month's march from Lahore to Bannu, and the hot season would be in full blast in April. "I had therefore at best a month allowed me to talk over people who had resisted



Sikh supremacy for a quarter of a century," says Edwardes, "and I think it is not very surprising that I signally failed in the attempt."

But the expedition was not a failure; it was true that he only succeeded in collecting less than one-third of the amount due, and that it was evidently hopeless to expect that the people of Bannu would ever pay anything of their own free-will. But he had gained the value of many lakhs of rupees in proving that Sikh soldiers could be taught not to touch what did not belong to them. For the first fortnight he did nothing but punish offenders; "the Sikh soldiers could not believe that they were no longer to be allowed to help themselves from every farmer's field, pull their firewood from every hedge, and drag a bed from under its slumbering owner, in order that they might take a nap on it themselves." Some of them had pulled the roof from one of the Raja Hira Singh's palaces in order to make the beams into bedsteads; why should any one trouble because a zamindari's young corn was taken for the horses and elephants, or the tree under which the village elders sat was chopped down for fuel? By dint of reproofs, fines, imprisonment, and floggings, they learned discipline. The country people, though deprecating any question of revenue, flocked into the



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camp, and talked with the expedition as friends; and the Sikhs, even when dropping down under arms for want of food, refrained from helping themselves. It was an object-lesson in English methods which the wild tribes of Bannu were to remember for our advantage in the hour of need.

After leaving Bannu, Edwardes moved from place to place upon the Punjab frontier, dealing out even-handed justice, everywhere making friends among the tribesmen, who conceived great respect for the law of the English, but considered it unnecessarily strict about trifles. A sixteen-year-old boy one day came to him, in much uneasiness because his tribe had heard that there was to be a law against murder. "What does it signify to a lad like you?" laughed Edwardes. "How many men have you killed?" He replied modestly, "Oh, I've only killed four, but father has killed eighty." "Yet," observes Edwardes, "*cæteris paribus*, in Bannu they are rather respectable men."

Edwardes did not waste time in formalities when bringing his ruffians in order. A certain Afghan merchant, Shahzad Khan, head of the Nassur tribe of Powindahs, refused to pay the tax for pasturage of camels levied by the Sikh Government upon all his fellows, and added con-



tumely to his refusal; he had defied the Amir of Kabul and other potentates; "was it to be supposed he would knuckle down to the dogs of Sikhs?" He refused to come and talk the matter over, or to leave the Sikh territory. So Edwardes rode to the Nassur camp one night, with two hundred Dauranis and sixty Sikhs at his back, and on arriving within sight of the watch-fires, found that in the darkness the men, misliking their errand, had slunk away, and only seventy or eighty remained to him. Of these, only fifteen followed when he charged through the camp. It was impossible to capture Shahzad Khan, but Edwardes had not ridden so far to go home empty-handed, and catching sight of the Nassur herd of camels, he dashed upon them. The Nassurs were busy exchanging shots and abuse with the Sikhs and Dauranis; the camels, with true camels' instinct for embarrassing their owners, tore themselves free from their fastenings, and Edwardes drove the whole herd before him, aided by one of his few remaining followers, a highwayman whom he had pardoned a few days previously, "who entered heart and soul into the business, giving them a professional poke with his spear which set them stepping out gloriously." The Sikh troopers came to his aid, and kept off the Nassurs, and Edwardes rode away with his spoil.



When they had put about a mile between themselves and their pursuers he called a halt to examine the wounded, and found that a Khan who was one of his most staunch allies had been knocked off his horse and left in the camp. It was useless to return, even if any one would have followed him, as his appearance merely would have incited the Nassurs to murder the Khan, if he still lived. "A follower, well versed in this kind of work, suggested a reprisal"; another Nassur camp was surprised, and two Nassur chiefs secured, and exchanged for the Khan, who returned none the worse for his wounds or for the surgery of the Nassur women, who had sewed up the cuts with hairs pulled out of his own horse's tail. The sale of the camels realised a handsome sum in satisfaction of Shahzad Khan's arrears of taxes; Shahzad henceforth avoided the neighbourhood so long as Edwardes remained in India, and no other Kabul merchant dared refuse to obey Sikh laws so long as he was on Sikh territory. The pleasant recollection of that night sustained Edwardes's spirits under a very severe reprimand from an official superior, who did not approve of reprisals in kind, and was shocked to think of the inconvenience that would have been caused to his betters if the young man had been killed in his raid upon the Nassur camp.



In the meanwhile, another British officer, John Nicholson, a tall black-bearded man, who had been one of the garrison of Ghazni in 1842, had been sent by Henry Lawrence to put the fear of the law into the Pathans, Rajputs, Gujars, and other races dwelling in the tract between the Jhelum and the Indus, and was working very much upon Edwardes's lines. George Lawrence, Henry's brother, was keeping order at Peshawar. All over the Punjab a new era of peace and prosperity seemed beginning, though Henry Lawrence himself had been obliged to take leave to England. "India," said the London 'Morning Chronicle,' "is in the full enjoyment of a peace which, humanly speaking, there seems nothing to disturb." Neither the editor nor any one else troubled about the Rani Jindan, who had been removed to a fort some twenty-five miles from Lahore, where she could no longer corrupt her son, or intrigue with "a venal and selfish Durbar." Henry Lawrence had urged that she should be removed from the Punjab, but his advice was not taken, and though Edwardes discovered "that Jezebel" sending a slave-girl on a secret embassy to Multan in the summer of 1847, he accepted "her impudent excuse that she wanted a white āk-tree¹ for enchantments."

¹ *Calotropis gigantea*—sacred to Ravi or Surya.



II.

Ranjit Singh had appointed a certain Sawan Mal as Viceroy of Multan. He must have been a man of extraordinary abilities, for while generally beloved for his justice and his kindness to the poor, he regularly transmitted the revenues to Lahore, and amassed the sum of £900,000 to be divided among his sons when a shot from a mutinous soldier ended his twenty-three years of office. He was succeeded by his son Mulraj, from whom the Lahore Durbar demanded the sum of one million sterling in death duties. The ensuing dispute was prolonged by the murder of Jawahir Singh and the consequent anarchy at Lahore, and in 1846 Henry Lawrence arranged a compromise. Mulraj was to cede part of his district, and pay eight lakhs of rupees at once, and ten more in instalments, besides an annual tribute.

This agreement did not long satisfy Mulraj; it seemed to him that he was paying too heavily for only a part of his father's district. Moreover, the people of Multan, seeing that the vexatious transit and town duties had been abolished in the Punjab, were dissatisfied with the fiscal system upon which



Sawan Mal had grown rich. Worst of all, it was impossible to keep them in order in these days when they had the right to appeal to Lahore, where the extravagant English notions about even-handed justice between man and man were being enforced. Therefore Mulraj determined to resign. John Lawrence, Henry's brother, then Acting-Resident at Lahore, attempted to dissuade him, but was emphatic that "no authority could be permitted to exist in the Punjab independent of appeal, and unaccountable to the law," and Mulraj was very wroth with the law which had lately obliged him to release certain prisoners, and to pay certain Muhammedan soldiers who claimed arrears. Finally his resignation was accepted; Sirdar Khan Singh, "an intelligent man," was appointed Governor in his place.

A Political Agent was appointed for Multan, Vans Agnew, "a man of much ability, energy, and judgment,"¹ "remarkable for carrying his kindness to natives almost to excess,"² and greatly beloved by them and by his own countrymen. His assistant was Lieutenant Anderson of the 1st Bombay European Fusiliers, an excellent Oriental scholar, endowed with "peculiarly conciliating manners," who had travelled through the whole of the Multan district. On the 18th of April 1848 they met

¹ Sir F. Currie.

² Sir H. Edwardes.



Khan Singh at Multan, and encamped in the Idgah, a strong building within cannon-shot of the north face of the fort. Mulraj came from his own residence, a garden-house about a mile away, to receive them, and arranged to take them over the fort on the following day.

On the evening of April 22nd, Edwardes was sitting in his tent at Dera Fateh Khan, on the banks of the Indus, taking the evidence of sundry scoundrels who were "robbers, robbed, or witnesses to the robberies of their neighbours," when the feet of one running hard were heard outside, and a breathless and streaming messenger entered with the crimson letter-bag that means urgent correspondence. It was from the Sahib in Multan to the Sahib in Bannu (General Cortlandt, an American officer in the army of the Punjab); but since Edwardes was here, the runner considered he might as well read it.

Within was a large sheet of paper on which a native clerk had begun an official report to Sir F. Currie, at Agnew's dictation. On passing out of the fort, Agnew and Anderson had been attacked by two of Mulraj's soldiers; all the Multan troops had mutinied. Agnew had scrawled a few lines in pencil at the bottom of the sheet and on the back, addressed to Cortlandt:—



"MY DEAR SIR,—You have been ordered to send one regiment here. Pray let it march instantly, or, if gone, hasten it to top-speed. If you can spare another, pray send it also. I am responsible for the measure. I am cut up a little, and on my back. Lieutenant Anderson is much worse. He has five sword wounds. I have two in my left arm from warding sabre cuts, and a poke in the ribs with a spear. I don't think Moolraj has anything to do with it. I was riding with him when we were attacked. He rode off, but is now said to be in the hands of the soldiery.

"Khan Singh and his people all right.—Yours in haste,
P. A. VANS AGNEW.

"19th, 2 P.M."

For the next hour Edwardes sat in his tent, calm and impassive, turning over ways and means, while the Biluchis entangled themselves in perjury. Then he broke up the Court, and sent for Foujdar Khan, the officer in charge of the ferry of the Indus—"How many boats can you get for me by midnight?" The Khan told off upon his fingers every ferry-boat within twenty or thirty miles, and horsemen were sent out to fetch them. The whole camp was warned to be ready to cross the Indus. Edwardes was so crippled by a blow



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the knee received during his camel-raiding that he could neither ride nor walk, and he lay in a palki on the river bank, in the burning sun, watching the boats toiling from side to side. Ninety miles ("chiefly sand") lay between him and Multan.

He entered the town of Leia unopposed, and there learned that it was too late to save the two Englishmen. Only broken fragments of the story reached him, and it was not for some time that he heard the whole truth. Whether Mulraj had determined his course beforehand, or whether, as seems more likely, he was hurried into it by the mutinous soldiery, he refused to seize the culprits and come himself to the Idgah, when invited to do so by Agnew, and Agnew's messenger found him sitting in Council with the Sikhs, who were binding the scarlet war bracelet upon his wrist. Next morning, the guns of the fort opened upon the Idgah; all the Sikh escort who had come with the Englishmen deserted them, excepting Khan Singh, some eight or ten horsemen, and their servants and clerks. At sunset they heard the roar of the mob from the city coming nearer and nearer. Khan Singh proposed waving a sheet and asking for mercy. "The time for mercy is gone," replied Agnew; "let none be asked for. They can kill us now if they like; but we are not the last of the British. Thousands of Englishmen will come



down here when we are gone, and annihilate Mulraj and his soldiers and his fort."

In burst the mob, a motley crowd—soldiers, townsmen, and the scum of the bazaars—brandishing any weapons that they had found to their hand and yelling for blood. They seized Khan Singh, they knocked aside the servants with the butts of their muskets, and surrounded the bed where Anderson lay helpless, with Agnew sitting at his side and holding his hand. The two were hacked to pieces, and Agnew's head was flung at Khan Singh. "Take the head of the youth you brought down to govern at Multan." Then followed horrors of which it is impossible to write, until what was left of the bodies was buried in a hasty grave near the Idgah, from which they were twice disinterred by the people of Multan, in order to strip them of their clothes.

Once committed past all hope of retrieving himself, Mulraj openly proclaimed war with the English, and called all the disaffected to take part with him. The country was swarming with mercenary swordsmen, Biluchis and Pathans, and Edwardes's position was most critical. As he said himself, he was "very much like a Scotch terrier barking at a tiger," and he knew that, with a dash across the Chenab, Mulraj could sweep him and his men away and return to Multan, or ever help



Lahore could reach him. But Leia was an important city, and so long as he could sit there with his little force, Mulraj's prestige would suffer throughout the countryside. "If a week only passes over, I shall have got together enough men to hold on," he wrote to Lahore. "If not, we are in God's hands, and could not be better placed."

Meanwhile he was enlisting recruits right and left among the tribesmen, many of whom had been in rebellion themselves only a few days before, and they answered to the call. Pathan hated Sikh, and the Sahib who was such a fearless enemy was likely to be a good ally. The Sikh regiment with him was not to be trusted; their co-religionists at Multan were sending letters urging "all who trust in the Guru" to join them, and relieve the Maharaja and his mother from the thralldom of the English. Edwardes intercepted the correspondence, but was warned by two native officers that his Sikh regiment were holding meetings, bearing themselves with "an unusual kind of swaggering air, such as the Sikh soldiers used to have at Lahore before the Sutlej War." It would have been madness to wait for the arrival of the force which Mulraj sent across the Chenab at the end of April, when Edwardes knew that the price of treason was already fixed—12,000 rupees to the regiment for the rebels in the battle, and 12,000 more if



they brought his head with them. So he retreated across the Indus to Dera Futteh Khan, to the indignation of the conspirators, who avowed themselves ready to hold Leia against twenty times their number. Let the Sahib trust them, and he would never repent it. "Which was probably true," is Edwardes's comment, "for they would not have given me time." Next day, General Cortlandt brought his detachment from Bannu, and Mulraj retreated.

The Commander-in-Chief in India was still Hugh Gough—now Lord Gough—and his decision not to take the field against the rebels until after the rainy season, was approved by the Government of India and by the Duke of Wellington. The heat of Multan had always been a bugbear, and that summer was unusually early and hot; many of the troops were absent on furlough, and it was not safe to lessen the numbers of our force at Lahore. It was therefore determined to send a Sikh army under Sher Singh, a member of the Lahore Durbar, to assist Edwardes in confining the rebellion to the province of Multan, until it was possible for English troops to brave the climate.

It was lucky for Edwardes that he had enlisted the support of the loyal Nawab of Bahawalpur in his operations against Mulraj, for the Sikh



failed to appear. He had other allies won by his own personality, and English justice. At the outbreak of the war he had ordered the chiefs of Bannu to send him their sons and brothers, nominally as volunteers, but really as hostages for the good behaviour of the valley, and these men now brought guns upwards of two hundred miles to his assistance. There were sundry skirmishes, and many marches up and down, before he joined with Cortlandt and was engaged by Mulraj's army at Kaneri. It was an anxious moment. "A young lieutenant who had seen but one campaign—alone, and without any of the means and appliances of such war as I had been apprenticed to, I was about to take command, in the midst of a battle, not only of one force whose courage I had never tried, but of another which I had never seen; and to engage a third, of which the numbers were uncertain." His hesitation "came and went between the stirrup and the saddle." "I knew that I was fighting for the right. I asked God to help me to do my duty, and I rode on, certain that He would do it." Besides, it was Waterloo Day, and Edwardes felt "no Englishman could be beaten on the 18th of June."

After nine hours' hard fighting, Edwardes sat



down on the ground occupied by Mulraj in the morning, and "had the honour and satisfaction" to report to Lahore that the enemy had sustained a complete defeat, and were in full flight to Multan, leaving their camp and ammunition and most of their guns behind them. He was "unable to do justice to the gallantry" of his men, many of them enlisted but a month before.

As for the men, they had enjoyed themselves thoroughly, and even the wounded were in excellent spirits, though there was no doctor. Each was surrounded by the men of his own clan, who brushed the flies from him, and Edwardes's appearance to "see how they were all going on," "was followed by a general removal of bandages, which, for all our sakes, might better have been kept on." Even when writing his despatch on the field, Edwardes was interrupted by the arrival of the Khan whom he had ransomed from the Nassurs, who wished the Sahib to admire his wounds, and another wounded hero, with his brain laid open, would allow no one to dress the injury till the Sahib came.

Another victory on July 1st, and Mulraj was beaten back to Multan, Edwardes halting his troops almost under the walls of the city.



III.

Now that fortune seemed to be with the British, Raja Sher Singh brought up his column, which should have been acting in concert with Edwardes's force all this time. The very day after their arrival, one of his colleagues frankly confessed that if their column had been ordered to advance against Mulraj before the battle of Kaneri, it would have refused, or gone over to the enemy. The neighbourhood of about five thousand disaffected men was a serious danger to Edwardes's little army, when Mulraj was writing to Sher Singh and his colleagues, welcoming them to his "poor city of Multan," and inviting the rank and file to come into his bazaars whenever the Englishmen were hard up for provisions. The arrival of General Whish, with an English force to open the siege of Multan, brought matters to a crisis. In an attack on September 12th the besiegers gained so much ground as to be "within battering distance" of the city walls. A few more hours might have seen them within the city walls, if Sher Singh had not suddenly gone over to the enemy with all his force. He had made some efforts to withstand the attacks of his soldiery, but his father, the Sikh



governor of Hazara, was already in revolt, and filial duty was too strong for him.

It was the spark to the powder, and all the Punjab was aflame. The Rani Jindan was now removed to the religious quietude of Benares, but her white âk-tree was bearing fruit. Her emissaries had been preaching sedition everywhere, calling upon all true Sikhs to expel the English who allowed the Mahommedan dogs to flaunt their religion in the face of the Khalsa, and who would take their weapons from them and send them back to the plough,—the most awful threat that could be held over a Sikh warrior. There was a prophecy that the English dominion should last only for two years and a half; that time was now up, and as Guru Govind had prophesied, the Khalsa should conquer East and West. "Every petty Sikh horseman raised his head, and seized his own village in the name of the Khalsa, with the old cry of 'Wah! Guru-ji-ke fatha!'"¹ Dost Mohammad was to be bribed with Peshawar to send his armies against the men who had hunted him up and down his own land. At Lahore, the Durbar prepared for war. In Bannu, the Sikh soldiery revolted, murdered the commandant whom Edward had left in charge of the newly-built fort of Lipgarh, and marched to join Sher Sing.

¹ Victory to the Guru.



Sikhs at Peshawar deserted in a body, and George Lawrence was a prisoner. Lastly, Gulab Singh of Kashmir was said to have fomented rebellion with great assiduity, and was certainly sheltering the families of the rebels, and allowing their troops to draw supplies from the territory which we ourselves had given to him.

For three tedious months the siege of Multan had to be raised until reinforcements could arrive. Edwardes and Cortlandt could do no more than stand their ground, in bitter disappointment. At the end of December, a division came up from Bombay, and a few days later Edwardes was displaying his levies to Sir Henry Lawrence, who had hurried back from England on hearing of the outbreak of war. On January 2, 1849, the final assault was given; the city was taken, and Mulraj with three thousand men withdrew to the citadel, which in less than three weeks was a wreck, from the constant storm of shells. The greater part of the garrison deserted, and Mulraj was driven to surrender. "The whole affair originated in accident," he pleaded. "Of my own free-will I would never have done what I have. I ask only for my life and the honour of my women." To General Whish replied that he had no right to take or give life, and that the British Government warred with men, not with women.



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On the morning of January 22nd, in a violent thunderstorm, Mulraj gave himself up to justice. He begged Edwardes to be his advocate at his trial, but Edwardes, who had already refused to act for the prosecution, would not consent. He was tried for the murder of the two officers, and found guilty, and, his sentence of death being commuted by Lord Dalhousie into one of imprisonment for life, was sent down to Calcutta, where he died in the following year.

Before our army left Multan, the bodies of Agnew and Anderson were taken from the hole where they had been flung, wrapped in Kashmir shawls, and borne by the soldiers of Anderson's own regiment to an honoured resting-place on the summit of the citadel. "By what way borne? Through the gate where they had been first assaulted? Oh no! Through the broad and sloping breach which had been made by the British guns in the walls of the rebellious fortress of Multan."¹

Eight days before Mulraj's surrender Lord Gough had fought the battle of Chillianwalla—one of the deadliest in which the British army has ever been engaged. Not only was the loss killed and wounded heavy out of all proportion, but though the enemy were driven back, the British were not able to follow them up.

¹ Edwardes.



took with them four British guns and the colours of three regiments. The Sikhs had suffered very severely, and conceived such a wholesome dread of our infantry charges that, when they next met in the field, they did not attempt to withstand another.

At the end of January came the news of the capture of Multan, and Sher Singh offered to treat. When his overtures were rejected by a masterly piece of strategy he turned the flank of the English, unobserved, and hurried towards Lahore. Gough overtook him at the village of Gujrat near the Chenab, and won, as he said, "his last battle and his best." There was terrific fire from the British guns, and then a general advance. "We stood two hours in hell," explained a Sikh, "and, after that, we saw six miles of infantry."

It was a decisive victory, won at very little loss to ourselves. The campaign was at an end. In March, sixteen thousand of the flower of the Khalsa army surrendered at discretion at Rawal Pindi, the tears rolling down their cheeks as they laid their weapons at the feet of the conquerors. "My day Ranjit Singh is dead!" they murmured and turned homewards. They did not fore-
day when some of the English who now
at their humiliation, should lead them



victorious through the streets of Delhi to fulfil Teg Bahadur's prophecy.

It was evident that the only chance for the Punjab was to pass under English rule, and Dhulip Singh resigned his throne, receiving instead a pension. The Koh-i-Nur was presented to Queen Victoria, after a sojourn in John Lawrence's waistcoat pocket—some say, a visit to the *dhobi* while in its hiding-place.

Lord Gough was long after he had retired to the place where he died, full of years and an officer at the siege of Delhi in 1858. He was asked by the Lord Sahib, "What is coming?" To which he replied, "Very soon no more." He then asked, "What mean?" In reply, he said, "He comes." He then said, "No one is he not?"

"S" wrote Henry Edwardes, "a special gold medal of appreciation from the Government was created for him."



medal was struck by the Company in his honour.

A few years later he negotiated a treaty with Dost Mohammad, the value of which was soon to be proved in the crisis of the Mutiny, when our old enemy loyally kept his agreement not to fight us.

When in a brief space in the summer of 1857, John Lawrence, in his own right, and proposed to fall back beyond the line of strategy was Edwardes, who, with Sydney Smith, observed, in Nicholson, withstood a retreat. Edwardes would have meant ruin. In the days when the game as in his irregular and his best." at the head of his British guns, and an army, and, as before, we stood two hours situation.

and, "and, after that, victory."

decisive victory, won at Poonah. The campaign was a mean thousand of the flow surrendered at discretion at as rolling down their cheeks as upon at the feet of the conqueror. "A single is dead!" they murmur homewards. They did not for some of the English who to a humiliation, should lead them

XXII
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THE LAST DAYS OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY—

“The East India Company, better and purer, more than would have been subject to the fluctuations of party

fate. Its rule had been the great dependency of the East India Company, like himself

of India, affecting the Indian Mutiny.

Emperor of Delhi.

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XXII.

THE LAST DAYS OF JOHN COMPANY—
1848-1858.

"THE infamous son of a yet more infamous Persian pedlar" founded the kingdom of Oudh, in the evil days when the Moghul Empire was falling to pieces at the beginning of the eighteenth century. His successors, like himself, called themselves Nawabs of Oudh, affecting to rule in the name of the Emperor of Delhi.

During Lord Wellesley's administration, the reigning Nawab ceded certain provinces to the Company which he was incapable of protecting against Afghan invasion, or attack from Marathas or Sikhs. If he had ceded all his dominions, like the last Nawab of Bengal, in return for a settled income to spend upon dancing-girls, his subjects would have profited, for the administration of Oudh was a crying scandal throughout India.

It will be remembered that a Nawab of Oudh



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lent two millions to the Company for the expenses of the Nepal War.¹ On the strength of this loan he styled himself "King of Oudh," as none of his predecessors had ventured to do, and had the help of the Company's troops to terrorise his wretched subjects, whom the tax-gatherers ground to the dust. Many sold their garments to buy swords, and turned dacoit, since no other way of getting a living was open to them—as did the people of Malwa in the "Time of Troubles." Every landed proprietor built a fort; the ryots twisted thorn hedges round their villages. The sovereign in whose name they were oppressed, starved the elephants in his menagerie to death, rather than buy food for them, and would have starved the widows of his predecessor, but that "they fairly broke loose from their prison,"² and plundered the bazaar, crying that they had pawned all their jewels and most of their garments for bread, and were dying of hunger, and that the King must pay for what they took.

The King is said to have been weak rather than wicked; his evil genius was the Prime Minister, formerly his *khansamah*, who knew no shame. A Rohilla chief owned lands in Oudh; his wife was famed for her beauty. The Prime

¹ See page 270.

² Bishop Heber.



Minister seized by force upon the lands, and carried off the wife to his zenana while the husband was away. The chieftain rode to Lucknow, and scaled the walls of the garden where the Prime Minister's two boys were at play. He seized upon the children, and cried to the trembling servants that their father should come and speak with him. When the Prime Minister, aghast, came down into the garden, the chieftain, still gripping the boys, announced his terms. Let the British Resident be sent for, as a guarantee of good faith, and in his presence let the stolen wife be given back to her lawful owner, or the children should be slain before their father's eyes.

There was a long and terrible pause, while the chieftain waited and the boys shivered in his rough grasp; then the Resident appeared, followed by the chieftain's wife. Her husband took her hand and led her away from the garden.

Soon afterwards, to escape the Minister's vengeance, the chieftain surrendered to the English, preferring captivity in Allahabad to assassination in Oudh.

The death of the old King brought no relief to Oudh; his successor, "stained with every vice," made his chief favourite of his barber, who had learned how to curl hair in London, and it



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is impossible to tell what took place in the palace in his time. He died, poisoned by some of his own kin. His successor was too old to effect reforms, though he honestly attempted them, and the next King tried none. Then came the last and almost the worst of the line, who on his accession in 1847 was warned by Lord Hardinge that the Company would assume the administration of Oudh unless some improvement were visible within the next two years. The Company were better than their word; nine years passed, and it was not till February 1856 that the wretched King was deposed.

“Millions of God’s creatures would draw freedom and happiness from the change.” So said the Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, whose last important act it was. But in East and West there are certain people so wrong-headed as to prefer a tyranny whose motives they understand, to a paternal government whose point of view is entirely different to theirs, and the natives of Oudh were not grateful for the improvement in their lot. Not even the appointment of the soldier-saint, Henry Lawrence, as Chief Commissioner of Oudh, could quell the storm, although his foresight and steadfastness enabled the garrison of Lucknow to weather it when it burst.

There was discontent and restlessness all over



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India, and not in Oudh alone, at this time. There had been other annexations, and everywhere men were uneasy, doubting the good faith of the English, and watching the red circles spread over the map of India, as Ranjit Singh had foreseen. A more conscientious man than Dalhousie was never set in high place. Not from vulgar greed of dominion, but from an enthusiastic belief in the advantages of Western civilisation, he was convinced of the duty of the Company to annex any state where the ruler died without an heir. He carried out this principle in Nagpur, in Satara, in Jhansi, and elsewhere; and the price of some annexations was other than he thought. It was paid with interest on the day when the English at Jhansi—man, woman, and child—were butchered by the Rani's orders, and in the weeks when, having raised the countryside, she led her army against the English, until she ended her stormy life in a cavalry charge below the walls of Gwalior—"the bravest man on the side of the rebels."

There were other grievances beside the annexations. Former Governor-Generals had prevented the Indian widow from winning heaven for herself and her husband through the flames of his pyre, and had forbidden a father to put his new-born daughters to death. Lord Dalhousie went further,



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and would encourage the widow to marry again. His zeal for sanitation, education, and other Western fetiches roused terror in the hearts of the people, who were convinced that the English meant to break their caste, and do away with their religion.

Some of Dalhousie's passion for reform might have been spent with advantage upon the Bengal army, which notoriously wanted it. Our prestige with the sepoys had never recovered from the Afghanistan disaster. They were alarmed by the new rule that they should be required to serve out of India, believing that to cross "the black water" would be to break their caste. There were many grievances to be righted and abuses to be corrected; but beyond drawing up a series of Minutes on his departure, Dalhousie made no attempt at reforming the army, whose unsatisfactory condition was by that time made worse by the number of Oudh sepoys in its ranks.

If to these and other causes for disquiet be added the prophecy long current in India, that the dominion of the Company would be brought to an end one hundred years after the battle of Plassey, there is matter enough to excite a jealous and suspicious people without the pretext of the greased cartridges, which were generally assigned as the cause of the Mutiny.



II.

The last territory left to the Moghul Emperor of Hindustan in the year 1857 was enclosed within the red walls of the Fort overlooking the Jumna at Delhi, where he and about twelve thousand subjects lived in squalor. Since Lord Lake had rescued Shah Alam from the Marathas, a pension had been paid by the Company, enough, with proper management, to support the Emperor becomingly. But no one of the Emperor's Court was able or honest enough to administer it, and twice the amount would not have sufficed for the hundreds who claimed a share of the blood-royal. "Here are crowded together twelve hundred kings and queens, literally eating each other up," wrote an English officer, who visited Delhi in the time of Shah Alam's son Akbar. "Kings and queens of the House of Tymour are to be found lying about in scores like broods of vermin, without food to eat or clothes to cover their nakedness."

Akbar died in the year of Queen Victoria's accession, and his successor, Mohammad Bahadur Shah, poet and devotee, was the feeblest of all shadow kings. A very old man, he and all Delhi knew that the existing conditions must end with



his life. Lord Dalhousie had notified that on his Majesty's death the mock Court would cease to exist and the whole imperial family must vacate the Palace.

For every reason, moral and sanitary, it seemed advisable to clear the fort of its present inhabitants. No man then alive could remember the days when the Emperor of Delhi was anything but a name; no one could be really the worse if the name itself ceased to exist.

Dawn was breaking over the city on Monday, May 11, 1857, when certain mounted men rode over the bridge across the Palace moat, and called aloud upon the Emperor's name. They had galloped through the night from Meerut, thirty-six miles away, leaving smoking roofs and rifled houses and dead bodies behind them, and they summoned the Emperor to place himself at their head and strike with them for the faith. A hundred years or more counts for very little in India, and if the English had forgotten, the sepoy remembered the days when the lord of Delhi was lord also of Hindustan. One of the Hindu regiments in the city mutinied, a few hours later, to the cry of "Prithvi Raj-ki jai!"—going back seven hundred years to a time when a Hindu king was ruler in Delhi.

The poor old Emperor, not knowing what to do,



sent for Captain Douglas, the commandant of the Palace guards, who spoke to the men and bade them disperse. They obeyed indeed, but as they went their fierce insistent cry of "Din! din!" roused the Palace. Others in the city took up the cry. Two hours later, Captain Douglas and all the English in the fort were murdered, the prisoners in the gaol were set free, and the mob were killing the English in the city, and firing their houses. By the evening, triumphant mutineers were bivouacked in the great Audience Hall, and the Emperor Mohammad Bahadur Shah reigned in Delhi.

Four weeks later—on Monday, June 8th—an English army had occupied the Ridge overlooking the city, and the last struggle for Delhi had begun.

III.

There is no space here for the story of the months from May 1857 to August 1858. It has been told over and over again, by those who were in the thick of the struggle, by those who watched it from afar, and in these later times by those who have studied it in every detail, and can offer a more or less complete picture



of it. However often it may be told, nothing can lessen the wonder and amazement that when the revolt was ablaze at Agra, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Allahabad, and twenty other places at once, through the furnace-heat of summer, with help from England of necessity very long in coming, a handful of men could prevent the English rule in India from being wiped out of existence.

At first every post brought news of some fresh calamity. All Oudh had risen; the river at Cawnpore was running red with English blood; the garrison of Lucknow were in the last extremity. On September 14th the tide turned—again on a Monday—when the British columns fought their way into Delhi. On the following Sunday they were holding their thanksgiving service in the Diwan-i-Khas. "It's a far cry to Delhi," but at length they were within its gates as conquerors. On the last day of September Outram and Havelock made their entry into Lucknow, to relieve the garrison that had kept the flag flying from the Residency tower for eighty-seven days.

The crisis was past. Many reasons are given for its existence, as many more might be given for its defeat. There is a story that Exeter Hall held a meeting to give thanks for the



suppression of the Mutiny, at which certain persons were invited to state what they considered to be the greatest mercy vouchsafed during the struggle. Among them was John Lawrence, who uprose and said, "The crowning mercy was that the telegraph-wire was cut between me and Calcutta,"—and sat down again.¹

Only those who at an outpost of Empire in time of deadly peril have been thwarted, checked, goaded, by prohibitions and commands from official superiors with little or no understanding of the situation, can appreciate John Lawrence's crowning mercy to the full. Thanks to the deficiencies of postal and telegraphic communication in 1857, it was often necessary to leave the men on the spot to mind their own business—and they usually completed it successfully.

There were other factors—such as Edwardes's treaty with the Amir of Afghanistan, which prevented an attack on the North-West Frontier at the time when every available man and gun was on the Ridge at Delhi. Most of all, there was the personal touch, of even greater value with Eastern races than in the West. "There were giants in the earth in those days"—

¹ The story is told as it was handed down to me by oral tradition.



giants such as Henry Lawrence, and John Nicholson, and Neville Chamberlain—who could sustain the falling house upon their shoulders, while the earth heaved and quaked below their feet.

One consolation was left for those who had trusted to the prophecy of the hundred years after Plassey. Some one must pay for the Mutiny. "If India had at that time been under the rule of the Crown, the natural scapegoat would have been the Ministry of the day. As it was, the blow fell upon the grand old Company which had nursed the early conquests on the eastern coast of Hindustan till they had developed into the most magnificent empire subject to an alien race which the world has ever seen."¹

"For divers weighty reasons, We have resolved"—so runs Queen Victoria's proclamation, publicly read at every civil and military station in India—"to take upon Ourselves the government of the territories in India, heretofore administered in trust for Us by the Honourable East India Company."

¹ Malleson.



CSL

EPILOGUE
THE MEN AND THE WORK

"Quasi cursores vitae lampada tradunt."



EPILOGUE.

THE MEN AND THE WORK.

ON the 2nd of August 1858 the East India Company ceased to exist.

Its last hundred years of life had been spent to some purpose for great part of the dwellers in India. No longer did gangs of robbers infest the roads to murder the peaceful traveller. No longer did armed hordes sweep through a countryside, leaving their trace in wasted lands, burning villages, smoking fields, the bodies of men tortured until death was a relief, and women who had slain themselves to escape worse than death. Pindari and Thug had been hunted down, Sikh and Maratha were kept within their own border, and even the wild tribes on the North-West Frontier had learned to respect the Law of the English.

It is impossible to read the history of the last hundred and twenty years of the Company's exist-



ence without a feeling of amazement at the work done, and of deep reverence for the men who did it, both soldiers and civil servants. Those men for the most part are forgotten. Such names as Henry Lawrence, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Robert Clive, John Nicholson—to take a few at random—must live as long as the British Empire. But there are many known only to the student who has put together their story from fragments and chance allusions; and there are many more whose names survive perhaps in distorted tradition on the scene of their labours, and in no other place.

It cannot be said that all the East India Company's servants did honour to their service. Some were incompetent, some cared only for enriching themselves, by fair means or foul; some were a disgrace to the country whence they came and to the religion that they professed. But, seeing what were the conditions of service in the East up to the time of our grandfathers—the lifelong separation from family and religious influences, the slowness and the expense of communications with home—it must be acknowledged that, in proportion to the whole, the black sheep were very few in number.

Nor can it be said that all the work accomplished by the best men was entirely for the good of the



natives of India, even when intended directly for their benefit. There is a certain simplicity about the British mind, which cannot but imagine that whatever is good for one race must of necessity be good for another. In the spirit of the little boy who crams sweets into his baby brother's mouth, he forces Western theories upon Eastern people, and meaning for the best, cannot understand why the results are not what he expected.

That some among them did wrong, that nearly all made mistakes—that is to say that the men who laid the foundations of our Indian Empire were human beings. But no other service in the world can show such a record of patience, of single-hearted loyalty, of devotion to a high ideal maintained through years of loneliness and neglect, of unflinching steadfastness in the face of misrepresentation, misunderstanding, and calumny.

Looking back, not upon the scattered units to be found in histories and National Biographies, but upon the countless host who toiled and suffered unknown to the great ones who are concerned with the destiny of the parish pump at home, figure after figure rises to the memory. Men who gave their best years to the service of an alien land, who bore perhaps lifelong separation from wife and children and kindred, who took the risk



of death as indifferently as other men take the risk of catching cold when playing golf, who learned to see with other eyes, and to understand other ways of thought, and yet kept their own ideals intact,—it was such men as these who made “the justice of the English” respected and feared throughout the land. Many died at their posts; some came home, and after ruling over tracts of country as large as England or Scotland, perhaps found that their names were unknown to the great man whom Destiny had placed temporarily in charge of the India Office.

If a momentary thought is ever spent upon such men, their womankind should be remembered with them. Certain novelists have brought into prominence a type of the Anglo-Indian “Mem-Sahib”—idle, extravagant, dividing her time between brainless or spiteful gossip and shameless flirtation. The picture is received without question in many English country neighbourhoods, where gossip is as mischievous and silly as anywhere in India, and where flirtations are limited only by the scarcity of men. It is a misfortune that less has been written of another type of Mem-Sahib whom India has known for many generations, in the days of “John Company” as in the twentieth century.

She did not often wear the beautiful garments



of the novelist's heroine, because, with children at school in England, there was very little money to spend on herself, and her own beauty usually did not survive several "hot weathers" spent with her husband in the plains. But for all that, she was good to see, when revolt was in the air, and she must let her husband go to his work every morning, not knowing whether he would return to her—or when she was nursing some lonely stranger, with no claim upon her but that of white blood, through some deadly and probably infectious illness—or in less tragic moments, when she was battling against countless obstacles, to make a home in the most unhomely surroundings. It is difficult to reckon up the work done by British men in India; it would be impossible to say how much of the credit for it is due to the women who stood behind some of them.

We are now told that India is undergoing a change more fateful than any that have passed over her since the days of the Moghul Emperors, and that she can no longer be ruled by the same methods or the same type of man as in former times. It well may be, for everywhere the civilised world is moving to a different tune, and men must change step or fall out of the ranks. Whether the tune be better or worse than that to



which their fathers marched, is a question to which our generation cannot know the answer. But for those who have to carry on the work under the new conditions, there can be no better wish than that they may prove themselves worthy of the men who went before them on the road.



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