

INDIA
and
Farther
India



LISTENING FOR THE DRUMS

by

GENERAL
SIR IAN HAMILTON

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The art of life is the art of giving up freely and of good grace before age compels us to do so. A woman should begin to refuse admiration after thirty and a man of thirty-five should cease to imagine himself capable of inspiring a passion. At fifty both sexes must remember that the active part of life is over for them and that their emulations, etc., must be transplanted into other and younger generations unless they are to wither and shock all beholders by their ugliness.

*From Ian Hamilton's Private Diary
Mandalé, Burma, 1886*

NOTE

No attempt at consistency in the spelling of Indian words and names has been attempted: in letters and documents they are given as written at the time without exception, but when necessary more modern spellings have been introduced into the text, so that different spellings of the same word will sometimes be found. Dera Ishmail Khan has however been left throughout with its old-fashioned phonetic spelling. Nor have the personal idiosyncrasies of the author in spelling certain English words in his own way been interfered with.

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I

JOINING THE GORDONS

(1873)

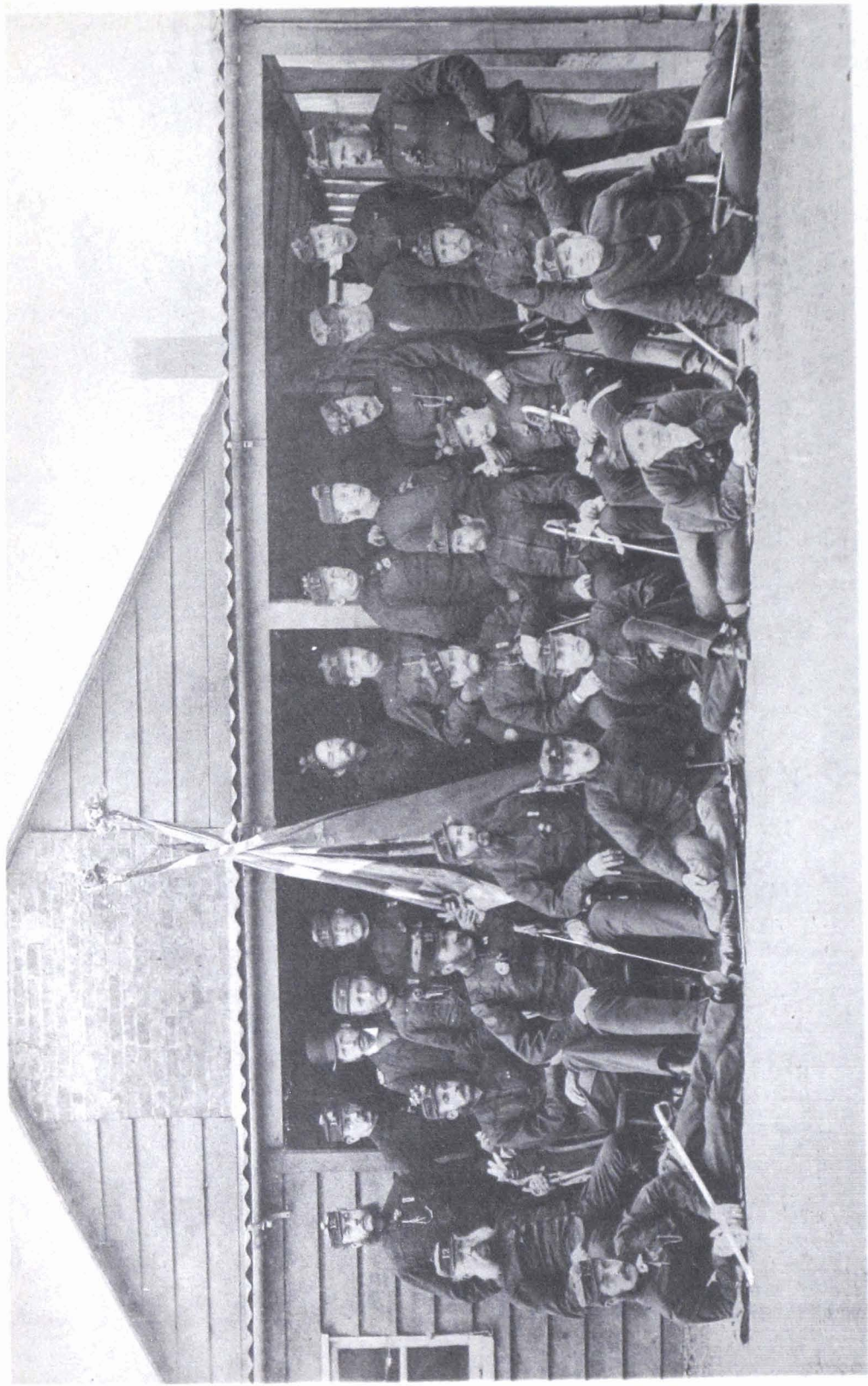
A day or two after Christmas 1872, I was living with my grandmother at Laggary on the Gareloch, doing a little shooting as a rest cure after my year of idleness at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. My brother Vereker, three years my junior, had just got back for his holidays from Loretto; after a couple of months he was going to follow in my footsteps and go into residence with Colonel Dammers at Dresden, where it was hoped he would learn to be steady and careful and wise and all the sort of things you are not taught at Sandhurst or Oxford or Cambridge. My father had gone off to stay at a house on the edge of the golf links at Prestwick, in Ayrshire, with 'Bottles' as he was irreverently called, otherwise Mr. Whigham of that ilk—who since those days has become father or grandfather or great-grandfather of all the beautiful or clever Whighams now flying fast and high round social or business circles. To me, thus jogging along, there came in the way such things do come along, a Postman. Postmen are the Ganymedes of modern days, only, instead of bringing us golden cups brimmed with purple wine, they bring events and, in Scotland, they like to hear their own news. This time the Postman did not, as was his wont, pop his letters into a box and go away. Being personally interested, he rang the front door bell and when I, whom he had seen through the window, opened it, presented me with a stampless envelope marked O.H.M.S. Nowadays, these hateful communications from bureaucrats pour in by the hundred. Sixty years ago we called the senders Jacks-in-Office and the occasional arrival of such letters would cause quite a little flutter of excitement. Tearing open the envelope I found myself ordered to report for duty without delay to the 12th (Suffolk) Regiment at Athlone in Ireland. A yell brought Vereker running downstairs; he read the letter and we both came to the conclusion that here was a matter not only of urgency but of enormous importance, and that the best thing I could do was to inform my father at once by

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wire telling him we would meet him in Glasgow that very day. Aunt Camilla was out or less hasty counsels might have prevailed—however, she was out. The sympathetic Postman reminded us that a 'bus ran from Rhu in connection with the midday train from Helensburgh to Glasgow, so we hurried off to the post office and sent the following telegram to my father in Ayrshire:

'Urgent orders come for me from War Office. Will meet you at 1.10 to-day at Queen Street. Ian.'

We duly caught the bus; soon found ourselves in the train and perhaps after so many years I may at last safely divulge the fact that we had a pleasant little sub-plan for our own enjoyment as well as for the treat we were about to confer upon our father. In Glasgow there was a very nice set of luncheon rooms called Ferguson and Forrester's, fitted with little cubicles like the boys' rooms at Wellington College. Failing that, there was a sombre dignity about the Western Club which would be very agreeable. Anyway, it would be odd if we weren't given a rare tuck-in—well, it *was* odd! Standing together on the platform we saw our parent get out of a first-class carriage. He had no travelling bag. Evidently he had come straight off the links and was dressed as was his custom in a suit of grey tweeds and a tall hat. Wet or fine he wore this kit and how he kept his hats so beautifully shining was one of the mysteries. As we rushed up to him he said, 'Well, what is it?' I handed him the War Office telegram; he read it; puckered his eyebrows and asked, 'Is this all?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I thought it very important.' Whereupon, taking off his hat and looking appealingly up to the roof of the station, he exclaimed, 'Oh, Almighty God, why hast Thou given me a fool for my first-born?' As a rule, Vereker had the knack of giving a humorous twist to awkward moments. But as this was his first meeting with his father since he had come back from school for his holidays he was dumbfounded; so too was I, when, instead of being taken to Ferguson and Forrester's or the Western Club, a very depressed pair followed their Papa, as we still called him, to a beastly little eating-house opposite the station and there sat ourselves down to a bad and gloomy meal. Not a word was being said and it was getting too much of a bad thing when, all of a sudden, there was a glare and in the most alarming fashion a great flame shot upwards towards the ceiling. Everyone jumped—there was a gas jet by the door with a tiny speck of fire at the end of the bracket where customers could light their cigars on their



The 12th Suffolks on Minden Day, 1873
Ian H. is fifth from the right in the back row



Sir Fred Roberts and his Staff, Madras 1883

Standing: Col. Stewart; Major-General Godfrey Clerk, Adjutant-General; Lt. Neville Chamberlain, A.D.C.; Capt. Ian Hamilton, A.D.C.; Col. du Caine, R.A.; *Sitting:* Sir Fred. Roberts; Lt.-Col. Pretyman, Military Secretary

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way out. Poor Vereker, his mind filled with the complete upset of our plan, had not noticed the little speck of light and having been handed the precious topper hung it up on what he took to be a hat peg. Then the fat was in the fire—the hat was in a blaze. So my father was hatless and as the smoke had driven the other customers out into the street, he had to give the waiter the tip he ought to have given to Vereker. But such was his curious nature that far from being angry he laughed long and loud. His laugh was most infectious and first Vereker and I joined in and then the little crowd—who had gathered round the door—so here ends the introduction to my story.

Of how I was duly gazetted to the 12th (Suffolk) Regiment and of the many months I spent in Ireland with them, culminating in the Battle in the Militia Square of the 9th of August 1873, has been told in the last chapter of *When I was a Boy*. Later in that year my fortunes were thrown completely out of gear. The Quarter-Master General to the Forces, who was going to take me as his A.D.C. when he got a Command, was drowned on manœuvres in Devonshire and my original application for a transfer to the 92nd Gordon Highlanders (my father's regiment), which I had made some months earlier, became effective. Thus an accident sent me to meet Sir Fred Roberts and my career in India.

The roving instinct belongs to me by birthright. Change was ever welcome to me for its own sake—whether for better or whether for worse made no odds. The ties Ireland had begun to bind about my life had no more power than daisy-chains to hold me so soon as foreign adventure beckoned; and when an order came to sail in H.M.S. *Jumna* for Bombay I danced round the room holding the envelope like a partner in my hands. My new uniform was an added joy—kilt; plaid; hose; even the trews with yellow stripes running through squares of dark blue, green, and black were wonderful garments after the dull black trousers with a thin red stripe which had been my wear till then.

In those days the 92nd Gordon Highlanders had not yet been robbed of their mourning lace for their part in the burial of Sir John Moore. Their dirk-belts were still of black leather, keeping in lasting memory that great leader. As subaltern of the day on the troopship I wore my dirk instead of the white sword belt with linked slings worn by everyone else. Thus arrayed, I bade farewell to my many friends at the Curragh and behold me boarding a huge white trooper bound for Bombay whence I was to

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make my way to Mooltan where the Gordons were supposed (erroneously) to be lying.

Many of the events of my daily life on the trooper were entirely new. Queen Victoria had probably no more idea than a fly of the sort of entertainment served out to her Sub-Lieutenants and Midshipmen. I dare say Queen Vic thought I had a berth. Not much! Down in Pandemonium, as it was aptly called, far away down in the fetid bowels of the ship, my hammock was slung with twenty or thirty others, just like hams being smoked in a chimney. My cabin (! ! !) kit was crammed into a bag lying on the deck beneath me, so as to break the bang of the fall when they cut me down (as happened at least once in the night). When the ship rolled the hammocks were so close that they bumped into one another. If either bumper or bumped was sea-sick—imagine! Shaving next morning was like playing cup and ball with your own face. And the good ship *Jumna* rolled. The moment the hawsers were thrown off at Portsmouth she began to roll like a drunken sailor, and when we got into the Bay she rolled like a dozen drunken sailors and never once got back on to an even keel until we cast anchor in Valetta harbour. There certain events befell which were recorded in a letter to my brother in Dresden.

H.M.S. Jumna, Indian Ocean

17th November 1873

My dear Vereker,

I am afraid I have been treating you rather badly in not writing to you. Nothing particular happened until we reached Malta. We stayed there three days as the engines wanted some repairs. The first fellow I met was McDonald of the 74th whom I dare say you may remember at Sandhurst. I walked about the town which is full of Arabs, Turks, Greeks, Albanians, Maltese and English. I then had dinner at the Club and ate baccaficos, *green* oranges, prickly pear, and pomegranate. I do not mean to say that my dinner consisted of these alone. After dinner I went to the opera and there I got an invitation to go to supper with Foley Vereker¹ whom I had not seen as yet. 'After the opera was over' I went to supper and then played pool until 3.30 p.m. (evidently a.m.). It was about that hour when Ward and Forbes of the Rifle Brigade, Foley Vereker and myself issued forth from the hotel, got into a fly and told the man to drive us *Zum Teufel*. He accordingly drove us about a couple of miles into the

¹ Our first cousin; second son of Lord Gort; in the Navy.

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country, when Foley, seeing some trees, stopped the driver, got out, and pulled one down. Thereupon he got in again and drove a little further, when he repeated the manœuvre. Shortly after this I saw a man running very fast towards us and I called out to the driver to whip up his horse; however the wretched Maltese driver was quite paralysed with fear and stopped. Then up came a man with an enormous club and ordered us to get out, which we refused to do; unluckily, however, we had stopped exactly opposite a police station and upon the man calling out 'Guard, turn out', a lot of white-coated fellows rushed forth and surrounded us. One of them caught Foley by the collar whereupon he hit him a blow on the nose and to our astonishment, all the white-coated fellows ran away back to their guard-house. However, the original fellow remained and he drew a revolver, cocked it and presented it at Foley. I was rather afraid he might shoot me by mistake so I persuaded the fellows to come to the Sergeant-major of Police where we told such a thundering lot of crackers that not only did we get off but the police got severely reprimanded. I have not told anyone else about this except Johnny Dennistoun—so keep it dark.

When we were in the Red Sea our engines went wrong and we were becalmed. Suddenly someone sighted a shark and I got up into the rigging to look at it. It came close to the ship's side so I could see the hideous brute quite plainly. It was attended by two most beautiful pilot fish striped crimson and black. Soon another shark was sighted until there were four monstrous fellows prowling about the ship. There were a lot of fowls' wings and heads floating about and as they were small they did not take the trouble of turning over but stuck their heads out of the water until their mouths were on a level with their food—so—(here, in the MS. comes a drawing of a shark rushing along through the water with the whole of his huge snout above the water-line). Some of them had pilot fish of the most beautiful sky blue. By the time the four were come, an enormous hook had been got ready and baited with pork. This was tied to a couple of spars so as to make a kind of float and a stout rope attached to the other end of the spars—so—(here comes another picture). Directly it was in the water, a sky-blue pilot fish came up and smelt it and soon a large shark, ten feet long he turned out to be, came up and pulled the float under water; however, he was not hooked. In about a minute he came back with a rush, turned over so as to show the white of his belly and swallowed the pork. About twenty fellows got hold of the rope and in

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about five minutes the brute's grinning head was raised out of the water. The bluejackets then slipped a running noose over the end of the rope and let it fall until it slipped over the shark's head and fins. We then hauled both ropes together and soon the beast was flopping about the deck. You should have seen the rush that took place. The captain and the chaplain took refuge in the rigging for you know that one blow of a shark's tail will break any man's leg. At last a brave bluejacket hit it on the tail with a hammer and partly paralysed it, they then slung it up by the tail and before it had recovered sliced its tail off with one blow which rendered it powerless. That same day we caught two more and hooked a lot more which got off. No Naval man remembers having caught so many in one day.

We shall now be at Bombay in three days and I hope to find a letter from you awaiting me. Love to the Dammers.

Believe me,

Your affectionate brother

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

P.S. If Miny is in Dresden give her my best love and show her this scrawl.

Bonnie Dundee said once that he who would get full value out of an irregular Force should have shaken hands with every clansman under his command. Even a hundred-handed Hindu God could hardly shake hands with Mother-India but I certainly rubbed shoulders with a great number when I landed from a troopship onto the Apollo-Bunder (Bunder meaning either a wharf or a monkey) and made my way along winding streets to an incredible Hotel kept by a Parsee wearing a hat like that of an Assyrian Priest about to sacrifice a calf to Baal—as indeed he did. My uniform case and portmanteau were to be recovered from the hold and brought down by the Agents whilst the bundle kept under my hammock was being trundled on a handbarrow through narrowing streets to the hotel. On the way I tried to take stock of the people, for to me Bombay was as fantastic as Baghdad might be to a traveller who found himself carried on a flying horse right into the middle of the Arabian nights. The majority of the citizens seemed to be wearing nothing to speak of but their own skins of burnished bronze; others, a step up the social ladder, were dressed in white with a shawl of white cotton loosely flung over their shoulders—as a Highlander flings his plaid—and usually a small white

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linen cap not unlike a glengarry without tails; another step up and there passed shuffling along in slippers what I took to be clerks with gold watch-chains over their fat bellies and small black silk, pill-box hats from which sometimes dangled a tassel. There were not nearly so many women and most of those few were old and wrinkled, wearing a muslin or linen shawl over their heads.

Another most curious thing—about half of these strange people wore a small round seal in the middle of their foreheads, making me think of Chapter VI of Deuteronomy where the Lord places ‘frontlets’ between the eyes of the Jews. Here and there through the crowd, like a man-of-war amongst bum-boats, stalked a fellow with a pack wearing a voluminous mantle and a flowing beard. I asked the hotel man who they were and he said Moormen or pedlars who came down from Afghanistan. All these curious types would have to be sorted out as soon as time was vouchsafed me to sit down and realize where I was; I little thought that the time would never come till now!

Meanwhile the hotel tout, who had snapped me up on the Apollo-Bunder, was guiding me through the crowd and past the beggars who certainly begged description. Policemen were there too who stepped up when we tried to push into the middle of the road. Here carts, drawn by white-humped oxen with long horns, were creaking along; the tails of the lovely white oxen were being twisted and the most awful curses (or so they sounded) being shrieked at them by drivers (save the mark!) squatting on the axles of the carts.

And here I must pause a moment to say that the handful surviving out of those who landed in Bombay during 1873 may very likely have seen quite another panorama. They may have driven in a carriage or buggy through a beautiful green park and gone on by wide thoroughfares past rows of shops boasting plate glass windows to some comfortable haven—perhaps to the mansion of a Merchant Prince on Malabar Hill. Three years later that sort of fate did befall me, but not this time and be it remembered my memoirs are not being written for the sake of telling the truth about India or anything else but simply to let off the steam in case my old boilers should explode. In this pious duty *le bon Dieu* helps me by having given me a curious analytical memory of objects or thoughts as they struck me long ago—the humps on a pair of white bullocks, a sky-blue pilot fish, the rage of Lillingston, the 1st Lieutenant on H.M.S. *Jumna*, when Bennet, one of the Tankerville family, rushed in with an axe and

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hit the deck instead of the shark—a dint which would cost £100 to make good,—whilst the day before yesterday is half dead already.

The wind-up of a long voyage in a troopship is unlike any other in that the little family is scattered to the four winds without any volition on the part of its members. The arrival of an official called the D.A.Q.M.G. might almost be likened to that of a torpedo for the effect of the orders he issues and the railway warrants he distributes to all and sundry: off they must go without time to shake hands, or even in the case of a rich subaltern—whose name I am sorely tempted to reveal—to pay debts lost in bets. Thus it was that the whole of my gay companions of the 3rd Battalion Rifle Brigade marched off in a body to the sound of martial music; were swallowed up into a special train for Umballa, and I saw them no more. As for me, I got my orders and railway warrant for my journey next day to take me from Bombay to Mooltan, breaking journey for an hour or two at Allahabad. Next I had called on Messrs. Graham & Co., who had handed over to me a nice little packet of ten fifty-rupee notes in an envelope, plus my first dollop of fifty silver rupees (also extremely nice-looking coins)—these last were to use for expenses on the way, and the five hundred rupees were extra to my regimental pay and private allowance of two hundred pounds a year, and were really a very handsome tip from my father. They were to enable me to start off handsomely in setting up house, or bungalow rather, buying a pony and so on, when I got to my journey's end.

As to my other ship-mates, I had quite lost touch with them and not one of them had been ass enough to come to this facsimile of an hotel that the devil would build for souls in purgatory. So after a dinner of herbs taken at a long table with six or seven chocolate-coloured ladies and gentlemen—who to my surprise spoke English to one another but in a strange clipped style called (I got to know afterwards) *chi-chi*. After dinner I felt myself quite at a loose end. To wander out into the streets, unable to speak a word of Hindustani, was to get lost. No doubt there were lots of things to see even at night time, but I neither knew what they were nor where they were. One of the dark gentlemen, however, who turned out to be a Portuguese from Goa, made a good suggestion, advising me to get the Parsee Hotel manager to order me a cab and then get the driver to take me round. So I locked up my kit in my room and with the key and some of the silver rupees in my pocket got the gentleman from Goa to tell the coachman to take me round such beauty spots of the city as might be

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most attractive by night. At the door was the buggy waiting with a sort of imitation coachman on the box and a pair of exhausted-looking skeletons in harness held together by strings. When this queer Jarvey was told to take me round and bring me back in an hour, he replied by some word which sounded exactly like a sneeze and off we shambled through a maze of badly lit streets, mostly empty. We seemed to be a long time getting to the sea-front along which many buildings and statues would certainly be found, but, at last, turned into what appeared to be a market without women. There was plenty of light here and plenty of people were walking about—bluejackets, redcoats, native soldiers, and civilians in European or native garb—but no women. Then—suddenly there passed across my mind the thought—the consciousness—that this was a market *for* the sale of women, not for life as in a slave market, but for a spell which, as a Scots Minister once remarked to a mixed congregation from the pulpit, might last no more than twenty minutes. What had seemed to be booths for the sale of gew-gaws and trinkets were little parlours with the front facing the street knocked off so as to display the charms of their inmates, which were open to offers from any eligible suitors. As to who was eligible there was no doubt that we were passing muster with a double first—the double being the two ponies in the buggy—yes, beyond a doubt the shabby genteel coachman and the two shabby old screws were certificates of solvency. So the ladies waved and beckoned to me like mad, and as they did so the coachman began to drive more and more slowly. That would never do. I must cling to my buggy whatever happened. Funny thoughts came into my mind. How odd if men sat in booths and women walked up and down to take their pick. Yet in a sense perhaps an heiress in a ball-room does do something very like that?

Passing the girls from China and Japan at the near end of the Bazaar—or call it what you will—who waved their little hands (a matter of business with them, nothing to do with love, nothing to be upset about or to upset others about, or that was my reading of their faces) we came to a batch of Eurasians figged out as fashionables in preposterous caricatures of Parisian modes; and several Mulattos—or perhaps Fuzzy-Wuzzies from Somaliland or Aden, two or three with their hair dyed bright red. Last, at least last for me, but their memories have lasted all right—we drew level with several small show-rooms tenanted by *soi-disant* females more terrifying than any ever yet encountered by me even in the worst kind of

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dream. They seemed to me to be Armenians—why I can't say but they did so seem to me to be. If I said that they were outrageously over-dressed it would give so feeble a notion of their kit as to be quite a false notion—also admittedly, they may have been Assyrians or Abyssinians. Tall, hook-nosed, fierce and with so much rouge on their dark faces that they had the complexions of a red brick wall, their spangled skirts showed about six inches of baggy trousers; their arms were covered up to the elbows with bangles. As they advanced, their long ear-rings swung to and fro—for that is how they made their advances—they really did advance. No coaxing blandishments—no fear! After shouting out invitations sounding like imprecations, two or three rushed into the road calling to my cabby, in English of all languages. 'Stop!—bloody fool! ! Stop! ! !' The fool did stop and then one of them tried to nip into the buggy and sit beside me. The boast of the Verekers had ever been that although they may often have played the giddy goat amidst the pitfalls and temptations of everyday existence, yet when a supreme crisis springs at them like a panther from out of a bush, it is apt to find them on the spot and stripped for action. This was beyond a joke. Suppose one of my late shipmates—suppose the First Lieutenant of H.M.S. *Jumna*, Lillingston himself, should see me promenading in public with an Amazon like that! My Vereker blood surged up in revolt at the thought. Starting to my feet, I held off the lady with my right hand whilst with the left I bashed in the hat of the cabby who took the hint and whipped up his screws, thus in less than twenty seconds turning the Armenian peril into a reminiscence.

Next morning I awoke with a feeling of escape and a resolve never to go and visit beauty spots in buggies. The driver had complained that his hat had been damaged but a rupee or two put that in order, and there were more serious matters to be tackled before making my way to the railway station for my journey up country. Letters home must be posted for I was going farther and farther afield, so that missing one mail at my end would mean losing two mails at the other. Those who have never travelled will easily understand me if they consider what would happen if they wrote home regularly when coming back to England, for clearly they and their letters would all come to hand in a bunch. My father deserved a letter of at least two sheets after his splendid surprise gift of five hundred rupees. Vereker in Dresden would be expecting a sequel to my illustrated screed about the sharks—that was the worst of writing interesting letters home, people wanted more. One cause of worry should

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cease to bother me. Tips to the various sorts of hotel servants—Khitmatgars, sweepers, etc., whose identities I had not yet grasped, would be taken off my hands; for the hotel manager had kindly secured me a bearer called, it seemed, 'Tippoo' which was as near as possible 'tip you'. He was a jewel (he assured me)—picked out from about a dozen applicants for service so honourable. Tippoo possessed several A1 'chits' or written 'characters' one of which went so far as to say that he was more careful of his master's money than his own. This seemed almost too good to be true—still—it might be true and as, through constant use, the date, residence, and signature of the writer had all become illegible, it had to be taken at face value. Tippoo said that this gentleman had been a very big Sahib—almost a Lord Sahib.

As has already been made clear, India and its customs were even more unknown to me than Kingdom come. But upon one small spot of Indian history Captain Lendy, that great crammer, had thrown a searchlight with his flair for likely exam. questions—this was the siege of Seringapatam when Tippoo Sahib—who was a Mahratta and the enemy Commander-in-Chief—proved himself to be a cruel and treacherous monster. But the Parsee who was surprised at my knowing anything about Mahrattas explained that the correct spelling of the name was Teppoo and that Teppoo was no connection of Tippoo's, that he was a Hindu of the Kahar caste and that he had only been given the name Teppoo for short as his own name was too long to be shouted.

I feel I must pause a moment to confess that as one fresh act of folly after another breaks cover from my pen, the temptation grows stronger and stronger to say no more about my culminating folly—the bearer. Otherwise I may lose any friends I may have made, for who in their proper senses would care to waste time following the adventures of an idiot? On the other hand I did start this volume with the resolve to own up with equal candour whether to ridiculous situations or to those few wherein I may have contrived by the aid of the Lord of Hosts to bring off a *coup*. How can I tell the reader of my record markhor or of how I saw a snow leopard fighting a red bear if Teppoo is not there to redress the balance?

My whole attitude towards my bearer was coloured by my having been made to read on Sundays when I was a boy at Hafston, a tract entitled, 'Little Henry and his Bearer.' The relations between these two were most tender and touching, ending in the death of little Henry and the conversion of his Bearer Boosey to Christianity under the name of John.

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Certainly there was nothing about the actual Teppoo to incline me to pray or sob or cut off for him a lock of my hair, yet none the less, enough of the mawkish strain of sentiment left by the half-forgotten tale had remained to make me more of a fool than usual.

At last we were off and rattling along through the land of Hindustan. Whether climbing with double puffs over the Western Ghats or crossing the flat plains beyond, the landscape was astonishingly unlike what I had expected; and well it might be for it had for years past been planted and peopled by my imagination. There was hardly one dozen of my millions of palms through which cheetahs should have been chasing antelopes—on the contrary, but I am not going to say what it really was like for is it not all written in the guide books? When we reached Allahabad I had to break my journey for about a couple of hours and then take another train to Umballa, Lahore, and Mooltan. The time must have been about 7 p.m. Standing on the platform with my baggage about me and wishing to supplement the half-dozen or so of rupees in my pocket, I opened my dressing-bag—a present from John Dennistoun—beautifully fitted with cut-glass silver-topped bottles, ivory hair brushes and fal-lals of all sorts. I could not find the rupees. At the very bottom of the bag under some papers were hidden my five-hundred-rupee notes. They had gone! My heart stood still. I had my railway warrant—true—but I felt as if I had found my death warrant—I had yet two days to travel. The stationmaster came up. Teppoo was questioned and he repeated what he had just told me, that when I had left my compartment in the train with most of the other first-class passengers during a twenty-minutes' stop for luncheon, he had looked through the window and had seen someone in my compartment. He did not see clearly until the man came out when he said he noticed he was a small shabbily-dressed half-caste about thirty years old whose face was badly marked by small-pox. The stationmaster said he would send for the officer in charge of the Railway Police and asked me if Teppoo was a reliable person. Though I had no reason on earth to believe he was so, being an idiot, I said so. Then feeling quite desperate as to how I was going to get on, I asked the stationmaster who was the biggest and most important Sahib in Allahabad. Without hesitation he replied, Mr. Rivett-Carnac. How far away is his house? A mile and a half. Well, I would drive there, and so I got into a *ghari* and drove off. What next? Would the door be opened by an Englishman? If not, would I be able to understand him? I did not know then that the set ritual or formula for a reply

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to a caller in the whole of India was given in Hindustani, the *lingua Franca* of the sub-continent, and was either *salaam* which means that the caller is to enter or *darwaza band* which conveys the opposite rather bluntly, the literal meaning being 'the door is shut'. Innocent of these formalities, however, and feeling utterly lost and anxious to the point of misery, the *tika ghari* or cab drove me through the dark—and then turned into a short avenue to set me down on the door-step of a big house whose lights shone brightly out over a garden. I rang the bell and the door was opened by an Indian servant, who, to my agony, addressed me in Hindustani. As soon, however, as he saw I did not understand he broke into quite good English and said that the Sahibs were at dinner. I told him I was a British Officer whose money had been stolen in the train and that I had been advised to see Mr. Rivett-Carnac about it. 'Yes, sir,' he said, 'but there is a big dinner party going on and I do not like to disturb him.' 'Look here, my friend,' I replied, 'that is very true but my train leaves Allahabad for Umballa in less than one hour's time; here is my card; please take it in to Mr. Rivett-Carnac and say that I am very sorry but I must see him if only for a few minutes.' 'Very well, sir,' he said, bowing and taking the card. After about one minute he came back and said, 'Please, sir, be so good as to follow me.' He threw open a door whereupon I found myself facing a brilliant dinner party of ten, including two or three ladies in evening dress. Conspicuous amongst the men was an officer wearing his red mess jacket. Mr. Rivett-Carnac, who was seated at the far side of the table rose, came round, and shook me by the hand. He then caused a chair to be squeezed in for me at his right hand and introduced me by name to everyone present, when I learned that the officer in mess kit was Colonel Chippendale commanding the 19th Regiment. When I had made my nine bows, Mr. Rivett-Carnac asked me to sit down and tell him my trouble. Everyone remained silent and listened. This was by no means the same as just answering questions and really my response to the invitation of our host was my first speech to an audience of strangers. None the less, desperation is a good antidote to shyness and I put my best foot forward, trying to gain the sympathy of the dinner party. When I made a face to show my horror in finding the notes gone they laughed and so did Mr. Rivett-Carnac who then asked me to drink a glass of port with him and next asked me where I had got the five stolen notes for Rs. 100? Had I changed a cheque or golden sovereigns at the bank in Bombay; in that case the numbers of the notes would be forthcoming? 'No,' I replied,

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'Messrs. Graham of Calcutta gave them to me in a bunch as a surprise gift arranged for beforehand from my father: Mr. Graham himself had left a letter for me saying he was sorry to be away that day but that a Mr. Taylor would hand me over the money.' 'Well now,' exclaimed my host, 'that's lucky for I know Messrs. Graham very well and that good sportsman Mr. Taylor also! How did you come to go to them?' 'My Uncle, Mr. George Hamilton,' I answered, 'is a partner with Mr. William Graham and they also buy pictures together chiefly from Rossetti and Burne-Jones but also from Millais.'

'You have told your story very well,' said Mr. Rivett-Carnac, 'and now let me tell you that very few people in India keep notes in their houses, preferring to send for a bag of silver rupees; but this house being half an office, we will send round to the Babu in charge at once and he will give you five ten-rupee notes which will see you to Mooltan quite comfortably. When you get there you should inform Messrs. Graham of what has happened—so now we all wish you a safe and happy journey.'

At this the other guests, including the Colonel, rapped on the table and cried out 'Bravo', and I was idiot enough to get some tears in my eyes for which I could have kicked myself. So off I went with fifty rupees in my pocket and two glasses of port in my stomach instead of those vacuums so very abhorrent to nature in both receptacles. Most fervently I gave thanks to God, for no-one less than the Almighty Himself could have worked so great a miracle.

Barely catching the train, I continued my journey without further incident bar one: as we were rolling out of Lahore Station on the last stage of the journey to Mooltan I called out 'Teppoo!!' There was no reply. There never was any reply and that was the end of Little Henry and his Bearer. In the booklet Little Henry converts his Bearer to be a Christian and even to be baptized under the name of John. But in my case, instead of Little Henry converting his Bearer to Christianity the Bearer converted Little Henry into cash.

II

MOOLTAN

(1873-1874)

Long afterwards, when Fate and Sir Evelyn Wood joined hands to make me Commandant (a word my wife was never able to pronounce) to the School of Musketry at Hythe—long, long afterwards my pupils were asked the following question: ‘State briefly what is rust?’ To this enquiry Lord Salisbury, who was then a pupil, composed an answer in verse, which still lingers in my mind:

*‘They ask us, “What is rust?”
It’s all right when you know it
But you’ve got to know it fust!’*

In the same rhythm let me reply to anyone wishing to visualize Mooltan—

*‘They ask us, “What is dust?”
It’s all right when you know it
But you’ve got to see it fust!’*

In Mooltan—except for a month or two when the rains combine with the melting of the snows in the Himalayas to turn everything into mud—when the side ditches to the roads, really young canals five or six feet deep, are brimming with muddy water quite dangerous to a drunken man—except then, Mooltan is sheer dust tempered only by long drinks and perspiration. Let me, however, go ahead and show Mooltan in its cold-weather aspect—as I first saw it.

Had a missionary been dropping on to Timbuctoo in a parachute out of a balloon his hopes and fears about the reception he and his hymbucktoo were going to get from the Cassowary could hardly have been so anxious as those of the only European passenger who found himself hopping on to the platform at Mooltan somewhere about the middle of December, 1873. Throughout my journey I had been looking forward to Mooltan as something more than a terminus, rather a homecoming into a city planted out with avenues of pagoda trees, up and down which pipers

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would strut playing martial tunes. But there was no sign of welcome. Only a swarm of natives with their belongings in bundles streaming down the platform and not one single white man to lend me a hand, much less shake me by the hand. My heart sank right down into my boots. This was quite another pair of shoes from arriving at Dublin or Athlone. There I could at least speak to someone—here was no-one—when lo and behold! making his way towards me against the departing tide was a very smart young officer—a Lieutenant of Foot but not of Ours. ‘Sorry to seem to be late,’ he said, ‘but I’m not—your train is early.’ The remark was typical of the casual bonhomie of a very good fellow, Henry Shaw Kennedy of the 41st Welch Regiment, and may partly explain why he never, so far as I know, left the same bright mark upon the military profession which he certainly had left upon me and probably upon no end of other individuals since. The ‘so far as I know’, is put in because he may still be alive, like Cotes of the Suffolks or Alexander of the K.D.G.’s and I hope he may be, so that he may read how nearly seventy years ago, his kindness went towards turning the series of shocks a brother Scot had received into a real, first-class beano. Not only had the place I had come to no faintest resemblance to the place I had thought I was coming to; not only was the air piercingly cold instead of warm and balmy, but the 92nd Gordon Highlanders were not there! *They were not there!* !—They were marching ‘across the desert’ with camels and tents and bullock-carts and horses—everything I should have adored—and they could not possibly reach Mooltan for several weeks to come. As to my getting to them it would have meant the equipment of an expeditionary force such as Stanley raised to get in touch with Livingstone. No thanks to the automatons who had so blandly given me my railway warrants, but by sheer luck Colonel Hugh Rowlands, V.C., Commanding the 41st, a soldier of renown, had heard in some mysterious manner that a stray subaltern of the 92nd *might* be dropping in that morning and the Adjutant had told off Shaw Kennedy to be on the spot in case I did come and to put me up and generally to take charge of me. Now please imagine what might have happened. My own imagination recoils at the thought. For, needless to say, there was no hotel in Mooltan—it could not even support a Dâk Bungalow! At that early date I had not yet become inured to the happy-go-lucky ways of H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge¹ and his satellites. The circumstances that instead of finding Highlanders in Mooltan, I found

¹ Then Commander-in-Chief of the British Army.

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Welchmen in possession; that the all-powerful British Government had embarked me on a huge ship only to catapult me off on to a wild goose chase after my own distinguished corps, struck me like a right and left punch on the nose. Therefore, when on the top of so much tribulation Shaw Kennedy asked me where was my bearer and I had to own up to the loss both of Teppoo and my five hundred rupees, he might well have pulled a long face, and this autobiography might have ended abruptly with one small obituary notice: 'On the 15th of December 1873, Sub.-Lieutenant Ian Standish Monteith Hamilton, from falling down a well at Mooltan!' But Shaw Kennedy did not pull a long face; on the contrary he burst into peals of laughter. This acted upon my exhausted nerves as a pinch of sherbet upon a tumbler of cold water: he put some fizz into me and I had to laugh too. In less than no time the luggage was found and hoisted into a *ghari* whilst we set off together in his dog-cart; the sun shone bright and I began to take notice.

There was lots to see. A multitude of tiny, mud-coloured houses over whose flat roofs a film of lovely, gauzy smoke was hanging in the dead still air as it curled up from out of the open doors. Evidently the ladies were preparing some sort of breakfast—I wondered what they had for breakfast and asked Shaw Kennedy, thereby again affording him some amusement. He had no idea, he said, *chupatties*, he supposed. What were *chupatties*? Sort of drop scones, he said, 'without butter or milk,' but no-one had ever before asked him a question so absurd. 'And when do they have their curry and rice?' I asked. 'Oh, that's down country—they don't eat rice up here—both Sikhs and Pathans despise people who eat rice, they say it is such miserable stuff it all passes away when they make water' and then—with the air of a Cockney pointing out to a country yokel the Marble Arch—he exclaimed, 'Here you are—we are entering Cantonments!' I looked—and what did I see? Nothing!

When Adam dug and Eve span they had been given a delicious garden to start in upon. Mooltan appeared to be the exact opposite of the Garden of Eden in every particular. Evidently no apple tree would be ass enough to try and grow in this barren cantonment of Shaw Kennedy's. A fig tree perhaps—given a pair of oxen and a *mali* or gardener to hoist hundreds of little pots of water out of a deep well and to pour their contents continually over the fig tree's roots—useful and refreshing this tree would be, both with leaves and fruit; however, these be phantasies, and we must not forget that Lieut. the Hon. Henry Shaw Kennedy of the 41st Welch

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Regiment and Sub.-Lieut. Ian Hamilton of the 92nd Gordon Highlanders, together with anyone in this wide, wide warring world who can spare a thought for the tales of his grandfathers, are entering the invisible cantonment of Mooltan.



In 1846, after four bloody battles (wherein three British Regiments lost their colours) had destroyed the Army of the Sikhs, the British began to push out westward from Lahore. In doing so they found themselves marching through a very singular and repulsive sort of desert. Being mostly uneducated they did not know that this was the famous desert which had served for countless ages as a buffer between Asia and India, and that they were struggling across the very tract which had proved a bit sticky, even for those grand marchers the Macedonians and Greeks of Alexander the Great after they had crossed the Jhelum and defeated the seven-foot-tall Emperor Porus and his Elephants. This *pat*, as the inhabitants called it, was not the Sahara type of everlasting yellow sand, although there was a good lot of that on top too, but was a vast expanse of flat, hard-baked mud, peppered over with squat little thorn bushes. When the Rank and File of the British Army under Lord Gough began to enquire with less and less politeness where the hell they were going, they were told it was to Mooltan where in 1848 the 2nd Sikh war had been begun by the murder of two British Officers by a certain swell called the Moolraj who lived in the Fort. When the Army had stormed the mud fort and won a bit more territory and a bit more glory their Commander called upon them for one more effort and marched them through the native town westwards towards the Jhelum. But as soon as that Army had traversed the town and struck that same repulsive desert again they dug in their heels, saying in soldierly phrases which cannot be printed without landing the printer in jail, 'Enough—enough!' Therefore, hurriedly, to make it seem he had meant it all the time, their brave Commander said, 'Behind us lies the town, in front of us will be the cantonment; not for you to live in, oh dear no, we will go away back to India, some other fresh Regiments will live in our beautiful cantonment.' So he laid it out and the lay-out was simple. He measured a square mile each way and then put it on to a map. Next he divided his square into some six or seven parallel roads with fine names and the central one called 'the Mall' to cheer up the new *Lal-Kurtis* or red-coats when they came. The Mall he made twice as broad as the other roads with a ride picked up on one side and treated with litter as in

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Rotten Row; all this of course, only on paper. Also some shisum trees were planted along it, also a square by the Bengal Cavalry lines was staked out for Public Gardens but the Public and the Flowers were on the knees of the Gods and were still mostly sitting there in 1873. Lastly, the lines of parallel roads were traversed at right angles by an equal number of parallel Avenues. Several of the roads and avenues were flanked by very deep ditches, now dry, but in summer eight feet deep with water from the Jhelum. These had to be crossed by bridges with no parapet or *berm*, so after-dinner riders had to mind their steps. Bungalows had been built here and there on squares marked on the map but only indicated on the ground by low walls of mud about three foot high.

So although there was a gateway to drive into, if you were walking or riding you just jumped the wall anywhere and called out, '*Qui Hai!*', when someone would run out from a tiny mud house and tell the Sahib he was wanted. Married people tried to be more punctilious and there might be an ayah and a pram and a *derzi* or tailor in the veranda with a bearer trained to hold out a silver tray for a visiting card; but in the end it became much the same as before, only more so. The Officers' Mess was a block at the meeting of an avenue and a road. Here a big effort had been made and, by constant watering, grass courts for badminton or croquet refreshed the eye and even flowers in their season grew in some profusion. Shaw Kennedy's bungalow was quite close. His compound as they called his enclosure was just baked mud but the bungalow itself, whitewashed with a deep veranda, was rather nice inside; two rooms with bathroom and a central room for a living-room set out with photographs and a few sporting prints. The ceiling consisted of a sheet of white canvas stretched straight across, called a *chat* which left a large space between this apparent roof and the inside of the actual outside roof. Every now and then something would scamper across the canvas ceiling and sometimes it squeaked—seeing my startled expression Shaw Kennedy told me it was only a rat being pursued by a snake unless it was a courtship between a couple of bats. As he appeared to think this was all quite in order I pretended not to notice it any more.

So soon as I had unpacked some of my things with the help of Shaw Kennedy's bearer and made myself tidy we went over to the Mess and I left cards on the Colonel and Officers of the 41st. Several of the subalterns were there and the Secretary forthwith handed me an invitation to consider myself an honorary member of the Mess and another asking me

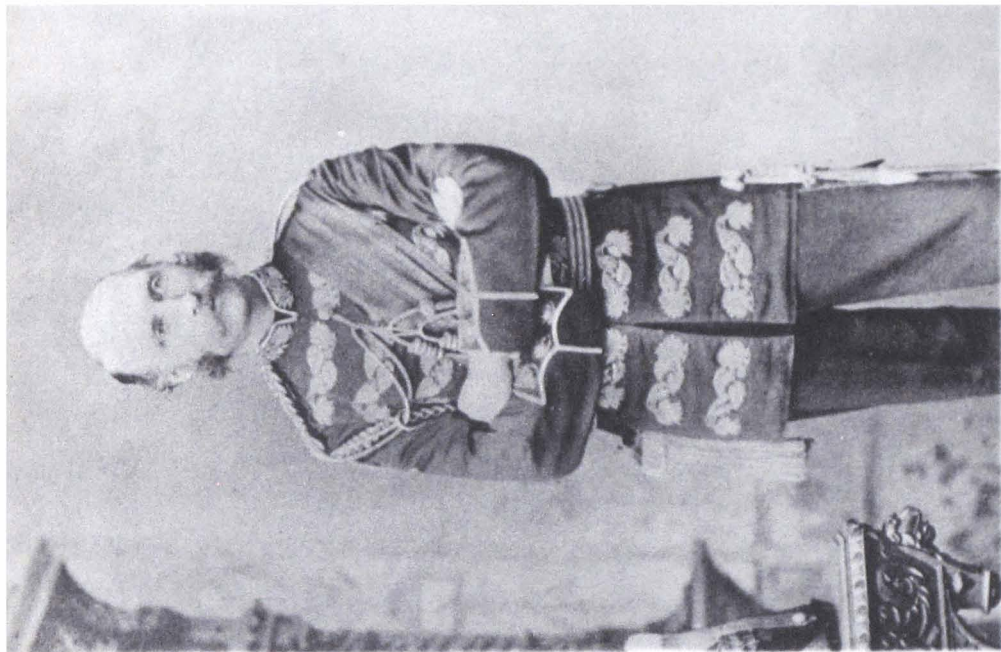
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to dine that night as a guest. So here was I, in harbour at last after so much tossing about. That night was not a regular Guest Night so I sat in great glory on the right hand of the Colonel and was given champagne almost like a prodigal son. The Colonel was one of the handsomest men I had ever met—rather on the lines of Napoleon III and like him wearing an imperial on his chin. They asked me to join in a round game of Van John afterwards but remembering a promise, I had to stand out as it was for money; and so I played pool instead, although more money changed hands on the billiard table than on the card table. When I say ‘money’ of course I don’t mean a big pile—twenty or thirty rupees at the outside. All the same I began to think I must screw up my courage and ask my father to grant me a dispensation to use my own gumption about my promise not to play cards for money till I was twenty-five, as a good many subalterns don’t believe that a lieutenant in the Army can be bound down by a promise made when he was only a civilian. ‘Soon’, Shaw Kennedy declared to me that night going home, ‘your father will begin to swear that your grandfather made him promise to get you to promise not to play! As for the Shaw Kennedys although my relations are the Ailsas and heads of the whole great Kennedy family I wouldn’t keep a promise like that for an instant!’ Ah, thought I, lying down for a good restful sleep under the *chat*—whereon the snakes continued to chase the rats—but the Hamiltons are a much grander family than the Kennedys, and so by hook or crook I’ll keep my promise not to play cards for money till I am five and twenty.

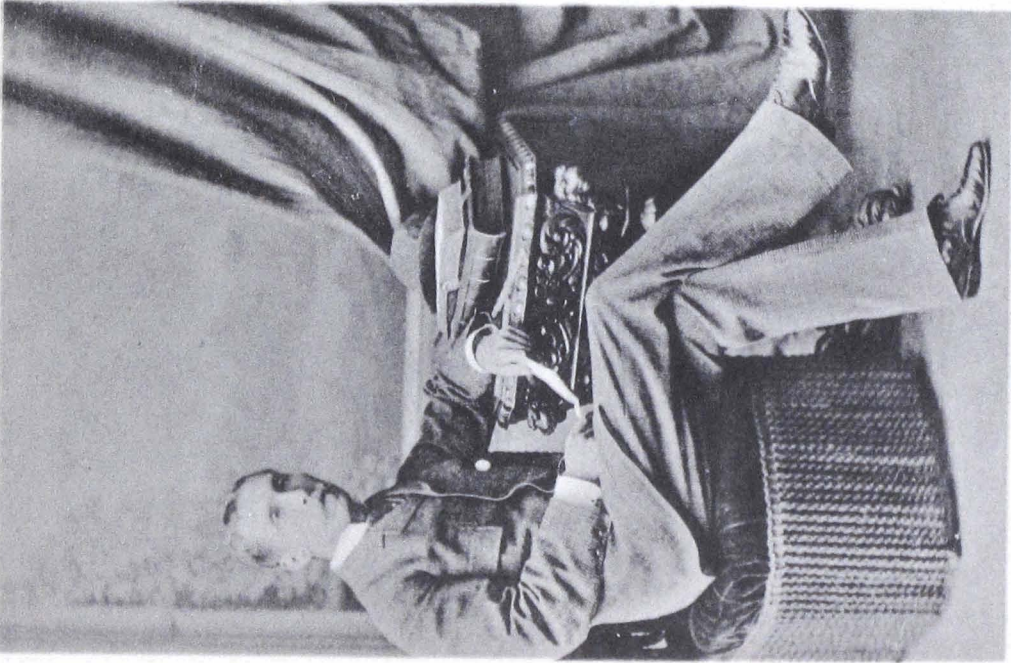
Before we left the mess that night a rumour had spread that some startling orders were coming out immediately and sure enough next morning there was a meeting of all Officers at the Orderly Room from which Shaw Kennedy came back beaming—almost dancing—with delight. The whole of the 41st was to go on fatigue forthwith and a big camp was to be pitched on the parade ground beyond the barracks which were to be vacated and swept and garnished for the reception of the 92nd Gordon Highlanders. As soon as this duty was carried out short Christmas leave of up to a fortnight would be opened for everyone whose services could be spared. This it was which had caused Shaw Kennedy to dance along the road as he came back because he knew of a tract of country which could be reached in one short march from the third or fourth railway station on the way to Lahore. Of this tract he had a secret map showing *jheels* where various sorts of ducks, some of them rare, rosy-headed



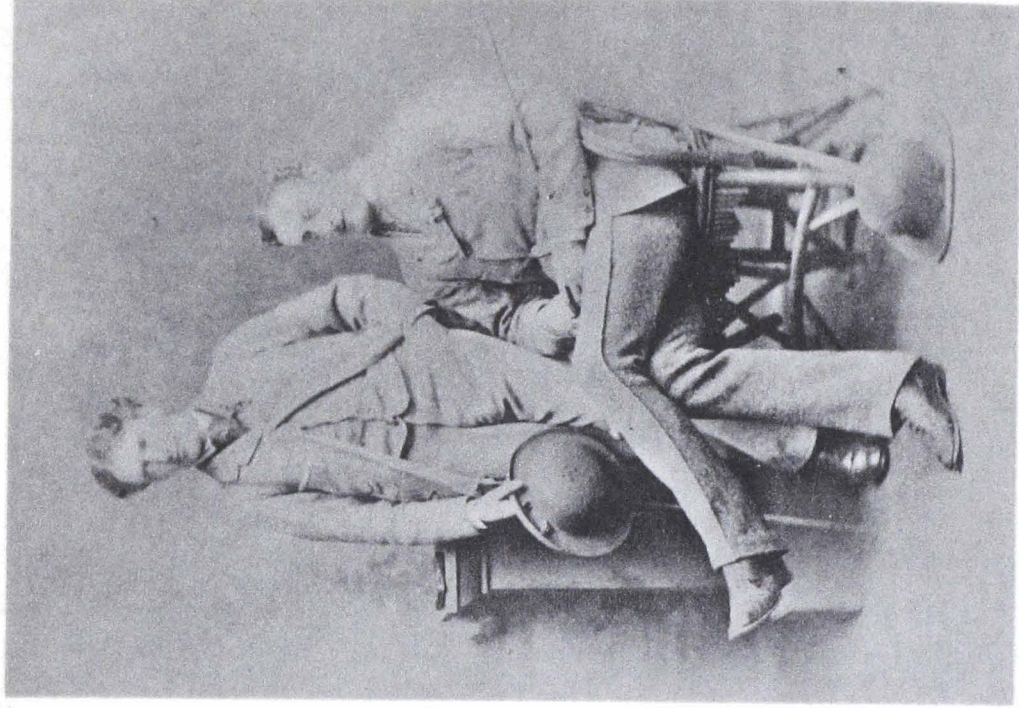
Wavell of the 41st



White of the 92nd



Dick-Cunyngham



Shaw Kennedy and Bay Middleton

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ducks, could be found in abundance as well as no end of partridge both black and grey and those false ducks called Brahmini ducks. Also there were blackbuck and ravine deer and pig. There were no bears or tigers or leopards or anything serious, only jackals and possibly one of those uncanny brutes, a wolf, who would keep a close watch on our camp although we would never see him. I wish it were 'our' camp, I thought, when he went on to say that things being so would I care to club together with him and go for a shoot. His own particular two pals in the 41st were always letting him down on these occasions, always pretending to be good sportsmen, but when it came to the bit they would be off to Lahore to pretend to enjoy bad balls and drink bad champagne and look on at bad polo and those swindles called gymkhana races. He knew all about Teppoo and the shocking misfortune he had brought upon me and so he offered to run the whole of our little enterprise from A to Z and would let me repay him so soon as the post brought me my money. Joyfully I accepted and together we set to work. We had to get a couple of bell tents and arrange to send them with our cook and his pots and pans and stores and any other heavy stuff, ahead of us in a bullock cart. In my own outfit were water-proof sheets; a cork mattress and an india-rubber bath; also my lovely twelve-bore gun by MacDougall of Glasgow, and cartridges galore. As to a rifle we did not dare carry off one of the new Government Martini Henrys, and the nearest approach to such a weapon we could raise was borrowed from the Bengal Cavalry—an old, very much worn Snider carbine carrying a .577 bullet with a trajectory at 250 yards of a semi-circle. If you did not estimate the distance to within a few yards the more carefully you aimed and the more steadily you pressed the trigger the safer your quarry would be. Although several times fired nothing was predestined to be killed by the Snider except my dream of killing something—as will be duly recounted.

The whole of our jaunt into the wilderness appears to me to-day and was, I believe then, a delight without flaw and an *exeat* back into Paradise. We carried so much of the elixir of life in our hearts that we ourselves (under God) made it so. The worse the mishaps—tents coming down in a rainstorm—the falling into the fire—the jollier the retrospect. We were young; our days and nights had hitherto been more or less regulated by rules, regulations, red tape and fashion. Sport was a province where these cut-and-dried precepts were more and not less rampant than elsewhere. How to open a gate was more vital to your reputation than how to jump

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it; what exactly to do or say if suddenly you came face to face with the fox was out of all whooping more vital than to kill the fox. In fact, if you did kill that fox the fox's ghost would hunt you at least for the rest of your mortal life—perhaps through eternity—who can say?

Grand shoots at home were just the same: everything cut and dried; a forecast of the bag; six hundred pheasants and three hundred pigeons, the only 'mights' would be the woodcock. Knowing therefore what was coming, the interest shifted as to how it was coming—high or low—in great bursts or the beaters so skilfully handled that a couple of pheasants for each gun (and no more) rose from their covert at a time. Then came the personal behaviour points on which would depend whether you, a poor subaltern, would or would not be asked again. Had you properly mastered the mechanical technique of swinging your gun forward in exact co-relation to the height and velocity of the bird—could you be relied upon not to miss easy shots which some even of the high-flying type sometimes do? Had your kit, and your manner of handling the Irish stew at lunch, been passed as 'correct' by the jury of matrons who are always sitting on subalterns everywhere?

How remote—how dull—seemed these superb affairs to Henry Shaw Kennedy and myself as we crept, filled with the enticement of the unknown, towards some secluded little *jheel* or lakelet; praying that some rare and lovely birds might just have dropped in from beyond the lofty Himalayas to pay a winter visit to the warmth and to have a good quack together in what to them would be what Monte Carlo is to the folk of foggy London. Anything might happen and even when there would seem to be nothing sometimes something did happen. On our last day, after a long trek, our *jheel*—quite a small *jheel*, fringed with rushes—was drawn so blank that not even a coot cast a ripple over its surface. So Shaw Kennedy and I came together to consult his secret map as to a further move. All of a sudden 'Sahib! Sahib!!' in a gasping whisper from our local guide as he withdrew the shot-gun from my hand substituting the Snider: and then, lo and behold! at the far end of the *jheel*, very elegantly stood a blackbuck in profile against the sky. Not a moment was to be lost for he might vanish as suddenly as he had come from nowhere into nowhere. So, making the range 260 yards, I pulled the trigger. What happened to the blackbuck or to my bullet will never be known till the Day of Judgement, for from the rushes at our very feet out stepped the devil—really the creature looked like him. A monstrous boar had been lying

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in his wallow and was completely smeared over with ochrous clay. Only his vicious little eyes and gleaming white tusks seemed to stand out from the filthy mud. Why he did not instantly charge is hard to say for he was very angry—I think he was a little confused by the sound of the shot and the presence of three men close beside him. Some may say we should have stood our ground. I know these desperadoes of the dinner table! Anyway, we, quietly and of one accord, no word spoken, edged away and walked off. Next day we were due at Mooltan and if we had brought back no venison we had at least some stories to tell.

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After the arrival of the Gordons at Mooltan two or three days were spent taking over barracks and Government property, our officers meanwhile being honorary members of the 41st Mess. The bungalow I had been sharing with Shaw Kennedy was taken by Napier of ours, whilst Oxley, Adjutant of the Gordons, invited me to go shares with him in a bungalow near barracks. Lastly the Mess itself changed hands whereupon it was resolved that we should celebrate the occasion by inviting the whole of the Welch Officers to a good-bye dinner, little thinking that the fame thereof would be bruited over India, much as in older days the feast given by Belshazzar rang through the provinces of Persia. An extra good dinner was our aim, no more than that; all our golden and silver ornaments were set upon the table, and a very brave show they made. Every good Regiment puts its best foot forward on similar occasions and some bring out curious not to say startling war trophies and souvenirs. For instance, when the Suffolks dined with the 14th Hussars at Newbridge in 1873 there was passed round as a loving-cup the silver *pot de chambre* of the Great Napoleon seized upon by them when his coach was captured after the battle of Waterloo. Two or three of us felt a qualm at putting our lips to such a utensil but it would have seemed rude to have refused, and the majority said that gold or silver cups could not carry bad liquor in any shape or form.

Soon the guests began to arrive into an informal, slap-on-the-back atmosphere, for we had all got to know one another pretty well by then. Cocktails had not yet been invented and the aperitif offered was sherry or madeira, with angustura bitters shaken by drops out of a small bottle. In due course we trooped in to dinner. Here the laws of the Gordons were drastic and bore heavily on those subalterns who had less than £200 a year as their private allowances. Beer or brandies and sodas or gins and

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tonics (rather popular at that time) were forbidden even on quiet nights with only half-a-dozen officers dining in. Whiskies and sodas were unknown. We had our own mineral waters machine but it was considered an insult to Scotland to dilute the whisky. The only drinks permitted were claret or champagne during dinner; port or sherry, with coffee and liqueurs after dinner—that is to say normally. But this dinner was destined to be abnormal. There was no sign of it at first. The band played, the pipers piped, speeches were made by the two Commanding Officers, splendid-looking soldiers, our Cameron of Inverailort and Sir Hugh Rowlands, V.C., of the Welch. Then, suddenly, a gesture was made by Major George White:¹—not quite so tremendous as the writing of *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin* on the wall, but equally upsetting. He rose, he said, to propose the health of his opposite number in the 41st and as he was an Officer of superlative merit he would drink the toast in a superlative fashion. So saying he took hold of one of the huge antique salt-cellars which formed rather a feature of our plate, then, calling for whisky, and pouring in the best part of a pint he drank to the health of Wavell² of the 41st. After draining it to the last drop he swayed somewhat but held on whilst the salt-cellar was being taken round to Wavell—who, jumping up, endeavoured to bolt out of the room. Every Sub of either Regiment was after him and he was brought back to his place at the table. ‘He drank the poison and his spirit died.’ He drank, and his place at the table knew him no more for under it he fell and great was his fall. At this Cameron rose and saying to Sir Hugh Rowlands, ‘We have done our share,’ led him out of the room, leaving General Pandemonium in command. The Adjutants had to drink to one another, next the senior Captains—then the Musketry Instructors. The whisky tap ran dry. Thirteen live bottles of whisky had been turned into dead marines and gin had to be requisitioned for the salt-cellars. Several times the latest joined Welchman was brought with singing and dancing to drink with me, but Campbell, one of our Captains, a Canadian, had been ordered by Colonel Parker, Commanding the Regiment and the Station, to keep an eye on me and every time the salt-cellar was dashed, so to say, from my lips. Otherwise, in that atmosphere of mad excitement most certainly I would

¹ Afterwards Field-Marshal Sir George White, V.C., O.M., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O.

² Arthur Henry Wavell, died 1891, uncle to Field-Marshal Viscount Wavell, Viceroy of India.

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have gulped it down. So I escaped until the messman came in and spotted me as being—if not as sober as a Judge—at least in possession of most of my senses. ‘Please,’ he said, ‘come out with me at once, it is most urgent.’ It was. In the veranda were seven bodies laid out in a row like corpses. ‘Now,’ said my mentor, ‘run or ride as fast as you can down to barracks. You know the Hospital?’ ‘I’m not sure.’ ‘Well, you’d better run straight to the Main Guard and say the Adjutant has sent you to order out an ambulance and several dhoolies to proceed double-quick to the Mess—if they ask “Why?” say, nothing to raise an alarm about, but urgent all the same!’ My pony was there but I did not trust myself to ride, for whether it was the champagne or whether it was the sight of those seven semi-corpses my legs seemed to have become rather groggy. So I ran like a zig-zag down the dusty road as fast as my legs would carry me to the main guard, quite forgetting the Gordons were no longer under canvas and had shifted that very day into barracks. The challenge, ‘Halt, who goes there!’ from a Welch sentry gave another nasty shake to my fast vanishing equilibrium, for although I had escaped the salt-cellar many glasses of champagne had been swigged down, sometimes with Highland Honours and one foot on the table, sometimes with what they called Welch Honours, and both feet on the table. With a last effort I managed to get back to our own main guard where I delivered my message. Then, feeling dead to the world I told the Sergeant I would lie down and rest myself awhile when sleep overtook me and I never stirred till the grey of the dawn had set the sparrows chirping. Thus did a Sub-Lieutenant, predestined to be Colonel of the Gordons, end his first night with them in the guardroom, and yet they say we are not democratic!!!

Walking out early the next morning the Padre of the English Church was surprised to find a *sais* squatting by the edge of the road. He was holding his pony by the reins, a hurricane lantern was burning dimly by his side. Asked what on earth he was doing, he pointed to the ditch. Sound asleep, at the bottom of it lay Dick-Cunyngham, later to be V.C. and Commander of the old 92nd, the 2nd Gordons, at Ladysmith and Elands-laagte.

Our revel—orgy—call it what you will—had taken place on a Saturday night and the only Officers on the 10 a.m. Church Parade were Colonel Parker, Captain Campbell and myself. But if Officers were conspicuous by their absence on parade, the black eyes of several of them were con-

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spicuous by their presence at the dinner table that night. Only one real hospital case resulted—Harry Brooke's ear. After draining the salt-cellar he and Captain Jock Hay who lived nearby thought they would have time to reach their bungalow before they felt worse, so they made off together. But they had not gone a hundred yards before the worseness overtook them and Brooke's legs gave way. Much concerned Hay sat down and putting Brooke's head in his lap tried to bring him round. He rubbed his chest, slapped his face—still he lay like a log, until, why he never could explain further than to say it was a Russian trick—he bit his ear. As he did so Brooke gave a moan which encouraged Hay to have another bite, after which he himself fell senseless. But the ear turned septic and Brooke went about with a bandage round his head for many days.

To my thinking the sore heads and empty purses (for a quantity of glass, crockery, and even furniture was smashed) were not the worst of this big night. From the remotest corner of North-west India down to far Ceylon the story spread by underground channels and whenever we asked a Regiment to dinner they came screwed up for another 'big night', whereas we were really a moderate lot, drank far less than the old Maori War warriors of the Suffolks, and bar this one occasion I don't believe I have ever seen a drunken officer in the Mess. The whole storm in a salt-cellar arose, it may have been noticed, from the flicker of an original idea—the idea of the salt-cellar—across the brain of Major George White who had quite recently exchanged into us from the 27th Inniskillings at Peshawar; the very same sort of quick intuitive impulse which made him seize a rifle and go on alone to shoot the leader of the enemy at Charasiah, turning the battle from an indecisive, touch-and-go affair into a blazing success—that's the very most anyone can say for it.

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Let me here put in a letter to my father whom I address for the last recorded time as Papa:

Mooltan, 12th February 1874

My dear Papa,

Very many thanks for your letter and all the kind wishes which accompanied it. I am regularly settled down now and get on capitally with everyone. I think I told you that I had got into a Bungalow with Oxley, the new Adjutant. It is only a temporary arrangement though, as I am going into a Bungalow with Cunyngham during the hot weather.

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Very likely Brooke, Napier, Cunyngham and myself are going into an enormous Bungalow, quite a Palace. The rent is very heavy being 160 per month but divided among four would not be much above the ordinary run. I do not know if it was the same when you were with the Regiment but the Mess bills are enormous, the average being Rs. 250 a month equal to £300 a year. I could hardly believe it till I made up an average myself. I have paid £15 already in furnishing my Bungalow so I don't think money goes very far out here. . . .

We give a dance to the station to-morrow night and Campbell has been sending me all about the place getting dirks and swords to make stars of. There are two racquet courts here and I play regularly every day. Cameron, Parker, and White are all very good to me. Mrs. Parker is particularly nice and she has two very jolly girls, Miss Forsyths, staying with her. Campbell is going to marry a very pretty girl, a Miss Lind. Carruthers is now in the Fort, a detachment about four miles out of town. He likes it very much as he never has to bother about parades. We get a terrible amount of drill now. C.O.'s parade every morning and adjutant's drill nearly every afternoon. Two Brigade days a week in addition.

Please tell Vereker I shall write him a long letter next mail.

Believe me,

Your affecte. son

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

Best love to all at home.

These remarks of mine, betraying a lack of enthusiasm for forming four deep squares against Cavalry when there were no hostile Cavalry within a thousand miles of us, or for Trooping the Colour when there were no ladies to admire us would have got me into disgrace with old Inverailort—as we called Cameron—and even the suspicion that I held such views would have done me harm only that everyone remembered my father so well, and, luckily for me, in a very friendly way. Everyone in the Regiment called him Cocky Hamilton, but he had never told us this. As to the Mess bills I terribly grudged the whole of my pay being swallowed up by my own stomach or other people's stomachs, but that was one of the drawbacks of belonging to a crack regiment like the 92nd. Not one stranger was allowed to pass through the station but he was put up by some of us and fed on the fat of the land (Champagne in India was 10s. a bottle then) at the expense of the regiment till such time as he chose

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to move on. Fortunately very few strangers came to Mooltan for it was at the back of beyond of everywhere except Dera Ishmail Khan.

The following day Mooltan outdid itself. The ladies of the Regiment helped by some of us had worked hard for several days to decorate the Mess and its garden for it was our first treat to the station and had to be a really swell affair. There were tents for sitting out in with sofas and masses of flowers and Chinese lanterns to burn dimly. There were also what were called *kala juggas* or 'black places' with seats for two only. To make it memorable Mrs. Parker who was now Chief Lady ordained that the subalterns should not waste the time of Miss Lind or Miss Forsyth or any of the half-dozen Spins by dancing too much with them. The girls should dance with the Majors and Captains or the very charming Deputy Commissioner Monti Lang, because they might marry them, whereas they were strictly forbidden to marry subalterns, at least in the 92nd. The dance began with a tremendous lot of go, Reels and Kitchen Lancers and Waltzes and Gallops. But after midnight the guests seemed to cling more and more to the tents.

Two happenings at this ball remain embedded on my memory as vividly as if they had taken place last night. The first took place about 3 a.m. when one of my partners did not appear till the dance, a polka, was half over. When she did turn up, I thought at first she must be tipsy. She was the aunt of the wife of one of the Bengal Lancers and had been sitting out with George Chalmers in a *kala jugga* and now she was trembling all over like an aspen leaf. It wasn't drink for, when we began to dance, she felt as cold as a polar bear and I really believe it was what is called 'cold rage'. Something must have happened in the tent—and as the dance went on I began to tremble too and right glad was I when the music stopped; but when I asked her if she'd like to sit down in one of our tents and I'd bring her some champagne, she glared at me as if I was the devil incarnate so I fled into the garden.

When I came back to the ballroom there was no one in it bar our Paymaster, Swinburne, and a lady. They were standing very close together and I thought it more discreet to remain in the shadow, not that there was any idea that there could be anything of a flirtatious nature afoot, because Swinburne was the embodiment of piety, correctitude and rupees. Once a month every Officer in the Regiment went down personally to the pay office and had his silver rupees weighed out to him. The cash was then shovelled into bags made of string netting and carried

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off. That was my idea of Swinburne. As to the lady, I only knew her by sight and, of course, I had noticed her dress because this night all the latest fashions were being trotted out. That season dresses were being cut very low, lower than ever since the Garden of Eden, and in trying to be extra fashionable the native tailors from the bazaar had cut them a shade lower still. But it is the last straw that breaks the camel's back and thus it came about that this nameless lady had a slip and they fell out—I don't mean she and old Swinburne—quite the contrary—I mean her most beautiful ornaments! What a subaltern would have done heaven knows; in fact, I never heard of such a thing taking place at a ball; but religion, duty, and the habit of a lifetime came to the rescue of Swinburne and, bowing, he took the precious articles as if they were bags of rupees and with the words, 'Pardon me, Madam', shovelled them back.

One day in April I was told off by Mrs. Parker to make up a set of badminton at the Mess. Badminton was far, far worse than croquet, from which I had always tried to escape at Rhu, thereby incurring my father's displeasure. Anyhow it would be wrong of me to hide my view that badminton is a game played by hideous women and unfortunate men, the apparatus being a net, a shuttlecock and a battledore. The game couldn't be played in a wind, but there was a dead calm, and that is the point—a dead calm! Being Orderly Officer my time came to buckle on my sword and ride down to barracks to inspect the picquet, for even Mrs. Parker could not prevent that. So I got on my pony and as I did so I saw a very odd-looking, large cloud, dark yellow in colour, about a mile off. As I was looking it got rather larger and even more curious in colour, streaked with red, brown and a lighter yellow at the base. As I got to barracks I had to inspect the picquet but before I had dismounted, a mighty wind arose and such showers of dust were blown in our faces that we had to break off and it was a bit of a job to get the pony to stand up to it and take me to the veranda of the men's barracks. Having got inside it I yelled out to the *sais* to take the pony away as best he could and they vanished. Being partly sheltered I then began to think it was not so bad and would soon blow over, when all of a sudden a large tree on the far side of the square was bent double and snapped off like a carrot and whirled away, whilst I was surrounded by a whirlwind of sand with pebbles as big as buckshot or bigger hitting me and hurting too. It became *pitch* dark. At that moment a door opened and I was grabbed by the jacket and dragged backwards into the barrack room. This was one of the men,

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who, remembering where I was standing, opened the door for a second, made a rush at me and pulled me in. Although the sun had been shining a few minutes before it was so dark that literally you could not see your hand if you held it right up before your face and lamps and candles were being lit. The roaring and howling of the wind was so terrible that we were all aghast thinking the roof must be lifted clean off the barracks. Then, as suddenly as it had come, so the storm passed away. But when I got back to my own Bungalow—what a scene! Although all the doors and windows had been promptly shut by Oxley my room had been turned into a Sahara Desert. My photos of Miss Gilderdale and Miny and other pretty girls were splotted and blotched till they looked like witches and you couldn't tell the colour of a tablecloth—everything was all sand and when I thought I could start in and begin to write my Orderly Officer's report for the day I found the ink pot filled with black mud!

Old Cameron of Inverailort was very religious and thought God would be pleased if we turned out in full fig for Church Parade and most of all if the 92nd wore their kilts. But there were two drawbacks—first you had to have an extra long numdah under the saddle to prevent the kilt touching the back of the pony as you rode down; secondly, the drawback that we didn't wear drawers except at athletics or dancing on a platform. So you were apt to get the skin of your thighs pinched between the stirrup leathers and the saddle, and anyway it was not very comfortable—I mean bare-back is all very well when applied to the pony, but not to one's own backside.

The best way of putting the real feel of Mooltan in hot weather across a gulf of some 70 years is to print here verbatim a letter written by me to my brother some months after my arrival. I hope there may be some kick left in the old, clearly written script:

Mooltan, 3rd June 1874

My dear Vereker,

You are sadly lazy about writing, but I live in hope of getting a letter next mail. Thank heavens I have got the two middle months leave and shall soon get out of this dreadful place. I am getting quite knocked up by the hot weather and Roe¹ says that if I had not got the two months he would have had to send me away to the hills in August. I will give you a description of my life now.

¹ Our Regimental Doctor, Sam Roe.

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Five days out of seven I get up at 20 minutes to 5, chuck on my clothes and ride down to parade. Going about in uniform you must take care to keep your arms away from your body or else the perspiration spoils your white jacket. After parade I go round my company and get back to my Bungalow by half past six. Then either a brandy and soda or cup of tea as you feel exhausted or not and you try and sleep (in vain) for an hour or two. At eleven I shave and dress, order my pony, and taking a large white umbrella, gallop to mess as hard as I can, eat breakfast, read, sleep, and play pyramids until six p.m. I used always after this to go and play racquets and have a swim in the swimming bath but now I feel so languid and tired that I have given them up and take a long ride till dinner at 8.30 p.m. About that time one begins to brighten up and feel fit again. Next, go to bed about 11 p.m., lie awake till 3 a.m., fall into a refreshing sleep and be awakened at 4.40 a.m. Repeat this with the relief of being orderly officer every 4th day when one can lie in bed until 7, and you have a very fair picture of life in Mooltan during the hot weather. Some fellows seem to thrive on it, I must say I do not.

I am looking forward to Simla with the greatest delight. Fancy sleeping again with a blanket on one's bed and not getting up till one feels inclined. Delicious! There are two sides to everything though and the other side to this is that Simla is very expensive and I have very little money. It is all that beastly money I lost coming up country. It would have given me a fair start in furnishing my Bungalow, etc., and I should have been rolling in wealth. There are not many men at Simla but lots of ladies. I hear the 92nd are in great request at the balls etc. as we happen to be the only kilted regiment in India just now. Papa's purse is too tarnished to wear at balls so I have borrowed another to take up there. I have got a letter of introduction to Lady Napier and a lot of the big wigs. I am so very glad to hear what a success your chocolate maid was. Shall you go on with your painting in Italy? I am bound for Dera Ismail Khan next October. I have applied for it and it has been promised to me as my company was going. I hope I shall be able to economize there. You should look on the map and see where it is. On the very frontier.

Best love to all at home. I am sending this to Laggary where I hope you will get it.

Believe me,

Your affectionate brother,

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

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See that Aunt Camilla gets something for Uncle Archie. Tell Aunt Camilla that Grant is now my batman and is very well. Pray don't imagine from this letter that I am at all *seedy*. I am only like everyone else, languid and peevish.

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The foregoing screed should be enough to give some notion of Mooltan in the hot weather, for there is more freshness in something written about heat when the beads of perspiration are dropping off the end of one's nose than there can be in something put down long afterwards in the cool comfort of England.

III

SIMLA

(1874)

*'Oh wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!'*

The above aspiration by a modest though rather wayward genius will serve very well as a heading for a chapter describing the accidents which befell a young brither Scot: all that is needed is to change the second word of the second line from 'see' into 'show' and you may take it as a plea from me to the All Powerful, to incline the 'ithers' to follow with interest my actual footprints on the sands of Time.

Having said so much, it strikes me that, in common fairness, the 'ithers' should also be reminded that never probably, since the Garden of Eden, have there been so many changes, some subtle, some violent, as have been compressed by Providence into the past seventy years. Without going into great battles and great disasters let me take one matter of fact item—take the changes wrought in life by petrol. Imagine what it would have meant to me, at Mooltan, during that first fortnight of that grilling June 1874, had it been possible to let myself drop into a motor car for 'an airing' from 11 p.m. to midnight. *An airing!*—Effortless motion in a land whose air was lying dead upon the dust!! In my day the nearest that could be got to air was to have the 'chicks' on the outside of the veranda rolled up as soon as I had gone to Mess in the hope that a puff or two of freshness might somehow creep into the oven (for that was what my room became) to keep me alive for the next twenty-four hours. From those breathless nights I have inherited a keen sense of pity for all strangled things—from goldfish in a used-up bowl of water to flowers in a vase whose contents the housemaids never change: very often in London or Scotland the thought of them gasping all alone in the darkness comes on me so strongly that I fill a little can with fresh water and slip down in my pyjamas to the drawing-room to refill the half-emptied vases to their brims. Sometimes the water overflows and then they think me mad—I am not; they have never served a hot weather at Mooltan—that's all.

SIMLA

As things were, in those old days, I would get back from Mess, exhausted in mind, body, and purse by two hours' walking round the billiard table; strip off my mess kit; pull on my pyjamas; then waving a towel round my head to drive off pursuing mosquitoes, dart beneath the gauzy refuge of the net. Once tucked in the thermantidote would be set going. The thermantidote was a contraption like the paddle wheel of a steamer enclosed in a huge wooden case. Worked by hand it directed a current of air upon a *cus-cus tattie*. The *cus-cus tattie* is a huge doormat made of the roots of an aromatic grass supposed to be kept soaked by the coolie who squatted by it with a bucket or two of water. The jet of hot air driven thus through the wet *cus-cus* mat did get cooled by as much as fifteen degrees, and let me assure everyone that those degrees between 85° F. and 100° F. are vital and well worth the big bite they take out of a subaltern's pay. The worst of it was that one of the two coolies was sure to fall asleep. No doubt you had put handy some slippers, hair-brushes, and razor strops to throw at him but to put your hand *out* might let half a dozen mosquitoes *in* and although, after the hurling of one of those missiles the thermantidote would blow a mimic gale into the room, carrying off your papers from your desk, yet too surely it would gradually sizzle down and down until once again it would become a snore. Probably my little *tableau vivant* of a June night in Mooltan is as much out of date as Warren Hastings and the battle of Plassy. But it was quite as real in its day as the battle of Plassy seemed to be to Warren Hastings, the memory of which is non-stop: still Indian mothers croon to their babies:--

*'Gora per howdah hathi per jeen
Isa bhagjata Warren Hasteen.'*¹

The man in the street then will understand how, partly perhaps owing to my youth, Mooltan had made me by the beginning of my leave as limp as a rag and dog-tired all day long. The morning of 15.6.74 brought me new life. Never, before or since, have I drunk so deeply of the elixir of life, and now that the portals of my 90th birthday have closed upon me with an iron clang, never again, unless God in His mercy were to grant me an entry into Paradise. But how to translate my sensations of escaping from heat, so that dwellers in high latitudes may understand them? Last night they may have lain dreaming of wolves and frozen Russians

¹ 'Howdahs on horses, saddles on elephants
Thus hastily fled they from Warren Hastings.'

amongst snow-drifts. How will they switch their imaginations on to the vision of a perspiring youth being lifted out of the heat and the dust of the plains into the gigantic clasp of the Himalayas?

Through the heart of the night he had been travelling from Umballa in a *dâk-ghari*. In case you have never seen or heard of a *dâk-ghari*, know that it is a Noah's Ark placed without interposing springs on four wheels and dragged along at a canter by two horses. On the floor my *resai* or cotton quilt had been spread; my prayers had been said and I had tried to sleep. Dark was the night; not a star could pierce the thick cloud of dust which stretched half-way up to Heaven. My sleep was fitful and unhappy until at midnight it was broken by an elephant. Half-way between Umballa and Kalka comes a river; what its name is I forget—the Gagga perhaps: we came to the river, the horses were taken out and lo and behold! the darkness gave birth to an elephant who pushed us across the river bed filled with rocks, sands and boulders, by using his head and trunk with astonishing dexterity. Take a child's perambulator and try to push it across a street with your clenched fist; you will find it apt to run crooked. But the elephant made no mistake. When the river was in flood, they told me, he would condescend to be harnessed and to pull travellers across—not unless. No one, alas, will be able to share my feelings about that elephant! If one of my readers were to meet an elephant in Piccadilly Circus after supper at the Savoy his friends would only say: 'Well, it might easily have been worse!' Meeting him when and where I did, I can only say that the impression that black elephant made upon me when he came surging up through the blackness into the torchlight and treated my Noah's Ark as if it were a matchbox cannot be transplanted out of my dreamland where there is always a welcome awaiting him.

By the time we got to Kalka at the foot of the hills, dawn was breaking. That is how you would put it in England; in India you should say the minas were squawking, a mina being a vulgar noisy bird about twice the size of a starling. A cup of tea, then another, then another, then ten times more toast than usual and then into a *tonga* or small, two-seated vehicle, harnessed like a horse-artillery gun to a pair of galloping ponies. In my mood at the moment I felt as if I was getting into the chariot of fire which bore old Elijah up as in a whirlwind to heaven; and had I known everything instead of next door to nothing I would have been aware that my high-flying simile was truly not so far off the mark; for, though it will vex the souls of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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people to hear it, if those ponies were to turn sulky and jib, a real fire of sticks and straw would speedily be lit under the pit of their bellies.

Next—at a bend of the road—at a stop to change ponies, a spring of fresh water was bubbling and gurgling out of the hillside and ran first over silver sand and then lush green grass and the smell of pines was in the air—a clear cool air which transfigured every pine needle, every blade of grass. Oh! that never-to-be-forgotten thrill as the sluggish blood began to pulse free and strong through flabby veins, making me keen set and hungry; hungry for food for the first time for two months; hungry for adventure; hungry for everything or anything. From that point each mile we galloped upwards into the sky a fresh gift—a flower, an insect—a fern—something quite foreign to Mooltan, dropped into my lap whilst the plains far beneath looked more and more like a large coloured map, until, as our souls will some day break the last thread binding them to the conflicts and sweat of Mother Earth, I found myself spinning along in a rickshaw propelled by a couple of strange-looking hill coolies and pulled by two in front through the main street of Simla; and was half persuaded I was being wafted along somewhere in another world. No wonder! for it was as unlike any street at home as the Grand Canal of Venice is unlike Princes Street. On one side the houses were blasted or pickaxed into niches in the *khud* or steep hillside; on the other they overhung the precipice, precariously shored or propped up by beams of wood and iron bars, to keep them from rolling a couple of thousand feet down. Every atom of my attention and interest should have been absorbed at such a moment by these extraordinary surroundings but, somehow, out of the excitement in my mind, there arose the rhythm of an old love song and I began to hum Annie Laurie. At that very instant (as if I had chanced to rub the magic lamp of Aladdin) a shining rickshaw appeared, spick and span as a fairy coach; it was going the other way; the *jampannies* or rickshaw men were dressed in gay blue and red uniforms and wore red fezes on their heads; behind them was seated a girl anyone could see at half a glance was the loveliest of her sex.

One look she gave me—one smiling look—that was enough—it passed through my eyes and pierced my heart. Too many emotions in one forenoon beginning with an elephant and ending with a girl whose sheer loveliness had taken away my breath had been too much for me and it was more an automaton than a man who sought out the Secretary of the U.S. Club and was shown the room Major White had chosen—a large



Sally Graham



The Real Mate (Sir John Astley) and The Pseudo Mate
(Spencer Astley) his brother (inset)

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room two storeys up on the *khud* side. The whole club being quarried out of the flank of the mountain, my window at the back looked on to a sheer cliff of rock at a distance of about ten yards. But daylight enough came in to save the room from being too gloomy for reading or writing, and a little wooden bridge thrown across the gulf gave access to a corkscrew path winding upwards towards the top of the tall central massif of Simla called Jacko—an ugly name for a superb mountain, bestowed, probably, because of the number of monkeys who inhabited it. 'Ordinarily, of course,' said the Secretary, 'your exit would be by the staircase and out at the front door into the main road.' This gave me an opening to ask a question which had been trembling on the tip of my tongue all the time. 'Speaking of the main road,' I remarked, 'just before reaching the Club, a very smart turnout came bowling along with *jampannies* in red and blue. Can you say who the young lady would be likely to be who was in it? I only ask because I fancy I have seen her somewhere before.' Smilingly he replied, 'You are right, you have seen her before, several times,' then noting my surprise (for I had only invented my pre-knowledge of the angelic being as an excuse) he added, 'I think it must have been Miss Sally Graham whose photos are so often in the papers and even on the book-stalls with those of the Jersey Lily and one or two others.' Good Heavens! I thought, Good Lord!! The love of the moth for the star. But my feelings remained unchanged and were indeed precisely those of a moth on a warm midsummer's night.

Having tidied myself up and put on what Charles Douglas (because he was jealous) had nicknamed, 'The lad's reach-me-down dittoes,' really several cuts above any of his sealed-pattern sort of clothes, I ran down to tiffin where I met our own Major George White of salt-cellar fame as well as our own George Chalmers, the bold soldier who had danced with the Aunt of the Bengal Lancer. So I began to feel quite at home, being introduced to half-a-dozen members, amongst them Mr. Howard Hensman, a big bug in the Club, also (as we used to say at school) in an 'over the left' way, in the cream of Simla society, representing as he did, *The Pioneer*, the principal paper in India. Holding that post not only had he to try to keep himself in personal touch with the Viceroy himself and the Commander-in-Chief but it was sometimes useful to *them* to make use of *him*; moreover, it was whispered of several Members of the Supreme Council that they dropped into his large ears some of their most deadly secrets, trusting to his discretion and trusting, too, that the paper would

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back up their own side of the question to which there were usually two sides. Nor should it be forgotten that these swells had wives, for certainly Hensman himself never forgot it. Indeed I am sure he was always on the look-out for a Delilah so that he might with her aid plough his allotment of print space at the expense of some Samson on the Supreme Council. Here he was on dangerous ground for, as a beautiful friend of mine afterwards made me aware, Simla womenkind are far more dangerous than the go-by-the-ground ladies of the plain. And the devil of it is that at Simla the visit of a gentleman to a lady is advertised to all the other ladies by the fact that his *sais* and pony stand waiting at the door of the house whose secrets he is probing, and if it is for the sake of his forthcoming article in the *Pioneer* it is known to everyone in advance. As my favourite author Jean Paul Richter had taught me when I studied him in Dresden, 'Every woman is jealous of her whole sex, not because her husband, but because all other men run after it and thus become unfaithful to her.'

In the Club the members, mostly juniors, did not care two straws about Hensman's political or military or financial views; but he more than held his own amongst us by being a very fine card-player, keen on sweepstakes and wiser than most on most matters. Regularly, once a week, Hensman would absent himself from the felicities of poker so as carefully to load and then discharge to Allahabad an assortment of good and evil reports, from the hat worn by the wife of a Lieutenant-Governor to the march of armies in Afghanistan. Small folk as well as big would come in for a spanking because praise is sickly stuff to swallow compared with blame. Even in a real bombardment a shell is sometimes used for a beneficent purpose. Many years later than these Simla adventures, to wit on Christmas Day, 1899, a huge plum-pudding was fired by the Boers on to the plateau held against them by the half-starving 1st Manchesters; and it came to pass that their Commander, a far-away strange gentleman to be known by the name of Colonel Ian Hamilton, had to eat a large slice of it to give confidence to the troops who had been told that this was a typical trick by the 'slim' Boers who had of course seasoned it with poison. Hensman had to fire off metaphorical plum-puddings at the swells of both sexes who had brought grist to his mill but he sold more copies of his paper if he put in a little spice. The Columnists and Paragraphists who play a leading part in running the British Empire from Fleet street to-day realize this full well—indeed they are the descendants of Howard Hensman and follow the technique of their grandfather. That

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is one reason why so full an account has been written of him that it only remains to be said he was one of the kindest and best. The three or four preceding paragraphs would furnish matter wherewith to make a play of 'Simla in 1874', or better, a chapter entitled 'Simla at Play in 1874'. The Club and its Members would be the setting; the leading lady would, of course, be Sally Graham; the cast would be filled by young ladies who had left their husbands in the plains and other young ladies seeking husbands in the hills—the Staffs of the Viceroy and C.-in-C. would keep the ball a-rolling and the Member of Council who bartered secrets for sugar plums would be the villain. But a record of frivol and flirtation would carry me too far from India on which Simla has about as much real grip as our King and Court would have on England if they adjourned every summer to Iceland. Therefore, I will only attempt to chronicle one or two side-shows of that season which, for one reason or another, caused me to sit up and take notice. My natural urge would have led me to seek the bubble reputation everywhere and anywhere, but I was in love and the love bubble explodes all other bubbles it touches. And my love was unrequited, or at the most played with by sweet Sally. Whether in the ball-room or on horseback she outclassed all rivals, and of her kindheartedness often distinguished me and infuriated A.D.C.'s and other star partners by selecting me as her cavalier. For this my heart is grateful but she never took me seriously; although I must have been nearly as old as she was she would persist in treating me as a small boy.

Major George White of Ours had become a lover. He was in no sense a philanderer. As soon as he saw someone whose eyelash or dimple or figure or laugh or foot caught his fancy he galloped after them and chanced catching a Tartar. He was just double my age but of a fiery and swift decision as shown by the salt-cellar affair. With him the wish was not the father to the thought but the act. So when he wished to get married to a pretty girl with ruddy golden hair he got himself engaged and married and off on his honeymoon hey presto! Her name was Amy and she was the only daughter of Archdeacon Baly of Calcutta. The very night the engagement was announced there was a ball and, of course, next day they were married. The important thing about this marriage was that she would become my Boss in a way as being second only to Mrs. Parker amongst the ladies of the Regiment. Thus it was a great honour that I had been allowed to have a dance with her and was meant to give me an opening to her good graces. Half-way through we stood

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for half a minute's breather, for dancing was dancing in those days, none of your hopping about like a frog with corns on a hot brick, and it was up to me to try and make my good impression. Too soon alas! she noticed (for she was sharp as a needle with two eyes) that my attention was absent without leave. Suddenly, I gave a jump and in a tone of anger mixed with anguish exclaimed, 'The damned fool has bumped her head!' The damned fool was the partner of the divine Sally. But Amy Baly told the story to her Major and so it got through to the Regiment.

A storm in a teacup! Anyway, the next storm was to be on the scale of an earthquake which would shake India (which is still shaking, though it does not know the reason, and puts it down to Congress and Gandhi and everything and anything rather than 'The Mate').

In the U.S. Club was residing a Card—the Joker of the Pack—we called him 'The Mate'. The real Mate was a famous figure in England and many thought, though he had never said so, that our club was being honoured by a visit from the veritable Simon Pure. Actually ours was a younger brother, Spencer Astley, who was serving with his Regiment in India. Mrs. Soames, daughter of the real Mate, has written me an amusing description of life at Elsham: 'It was the oddest household ever! Into this few penetrated. Of the Astley uncles, Uncle Hugo did—he was the worldly one—not a favourite with the poor sat-on, mice-like nieces. Uncle Thurlow came once, and set his four-poster bedstead on fire. He left by earliest train next morning in *dire* disgrace. Then Uncle Spencer used to come—I see him now, slightly slouchingly seated next door to his alarming sister-in-law Lady Astley. . . . We only saw him at lunch, the only time we ventured from the schoolroom into the alarming presence of our Mama.'

The real Mate, Sir John Dugdale Astley, was a prodigious fellow and as it is well that the present generation should have some idea of the appearance of a hero of the English sporting world of the seventies, I append a portrait. As to Spencer Astley, as will be seen by the sequel, he was a real chip of the Astley block and in every respect a reproduction of a sporting Squire of 200 years ago. Naturally this 'time slip' brought him right into touch with the Indian Princes and Rich Bankers who adored him.

He had been followed up to Simla by the most fantastic crowd of people: also crates of animals and fighting cocks. He would sit the clock round, with natives in the bazaar, gambling, whilst the blood of many

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feathered duellists spattered the sides of the arena. This was child's play though, to the rams. Let two express trains run full split at one another on a single line and you would hardly get a more vivid sensation of smash than by watching two huge rams go for one another across seventy yards of turf. In fact, it gives me a headache even to think about it. Buffalo bulls too had to perform but more money changed hands on quail, who were perhaps the most pugnacious of 'The Mate's' pets; all you had to do was to put a pinch of birdseed down on a table, then let two quail go from opposite sides of the table. As each quail is about to pick up a seed flick his beak away with your finger, then let them meet one another. All these excitements, however, would pale before wrestling. 'The Mate' had a bodyguard of wrestlers and his own personal body servant or bearer was a famous *Pulwân* or wrestler. After-events caused this to be investigated and he really did help him on with his clothes and do genuine bearer's work.

The prize for wrestling in the British Army had been won that year by a bombardier of the Royal Artillery. To the Officer commanding his Battery 'The Mate' issued a challenge backing his bearer for Rs. 500 against the bombardier. The challenge was accepted; the match was to take place at Jutogh the station of a Mountain Battery not far from Simla and on a perfect July day the whole of Society on horseback or in rickshaw migrated to Jutogh. But, they had reckoned without their host—a real host of hillmen from all the surrounding country; men, women, and children had flocked in their thousands on to the hillsides overlooking Jutogh giving them a creepy look until the *tamasha* began, when they sat quiet and everything seemed powdered with dirty snow. Although this big crowd were too far off to be able to follow the wrestlers in the ring, they were all there in the sense that the gods in a theatre are all there, holding views of their own very likely at variance with those of the swells in the boxes and stalls.

A trumpet blew the fall-in and the contest began. The niceties of the art of wrestling were unknown to me then and remain so still. The bombardier was a beautifully proportioned figure of an athlete. At a boxing match by his footwork and striking force he should have knocked out his opponent easily within two or three rounds. The bearer was a huge beefy mass of flesh though, as it turned out, he must have been pretty fit to stand the racket as he did. Indeed I have learnt since that the training takes a year; it implies perfect chastity and aims at combining strength with

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bulk and weight. The champions closed, broke away, gripped one another again and again in close hugs each trying to bear the other down, to trip him up or to break his back and hold him helpless on the ground. Clearly there were certain rules to which the wrestlers were bound to conform and to keep an eye on these the Seconds and Judges were kept busy dancing round to see exactly what was what. For a long time this went on. Since Jacob wrestled a whole night with the Angel and came off limping but having won by some of his many low-down tricks—never has there been a more sensational moment than when the bombardier putting out his last ounce of energy lifted the huge *Pulwân* right up in the air, dashed him down and then fell on top of him. Alas! for the British Army! Within the womb of that last moment of triumph lay defeat. How exactly the trick was done it would take a wrestler to say, but somehow in falling the crafty *Pulwân* had managed to wangle a *peinch*, the equivalent of throwing a spanner into the machinery. Thereby, the bombardier must either yield his position of top dog or have his leg broken. So as they lay writhing and rolling there out of the confused mess the bearer emerged as conqueror.

The moment the decision was given a shrill clamour arose as the whole of the crowd on the hills came rushing violently down the steep places, capering, dancing and shouting as they converged on to the small plateau of Jutogh. Some devil had taken possession of these gentle, docile hill folk. Roughly and rudely they pressed in to give an ovation to the *Pulwân* hustling the departure of the Britons—rather an unpleasant, indeed an alarming, experience for the ladies. Not for the intrepid Sally Graham—oh no! As cavalier in attendance for the day and mounted by luck on a lovely Arab, I had been longing for a chance to prove myself worthy of the honour and had a bear come out of the forest I would have considered it my opportunity and rushed to embrace it. Things come tumbling out of Dame Fortune's lucky bag in quite a topsy-turvy style, however, and it was this intrepid little daughter of the great House of Graham, carrying possibly in her veins a corpuscle or two of blood inherited from Claverhouse himself, who was to protect me! Her pony being handy she was in the saddle before the rush had reached us. My pony and *sais*, however, were nowhere to be found. As we used to say at Cheam School, they had done a bunk. 'Come on,' cried Sally, treating the mob as if they were out for her amusement and shaking her little riding switch as if it had been a sword at anyone who offered to touch the reins or head of her mount.

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'Come on!' and very soon we found my pony, a dark grey Arab of great price lent by a political Agent to a Maharajah staying at the Club. The *sais* had taken refuge in the stable of the Battery Commander so I jumped into the saddle and all was well. My charger bounded and snorted and caracoled as if he were Marengo and made the crowd who, like all Highlanders, fought very shy of horses, scatter to let us pass. As a matter of fact, no European was hurt at Jutogh but next week an order in Council was signed by Lord Northbrook and Lord Napier of Magdala which forbade athletic competitions between British and Indian troops, an order I believe to be still in existence.

Never, it might have been thought, had there been a finer field of fire for Hensman's descriptive pen—eagerly the *Pioneer* was scanned—not a word! Possibly the shocking events of the night which followed may have given him a headache!

*On Simla when the sun was low
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow
But when the sun had gone to bed
In Simla many noses bled.*

Yes, that night at the U.S. Club, believe it or not, cannon balls flew and wigs fell upon the board of green cloth y'clept 'the billiard table'. The storm arose during a game of pyramids. At the moment, Astley—'The Mate'—was playing. George Chalmers of Ours was looking on, standing at the centre of the table. Rightly or wrongly there was a strong feeling of irritation amongst us soldiers against Astley for having been the promoter of this wrestling business: had we won it might have passed off as a good joke—otherwise it became an offensive joke. Amongst the civilians whose pride had not been hurt he had support. In the course of the game Astley called out to Chalmers to pass him the rest for his cue. Chalmers answered, 'Get your sham bearer to do it.' 'Go to the devil,' said Astley, 'and take your muttony fist off the table.' Those were the exact words. I had never heard them before nor have I heard them since, or seen them written. Heaven knows then how many 'n's' there should be in 'muttony'. Chalmers' instant retort was a pyramid ball at Astley's head. Another moment and the two flew at each other with their fists. We were assembled in a good place for a bad row, stocked with missiles and billiard cues. Not being drunk and seeing no personal enemy to

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attack; seeing, too, that glass from the pictures began to fly about mixed up with the billiard balls, I threw myself under the table until the two principals, who had knocked themselves and been knocked by free-lance billiard cuers to pieces, were being supported into the passage. I escaped without so much as a scratch into my room upstairs and double locked the door. He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day but then I had not even fought. My prudent conduct saved me from one of the black eyes or puffed up, purple noses which decorated the tiffin table next day, but it did not save me from having to pay the two gold mohurs at which my share of the damage was assessed by the Committee of Public Safety appointed by the Club, and it would have been a shabby excuse to say I couldn't have cut the cloth on the top of the billiard table as I had been underneath it.

The Astley *fracas* was the beginning of the end for me. My leave was up and my money was down. The last crushing blow befell me as a result of years of neglect of the precepts of my good Aunt Camilla who used to carry me off at fixed intervals to see Doctor Buchanan, boss dentist of Glasgow; not once, alas! had I visited any member of that distinguished confraternity of scientists since Sandhurst had set me free. My own character as a soldier is not cutting much of a dash in these accounts. Still, the story must be told because this dentistry adventure played a signal part in my destiny; indeed, it might fairly be argued that my whole career has turned upon a tooth. So here goes!

At Simla, on leave, like myself was a 2nd Lieutenant of the Indian Army attached for a year to a British Regiment on probation. (I won't give his name because I rather think he is alive and although there was no harm done he mightn't like it.) Well, he was very hard up but that didn't prevent him from having toothache. At Simla also resided the great Dr. O'Meara, uncrowned king of the Indian dentists. Driven by pain the poor youth made a date with O'Meara. As he sat swizzling in the swivel chair he had nerve enough left to pitch the yarn of his lack of rupees to O'Meara whilst he for his part was stuffing gold and silver and all sorts of precious metals into the hollow tooth. So much silver and too little silver meeting thus in one person seem to have cancelled out one another for, when the patient asked what he had to pay, the dentist replied with a courtly bow that the honour of saving so young a tooth as that of a 2nd Lieutenant would suffice!

Generally speaking, generosity is reserved for the rich so the noble gift

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of the dentist pleased me very much as soon as I heard tell of it; besides, I myself had only been a Lieutenant for about a month and it struck me that if my teeth were not looked over now the Lord only knew when a dentist would appear at Mooltan or Dera Ishmail Khan. So, the last day but one of my leave the appointment was made. Doctor O'Meara was shocked, so he said, and so was his patient. Five fine teeth were well on their way to perdition. A stitch in time saves five. Dr. O'Meara set to work and by noon had finished the restoration. In answer to my question he said, 'My charge to you will be a gold mohur per tooth!' After paying my Club bills, tips, tonga, etc., my fortune at that moment was Rs. 100: a gold mohur equals Rs. 16; five times 16 equals 80; Rs. 80 in sterling equalled in those days £8 less two or three shillings. The notes were produced and after they had changed hands I had about twenty shillings left with which to get from Umballa to Mooltan. Of course I could have gone to my Patron and Chief, Major White, who would at once have lent me Rs. 50 or Rs. 500 for that matter. But I was afraid he would chaff me if I asked him to pay for my teeth. Another word before I start on one of the queerest journeys of my vagrant life. Although he charged well he had worked well. At ninety years of age I have not a false tooth in my head and two of the few teeth I have are veterans drilled in their youth by Doctor O'M!

Neither time, space, nor inkpot will hold one quarter of my doings on the 14th of August 1874 when the *tonga* galloped away with me and my troubles into the steamy plains where the dust had gone, the rains were come and the blue clouds on the horizon were the mountains where Sally had begun to forget me. My own tears too were beginning to yield to fears lest my rupees should prove too few to buy me a ticket to Mooltan. Sure enough on arrival at the railway station I found I had not money for a second class or even for what used to be called intermediate. Only for third. Here a word of explanation must be offered to some of the practical people who may chance to read these remarks. Why, they may ask, why on earth did you not (1) look into a time-table at your Club and find out the fare for certain before you started; (2) go 3rd class? As to (1) I was in love; as to (2) no European in India, not even the meanest of whites, travelled 3rd; it was not done and the Indians would not have liked it if it had been done sixty-nine years ago.

However, there was no way out of it that I with my short-range human vision could perceive and the 3rd class ticket was bought. Up

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came the train and out of the window of the carriage which drew up exactly opposite me popped the head of Bisset. Bisset was a Superintendent of Railways or something like that. These officials in India do themselves well. He had a whole carriage fitted up with kitchen; lots of space for servants and baggage; a luxurious sitting-room and a bedroom; pretty good for one who, had he stuck to the Army, would only have been a subaltern. 'Hullo, Hamilton!' he exclaimed, 'where are you off to?' 'Mooltan,' I replied, 'my leave is up to-morrow.' 'Glad to see you on my beat,' he said, 'jump in and we'll have supper together and then you'd best doss down here; you'll be more comfortable than in an ordinary carriage: we're not due in Lahore till the morning!' Sensing my Heavenly Guardian at my elbow, I hopped in and after a drink began to retail the latest Simla gossip or *gup* as they call it out there. But, business had to be attended to by my host and in the course of it the European Guard looked in to ask some question or other. Seeing me in the carriage he said, 'We are just starting, sir; may I see your ticket?' Of course, he *might* have got the tip from the babu at the ticket office but I rather think not and that he merely wished to snip the darned thing. Anyway, I might as well have produced the egg of a cockatrice or a live scorpion out of my waistcoat pocket as that horrible pink ticket—the Guard was clean dumbfounded and I felt like a detected cardsharper or pickpocket. 'You've made a mistake, my dear fellow,' said Bisset, 'that is your servant's.' 'Not at all,' I said, 'it's all I have in the world at present,' and was about to explain my false position when the absurdity of telling them about the dentist and that the price of the ticket was in my teeth, struck me so forcibly that I burst out laughing. Bisset began to laugh too, and then he turned to the Guard and said, 'Look here, Guard, this will be all right; I'll see to that and to-morrow morning at Lahore, when my carriage comes off the train, I'll ask you to take Mr. Hamilton on and see him through; I'll be responsible.' Then, over a cosy supper, as the luxurious saloon carriage bowled along, I told my story and promised to send in the price of a 2nd Class ticket as soon as I got to Mooltan.

IV

BACK TO MOOLTAN

(1874)

During those last two months of the leave season (mid-August to mid-October) Mooltan had surely become the most dead-alive spot, or blot, on the map. Towards the end of September the hive would begin to hum, ever so faintly, when you put your ear to it—so at least we were informed by Monti Lang the Deputy Commissioner. ‘The quail’ (in olden days that ‘manna’ which kept a lot of long-noses on their legs)—‘the quail will be in’—thus spake Monti Lang, Deputy-Commissioner:—‘The quail will begin to come in; the mosquitoes will begin to go out.’ By that same date we soldiers should find ourselves furbishing up our buttons for an inspection by the Divisional General, a V.C. man from Lahore, reputed an iconoclast, a Communist, a man whose ruling idea was to reduce all Regiments to a flat uniformity by whittling away their traditions. Meanwhile ‘nothing doing’ was the text of the pale and perspiring Gordons as well as of their weekly letters home, meaning thereby swimming baths, pyjamas, siestas, pyramids, cards and just as much soldiering work as would keep a poor subaltern from getting into trouble. Also there were those new seductive gins and tonic. Anyone who wishes to establish the exact date when the brandy *pawnée* of Jos Sedley the Collector of Boggley Wollah in *Vanity Fair* in 1800 and the brandy and *belatti pani* of the ‘sixties were dislodged in favour of whisky and soda or gin and tonic, may take it from me that it was during the autumn of 1874: the Regiment had bought on spec. a new aerated waters machine and had had it sent out from England. The slightly bluish colour of its tonic water was supposed to be given it by a quarter of a grain of quinine making it into a febrifuge which again made it almost a duty ‘to have another’ not only in Mooltan, but also in Lahore where they bought it from us by the barrel and swilled it by the bucketful.

Mooltan had, in fact, been under the weather and had been going downhill whilst I had been up in the hills. The easy thing to do was to let myself

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slide. But the pine-scented breezes of the Himalayas had bathed my tired nerves; my fancy had been fed with visions of snow-capped mountains; my heart, that marvellous little ticker, had been freshly wound up by the delicate, pointed fingers of the loveliest of her sex, now it was pumping so much 'go' into me that swimming baths and pyjamas, pyramids and pool were not worth the candle; we had not started polo yet and I felt in every fibre of my being that I must get my teeth into something solid and serious. As to the why and wherefore I had only the crudest philosophy to guide me, my own personal philosophy. Life, it seemed to me, was in the main a struggle against death. The world was a battlefield. Some very odd spiders sat on their webs in my bungalow, spiders with immensely long legs to keep their small behinds a safe distance from the wasps they entangled. By night they had perhaps a good sleep. But no: the corpses of the moths told another tale: all night long the spiders had been busy at their business. One day a mina flew into the room and swallowed one spider after another so that in the end all their murders had not cheated death.

A soldier, a true soldier, it seemed to me, was the one exception to this general rule of struggle against death. To him the call of danger was the call of duty—he must behave as if he *wanted* to lose his life, even seeking out danger, putting himself into the hands of God and if he was to get through, get through he would; and God certainly does take an interest in our struggles against death—'Give us this day our daily bread' is the sign.

Viewed from another angle life is a race between millions of atoms, small-fry or super-men, each paddling his own canoe. Should any one of them be moved by an impulse to push up stream faster than the rest of the flotilla, slack tide will offer him a good opening. This was to me an epitome of the struggle going on everywhere—a struggle not only for survival but priority.

I have put down these crude ideas in my effort to explain that sudden urge, inexplicable both to myself and my comrades, which caused me to devote every moment I could spare from barracks and parades to working like a steam-engine, with an old grey-bearded Moonshi as stoker. He had made me the sporting offer to pass me for the Lower Standard exam. in Hindustani at Lahore for the sum of Rs. 100—no Pass no Pay. No-one had advised me to do so: my bank account had recovered from the Simla U.S. Club and from Dr. O'Meara the dentist, and his five gold mohurs.

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Entirely on my own I set myself to sweat mind as well as body harder, much harder, than if I had been back with Captain Lendy the Crammer. Late hours at pyramids and pool as well as rising at 4 a.m. to shoot quail at 5 a.m. were stoically turned down in favour of exam. books, *Bagh-o-Behar* or the *Garden of Spring*, and other awful nightmares. Only my father's prestige saved me from complete disgrace. As it was, Captains and Subalterns joined in pulling my leg and in doing their utmost to beat this bee, or hornet, out of my bonnet. The most ingenious of these stunts was carried out by Captain Kellie McCallum of Braco, whose wife was a novelist of some repute, which accounts I suspect for the milk in the cocoa-nut. McCallum purported to have come into my room to see me and to have found me out both in the literal and in the metaphorical sense. On my table lay an Army List and wishing to refresh his mind on some trifle of regimental import he opened it at the 92nd Gordons page. What was his surprise when he found that everyone senior to my own self had been stroked out, a few by a black line, the majority with red ink. Here, evidently, he said, was the 92nd as it was to be in about five years' time. The blacks were dead. They had died of old age. The reds were rich and had retired to their estates, or else they had broken their necks pig-sticking or steeple-chasing or had fallen down precipices when pursuing ibex. Anyway the skit amused everyone including myself and now it has come to be believed almost even by myself. Otherwise the Captains and Subalterns set about the business of wheeling me into the sealed-pattern line very kindly. Indeed now I look back I can see that I was treated with the utmost indulgence—for in truth I was flying in the face of the unwritten law of the old 92nd 'form' or tradition. Until that date—1874—we had never had one officer volunteer for anything; not for the Staff College; not for Active Service, still less for an absurdity like an exam. in an oriental language. We went where we were told; we fought where we were told; we sought no personal reward; a very proud stand to take up in face of a pushing, self-seeking world; there was a great deal to be said for it and it was said, freely—to me.

Here was one out of many samples:—at Egmont-op-Zee, General Moore, afterwards famous at Corunna, was carried off the battlefield, desperately wounded and unconscious, by two soldiers of the Gordons who having placed him in safe hands went back into battle. Anxious to get the names of his two saviours the General offered each of them a reward of £20 if they would make themselves known, but, in keeping

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with the custom of the clan never to touch money for succouring a friend or killing an enemy, they remain unknown to this day. Afterwards, when Moore was knighted, he chose for his Armorial Bearings a Gordon Highlander in full dress. At Corunna it was, I believe, the Gordons who supplied the burial party, but the poem, 'Not a sound was heard, not a funeral note,' started several false claims to have been the Regiment who buried him. It would have been curious indeed if another Regiment had been chosen when his own armorial supporters were standing by.

So there was a lot to be said in favour of a Gordon resting and being thankful for his good fortune in being a Gordon, even if only by adoption. I agreed; that is to say the quite simple and work-a-day Subaltern, sometimes called Johnnie-Head-in-Air, agreed. But there was another fellow hanging about him like his shadow who made himself fully known now for the first time. He was my Genius or Familiar or whatever anyone may like to call that other invisible and innermost self who leaps out and grasps the reins during a crisis. Having done so he forces me to question and resist or withdraw myself from the paramount Authority or Boss of the moment. In this case, however, the Bosses were my Mess-mates and I could not cut myself off entirely from the lighter side of regimental life.

The following letter to my brother Vereker describes working for the Lower Standard in Hindustani and a quail shoot with Harry Dick-Cunyngham, one of the best, who lived in the next bungalow:

Mooltan, 6th September 1874

My dear Vereker,

Many thanks for your *note* although you did not tell me what you had been doing at the German watering place you were going to when you last wrote. I can't tell you how I enjoyed Simla, although being rather hard up I had to put the screw on pretty considerably and always had to calculate the cost of everything before I did it. The thermometer stands just where it did when I came down but I do not feel the heat so much as the effect of the rains is passing off and it is not so damp now.

The quail are in now and I went out on Thursday with Cunyngham. We then shot 18 couple, I shooting the greater part of them. I really am a very fair gun shot now and I would have shot a great many more on that day had it not been for my cartridges being over-loaded. My gun takes a very light charge and when I load my cartridges I put a wad into the bottom of the ladle to get the right no. of drachms of powder. This

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wad fell out and the consequence was that unwittingly I loaded my gun with rather over $3\frac{1}{4}$ instead of $2\frac{3}{4}$ drachms. When we first got on the ground I killed $4\frac{1}{2}$ couple in 10 shots and Cunyngham was astounded as quail are not at all easy to hit. I then felt rather knocked about and found blood running down my cheek and middle finger besides my shoulder being very sore. Of course that spoilt my shooting as I fuked the gun and I shot very badly afterwards. The quail are collected at night in certain fields by call birds and when you go there in the morning there are immense numbers collected. I intend to shoot 30 couple to my own gun yet. Of course you cannot be out a minute after 9.30 as the sun is too strong. Anyway it is very dangerous now, Macgregor, Brooke, and Forbes went out and stayed till 10.15. Brooke was sick and had cramps all the way home and the other two went straight to their Bungalows with a raging fever on them. I think it is partly that the moment you go into the cotton fields you are soaked up to your middle by the dew.

I thought I had given the carpet to Grandmama however you are welcome to it if she don't object. It may perhaps give you some idea of the discomfort of extreme heat to know that between every two words I have to dab my wrist and hand on the blotting paper to prevent them spoiling the paper.

Thanks for your advice about the girls old fellow—but did you ever hear a proverb about teaching your Grandmother. I *really* am working *hard* at Hindustani now—when I say hard I mean never less than six hours' *real work*. I hope to pass on the 1st of November. I have to learn to read two horrible sets of characters. I send you a specimen of Hamilton Sahib written in both. The spotty one you read backwards the black fellow is read like English. They look much more simple in writing than in print. Tell Papa that the Lower Standard is no longer the farce it used to be. . . .

Love to all,

Believe me, your affectionate brother,

IAN HAMILTON

The whole of my next letter written to Vereker contains nothing more interesting than samples of Urdu, Nagri, and Arabic script! Even when I went for a walk or drive I would carry in my pocket *chits* or letters written by the Rank and File of the Indian Army to one another mostly about pay and the price of food. The real reason I was making such heavy weather over a very potty little exam. was that I felt the only definite

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excuse for my un-Gordon-like behaviour was to pass. If I was plucked I should have to go on working for the Higher Standard and then join the Indian Army.

When the next exam. took place my luck stood by me in the passages set me from the text-books. The *viva voce* also went very swimmingly and then they gave me a Sepoy's *chit* to his mother. This was an easy one and quite clearly written in Urdu so I sailed along like a ship in the trade winds over line upon line about the price of flour, the cheapness of *ghi* or clarified butter, and the awful fact that he had been cut four farthings of his pay by the cruelty and deceit of the Corporal, when, at the very end I struck a rock! A sentence where her son told her she should go herself—where? The letter said she must be sure to go in person to where? Or, *was it* a place name? Was she perhaps to go 'quickly' or go 'without fail'? The president tried to help me. 'Just think,' he said, 'Where would he want her to go?' Horrible old woman! To hell of course! But that wouldn't get me any nearer Heaven and so at last he had to tell me. To the 'Post Office'! The writer had used the English words spelling them backwards without capitals and in Urdu. Even in his own language a reader might be given pause by the words Tsop Eciffo but put into the middle of an Hindustani *chit* and in the Urdu character they were the absolute limit. Too bad! However, the rest of the exam. had gone so well that they stretched a point in my favour and before we started on our march for Dera Ishmail Khan my name appeared in Divisional Orders as 'Interpreter.'

Interpreter! The whole of my story about my work and my exam. will seem to be much ado about nothing to any Anglo-Indian. The Lower Standard is child's play to the Higher Standard (afterwards passed by me) but that does not by one iota affect the fact that the day I saw myself in print as 'Interpreter' has been one of the red-letter moments of my life. In a flash my mind flew back to the house of the Interpreter in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. There the Interpreter showed to those who called upon him many things that would be profitable to them. Why, of course! I would find out from the villagers where ducks and partridges could be found and then I would, perhaps, tell my brother officers—or perhaps not. There was the very agreeable solatium too of extra pay of Rs. 30 a month, equal in those days to £3; also the fact that being far away from Headquarters and the rest of the Regiment at Dera Ishmail Khan, where they mostly talk Pushtoo, would not make any odds to my drawing the

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money. India is a wonderful country for people who wish to run ramps and draw pay for doing nothing. The reason is the Bureaucrats who run the show try and cover every trick a human being can play by a huge book of Regulations. But, if once you can get on the right side of one of these Regulations, you may go on drawing money for interpreting in Hindustani though you may be living in China.



Life may be one long exam. but hardly quite the whole of it as will be proved here by the faithful setting down of a sort of peep-show frolic (surpassing even the cock-fighting or wrestling shows by 'The Mate' at Simla) with which the fag end of that hot weather was enlivened. Ought I, an Interpreter, to put into black and white sheer animalities even if they are remarkable. No, not perhaps because they are funny but because they were vitally important to thousands of hounds and of antelopes and, judging by past history, will so continue for at least two thousand years.¹

Harry Dick-Cunyngham played the lead in this strange affair; my part only came in as next-door neighbour, for our bungalows were the only two tenanted by officers that side of the Mall. So he had to enlist me to do best man. The coming event cast its shadow before when an envoy arrived with a letter and gifts for Dick-Cunyngham. There was a rug, a shawl, and a dagger with gold patterns beaten into the steel; also a letter in which it was stated that the writer was a Persian nobleman living on the borders of Afghanistan to the west of Herat. The Ameer had given him a passport to cross his territory as he was well-known to be a patron of hunting and a breeder of Seleuchie hounds (this is how he spelt the name in Persian; we, they tell me, spell it Seluki). His own hounds, and Seluki hounds in general, were becoming too inbred. Although swift enough to catch a bird on the wing they lacked substance and weight when it came to tackling a wolf, and even when it came to pulling down an antelope. This was very natural seeing they had first been bred by the favourite General of Alexander the Great. And now news had been brought by a trustworthy traveller that in the East, at Mooltan on the Chenab, there was a Regiment of *Ghoras* or white soldiers who wore

¹ Yes, the Russians may march across Asia; the Japanese may teach the Americans how useless it is to write books such as Homer Lea's *The Valour of Ignorance*; Hitler may recreate the empire of Charlemagne; yet the mark set upon the Seluki hounds in the next compound to mine at Mooltan will go on as long as Mother Earth retains any heat at her old heart. Ian H. 1940.

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petticoats, and that among their officers was a young Lordling who possessed a Seluki dog of his own country of remarkable beauty and strength: so he hoped this British hound might be permitted to sire some Persian pups and refresh the most ancient of all breeds by an out-cross. As the matter was important and he did not want to let slip such a chance he had started off to march across the desert with a very beautiful bitch, and was writing from Kandahar whence he should reach Mooltan a day or two after his messenger. In conclusion, he prayed that his proposal might receive the kindly consideration of the young Lordling as well as the blessing of Allah and of Mahomet his prophet. The letter was written in that beautiful Urdu character which makes our English script, even at its best, look illiterate.

Now the traveller's tale which had moved the Persian into marching about as far as from Land's End to John o' Groats through a country infested by marauders was not a 'traveller's tale', that is to say it was true. Dick-Cunyngham was the proud possessor of Angus, a superb Scottish deerhound. Looking back, it does seem rather a large order for a man of a certain position and a holy man as well to have come himself instead of sending one of his retainers with his Seluki bitch, and since those days I have wondered if there might not have been something political behind the journey. However, no such misgivings worried us then—we were thinking, and anxiously thinking, about the potency of Angus. Normally the precise date would have had to be left to the bitch but in this case Angus was very much below par. He ought really to have been taken to the hills for he was now suffering even more than we were from the utter slackness and lack of energy common at that moment to every live thing in Mooltan, bar the mosquitoes and me with my Moonshi. Most of the day and night he lay on wet straw panting and hardly able to wag his tail, let alone impress himself upon a dynasty of hounds. Most fortunately the lady was not favourably disposed on arrival and the week of cool weather that ensued was priceless for Angus who became almost frisky.

Meanwhile, we had not seen the Persian; he was the guest of certain Mahommedan notables in the native town and had sent a message fixing the date and hour when we might expect him to arrive at our bungalow with the bride. Dick-Cunyngham did not want our brother Officers of the Gordons to hear a word about Angus and the Seluki nor the men of the Regiment either, and he bound his own batman as well as Grant, my soldier servant, to secrecy—why I don't know; I imagine he felt whatever

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Laird or Chief had given him the hound might not approve. But some of the native officers of the Bengal Cavalry had heard of it through Bazaar rumour and were so anxious to see the Seluki and pay their respects to the Persian that at the request of Major Rivaz half a dozen of them were invited to have tea and coffee and sweetmeats. They looked very fine seated in a semi-circle of chairs borrowed from my bungalow. Of course, neither they nor any other outsiders were meant to be present at the actual *shadi* or marriage. They only came to see the bridal pair and, metaphorically, cast the confetti of their approval at them: also no doubt mainly they wanted to salute the Persian, for a *Hadji* who has travelled to Mecca to make obeisance at the tomb of Mahomet is always highly respected by his co-religionists as being one who has shown true feeling for his faith in a practical manner. The great Doctor Norman MacLeod had journeyed to Jerusalem—how could a man of his abounding belief and love for the memory of Christ fail to go? That's how he felt and all the Scots knew it and he was the most respected man in Scotland.

At the appointed hour, punctually, the Persian turned up in a conveyance never seen before in cantonments; a super-*ekka* with a sleek and well-groomed piebald pony within the shafts: he was followed by four or five ordinary *ekkas*. (An *ekka* is a two-wheeled vehicle not unlike a rickshaw with a hood.) Grant, my soldier servant, who had been posted at the gateway into the compound with orders to keep any followers out, was so impressed by their fine clothes that he let them all through which speaks well for the clothes but not for Grant. The chief guest was slim built, of medium height, about forty years old and of quite a fair complexion with a small moustache. His hair was short but not shaven and he wore a small, tight turban of green strapped across with a gold band. His manners were perfect and so was the Hindustani in which he conversed with the Native Officers as he and they drank coffee together in a friendly way. All was going very nicely but the Persian's retainer who had charge of the lady had been delayed as they could not well bring her in an *ekka* and at the last a *ghari* had to be found.

We were prepared for almost anything yet we were all fairly startled by the entry upon the scene of a negro. Down south and especially at the sea ports you may see a good many Africans, but this was the first negro I had seen in Mooltan. He was a big fellow and wore nothing on his head but his own wool: in one hand he held a stout *lathi* or cudgel; in the other hand he held the Seluki by a lead. Whilst we were gazing with

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astonishment at the negro and the tall spidery creature he was leading, Dick-Cunyngham slipped into the bungalow to loose Angus who was tied up there and to bring him out. Then came the catastrophe. If there was ever a dog who could be relied upon to 'stay put' and not so much as move a muscle though all the deer in Scotland were trotting past his cache or hiding-place that dog was Angus. Dick-Cunyngham had meant to walk him round and show him to the Persian and the Native Officers. Angus, however, as if inspired by the devil, seemed to know all about everything; in one bound he broke away from Harry Dick-Cunyngham; in another he jumped clean over the Native Officers; there were loud appeals to Allah and loud angry calls of 'Angus' from Harry D.-C., but like a flash he took possession of the Seluki and when his Master, whilst there was yet time, tried to stop him, the negro actually aided and abetted Angus by holding out his *lathi* and preventing Dick-Cunyngham from getting a grip of his collar. This scuffle provided a *tamasha* entirely to the taste of the Native Officers. Usually so solemn and serious they rocked with laughter and even applauded Angus. Dick-Cunyngham was furious and instead of punctiliously bowing good-bye as etiquette demanded actually pushed them out towards the compound gate. They did not mind a bit for they had enjoyed a first-class entertainment better than singing girls and *nautches*, and Angus had won.

So the show ended in a fiasco in one sense, but not in another, for in due course Dick-Cunyngham got a letter in that same picturesque Urdu script announcing the birth of five fine pups one of which would be sent as a keepsake to the master of Angus; Harry Dick-Cunyngham was delighted but alas! the pup never materialized. Probably when it came to the bit the *Hadji* determined to stick to the lot for the sake of the breed.

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The marriage of Angus left so vivid an impression upon my mind that it has obliterated most of the minor happenings which followed in its wake. A boy's memory may be likened to a clean sheet of blotting paper. The impression left by a first kiss or a first slap is every bit as clear and legible as the act itself, and a battle against other small boys with paper pellets will leave more of a mark than battles with bullets will make twenty years later. By the time a man comes of age the sheet of blotting paper, once so white, has become a criss-cross of thousands of events and if he wants to write truthfully he must turn to his own old letters. I started young; kept shoving along as hard as I could; have fought my

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damnedest in every campaign; at the age of eighty-eight have marched in slow time down the ranks of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, have taken the salute at the Trooping of their Colour and am in fact, 'No deid yet!' Young enough, anyway, to amuse myself by picturing the face of Field-Marshal H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge if he saw some of the inadequate, ill-drawn maps issued with their reports by his successors. Why I have chosen one story rather than another no one knows but myself and neither do I! Only God knows and, strange to say, He seems to prefer that absurd and frivolous doings should be chronicled.

Two or three days after the gay wedding of Angus, came the annual inspection of the 92nd Gordon Highlanders by Major-General Sir Charles Reid, V.C., commanding the Lahore District. This ordeal had lain for weeks like a bottled nightmare under my pillow. The extraordinary thing was that a danger spot to the Battalion in the eyes of the Adjutant was predestined to score a hit. Subalterns or Captains of the Home Guard may smile at our anxieties and think how much braver they have become. They are mistaken. They are no braver than we were—the Generals have become more gentle. In those days the Generals were not urbane smiling Personages saying please, and thank you, and would you mind or even—it has been whispered—offering you a cigarette. Not much! After you had been doing your level best you would be lucky to get off with a reprimand to smoke in your pipe. Tiger Hamilton of the Suffolks was no figment of a dream and there were many Generals built on his lines.

The dread morning broke. After Books—Cooks—Kitchens—Barrack room and Kits came three-quarters of an hour for breakfast; then Parade. Next day there would be a field day. My Captain—Carruthers—was ill and I found myself in command of A Company, still informally called the Grenadier Company. As the fathers of the men of this noble Company had all got drunk off whisky the day I had been born at Corfu in January 1853, they were well disposed towards me; also I had an A.I Colour-sergeant, so I said to myself I had only to watch my step and they'd pull me through. I'd need some prompting for all my mugging away at Hindustani with a Moonshi was not going to help me *that* day.

The items of the Parade work were set forth in the following order. First the march past—all the officers of the Garrison to be present in uniform—the order said nothing about the ladies of Mooltan, but they were all there and all in full kit; next, the rapid formation of squares two deep and four deep to resist cavalry; next, a practice performance to show the

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new-fangled 'attack' as it would be carried out next day at a field-day for the whole garrison.

The Grenadier Company pulled me through the march past and the squares in A.I form—then came the attack: The enemy were supposed to be entrenched under a clump of palm trees about 600 yards distant. At our Colonel's command the Regiment deployed at the double from Quarter Column into line, lay down and opened fire. Next came an order for the Regiment to advance by Companies, beginning from the left, with short sharp rushes of fifty paces. Having made its rush each Company had to fling itself on the ground, fire three rounds rapid 'independent'—make another rush and so *da capo* until we got within 100 yards of the enemy when we would fix bayonets and charge—a stage never reached in the famous operations of this famous day. Be it noted that in 1874 fifty paces was fifty paces to an inch as measured by the Sergeant-Major's pacing stick. By the time we had covered 200 paces we had come within about 70 yards of the stout brick wall some four feet high surrounding the parade ground. Beginning on the left each Company made its rush; flung itself down and fired its rounds. Seven times this was repeated and now, last of all, was my turn, but even as I gave the order for the drill-book rush I felt myself seized with a strong impulse as a sportsman who had to hit the group of palm trees, to fire over the wall. I did not reason, I felt I must, and shouting to the men to carry on to the wall we fired our three rounds over it and then sat down under its cover. The Adjutant galloped up from the left—he had not time to voice his feelings—not yet—but it was clear to everyone he was not going to pay compliments. The Colonel and both Majors were trotting towards me. The Sergeant-Major who persisted in adopting a paternal air towards me (probably because I had been trained in the 12th Suffolks by another Scots Guards Sergeant-Major) pretended to have something to see at the far end of the line—altogether it was an ugly moment and as for my own men the wretches were smiling in anticipation of some flowers of rhetoric when—the Inspecting-General's bugler (the only bugler allowed on the ground) sounded the 'Cease Fire', followed by the 'Dismiss' and the 'Officer's Call'.

Respectfully we stood around, swords drawn, when the Great Man lifted up his voice and spoke; he said he would set our minds at ease by telling us that, on the whole, he was pleased with what he had seen although, as no doubt we were all aware, there had been some departures

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from regulations. At this it seemed to me that everyone squinted at me. So I fixed my facial muscles into a calm and confident expression and listened to his next remark which was rather a shock to everyone. The first item not covered by the regulations were our uniforms. He could find no authority for our wearing the burial lace for Sir John Moore or the black dirk belt. This he was bound to report. He then went on about the high Mess bills suggesting beer instead of claret and claret instead of port and so he went rambling on until he came to the Parade. There he had nothing but praise except in the last phase of the attack—now for it, I thought—and this is what he said: 'A certain amount of make-believe is unavoidable when any field exercise is practised on a parade ground, but to carry this to the extent of treating a brick wall as if it is transparent is to go too far—I hope this criticism will be taken to heart—also in fairness I must praise the officer in command of the right company for his soldierly common sense and I beg that his name may be submitted to me for record in the Divisional Office at Lahore.'

Had the Almighty forgotten I was wearing a kilt and suddenly stood me upon my head I could not have been more upset. To score in this way over my brother officers—over Inverailort himself—was a most desperate scoop to bring off and one which would demand from me weeks of humility and months of modest behaviour.

V

DERA ISHMAIL KHAN

(1875)

Two sparrows are sold for a farthing and yet one sparrow shall not fall to the ground without a record being made of its fall —yes, though the angel of Death clasped the fluttering thing in his cold hand two thousand years ago, yet still, in Paradise, its small adventure stands recorded for ever. Thus parable lends courage to all adventures. What does it signify to that gay and thoughtless spark filed in the heavenly index as Lieutenant Ian Standish Monteith Hamilton? Surely that he should lose no chance of backing his luck now that Destiny had held out a hand to him! Had he not been chosen to lead the right half of the Grenadier Company of the Gordons across that ancient river, the river Hydaspes now become the Chenab: to ferry the kilted warriors to the martial music of their pipes over the vast Indus: to march on and on to the uttermost confines of India taking in reverse order the grand march made by another sparrow (or sparrow hawk) called Alexander the Great?

In the distribution of the British Army in India at that time, it was laid down that the Regiment in garrison at Mooltan should detach one company to hold the Fort trans-Indus at Dera Ishmail Khan, or Dismal Khan as it was generally known.¹ An *immortelle* dropping out of an old love letter will recall an immortal hour better by its language of flowers than the letter itself with all its impassioned inked words. Yes, though its bright lavender hue has been yellowed by age the simple flower makes the better keepsake. Of course there are letters and letters: an old love letter dated September 1874, popping the question but never sent, gives me the same sensation as if I held in my hand a bottle of champagne popped in '74—what an escape! On the other hand, love part, an ancient letter written red hot on the spot should put an incident of daily life more vividly to posterity than any reminiscence put down on paper years later. Now here is a letter to my grandmother still tingling, so it seems to me, with life.

¹ See map, p. 107.

DERA ISHMAIL KHAN

The lines on the flimsy old paper run straight; the Indian ink is as black as the day after it was written; not one erasure and only one rather awful spelling bloomer. As I re-read it a curious feeling of metamorphosis overcomes me: I seem to be studying rather critically the letter of a grandson.

Dera Ishmail Khan

28th December 1874

My dear Grandmama,

Here I am all safe at Dera Ishmail. I have hardly had time to look about me yet so I cannot say much about the place as yet, but as far as I have seen I am very much pleased with it. The march was just as good fun to me as a month's leave would have been. We left Mooltan at about 5 a.m. with the moon shining brightly and the pipes playing—I felt most dreadfully cold, especially about the knees, however the pace the men marched soon warmed me again. The first march we had to cross one of the five rivers of the Punjab, the Chenab, which was about a mile broad at that place. I was sent over first with the right half company to reload the camels as they came across and send them on while Carruthers and the left half company remained behind to unload them and put them into the boats. We had great fun getting the camels out of the boats, they kept jumping into the water on the wrong side of the boat and then running away when they got on shore. When we had all got across we marched on about 7 miles and got into camp. The tents were quickly pitched and thanks to Grant¹ mine was most comfortable. My tub, looking-glass, clock, bed, etc. were all there just as if I had never left my Bungalow, and as for lunch and dinner they were better served and better cooked, in my opinion, than ever they were in Cantonments. Next morning was the worst march of all and one we had all been dreading for some time—20½ miles through a perfect desert, and sand well over our ankles. We were up at 4 a.m. and although nearly frozen the cold did not prevent my thinking the camp made about the prettiest picture I had ever seen. The men in each tent are issued a quantity of straw to sleep on—as soon as the tents are struck they pile it into heaps and make immense blazing bonfires of it. I should have liked to paint the straight lines of fires with the smoke going straight up and the men in their kilts standing round them. I was never more tired in my life than after the second march; it was not

¹ Grant was my soldier servant; he had been at home with me at Laggary; so my Grandmother knew him well.

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so much the distance as the sand which was quite as bad as a heavy ploughed field in England. Although I had heard that there was no shikar on the road I was determined to try and was rewarded for my unbelief by shooting lots of duck and black partridge all the way up. I fancy fellows were mostly so tired after the long marches that they had not energy to go out. I feel so fit and well now that I could imagine I had never left England. About a mile before we marched into Dismal Khan (which is really not half so dismal looking as Mooltan) we had to ford a small river about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep. It was so deep at least that the men had to put their purses round their necks and take their kilts under their arms. We marched over with the pipes playing all the time. Cuthell had ridden out to meet us and I excited the derision of the men by getting up behind him—it was not from fear of the water however, but because I wanted to look respectable marching into cantonments. There was a very fine kind of black dust on both banks and the men's spats and knees were the colour of coal before they had gone on 10 paces.¹ We were marched in by the band of the 3rd Sikhs and 6th Punjab Infantry. They wear knickerbockers, snuff-coloured clothes² and red turbans. I shall write a long account about Dismal Khan the next mail. I have just been writing a letter to Aunt Ki and telling her all my adventures on the way up.

Please send this letter on to Vereker and explain to him I could not write before as I was on the march. If I was to write a separate letter to him I could not add anything to this, so what is the good of waisting (sic) ink and paper.

Best love to all at home and tell anyone who you may hear intends to make me an Xmas present that a single-barrel Henry's express rifle is just about the ticket.

Believe me,

Your very affecte Gson,

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

¹ The kilted men I remember were all right as a dash of cold water soon made them clean, but the tent orderlies who wore trews were in a deplorable mess.

² There has been a good lot of correspondence lately about the date of the first issue of khaki uniform to the British Army in India. Here, writing home at the end of 1874, it will be noticed that the word khaki is not used as it would have been ten years later and that I speak of 'snuff-coloured' kit. Ian H.

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Dera Ishmail Khan,

24th Jany. 1875

My dear Vereker,

So many thanks for your last letter. I am glad to hear you are getting on so well with your pencil and brush. I wonder if you have changed your mind yet about calling, dances, and society in general or if the pipe and double dummy with the General have become chronic. What a jolly time of it you must be having—however they say every dog has his day and I suppose my day will be when I get 15 months leave, if ever I do. Really Dera Ishmail is not half a bad place, and if the weather would only remain as it is at present I should greatly prefer it to some kinds of English quarters, Athlone for instance. There are some very jolly people indeed here; among others General Keyes and his wife—who as Miss Norman used to know my father very well up at Simla.

My chief amusement here at present is hawking. The quarry is a large bustard called the Aubara—it is the size of a turkey and is found nowhere but on this particular desert. The hawks are most of them peregrines. The way we set about it is by forming a long line of horsemen who advance at a walk until the Aubara is seen crouching on the sand. The hawk is then unhooded and cast off and we all gallop to put up the Aubara with the hawk flying over our heads. There is a great difference in the sport—sometimes the hawk is successful at the first stoop and sometimes it is a matter of a 5 mile gallop as hard as you can lay legs over a very dangerous sort of ground. Of course you are staring up into the sky and have to trust to your horse to take you over nullahs and all sorts of things. I have never been more than three miles myself but that time the bustard and hawk got gradually away from me and when the kill took place I was quite half a mile behind.

I have just come back from Sheik-boddeen mountain, markhoor shooting. However as there is so little to write about here it would be a pity to compress it all into one letter and I promise you a full account by next mail. Hoping soon to get a long *illustrated* letter

Believe me,

Your affecte. brother,

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

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D. I. Khan,

7th February

My dear Vereker,

Make up your mind at once that you are to hear about nothing but shikar in this letter. About three weeks ago I got ten days leave and of course the place to go and spend it was Sheik Boddeen, an exceedingly precipitous mountain about forty miles from here. Three kinds of shikar are to be found there: markhoor, oorial, and leopards. The first and most famous is a kind of wild goat and has very long massive horns sometimes reaching, measured straight, 36 inches. The second is a wild sheep and has immense horns curling round its head. The markhoor is the most famous because this one hill jutting out from the Affghan (sic) hills is the *only place* in India where this particular species is found. The country between D.I. Khan and the hill is very dangerous at this time of the year as there is no traffic on the road and parties of Wuzzeeries (sic) are said to have come down and to be hanging about here. I had a nag of some sort or other sent out and posted at 10 miles interval. If you had only seen me starting with some friends who had come to see me off and give me advice about what to do if I met any of these ruffianly hill men. Breeches, boots and an old sola topee—a revolver and hunting knife in my belt and a thick stick in my hand were calculated to strike terror into hearts of the unbelievers but between you and I the weapons I chiefly relied upon were an exceedingly sharp pair of hunting spurs and the legs of my pony. I got to the hill all right without seeing a single Affghan (sic). To tell you all my adventures in detail would spin out this letter to a tremendous length. The walking was something too beastly in places and I had often to take off my sandals (or chuplies as they are called here) and walk along a cliff with the shikarrie in front cutting out holes for my big toe with a hunting knife. As one slip would land you about 1,000 feet below in some places it was terribly exciting work and after going over one of these places I used to tremble all over. Once in a very bad place as I was spread-eagle fashion hanging on to the cliff and getting my wind before taking another step a large stone gave way under my feet; after what seemed to be quite an age I heard a gentle click and I knew the stone had at last reached the bottom. A most extraordinary feeling came over me then, I felt very sick and just as if the whole of my inside was falling after the

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stone. I shut my eyes, tried to think of every sort of thing but the precipice and thank goodness got all right again.

That very day we had been following a herd of markhoor for a long time in which there was a regular monster. Just after this bad bit of ground we heard stones falling and my shikarrie looked cautiously over the brow of the hill—he drew his head back trembling with excitement and signed to me to get the rifle ready. ‘Now,’ said he, ‘shoot in the name of Allah.’ I looked over the hill and all I could see was a young male standing on a rock at least 240 yards off. I thought the shikarri a great fool to have made such a fuss; however, I thought I might as well have a shot though it was a long way off. I rested my rifle on a stone and fired but I never knew what became of him because as I pulled the trigger there was a tremendous crash of stones and away dashed the old fellow from where he had been asleep not 15 yards off directly under me. He disappeared behind some rocks and I got a snap shot at him about 60 yards off. My bullet flattened against a rock having passed between his horns about 3 inches above his head. Tableau, disgust of shikarri who had seen the big fellow all the time.

The last day but one we met a native postman who said he was coming along with us to get some meat. As I had shot nothing as yet I laughed at him however he had not been with us 10 minutes when we saw some markhoor. I got within 100 yards of them and took a steady shot at a very nice one of 20 inches (in the room now) and fired. He scuttled away and the shikarrie said my bullet had gone over him; with my second barrel I hit a small male on the quarters, he fell down the precipice, got up and fell again right down to the bottom. As we were going down the hill I heard a dispute between the shikarrie and the postman, the latter of whom was saying I had hit the first fellow. I said the least we could do was to go and see and by Jove when we got to the place we found about a pint of blood. We followed him by the blood for I should think at least two miles down the most dreadful places going in line in searching for blood. At last the drops were not bigger than this ° and were 20 or 30 yards apart and as night was coming on and I should never have got home in the dark I had to give it up. I first built a large pyramid of stones at the last blood speck and next day sent a man who, to cut a long story short, found the markhoor by means of the vultures and here his head is. I have spun this out so far that I have no time to tell you about the last days work when coming down the hill I wounded a very large fellow (28 inches at least)

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followed him by the blood, came on him again unexpectedly and missed him both barrells (sic). I have offered a large reward though and have not yet given up hope that he may be found by the vultures.

Longing to hear from you old fellow,
Your affecte. brother,

IAN HAMILTON

D. I. Khan,
21st March, 1875.

My dear Vereker,

It is indeed a long time now since I heard from you. However, as I hear you are moving about a good deal I will be forgiving enough to break the contract and write again although I have not heard from you in the interval. My tale is again about sport and this time I have indeed been lucky. I have shot the monster ourial of the Chundly Bluffs a name by which it is well known to most sportsmen about this part of the world. I had not been three hours on the hill when old Shah Zada my shikari suddenly sank down behind a stone and told me there was a huge ourial about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile off. I looked for a long time through the glasses and at last made out my gentleman quietly feeding. The horns are so like the rock that at that distance we could not see them. However Shah Zada said they must be good ones as he could see by the black beard and colour of his skin that he was a very old male. He was feeding on a slope which was gradual on his side but was a precipice on the other. We at once made up our minds to go down the precipice—run along the side of it—come up about 200 yards the other side of the ourial when we should have the wind in our favour and find ourselves among some large boulders of rock so that we might perhaps get very near indeed. When we came up the Shikari peered over a cliff and then told me the old fellow was lying down about 120 yards off and that I could see his horns rising from the grass. I looked and could not see. He then explained: ‘Do you see that little green tree?’ I said yes. ‘Do you see that large white stone beneath it?’ I said yes. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘if you look 3 yards beneath you will see the old fellow lying down.’ Unfortunately there were two trees and two white stones and I was looking at the wrong one full 250 yards away. Such however is the power of my imagination that at last I persuaded myself that I saw a pair of horns and was very nearly firing at a stone. All of a sudden he said ‘Sahib, it is standing up, sahib, sahib, why don’t you

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fire?' I was quite certain the things I had been looking at had not got up and I looked in despair up the hill. Luckily my eye caught him this time. Hastily covering him I fired—off he went followed by two females one large male and one little one. I was so disgusted at having as I thought missed the monster that I let off the second barrel in a hurry and missed. All of a sudden Shah Zada gave a frightful yell then drawing his knife and shouting 'it has fallen' he left me. Although unaccustomed to carry my own rifle I went after him at my best speed—without my knowing it my sandal slipped off and the next jump with my unprotected foot on to a sharp stone caused me such pain that I fell down. Once down in these sort of places you don't often get up in a hurry and accordingly I slid down about 35 yards over loose shingle and was stopped by a small thorn bush at the very edge of a little precipice about the height of the Laggary dining-room. My left hand was cut very badly—all my clothes torn and bruises from top to toe. However I picked myself up and limping along was just in time to see my fine fellow get his throat cut. We then cut him up, lit a fire with flint and steel and had a hearty good meal—cutting flesh liver heart kidneys into small pieces—sticking them on green sticks and slightly warming them over the fire. Horns measured 29 inches and please the pigs will some day adorn the Laggary smoking room. As usual left myself no space to tell rest of my adventures.

Your affectionate brother,

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

Hitherto my own old letters have made very useful signposts to mark my peregrinations up and down the Indus. The incidents touched upon whilst marching from one unheard of spot to another are mostly quite trivial, yet, as a match flung amidst expiring embers will flare up for a second or two, casting its flicker into the corners of a darkening room, so does one of my own old letters resurrect a living moment from the shadowy recess of my brain. Then, sometimes, what had seemed trivial at the time turns out to have been vital. So it is rather bad luck that when what might almost be described as an historical adventure did come along there is not a single line about it to be found, although certainly several were written home. The reason must be that there was some value in my letter, giving a 'close-up' as it did of the Hero of the Piffers (Punjab Frontier Force = P.I.F.) at the same time bravest and most taciturn of men, in parley with a gang of murderers with no other escort but me.

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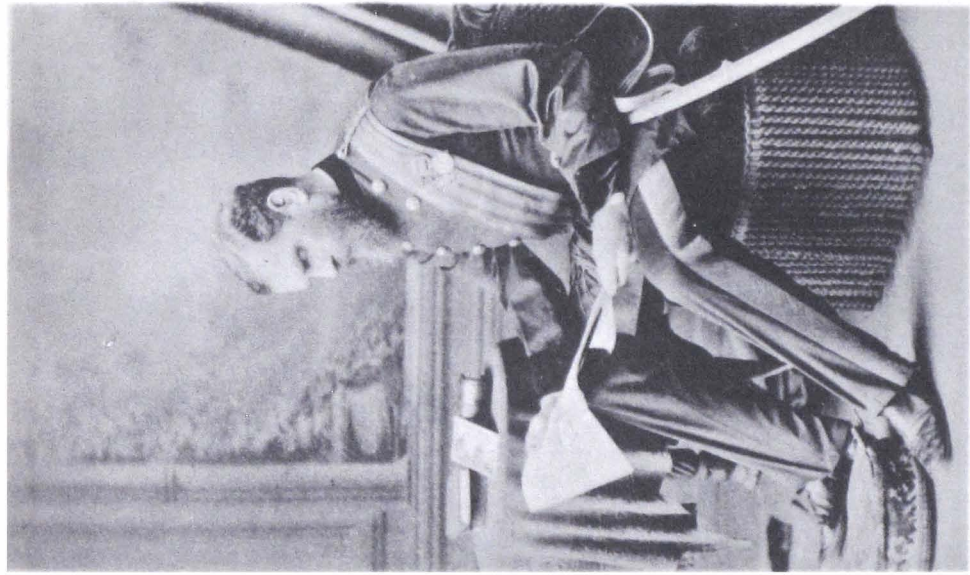
Therefore, these particular letters of mine were never returned to my grandmother by those to whom they had been lent—therefore, also, it is up to me now to try and let the gallant thrusters of to-day take a look at one of those old-fashioned Paladins of the Marches who preceded them—a Roland at Roncesvalles without a horn (for he would never blow his own trumpet).

First, here is the lost drama in vignette, and I think if my old letter ever turns up, the following will prove to be next door to a duplicate. My own bright particular star must have been in the ascendant, for it brought me (to whom adventure was what an apple in a well-guarded orchard is to a naughty boy) into hand-in-glove contact with the hero of a hundred adventures. After the death of my captain, Carruthers, I found myself the only British Service military officer serving trans-Indus. Now, had I again ridden to Sheik Boddeen alone (as described in the letter of the 7th February to Vereker), not one slice of me as big as a shoulder of mutton would have been left lying on the Dera Ishmail Khan-Bunnu road for jackals and vultures to make merry over—not even Dr. O'Meara's five teeth, at a gold mohur a tooth, would have remained to tell the tale. As it turned out, being with the great Keek Sahib,¹ Warden of the Marches, I was as safe as any true soldier would ever wish to be.

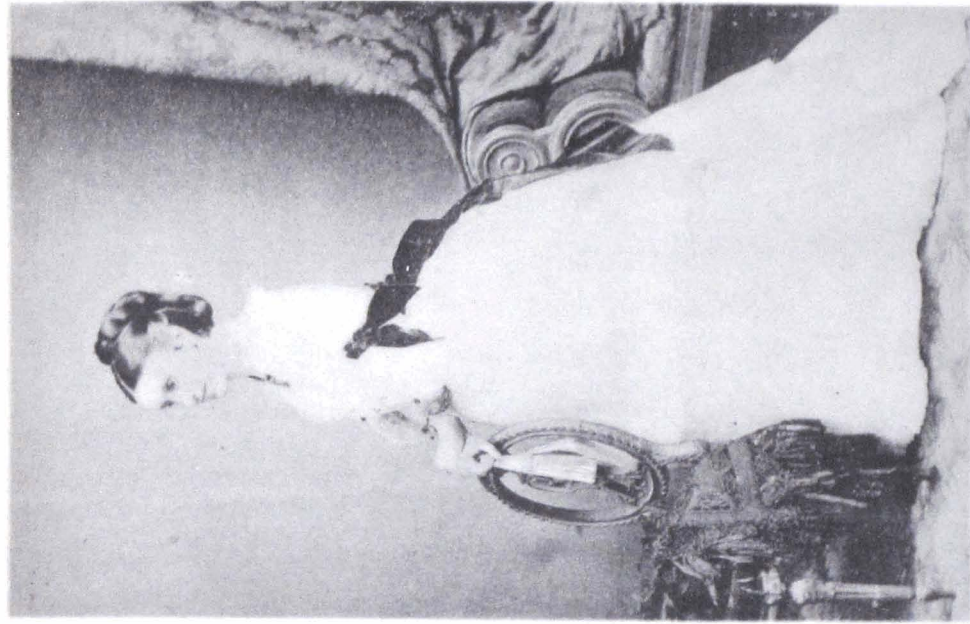
At the foot of Sheik Boddeen, at a hamlet called Peyzoo, there was a travellers' dâk-bungalow guarded against raiders by a small detachment of Piffers. Thence a rough track branched off up the mountain, on the top of which was another dâk-bungalow. This had no guard, as there were no Hindu worshippers there to murder, and nothing stealable that was worth a 3,000 foot climb.

On this occasion I had made my *band-o-bast*, or arrangements, for the solitary journey next day and was sitting down to dinner (which usually consisted of game of my own shooting) with the addition of some tinned delicacies (a grand way of saying sardines) when a note was brought me from no less a personage than Lady Keyes saying the General had heard I was setting out next morning; that as he, too, had to ride out as far as Peyzoo dâk-bungalow at the foot of the mountain he would be glad of my company. If that would suit me, his *tonga* (a cart with two ponies) could take my bearer and baggage along through the night and a small cavalry escort would go with them; so that if I wanted to have a second

¹ General Sir Charles Patton Keyes, G.C.B., father of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Keyes of Zeebrugge and Dover.



General Sir Charles Keyes, G.C.B.
(Keek Sahib)



Lady Keyes (née Norman)



Miss Amy Baly (afterwards Lady White)

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mount to see me through the forty miles' ride I could send it out under their convoy. Naturally I jumped at the offer and so, next morning, after breakfast we started off together, the General and I. Rather a queer couple we must have seemed to the sentry and guard who presented arms as we rode out over the draw-bridge of the Fort—he on a big brown Waler, I on my little white Arab—he rather grim, doing all the listening, I very eager doing the talking. And now I come to think of it I was a great swell in those earlier days—far more so really in sole command of that mud fort than when I commanded three Armies round London with Kitchener as overlord. As we rode, the desert stretched out grim and forbidding yet beautiful, a huge carpet of yellow, mottled with patterns formed by millions of small, low, grey-green bushes. No trees or rocks broke the dead level till, in the far distance, the horizon ran upwards against the hazy blue line of the Sulaiman range. Straight as a die the white road we were following ran parallel to the distant mountains between two deep, dry ditches dug to carry off the flood water in the rains. Far as the eye could reach there seemed not a thing moving upon it. Trotting and cantering we were making good progress and I had just said, as I was often afterwards twitted with having said, that I could have seen a fox or even a hare cross half a mile ahead when—suddenly—all around us were a mob of wild Waziris gripping our horses by their heads. They were just there. I never saw a sign of a soul till they stood there. This was the moment when, had I been alone, I would have lugged out my Colt and the next moment would have been sliced into fifty pieces. This fortunately, was also the moment when the General made an oratorical effort which to my thinking wipes the floor with any other recorded utterance of a human being poised on the threshold of Eternity. Mind you, though physically fine men these were wolves—blood-thirsty murderers—to realize this you had only to look at their faces scowling sudden death out of evil countenances. But the General never for one moment faltered or lost his grip of the situation. He, the reserved silent Commander, became at once the most genial and amusing of Merchant Princes. A perfect Pushtoo speaker he waved his hand to them with a gesture of friendly welcome exclaiming: 'In the name of God I am glad to meet you!' That much I understood, but of course though I had learnt a phrase or two of Pushtoo I could only follow most of the rest of the conversation in dumb crambo. One moment I thought was our last for I saw the scowls deepen and fingers stretching towards knives, next moment they all burst out

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laughing and let go our bridles. Instantly the General turned his head to me and, shouting, 'Gallop!' put spurs to his horse. Down the road we raced and let me tell anyone who may see these remarks that to gallop *at* an armed enemy, whether it be a grisly boar or a South African Boer, is a wildly exhilarating thing.

*'Ride, boldly ride,
The shade replied,
If you seek for Eldorado!'*

But to gallop away *from* them sends creeps up your spine and takes a heavy toll of your courage. With every leap of my little Arab I expected a bullet in my back until, praise be to God, we came up to where four of the 5th Punjab Cavalry were keeping watch over our change of horses. The others had gone on with the *tonga* to Peyzoo. Luckily the band of Waziri raiders, for that is what they turned out to be, must have cut into the main road after the *tonga* had passed by; or perhaps seeing the *sowars* they may have thought them rather too much to tackle and let them go by, otherwise we would have lost all our gear and my bearer would have had his throat cut. They did murder some *powindahs* or travelling native merchants before we could set the Cavalry on their tracks, but although a great hunt was organized they were never caught.

The General gave me an account of the *pow-wow*. He had begun by telling them that as he was a man not without influence in these Marches he would like to know something about them and he asked them some questions, interesting them by his knowledge of the road to Kaniguram (their capital) four days' march away. They said they were on their way to Bunu to buy camels, but unluckily they had no money. 'Ah ha!' he said, 'I'm afraid then you will have to stop in Dera Ishmail Khan and sell some of those pistols whose handles I see peeping out from under your *poshteens*.' This joke was not at all to their liking and they delivered point blank the highwayman's challenge, 'your money or your life!' Then it was that their fingers began to steal towards their knives. But again he laughed and said, 'Let me tell you that you are the strangest caravan of travellers I have ever met: you have come all this long way from Kaniguram where no camels can live, to buy camels though you have no money. There is only one explanation; you must be magicians!' Apparently in Pushtoo this was a very good joke for they rocked with laughter and let go our horses' heads.

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No sooner had the crisis passed and this brief statement been vouchsafed than Keek Sahib relapsed into his shell and became as reserved as a tortoise. The only comment on our get-away he permitted himself to make was, 'You can do anything with a Waziri if you can only make him laugh.' Yes, I dare say. But unless, like me, they had seen with their own eyes and heard with their own ears, no one on the Indian Frontier would have believed that their General could make a Waziri laugh! How should they? At a banquet or state function he had never been known to make anyone laugh. Far from it—very far from it!

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The Generals brought up to the top by the Mutiny and the disturbances which arose from it were more in touch with their men in battle and in quarters than the Generals who came to the fore during the war of 1914-18. In those days commanders of armies did not sit in *châteaux* scribbling about backs to the wall or giving dinners and special trains to leading politicians or pressmen whilst Passchendaele, which they never once visited, was sucking down in filthy mud the flower of their armies. No! sword in hand they fought themselves and let their troops enjoy the spectacle. Thus did the Ancients at the siege of Troy, where the Trojans and Greeks sat down and shouted (like a crowd at a football match) when Hector and Achilles joined in their mortal combat.

Without going quite so far as to suggest that Gort and Göring, who have almost the same names, and are very likely crack shots, should decide the war by a duel starting at 2,000 yards, some of us are inclined to wonder if nothing can be done to put a stop to the system of education for savages now being broadcast on the radios of Europe, teaching the young generations to rejoice in the torture and misfortunes of the children of the pirates, robbers or murderers on the other side. The idea seems to be that war ought to be served up to the nations with a sauce of hate propaganda because the more any two nations hate, the longer and more fiercely they will fight. I don't hold with that idea. Mercenary troops fight better than irregular volunteers or conscripts. Dugald Dalgetty at Inverlochy defeated the whole of the Clan Campbell. No men ever fought more doughtily than those who fought at the Dardanelles in 1915, and they did not hate one another—not in the least. No sooner had Britains or Anzacs captured a few of the enemy whose rifles might still be hot with firing at them than they would give them the last drop in their water-bottle and even a precious cigarette. As for the Turks, our

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Field Hospital at Suvla Bay was tucked away well under fire of their main batteries and they could have blown the whole caboodle—sick, wounded, medicines, doctors and all—bang into the Ægean Sea in a brace of shakes; but never was a single shell aimed at it. And now, in the Nineteen-forties we reap our reward. Far better that a friendly Turkey should hold the Dardanelles than that Cape Helles should have been turned into a second Gibraltar with a hostile Turkey across the water.¹

In 1860 there was plenty of fanaticism and religious hate on tap but there was no deliberate poisoning of the truth, as ordinary men saw it, by propaganda; instead of a vain glory or a figment of fame we had prestige built up by a series of exploits: there was then still extant a sentiment called the Chivalry of Arms to which appeal might be made—once a leader had become a hero to his army he might win a battle almost single-handed.

Before starting in to tell my story, or rather stories, I should explain that being very keen indeed to practise my Hindustani and become a *pucca* or real interpreter (instead of only one of those *exam. wallahs* who turn as dumb as fish in a crisis) I spent many of my spare hours at Dera Ishmail Khan in chatting to Indian soldiers of every degree, sometimes about their homes, though the subject was cramped as you had to refer to their wives in a guarded or roundabout way as their *Kabila* or family, so we talked mostly about their campaigns. The duel of 'Keek Sahib', as they called Charles Keyes, with the Waziri Chief was the favourite topic, and for a soldier to have seen it, even when he was himself on the run, was something to write home about; and next to that would come the tale of Keek Sahib at the Crag Picquet. Since those days I have studied the Dispatches and the Lives of Sir N. Chamberlain² and Lord Roberts and find that modesty has caused these grand old characters to pick most of the dots off their 'I's'. In their conversations the Rank and File put them on again and my version, though not professing to be more than a flare thrown into the past, is probably as life-like as any chapter to be found

¹ From the personal point of view, there is no quarter of the globe from which I receive kinder or more constant salutations than from Turkey. The Dardanelles campaign and its memories are the magnets which have drawn us together. Were Turkey and ourselves the only nations in Europe and Asia how easy would be the job of the Foreign Office; how easy would be the reorganization of the post-war world!

² Field-Marshal Sir Neville Chamberlain, G.C.B., G.C.S.I., 1820-1902.

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in the histories. Not having been an eye-witness it may seem that I am thereby stepping outside my sphere, but I have seen the theatre and the actors and feel that I ought to try and leave behind me a true picture of the Indian Frontier as it was then especially as there is probably no one left alive now but me who *can* do it.

That crucial decision to eject the Sikh company from its guardianship of the mud fort of Dera Ishmail Khan and to replace them by a company of Europeans was made in August 1858. It had been discovered that the Sikhs were plotting to murder all the British Officers in the Fort and Cantonment, and seizing the Fort and the magazine, to march on Mooltan and thence on Lahore to restore the ancient glory of the Khalsa. Only as I became aware of these facts did the reality of Mooltan and something of the significance of what my company of the Gordons (the only tiny fighting force of Europeans amongst vast armies of Asiatics) stood for in the Empire gradually dawn on me. I seemed indeed to feel the lava of the eruption of the Mutiny still seething under my feet.

In 1859 the last straw had been laid upon the back of the patient British Government camel by the murder of a very promising and popular young Officer of the Gunners. He had only just returned from leave in England and was riding along the road between Kohat and Bunnu when some Waziri wolves jumped out of the roadside ditch and before he could fire more than one chamber of his revolver had hacked him into pieces with their *tulwars*. The Kabul Khel Waziris had given asylum to the murderers and refused to surrender them, so a force of 4,000 men under Neville Chamberlain marched out from Kohat on the 15th of December, crossed the Kurram river (destined to become so well known to me in the Afghan war of 1878-80) and by Maidani won a victory where many of the best fighters of the Kabul Khel were wiped out. On the 29th the Davesta Sar, 5,114 feet high, was in the hands of the Piffers and then, having 'larned' the Kabul Khel who were their masters and that we could go and come when and where we chose in their country, the force was broken up at Kohat. But now came the year 1860 when a much more serious and risky expedition had to be put in hand. There had been a steadily increasing number of robberies and murders amongst the harmless and peaceful *ryots* and *powindahs* (traders in cattle, camels, cloth and so on). During the absence of the troops who had been inflicting punishment on the Kabul Khel Waziris these raids by the Mahsud Waziris had reached a pitch which had become intolerable. So Neville

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Chamberlain was ordered to *saf karo* or clean up the whole Mahsud country; and early in April 1860, his standard was unfurled at Tank and 5,000 fighting men came together there to form another Expeditionary Force. On the 17th of April they marched out of camp and were swallowed up by the huge mountains of the Sulaiman Range some of them 11,000 feet high. They entered by a ravine called the Tank Zam. I know the Tank Zam, also the Zam or river the traveller has to keep fording as he makes his way up, a river hardly over his horse's hooves in fine weather, though when the snows are melting or the rain falls, becoming a formidable torrent, capable in places of covering the whole of an elephant excepting the tip of his trunk. With the Force (fortunately) was 'Keek Sahib', otherwise Major Charles Keyes, at the head of the 1st Punjab Infantry. For the first twenty miles there was no opposition, not even sniping into camp: the keener spirits amongst the troops began to be afraid the campaign might fizzle out without a fight when they were cheered up by the news that there had been a gathering of Waziri Chiefs at Kaniguram sixty miles distant in the heart of the Mahsud country where one and all had sworn on the Koran that our troops should march no farther. 'Kings have come and gone,' they declared, 'for many years, but the eyes of an enemy have never seen Kaniguram.' The messengers who brought this news under a white flag were hospitably entertained whilst Chamberlain called a meeting of his Commanding Officers. To them, in the presence of the Waziri messengers, he swore that so help him God nothing should stop his march 'till he had made the mountains round Kaniguram resound to the sound of his bugles.' So the hearts of all were uplifted; and the delegates too seemed well pleased. The die was now cast and between bayonet and *tulwar* a clash had become as sure as between two express trains running head on towards one another on a single line where there could be neither shunting nor stopping. After the repulse of a determined attack upon our camp which for a few minutes was a near thing, and some desultory skirmishing, the 4th of May dawned fine and clear without a shot being fired. The route lay through a wall-sided defile and after our troops had been marching through it for about four miles they debouched on to a small, well-cultivated plain shaped like an oblong saucer. The sun only shone directly on it for an hour or so out of the twenty-four but that was enough for the crops. In length it would be perhaps half a mile and in width about four or five hundred yards. At the farther end of the saucer the huge mountains closed together as with

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a snap into the narrow Barari Tangi. (The word *tang* in Hindustani means 'tight' or 'close'—hence a 'pass'.) Here the enemy were waiting, some 5,000 of them as it turned out. Many of their *sangars* or stone pill-boxes could be seen perched on ledges on either cliff side but the centre of the pass was entirely blocked by an *abattis* of felled poplar trees, rocks and brushwood. Against it field artillery would have little effect, much less the mountain guns. There was no use looking at it—and the order was given to advance to the assault. What the officers thought at the moment no one can now say for they are taught to hide their feelings, but many of the corporals and privates who were there have confessed to me they did not half like the look of this lion of Barara crouching across their path.

The right wing of Chamberlain's Force (four battalions) was commanded by Keyes. The two battalions forming his (Keyes') left fell in with the main attack on the *abattis*; Keyes himself and his two remaining battalions were then left standing well clear on the right by the two 9-pounders and the two small howitzers. The main column of attack, bayonets fixed, pressed gallantly forward, though many fell, until they got right up to the enemy's breastwork; but what they had not seen till too late, was that just in front of the *abattis*, safeguarding it from direct assault in much the same way as a ditch safeguards the parapet in Vauban's system of fortification, was a perfectly sheer smooth cliff—'the height of two men!' As the column carried no scaling ladders the men were brought up with a round turn, their huddled mass offering a perfect target to the sharp-shooters on the ledges of the big mountain who were even able to fling stones from their commanding positions. So the stormers had to fall back a few yards to take cover behind the rocks and use their rifles. The Waziri Chieftain sensed the wavering of the impulse and darted out from behind the *abattis*—dropped down the little cliff, a most conspicuous figure, wearing a yellow turban and brandishing his *tulwar*. Thick as a bee-swarm following their queen the clan poured out after him. Those armed with *tulwar* and shield would catch the bayonet point on the shield and then slash. The most dangerous were those trusting simply to their long Afghan knives. I have one still which had killed seven men before the battle of the Barara and none can say how many there. I mention it in my last will and testament. These knife-men danced and jumped and getting right in amongst our men broke them up and began to cut them up. In the twinkling of an eye the battle which had begun so well seemed to be turning into a bloody disaster. The two

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battalions of Keyes' left which had been drawn into Chamberlain's main attack were now merged in a mob of soldiers falling back in confusion. The shouts of the triumphant tribesmen echoed through the mountains—their Chieftain pressing on had reached the open ground between the retreating mob and the guns. This was the moment my friends of the Rank and File at Dera Ishmail Khan used to dwell upon with many gestures and appeals to the Almighty and to Mahomet and this is just the moment which is not recorded, so far as I know, in dispatches or books of memoirs.

The moment! Keek Sahib ordered his two formed battalions to stand by the guns; drew his sword and ran out very fast to engage the Waziri Chief in full view of the opposing hosts.

Both sides could see the duel because—(1) the area and scope of the battlefield was very much smaller than those of forty years later—(2) both the oncoming Waziris and our men of the main attack heading back had now their faces turned from the Tangi towards the guns. The best way to grip the scene would be to imagine the battle taking place at Olympia where some magician had changed stands and barriers into huge mountains ascending nearly vertically.

Only for a moment or two of time; miraculous moments still remembered in many a Border hamlet; all those savage men seemed turned into statues. The tumult died away. Sword and *tulwar* clashed mightily and Keyes had killed his man. His two formed battalions cheered and charged; the Waziris fled; the guns sent their shell screaming over the heads of the onrushing Punjabis; the Barara Tangi was stormed and once through it the whole country lay at our mercy. The war was won!

This story enchanted and filled me with vague longings which did, however, gather themselves into concrete form so far as to cause me to get my broad-sword sharpened by the Armourer Sergeant of the 3rd Sikhs. You never know your luck and the only prize I ever got at school had been the fencing prize at Cheam.

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For a long time I thought Sir Charles' fingers had been chopped off by the Waziri Chief's *tulwar* at the Barara—actually it was three years later, in 1863, in the Eusufzye country, at the Crag Picquet overlooking the Umbeyla Pass that this decoration was conferred upon him (as the best decorations always are)—by the enemy!

The Umbeyla Campaign—a most bloodily contested struggle—to the

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Chief Command of which General Neville Chamberlain had been appointed, should never have been fought, not then, not in that manner, nor in his opinion. But the outlook of soldiers is rarely the same as that of Governments whether they are Governments at Westminster or Governments of Indian Bureaucrats. The point I want to drive home is that your professional British politician or your Indian bureaucratic Member of Council cannot always be safely trusted to steer the ship of state through the hurricanes and over the uncharted reefs which have followed their declarations:—Bellona is like the Witch of Endor, easy enough to call her up but what she is going to say only two people know—God and the devil!

Broadly speaking, the career of a politician teaches him to keep a sharp eye on the dramatic effect likely to be produced by his performance upon the mentality of his friends and foes. When he comes upon actual factors like land, sea, munitions, weapons, blood and iron he is inclined to blink them as details for a soldier and to focus his thoughts upon what place or date and what particular juncture will score most votes.

Thus the Government of India was urgent on General Neville Chamberlain starting his frontier war at once because they thought immediate action would startle and overawe the tribes. Yes! but what sort of action? Surely not halting or blundering action! However, a Government is a Government and even if the General is to play the part of an ass in a lion's skin he must obey. So the soldiers really had no say in the despatch of the expedition. Lord Roberts states on page 2 of Vol. II of his *Forty-One Years in India* that the Commander-in-Chief in India had agreed with Neville Chamberlain as to 'the inexpediency of entering a difficult and unknown country, unless the troops were properly equipped with transport, supplies and reserve ammunition. . . . Moreover, he gave it as his opinion that it would be better to postpone operations until the Spring, when everything could be perfectly arranged. Subsequent events proved how sound was this advice.'

Brigadier-General Neville Chamberlain's plan of campaign was that of a soldier—i.e. he weighed the factors of time, place and season; then and then only he meant to cut an up-to-date coat out of the cloth supplied him by Government. All the most turbulent and dangerous tribes of the North West Frontier were 'up!' The Akhoond of Swat (who was to the Mohammedans what the Pope was to the Catholics of Europe in the time of Peter the Hermit) was preaching a Holy War—murderers and robbers were

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promised absolution from their sins if they would fight the infidel. Any evil loot they might have amassed would be legalized: and he did more than preach, he marched down himself towards Umbeyla with his own bodyguard of 100 Standards, each Standard standing for a company of Foot as well as 120 Horsemen. There, too, were the Hindustani Fanatics from Bareilly or Bengal, clad in blue, some thousands of them determined to die—as they did—all of them! Bandits and assassins, keen on passports to Paradise, trekked down from Kabul City, from distant lands like Chitral and Boonji or Dir; names hardly known to our officers. 15,000 were already on the ground and more were on their way. In that broken country where cavalry would be of no use to guard his flanks, it would have been madness for the General to push in and burn the village of the Hindustani Fanatics (as was his intention) with anything less than a force of 10,000 regulars: and he had only 5,000. So Chamberlain's plan was promptly made. He marched through the Umbeyla Pass and there, just where it debouched into the plain, selected a spot where the exit was commanded by two almost perpendicular pinnacles of about 1,000 feet each. One was called the Eagle's Nest, the other the Crag. Formed no doubt by the action of millions of years of alternating frost, snow, and blazing heat upon the cliffs, in general outline they resembled very fat, squat champagne bottles; a few trees grew upon them but mostly they were a mass of tumbled rocks. On these two he would place his picquets and simply hold on. If he did this, the picquets would be a challenge to the Fanatics who would be bound to attack and in the course of that interplay of attack, counter-attack and defence, he would in due course break the enemy's hearts. The battlefields were certainly small. In the first instance the small platform built and *sungared* on the top of the Crag held only twelve men. But the name given it by the Mohammedans became significant—*Katl-ghar* or Slaughter House.

On the night of the 29th–30th of October 1863, Keyes had been sent out with his own Regiment, plus one company of the Guides, to support our troops who had successfully stormed this Crag Picquet for the first time. Making his way up to the mouth of the Pass he heard heavy firing and soon got the bad news that the Picquet he was to support had been captured by the enemy. As soon as it became light enough to see, there, from the top of the Crag, floated three enemy standards. Without any hesitation or sending back to Headquarters for instructions Keyes at once made his plan to attack and retake the Picquet before the enemy could

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consolidate, before the whole of our own Army should become discouraged by seeing the enemy with their standards on the Crag. There were only two paths up the bottle-shaped pinnacle, each just wide enough for two men to climb abreast. Keyes himself led up one path with Subadar Bahadur Habib Khan while Lieut. Fosberry of the 4th Europeans with his Adjutant Lieut. Pitcher scrambled up the other. As Keek Sahib, my Hero and the Hero of Barara Tangi, topped the crest three men fired at him: the first bullet knocked the sword out of his right hand, the second bullet completely shattered his left hand, the third bullet, making two holes through his *poshteen* or sheep-skin coat, only grazed his side. The Subadar Bahadur defended him from further attack for the next moment or two and managed to pick up his sword again and put it back into his right hand—the enemy were then ‘put to the sword’ in the scriptural sense and the first retaking of the Crag was accomplished.

In dwelling upon these old romantic encounters, separated from the present style of bomb- and torpedo-warfare by what seems eight hundred years of time and space rather than by the actual mere eighty, there is no thought of writing a hand-book useful to the student on the hunt for facts. The idea is merely to try to share out with others my own feeling of wonderment that within one soldier’s life-span could take place a transformation which has hitherto taken many centuries of time!

I have told of the first retaking of the Crag Picquet when there was only room for twelve men on the little platform on the top. That platform was now enlarged so as to hold a garrison of 160 men. But it was lost again. The next and last recapture was led by the Commander of the Expedition—Neville Chamberlain himself. He was badly wounded but he re-occupied the Crag Picquet—for good.

Neville Chamberlain was soon made ‘Sir’ Neville in recognition of his services in this expedition and thereupon sent in his Dispatches on the Operations to Sir Hugh Rose (afterwards my old friend Lord Strathnairn), Colonel of the Blues, who rode to hounds on a white Arab wearing his dancing pumps. In 1863 Sir Hugh Rose was in the plenitude of his power as Commander-in-Chief in India and the terms of his refusal to the recommendation of the V.C. to Charles Keyes and Charles Brownlow created a rut in the line of Headquarters procedure cases which lasted for many years. The exact words he used are very revealing and enable me to point a moral and adorn a humble tale at a moment when V.C.’s are appearing in every *Gazette*.

1863

‘Personal gallantry on several occasions during a hard-fought campaign on the part of certain Majors in command of regiments¹ was no more than their duty, and should be recognized by other rewards than the Victoria Cross, for which they had been recommended by their General in his published dispatches. They would instead receive a step in rank and the C.B. as more conducive to their future promotion and usefulness. A captain or a subaltern might stake his life and lose it for the sake of the decoration without playing with the lives of others, but a field officer in command risked not only his own life, but possibly the success of the operation devolving upon him, by an unnecessary display of personal valour.’

A remark made by the late Lord Roberts (who had been himself at Umbeyla) on page 18, Vol. 2, of his reminiscences *Forty-One Years in India* shows another side of the dictum that field officers in command should not expose themselves to risk by an ‘unnecessary display of personal valour’. He, Roberts, then a Major, thirty-two years old, of very much the same status as Charles Keyes and Charles Brownlow, was marching with the 23rd Pioneers. Here is his account of an incident—‘Just at that moment a band of Ghazis furiously attacked the left flank, which was at a disadvantage, having got into broken ground covered with low jungle. In a few seconds five of the Pioneer British Officers were on the ground, one killed and four wounded; numbers of the men were knocked over and the rest, staggered by the suddenness of the onslaught, fell back on their reserve, where they found the needed support, for the Fusiliers stood as firm as a rock. At the critical moment when the Ghazis made their charge, Wright, the Assistant Adjutant-General and I, being close by, rushed in among the Pioneers and called on them to follow us; *as we were personally known to the men of both regiments,*² they quickly pulled themselves together and responded to our efforts to rally them. It was lucky they did so. . . .’

Now let the magic searchlight of my golden fountain-pen be switched thirty-seven years forward on to the battle of Elandslaagte. It will then be seen how the notions of Lord Strathnairn had taken root in the august brain of H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, side by side no doubt with a few brilliant flashes of his own wit, as, for example, when he announced

¹ Charles Keyes and Charles Brownlow.

² The italics are mine. Ian H.

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to Lord Roberts at his own table that no one who refused Boar's Head with Cumberland Sauce was fit to hold the chief Command in India.

1900

'In reply I am to acquaint you that the Commander-in-Chief will submit to the Queen that the decoration in question be granted to Captain Meiklejohn, 2nd Lieutenant Norwood, and Sergt. Major Robertson, and that the medal for distinguished conduct in the field be awarded to Sergt. Drummer Lawrence, Corporal Piper McLeod, Lance Corpl. Dryden, and Trooper Evans, whose conduct, though gallant, was not, in his opinion, of such a nature as to merit the high distinction of the Victoria Cross. With regard to Colonel (local Major-General) Ian Hamilton, I am to observe that the act for which he was recommended was performed when he was commanding a Brigade, i.e. in the position of a General Officer. The Victoria Cross has never been conferred upon an Officer so high in rank. The Commander-in-Chief thinks this limitation a wise one, and that it would not be desirable to establish a precedent opposed to it. He is unable, therefore, to submit Major-General Hamilton's name to the Queen.'

So that was that. But it was rough luck—indeed damned rough luck because already in February 1881, after Majuba, Sir Evelyn Wood had asked the Duke, personally, whether he would allow him to send in a recommendation for me for the V.C. although he could not strictly conform with the regulations; for he had not been an eye-witness of the particular act, having been only appointed enquirer into the general conduct of the action. The Duke had been good enough to reply that as to Majuba he was well disposed to me and so he thought would be the Queen, but that I was too young, or at least so young that I'd have plenty more chances. Sir Evelyn said no more. Born in 1838, he was first recommended for the V.C. when, as a midddy, he stormed the Redan in 1855; with, as the recommendation rather quaintly stated, 'the most beautiful courage and conduct, and manners that were exemplary.' But he did not actually win the V.C. until 1860, at the ripe age of twenty-two. With only a *duffidar* and *sowar* of his regiment at his back he attacked a band of seventy robbers in a dense jungle, as they were on the point of hanging an official who had informed against them.

He said no more. And I said no more myself until to-day when, at the age of ninety, decorations have lost their meaning.

VI

SHIKAR

(1875-1876)

Marshal Foch once told me that he was possessed by two master passions. Many would imagine that wars, ancient and modern, would have been the two passions, but no—they were Religion and Gothic Architecture, and he went on to say that York Minster satisfied both. Put down just so, these observations sound as whimsical as his next remark: that although the *valuta* or exchange rate between the franc and the pound was deplorable, a Marshal of France could still pay his own taxi. Both of his remarks, however, became as plain as a pair of pike-staffs when he commanded me to sit still in the taxi we had taken from and back to York railway station, overpaid the driver and exclaimed, ‘Let me assure you, my General, that a run round the aisles of your Minster, together with my descent into the Crypt where they allowed me to place that ancient Crown upon my head, have given me a better grip of Religion and Gothic Architecture than all the books and drawings in the world!!’

This little sermon preached to me by an eccentric genius has never been forgotten, and now the thought of it encourages me to hope that the following adventures set down at the time in letters and diaries may give young officers a more intimate grip of Indian service than the study of books devoting themselves entirely to descriptions drawn from dispatches, statistics, and essays on policy, strategy, and tactics.

To maintain our hold upon India, it is not enough to sprinkle a few little garrisons over it; to impose upon it a Congress on the lines of a Russian Duma, easily to be turned, when the hour strikes, into a Soviet; to travel thousands of miles by rail over its surface in a first-class ‘reserved’. How are these first-class reserved Personages going to make friends with the people? The answer is, they don’t. How are grand Collectors or Commissioners, moving about with a greedy crowd of *chuprassies* and police with itching palms going to make friends with the peasants? The answer is, they can’t, nor can the missionaries—except to a very small extent the

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medical missionaries—nor can the tax gatherers. In the days now about to be described and before the era of travel by air, there was still one class of European that did do its bit towards gaining the good-will and confidence of the *ryot* towards our Raj—the junior ranks of the British Army of Occupation. Equipped with the rupees saved up during the previous ten months, plus a big credit balance of *bonhomie* and love of sport, they would spend sixty days, or sometimes a solid six months, in the jungles or on the Himalayas, talking, walking, risking their necks in close and often intimate touch with little bands of *shikaris*; carriers and village worthies. Since those halcyon days, however, young officers have been encouraged by Viceroys and Commanders-in-Chief, to fly back to spend those precious days of privilege leave and those precious thousands or so of their hoarded rupees at The Empire in Leicester Square rather than the Empire of India—K. of K. would never have countenanced such a particularly unfortunate form of transferring Rs. to £ s. d. which lies only too well within the comprehension of the little groups of friends who used to form round that subaltern in search of sport. The Himalayan *shikaris* used to have a name of contempt for certain young officers who spent all their *talab* or pay in floating about the Woolar Lake in a house-boat with a fair Kashmiri—in his simple but expressive language he would call it *palan shikar*, ‘palan’ meaning ‘bed’.

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In April 1875, having got two months’ leave, I decided to try my luck on the Pir Punjal Range. Here are some letters of that time:

Dera Ishmail,
9th April 75

My dear Father,

When last I wrote what with fever and one thing or another I think I was rather in the dumps. Now, although alas this mail has brought no English letters with it I am quite recovered both from the fever and the blues.

In the first place it is much cooler than this time last week and in the second the Officer Commanding here is going to give me 10 days in addition to the 2 months that is to say if I get them which I think is pretty safe. There have only been two Cashmere passes granted to our Regiment so I cannot go there. I am going to the Pir Punjal range to try and get a big Markhoor. They, as I daresay you know, are a different variety to the

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Sheik boodeen fellows—the horns are not nearly so straight but are much longer reaching even to 54 inches. They are very scarce now and people say there are only 6 or 7 big males left on the whole range. How happy I should be if I got one. I am not going to fire at anything else, not even at bears, for the first month for fear of disturbing them by the noise. Lots of fellows have been coming down to look at my oorial and admire it very much. I can see the men quartered here are awfully jealous. I am now in the full swing of preparation. My things start by camel on the 15th and march to Bimber. I start on the 1st May—go by mail cart to Cheetcha Wutni from thence by train to Wazeerabad via Lahore—on to Bimber by dhoolie and dâk-gharrie—pick up my things there and then about 6 double marches and I am on my shooting ground. I shall always camp just on the edge of the snow line. I believe there are tremendous storms of rain and hail up there. I have been very economical in what I am taking with me and instead of half emptying the Mess store-rooms have contented myself with Commissariat rum at 9 annas¹ a bottle instead of brandy and ditto tea instead of best Souschong. The only stores I am taking at all are a few tins of soup which will be great luxury after a course of chupatties and tough goats' flesh. I hope I don't get charged by either a panther or a bear as when once I have let off my express I have only your old gun to rely on. The latter is in A1. condition—not a speck of rust anywhere about it. I had a most vivid dream last night—thinking I was out shooting bears with Vereker. I always got much the best of him through my superior knowledge of shikar but he always equalized that by his superior shooting. MacCarthy tells me I will very likely get off the frontier sores as my 2 months is sure to make me so fit and well. Cotton and I hit it off very well indeed. I really have found some one now decidedly more unpunctual and procrastinating than myself. He wishes to be remembered to you. I really am going in for Hindustani again directly my two months are over. This letter has been quite entirely about myself but I have the best of excuses this time that no letters came for me to make remarks on. Keep sending to Mooltan—less chance of being robbed. They always choose the English mail day to rob it and by sending to Mooltan my letter comes a day later.

My best love to all at home and believe me

Your very affecte son

IAN HAMILTON

¹ About one and twopence.

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Buckree Wallah Nullah,

11th May -75

My dear Granny,

Here I am at last, after a tremendously hard journey, at the commencement of my shooting ground—My tent is pitched at the bottom of the nullah and now I am king of a regular province 29 miles long and averaging $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles broad. So long as my tent stands no one dare fire a gun in it and no European can even go through it without first asking my permission. For the last 7 days I have been climbing climbing climbing—getting gradually cooler and cooler and now at last I am within 11 miles of the snow. I begin shooting to-morrow and shall work slowly up towards the snows. When there I shall sleep out at night wrapped in a rug and my father's old waterproof and try very hard if I can't get near an old markhoor. I shall be very proud if I succeed in getting one. As it said in the last *Field* 'there are only about half a dozen old males left now in the whole Pir Punjal range and as they frequent places where hardly any wingless animals can follow them it is now a great proof of endurance and nerve to get one.' A Russian Prince was here with 12 shikaries and 300 coolies for 15 days and though some of the shikaries marked one or two down yet he was unable to get over the ground and consequently did not get any. I hope to bag a black bear or two also musk deer, thar, gooral and perhaps with luck a red bear, leopard or serow. Up here one ought to be quite satisfied if one lets one's rifle off twice a week. So long as I get a fair markhoor I don't care so much about any of the others. My head shikari is an old man very like a markhoor himself—he knows these hills perfectly and has a very good chit from Major White of the Ninety Second dated '57. He gets Rs. 16 and Rs. 4 for russat.¹ My second is a tall, handsome, powerful young fellow who was recommended me by Brooke. He gets Rs. 10 and Rs. 4 russat. I have 10 coolies and mean to try and do with 9—that is very very little indeed and I only met one fellow on the road with less than 14 and he had 12.² I am in such a lovely place now. I wish you could see it. My tent is pitched on a little flat meadow by the side of a stream about the size of the Fruin. It is quite shaded from the sun by a large walnut tree. The other side of the nullah rises very steeply and

¹ *Russat* is food allowance.

² Amongst the loads were my mother's Bible, Shakespeare, and *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo—seven volumes. Being in French I was forced to read them at a snail's pace—a great advantage. Ian H.

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is covered with magnificent pines. If you look away up the nullah the view is closed by the snowy Pir. Add to this that the little meadow is carpeted with wild strawberries, forget-me-not and oleander and you may perhaps faintly conceive what a change it is for a poor fellow from dreary, dusty, hot Dismal Khan. For the last two days my appetite has been prodigious. I have eaten no less than three breakfasts and am now as I write tucking in to dates and walnuts. My liver got all right directly I left MacCarthy and Cotton who are always talking about liver, fatty degeneration of heart in India, etc., and who keep regular calenders of their pulses taken four times a day. I had a very narrow escape two days ago—as I was walking along I saw a snake come out right from under my foot. I must have missed treading on its tail by about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch. As it was climbing over a hollow stump I killed it with my alpenstock. Duke, a doctor who had come so far, examined it and said it was the most poisonous snake in India except *perhaps* the cobra—it was a *crite*. Had I stood on it, it is very improbable I should have lived more than an hour. I was walking with bare legs, sandals and knickerbockers at the time. You must make every allowance for the writing as I have lost my pen and I am writing with the twig of a pine tree. It will cost me Rs. 7 to send this to Gujerat so I am afraid dear Granny you will not hear very often from me during my leave. Best love to all at home.

Your affecte. grandson,

IAN HAMILTON

at the time. You must
make every allowance for
the writing as I have lost
my pen & I am writing
with the twig of a pine
tree. It will cost me Rs. 7 to

My hunting adventures were duly recorded day by day in a small brown note-book, describing itself on the cover as 'an improved metallic book, warranted if written on with Henry Penny's patent prepared pencils to be as plain and durable as ink'. The beauty of this is that now nearly

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seventy years later I am able to compare the notes written down each day with the accounts I sent home, and the extraordinary thing is that the two tally in every particular. Under the heading 'Buckree Wallah Nullah, Pir Punjal, 13th May 1875' the first entry records that after some stiff climbing I got the chance of a shot at a musk deer but saw nothing else. The next day:

Went with a coolie to a cave where two bears who were killing a lot of sheep resided. Pretended to be very plucky and crawled in—delighted to find them not at home—horrible smell of Zoo and pieces of skin of goats and sheep. Afterwards found tracks leading down to stream about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles off. Followed them so far and found they had had a regular tub. Getting dark and had to leave off. Tula Khan says they will not come back from bottom of nullah until rain falls.

The story of my first encounter with a bear is told in a long letter to my father a week later:

*Buckree Wallah Nullah, Pir Punjal,
20th May 1875*

My dear Father,

The messenger who took my last letter has returned bringing a long one from Grandmama full of news. . . . You can't think how jolly it was getting a letter especially as I must again report myself on the sick list at least I am now getting better but I have been down with fever 5 days. I hope to be able to go out shooting again in about 4 days that is to say if the fever keeps off. I have only been out 3 days and have not bagged anything. The 3rd day I was out, whilst climbing a stiff hill the shikari stopped behind with my rifle to put on a new pair of grass shoes. I went on with a coolie carrying only my gun loaded with ball. When we had gone some distance I saw a male musk deer about 100 yards off. It was rather too far for the gun but I thought the deer would be off before the shikaree could come up with the rifle so I fired, but as I thought, the bullet fell just a little short although a very good direction. Had I bagged it the food alone would have been worth Rs. 16. The head is very peculiar—it has no horns but very very large ears and long tusks. That evening coming back as I was going down a side nullah filled with snow my stick slipped and sliding down fell into a great hole at the bottom. I climbed down the snow walls after it. Just as I got to the bottom old Tula Khan put his head over the edge saying 'Bhaloo'. At that magic word I scrambled up as fast

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as I could but just as I got to the top I fell back again to the bottom. By the time I really had got out of the beastly place I saw a monstrous beast about 100 yds off walking slowly up the nullah. I assure you it was no more like those wretched animals that climb the pole at the Zoo than I am. I let drive at once and hit him on the quarter disabling one hind leg. He made the most dreadful noise ('ugh ugh ugh' something like that only I can't write it) and came straight at us at a great pace. I thought it would be better to have two cartridges in my rifle than one as he was coming to close quarters so instead of giving him the second barrel at once I opened the breech and put in another cartridge instead of the one I had fired. Just as I had got it in the bear was within 20 yds but here his heart failed him and before I could get the rifle to my shoulder he turned sharp to the left up a deep cutting in the snow. It was so deep that I could only see his head and neck as he went along. After getting about 120 yds off he sat down and I could just see his head, and so I fired through the snow at where I thought his body ought to be but I do not think I hit him. Directly I fired he turned up the side of the hill and began to climb a small, very steep nullah—I ran down on to the snow as hard as I could and got beneath him—he could only go very slowly *up hill* because of his leg. I fired and hit him directly between the shoulders—to my astonishment he did not fall but went up a little way and then lay down. I fired two more shots the first of which missed as I was so blown and the second hit somewhere. I had now only 1 cartridge left and the shikari proposed that I should climb close up to him and put it through his head. I must confess I did not quite like it as Brooke has always warned me never to go at a bear from down hill but *always* from above. When I got there after some very hard climbing I found nothing but a pool of blood and some sticks he had bitten in his rage. We followed his track for about a mile and a half down to the water when we had to give it up as it was getting very dark. Next day I had fever and the coolies I sent were probably frightened for they brought back news they could find nothing further. The day after though very weak I started off and followed the blood another $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to where the big fellow had lain down. I sat down there to rest and whilst doing so fever came on again. How I got home I don't know. The coolie pushed me and the shikari pulled me and I arrived somehow. I hope soon to be well now as I am taking any amt. of quinine. My food here costs me As. 12 a day and I drink pinika pani.¹ My bearer is very

¹ Plain water.

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seedy and I have to keep 2 extra coolies for him making a total of 10. This letter costs me 7 dibs and all together I live here at a total cost of only about Rs. 170 per mensem so that had I got 3 months leave I should actually have saved considerably in spite of the enormously expensive journey. As it is, and I have calculated it over and over in the silent watches of the night, I think I shall just manage to pay my shikaris and get back to D.I.K. If this fever continues much longer I shall throw up my leave and go back where at least I can get a Doctor. However, I think it has passed off for good now. Vereker has evidently quite forgotten that he has a brother out in a beastly country whilst he is enjoying himself at home. Not a line since Heaven knows when. However every dog has his day and perhaps some day when he is simmering in Ceylon and I am in Europe he may wish he had kept up the correspondence a little better. . . .¹

Your affecte. son,

IAN HAMILTON

Apart from adventures with bears, 'fever, could not go out' is a recurring entry in the diary. One day I had a narrow escape while crossing a stream which, just before falling in a cascade about 100 feet high, rushed through between two perpendicular cliffs. The cliffs came straight down to within about four yards of the water, which was here compressed to a width of about five and a half feet and rushed with tremendous force over the precipice about ten yards lower down. The stream had here to be crossed twice without gaining any ground. Lasso, my shikari jumped first and I followed all right. 'There was a tiny little crack into which I put my alpenstock and felt quite firm. Lasso prepared to jump again and as I seemed quite firm asked for my alpenstock. I gave it him and just as he leapt the stream again my foot slipped and down I went slowly towards the water, as I could not get any proper grip of the smooth rock. By the time my fingers came to the level of the little crack before mentioned I was up to my middle in water and the stream was tugging me with all its force towards the precipice ten yards off. When Tula Khan' (the Head shikari) 'who had not crossed, saw me slip, he gave a most dreadful yell—luckily Lasso heard it above the noise of the water and looking round leapt as quick as lightning back again and caught me by my coat and pulled me out just as my fingers were beginning to relax their hold. Up to this

¹ It transpired that all Vereker's letters had been sent to a wrong address.

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time I had always managed to put a good face on my accidents but really this time I was so thoroughly frightened that I was very much subdued until the fever came and subdued me entirely. We went on about two miles after this and then I took my quinine and the shikaris made me a most comfortable sort of nest under the trunk of a huge fallen pine where I was to rest whilst they went to look for game. They had not been gone an hour when the *beastly* fever came on again. I sent a coolie for Tula Khan and when he arrived we started for the tents. I really never thought I could possibly get home and I was so weak that when I first got up to start I fell flat on my face and scratched it all over. The coolie passed his turban round my waist and pulled whilst Tula Khan shoved from behind. In this manner we struggled on till we got near the difficult ground when Tula Khan said we must go over a high hill to avoid it. I felt it was *quite impossible* that I could climb another hill and so against his most earnest entreaties I went straight on.

‘About twenty yards above the big cascade there was another little one. The water as it rushed over the latter was only about three feet deep and we had waded across it the time before. Were you, however, carried over the small cascade it was quite certain that the rush of water would carry you on over the big one. As my legs were so tired the coolie said he would carry me over as he often had done before. He had a huge bundle on his shoulders and as I jumped on he fell flat on his face into the middle of the water. Most luckily my hands fell exactly on to a large rough stone which stuck up in the middle of the water. I held the coolie’s head firmly between my knees until I had got firm hold with my right hand and then made a half turn and caught him by the bundle on his back. All this time his head was under water but it was a choice between that and letting him go down the cascade. Luckily Tula Khan was on the near bank and after a little we managed to get hold of one of his legs and pull him ashore—he was very nearly drowned. This plunge into a snow torrent seemed rather to strengthen my legs than otherwise and I got over the place where I had so nearly come to grief in the morning all right.’

One day when I went away down the cud I found a Goojer leading his goats towards my shooting ground. This made me very angry so I beat him soundly with my stick and told him if I found either men or goats on my ground I would shoot them. The effect was unexpected. ‘Most extraordinary how giving a native a good licking raises you in his estimation,’ I wrote in my diary at the time. ‘This man was so pleased that he brought

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me some milk and a kind of cream cheese and said that his greatest wish was to become my servant.'

In June there is the first glimpse of a leopard noted in the diary:

'June 7th. Went up Hundernard again. Saw a gooral¹ on the opposite side of the cud. Went down and got within about 200 yds. I was on a very bad piece of ground and was hardly able to keep myself from falling. Much less could I hold the rifle steady. Tula Khan insisted on my firing from where I was and *most unfortunately* I did so. My bullet passed just over the gooral's back and it at once darted away when what did I see but a tail the length of my tent pole give one flourish from the small jungle about 10 yds. from where the gooral had been and then disappear. I squatted down with my finger on the trigger of the left barrell (sic) but he did not show himself till right up the opposite cud 400 yds. off when I thought it useless to fire. This was the first leopard I had seen and had I waited about 10 minutes I should almost with certainty have got both gooral and leopard. . . .'

A letter from my brother who was studying painting in Rome seems at last to have turned up at this point, and here is my reply:

*Top of the Pir Punjal,
9th June 1875*

My dear Vereker,

At last you have deigned to write to me. However better late than never and I can assure you your letter was a great treat to me up here in the jungle. Having said so much I hope you will not be offended at a few suggestions as to how letters should be written to people who have been some time in foreign parts. With regard to your letters I wish you would enter a little more into detail and if possible simulate a slight interest in what one is doing out here at any rate in so far as to wish that one may have a successful two months' sport or something of that sort. With regard to the question of detail you say in your letter I shall ever be grateful to Puggo (or Poggo) for the trouble he has taken with me. I presume Puggo is a painter but what really would interest me would be to hear what sort of place Puggo lives in—how he dresses—what language he talks to you in—etc. etc. You also say the Leckies, Woodwards etc. are still here—now as you have put it, they are meaningless names to me, whereas I really would give anything to know whether you have been

¹ Himalayan chamois.

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going out into society much and if so what sort of people you met. I have just come back this morning having killed a fine male musk deer. . . . The valuable pod is hanging in front of my nose from the top of the tent. I saw it cut off and turned inside out myself and I have now put my seal on the string that ties it so that any fraud is impossible. Yesterday I got within certainly 15 yards of a large she-bear with two tiny little cubs. It was pouring with rain and my second shikari first spotted her by seeing some stones fall on to the snow. We looked up and then saw her away up the cud. We scrambled up hands and knees up a dreadfully steep place down which I several times nearly fell. At last looking over a rock the shikari said she was lying down 15 yards off but that as she was slightly above me it would be safer to move a little to the right which would bring me behind a large tree. In the meantime the rain began to fall in torrents—a most tremendous thunderstorm—and whether because of that or that she heard something when I got to my place and looked over she was gone. All of a sudden I saw her immense head looking over a rock and snuffing in all directions about 20 yds. straight above me. We both remained as still as death for had she caught sight of us or got our wind, having cubs she would have charged at once and knocked us both down the cud before I could have got the gun out of the cover in which it still was. To our relief after a little she retired and getting the rifle ready we rushed up after her but she had disappeared in the thick jungle and all our efforts to find her were unavailing. As the cubs^r are so small she cannot go far and I have great hopes of getting her this evening and catching the young ones alive.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

Believe me,

Your very affecte. brother

IAN HAMILTON

All our efforts to find her, however, were unavailing. In my last week I was more fortunate:

'June 22nd Tuesday. My lucky day so far. Got up whilst it was dark and climbed up small cud on to the snow nullah. Whilst walking up it Lasso saw something red in small jungle to left. Tula Khan was half an hour getting rifle out of case and the bear disappeared. In the meantime however another we had not seen came out of small jungle and ran up the grass on edge of the snow at a great pace. When it got to 200 yds. it

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stopped and turning its great head round snuffed in the air. I then let drive and broke one hind leg. It did not make as much noise as the black fellows did but turned to its right on to the snow and came straight down at us. About 20 yds. to my right was a very steep cud and Tula Khan and I ran as fast as we could to that and scrambled up about 5 yds. and waited for him to come. In the meantime Lasso with little gun had also scrambled up the cud but he was about 10 yds. higher up than us and about 20 yds. nearer the bear. When the bear got opposite him it turned straight up the cud at him. As it turned sideways to me I fired my second barell (sic) and hit it in the middle of the body. It fell on to the snow but instantly got up and went at Lasso again. Something went wrong with my cartridge and I could not get it in so I was in the greatest fright about Lasso who however was quite equal to the occasion for as the bear got within 2 yds. of him he let drive and knocked it over to the bottom again when after a few moans it gave up the ghost. The shikaris could hardly believe their eyes. They said it was the first time they had ever heard of a red bear being in Buckree Wallah. . . .'

'*June 26th.* Went out after Markhor. . . . About 12 a.m. the very worst fever I have had came on. Tremendous rain. Lasso stayed with me—sent others on. Although only $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour from camp and it was all down hill it took me fully $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours with many falls from weakness. Got soaked through.'

'*Sunday.* Kind note from Duke with some honeycombs and quinine.'

On this subdued note the diary ends. It was to lie forgotten among my papers until March 1942.

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Early in the following year, that is to say in 1876, I was feeling very forlorn and forsaken. The 92nd Gordons had departed in a special train for Lahore to add *éclat* to a grand March-past before the Prince of Wales and I had been left alone in the old fort of Mooltan city, a couple of miles from the Cantonment. We subalterns took this duty in turn and hated it. Not only was it deadly dull but there was a horrible pest of sand-flies, creatures so minute that they penetrated mosquito nets and the only protection was to smear any exposed part of the person with sour milk. As I was in the act there was the sound of steps coming up the wooden stairs and a grimy looking railway man, head of a gang of plate-layers, said to me, 'Your Colonel wants you up at once.' So saying he handed me a letter saying, 'We are one short for the reel in which the Prince himself

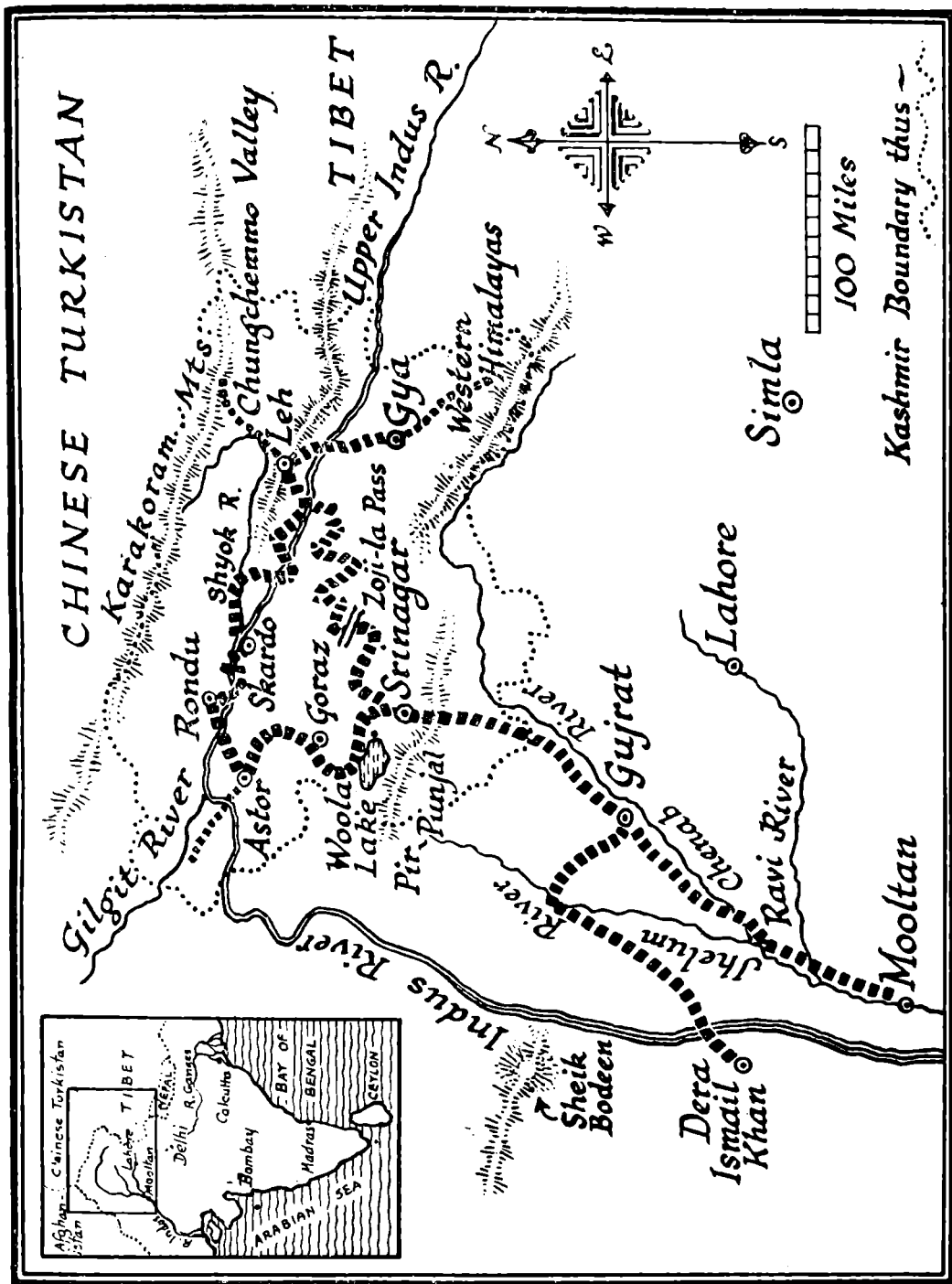
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takes part, so come sharp; and you may have to do the sword dance; bring the whole of your kit and the bearer of this has promised to run you right down.' In a quarter of an hour I was on my way to the station; in half an hour I was on my way to Lahore.

Well, I got through the reel all right and was not called upon to do the sword dance; luckily, as I couldn't *really* do it having only had a lesson or two from the Pipe Major. Next day the races—excitement and betting. I had entered one of my ponies, 'James Pigg', for the first race, a handicap. He had too many penalties and did not win but my luck holding next morning the fellow who was to have ridden the favourite in the big race was flattened out with fever and I got the mount. Two false starts and my mouth grew so dry that my tongue rattled—I won!!!

Then, as a finishing touch who should come up and congratulate me but Gwatkin, ex-Captain of our Sandhurst football team, who had said to me, as the time of our famous match against Woolwich was drawing nigh, that it was so important to win the match that we must practise every Saturday afternoon. 'But,' I had replied, 'that is the afternoon for the run of the Staff College Drag-hounds and I have to train my mare Camilla for the point-to-point races.' 'That's nothing to me,' Gwatkin had said, 'You must please yourself; but if you elect for the Drag and cannot promise to give up your Saturdays to football then you must drop out.' He was now a Lieutenant in the 73rd quartered in Ceylon and wishing to see India had made his way to the Punjab. Having some cash in hand he thought he would have a bit of a flutter and backed the favourite! So there he was again, just as if we were still at the R.M.C. Sandhurst, and in the best of good humours, patting me on the back and declaring that he was glad after all that I had put my pink silk jockey cap before the purple velvet of the football team.

This was a good beginning for the year 1876, which stands out as the most marvellous year of my life; reckoned, as years should be reckoned, by the amount of effort put into them. And now—what next? Everyone in the 92nd was aflame to get off into the Himalaya, there to emulate the record bag made in 1875 by Captain Harry Brooke of Fairley—near Aberdeen. Only two permits into Kashmir were granted to each British Regiment, but as I was serving on detachment I had been able to get an *extra* one from Sir Charles Keyes commanding the Frontier; but only for two months. There was, however, just a chance that an extension would be forthcoming at the end of the two months, which meant that I must



TRAVELS IN KASHMIR AND LITTLE TIBET, 1876

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carry out the first part of my trip on the assumption that I might have to go back after giving myself only about 10 days shooting on top of a prodigious series of marches. The sensible thing, I suppose would have been to potter about in the neighbourhood of Srinagar but then as you know I am not sensible. So that's that.

Two letters I wrote to my brother Vereker who was in Ceylon at the time describe the race up to Kashmir and my journey on to Belatchi Nullah beyond Astôr.

Bundipûr, Woola Lake, Cashmere,
18th April

My dear Vereker,

Here I am after *the* hardest work I have had in my life. I have done 4 *treble* marches and 2 double ones. Once I was *actually* 13 hours in the saddle exclusive of any little time I may have spent in breakfast or resting. Of course I had no time to get my meals properly cooked and I have lived chiefly on eggs and chupatties. As a reward for all this I am about the 1st into Cashmere from the Punjab. After all my hard work I had a delicious day yesterday. I was paddled along all day for 30 miles along the Woola lake. I really can't describe the scenery—it was too lovely. On the one side great mountains *covered* with snow came sheer down to the water; on the other a delicious green plain stretched for 40 miles, dotted with splendid trees and then again came the snow-covered mountains. Tonight I sleep on the top of Zayabu pass in 7 or 8 ft. of snow. However I have lots of bedding and don't care much.

If I don't get my extension I shall just have to double back as quick as I came for I am still 12 double marches from Astôr. If I get it I ought to make a good bag as I have got a first class shikari. I am going to take 130 chickens some sheep and 20 coolie loads of rice for my servants.

I am now off—

Good-bye old chap and wish me luck,

Your affecte. brother

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

Belatchi Nullah Astôr,
9th May 76

My dear Vereker,

Here I am in the very nullah I wished to get. What times I have had since you last heard from me! You must know that when any particular

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nullah has a good name for sport there is a most tremendous race for it and as all the leaves begin within 10 days of one another there is a pretty equal start. From where I wrote to you I went to Gorāz (do look at your map) as hard as I could—through snow all the way varying from 7 ft. to 30 ft. deep. Although I had passed a good many fellows on the way still there were two ahead of me one of whom I knew was making for this nullah. As there would be some delay about coolies I started straight off then and there with 1 rifle and 20 rounds—bedding— $\frac{1}{2}$ a load of grass for shoes, a couple of degshies¹ and the clothes on my back. I caught up 1 man that very day—the next day I caught up the other but unluckily in the last mile of catching him I strained the tendon which runs from the back of the heel up the calf of one's leg, in the deep snow. Lovell of the 9th who was the man was very kind and fomented it and bandaged it up in the most perfect style. Next morning I could not move a step and as I was resolved not to lose sight of him I rode a pony. This was all very well till about 8 a.m. when the sun melting the frozen crust the pony kept falling through and giving me the most tremendous croppers. In this way I did 11 miles and then I made a sort of dooly out of my bedding and was carried another 10 miles. There was no hut so slept on the snow on the top of a pass 16,000 odd feet.² A bitter wind—I wonder what some of our volunteers who make such a fuss about camping out at Wimbledon would say to it. Next day I was much better and having made a double march along with Lovell I started again at 7 p.m. and got in at 1 a.m. Next day I did a treble march getting in at 12 at night and so left my rival well behind.

In Astôr they told me the Rondu Pass (19,000 odd feet) was closed by snow but I got over somehow or other (though I nearly lost my nose and it has no skin on it now). My coolies were only carrying 15 seers.³ No one else has attempted it so the nearest sahib is 57 miles off. The 1st 4 days my ankle was so bad that I could do nothing but look at the monstrous ibex with my glasses on the other side of the nullah. Brooke had told me of him and had slept out 8 nights in the snow for him without getting a shot. The 5th day I had my breakfast comfortably—went out and was fortunate enough to bag him. I should like to tell you the story but it would take up too much space. His horns are 40 inches and *may* be the biggest shot this year. If so I shall be famous for 12 months to come. I

¹ A degshie is a round copper cooking pot without a handle.

² Top of Punjal.

³ Approximately 34 lb.

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was only out 1 other day and had the extraordinary good fortune to find and bag another beauty of 31 inches and see 5 magnificent markhor after whom I intend to work till I hear whether my leave is granted or no—I am in the greatest suspense at present.

I hope I shall soon hear from you—this goes by a very fast runner so I hope you may get it soon.

Believe me,

Your affecte. brother

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

No word having come of the extension of my leave, I started back for Srinagar in the last week of May. As I neared the Woolar Lake there was put into my hand a telegram, forwarded by runner from Murree:

‘Four months’ extension granted all wish you luck. George White.’

Eureka! And now my mind must be made up on the spur of the moment: should I retrace my steps and march back northwards to Astôr and Gilgit—or, should I strike off north-eastwards to Leh and the Karakoram range. The one thing I must not do was to hesitate or delay. So I changed course and marched as if the devil was after me and heaven before me over the Zeoji-La Pass into Little Tibet (about two hundred and fifty miles) to Leh, which I reached on June 16th. From Leh I pressed on for five marches eastwards to a small desolate hamlet called Gya, where there was an old hermit living in a cave who had to be propitiated with a gift of a sheep. Owing perhaps to this gift the first shot I fired was at an Ovis ammon or Giant Sheep. He came over the rise and I did not move a muscle till he stood full in the open about 120 yards off, then sent a bullet from the little rifle behind the shoulder and out at the other side. Off he went—I ran down and saw him and his companion bounding along as if nothing was the matter with either. At 320 yards the one I had wounded stood facing me. I took a full sight at his horns and the bullet went straight into his chest. He went still about twenty yards and then rolled over.

At last my dream of shooting an Ovis ammon had come true. His horns were—or rather are, for I have just been having another look at them—very massive and thirty-two inches long.

From here we went a long, long march to Pulchimba on the Rubshu road where there was a plain about fourteen miles square with a great

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salt lake in it swarming with red geese and Brahminy ducks. Here I spent the whole day on a wild goose chase with the usual result. One morning as we went along the bottom of a big nullah I heard a most extraordinary howling and on the top of a hill about one mile off saw a wild dog. Suddenly the howling was answered from close behind us and we saw another about 500 yards off lying on a rock. Leaving the coolie to attract his attention I started off to stalk him; when all of a sudden with the most frightful howls she came straight at us. Like a fool I fired at about eighty yards and missed when she turned up a nullah and disappeared. Another day we went up to the very top of a nullah close to the snow looking for Ovis when all of a sudden we saw eight wild dogs lying on a bank. We tried to stalk them but were still a long way off when we were discovered by one who had in the meantime climbed a peak. He barked and howled and at once six of them who were pups of about ten weeks disappeared in some burrows we had noticed before. The other big one went to join the first. We tried to cut them off but only got a hopelessly long shot and missed. When we went back to the burrows we found five entrances, evidently marmot holes enlarged. I sent two of the coolies to try and dig them out with promise of liberal *bakshish* but they came back late saying that the burrows were most extensive and that they could do nothing.

During this very period there happened to me the strangest adventure of my life; so strange that it has never been told to *anyone*! Often I have been tempted, always I have resisted. Sinbad the Sailor was carried off by a Roc; but I am perfectly certain he would have been wiser to keep his mouth shut, and certain that his wife was not taken in by this attempt to account for his having left no tracks upon the sand when absent without her leave.

I had wounded an ibex and following it up with Lasso along the edge of some cliffs about 2,000 feet above the little river that ran far away below, we came to a place where for some 200 yards there had been a landslide. The face of the precipice had broken away into loose shingle. An active man could get across, each bound carrying him down about ten yards. Lasso had managed to perform this feat and had disappeared on the far side. The more I looked at it the less I liked it but I saw that in the centre of all this loose stuff there jutted out a small piece of solid rock the size and shape of a coffin. So I started off about twenty yards above this—each step I was carried down with a cloud of dust and stones but I had calculated correctly and landed myself exactly on my rock. I should add

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that on this occasion I was not wearing my turban or solar topee—a day or two previously as I jumped over a plank bridge my hat had been carried off by the stream and my men had made me a sort of Robinson Crusoe hat of canvas and musk deer skin with the crown and sides of black Ladak lamb, which I was then wearing. Hardly had I settled myself when there was a tremendous swish in the air and my hat was sent spinning off my head down the precipice whilst I received a blow which all but made me follow it. I was being attacked by a Lammergeyer or Bearded Vulture which was making circles round me. I shouted out and by the mercy of Providence at that moment Lasso fired off his rifle. Otherwise my remains would have fed this huge and hungry bird at the foot of the cliffs 2,000 feet below.

Returning to Leh in Little Tibet, I found letters had at last arrived from my brother in Ceylon and on the 22nd July 1876 I wrote to him as follows.

My dear Vereker,

Many, many thanks for your two charming letters. They almost made me repent not having written to you for the last 6 weeks but really when I got the first of yours 3 months 9 days had passed without a line from you. Often and often have I also wished that you might be here just for a moment whenever I made a particularly good shot or saw anything particularly curious or beautiful. Especially I thought of you at Srinuggur when dashing about the city in my canoe with 7 paddlers. I think you would have enjoyed the eastern Venice very much though I think you would soon tire of the sort of work I am at now. . . .

Now for *my* news. I meant to give you some long accounts but must cut it very short as my baggage has already started back to Astôr—via Skardo—along the Indus and Shayok rivers—look at your map. As to sport, old fellow, I am the most fortunate and happiest fellow in the world. I have shot 3 Ovis-Ammon, 2 monsters. To show you how rare they are only 3 were shot the whole of last season and only 2 very small ones have been shot since. Many, many fellows have been trying and have got none. The biggest is 37 inches long by 17 circumference. The next 32 by 16. Besides this I have got 5 burrell 1 shapoo and 1 Thibetan wolf (very rare). . . .

After an agony of indecision as to whether I should go to the far off Chung Chemoo Valley for Thibetan Antelope and Yâk or back again to

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Astôr for Ibex and Markhor I have made up my mind for the latter. It is 11 days to Skardo—27 miles a day—and 7 from there to Astôr, the nearest post office so that you must not expect another letter for some time but I'll give you a good long account of Skardo on the first opportunity. How on earth did you manage to get a bill of Rs. 800 in a month. I should have thought you could have gone 3 times round the island for that sum.

Good-bye old fellow and believe me

Your very affecte. brother

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

Now began the long journey back to Astôr along the upper reaches of the Indus past Skardo and Rondu crossing and re-crossing the gorge. These crossings of the gorge were worse than terrifying. Whenever the footpath along the river ran up against sheer rock the traveller had to get across to the other bank to carry on and the way of it was this: there were two ropes, the upper one for the hands, the lower one for the feet—far above was the sky, far below ran the Indus 'through caverns measureless to man' down to the ocean. A tight-rope dancer would have been quite all right, I suppose, but these ropes were not tight; they were slack and sometimes my hands went one way and my feet the other. If I were to live to be a hundred these crossings will come back to me in nightmares. I was making for the Belatchi Nullah, where I had set my heart on shooting a monster Markhor which I had already spotted on a far hill.

Ditchell Nullah, Astôr

19th August 76

My dear Vereker,

You complain of not hearing from me and I am afraid nearly 20 days after the date of yours will elapse before you do, but remember that it was all your own fault writing to Gujrat and that in consequence I did not get a line from you for nearly 4 months. My latest papers are 2 months old but I see in them that there is every chance of a row with the Russ. I pray to Heaven if there is I may not be out of it. Next December also there is to be an autumn campaign against the Afridis a most numerous and warlike tribe near Peshawer. I really think I have a chance of getting there. Even if the regiment were not ordered I (having passed already the necessary exam. in Hindustáni) shall volunteer for the Staff Corps and ask for one of the Sikh Regts. going! As they are very short of officers in the

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Staff Corps it would be sure to be granted and there is a rule that anyone wishing to return to their own Reg^{ts}. within 2 years has a right to do so and comes in in his own place again. Of course there would be the expense of uniform but that would not be much. Is it not a brilliant idea? I think it will be safest to tell no one but to pretend I am really going into an irregular corps. Fancy our Father's horror on seeing in the Gazette my transfer to a N.I. Regt! Don't say anything about this. No other fellow in the Regt. is qualified so there is no chance of anyone else trying the same dodges. Besides I should get £500 a year pay instead of £350 as I do now—counting my interpreter's pay of Rs. 40 a month I am not drawing now as I give it to a fellow to do my work for me. You fellows seem rather poorly off as far as mere pay goes. If I chose to go in for being Adjutant I have every reason to believe I could get it at once and my pay would then be £600 a year and horse allowance or equal to your Garioch's who, I take it, is an elderly man. A Captain only gets £530 or less than an Adjutant, a Major £900 and a Colonel £1780 or nearly two thousand a year. But what plays the devil are our Mess Bills. I find mine (except at D.I.K.) have come to £270 a year. The thought of all that spent on one's stomach is simply disgraceful but in a Regiment like ours one *cannot* help it. Champagne always flowing. *No one* allowed to pass through the station without being made a regimental guest—all that sort of thing. I declare if I were you I should take to water drinking when alone. I drink nothing but water and tea up here and find it agrees with me. I never was better in my life. It was unpleasant for the first 2 or 3 days but I soon got accustomed to it. I fancy you would find you could keep 2 horses on the money thus spent on an ungrateful stomach which instead of being thankful for the favours you bestow frequently makes you feel much the worse for them. Perhaps however in Ceylon liquor is not so expensive as here. A bottle of beer costs a rupee at Mooltan.

Working very hard but only got 1 shot since I came here resulting in a magnificent *black* markhor. Length 45 inches. I should also like to have a slap at your elk. For the other game I do not care. The elephants have no tusks and I consider even a chamois horn better than a *tail*. Excuse dirt and untidiness but remember I am in the jungle.

Believe me,

Your very affecte. brother

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

SHIKAR

Town of Astôr
10th September 1876

My dear Vereker,

No letter from you since last I wrote a fortnight ago. I have really wonderful good news to give of myself however. (N.B. Don't think I am making swans of all my geese for I give you my word I am not going to exaggerate in the least). Well then here is my news—I have shot the biggest markhor in the world perhaps—at any rate the biggest that has ever been bagged by a European. The biggest up to 1874 was one shot by a Col. Cuppidge, who committed suicide about 5 years ago, in the Pir of Punjal and measured 53 inches. This is quite 30 years ago. Last year a Cheshire man went up in the *winter* to Brooke's new ground of Astôr and there being a vast quantity of snow on the ground he somehow or other got a 54 incher. When he came down to Mooltan to thank Brooke who although a stranger had given him the route he and Brooke made every enquiry from all the authorities—Kinloch etc. etc. and Shaw's was acknowledged the biggest markhor in existence. *My* markhor measures 56!! inches horn, 12 inches face and 16 inches beard. That you may form a better idea of the monster I may tell you that an average royal Scotch stag measures from base of horn to tip of longest antler only 22 inches. I feel so tempted to tell you the whole story but shall restrain myself for fear of boring you. I worked very hard on purpose for him but thought I had very little chance as many had tried for him and failed. Besides quite contrary to the usual habits of markhor he lived in the densest jungle instead of the open. The natives reputed him a devil and said no bullet could hit him. He had two old wounds on him. Besides this I have been very very fortunate in other ways. Two other markhor, one 45 the other 35. Four extremely large ibex 43, 41, 41, 32 and a smallish one. One ibex has been shot of 42 this year and none other over 40 so you see what with my splendid success in Ladâk I am sure to make the best bag Kashmir has seen for many a day. I must try and get photo^d. somehow with my heads and shikâri. You would be amused to see how very oriental I am in my costume. A huge choga from Yâsim in Central Asia, a most becoming light brown turban and wide Pathân pyjâmas of Yârkandi cloth. I have with all my luck in the sport line had a great misfortune also at Mooltan. The month I left Mooltan my Cr. Sergt^t chose to make away with Rs. 233. 10. 6 of Canteen money and after a long inquiry I have been ordered to stump up. Cruel hard luck—is it not. . . . Let's hear from

SHIKAR

you soon. I have only about a month left me now. I hear from home they are going to move you again. Hoping to get a line soon.

Believe me,

Your affect. brother

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

P.S. I quite forgot to mention that the markhor has only one horn and a stump. This though some people may think it a drawback is an additional perfection in my eyes.

Excuse dirt!!

Srinagar, Kashmir

28th September 1876

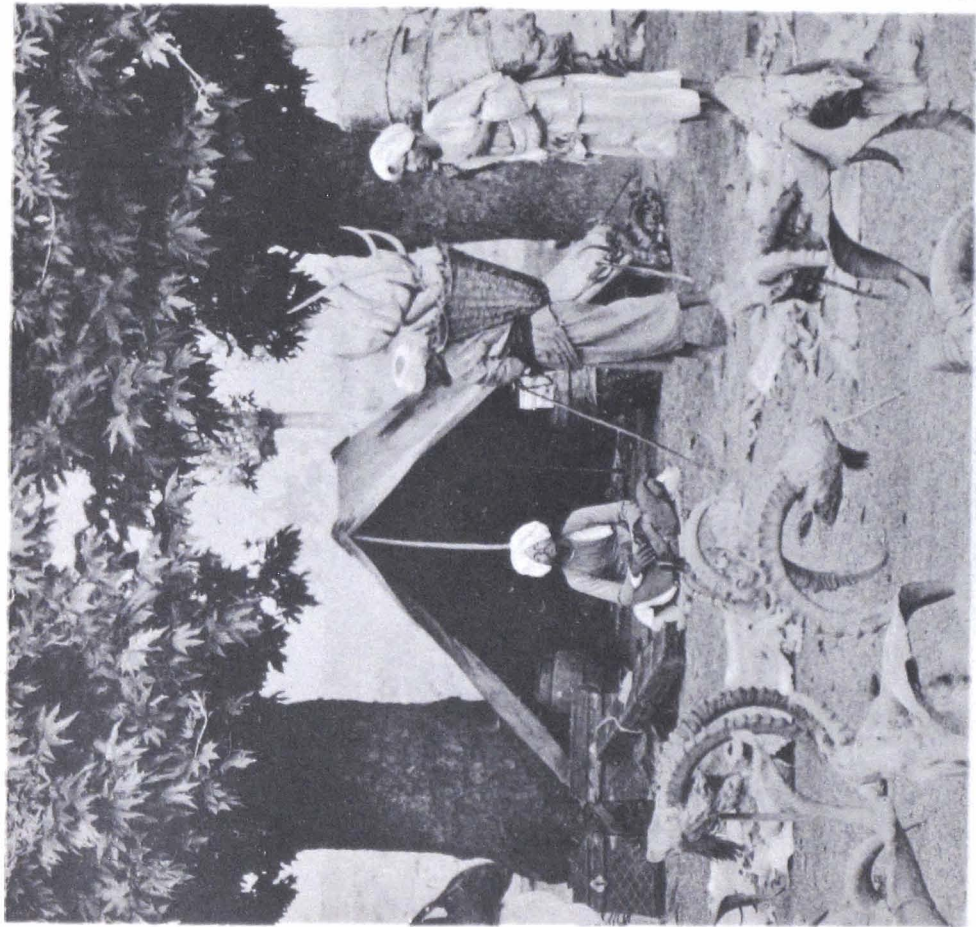
My dear Vereker,

Will you excuse a hurried line. I know I owe you a long letter but I am not at all well—horrid diarrhea—I've spelt it wrong—and hurry off to-morrow at daybreak to get out of this place which I don't think suits me. On arrival here a famous Indian photographer—Burke—came to see me and beg my heads to photo for a book he is bringing out on the Himalayas. I was delighted. Besides the big group he has done two more for insertion. The first, my two biggest ibex and a markhor and the second two oves ammon with a Thibetan ibex. They are beautiful large photos and of course he makes me a present from each plate. I also on my own account have had photos done of camp, shikari, servants, self etc., so that you will soon see all about it. We leave Mooltan for Delhi (41 marches) on the 2nd of November. Then march on to Sitapur and arrive there in February. At Delhi we are to assist in the grand 'tamasha' at the proclamation of the Queen as Empress. Sixteen thousand troops are to be there and no soldiering—only races, fireworks, etc. Every Rājah, Amir, Lt Governor, General and in fact every notability in India is to be assembled there. It will cost me Rs. 200 for a new tent and I really must get another horse. I hear the Meerut fellows are going to bring their hounds. A Mess Meeting has been held at Mooltan at which it has been resolved to buy a *monster* tent and entertain all the swells. It was also passed that open house be kept and champagne flow like water so that ruin stares me in the face. I hope to hear again soon—

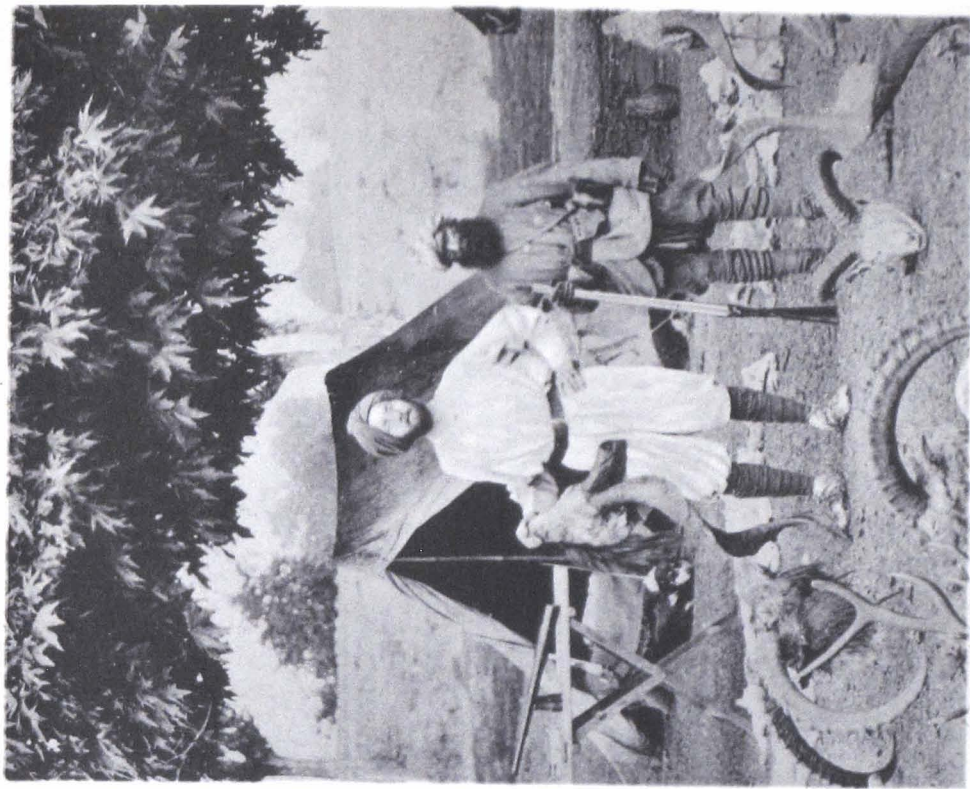
Your affect. brother,

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

P.S. Strangely I have forgotten to tell you I bagged a magnificent 10 point barasingh. *Really* the only man in Kashmir who has done so.



Camp, Baramoola, September 1876



Ian H. and Rajvelli



Ian H. and Record Bag

SHIKAR

Mooltan, 22nd October 1876

My dear Vereker,

I have got as languid and lazy as ever with my return to the heat and although my conscience has been pricking me at least 3 times a day for the past week for not answering your long letter yet this is the first time I have got fairly started. . . . Mooltan seems to be much as I left it except that one or two new subs have joined and some come back from 15 months leave. My bag as you may imagine was immensely admired. I have had a sort of trophy made of the heads and skins and every day and all day long some men are here looking at them. I forgot if I wrote and told you about the Regiment's movements this winter. We start on the 2nd of November for Delhi and arrive about the 16th of December. . . . I look forward very much to our march—the sort of life which suits me exactly. Of course it is rather a bad quarter of an hour between getting up at 3.30 a.m. and falling in at 3.45 a.m. as we are to do for the first month, but then one is always in before 9 a.m. and has tubbed and breakfasted by 10, and then the remainder of the day is entirely your own to do what you like with. No drills or anything of that sort, and duty will only come about once every 10 days we have so many subs.

We get fair shooting—both big game and snipe and partridge. Also for at least a month we will be in the best wildfowl shooting in the Punjab. I do hope you will forgive my not writing before and believe that I shall do better now that I have settled down. I shall write you great accounts of our long march and of the Imperial assemblage at Delhi.

Believe me,

Your very affecte. brother

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

VII

FRONTIER FIGHTING

(1878-1880)

When first I joined the 92nd Gordon Highlanders at Mooltan my lack of interest in routine soldiering might well have proved my undoing had not my father, only three years previously, been a popular Commanding Officer. Although a very few hours of application would have enabled me to master the red books containing the rudiments (drill, law, etc.) those few hours were never given. To my maturer brain this slackness—this lack of common sense amounting to perversity, remains a complete enigma, more especially as about that very time a strange ferment had begun to take place within me. For the first time since the Autocrat of Cheam private school had terrorised me into cramming my brain with Greek and Latin I had begun to work, not at my own job but upon a sideshow, passing the Lower Standard examination in the language of Hindustan. This I have already mentioned.

The Adjutant had been wild when he heard about it. I can see him now, clanking up and down my room in his spurs as the punkah flapped and creaked and the *bheestie* dashed water on the *cus-cus tatties* through which the scorching duststorm in passing became moist, and tempered with a never-to-be-forgotten aroma.—‘Had you only,’ he declared, ‘given one-tenth part of that time to drill and military law you would have been fit to fill my boots and then, when I went on leave, you would have drawn £10 extra a month!’ But I, in my pyjamas, pale before that red and angry man in white uniform, although I did feel a very real and very keen desire to wear his clanking spurs—had not the faintest ambition to fill his boots. None the less the ice of indifference to all but my own daydreams about sex, music, poetry, and a dozen other fantasies—that ice was beginning to crack and break up with strange and hollow sounds like the ice on the lochan in Argyll. When volunteers were called for to take part in an expedition under a man called Roberts against hill tribes called the Looshais, I was the only creature, officer, N.C.O., or man in the

FRONTIER FIGHTING

whole regiment who stepped forward; but when I appeared at the Orderly Room, Colonel Cameron, a smile for a moment softening his severe and aquiline features, told me that I was too young. So no one went. Incredible as it may seem to the Army of to-day, when volunteering fills the War Office files—to offer to go and fight out of your proper turn was held to be all very well for officers of grabby regiments but bad form for the Gordons who either fought collectively as clansmen should—or not at all.

Until the Afghan War of 1878 came along to show the 92nd Gordon Highlanders that they had to put their best foot forward to hold their own with the 72nd Seaforth, they were fully content to be the Gordons—a very special and peculiar folk (we really were); the *crème de la crème* (so we fancied) and for Lairds, Lairds' sons and such like, to go running about after savages like the Looshais was deemed to be at the same time childish and *infra dig*. That there was an indubitable, actually-so-nicknamed Jew amongst our officers seemed to make no odds, not did it matter somehow that one of our Majors was Irish, another English; although certainly on the positive side, it did make a big difference that Cameron of Inverailort was our Colonel. So wagged my world when, suddenly, that world began to hum like an enormous top.

Perhaps they had put me in as Musketry Instructor because I had made a record bag in Kashmir the previous year, which was equivalent to a certificate for straight shooting; or, it may have been because I had just astounded everyone—myself included—by taking an 'extra' First Certificate at Hythe. Under our regimental code of behaviour I could, of course, never have got to that place of my own volition. How it had happened was that under the play of some new-fangled regulation I had been specifically ordered by the War Office in London to enter for a course, because they happened to catch me at home on six months' leave from my Regiment in India and would thus save the passage money. So I went to Hythe; I saw (incidentally) Cecil Rhodes; I conquered an 'extra' First. Thereupon, I was almost at once gazetted as Musketry Instructor to the Gordons; H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge little dreaming that he was thus touching off a squib which would make Guy Fawkes of some of those prejudices cherished by him almost as tenderly as his own whiskers.

The Gordons were at that time better armoured than anyone nowadays can imagine against enthusiasms or ideas. No officer from the regi-

FRONTIER FIGHTING

ment had ever entered for the Staff College. That was one of their numerous, die-hard boasts. Schools of special instruction the Gordons considered had been invented by those faraway dim arbiters, demi-gods, or devils, called 'The Horse Guards', to enable slackers to sneak away from good, honest, regimental parades, and orderly duty, thus throwing their duties upon their comrades. Professionally speaking, the Colonel, Adjutant, and Sergeant-Major held the bullet to be a fool, and the bayonet to be still the last argument of Kings; the reigning Queen of battles. The old Duke of Cambridge warmly approved (in his heart) of all these Bow and Arrow theories: the Gordons had also some peculiar tenets of their very own. With the instinctive fear of Highlanders for the horse went a superstition that cavalry was the chief danger. Accordingly on parade or at field days we formed ourselves into a square on the smallest provocation, and (inconceivable idiot that I was) never having properly mastered my drill, one of my perpetual nightmares was how to extract my company from this predicament. Sometimes the square was four deep; then it became a mouse-trap; I the mouse and the Adjutant the cat.

This question, however, of the Adjutant and Musketry, trivial as it may appear, did actually mark a real turning point in my career. For there, before me as their new Musketry Instructor, arose a mountain of inertia. At any earlier date I would certainly have run away or lain myself down upon the mountain and gone to sleep. But now, it was suddenly borne in upon me that if I put out the whole of my will-power I might make that mountain move. The ice coating over my initiative had gone. Responsibility was the hot sun that had melted it. I sweated; I lectured; I begged; I made bad jokes; I even filled the pouches of the battalion with ball cartridge for private practice out of my own slender purse. As my propaganda began to take effect, the Adjutant and the Sergeant-Major became first uneasy, next furious, to see so much time lost to the barrack-square for the sake of the rifle range; the field officers, however, were astonished, and not altogether displeased when they saw the musketry returns of the battalion creeping up and up to the very top of the tree until we became the best shooting battalion in India, whilst, strangely enough, the drill and marching past (at which the men had got thoroughly stale) seemed to be better than ever.

In the Regiment was a tall, thin, handsome old Major with an imperious manner, an imperial and a cast in one eye called Jock Hay. He used to sit at table drinking port (he never was drunk) for at least an hour after

FRONTIER FIGHTING

everyone else had slipped away and gone to play pyramids or poker or perhaps to flirt or dance, and it was then the duty of us subalterns to take it in turn to sit by him and listen to his interminable stories—every syllable of which we knew by heart. At last a night came when I was to be rewarded for my listenings-in. After saying something decent about our high figure of merit in musketry he added, 'You know none of us seniors ever thought you had it in you.' That well might be, for assuredly I had never thought that I 'had it in me' myself. I can remember that mess table. I remember even the almost empty decanter of port. I remember the very accents of that remark (on the face of it so insignificant) much more vividly than if it had taken place last night. The reason is, I suppose, that although petted and praised for everything I did or said as a tiny kid, it had not been possible for anyone to praise me for anything at all, except perhaps the Army entrance exam, since I had made a bad start of it at Wellington College.

Well—what was it that I had in me? Love of fame? Fame for what? Certainly not! Love of money? I was pleased with the sparkling rupees I brought up in a knitted string bag from old Swinburne—it gave me quite a thrill to plunge my hands in amongst them, but here was I spending every anna I could lay hands upon to buy extra ammunition for extra practice by the men. Love of success? What was success? The word sounded as vague as 'truth' to Pilate. No. What had happened was that a revelation had been vouchsafed to me. Had I the copyright? Good Lord—no! The idea was as old as General Braddock or Sir John Moore—nay, older far, as old as the battles of Croesus with the Parthians. But at that time I imagined it was my own—my very own—namely the conviction, that formed infantry and cavalry, as I had seen them advancing in double fours from the centre, or clustered into a four-deep square in the open, must surely melt away like cream before a cat under the concentrated fire of scattered sharp-shooters armed with modern rifles. So when later on the news of war with the Boers came to Benares, it struck upon me not in the least as it is supposed (by novelists and film authors) to strike, viz.: as a blow, as a misfortune. Nor, as I see written by a Princess in *The Times* was it a case of 'Only to a tiny minority—if there be such a minority—can war exist for war's sake.' On the contrary, war put me very nearly out of my mind with delight. Bar one private from Glasgow who was said to be in love with a nautch girl every single living soul was excited and happy.

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All males fight other males of their kind and, in the case of human beings, will club together and put themselves under authority to do so more effectively. Women are differently built. They will (as a rule) put their backs into a fight only to defend the nest, or the nursery. As for me at Benares I was drunk with joy. Now I should see the bare, clean, naked struggle for life. Now I might have some splendid adventures; now I ought to reap the reward of my struggles with recruits at the rifle ranges! All that may seem sheer wickedness to the Princess in *The Times* but at least my enthusiasm was not fouled by the economic lusts of profiteers. No thoughts of promotion, loot or even of glory muddied the purity of my sentiment which was made up, so far as I can analyse it, of about equal portions of professional curiosity and sheer love of danger. To my mind this was, is and will be the spirit of the British Rank and File—the finest fighting men in the world—the old spirit of the race which Geneva only denied because they could not comprehend it. Even when war-poverty stalks through the land; when cemeteries of Scots and English slain in battle cover the habitable globe; ‘only a tiny minority’ will say they wished they had never fought. Suppose I meet in the street, as I constantly do, or am driven in a taxicab, as I constantly am, by an old soldier, combatant officer, Medical or Army Service Corps officer or man, and he reminds me where and when we met, usually upon Gallipoli, he usually likens it to hell. Then I say to him, ‘Do you wish you had never been through it?’ Ten to one he replies, ‘That’s another thing: I wouldn’t have missed *that*—not for anything.’ He ‘*wouldn’t have missed it for anything*’. Mind you, they never say that of the wholesale slaughter of the Somme and Passchendaele—the memories of these are as accursed as were the realities.

To return to Benares where half the Regiment was then stationed, the other half being at Sitapur; how did the sudden approach of war—that fantastic break-away from dull routine—death instead of procreation, havoc instead of harvest; battles instead of business—re-act upon my immortal soul? We are apt to forget that for good or evil there is, and remains, a definite difference in the man who has been over the top and has really fought, and the man who has never of his own free will subjected himself to terrible dangers. Regarding man as a money-making machine we know that war fatally interrupts the process. Does it give him anything in return which will account for the sense of superiority with which, hidden away deep down in his heart, the chauffeur, gardener,

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butler, valet who has passed through the fiery furnace regards his profiteer Boss who kept himself out of it and now gives him orders? War to us British is a process of running into danger voluntarily for the sake of others. Looked at in that light it is quite another process from that of working for selfish reasons whether as a cat-burglar or company promoter. War then is an ordeal and the man who has been through it adds to his self-esteem. In all respects, war and peace are really two opposing states or conditions. If then there is any educative force in experience the man who has stood for King and Country under fire is a more complete being than one who has avoided doing so. I dare say I may give some examples further on to show positively that some of the greater Pacifists are secretly uncertain whether cowardice may not have had some say in influencing their consciences.

Speaking for myself, only by war was I to be made to understand the full significance of camaraderie. My Aunt Camilla and my Grandmother were very sweet to me and thought that I was quite a nice young man but they were not comrades; those Afghans, with their long gleaming knives, would not stop one moment to consider that I had never done them any harm but would joyously make me into mince-meat—were it not for my comrades. So I had comrades, had I? There was a glow in the very word and a glow also in the thought that I would stick by them, whatever happened. Some folk maintain that these sentiments, these loyalties, can be bred in peace time by the common front made to death in a mining disaster, earthquake, shipwreck or what not. To that all I can say is,—fortunately these emergencies are too rare to cover much ground; secondly, there is a distinction between the impulse which prompts a man to leap into the sea to save a drowning fellow creature, and that which enables him to face the bullets and bombs consciously aimed at him when he darts out into No Man's Land to carry in the wounded comrade. You are grateful to the man who pulls you out of the sea, or out of a fire, but you worship the hero who saves you from your fellow creatures.

The term pacifist needs to be defined. There is the lover of peace who is a priceless person. There is the peace-at-any-price person who is a poor creature. I get lots of letters from them so I ought to know. There is a letter on my table now which sheds some light on the question. 'Let them put me in prison,' it says, 'and then how I shall hug myself when I am having three hot meals a day and a hot bath once a week as I think of the silly blighters starving in the mud.' This letter was written in the confident

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assurance that I would be greatly pleased, and when my answer took the shape of a string of curses the poor creature who had written was astonished and crestfallen. The average pacifist is not a very good man—not really. He is quite pitiless towards anyone who for whatever purpose sheds a drop of blood, but there is a lack of warm blood in his own veins. He does not seem to understand that it is much worse to avoid an old friend who has become poor or deaf or blind than it is to fire a pistol at an enemy. Perhaps it is not fair to generalize from a few hundred samples—anyway I have done so.

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In July 1879 during the Afghan War an incident occurred which, more than any other single event, was to influence my whole career: for it brought me for the first time into personal contact with Lord Roberts. I had been sent to the Peiwar Kotal for a pick-me-up after a baddish go of fever. The Peiwar Kotal was a mountain pass, still the G.H.Q. of the column which had defeated the Afghan Army, and the ground was strewn with interesting relics. I was supposed to be too ill to walk and was riding through the forest, a young brother officer Polly Forbes, who had been sent to look after me by my side, when we were startled by shots which came from the deodars surrounding us, and still more startled when we saw some British soldiers running in disorder down a steep hillside on our right. They were the first of the new, short-service type we had seen. Intercepting them we were told that their signalling picquet had just been rushed by fifteen or twenty Afghans and that two of their men were missing. So being full of fight Forbes and I decided it was our duty to attack; sent off two of the men on our ponies to give the alarm in barracks which were not far away, and drawing our revolvers began to climb the hill, followed at a discreet interval by the only runaway who had brought his rifle with him and who climbed after us just fast enough to save himself from the Court Martial which afterwards sat upon his comrades. Within ten paces of the summit there was a rustle in the undergrowth and our hearts jumped, but it was only a wounded Kahar who lay there with an Afghan bullet through his chest and had yet the pluck to cheer us on. '*Shabash, Sahib log, shabash!*' he said. Next moment we were into the post, a small open redoubt—unoccupied! There were the rifles, neatly piled, the ammunition, equipment, flags, and heliograph untouched! No killed; no wounded; no sign of the enemy. Everything just as it had been left by the young soldiers when they bolted in their panic.

FRONTIER FIGHTING

Then Polly Forbes and I each picked up a rifle, loaded it, fixed bayonets and mounted guard, finger on trigger, waiting for what that dark forest might bring forth. No Afghans; not a move; not a sound until a company of the 8th King's came out with Captain Stratton of the 22nd Foot, the Chief Signaller. Then ensued a serious little debate, between youngsters, which ended in a decision to pursue our adventure down the far side of the hill. In that pursuit it was my fate, being weak and groggy on my pins, to get separated from my companions and so to fall in with the raiding party—Shinwarris they turned out to be. Some shooting took place; I managed to keep them at bay with my revolver from behind the trunk of a huge tree until someone came up. I fired six shots altogether but missed as I was very seedy and had just run up the hill, which made my hand shaky. I found the shots afterwards high and wide of the mark—in a tree. Three men enfiladed my position and made it hot for me and the old Mullah who led the raiders fired at point-blank range with a flintlock *jezail* that missed fire. Eventually he was shot—not by me—at which point the story should have come to a full-stop. Far from it: it is still going on. For Lord Roberts, or Sir Fred Roberts as he then was, sent for me to his tent and made me tell it to him. He then gave me a glass of sherry and said he would write home and tell my father what had happened and so he did—longhand and at length. The indirect sequel was Sir Fred's offer to me two and a half years later to come on his Staff and the sherry and the letter give a useful glimpse of the secret of his popularity.

The immediate result was that I was gazetted in Field Force orders to be A.D.C. to General Redan Massy—commanding the Cavalry Brigade; Massy was not entitled to an A.D.C. but that did not matter. The other galloper Butson of the 9th Lancers was killed soon after and so was Polly Forbes. Sir Fred went off to Simla to confer with the Viceroy, leaving Massy in command of a force twice as large as any division in India, but he came back in a hurry when news reached him at Ali Kheyl that the British Mission in Kabul had been overwhelmed and everyone in the Embassy massacred. This led to a renewal of the war.

As I look back to that time I seem to see the whole of the Cavalry Brigade—swords drawn, lances at the ready, their nerves screwed up to over-the-top agony pitch—awaiting the word to gallop on the heels of the broken Afghan Army into and through the Western Gate of Kabul City after the battle of Charasia. Instead, all were completely flattened out when the word came, and from his foaming charger Roberts' messenger

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cried to Redan Massy, commander of our magnificent Brigade, 'Steady, Sir, steady! The Chief's order. Keep clear of the City!' What a flop! For the intrepid Roberts, most thrusting little Chief that ever sat in a saddle was, in the field, scared to death of one proposition and one only. That was a city. He never could shake off his nightmarish memories of the storming of the Delhi Gate in 1857; of the death of Nicholson, of the disastrous effect of street fighting, screaming women and drink upon regular troops. It was in 'the Cavalry pursuit'—still to my credit in the War Services records in which I led a troop of 5th Punjab Cavalry in a charge,—that I first learnt that the sword is no good against an Afghan lying on his back and twirling a heavy knife. The dust clouds of the Chardeh Valley—the 5th Punjab Cavalry—red puggarees—blue swords flashing; the galloping line, and I also galloping with that sensation of speed which the swiftest motor car can never impart; my little grey arab snorting and shaking his head, galloping obliquely towards them again, carrying orders, this time from Redan Massy himself, on no account to charge; but yet this time another kind of emissary—Balaclava over again without newspaper or poet laureates—that's how I felt, and of course I should have been court-martialled, for my claymore was drawn (in those days I still had my left hand). Nearer, nearer, every stride nearer! Those dust clouds of the Chardeh Valley, flecked here and there with a flicker of moving colours; the foot-hills speckled with puffs of white smoke. Wonderful! A big jump and I nearly fall off. My horse has leaped over a dead tribesman. Then in the thick of it. Afghans in little knots, or else lying on their backs whirling their big knives to cut off the legs of our horses, a hell of a scrimmage in fact, until the *sowars* got to work in couples, one with sword uplifted, the other pulling his carbine out of the bucket and making the enemy spring to their feet and be cut down or be shot as they lay. Dust, shouts, shots, clash of steel . . . only a nameless little skirmish and yet it is a favourite picture amongst the many that come back to me in my dreams.

There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune, etc., etc., but when once the ebb is due—beware! for any change must be for the worse. The very last convoy to leave Ali Kheyl took me, shivering with malarial fever, to Rawalpindi to appear before a Medical Board. The mere sight of so many doctors gave me dysentery—most painful, like swallowing red-hot poker—and they packed me off from Karachi in a troopship. By the time we got home I had become as fit as a flea and as keen to hop back to India. Actually by the time I got back to

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India Ayoub from Herat had defeated us at Maiwand, taking all our guns (the Persians make good soldiers) and the Gordons were marching down from Kabul to knock him out of Kandahar. There was only one chance for me—to get to Kandahar before them. The Bolan Pass was held by the Baluchis as far as Quetta and they were not actively against us. Anyway I chanced it and got through. Actually, I rejoined the Battalion on the day of battle, early enough to have been shot but too late for the decoration of the Kandahar Star—one of the few cases in which the Fates have dealt harshly with me.

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I shall never be able to recapture my soul as it was when my body seemed made to dance at night and gallop or climb all day and my muscles refused to get tired. Who can study the hues on a butterfly's wings so long as it is fluttering in the sky and as for the fierce dragon-fly's wings they quiver so fast that no one can see them at all. The elusive phantoms have to be caught and fixed upon a piece of paper. Unluckily to-day I have grown old and stiff and find it hard to run fast enough with my net to recapture my real self exactly as it was. But I can probably get closer to the knuckle than any other outside chronicler.

Looking back to that time I seem to discern something like a speck of quicksilver darting about on a large lacquered tray covered with the queerest pictures. Afghanistan, where the old Shinwarrie Mullah is still firing his *jezail* at me from behind the trunk of a cedar tree in the Peiwar Kotal forest; Afghanistan and unwritten pages of history. The war passes away and I see an earlier scene—precipices, stark and grim—a bivouac on the snow—everything in black and white except the fire and the two red bearskins being scraped and cleaned in the foreground. The picture fades and enter next the tiger! A far more dangerous quarry than the King of Beasts whose conquest by Assyrian monarchs from their chariots is carved on marble frescoes by the subservient sculptors of Babylon. Not quite as great a beast as Bindon Blood's midnight tiger well met when each went out alone along the moonlit pathway by the forest! No such pluck—no such luck! Yet still a wonderful tiger shining bright in the full blaze of the sunlight. Could I but let the slum-dwellers of Glasgow or Westminster see the jungles of Nepal—the real thing; the swaying, trumpeting line of elephants; the high forest threaded with unexpected stony rivers; tufts of yellow jungle grass and the sudden Apparition, as I still see him. For still, alive as ever, he will sometimes leap forth from a dim corner of my mind

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and revive the whole scene so vividly that although no draughtsman, I can actually draw him as once long ago I drew him in a letter home to my brother. He rears himself up, roaring, pawing the air. One second and my bullet tumbles him down into a helpless paralysed heap—dead but for the unutterable hate glowering still from his ghastly eyes. An easy victory; ah, yes; but how about that half second when I fumbled with the trigger? The mahouts, shikaris and chuprassies call out with one voice, 'The Lord Sahib's bullet struck the tiger!' and the Big Lord Sahib accepts the skin amidst the plaudits on the magnificent shot he had made right through the thicket as high as his howdah. Long since, no doubt, that 'trophy' became moth-eaten: but my picture lives.

How then shall I best lay hands upon and cork up in a bottle that speck of quicksilver which once upon a time was the essence of me? By pinning down the little fellow with a whole big pin-cushion full of facts; rows and rows of pins with heads as well as points; true facts: as true as I can make them. Most folk are cinema-saturated, constantly being fed with gladiatorial wild beast combats, not quite genuine but still near enough to jade the palate and spoil the taste for the real thing. So they do not want to hear about Majuba, though the skirmish on that fateful hill led directly to the South African War of 1899–1902, settled the lines of South African expansion for two hundred years to come, and changed the destiny of a continent. Nor of the prayer of Fujii to his naked sword the night before the crossing of the Yalu or the answering flash that she gave out as her spirit cried 'attack'. Nor yet of the battle of the Shaho where, by the will of Providence it was I who stood, the only white man among 42,000 Japanese, by Kuroki, and looked turn about with him through his field-glasses as the Russians melted away under the gunfire; and the revolt of the yellow man against the supremacy of the white man got fairly under way.

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At the point here indicated by five black stars something came over me and overcame me. My gold fountain-pen is still in my hand and yet—I have been far away—as far as Orpheus went after Eurydice. Where have I been? Let me put it down, whilst seeming still to hold some of that dead air within my lungs.

I am standing bewildered in a large empty room. The ceiling, if there be one, is lost in hollow night. This room is so vast that it fades off on all sides into nothingness—nothingness made visible only by one wildly

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flickering candle-flame. Anxiously, hurriedly, I make towards that light—a massive silver candlestick as tall as myself stands on the floor close up to a door whose upper half is made of glass. Through this glass, dimly, I can make out a four-poster bed. Over the bed a mosquito net seems to be drawn, the sort of net we used to use in India. The candle is spent. All that remains is the wick lying on its side in a drop of liquid grease held by a thin ring of wax. There is a sense of waiting and at any moment the struggling flame may—will—must do—whatever a flame does do when it makes its last leap? As for me not an instant is to be lost. Everyone and everything is waiting for me to follow the flame yet I struggle against the impulse as desperately as the candle flame clings to its wick.

There! That is all. And now I am awake and still alive.

VIII

MAJUBA

(1881)

'I ought, no doubt, to think only of those who died in the Great War. Yet, when I consciously set myself thinking, one of the first I always think about is Sir George Colley, stretched out, exactly as the effigy of a Knight lies in a cathedral, upon the flattened summit of Majuba. His face I have to imagine, for a cloak has been flung over it, but that is one reason why I remember it the better, and the wound, though I saw it not. Had death so composed his limbs, or the pious hands of the foe? I know not. There he lay upon a site which might have been selected by Valkyries for a hero's grave, midway between the Transvaal and Natal with an eagle's outlook over both.'

—*The Two Minutes' Silence*

11th November 1928.

On the 27th February 1881 a skirmish took place which would not have won more than a line or two of mention in dispatches written during the Great War. And yet Majuba was to cost us 20,000 lives twenty years later and figure as a sort of Bunker Hill in Afrikaner history for all time.

The bitterness after Majuba was intense and in South Africa the word is still as poisonous to handle as a puff-adder. The actual capture of the key to the Boer position under the noses of a Boer Army was a notable exploit. The ensuing fight went against us and we lost it; but we could easily have retaken it. Quite so; but we did not retake it. We accepted the defeat of 365 men as the defeat of the British Empire although we had 5,000 men under Evelyn Wood within two days' march. We so mis-judged human nature that we thought it more politic to sue for peace at once before our dead were buried or avenged than to wait a couple of days and make peace as the occupiers of Majuba Hill!

How was it that the Gordons found themselves in South Africa? The story is worth telling. At the end of the Afghan War we were under orders for England and had got as far as Cawnpore when, on the 6th of January 1881, something historical took place. On that date the Com-

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manding Officer received a startling cable: 'The 92nd Highlanders are to embark for Natal immediately instead of going to England.' But the cable did not startle me. To-day the old secret of how that cable came is about to be disclosed. As senior subaltern I had three days previously myself cabled to Evelyn Wood in the name of the 'Subalterns of the 92nd'. I had never seen him but had heard he was keen and would understand keenness. Somewhere I have a copy of the cable—I wrote it myself and paid for it myself. The four senior subalterns agreed on the understanding that I stood the shot if there was a row. The Captains and Majors knew nothing whatever about this plot of mine. Something like this it ran:—'Personal. From Subalterns 92nd Highlanders. Splendid battalion eager service much nearer Natal than England do send.' Evelyn Wood was amused and sent us. And so we went and so I have only one useful arm but Majuba was worth an arm any day.

Majuba was nothing in itself. It is not the magnitude but the moral bearing of a military event which appeals to the Rank and File. Up towards the flat top of that freak of an earthquake—that tall, table-topped mountain—since ten o'clock of a dark night a party of British sailors and soldiers had been marching under a heavy equipment—full-sized picks and shovels, three days' rations, seventy rounds of M.H. ammunition, waterproof sheets and greatcoats. Every now and then a man would fall and then there would be a clatter, curses and orders, 'Silence!' A fool would light up and there would be a call of, 'Out with that match'; or, once, there was a sort of splintering up of the head of the column and a horrid stifled sort of muttering, 'Here they come—fix bayonets!'

Under these conditions the most fantastic fears are bred in the imaginations of men. Yet we were seasoned troops come straight from a long campaign in Afghanistan. But this is the result of marching men in the night for God knows where. For, until midnight was past, only the Commander and his Staff Officer had the remotest idea where we were marching or even where we were. For myself I had only been called in off picquet duty at 9 p.m. and told to fall in with my company at 9.30 p.m. But by midnight we found ourselves a small group standing huddled on a saddle between two black shapes which, outlined by the stars, we recognized as the mountains of Umquela and Majuba. Their summits stood about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles apart. The occupation of one would involve a threat to the enemy's rear; of the other, a direct seizure of a part—and vital part—of his actual fighting position. Nearly half our force were left

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on that saddle to entrench and then the rest of us turned north. As we did so, a whisper passed along the ranks—‘Majuba!’

In the Transvaal war of twenty years later—the Transvaal War, illegitimate but none the less authentic child of that 27th February 1881, the spirit of the soldier man had changed. Then eyes in the ranks would have turned anxiously towards one another and resignedly—rather sadly—comrades would have muttered, ‘another kopje day’. But in those earlier days we were all adventurers, as keen every whit as the lads who landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula in April ’15, and after that one whisper the soldiers said never a word. I remember, as if it were yesterday, the tense excitement of that climb up with a half-dozen shadowy forms close by, which were swallowed up and disappeared if they got farther away from me than half a dozen paces. Several times we were halted because half the men had got lost! Zulu scouts found them and then once more we plunged into the unknown and invisible greyness; upwards always upwards upon the face of that south-west flank we struggled and straggled. I remember the unearthly look of the veldt—so vast so pale. The last few hundred feet were precipitous. On hands and knees we hauled ourselves up by the tussocks of long grass. Now and then a man would fall with a hideous clatter whilst his arms and equipment went to glory. Then all would hold on, like petrified men, for half a minute expecting a volley from up above. None came and at last, about 4 a.m., we began to trickle into the saucer-shaped table top of the extinct volcano and found it empty! Not a shot, not a sound, and now we all knew that, without one life dropped in the effort, we had captured the main bastion of the Boer fortress—that, at daybreak, those lights twinkling at our feet would resolve themselves into the Boer laager which lay *behind* the protection of his entrenchments where we also had arrived. With the streak of laziness which is part of the make-up of a South African Dutchman, the enemy Commander had too easily assumed that Majuba was unclimbable by heavy-armed infantry during the dark hours. Therefore the easy-going man had been allowing his picquets to withdraw themselves at dusk from the cold and uncomfortable summit and—as Sir George Colley had surmised—they did not reoccupy it until after daybreak. Meanwhile we had slipped in. Surely a shining feat of arms and extraordinarily reminiscent of Wolfe’s climb by night up on to the Heights of Abraham. All we had to do now was to stand firm as Wolfe’s Grenadiers and Highlanders had held firm and Majuba would go down the ages as the world-changing

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sword-stroke of a hero. Poor Colley! What a gamble is the pursuit of Fame! The neglect of a mere military detail—an aberration of ordinary soldierly practice—by a brilliant Staff Officer whose career had given him no executive experience—was to turn glory into disgrace, vision into blindness, triumph into defeat. Fresh from the victories of Afghanistan, every private in the 92nd Gordon Highlanders knew that whenever a detachment happened to hit on a weak spot in the enemy's line and made it good they built up a *sangar* or stonework defence as a matter of course—unless the ground happened to be stoneless when they had to dig themselves in. Apologists have since urged that upon this occasion the men were exhausted by their night-march and that the General had rightly refused, therefore, to set them to work with the heavy navvies' spades and pick-axes they had so laboriously lugged up for that express purpose. This is just one of those exasperating little lies which buzz about the head of John Bull like flies whenever he is let down and hurt. Whatever General Colley himself may have felt, I have never felt less tired in my life than when I looked at the Boer Army lying at our feet; and my men felt the same. Many intimate contacts with the tactics, the characteristics and, in a word, the strong points and weak points of the Boers have since convinced me that if our men had been set going at digging redoubts strengthened with those stone walls (called in South Africa *schantzes* and in Afghanistan, *sangars*) the Boers would not have overwhelmed our little band of three hundred and sixty-five British before reinforcements came up.

As it was, the hill was stormed by the enemy and a lodgment effected with less than one hundred brave men. The account of the fierce, brief struggle and the resulting wipe-out of the British which I wrote in October 1881 for General Dillon, and which was shown to Queen Victoria when I got back wounded to England, may be of interest. It was found among the late Lord Knollys' papers and returned to me by the King in 1932:—

'We left camp at 9.30 p.m. on the 26th of February. The men each carried a waterproof sheet, a blanket, a greatcoat and three days' provisions, besides this sixteen picks and shovels were carried by each company. We had no idea as to what our destination was.

'Two companies of the 60th Rifles were left in the Inkwéla Mountains, and later on No. 5 Company of the 92nd, under Captain Robertson, was left on the neck between Amajuba and Inkwéla. We now realized for

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the first time where we were going to, and I think most of us were delighted. I heard, however, some of the men of the 58th¹ who were just in front of my company, turn round and ask my men what our strength was, and when told say they wished we had brought the whole Regiment.

‘After a terrible climb, sometimes on hands and knees, and pulling ourselves up by the grass, we got to the top of the hill. The men were, however, too excited to feel fatigue and I saw no signs of it.

‘When my company fell in on the top dawn was just beginning to break, but it was still too dark to form much of an idea of the size of the place we were on. Captain MacGregor of my Regiment, who was acting A.D.C. to General Colley, took me and my company to the eastern side of the plateau, and directed me to extend to my left until I touched the 58th. I first extended the men at six paces, but finally had to increase the extension to twelve paces between each man to cover the ground. The men then by my orders collected stones so as to make some sort of cover for themselves. By the time this was done it was broad daylight and we could see the Boers streaming right out of their trenches back to their Laagers.

‘About this time the first shots were fired at a party of about thirty Boers who rode close under the hill, unconscious of our presence. Had a heavy fire been opened on them they must have been all killed, but some of the senior Officers, not being sure if the General wished firing to begin, no orders having been given, made the men cease. The order was then given to fire if we had a good chance of doing damage, but by that time the Boers were well out of range. Just then I noticed large numbers of the enemy crossing through a mealie field about 1,200 yards off into a ravine.

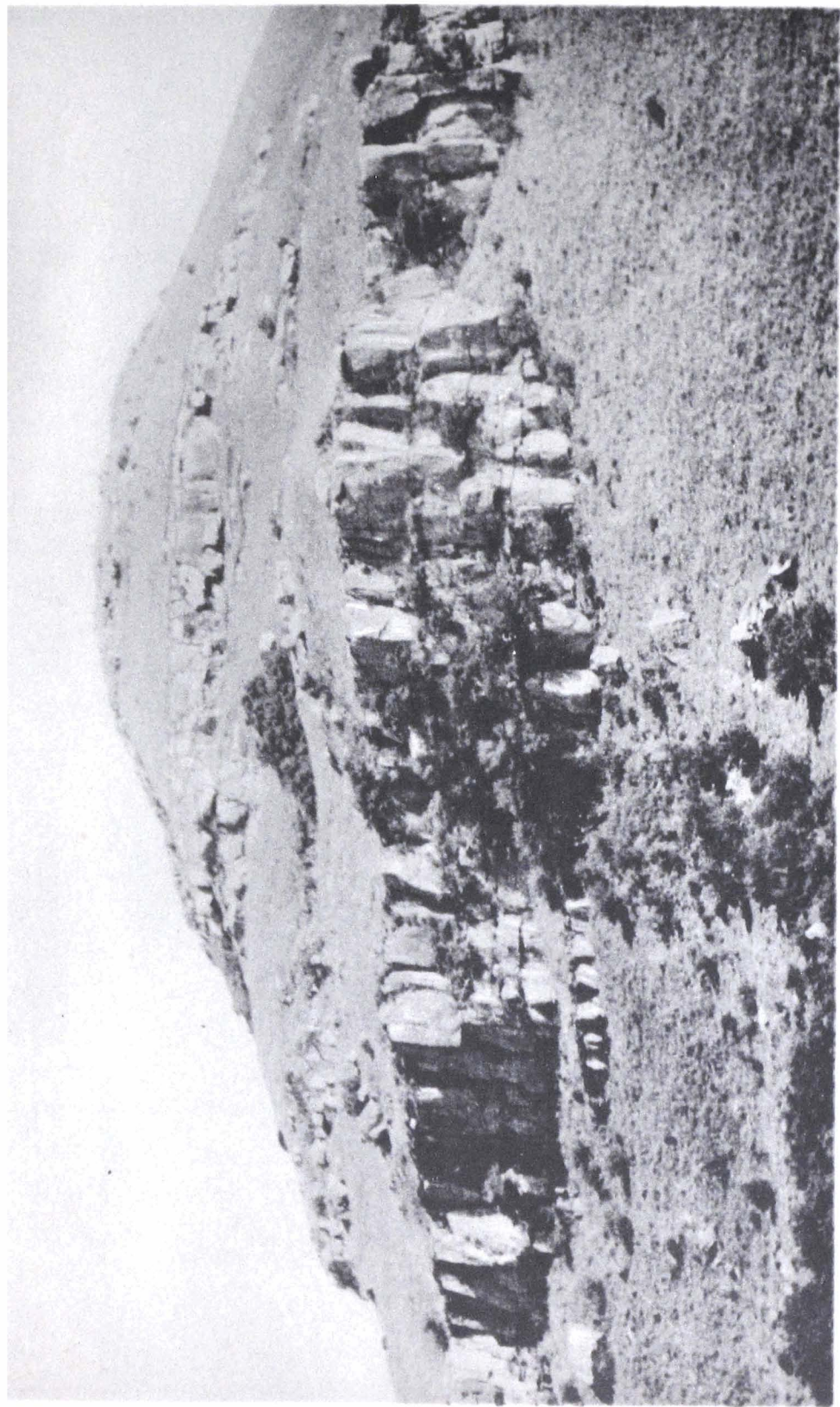
‘This ravine brought them up under cover to within a short 500 yards of us, when it turned to the north and ran parallel with our part of the position for about 100 yards.

‘From this end of the ravine a most accurate fire was opened on myself and about eighteen of my men who were facing it. This fire increased in intensity until about eighty rifles had been brought to bear on us. Every now and then the bullets would pelt in extra thickly, when some ten or fifteen of the enemy would come out of the ravine and rush for about twenty yards across the open to the bottom of the hill, when they got so underneath us that we lost sight of them.

¹ 2nd Batt. Northamptons.



Gordon Picket, Majuba Hill



Amajuba

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'When about 100 had got on to the hill in this manner, I thought it my duty to go back and report the matter to the General.

'It was rather a nasty business getting up as I had to run about fifteen paces exposed to the enemy's fire. I found everyone on the body of the plateau very comfortably eating, sleeping or smoking. The General thanked me for my information, and I went back.

'During the short time I was on the centre of the plateau I noticed that the larger portion of the force was extended all round the edge of the position in a very weak line, being at about twelve paces' interval; in some parts the interval was perhaps a little less. This left a reserve in the centre of about 120 men, bluejackets, 58th and 92nd. The plateau must have measured about a mile in circumference.

'The enemy pursued the same tactics, and before long I had to report 200 men on the hill. Later on again I reported 350 men on the hill, and begged that I might be given such a reinforcement as to keep down the fire from the ravine, when I should have told off a small party of marksmen to punish the enemy when they made their rush. As it was the Boer fire so completely dominated ours, especially as we had to be careful of our ammunition, that they experienced little loss in gaining the base of the hill; I only saw three men hit the whole of the day. I was told the reinforcements would be sent but I only got five men of the 58th and poor Maude.

'About noon, finding that at least 400 men had got on to the hill, and feeling uneasy as to where they might try and break in, I went for the last time to report to General Colley; he was asleep and so I reported to Lt.-Colonel—then Major—Hay commanding the Regiment.

'Detached from the main hill and about seventy yards distant from it, was a knoll, the top of which was only a very little lower than the plateau. All of a sudden, about half past twelve o'clock, a tremendous fire was opened from this knoll on a part of my company immediately to my left. A space of ground sixty yards long and held by five or six of my men was *covered* with bullets. Two or three of the poor fellows were killed at once, one or two ran back. Where I and my men lay seemed to be out of the direct line of fire. I next saw our Reserve coming up; bluejackets, 58th and about ten men of ours. They had fixed cutlasses and bayonets, and I fancied by their manner that they must have been startled by being so suddenly hurried up—anyway I did not much like the way they came up.

'They lay down considerably short of where my men had been and

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opened a heavy fire, though I don't quite think they saw what they were firing at. The Boers ceased fire and the Officers with the Reserve, seeing that there was nothing to take aim at, got their men also to cease. For a moment there was perfect silence when again a terrible fusillade commenced from the knoll. About sixteen of the Reserve were knocked over in no time; being unable to stand it any longer, they got up and retreated into the dip which runs across the centre of the plateau.

'My own men were quite astonished to see the turn matters were taking, but we very soon had to beat a retreat ourselves as in an incredibly short space of time the gap in our line, lately held by the Reserve, was filled with Boers and a sprinkling of Kaffirs, who advanced with their rifles in their shoulders ready to fire a snap shot the instant they saw anyone.

'Very few of our men got back to the second line. As I turned to run I saw the Boers swarming out of the ravine from which they had been so long annoying us and coming straight up at us.

'When I got back everyone was trying to separate the men of different corps, who had got thoroughly mixed, and to arrange them in some sort of order.

'For a very little there was a pause in the fight, but soon the Boers opened heavily on us from our front and right flank. It had been hoped that the fire from a koppie on our left front, held by Lieut. Macdonald¹ and twenty men, would have enfiladed the enemy's advance, but unfortunately the top of the koppie was quite narrow, so that as the men crawled up to the top to fire they were shot in the back by the Boers down in the plain or half-way up the hill.

'I myself was on the extreme right of our line, and getting a few men together I attempted a charge, but was stopped by Colonel Hay, my Commanding Officer, who thought there were too few men, as indeed there were. I then ran down to General Colley and saluting said: "I do hope, General, that you will let us have a charge, and that you will not think it presumption on my part to have come up and asked you." Sir George replied—"No presumption, Mr. Hamilton, but we will wait until the Boers advance on us, then give them a volley and charge."

'It is my firm belief that had a charge been ordered at this moment we should have cleared the hill. The men, near me at any rate, were furious at having run back from the first position, and had a few encouraging

¹ Afterwards Major-General Sir Hector Macdonald, K.C.B., D.S.O.

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words been spoken to them, and the pipes told to play up, I feel confident they would have followed their officers anywhere.

'The moment passed and it was soon evident that the day must go against us. Bullets from an enemy we could not see, and were not permitted to assault, came in amongst us from every direction. Colonel Hay at this time called out to the General that the enemy were pressing round his right which brought them in rear of our line. The enemy to our front began to fire buckshot, which makes a particularly unpleasant sound passing through the air, and quite distinct from the whiz of a bullet.

'I was standing to the right of General Colley, and ten paces from him, firing into the smoke, for I could not see anyone, with a rifle I had picked up. Sir George appeared quite cool, and was pacing up and down slowly with his revolver in his right hand, and looking on the ground. He said nothing. Towards the left I could see Major Fraser encouraging his men. On the extreme right Colonel Hay. Suddenly to my front, and not more than fifteen yards distant, I saw a rifle barrel stuck up out of a tuft of grass, evidently to allow of a cartridge being put into the breech; looking more carefully I made out the head and shoulders of a Boer. I put up my rifle and covered him, but just as I began to press the trigger he sent a bullet through my left wrist causing my rifle to fall from my hand unfired. I turned round in despair and saw that the whole line had given way. Sir George Colley had turned in the direction the troops were flying, and holding his revolver high over his head shouted out either—"Retire and hold by the Ridge," or "Steady and hold by the Ridge," I cannot be quite sure now which it was, but it was something to the effect that we were to hold by the last ridge of the hill.

'Though I had a very bad start I resolved to have a run for it, and catching my broken wrist in my right hand I ran for my life. Just as I got to the edge of the plateau something, either a spent bullet, or a stone knocked up by a bullet, hit me on the back of the head, and I remember no more until I found two small Boers, aged about fourteen but fully accoutred with rifle and cartridge belts, rolling me over and removing my belts, sword, haversack, etc. I experienced rather an exciting time for the next few minutes, but my adventures do not become of any general interest until I was ordered by Schmidt, one of the Boer Commanders, to be supported up to where poor Sir George Colley was lying for the purpose of identifying him. I found him on his back in the very place I had last seen him. A crowd was round him but they had covered up his face

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with greatcoats taken from our dead. I did not ask to have the coats removed as I at once recognized him by his clothes and figure.

‘My first thought after this was to look round the plateau and see how many of the enemy had driven us off the hill. It was very easy for a soldier, taking the different parts of the plateau separately, to make a pretty close guess.

‘There were then, about five or six minutes after the fight, quite 1,200 Boers on the top of the hill—not counting large numbers who had gone down into the bush to loot the dead and wounded. The Boers told me that, as I would probably die, they did not want me and I might go where I liked, except on to the ground over which they had moved to the attack. I spent the next two hours fetching muddy water to our wounded in a canteen, and then tried to make my way down the hill to our camp. It soon came on heavy rain and mist, and finally darkness set in. Having wandered into a marsh I was afraid of falling into the river, and so lay down where I was.

‘Next morning I wandered about in the mist which still continued, until I was found by a picquet of the 58th and brought into camp at 11 a.m. on the 28th of February. You did me the honour, Sir, to ask my opinion as to how the Majuba Hill might have been held. It is not so difficult to be wise after the event, and I think our only chance with the small number of men we had, was to have kept as quiet as possible until we had constructed rough redoubts on the left koppie (Lieut. Macdonald’s), on the right koppie (Colonel Hay’s), on the koppie on which Commander Romilly was hit, and most important of all on the koppie distinct from the hill and North-East of it, if I remember right, from which the Boers prepared the way by their fire for their final attack. These redoubts might each have held about forty men, and the remainder might then at their leisure have constructed a large redoubt somewhere about the centre of the plateau, as a rallying place, should that have been considered necessary.

‘I think the men as a rule behaved very well indeed and only gave way finally when common sense showed them that to stay would be to throw away their lives to no purpose.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

IAN S. M. HAMILTON, 2nd Batt. Gordon Highlanders.

‘P.S. I should perhaps have told you that more than half of the eighteen

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men I had with me on the advanced position were wounded before the reserve came up. Most of the wounds were slight, and all the men, except three I think, refused to leave their posts.'

If the disaster was going to be produced, the coincidence of two factors was necessary. The first factor was that curse of the Commander, the intrusion of politics on to the battlefield which was responsible for the entirely vicious and, militarily speaking, uncalled-for departure from one of the best-known axioms of the science of war. The force which marched out of camp consisted of seven companies of infantry plus the naval brigade—eight detachments in all, numbering each about sixty-four rifles. As regards numbers and armament the force was a replica of any average battalion of British Infantry serving abroad at that time. But, when we come to the organization of the force, we find that it was made up of two companies of the 58th; two of the 60th; three of the 92nd and one of sailors. Of these eight companies, three were to be dropped to hold the line of communications so that the actual fighting force resolved itself into a very scratch lot of three hundred and sixty-five soldiers and sailors. By the fate of this force—or lack of force—the future of a huge continent was to be very perceptibly swayed. For thirty-three years after Majuba there was no use hammering in the point that a commander who undertook a dangerous feat of arms with detachments instead of units was asking for trouble. The reading public did not understand. 'A man's a man for a' that,' is what they really thought. To-day the Great War has sharpened the point of the nail and it will get there.

The second factor was that failure to dig in—a crime, not so much against the science of war as against the art of war. For in 1881 the science of war was in a state of flux which left much of its practice in the hands of that artist, the Commander. In 1881 the army was still dominated by the Duke of Cambridge—grotesque shadow of the Duke of Wellington. The Crimea and Indian Mutiny had passed over him without leaving a trace of their passage upon his mind. Lessons had been lavished upon England during those campaigns but no soldier of original and forceful character had emerged to drive those lessons home. The elementary idea that a position seized by a *coup de main* and precariously held should instantly be entrenched and consolidated had not yet struck roots into the pipe-clay. Not until after the battles of Liao Yang and the Shaho was the value of this anti-counter-attack system preached by the few European officers who had witnessed the Manchurian War of 1904-5 (notably Hoffman

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and myself) and, as is well known, it had not yet worked its way down into the practice of the British, French or German armies at the beginning of September 1914. By 1915 we find the word 'dig' thrice repeated, at the roots of the military history of the young, English-speaking natives of the Antipodes ('the Diggers'), forming as they did part of the message which prevented the Anzacs from recoiling at their first contact with the enemy.¹ But in 1881 the spade—*sine qua non* of Marlborough—might still be used or not at the discretion of the Commander; and, let me hasten to add, never was there an instance where the need for the spade work was more obvious or more pressing than at the first streak of dawn on the 27th February 1881. We had the precious tools in our hands. A battalion would no doubt, even in those pipe-clay times, have received direct orders to entrench from its own colonel without any reference to higher authority. But here were we, little scraps of corps, each under a Captain or a Subaltern, and we had to take our orders from the Chief Staff Officer. None came—Herbert Stewart himself was a cavalryman. His chief, Sir George Colley, had no practical military experience. Neither order nor superior officer came near my own part of the line from first to last.

Besides, the immediate issue between Boers and British seemed already to have been settled in our favour and no longer weighed upon the minds of Colley and Herbert Stewart. From the moment we had successfully scaled that almost inaccessible sky-high key to the Lang's Nek position success seemed a foregone conclusion.² So now that political grub which had lain dormant at the roots of their military preparations was about to waken and emerge. Why had Colley started upon an adventure so perilous with a scratch lot of soldiers and sailors instead of one homogeneous battalion? Here was no question of each unit being called upon to furnish a quota of volunteers for a forlorn hope. In that case individual enthusiasm might have compensated for lack of cohesion. But there was no call for volunteers. The companies taken were merely those which hap-

¹ See my *Gallipoli Diary*, Vol I, p. 144; P.S. to my refusal to re-embark the Anzacs on night of original Landing, April 1915. 'You have got through the difficult business, now you have only to dig, dig, dig, until you are safe. Ian H.'

² 'We could stay here for ever' was Colley's summing up of the situation as made by him to Herbert Stewart after daybreak. At 9.30 a.m. Herbert Stewart, Chief Staff Officer, sent a flag signal to the British camp below, 'xxx All very comfortable. Boers wasting ammunition.'

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pened to stand next on the roster for detachment. Then why court confusions and misunderstandings? Why not take a complete battalion? Because, at this period, there were two campaigns in progress, the main contest between Boers and British and a side-show contest between Roberts and Wolseley as representing long service and short service. The 58th and 60th were the first of the short-service or Wolseleyite type of troops to be subjected to the test of war. They had already been roughly handled at the battle of Lang's Nek a month previously when the 58th had lost 160 out of 480 men and again, only eighteen days previously, when at the battle of the Ingogo the 60th were so badly cut up that, of the whole force under Colley's command, one-third were *hors de combat*. Anyone who will take the trouble to turn back to those old pages of history will see how, at the second of these two fights, our troops escaped a surrender by a forced retreat under cover of a dark, wet night so stormy that no sound reached the ears of the careless Boers who had surrounded them. Small wonder if the nerves of these young soldiers were shaken. They had fought pluckily but in the end they had been rounded up and they knew quite well they had escaped death or imprisonment by the act of God rather than by good guidance or their own skill at arms. Marksmanship and mobility had made the Boers their masters in the open field although, wherever an entrenchment neutralized both marksmanship and mobility, they might be still the better men. To use them again so soon on a singularly daring adventure in the open was rather like asking a hunter who has been mauled in single contest with a lion to creep next night into the middle of a den of lions. But there was no need to do anything so unfair. A chance survival of the long-service army which was fast passing away had just marched into camp fresh from their victory at the battle of Kandahar. As I have recorded, the last year before the Afghan war they had been the best-shooting regiment in India and since then battle practice had been steady. As Abraham found a ram caught in a thicket at the very moment he was to make his burnt offering, so Colley seemed to have received from Providence the very troops to offer up upon the altar of Majuba! But—success being assumed—what would be the political effects of the success of the 92nd (Gordon) Highlanders? Might it not be said, would it not surely be said, that the old soldiers had made good where the young soldiers had failed? Might this not be used, would this not be used, as an argument to prove that Roberts and the Duke of Cambridge were right and that Wolseley and Mr. Cardwell had been wrong?

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There was that danger. Well then, let the tiny force be so thoroughly well shuffled and mixed up that the Devil himself would be unable to say what these victorious troops were—long-service or short-service, soldiers or sailors. The *coup* was so sure to come off (they thought) that they did not trouble to reflect that to shuffle and mix up units is to disorganise units, and that when bodies are disorganized their functions are apt to be disordered.

Here then, at long last, I place the key to the riddle of Majuba in the hands of the public. The plan was brilliant and daring. The execution was as daring as it was hazardous. It failed, and the laurel wreath was dashed from Colley's head by a bullet because he and Stewart had tampered with their instrument. Behind the force that scaled Majuba Hill stood no tradition; no cohesion; no confidence. A common interest even was lacking for no one had been told what was happening; and no one ever said those few burning words due to the men from their Commander even if only to let them understand how much they had accomplished and how vital it was that they should see it through. Most fatal of all, perhaps, there was no battalion Commander or Adjutant to order the companies to dig in.

As to my personal experiences I had shave after shave—close shaves too—with Death on this Hill of Destiny: my kilt and coat were cut in several places by bullets—a bullet passed a quarter of an inch under my armpit; another between my legs—also a miss by a quarter of an inch! After I was wounded a big dirty Boer, with a big black beard, came up to the two youngsters who were stripping me, and catching one of them a box on the ear, he took my sword from him. I sat up at this, and said I would give any money if he would leave me my sword, which had belonged to my father. 'Money,' he replied, 'you have money, give it up.' There was no help for it. I had some sovereigns in a belt round my waist, and very unwillingly I began to try and get them out. At that moment, Joubert, who had had a pony led to the top of the hill, came up and ordered them towards our camp, where the guns were still firing. They were naturally unwilling to go at that precise juncture, but he would stand no nonsense, and repeated his order in so peremptory a tone that they left me and went, carrying off my sword, but not my money.¹ Feeling very sick, both in mind and body, I dragged myself to the shade of a

¹ My sword was recovered in 1902, but was swept away by a flood at Kronstad, Orange Free State, before it reached me. I still have my bullet-torn kilt and tunic, with the sleeve cut away.

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little thorn bush and then sat down. I was there on a narrow ledge, where I had fallen, about 8 ft. below the plateau. Along this ledge came a young fellow so busy picking up cartridges and meat tins that he never saw me. At a movement I made he jumped back with a startled exclamation and put his rifle to his shoulder. I held up both hands over my head, saying 'Wounded, wounded'. 'Where is your gun then? give me the gun!' he called out threateningly, still covering me with his rifle. 'I have no gun,' I replied, 'I am an officer.' 'Your sword, then, you d—d *roy baatye!*' he exclaimed, and he would, I am sure have fired, had not quite an old man, with a venerable white beard, who was close behind him, remonstrated and gently pulled his rifle to one side. After that the bitterness of imminent death was past, and Schmidt, one of the Boer leaders, coming up with some others, asked me if I was an officer and took me off to identify General Colley, as already described. Schmidt was a fine-looking man and it was he, they said, who actually took the hill.

On the whole the Boers were not bad fellows. Several of them remarked to me that we could not expect any other fate, if we chose to begin a fight on Sunday. They nearly all talked English; one of them rendered first aid and gave me a huge red bandana handkerchief to tie up my broken wrist with, the only piece of loot any of us brought away from Majuba, I think. He used the top of a bully beef tin as a splint; laid my wrist on it; packed a little grass round it and tied it up in the handkerchief.¹ Another wild-looking creature came up with a friend to interpret, and said his wife would like my sporran to hang up in her house. My position necessitated a polite reply and I sent Mrs. Boer the souvenir she wished. I hope she appreciates it.

None of them would give me a drink of 'Square Face', though they were well provided with it; and none of them would help to carry water to the wounded. Joubert was a little man, just like a German professor in appearance; his hair was black, streaked with grey, if I remember right, and he wore it long. Before leaving the hill I went to him about my sword, as I wished, if possible, to make some arrangement about getting it back. He was very polite at first and after I had described the man who

¹ I recalled the episode in a speech at a banquet at Harrismith in 1910, when I was Inspector-General of Overseas Forces. Suddenly we were all electrified by one of those present, Mr. J. H. J. Wessels of Vleiplaats, jumping to his feet and saying he was the donor. So I sent him a new handkerchief in an inscribed silver box to replace the old one which had rotted away. Ian H.

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had taken it, he called up several Boers and asked them if they could put a name to him. As none of them were able to do so, he took a note of my wishes and said he would do his best for me. I am surprised sometimes, when I look back, to think of a subaltern, and a prisoner of war, being permitted to go and bother the chief of the enemy's forces about personal details at such a moment; but they were homely sort of people and it all seemed quite natural at the time. He remarked, pointing to all the dead and wounded lying about, 'This is a sad business.' I agreed with him. He continued, 'Why do you force it upon us?' 'We do not force it upon you,' I replied, 'you began it at Bronkerspruit and you will see England will go on with it to the end,' for I did not know then that the dead around me would not be avenged and I did not much care what I said, I was so sick at heart at all that had happened. 'Who told you that we began it?' I made the rather tame reply that I had read it in the newspapers. At this he seemed quite to lose his temper and stamped on the ground with his foot, saying, 'Those vile, damned, accursed newspapers, they have made all this mischief, and now you come here telling me of newspapers!'

One or two of our wounded were by, and were much alarmed, thinking he would order us all to be shot forthwith, but he grew cool again as quickly as he had got angry, and turned away to his work without troubling himself more about me.

Stumbling and falling, I slowly made my painful way back towards the camp from which we had started at 10 p.m. the previous night. At the foot of the hill I got into a marsh and, being utterly exhausted, lay down never expecting to rise again except on Judgment Day. But Fate taking the form of a little dog of mine willed otherwise. I was proud owner of a fox terrier named Patch who had been miserable when I would not take him with me into battle. At daybreak picquets were sent out from camp to see if they could find and bring in any stragglers from the front. Patch accompanied one of these picquets and led them straight to me—the first I knew he was licking my face. They carried me in where I was given coffee to drink and a pot of jam to eat, and then sent me off to Newcastle on the Natal frontier. I have a confused memory of meeting some Zulus in full war paint who jeered at us as we marched by. On arrival at Newcastle I became so ill that I remember when Colonel Luck, afterwards General Sir George Luck, visited the hospital with two Cavalry Colonels, the doctor whispered to them as they passed softly by my bed to leave

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me in peace as I was moribund. My ears caught the ugly-sounding word which I did not quite place though I suspected it. When I taxed the doctor with the word afterwards he denied having used it but he had done so all right, which shows the need of care in discussing dying people in their hearing. To all intents and purposes of normal life they may appear to be dead. They cannot quiver an eyelid; they cannot heave a sigh but the word gets through and is registered in the moribund brain. From that state—from that complete indifference to life—I was first roused by Evelyn Wood¹ who rode many weary miles to see a sick young subaltern and tell him personally that his name was going home with an honourable mention in dispatches to England.

As I lay in hospital at Newcastle, it was decided that my arm must come off. But there was a Dr. Brown present who had seen a case of Lister's operation of excision of the wrist carried out in England and he begged he might be allowed to try his hand on my wrist. He argued that if anything went wrong the arm could always be cut off just the same. Permission was rather grudgingly given; I was four hours under chloroform and when I came to, my hand was hanging by a long sling of white bandage from a rafter, a horrible thing to look at; in shape more like a frog than a human hand; quite black; ice cold. A hurried consultation took place and it was decided to cut off my arm. As Sister Gray ran away to make the preparations our own 92nd Gordon Highlanders doctor—Sam Roe, an old friend of my father's—came to have a look at me. Touching my hand it seemed to him that he could detect a shade of returning warmth and he rushed to tell the others the circulation was coming back. For good or evil my hand was saved. In those days each regular battalion of infantry had its own doctor who wore the regimental uniform and was to us a godsend. He ran the Mess; took over many odd jobs on the administrative side; knew the scrimshankers and lazy-bones. At a stroke we could add 25 per cent to the efficiency of our Army to-day by giving each battalion its own regimental doctor. But we won't: too simple for our Civil Servants.

Four months later I was travelling back to England escorted by Vereker who had come out to bring me home. During the whole voyage my hand was laid out flat in a splint covered with green oiled silk. The fingers were firmly strapped to this but never having been flexed the fingers and thumb stuck out as stiff as five sticks.

¹ Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, V.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

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We arrived early in August and I at once made an appointment to see Professor Lister. When I entered the house in Portland Place a nurse led me into an ante-room where my splint was taken off. Next I was shown into the drawing-room where Mr. Lister, an angelic-looking oldish gentleman, was sitting by the sofa. He did not rise but said he had read the history of my case and asked me to come up to him and let him examine the hand. He looked so sweet and sympathetic that I quite confidently gave him my hand which he manipulated very gently and carefully; until suddenly he seized it in both of his hands and crumpled it right up. I fell fainting into an armchair and he called for brandy. After a glass I felt better and he said, 'Save you a lot of trouble, my boy—chloroform and fees.' I should add that he didn't charge me anything himself. After this I used to see Lister about once a fortnight and was repeatedly 'broken down' by him, the last time under chloroform. Often, when I look up at his placid bronze features in Portland Place, I remember my anguish.

A week later, when staying with Uncle Gort at East Cowes Castle, I was commanded by Queen Victoria to dine at Osborne. Actually, I dined with the Household and the chief thing I remember about the dinner, besides their kindness, was that the attendant who poured out my champagne did so from two bottles simultaneously, one held in each hand. The reason of this I was afraid to ask but I do know I was glad of as much champagne as I could swallow. After dinner I was taken down a corridor by Sir John Cowell, who opened a door, gave me a gentle push and then closed it behind me. It is all very well for writers of fiction or biography to let their vivid imaginations play like lightning about dry records, but they quite fail to recreate Queen Victoria as she appeared to a young soldier in the full effulgence of her glory. There she stood, her Ladies in a semi-circle behind her. Of all the Grandees I was ever predestined to behold, by long chalks the grandest was tiny Queen Victoria. Stretching out my hand I could have touched her as she made tender inquiries about the wounded. The Queen believed in herself and we believed in her. There lay the secret of the Victorian Age.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Everyone in England was very nice to a young man with his arm in a sling, and a round of charming visits now opened before me. To give an idea of the sort of party which humanly speaking will never again be

 OSBORNE. 22 August 1881

Dear Mr Hamilton
I am commanded
by the Queen to invite you
to dine with the ladies
& gentlemen of the Household
here this evening about 8 o'clock.
I would inform you that
Her Majesty will wish

to see you personally, in
the evening, with the
Officers of the Guard Station
at East Cowes, who will dine
here. I am
Yours very truly
L. S. Hamilton
Under-Secretary.

I should mention that
you should come in
on Friday Evening Dress.
as you may not have
your uniform with you.

INVITATION TO OSBORNE, 1881

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seen at a private residence in any part of Great Britain let me put in here a letter written to my father during a visit to Mrs. Charles Wilson at Warter Priory:

Warter Priory, Pocklington
8th Dec. '81

My dear Father,

Here I am once more in the lap of luxury. Such luxury too. I had not half seen the house in my last short visit here. The house is pretty full and all taking the cue from our hostess I suppose are particularly kind to me. I have not mastered all their names yet though. Lord and Lady Wenlock, both charming. The latter is sitting close by me now painting in water colors. We are in the library, so called because there are no books in it I suppose. Old tapestry old oak Wedgewood China make up with hundreds of lovely knick-knacks a most fairy like room. A Mr. and Mrs. Digby Cayly are here, most amusing. A widow called Mrs. Clarke. The straightest rider to hounds in Yorkshire Miss Gautier. Lady Middleton and her daughter Miss Willoughby. Sir Henry and Lady Boynton. Randolph Stewart (Dumfries). Major Wood late 12th Lancers going to stand for Parliament somewhere. The men have gone out for a shoot. Wonderful it is to be I believe. I shall join them in the afternoon. Going for a drive with Mrs. Wilson in the pony carriage. Love to all.

Your affect. son,

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

Wishing, however, to play up to the good opinions of my hostess and everyone I now renounced a further cycle of visits in order to bury myself at a crammer's, where I began to work feverishly for the next examination at the Staff College. For this purpose I took a room over a pub at Sunbury and put myself under the tuition of my old crammer for the Army entrance exam., Captain Lendy, who was second to none in his skill at getting officers into the Staff College. Here I set to work, and on the 22nd of December was writing to my Father:

I was called up to town early to-day by a most unexpected summons to go before my Medical Board. I have just returned and from the manner of the medicos I fancy both leave and ultimate pension will be secured to me. There was great interest displayed about my wrist—two men having come on purpose to see it. They called it a 'miracle of conservative surgery'. After the Board went to see Dillon. He read me, but unfortunately

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did not give me, several letters—one from the Prince's Pte Sec and another from Sir Henry Ponsonby, saying that the Queen and the Prince, the latter being at that time in Paris, had both read my letter and had been highly delighted with it. Best of all a letter from Sir Archibald Alison saying that putting aside the importance and interest of the letter, which was great as it displayed some events in a totally new light, as a piece of graphic and exciting writing it was quite more than he should have looked for from the British sub. I won't swear to the exact words of course but this was the sense of the letter.

I'm afraid my Company will be a very long time coming—another man must be absorbed before I get mine.

I am quite alarmed about V. He raves about a Miss Helen Smith so—you sent him to see her I believe. She has commissioned him to buy her a skeleton. He is delighted with her knowledge of bones, sinews and the human frame.

Love to all,

Ever your affecte. son,

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

I worked several months and was within a few days only of the entrance exam. when I was wired to by Sir Martin Dillon, A.M.S. at the Horse Guards, to come to London. Wondering what was in the wind I went at once and was informed that Sir Fred Roberts, Commander-in-Chief at Madras, offered me his A.D.Cship. Here was the ghost of the old robber Mullah in Afghanistan still working away on my behalf! Though I would have advised anyone else to say, 'No!'; so sick was I of 'grind' that I said, 'Yes!'; and, returning right there to my crammer's, I had the exquisite pleasure of consigning all my lesson books to the flames, while the following telegram was sent off to my Father in Scotland:

24th January '82

Been offered in very flattering way A.D.C. to Roberts I have most carefully thought it all over and accept tomorrow morning at ten unless you positively forbid me to go which I sincerely trust you will not Ooty is a famous climate

Wise or unwise, the die was cast, and it was to be my fate for the next twenty years to spend any surplus energy I had left after fighting the enemies of my country in fighting for my Chief against the Wolseley Ring.

IX

‘BOBS’

(1882-1884)

Burning your boats is child's play to burning your books. The act was symbolic of my long farewell to study and to theories which were to be replaced by the closest touch imaginable with a man who was practical to his finger tips. Had I gone to the Staff College I should probably have gravitated towards the Wolseley Ring; as it was, I found myself clean outside that charmed circle with Sir Fred Roberts. Looking back now at these two notorious ‘Rings’, the Roberts and the Wolseley, I can regard them as coolly as if they were the rings of Saturn and lament, as if my own withers were unwrung, the narrow-mindedness of mighty men of war. Were I Swift-minded, it would amuse me to see those calm statues decorating the purlieus of the War Office; to look at them and to remember how, in the flesh, that band of brothers in bronze could not even breathe the same atmosphere. As it is, the thought saddens me.

Such misgivings were far from my mind in the 'eighties. I cannot revive my own feelings; I can hardly imagine them now but I can remember them. To take down the pride of the Wolseleyites did not seem humanly possible and yet nothing is forbidden to work, self-denial, and prayer save always an escape from an obituary notice. Sixty years ago I would gladly have given away all my belongings provided thereby Roberts could be hoisted up and Wolseley brought low, and this although I was constantly haunted by a suspicion, which I shook off as if it was the caress of a leper's hand, that Wolseley was a soldier of quality—‘some soldier’ as nowadays they would put it. As for the Rank and File, to them, Roberts was always ‘Bobs’; they had no nickname for Wolseley—even to think of it is ridiculous.

Memories of Majuba led to my first outbreak into print in the shape of a red booklet—*The Fighting of the Future* written in June 1884; this again led on to the main work of my life—the revolution of musketry training which took place as an entirely original concept in my brain and was

'BOBS'

thence, all praise to Bobs, imposed first upon the Native Army in India and, later, upon that infuriated old *arme blanche* warrior the Duke of Cambridge.

The way was this. My Chief had confidence in me. When he became Commander-in-Chief he made me Assistant Adjutant-General of Musketry at Army Headquarters. He could not meddle with the British Army bullseye course but was free to do anything he liked with the Native Army. So I rewrote the whole of the native musketry Regulations with my own hand introducing, 'Celerity and Precision'. 'Head and Shoulder Figures', the 'Running Deer', and rapid volleys at khaki disappearing targets. An antiquated convention cannot run in double harness with real up-to-date business. Within two years the British Army had to follow suit. General Sir O'Moore Creagh did some justice to these efforts in a 'Who's Who' for V.C.s and D.S.O.s he edited before his death. Mayne's *Fire Tactics* which afterwards appeared, though it mentions my *Fighting of the Future* as one of the works consulted, was based on an entirely different principle, i.e. the negation of individual marksmanship and the law of averages—i.e. browning the covey.

My departure from England was delayed. Meanwhile on the 25th of February 1882 I was gazetted Captain and Vereker wrote excitedly to my Father in April:

Isn't Ian's promotion glorious! It was so thoroughly unexpected! I believe that Sir George Harvey came up to him in the Club and congratulated him on his name being in the Gazette. Ian, who never dreamt for a moment but that Sir George had made some mistake, said 'I am afraid you have mistaken some other Hamilton's promotion for mine!' Sir George apologized for having made the mistake as he imagined it to be but had another look at the Gazette which he brought back triumphantly.

The mail train brought me from Bombay to Bangalore at 5.30 a.m. on a June morning. Sir Fred, however, was already wideawake and gave me a warm welcome telling me I was in luck as I had turned up just in the nick of time to see and be seen by everyone; so I must get into uniform and ride down the line with him in a grand parade of all the troops that very morning. Had I ridden on a unicorn I could not have better caught the eyes of the Army! Everybody lending a hand I scrambled into my uniform and stood spick and span, booted and spurred by half-past eleven

'BOBS'

o'clock. A charger had been borrowed for me from the 4th Hussars and what sort of a horse he was God knows but I think he must have been a spare or superannuated kettle-drum horse. No one looked at Sir Fred but only at my mount which walked on its hind legs, snorted, kicked, and plunged the whole way down that long line, in attempts to rejoin its regiment. Sir Fred had many close shaves and I fear he was not amused. Enough of this painful subject. Soon afterwards I was told off to escort Lady Roberts up to the hills.

Ooty, as Ootacamund is familiarly called, was a lovely spot. There, at Snowdon, I found myself in charge of the household including the two girls (unless they were in charge of me?)—mischievous creatures, Edwina aged about seven and Aileen eleven. The Governor of the Presidency, Mr. Grant Duff, was in residence in his mansion about a mile distant and it was he who told me the story of Bulwer Lytton coming in to breakfast in his nightgown imagining he had become invisible by eating fern-seed—his informant Lord John Russell had been present. By some lucky fluke I caught the kind regards of Mr. Grant Duff who took no end of trouble to repair the book-burning act with which the last chapter closed. He lent me solid works out of his own library and thus it came to pass that in one corner of the drawing-room I might be studying Motley's *Dutch Republic* whilst in the other Neville Chamberlain, nephew of the intrepid commander at Umbeyla, and Polly Carew, afterwards Sir Reginald Pole-Carew, would be devouring the reminiscences of Elinor Glyn.

*Would you like to sin
With Elinor Glyn
On a tiger skin?*

*Or would you prefer,
To err—with her
On another fur?*

Neville was indefatigable at turning neat verses. At Kabul, after the Afghans had been driven off, he had written topical songs for a pantomime got up by the garrison of Sherpur at Christmas 1879 of which one verse ran:—

*At length outnumbered, hearing too
That Gough to help us soon meant,
In orderly way we all withdrew
Inside Sharpore Cantonment.*

'BOBS'

We weren't afraid

Oh! not at all!

Upon that Picquet Hill, Sir,

That Ghazi with his gory knife

His bright smile haunts me still, Sir.

Sir Fred, although, as has been said, 'practical to his finger-tips,' had no objection to his Staff, or at any rate one of his Staff, having a literary turn which might be useful in the preparation of speeches, drafting dispatches or even in writing books. So he encouraged me to give ear to Mr. Grant Duff and my inclination also being that way I began what was virtually a refresher course of education. Anyone who sets forth upon the perilous task of writing an autobiography will be surprised at the number of incidents already half-forgotten which are now seen in retrospect to have been turning points in their careers. Life is, in fact, nothing more or less than a succession of turning points.

Underneath Snowdon lay two small lakes divided by a causeway—beyond lived an old Major Martin who had two daughters Gracie and Gertrude. The Major was a brilliant artist and illustrated his writings with amusing sketches. The daughters, too, were very clever and capable and between them they had got up a literary club called The Scribblers. There were frequent competitions and I entered for these with much zest. At last I won a prize and as this win gave a fillip to my quill-driving propensities I put in the last line or two, all I can recollect. The task set was the translation into English verse of the Erl King.

Erreicht den Hof mit Müh und Noth

In seinen Armen das Kind war tot.

Made good his home with spurs dripping red,

Within his arms the child was dead.

However, I won out of twenty-six competitors.

One result of this little flutter into fairyland was entirely practical; the editor of the *Madras Mail* wrote and asked me if I would care to be his 'Correspondent from Army Headquarters'. I consulted Sir Fred who bade me accept on condition (not to be revealed) that he checked the MSS. A letter to my Father written the following year explains the ensuing situation.

'BOBS'

Snowdon, Ooty,
8th June 1883

My dear Father

The world wags on much as usual. It is now a year since I came up here and beyond any question it has been the best spent year of my till then extremely useless life. I feel that I am independent—that if I were kicked out of the Service tomorrow I should not be a mere loafer the more thrown onto Pall Mall and the clubs but that I could fight my own way. You may think this rather a high estimate to be grounded on the receipt of a few hundred rupees from the *Madras Mail*, but I base it on more than that: viz., on the fact that I have done vastly, immeasurably better work since, and that I imagine that I have potential possibilities in the way of improvement still lurking in me. What a lucky bullet that of Majuba has been. But for that I should still be spending my evenings playing pyramids at the club and my days shooting or training horses for races, etc., etc. Bless the gentle Boer who let me have it. Tomorrow is the first day of our theatricals. I am selling the tickets, managing the accounts, etc. etc. Everyone is very busy. V. will have been at home some time when you get this. I shall be very curious to hear how he gets on and what course he adopts.

We go down to Bangalore on the 4th June for three weeks seeing Trichinopoly and one or two other places. It will be a pleasant change as Bangalore is almost English-cool in the rains. Love to dear Granny and all at Laggary. Excuse my haste and this scrubby, egotistical letter.

Your affecte. son,

IAN S. M. HAMILTON

My younger brother by three years, Vereker was born within a few weeks of our Mother's death from consumption. He was very quick and clever being my father's favourite and I was far too fond of him and proud of him to grudge him this. On the contrary, I thought it quite natural and lost no chance of urging him to excel. While he was in Ceylon planting coffee, we kept up a continuous correspondence and the samples which follow will show the lines on which it was conducted:

13th August 1880

What a charming letter you can write when you like; pity you don't try oftener.

My Medical Board passed me but I can't find out the exact date of

'BOBS'

starting. Some day within a week anyhow. For one mail after getting this write to the Byculla Hotel, Bombay—second mail Quetta and after that Kandahar. I am determined to do something for myself this time if I get the chance—I should like the old Westport branch of the Hamiltons to make a bit of a rise in the world.

If in trying to cut a dash anything should happen to me, your way in the world would be made just twice as easy, as you would be double as well off. In that case I should leave coffee, come home and marry. . . . I myself, unless I was so unfortunate as to fall in love, would after a careful study of my Darwin try and get hold of a girl who would, in the language of breeders of prize animals, 'hit' with me.

I mean to say that both mentally and physically you ought to try and eradicate the weak points of your particular breed, for the sake of your children, by marrying a girl who is strong in the points where we as a family are weak. Of course if she combines as well your good points, *desto besser*, but then she would be an angel. *Par exemple*, it would be little short of madness in either of us, to marry an undersized girl, whose father and mother had red noses and bald heads. And nearly as foolish to marry a girl who, although clever, was lazy and procrastinating.

I wonder if we shall ever laugh over this letter—both of us having married the most utterly unsuitable persons.

However that may be I'm *certain* I'm right: and after all, is it not nearly, if not quite of as great importance to start a son in the world with a good-looking person and clever pushing disposition, even though poor—as to breed some idle dwarf even though you may be able to start him with five thousand a year. I wonder if you agree with me?

22nd October 1882

What, a whole precious golden year—*gone*, LOST. Indeed daemons have possessed your soul—and what do you pride yourself on in your letter? The 'profile in shadow' does indeed remain in shadow as a very secondary matter, whilst 'Successful Planter' a term which conjures up the most deadly visions to me, stands out prominently as the aim of a Life—a goodly enough aim for some lives perhaps but for you—Never. And what do you propose to do on return from Ceylon? 'My idea for the future is after returning from Ceylon to do a little', mark the little, 'more studying in town and then *settle* down in the country', ye Gods, 'and combine shooting and painting—the painting as a pastime'. . . . And

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if the painting is to be the pastime what is the shooting to be? The work I suppose. You would hardly in cool blood sit down and plan a future without work. There is but one God and he is Great. And so the object with which you came into this world, you who have brains, was to be what Carlyle calls a Double-Barrelled Game Destroyer of the Blatherwickian type. God help you old chap and send you a clever ambitious wife as soon as he conveniently can. . . . I seem to see your Higher Nature sick and staggering—wounded and bleeding—transfixed by golden arrows shot by our Uncles and other business relations. Adieu—adieu—farewell.

31st August 1883

To say that I was charmed, pleased, astonished by your letter will but express my feelings in a very fragmentary manner—on the receipt of your very approving letter. One thing I am in terror of. It is that you cut out even a verse of the 'soft winds streaming heedlessly' poem. For Heavens sake leave it. . . . *Strictly, sacredly private*. I am writing an article for H.E. on the Army. You will see it some day in a very emasculated form. It takes up all my spare time save an hour in the early morning. Nevertheless since last week I have written several hundred lines of verse. A supernatural poem—God knows whether it has entirely overstepped the line of sanity or not. The heroic couplet is my vehicle. I shall stick to my determination not to send any more home until I hear from you whether it is poetry or not.

7th September 1883

In spite of my saying that I would not trouble you any more with my rhymes until I heard your verdict I must send you the 1st three verses of a tiger shooting poem. I think, I almost think, it is poetry. What do you think? It is for the Madras scribbling club. The theme is 'an enjoyable day'. I am going to give them shikár. . . . I am very hard worked—but in my supernatural poem I have got as far as a duel with King Pharaoh, at the bottom of the Red Sea. Pretty far after all—300th line. I kill him—no, 302nd line. How about your mutual admiration society. The idea is good—providing you are absolutely firm in admitting or initiating none who are not *capable*, unscrupulous (to some degree) and of some position or prospect of position in letters (A.1) political society (A.2) Art (B), Society (Z). The letters imply the relative importance of the subjects. These remarks apply only to men—any clever enthusiastic (handsome?) woman should be eligible. They are always unscrupulous.

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Perhaps this may be the best place to break it to the reader that early in '83 Vereker and I had embarked in a Bombay harbour boat to sail for Ceylon and on what was even more serious, the plan of writing a fantastic tale of our adventures and of publishing it. Under the synonyms of Kinioch and Uven we were about to horrify our matter-of-fact relatives and it is much more serious for a young Scot to horrify relatives who live in Argyll or Aberdeen than it would be for a young Englishman to horrify relatives who live at Birmingham or Kew. Why this should be I cannot exactly say but it is so. The Scots are much more concerned with the behaviour of all their relatives good or bad. The English, if they lose sight of their first and second cousins for a few years, forget about them unless they come into a fortune; if they commit a crime they continue to forget about them—not so the Scots, who condone the offence and try to put him upon his legs again, not only for the honour of Scotland but because to those who say the Lord's Prayer every day not to forgive is not to be forgiven.

When the *Madras Mail* were sent a copy of the *Jaunt in a Junk* I artfully pretended that I was somebody else. When, however, they tore it into shreds I wrote to the Editor, C. A. Lawson, saying my friend was very sad and would he take a look at it himself. In reply he wrote saying he was very sorry the writer was a friend of mine, adding: 'The glance I have given to the *Jaunt* left on my mind the impression that the criticism was none too severe. The book should never have been published.' This blow below the belt should have knocked me out but I had brought it on myself; its effect on me was that of a stimulus rather than otherwise. I immediately embarked upon writing a novel *Icarus*, which was published in 1886.

This time the critics were kind but my relatives, especially Aunt Camilla, were more than ever frantic. Usually a young author is assailed by the critics and upheld by his friends. With me it was the opposite. 'If vivacity of style, obvious familiarity with many phases of our modern life and a certain audacity of realistic treatment were the only qualities required to make a good novel, *Icarus* would deserve to be ranked in this category' wrote the *Scotsman*: 'it is an exceedingly clever book in its way, and it keeps the reader's interest and expectancy aroused from beginning to end.' As to the story, I will give it in the words of the *Civil and Military Gazette*:

'The hero of this tale is one Errington—a man about town—who leads

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an unprofitable but by no means flat existence, compromises himself with married women, actresses, and the like, gets blown out of a cab with dynamite—a novel situation which verges slightly on the ludicrous—never seems to know exactly who he is in love with, but gives and takes kisses with the *abandon* if not the innocence, of a child of five; finally discovers that the girl he adores, *pro tem.*, is the by no means speckless wife of another, and gets shot through mistake by the husband.' The reviewer of the *St. Stephen's Review* found it 'decidedly naughty and decidedly amusing—so amusing that I should not be surprised if it made a hit,' and another reviewer, while objecting that it was 'not free from the taint of Bohemianism', described it as 'a very powerful novel, with plenty of sparkling dialogue, and entirely free from the suspicion of plagiarism'. But perhaps the most amusing comment is that of the *Lady's Pictorial* quoted in a letter from V. which says: 'Here we have a book which is distinctly entertaining, although the situations are here and there far more *risqué* than is necessary or desirable, while the author indulges in a certain blunt and somewhat coarse fashion of calling a spade by its ordinary name.'

The supernatural poem never saw the light but some of the best of the shorter poems appeared in a small volume, *The Ballad of Hadji and the Boar* in 1887. Lady Roberts objected that the Ballad left the reader with a distaste for sport and that it might spoil pig-sticking but the horror in it was pleasing to me and I thought it might improve pig-sticking.

A letter to my grandmother describes the daily round.

Wellington, 8th May '83

Dear, dearest Granny,

I meant to write you a good long answer tomorrow morning but, quite unexpectedly, my Chief has warned me to ride with him early, so I have to get through my reply after a big dinner party has left me somewhat idealess. I know nothing that dazes me more than talking forced nonsense to stupid people for, say, three hours at a stretch. . . . And so my father has experienced, to quote his own words, 'three weeks of perfect enjoyment.' Fortunate man—three weeks seems a long time to remain perfectly happy! Bon Dieu, I seem to have left those days far behind—not, dear Granny, that I am not what everyone would call perfectly happy—still a restless ambition has hold of me now which hardly leaves space for so calm a sensation as content. . . . Lady Roberts is as kind to me as Cousin Colina or Aunt Cam and that, as you know, is saying a

'BOBS'

good deal. I get on famously with Col. Pretyman¹ and Neville Chamberlain suits me so well that I may say we are bosom friends. As for my Chief himself nothing could possibly exceed his consideration and kindness. With this good account of my surroundings I shall close. Adieu. Believe me, dear Granny,

Your loving grandson,

IAN H.

The following October there is a letter to Vereker describing the awful grind of passing for my majority. How little do the young majors of to-day realize what they are spared! They think they have to pass a stiff exam. but if they would ask the W.O. to let them see an old set of papers of 1883 I do not expect they would grouse any more. Leave, however, was almost due.

21st January 1884

I write and fight and fight and write—not for myself but for other people. This is a life of obligations. I do not live for myself but for other people. It is though, I think, very good for me; and would be I am sure for you (up to a certain point) to be forced to ride when you want to walk and to walk when you would rather run: to eat a big dinner when you wish to fast—to laugh when you are sad—to flirt when you are in love with another than the flirtee:—yes, I think it is all very good for one if one does it conscientiously. What are we going to do when I come home? By Aunt Camilla I swear that I shall have a grand go-in at pure, delightful, selfish work! Rhymes or a novel or a play or something—10 hours a day! Heavenly prospect. A very pretty girl here, a daughter of Sir Donald Stewart's—the C.-in-C. in India—I, however, am at last grown callous. . . . Arrange something to do during my 46 days at home.

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My Chief wrote a marvellous 'chit' to my Father (which I print at the end of this chapter) when I left Ooty in October 1884, ostensibly on six months' leave but really (if possible) to join the Nile River Column—so let me put in here my own little tribute to him. A perfect temper and moderation in everything were a part of Sir Fred's outfit. The quickness of his one eye was astonishing and disconcerting. He could come into a room and in a moment he could see that two of his Generals were conspiring and that another was making love to somebody else's wife. His

Military Secretary.

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sense of hearing was so acute that he could hear what Lady Bobs was saying to her neighbour at the far end of a long dinner table. That also was disconcerting. When Sir Fred got into the saddle and bullets were in the air he became, as Lord Randolph Churchill said three years later when he pressed for his appointment as C.-in-C. in India, ‘the first soldier of his age’. He combined moral and physical courage. All V.C.s do not do so; he did. When Sir Fred fought at Charasia with one half of his army instead of waiting for the other half to come up,—that needed nerve. When he marched on from Johannesburg to Pretoria through a country bare of supplies, one day’s rations in hand and Christiaan de Wet attacking his communications,—that was a move the good ordinary General (and I have known a good many of them) would never have ventured upon. Some might call it foolhardy. But here is where the public do not yet grasp the relative functions in war of a Prime Minister and a Commander. No big victory can be won without risk. The Commander must not say to himself, ‘I hold the life of England in my hand—I dare not risk it!’ He *must* risk it if he is to win a big victory. If there is any hedging to be done, any playing for safety, that is for the politicians. When they do this the Commander may clap his telescope—like Nelson did or Sir Fred would have done—to his blind eye; or he may resign. The one sure thing is he must run big risks if he is to gain big results. And I will go a step further—if on the battlefield with my hand on the pulse of events I felt Now or Never in the air—‘Now!’ it should be, so help me God.

Never shall I forget my passionate longing, my prayers, for the advancement of Roberts, my hope against hope that he would become Commander-in-Chief in India, that he would triumph over his enemies and force his way out to South Africa. There is nothing unusual here, still less any claim for merit. Only heaven can tell how much was personal ambition merely seeking a vicarious outlet, how much was impersonal; most certainly these are mysteries insoluble by the individual himself. Only, I will say this for Sir Fred; he was so charming, so considerate, so even in his temper, so wonderful a hero-to-his-valet man that an Aide-de-Camp might well begin by being interested and end by becoming disinterested.

Little Bobs was Boss of my Ring and was the man to whom I owe militarily everything. I don’t mean by that the appointments and honours which he gave me or got me given. He believed—mistakenly perhaps but he did believe—that I was the man for the appointments. As for the honours, although I had a passion for battle bars on my medals, mere ‘break-

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fast ribbands' as the Germans call them, meaning non-service decorations for display at banquets, or a 'handle' to a soldier's name are to my thinking a positive hindrance. I begged him (in vain) to get me passed over for the K.C.B. and afterwards (with success) got myself cut out of the list for the Good Service Reward. This was after the South African War; but the question cropped up again after the Great War and there has been an interesting sequel. As the workings of the official mind can only be studied in offices and are not without interest especially at the present time I will give the whole correspondence.

Confidential.

*The War Office,
Whitehall, S.W.1.
11th July 1935*

My dear General,

I trust that you will forgive any apparent indiscretion in writing to you on a purely personal matter.

You will remember that, in 1920, you were awarded a meritorious service annuity of £100, in recognition of your distinguished service. At that time it was not the practice to enter into consideration of the financial circumstances of the recipients: with the result that, in many cases, rewards were conferred on officers who had private means, in addition to their pensions. This is no longer the case; but the Secretary of State finds, that even by making the fullest use of the very few annuities which become vacant annually, there are still a large number of general officers, who, by reason of comparatively small pensions, and unavoidable commitments (e.g., education fees, or allowances for sons entering, or in the service), find it almost impossible to make both ends meet.

In these circumstances, the Secretary of State will be very grateful if you will be kind enough to consider, at your leisure, whether the £100 a year you now draw in this connection, is of any real moment to you; if not, and, if after mature deliberation, you feel prepared to place it at his disposal, for re-allotment to one of the very many officers less fortunately placed, he will regard it as a most generous gesture.

Yours sincerely,

C. P. DEEDES

General Sir Ian Hamilton, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., D.S.O., T.D.,
Colonel, the Gordon Highlanders,
1, Hyde Park Gardens, W.2.

'BOBS'

1, Hyde Park Gardens, W.2.

12th July 1935

My dear General,

Yours of yesterday comes to hand as I am busy packing up for a week's inspection of ex-Service men in the North of England and in Scotland. During this period I will revolve your £100 letter in my mind. Meanwhile, let me dictate these few hurried observations.

That you should write me, an old M.S., on this particular matter is more strange than you probably realize, though the archives of your office and those of the Finance under Creedy ought to have some records of the matter. After the South African War in 1902 or possibly in 1903, I was awarded a meritorious service annuity. At that time the meritorious service annuities were all held by rich men. Buller held one as A.G. and G.O.C., Aldershot, and apart from Crediton¹ he had £7,000 a year. The reason was simple. Private means helped a man to the top of the tree. He need never refuse a billet on score of expense. Portsmouth, Plymouth, etc., were impossible for a poor man. The same principle held later on when Haig and French came along. Both comparatively well off. Now, I did not like this and although I was in those days by no means very flush I refused the gift. Neither Mr. Broderick nor Lord Bobs approved. However, I stuck to it and eventually got a letter from Lord Bobs which I still should have somewhere saying it was quite decent of me or words to that effect. So the Governments have rather scored over me; also over the fact that since 1882 I have drawn £70 Wound Pension instead of £100 wound pension to which I was entitled under the warrant then still in force that it was the rank exercised and not the Army List rank that counted.

As to the present £100 when it came along of its own accord I considered it to be on a different footing for I had made up my mind to live up to my income and saw my way clearly to spending a good slice of it on ex-Service men. So I took the £100 and, like the Army Contractor's daughter, I am 'spending it now'.

But, if the S. of S. is keen to have the spending of it instead I don't

¹ His property near Exeter.

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think I'll stand in his way; only as I began by saying, I'll let you know for certain when I get back.

Yours sincerely,

IAN HAMILTON

Lieutenant-General C. Deedes, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.,
War Office,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

29th July 1935

My dear Deedes,

Since yours of the 11th inst. conveying to me a suggestion by the Secretary of State that it might be counted to me as righteousness were I to relinquish my Meritorious Service Reward so as to enable him to distribute it to poor Generals, the question has been a good deal in my thoughts. To you, as Military Secretary, and to the War Office generally, the proposition may seem as simple and straightforward as that made by Our Lord to the young man of great possessions seemed to Matthew and Mark. All he had to do was to sell what he had and give it to the poor. But as that young man of great possessions went away sorrowful, clearly there were some other considerations at work in his mind of which Matthew and Mark did not know and which even now remain unknown to the British public.

However that may be, my own problem has now become clearer to me, and I will surrender my Meritorious Service Reward to the Secretary of State on condition that this correspondence be not used by him (as a bell wether is used by a shepherd) to induce the rest of his flock to go and do likewise and *per contra* that it shall not necessarily be secret.

Yours sincerely,

IAN HAMILTON

Lieutenant-General C. Deedes, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.,
War Office,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

*The War Office,
Whitehall, S.W.1.
30th July, 1935*

My dear General,

The Secretary of State asks me to write and tell you that he much appreciates your generous action in resigning your Distinguished Service

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Reward in favour of some other officer who is in greater need of it. I shall inform the future recipient that the grant is due to your generosity.

Yours sincerely,

C. DEEDES.

General Sir Ian Hamilton, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., D.S.O., T.D.,
Colonel, The Gordon Highlanders,
1, Hyde Park Gardens, W.2.

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The things I had in mind when I said that I owed Lord Roberts 'militarily everything' were his example and the immense pains he took to mould a wayward and casual character into his own bright, clear-cut image, a task, alas, pathetically impossible. Still, to serve with him twenty-two years and not to get some glimmer, some inkling, of how he would have set to work to tackle a problem was not possible either. At the Dardanelles I used to think, 'However would Sir Fred get through; how with a gagged Press and held-up dispatches would he make the people at home administer a spiritual nip to their collywobbly Government, or make the War Office understand that Gallipoli was not in France and that if they mean to help us they mustn't lose too much time.'

What *could* the little man have done? I knew. He would have got into a fast cruiser and he would have gone to Marseilles; thence to London, to fight the issue through the Cabinet—one way or the other—to be or not to be—get on or get out:—that's what he'd have done—and yet—Anzac? Helles?—how could I desert my exhausted troops? Suppose?—suppose . . .? And then suppose again. One grisly suppose after another. All of which shows that Lord Roberts had not succeeded in grafting on to me his gift for taking the bull by the horns. In South African times these horns were at Pretoria; Bobs went for them. In Dardanelles times these horns were what were called G.Q.G. and G.H.Q. in France and Bobs would have gripped them before the Cabinet. Reading the post-war French war books (see Mermeix's *Sarrail et les Armées d'Orient*, etc.) we can realize more clearly than we could at the time how greatly the French were preoccupied with the idea of furnishing the Entente armies with French Commanders-in-Chief. If only with the aid of Northcliffe and Lloyd George (who in this stunt worked together) they could succeed in shifting the British-commanded, amphibious push from the Dardanelles waterway into the Salonika defile, they were pretty confident that the

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command of the combined forces would in due course fall to a Frenchman. Had Sarrail been shown my official cable to Lord K. in which I offered to serve under his orders, the big French reinforcements would have been sent to the Dardanelles. (I have proof of this given me first hand by a famous warrior¹—one of England's best.) We should then have reached Constantinople within a month.

These are the sort of issues which can only be dragged out by the horns. Roberts would have had that discussion or the public would have known why not. For a hero who had the habit of taking his bulls by the horns, Lord Bobs had the most equable, well-balanced, commonsense disposition imaginable; but when he was worked up to white heat by war he was of all men I have ever met the most ready to cry *va banque* and win or lose it all.

At all times, Roberts was inclined by his nature to take the most lively interest in his fellow creatures. This natural instinct was constantly being exercised and cultivated. If Roberts had a genius for popularity, it was partly at least owing to his genius for taking pains. He must know everyone's name in every room and the more information he had about their heredity and career the better. If he was clear a man had owned a good grandmother he would try to give him a trial. To us as Aides-de-Camp those traits were an abominable nuisance. On the race-course at Calcutta, riding through the Simla bazaar, if he encountered someone he thought he ought to know and didn't, his A.D.C. was ordered to find out particulars. He might have to follow his man for miles, track him to his house, run him to ground at his Club; as the Redskin has to show his victim's scalp so the name at least had to be laid at the feet of the Commander-in-Chief: there was no use hoping he would forget all about it: 'not much' as folk say in the 'forties.

Into his day's work he flung with generous hand the whole of his life and energy. The State paid him well; the State was entitled to all he had. My best chance of making my readers understand a character so unlike any they have known is to give an example:—If some of his house-party were going out riding, instead of sending an order to the stables like an ordinary civilian, or instead of telling an A.D.C. to see to it like an ordinary General, he preferred to write out on a slip of paper called a *purzi*, of which he had a number hanging on his drawer handle, the names of

¹ Admiral of the Fleet Lord Keyes of Zeebrugge and Dover.

the horses, the special saddle they were to carry and the precise moment they were to be at the front door. ‘It only takes one minute, my dear Johnny,’ he used to say when I looked at him reproachfully, ‘and it is so *much* more satisfactory.’ His temper was the nearest thing to invulnerable anyone is likely to encounter, however long his life. Though he might be focused on some nice calculation; strung up with some mighty effort he was making; anyone might barge into his room and bother him on any old question. We all know politicians and leader-writers who curse and swear and tear their hair at interruptions—he did not even look like a saint disturbed at his orisons, as some of the worst of the Civil Servants nowadays look when you barge in upon them. He looked glad to see you! Neither in peace nor war did he ever get the wind up, and he never raised his hand to a servant, in a country where a certain type of Indian is begging all day long to be beaten—never, at least, but once. At Hyderabad in 1883 his faithful *khitmatghar* Eli Bux, who had brought his early cup of tea ever since the Mutiny, overslept himself on the morning of a great parade. Not the least extraordinary fact about this extraordinary Commander-in-Chief is that he had never been late for parade in his life. As a General, he had taken to being two minutes after the hour, for, as he said, the leading personage should come last, people should never be hustled, it showed a lack of good manners to arrive upon the tick—but that was of set purpose, that was not being late. He had many punctilios of this sort. For instance, if in writing he repeated himself he was most particular to scratch out the second word or phrase and not the first, because the first was right and it was the second which had gone wrong. But here was a question of being really late for parade; half an hour! So when Eli Bux awoke to the impending catastrophe terror so sharpened his wits that he hit upon an ingenious plan. There was a wretched *messalchi* or washer-up who stood about four feet high in his shoes: we called him the Dwarf. Eli Bux gave *him* the early morning cup of tea and told him he was promoted now to the job of taking this in to the Lord Sahib in the morning. Proud as Punch the Dwarf walked in and as he opened the door the music of the bands marching to parade was wafted into the bedroom. The sound of a slap reached the ears of the anxious Staff. Next moment the Dwarf—dishevelled and unturbaned—darted from the room, and was never seen again! Our surmise was that the Chief had boxed his ears; if so that is the only time he ever struck anyone except an enemy in the field. But it was destined not to be the only time he was late for parade.

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In 1910 Lord Roberts was commanded by the King to go forth and make it known to the monarchs of Europe that he, George V, had by the Grace of God become one of them. These glad tidings must be brought right home to the Sultan and Balkans; Kaiser and Tzar. Even if the news had already met their eyes in the columns of the press, no matter; and so it came to pass that Lord Bobs chose me as his General-in-Waiting and off we went—in special reserved carriages—towards a disaster which is now for the first time disclosed.

Hardly had we got to Vienna (on our way from Belgrade to Berlin) when Lord Bobs caught a chill; so he went straight to bed like the wise little man he was and begged the Embassy to wire at once to Berlin and say we should be twenty-four hours late—not quite so wise a move, I fear; in fact, that he should have taken such a step was of itself sufficient to show that he was a very sick man. To ask an Embassy to *do* anything is like asking the General Staff for rations or a railway ticket; you don't get it; instead of bread you get a flea in your ear. If you want something real you must go to a Quartermaster General in the Army or to a Consul in the diplomatic service. School Marms should be asked to teach these rudiments of official life to all their young charges. As might have been expected the telegram was a dud, it never exploded, afterwards the Embassy swore it had been fired off yet singular to say it arrived nowhere—never—ever. *But we arrived twenty-four hours late!!!* Imagine some hundreds of sour faces with bogus smiles pasted onto them. Imagine the feelings of the Chief of the Great German General Staff, of the Commander of the Guards Division, of the Head of the Military Cabinet, of the Band and Guard of Honour—for these were still the very same folk who had paraded at the very same hour and place twenty-four hours previously when they had been made into April fools. The carriage had pulled up opposite the Guard. Arms had been presented. The German equivalent of 'See the Conquering Hero Comes' had thundered forth. The heads of all the ordinary passengers in the train were stretched out to see us emerge and out of the carriage came—*nix!*

Many years have passed but even now to write of this awful catastrophe makes my blood run cold. The All Highest had dressed himself in the uniform of the famous British Regiment of which he was Honorary Colonel and had come downstairs on to the doorstep of the Potsdamer Palace to salute the British Field-Marshal: up drove the State carriages—empty! Yet still the bookworms grope through dusty archives seeking

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the real cause of the war! They won't find them. Wars are never brought about by big incidents unless the soil has been well manured with imponderable small snubs and counter-snubs.

My anecdote is not an end in itself; it is meant to be a means of illustrating a certain special angle of an historical specimen. Lord Bobs sensed what I have tried to say and was determined to try to put things straight so far as his Mission was concerned. And when I cause the magic lantern of memory to project other Generals on to that same screen they—all of them—fall short of his achievement. Some would have been too voluble and apologetic; others would have been dumbfounded; not one of them could have faced up to the crisis like little Bobs. From the very first moment he shouldered the whole enormity. Half a dozen he might have unloaded onto and implicated; not a word of it; not a hint of it; not a thought of it. His handling of the Kaiser was perfect. To remain entirely erect when you have just been badly let down must be difficult but to manage to do so while you convey also an impression of real distress is quite a *tour de force*, a masterpiece. The Kaiser had not made it too easy. He received us in the Audience Chamber upstairs and began by saying he had been down on the doorstep yesterday but could not risk another misadventure to-day. However, Lord Bobs was quite perfect—in a couple of minutes he had restored the All Highest to a good temper; the tension had relaxed and, for the time being, at any rate, it became too difficult for the mischief-makers to persist in their view of a studied affront to Germany.

At the office desk Lord Roberts was full of common sense and tense industry; perhaps he was too sensible and too industrious. Anyway, what he put into his work made him easily first amongst the glorified bureaucrats who ruled India, including those Military Members of Council who were too much for his successors. Those very coadjutors with whom Kitchener fought put all their forces at the disposal of Roberts. Famous men; George Chesney who wrote *The Battle of Dorking*; Henry Brackenbury, the Wolseleyite, who was reputed afterwards the best Master-General of the Ordnance who ever served at the War Office, these men he made into his instruments and assistants. Wherever the business had to do with military training, musketry or the handling of troops in barracks or in the field, he was consistently wise with an abiding wisdom which has stood the test of time. But whenever the problems involved unseen things not yet tested by experience or principles of an abstract application, then, my own

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feeling about him is that he had dulled the fine razor edge of imagination by too much application to the practical. What he saw with his own eyes he saw clearly and his own eyes had seen, for instance, that the Cavalry spirit was an anachronism; that marksmanship was imperative; but when it came to great structural changes in our system, the short-service stunt, the building up of a Reserve, the Territorials, the Territorial Artillery, his footing was less secure. Where he shone out supreme during the nineteenth century was in the saddle at the head of an Army in the Field.

No one ever had cause to complain of Lord Bobs that he had let a chance of beating the enemy slip through his fingers. He was a sure battle-begetter. The men knew he was a fighter; they knew he could harden his heart; they knew he would make them storm *kopjes*; put them on half rations, march them till their clothes were in rags, their boots without soles—and they liked it—they liked it all the time except when they were doing it.

In quarters Lord Roberts was ever alert and on the spot; ever 'making his number' with the men, and he could not possibly have kept this up for forty years if he had not felt tugging all the time at his heart strings, quick sympathy for young soldiers. My intimate knowledge of every turn of the little man's behaviour has made me discontented with myself, and critical as regards others. He was never casual or inconsiderate with any human being; most people are casual and inconsiderate so long as they are not bound, by convention or interest, to be otherwise. An instance; at my first public function with another well-known Commander-in-Chief I noticed, as we were going into the lecture hall, one or two grey-bearded veterans who had pinned their medals on to their mufti and were standing amongst the crowd hoping some notice might be taken of them. This other General, one of the best of men, passed on. An incident like that would have been unthinkable to Lord Bobs. The moment the veterans met his eye he would have understood that a few words of interest—a few words about their career and their present concerns—would be worth all the fine phrases he was booked to spout on the platform. If, after an exhausting march Lord Roberts reached camp with a sharp go of fever on him—do you suppose he would go to his tent and lie down? Not much! There he would sit, half-dead, his Staff simply writhing in their saddles with fatigue, whilst he watched the long column march in for four long hours and exchanged kindly greetings with any of the extra exhausted.

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Years afterwards, when we went up to Abbottabad to inspect the Gurkhas, this habit of his had an amusing sequel. After the parade, the Regimental Commander was much surprised to see the senior native officers arrive at his house rigged out in their Number One mufti. 'Now that the business is over, we want,' they said, 'to go up now as *private persons* to have a confab (*mulakát*) with the War Lord (*Jhangi Lat*).'

'You can't do that except properly dressed in uniform at a durbar!' replied the Colonel.

'But we know him privately,' came the astonishing rejoinder, 'know him well and he knows us; he knows all about us; even our families he knows.' The charm had worked. Here was the concrete justification of these hours spent writhing in the saddle whilst the interminable column of route staggered in—here was the prize for having mugged up the names of no end of native officers and N.C.O.s so that he was able to fire off encouragement.

'Bravo Havildar So and So,' or 'Well done Subadar So and So,' until these simple souls felt that their commander was their personal friend—which indeed he was—their *bhaiband*, their brother in arms.

Wolseley and Kitchener hadn't got Roberts' gift of charm and didn't want it. Neither had built his house of fame upon the regimental officers and men although sure enough the regimental officers and men had built it for them. The reputation of these two men had caught on with the rank and file, not the men themselves. Wolseley was too detached; Kitchener was too shy ever to get to close quarters with the troops. Therefore (whatever the feelings of the great B.P. might have been) they never, either of them, gained from those troops that warmth of familiar possessive affection which was enjoyed by both Buller and Roberts. Wolseley was the most impersonal commander I have ever met except possibly Kitchener; and Kitchener was the least personal Commander I have ever met except possibly Wolseley. Kitchener seemed actually forbidding; there was nothing alarming about Wolseley but to show the distance to which he could carry himself away I will give an example, although it involves the resurrection of an old-world 'side-show'. I will tell the story in my next chapter, for, apart from Wolseley, the story is one of the best illustrations of what may be expected to happen when rank, which has been bestowed on ground of administrative, peace services, comes into play to give its possessor the command of troops in perilous times.

I sailed away from Bombay for four months' leave at home on the 22nd

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of October 1884, and after me sailed this wonderful testimonial from Sir Fred to my father which must have reached him only a few weeks before his death in January 1885:

Snowdon, Ootacamand.

28th October 1884

My dear Colonel Hamilton,

Ian sailed from Bombay in the *Malabar* on the 22nd inst. I saw him off from the *Apollo Bundur*, and was, I can assure you, very sorry to part with him. He has been my constant companion for more than 2 years, and like everyone at Snowdon I have a great affection for him. Both socially and officially Ian has been a perfect success, he is a thorough gentleman and a first-rate soldier, he has afforded me every possible assistance, and I look forward with great delight to his being with me again.

We all miss him greatly, and we shall all welcome him back most cordially. Lady Roberts landed in Bombay on the 20th and we started for this on the 22nd, a few hours after Ian sailed. The voyage out was trying, rough and hot, but we all think Lady Roberts looking very well, and she is much pleased with the appearance of our two girls. Ian proposes remaining a week at Cairo in the hope of getting employment in the Sudan, I urged him not to stay longer, and I warned him not to be too sanguine, for I hear that Cairo is full of disappointed men.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

FRED ROBERTS

X

THE NILE EXPEDITION

(1884-1885)

In 1884 I was chosen by the Commander-in-Chief of Madras, Sir Fred Roberts, to be his Assistant Military Secretary. For six months I performed the duties but the Duke of Cambridge turned a deaf ear to all appeals and refused to confirm the appointment. Pronounced too young at thirty-one; too inexperienced after two campaigns, wounds and mentions in dispatches, there seemed to be something to go upon when we all with one accord laid the blame on Redvers Buller, the evil genius of the Wolseley Ring. But, when Fate flings a shovelful of dirt at you, work it well and you may pan out a nugget! Six months' leave to England was given me and 'an indulgence passage' in a troopship to break the shock of my fall back to Aide-de-Camp. Hardly had we cleared Bombay harbour when I found that about one half of the Officers who were to be my fellow passengers had hit on the same bright idea as myself; the idea, namely, that we might wangle ourselves into the Gordon Relief Expedition, then about to start for Khartoum. We arrived at Suez at daybreak in October 1884 and the pilot tug brought out answers to the appeals we had all made before leaving India to our lucky friends or patrons in Egypt. Nothing could have been more inhospitable or forbidding than the response from that special preserve of the Wolseleyites. There was a ban on 'medal hunting'; all and sundry were to be properly appointed from London; if we wanted to relieve Gordon we must do so *via* Pall Mall: anyone attempting to cut in from any benighted country like India would be summarily dealt with; arrested certainly; probably tried by court martial. These ferocious threats were too much for the other would-be adventurers, but my dander had been rized by the loss of the Military Secretaryship. I said to myself, 'I'm a free-born Briton *first*; a British Officer *second*, and nothing but force shall prevent me from getting to Cairo.' So, amidst the head shakings of my comrades I chucked the balance of my 'indulgence passage', a fortune to me in those days, and got into a small row boat and went ashore. Running half a mile with my kit

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over the soft sand I just caught the one and only train of the day from Suez to Cairo and began to move rather too quickly for my courage towards that awful enemy Ring,—Redvers Buller; Evelyn Wood; Herbert Stewart; Maurice Brackenbury; Burnaby. Arriving about 5 p.m. I went to Shephard's Hotel on the veranda of which (you might have knocked me down with a feather) sat a subaltern wearing the Gordon trows. I had not the faintest notion that the newly created 1st Battalion of my Regiment (which I had never seen) was in Egypt. At once I fell on my brother officer's neck who thereupon said, 'You're only in time to see us off; we start up the Nile at 5 a.m. to-morrow.' 'Good Heavens!' I cried, 'Why not me too?' 'Why not,' was his astonishing reply, 'let's go in and put it to the Colonel.' The old Colonel turned out to be a disguised angel. He was several short of his complement and would like to have me with him; but we must get authority so I had better come round with him at once to see the Base Commandant, Colonel Ardagh. The Base Commandant was everything a Base Commandant should be until it transpired that I was actually on the Personal Staff of Sir Fred Roberts. Then his face fell for he was a most kind old boy, and he said, 'I fear I can't take the responsibility; you won't mind if I speak plainly; I fear you might be regarded as an intruder.' I hadn't a leg to stand on: I had no business to be there: I *was* an intruder: I was alone in a hostile camp. But I saw he was good-natured and I simply wouldn't take 'No': I begged and implored him at least to wire up the Nile for permission. 'But,' he said, 'we can only wire to the Chief of the Staff who is Buller and there's no saying what he mightn't do to you. How you have got here Lord knows: you have got here somehow against orders: had you attempted to land in a regular sort of way you would have been stopped: hadn't you better let me give you a railway pass to Port Said where you can pick up your troopship again and go quietly to England?' The thought of the awful humiliation of climbing back amongst all those 'I told you so's stung me to the quick. I appealed to Ardagh again; I entreated him to wire Buller. So we left and after dinner that night a letter was brought in from Colonel Ardagh enclosing a wire from Buller: 'You may attach Hamilton to Gordons.' Then, bursting with joy, I stowed away my Staff kit: got a complete outfit as a private soldier, kilt, hose, and glengarry from the Quartermaster's store and was off to the wars—off to the most thrilling of life's adventures, bar a honeymoon.

We started next morning at dawn but short-lived was my joy for,

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when we got to a place called Korosko next day, an order was received by the Colonel telling him to leave 100 men and an Officer at Wadi Halfa on the wrong or peaceful side of the Sudan frontier. The awful possibility of being left behind had already occurred to me as may be seen from a letter written to my brother as we went up the Nile headed, 'Between Korosko and Halfa' and dated the 24th of November 1884:

Mon doux Ami,

Me voici plongé into the heart of Africa. Du lieber Himmel! What a queer little world it is and how little thought I had this day month that the next new moon would glimmer for me over the great Nubian desert. Here I am in command of a fine ship of some 40 tons burden; of G. Company of the 75th; of a very agreeable subaltern called Miller-Wallnutt, and of my own destiny (within limitations this latter, I must allow). We were to have gone up in little 'whalers' but their oars and masts had somehow got mixed and so we were put aboard this *diabeah* and told to make our quickest to Halfa. I have been acting up to the letter of my instructions and although four Co^{ys} had started before me, by dint of towing, sailing to every puff of wind, exhorting, cursing and praising I have passed the whole Regt. except 'B Co^y' which—oh joy—lies barely a mile before me; lazily, leisurely sailing—too leisurely—for assuredly when the sun sets I shall steal past them with darkened lanterns and all the men lying flat down. I must be first into Halfa—for there is always a dreadful chance—even a probability—that a company may be told off to do garrison duty at Halfa and there is great likelihood that I being the stranger would be pitched upon to do this piece of dirty work. . . .

Ever your loving brother,

IAN HAMILTON.

Sure enough on arrival at Halfa the Colonel called me on one side and explained that while he had been happy to help me so far, he could not forget that his own officers had the prior claim and that now I must therefore be the victim selected to remain with the 100 men at Halfa! I was heart-broken! Here had I given up the whole of my hard-earned Indian leave and only that I might do garrison duty in a dull frontier station, far from the scenes of war and where yet I should be daily goaded to desperation by seeing more fortunate friends hurrying by me and past me to the front. But the Colonel's decision was just. There was no getting away from that. If I had been anyway trapped it had been entirely my

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own doing. Some people find consolation in such a thought. I found the reverse.

At Wadi Halfa the first man I tumbled across was Sir Evelyn Wood. 'Hullo—what are you doing here,' cried he, 'I thought you were surely serving with Roberts in Madras?'

'Alas,' I replied, 'and alas,' and then I told him my sad story. Several hours later my Colonel and his Adjutant went to pay their formal respects to Sir Evelyn, who was living in a *dahabieh* moored to the bank of the stream. I happened to cross his path as he came back to camp, and I could hardly believe my ears when I heard him mutter in a grim, half angry tone something about, 'Young fellow—and born with a silver spoon in your mouth.'

As soon as the old bear was safely inside his tent, I flew round to the Adjutant and learnt from him that it had been arranged between the Colonel and Sir Evelyn that instead of an Officer and 100 men being left at Halfa, the next company for detachment, or about seventy men with its own Company Officer, would suffice. So I was saved to have no end of adventures up the Nile and to take part in the glorious and too little known action of Kirbekan.

The romantic enterprise for the relief of Charles Gordon did not even avenge him. It was treated by G.H.Q. dispatch writers and Press Correspondents as if it was an illegal operation. Twenty millions, a vast sum for those days, was spent in emulating the Duke of York who marched up a hill and then marched down, except that in the more modern version we rowed up the river and then ran down it. My Company took their seats in eleven small row-boats to struggle hundreds of miles up the Nile in order to save Gordon: a vague and typically British adventure—just like a fairy tale. We carried with us food for 110 days; white lead, tacks, sheet iron and tow were stowed for repairs; 200 rounds per rifle were in reserve. Our feelings were as nearly as possible those of a party of Boy Scouts dressed up like Red Indians and let loose in a flotilla of canoes. Each boat of eight rowers, a poleman and a coxswain was—and had to be—a self-supporting, independent unit. At the best, the company got together about once in ten days, when the negotiation of a cataract called for combined effort on the drag ropes or for portage of stores. If a boat failed to put in an appearance at the rendezvous, the captain had to unload his own boat, and thus lightened row back down the river to find the lame duck and help it along. The tale has the ring of glorious adventure, and so it was, only, at

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the time, it was incessant toil much of it waist-deep in water; bad food, broken nights, the lack of any drink but sand and water; the resultant scurvy; all these wore health and nerves to fiddle-strings. Never in their whole lives had the men worked so hard. The mere thought of such a job would make a modern Labour Union call a strike! Yet, there was no crime, no stinting of effort, no grumbling; no, not even if after spending two days struggling inch by inch painfully up a cataract boats had to be sent flying down again to the rescue of wrecked companions.

The whole campaign would have been a fiasco had it not been for the River Column side-show and the venturesome little battle yclept Kirbikan. Our River Column was made up of four battalions of British Infantry plus a handful of Egyptian Auxiliaries; Cavalry and Camelry with pop guns. For the Desert Column was to be 'the go', as they called it then: into *that* the cream of the British Army had been poured with no niggardly hand. Far from the nursemaids of Hyde Park, mounted now upon magnificent, groaning camels, the Household Cavalry and the Guards performed the most wonderful evolutions. Associated with these tremendous fellows were a detachment of the Royal Navy, the K.R.R. (Buller's Corps), the Royal Irish Regiment (it being tacitly accepted by every British Commander that he had got to boom the Irish). In another work I have revealed how this band of patricians 'snaffled', 'cribbed', or 'nicked' the toothsome jam, cheese and boiled Australian mutton we poor plebeians had carried on our heads across portages and up rapids in our boats; boats now refilled with the weary old 'jungle' stuff from Chicago and the weevil-infested old ships' biscuits from the ark. That was, literally as well as metaphorically, a scurvy trick and my bleeding gums and loosened teeth taught me once for all the advantages of belonging to the aristocracy. However—let it pass: my weevils and my scurvies are only exhibited here so that they may shed a tiny new ray upon the tombstone of Wolseley. He was in advance of his time. Dissect this stunt of his you will diagnose the incipient boost-or-bust disease very easily. Plain blunt Buller had stuck in his own K.R.R. in a plain, blunt way. But there was no other soldier in power then (with the possible exception of Sir William Butler) who could have hit on an advertisement which would tickle to death the nursemaids and the House of Lords at one and the same time. Wolseley was a genius! The Desert Column was a brain cell freak of his. No one but Wolseley, in the days of railways, as leading soldier of the greatest industrial nation of the nineteenth century, could by his creating

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fancy have persuaded bovine Hartingtons and serious Gladstones to re-embark upon the methods of the ninth century. Had he stuck to his boats, those river men, the other poor common soldiers, the outsiders, would have saved him: they would have enabled him to rescue Charles Gordon (which he was by no means mad keen about) and to wipe the floor with Roberts's march to Kandahar (on which he was absolutely set). But the pressure of the Ring; the urge to do something for his pals; the picturesque-ness of the idea of putting London Society on camels and marching them over a desert; these were too much for him; and yet, even at the eleventh hour, the River Column would have seen him through had he only, at the critical moment, given them a Commander. They wanted a Commander; they were given an Administrator.

So we left our lucky comrades preparing to cross the desert *via* Abu Klea and we tackled those five last desperate cataracts where they had raged through black precipitous rocks unseen by eye of civilized man since the days of Antony and Cleopatra. There we faced hell: toiling like galley slaves in a sea fight, gaining sometimes a hundred yards in a day until at last we earned the chance of Paradise. For there across our front lay the Dervish host: there they lay entrenched up to their chins along the heights running at right angles to the river. They were based on Berber and Africa; we on the thousand-mile thread of water which still linked us with the sea.

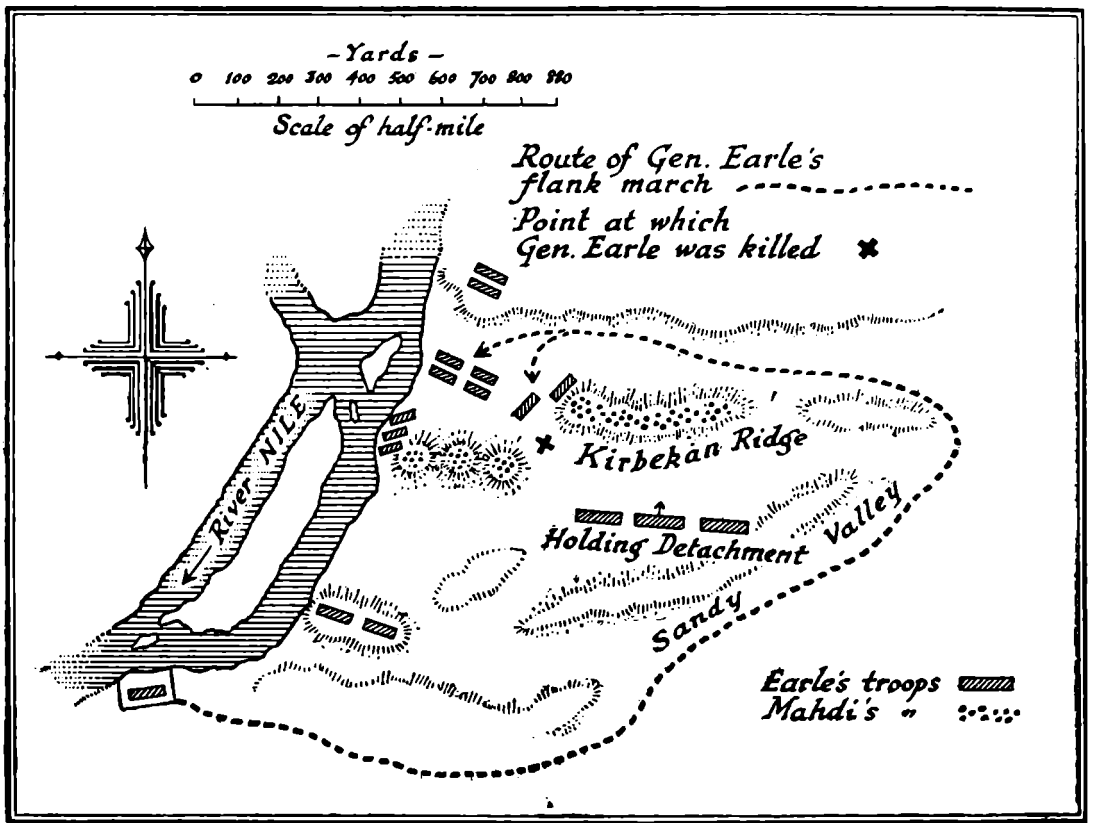
Then—in these fantastic surroundings—took place a gem amongst battles. Devoted to selfish ends the efforts we had made to get there would have made us all comfortably well off. Actually, in hard cash, it had taken some millions to bring us to this extraordinary desolate spot where jagged rocks of jet stuck up out of yellow sand; a spot more like a moonscape than anything on earth. Opposite us lay the Dervishes who had themselves sold all their worldly goods and followed the throbbing of their drums for hundreds of miles to come to this same entirely god-forsaken rendezvous. Nothing, it might have been imagined, but the most wonderful love could have drawn these two hosts together.

The wine had been drawn, it must be drunk. Our road was entirely barred. The ugly black knobs and pinnacles which ran out from our bank of the Nile sparkled here and there as a sunbeam struck upon a spearhead. That old martinet General Earle had to make up his mind. Half his life had been spent trying to inculcate and enforce incredible standards of military punctilio; dress, deportment, drill. Now he was up against a live

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thing, the Mohammedan faith and he rose to his chance; he was inspired to act like Frederick the Great at Kolin—only a bolder stroke here and more reckless, for where both sides fight with their backs to their own bases one side fights to the death. Nothing can save it.

The pop guns and the detachment of Egyptians with D. Company of the Gordons (the only one in the battle) advanced up along the river, parallel to it, opened fire and pinned the Dervishes to their entrenchments; the rest of the force marched clean round the enemy in broad shining sunlight; wheeled; came down along the river and attacked them from their rear; thus:—



None of your Abu Klea or Metemmeh squares. We would have been shot to bits by their riflemen had we tried sheep tactics against shock tactics. In open attack formation our men went for them; destroyed their grand counter-charge of spearmen by fire and then stormed the heights *from the rear!* No one escaped. A few dozen desperate fugitives leaped into the raging Nile but it is doubtful if any got across. In the morning the Dervish leader held us, so he thought, in the hollow of his hand: when the sun was low he was dead; his warriors were dead; their bodies formed an outline like a huge sprawling snake marking the line of

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the spearmen's onset; or else they lay bayoneted in their rifle pits. So we won our way through with a vengeance and not one single shot was fired at us from that day forth. But we lost our gallant Commander! There was a gap in the hills which we had stormed in open attack formation; in this gap there was a small hut and it was still held by about half a dozen of the Dervishes—desperate men determined to die. General Earle, always too impetuous in his actions, ran up to the hut and looked in through the window, when he was instantly shot through the head—the last shot fired on the field. Then came my melancholy duty of burying him. In the middle of the field on to which we had landed stood a dôm palm tree. Under the roots he was laid 'with his martial cloak around him'. Then a company was marched round and round until the surface of the ground for about twenty yards was thoroughly ploughed up so as to save the grave from desecration—and there D.V. his remains still lie. No one remembers the battle; hardly anyone ever knew about it. Why? Because the River Column was the poor relation, the side-show to the Desert Column. Again why? Because G.H.Q. had made it so.

Earle was a bold man who had kept himself in touch with the rank and file and was out for fighting. He was succeeded automatically by the next senior, Henry Brackenbury, the purest example then going of a type since become more common; the bureaucratic, scholastic soldier. Without any exception—not excepting Buller or Chesney—Brackenbury was the most competent administrator in our Army. As an organizer also he was far ahead of his time for he was an ardent advocate of the General Staff at a date when no one else at the War Office knew exactly what a General Staff was: he had been an instructor at the Royal Military Academy and was destined to become the greatest Military Member of Council of the nineteenth century and to become famous also as Master-General of the Ordnance during the South African War when, as in the Great War, the munitions question broke records and raised difficulties unimagined until then. When on one occasion a battery fired five hundred rounds in one day (unprecedented at that date) Brackenbury tackled those demands and met them more than half-way. In sheer brain power he was chronologically one thousand years in advance of his predecessor, Earle. He knew millions of things Earle did not know as well as the relations of the things to one another; and he realized their relation to other things. On the other hand, he hated cataracts, night alarms and live soldiers. On paper he appreciated them well; that is to say he wrote what

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military instructors barbarously call 'appreciations' about them, but Brackenbury, the real Brackenbury, hated them in practice. He had never worked with soldiers; never kept in touch with them; always tried to keep out of cannon-shot range of them. I know this for I was closely associated with him for years and took him down the cataracts in my whaler boat.

I hope I have given a true picture of a tiny corner of these two men's ways of taking notice. If I have gone wrong it is through dullness, for I knew them both well. I was Captain of the Guard (permanently) to General Earle; I had to follow him when at any odd moment of the day or night he would rush about seeking for irregularities; I liked him very much and wept when I and my men of D. Company buried him under the dôm palm by the Nile.

IN MEMORIAM—KIRBEKAN

*No rose blooms there, no laurel:—no wild heather
Or dark-leaved ivy drop their silvery dews
For thee:—no homely song-bird preens his feather
O'er thy still heart, and the black mournful yews
Cast shadows where the soft-eyed English weather
Sheds tears—but not for thee—on sacred ground.*

*An alien soil lies dense upon thy glory;
That palm which held thy victory in its ken
Has wound its starved roots round thy features gory
Months since. But thou, beloved of all thy men
Shrined in their warm hearts needst no pompous story
Engraved on stone;—so fare thee well, sleep sound!*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

My firm belief has always been that in losing old Earle, Wolseley lost the war. I believe Earle's death was a worse facer to Wolseley—as it turned out—than the loss of his brilliant favourite, Herbert Stewart. I believe so because I do *not* believe that heterogeneous crowd of samples from crack Regiments which formed the Desert Corps was a military instrument. Their wretched square tactics were the refuge of seamen and horsemen who believed in shock, who had never been trained to fight each man for himself on foot. The scheme was semi-social, semi-political.

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Charles Gordon was doomed when Wolseley hatched out that Desert Column. But the River Column though weak was homogeneous. Four Battalions of 'Contemptibles'! There was nothing in the Sudan which could prevent them getting to Berber, thence with reinforcements to fight an earlier Omdurman; to save millions of lives; to save Gladstone's soul; to save Wolseley's prestige from the knock from which it never recovered; to save heaven knows how many millions of money. There was nothing to prevent this but the crack up of the will of one man who might have said 'Advance' and did say 'Retire'; just the same as in the case of the Dardanelles exactly thirty years later. In neither case was there anything wrong with the troops; in both cases we had a retiring Commander.

After Kirbegan we went on till we reached the head of the Cataract thirteen miles short of Abu Hamid. For weeks we had only seen broken water and now at last the river came gliding to us smoothly from the West. In two or three days' time we looked to have Abu Hamid in our hands and to get filled up with fresh supplies the Joalin Arabs were bringing us across the caravan route from Wadi Halfa. I don't think that ever in my life I had felt so uplifted, so confident, as I did when the sunlight turned the drops of water on our uplifted oar blades into diamonds. For old Earle had taught us man-of-war fashion to 'up oars' and come down all together and give way when the bugle sounded the 'Advance'. Out rang the notes but what was *this*? Good Lord, it was the 'Halt!'

In half an hour we got our new orders. We were to go about turn and hook it; putting the desert as fast as we could between ourselves and the warriors we had come so far to fight. A letter had come in by runner from Wolseley telling Brackenbury that Stewart was dead and Buller was retiring with the Desert Column from before Metemmeh. Wolseley advised us to come back but left an option. There was no more hesitation or consultation than there was under similar conditions at the Dardanelles. As each boat completed its tale of twenty wooden plugs to stop bullet holes it was to 'up oars' again and await the bugle. Just time there was for a buzz of excited comment. A few were furious. One officer afterwards well-known was restrained by main force from going up to remonstrate too forcibly. But, on the whole, the terrible tension of months was relaxed; a sense of relief made itself felt; no more zariba building; no more standing to our arms before dawn; no more bully beef; no more desperate battles. Heroics were puffed out by one breath from the mouth of the

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new Commander. The softer side of human nature reasserted itself—for the time being—exactly as in the case of the Dardanelles.

At last all the oars stood upright; Brackenbury took his seat in my boat; I took the helm; the bugle rang out with the 'Retire!'

We turned on our tracks and flew back on the plumeless, foam-flecked wings of the cataract which had so furiously fought against our advance. Not a shot was fired at us on the way down and as we neared Korti we were told to see to it that everything was ship-shape as Lord Wolseley would be sure to come a mile or two up the river to welcome the victors of Kirbekan. After all, we had not formed a square and beaten off the Dervish attack: we had gone for them in the open, in open order, and had wiped them out. Wolseley didn't come to meet us. We went into camp within two hundred yards of his tent; we never saw him. I have a vague recollection of two of our battalions being inspected but certainly neither I nor my men ever set eyes on him although we stayed there a fortnight before we were sent off to Karot.

Wolseley was not built to catch the eye of the crowd and clearly he didn't try much to do so. He could never have bequeathed to posterity a legend, though I do think it is odd that so original a mind has passed away leaving so little of remembrance behind it. When he was in his prime he filled the newspapers; now his name is never mentioned. Perhaps he may yet come into something of his own and in his day the glamour which hung about the victor of Tel-el-Khebir and the fame of the creator of short service was enough: it caught the imagination of the Army and made it keen to serve under his orders. But there it ended; after the campaign was over so was the personal enthusiasm. Napoleon fascinated the imagination of a great nation by his exploits and could at the same time pinch officers' ears or mount guard over sentries whilst they slept. He was an artist, not only in the technique of war, not only in choosing lovely names like Austerlitz for his battles, but he was also an artist in hearts. By showing the human side of himself he touched the human beings about him. Try to imagine Wolseley or Kitchener pinching people's ears or taking rifles from sleeping sentries. The idea oversteps the limit! Yet they were famous and men are always keen to see war under a famous Commander. Kitchener's presence was priceless as a trade-mark and Wolseley could make another sort of appeal by his own writings or speeches. Roberts could not be seen in the flesh towering over the crowd. He did not catch the eye upon a poster. He wrote, but his writing was rather dull.

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The affectionate familiarity of 'Bobs' was more human than 'K.' and Wolseley, as might be expected, was always given his full eight letters. Still, on the whole, Roberts was not so well equipped as were either Wolseley or Kitchener to create a public impression. What he had to fall back upon was not impressions or imaginings but the actual human contact, very industriously made, between himself and tens of thousands of others. It took him a lifetime to touch everyone but by the end he had pretty well brought it off. All was then achieved for he was much more human; much more comprehensible; much more lovable than the other two. Buller was his only rival in that respect and Buller, in that respect, never troubled. Lord Bobs was the apotheosis of common sense; he had a genius for it. He had nothing of the artist in him beyond the striving after perfection in his own business which, after all, distinguishes every good artist always. Whatever his hand found to do he went for it with a pick-axe—he burrowed into it with a will so concentrated, so fervent that he had no time to notice those strange ideas which were floating down, every now and then, like manna out of space. Except for his deep-rooted religious beliefs, he did not speculate in transcendentals. Wolseley was less obsessed with daily work and also less wise. If he never opened his mouth without putting his foot into it, in revenge he would conduct now and then a reconnaissance into the infinity. As an ice-cutter Lord Roberts was very much the keener blade but when, in 1918, forces and spaces became too immense for a commander of the Roberts stamp or indeed for any single personality to touch everyone everywhere, and when, on the other hand, the *impersonal* system of an all-pervading General Staff doctrine had only made action so mediocre all round that it became equivalent to *in-action*, why then, at the last, there was a place waiting for a Marshal not so much of men as of ideas.

I doubt if Roberts was detached enough. He could not, like John Sargent, tear himself away from the canvas, gazing at it from the far end of the room as if it didn't belong to him. Kitchener simply did not know enough about the works of his machine. He did not in any way grasp what it could stand and what it could not stand. His plan was to take the advice of experts as to the amount of time and money which would be required to carry out a particular job, then to call upon the Army to do it in half the time for half the money—and they'd rise to it. But the war-worn armies of 1917-18 would never have stood that racket.

During the last twenty years of the nineteenth century Wolseley used

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to be spoken of as 'our only General', meaning our only Commander in the field. After the failure of the Gordon Relief Expedition the greatness of the March to Kandahar began to tell with the public and the beauty of the title too made its way into their minds; so much so that Wolseley's exclusive title was sometimes qualified by allusions to Roberts as 'our only other General'. Actually, the soubriquets expressed exactly an inversion of the facts. The two men held their lead easily enough from Kitchener even after his Battle of Omdurman. I remember very well a lovely Sunday forenoon on Salisbury Plain where our guns fired their salute to that famous victory. I remember a luncheon party at a country house where all the Generals met and Buller with a very red face gobbled up all sorts of good things. I remember making the imprudent observation that the rising of this new star in the East had eclipsed that red-faced Martian. I remember that it was I who found myself eclipsed and excommunicated and generally extinguished because I had X-rayed a commander and found him too full of good things. This reminiscence will show the relative positions in 1898 of Buller and Kitchener. There is no doubt—no doubt at all—that Wolseley and Roberts divided the honours during the last twenty years of the last century and that they towered above Kitchener, Napier of Magdala, Buller, White, Brackenbury, Evelyn Wood, Lockhart, Baker Russell, Donald Stewart, Graham, Herbert Stewart, Pomeroy Colley and other good soldiers who had held independent commands. But, my point is this:—*of the two*, Roberts was 'our only General' and Wolseley 'our only other General'—speaking always, be it well noted, in reference to war conditions as they existed in the nineteenth century.

Certain it is that Roberts would have saved Charles Gordon. The boats would not have seemed picturesque survivals to the sensible little man; they would have seemed—and did seem—old-fashioned. Why travel by slow coach when you can go by express? As for the social make-up of the Desert Column, he always considered that unsoldier-like. Last not least; wherever the main clash was to come Roberts would have been there, in personal command.

Fifteen years after the conclusion of the South African War, when an 'only General' was wanted to handle nations in arms, another situation had arisen which could only be tackled in one of two ways:—

(1) By a Chief of the Imperial General Staff with the Cabinet at his back and having his hand on the reins of every Commander-in-Chief.

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(2) By an Imperial Commander-in-Chief; a Generalissimo handling ideas rather than the direct food for powder: a man of the *genus* but not of the *species* of the Commanders of the Victorian period.

If I succeed in making these thoughts of mine clear it must be by making the said Victorians clear and by showing how when the Great War came along the Allied Generalissimo Foch differed from them. Perhaps it may then be found that Wolseley was the only one of them who—with proper training—could have played the role of Foch.

XI

MARRIAGE

(1886-1887)

When I was a small boy I said my prayers twice a day—in the library before breakfast when everyone in the house, including guests and servants, trooped in and my Granpapa read a verse or two of the Bible and then, everyone kneeling, said a prayer. My evening prayers, said in my nightgown, were of my own making as Henriette, into whose lap I poured them, didn't listen. They began with Our Father and went on to beg that blessings might be bestowed upon a certain list of elderly relatives winding up with the magical word Amen! sometimes repeated three times. Lastly, without moving my lips I said quite privately to my Father in Heaven that I hoped he would find me 'a good wife'. From what childish observations this wish sprang Heaven knows; but, from the age of five up to the age of nine, these private prayers went on and must have got across, for I did get Jean and only then was it borne in upon me that I had quite forgotten to pray that I might be worthy of her. For Jean was far too good for me.

My wandering career has brought me into contact with more beautiful women perhaps—women as gracious and anxious to see those about them happy—but in no other woman have I felt at the core of her mantle of social grace so wise and helpful a counsellor, so splendid a courage and power of getting right down to the heart of the troubles of her friends. At Simla in 1886 Jean was known to me by sight and indeed the fame of her beauty had spread far and wide; for had not the occupants of the Enclosure on the day of the Viceroy's Cup mounted perilously upon their chairs to stare at her? The late Lady Wenlock, who was the Viceroy's guest at the time, used often to tell the story: 'What on earth is that disturbance, Your Excellency?' she asked Lord Ripon. 'Is it an accident or a fight?' 'Neither,' His Excellency replied; 'I should surmise it was Miss Muir passing along!' But Jean, 'the loveliest woman who ever came east of Suez,' was known to me only by sight and there our acquaintance ought, by every social standard, to have stopped, for (1) she was engaged

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to an Austrian Prince, one of the Esterhazys; (2) her own father was flattered at the prospect of such an alliance and had given his approval; (3) Sir Fred Roberts had determined I should not marry anyone—Lady Roberts being even more determined.¹ But my very first flesh and blood contact sent all these admonitions to Jingo de Cutch (to use Sir Fred Roberts's favourite oath).

The immortal hour struck during a cotillon at a Viceregal Lodge Ball, whereat, in one of the figures, the men had to jump through paper hoops and choose their ladies out of the group who stood at the far end of the room. My hoop was of pink paper and suddenly something quite unpremeditated—my good genius it must have been—spurred me on to take a real flying leap and catch Jean. The band was playing a Mazurka, I shot through the hoop like an arrow and the next second Jean and I were gallivanting in the Mazurka. Being the first couple to pass the Viceregal platform we were given a round of applause and our destiny was writ upon the stars.

A.D.C.s to the Viceroy or C.-in-C. used to top Simla society, meaning that the lady who turned up at a social function attended by one of these butterflies found herself at once in the fashion. But she had to pay the piper and face the awkward fact that an A.D.C. could not make plans—in the modern idiom he could not 'make a date'. He was not up at Simla on leave like other civilians and soldiers whose time was their own. So when Jean, whose Prince was visiting some Rajah for a day or two, said that she would like very much to ride out next day to Mashobra, a charming hill village a dozen miles off, and I said I would love to escort her, I was running some risk for my frisk. Sure enough, my risk came to roost in an order quite explicit in its terms to ride round Jacko with the Chief and Lady Roberts that very same afternoon. Engrained in my temperament is a streak of the desperado—urging me to run myself into danger for a smile or any other fantasy. So in reply I begged to be excused; I had found it necessary to carry out an important piece of business, I said, and Charlie Hume would take my place. In due course we started but, as the Devil himself must have arranged, at a place called the Lakker Bazaar,

¹Once when they had imagined I was in danger of falling seriously in love I was ordered at a moment's notice to take charge of Lady Roberts and her luggage and convey them to Ooty. All that happened was that Lady Roberts took charge of me, the luggage got lost and I arrived at Ooty wrapped up in her fur cloak.

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we were caught, just before being able to turn off the road, by the whole Roberts cavalcade. Two *sowars*, next Lady Bobs, next the Chief. I took off my hat. They cut us dead. That was a bad moment. Innocent Jean fortunately noticed nothing peculiar and would have been astonished indeed had she realized she was representing an important piece of business. At Mashobra *dâk* Bungalow we had tea. They served it in large blue and white china cups. I said, 'When we are married we'll have better cups than these.' She gave me a very curious look—startled but not angry.

On the hill above Mashobra grew quantities of small lavender-coloured asters. As we rode home she said she would have liked to pick a bouquet from them. Next day saw me up at cock-crow galloping back to Mashobra. In less than no time a pretty bouquet had been gathered and when Jean came down to breakfast her *ayah*, by name Belassoo, presented her with the flowers. Jean, as I should have begun by explaining, was staying with her sister Mrs. Harry Moncreiffe whose husband (brother to Lady Dudley and the other famous beauties of that ilk) was away on a shooting expedition. My star was in the ascendant as I gained the sympathy of Mrs. Moncreiffe; and during the next fortnight got myself engaged to Jean and letters were written home breaking the news to her family. But Simla gossips were getting busy. An officer called Dalbiac, nicknamed 'The Treasure', put it about that he had seen Esterhazy climbing out of Jean's window at midnight. Actually Prince Louis had not come back and no one ever took 'The Treasure' seriously. Still, scandal was afoot and Sir Fred Roberts was a man of action. He was preparing a camp in the plains at Dehra Dun from which he meant to start for his winter tour of inspection and he ordered me off there at one hour's notice to take charge pending his arrival, adding that he would come down himself to the *tonga* office to discuss details five minutes before starting, thus leaving no loophole for tender partings. Simla gossips were on the watch however; ribald jesters composed a song on the theme beginning, 'Johnnie has gone to Dehra Dun,' and certainly there was no question of leave for there was work galore getting things ship-shape. Only when I had got through this could I find time for my daily letter to Jean, letters which, carefully kept, have tragically come back to their writer now after all these years. And we never went on our winter tour after all—Sir Fred being suddenly ordered to take over Chief Command of the Burma Campaign owing to the sudden death of General Macpherson in Burma.

The course of true love was not running too smoothly but Jean gave

Inches

Dear Major Hamilton
Alas no! I
have promised to ride
with the Premier this
afternoon. But 'some
day' perhaps you will
see me again
Yours sincerely
Linnie Bruce
Thursday
You bet!
L.H.
1871.

JEAN'S FIRST LETTER

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me a first taste of a determination she had come to, never to say, do, or write anything to conflict with my military service; so she went back to Calcutta with Mrs. Moncreiffe where she definitely disentangled herself from Prince Louis, who simply could not believe he was being ousted by a mere Major of Foot; nor did he ever quite tumble to it. He had given her a present of a pretty little brooch set in diamonds and when Mrs. Moncreiffe said to him her sister must return that, he grew angry saying, 'It is not as if I was an ordinary man—I am not a cowherd!' Looking back on it all now I cannot but feel some sympathy for Prince Louis.

As for Sir Fred Roberts and his Staff, we took ship and saw the flying fishes play and dawn come up like thunder as we sailed for Mandalay. Before sailing I had written Jean this breathless little note of farewell:

Treasury Gate (Calcutta)
3rd November '86

This must be written in scraps as I have a day of frantic hustle before me and we embark and sail to-morrow at 8 a.m. Not long to get one's fighting kit together when one has a heap to do for H.E. . . . I am sorrowful at the thought of this separation. It is a hard world. I never thought seriously that we could have been married now, in this little space of four days, but Harry¹ seems to have done so—and even to write the word almost brings the tears from my heart into my eyes.

When Destiny shot me, like a stone from a catapult, out of India right into the heart of Burma a touch of the fantastic was given to my career from which I have never quite recovered; never again could I regain my calm confidence in the reality of strings of words or strings of pearls or anything else. I felt that anything might happen—anytime—anywhere.

Since King Thibaw had come to the throne in 1878, things had been going from bad to worse out there. Not only did he slaughter his relations in Palace massacres on an unprecedented scale, but the whole country was seething with unrest. British officers were insulted and the Resident had been withdrawn in protest. Matters came to a head when the king picked a quarrel with a British trading company, imposed a huge fine and refused arbitration. Then indeed the fat was in the fire for the next thing was a British ultimatum, closely followed by a force under General

¹ Harry Moncreiffe—Jean's brother-in-law.

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Prendergast who occupied Mandalay and removed King Thibaw from the scene of his family holocausts.

*Thibaw, the Burma king
Did a very foolish thing,
When he set his hostile forces in array;
For he little thought that we,
From far across the sea,
Could send our armies up to Mandalay.*

When Sir Fred arrived, the country, although it had been formally annexed nine months earlier, was still unpacified; dacoity, indigenous to Burma, was rife; disaffection was spreading from Upper Burma, where communications were poor, to Lower Burma, and there was great disorder everywhere. He at once set to work sending out columns all over the country to round up the robber bands and restore order. Sir Fred was the last man in the world to mix himself up with anything mysterious or inexplicable; but this visit to Burma, or rather say reconnaissance of Burma, has been the exception which proves the rule. There is no exact account of his movements in his *Forty-one Years in India* and now there never will be. As for his Staff we were forbidden to date or head any of our letters with place-names. The worst of it is that, having been gone so long, the features—spelling of names, etc.—may not be up to date. Speaking broadly we went from Calcutta to Rangoon and thence, through the Shān States northwards to Bhamo towards the Yunnān. From Khanyut, on the river to Sagadrung (forty-two miles) we rode through thick bamboo jungle, so thick that the pathway lay in deepest shade. To be galloping on and on and on through endless arcades of thick foliage gave me a queer sensation as if I was playing a part in a fairy tale, and so, in truth, I was for I was making for the biggest conglomeration of rubies in the world.

At Sagadrung we slept and next morning we continued our ride up the mountains along a narrow goat track for twenty-eight miles to Majionh¹, the Ruby Mine capital. About eighteen miles farther on we struck a plateau of several miles square at an altitude of 6,200 feet with a ring of mountains of some 8,000 feet high encircling it. A bitter cold wind was blowing and the whole landscape so resembled an English autumn scene that I felt a keen thrill of homesickness pass through my heart. There

¹ The modern name for this is Mogok.

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were long stretches covered with dead, golden-coloured bracken and oak trees, leafless, with their branches whistling to the breeze, not to speak of a jolly little trout stream. Leaving the plateau we crossed a pass 6,700 ft. in altitude and began a steep descent through virgin forest. Huge trees knitted together by every description of creeper and parasite, their trunks starred rainbow colours with orchid blossoms: a riot of jungle growth showing what nature would do with the monsoon-swept tropics if left alone for one generation. One morning Polly Carew took the lead on his pony, drew his sword and slashed at the big plantain palms on either hand. Though they towered above us their trunks were soft as butter and they fell to right hand and to left in the most amusing style. Next day there was a sad change—the monsoon had broken earlier than expected! Mist and pelting rain. At last the ruby mines! A pretty flourishing little cluster of villages and below them—in the middle of the paddy fields—the mines. Our party made helter-skelter for shelter from the rain coming down, as the Japanese say, 'like spears and arrows'. Never, I may say, did I see such rain or such an unenterprising set of devils as the whole lot of our fellows, whether the Gurkha escort, the native officers or our own British officers—all these (potential) rubies within three hundred yards of them and they never stirred out one yard to try their luck during the whole two and a half days of our stay!

As for me I was in ecstasy. For one thing I was in love and even birds or insects refuse to worry about the weather when they are in love. Can anyone conceive a man failing to keep a rendezvous with his best girl because he had forgotten his umbrella? Shades of Lord Ullin's daughter and young Lochinvar.

Now was my chance to scoop out some rubies for my Jean to wear on her wedding day. So I kicked off my riding boots; got out a big pair of fishing boots; seized a spade and was off. They thought me a lunatic; I thought them idiots. And here let me interpose a few words on digging either for nuggets of gold or gems. The recognized excitements of life, Poker—Roulette—Racing—are as dull as ditch-water in comparison. Any stroke of the spade may turn you up trumps indeed—a Koh-i-Noor; a flawless emerald or best of all a pigeon-blood ruby.

Some half-dozen claims had been started but judging by the amount of dirt chucked out they had been going some time. One cutting seemed to have only been worked a day or two. First came two feet of clay; next three and a half inches of gravel; then eighteen inches of clay and a

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narrow band of two inches of gravel. They had not dug any lower and this was the bottom of the cutting. But why had the cutting not filled with water which was falling from the sky faster than ever since Noah? Then I found there was an underground pipe to carry it away—all very perfect and well thought out. These fellows would never have run away had it not been for the rifles of the Gurkhas! The ruby mines were in the hands of Chinese merchants in Rangoon who ran them with gangs of Shâns. These Shâns were formidable fellows and were armed with *dahs*, daggers and pistols much as the frontier tribes on the Western mountain boundaries of India. When formed into gangs they were called *Gulahs* and would stick at nothing when holding off or pursuing intruders. On this occasion they must have got the tip from their Bosses that really big *lat Sahibs* with an escort were on the move and that they had better clear up the field and make themselves scarce. Everything, therefore, had been smashed—including the pipe bringing water to work the cradle in which they washed their diggings. I felt very angry for, after all, we were not enemies—though I dare say that the man who has struck a lode or vein of rubies regards the whole world much as a dog with a bone does, who would bite even Mother Hubbard if she tried to take it from him. Anyway, the best revenge I could take would be to get a good fat ruby out of their mine and give it to Jean. So I set to work. As soon as I had scraped out a handful of gravel, it had to be washed. For this purpose I used my handkerchief, waggling it to and fro in a puddle of water. Out of every washing there would perhaps be a dozen coloured stones which *might* be gems of sorts. When it became too dark to see I went up to the house on the hillock to get some supper. Neville Chamberlain was reminding me only yesterday of how they laughed at me. At the end I had got some spinels, topaz and bad sapphires but no true ruby and the whole lot were not worth a fiver. Still, even that was not too bad and, remember, I *might* have found one worth £1,000 and I *did* have my excitement and my memories!

From the moment we landed our Chief had been up to his neck organizing commandos of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry to scour the country which was seething with guerrilla bands of land dacoits, river dacoits, and mutineers, each of which had to be hunted down and rounded up, for since the deposition of King Thibaw the country had become even more disordered than formerly. Sir Fred himself would not enter Mandalay; the place was taboo to him or perhaps Lady Roberts had tabooed it; but,

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anyway, he was afraid lest some of the troops or camp followers might get into the defenceless palace and destroy it. So, as he had no particular use for his personal Staff he sent Pole Carew, Neville Chamberlain and myself into the precincts of the Fort to eat, sleep and work; to make lists of any treasure we came across and see that no mischief was done. How we were to hold the Fort was our affair for the Fort was, in fact, not a fort at all but a piece of land enclosed by a moat seventy-five feet wide, containing amongst other things Thibaw's Golden Palace. Ours not to reason why, ours but to do or die, the one point upon which we were heartily agreed being not to die. So I put my little camp bed by the waterside and made myself as comfortable as might be.

The area enclosed by the moat is about the size of Hyde Park. To realize what these buildings in Mandalay, the axle of the Buddhist world, were like in 1886 before clubs and shops had invaded the Fort, the reader should construct for himself a house of cards rising to seven tiers, flanked by numerous lesser buildings and pavilions painted scarlet and gold. But each storey must be appreciably smaller than the last, and each storey should be hung with bells and crowned with a golden spire. The pagodas had no rooms; they were shrines, but the Fort with its rose-coloured walls had many rooms approached by courtyards and richly carved teak doorways and we took our choice. We did not encounter a soul but there were queer sounds—creakings and rustlings—reminding us that we were not alone—that we were being watched; that the most frightful of massacres had taken place not so very long before and that others were only suspended by our presence. The murder of the Princes in the Tower of London has hitherto held the record in the annals of atrocity but here Queen Supyalat had caused dozens of young Princes of the blood royal to be brutally slaughtered and then trampled into the ground by elephants!

As to our work, the simplest thing would seem to have been that the senior should have taken command—but it was not as simple as that. To begin with myself, my status was that of Persian Interpreter! A Persian Interpreter drawing pay as such in Burma must seem rather an anomaly—an absurdity indeed. And so it was, but in my official record of war service there it still stands. The Bengal Regulations in India were framed on quite another system from the regulations in Great Britain; the former endeavour to cover every possible occurrence. But once you have hooked yourself on to one particular authorization you have only to quote it and the examiner lets it pass. During my campaigns on the Indian Western

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Frontier I had picked up a smattering of Persian and with friends in the Military Department at Simla had been graded as Persian Interpreter: once that was done I could go to the Esquimaux or Fiji Islanders still drawing pay as Persian Interpreter. Pole Carew was Assistant Military Secretary and Neville Chamberlain was A.D.C.

The first thing we had to do was to agree upon the allotment of work. Sir Fred Roberts had wished Neville Chamberlain to be in charge of what might be called the jewellery department, and Pole Carew did not wish to do anything at all, which simplified matters. I was to keep a record of the proceedings. Neville at once got hold of a bureau of drawers, which in turn were full of jewellery of sorts, nothing of any great value like a flawless pigeon-blood ruby but quantities of spinels and strings of second-rate stones or rough bits of gold for necklaces. Pole Carew, who was hovering around, wished to rummage in the bureau—he wanted a keepsake he said—but Neville was adamant and warned him off. However the whole place was plastered with gold. The idols, the chairs and tables, everything. Not a thin coating of gold leaf but what might be called gold foil—pure beaten gold. So it was with agony of mind that Neville, out of the corner of his eye, watched Polly C. pulling strips off the screens or decorations and putting them in his pocket.

I am writing as if I were a plaster saint whereas alas! under temptation I had become a barbarian; the temptation had only to be my sort of temptation. In this case the devil had baited his lure rather artfully. Six miles away in the forest was an image of Buddha—seated in the traditional attitude. To go there by night was dangerous, Dacoits and tigers were apt to be lively at that hour. I like running into danger, though I admit I am apt as often as not to like running out of it faster sometimes than I had run in. Anyway, taking an escort of the 5th Gurkhas with me we set forth. A clammy mist obscured the sky and having a compass with a luminous dial I led the procession. At first there was a pathway hedged in by dense undergrowth on either hand but soon we were off it and found ourselves splashing through swamps as likely as not to hold man-eating crocodiles; then into the sheer tropical jungle through which there would be every now and then a stampede with a rush and crash—then silence. What next? A nerve-racking adventure and I prayed I might be well guided. The Gurkhas, however, were quite in their element and with their sharp *kukris* at the ready and eyes too as sharp as needles gave me a much-needed confidence. If you can't feel brave there is no reason why

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you should not act bravely. Suddenly, we came upon a small stream and on the other side of it was an open space as it might be of an old camping ground: and then I guessed where we had got to—namely, within one mile of the shrine. Heaven be praised—I knew there was a decent road from here leading down to where my Buddha had sat for centuries awaiting me. He has sat in the entrance hall of my house ever since, and experts at the British Museum have testified to the extreme antiquity of the statue. They wanted to saw open the pedestal but to that I would not consent.

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And now my story leaps on to our return to Calcutta and again I see myself dashing up the stairs and letting my sword clash on the steps to give warning, and in a blessed moment my darling was in my arms. Alas! could I but live that moment over again! She had been down with asthma and strange things had been happening on the Home Front; for Jean's father and mother, and brother and sister were all arriving from England and we were to be married in Calcutta right away and going off afterwards on a honeymoon.

Half my working life has been spent on active service and to-day, too late, I would that I could have been more with my darling Jean. But she would not have had it so. She never, never said one word to hold me back—not one. Too many wars; too many partings.

The turning-point in Jean's life was her wedding, when she definitely elected for a bungalow at Simla instead of a suite of apartments in the vast Esterhazy Palace at Eisenstadt—for a Major of Foot in a marching Regiment of the Line to a Prince of semi-royal status whether in Budapesth or Vienna. 'How thankful I am you didn't marry him,' her mother wrote to her twenty-four years later, 'I am sure you would have had a most unhappy life.' The baroque glitter enveloping Princesses without thrones would very quickly have wearied Jean's active mind.

When the ship-load of Muirs had got half-way across the Indian Ocean, I received a cable from Calcutta, asking if Wednesday the 23rd of February would suit me for our marriage. I do not remember the exact terms of my ecstatic reply but it was in the sense of 'rather so'; whereupon Bess Moncreiffe drove off to the Cathedral to fix details. The clergy, however, were scandalised, for Jean had pitched upon Ash Wednesday. But when they understood that Big Wigs were coming from Scotland for it and that the Cathedral would probably be packed they consented to let the ceremony take place on Shrove Tuesday provided we promised that



Jean in her wedding finery



Wedding Group

Standing: Capt. Rawlinson, Mrs. Rowan-Hamilton, Mrs. Harry Moncreiffe, Mr. Harry Moncreiffe, Sir Fred. Roberts (C.-in-C. India), Col. R. Pole-Carew, Sir Auckland Colvin (Governor of Bengal), Kay Muir, Ian H., Miss Thuillier, Miss Agnes Muir, Miss Colvin, Bridesmaid, Capt. Hon. H. T. Allsopp, Lt. Charles Hume, Miss Beadon. *Sitting:* Mr. John Muir, Countess of Dufferin, Mrs. Muir, Guy Moncreiffe, Jean, The Viceroy (Lord Dufferin)

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every trace of the wedding—confetti, etc.—should be swept away before midnight.

Another *contretemps*, Jean wishing to make doubly sure had written out a telegram addressed 'Hamilton, Mandalay, Burma' saying 'Will Wednesday 23rd suit you for our wedding in the Cathedral?' Unfortunately clarity of handwriting was never her *forte* and the post-office babu mis-read it as 'Hamilton, Malabar, Bombay.' Now it so happened that Bruce Hamilton, son of the redoubtable Col. 'Tiger' Hamilton, was A.D.C. to the Governor of Bombay who was in residence at Malabar Point. So the cable was delivered to him. Bruce was a brave soldier, but this proposal gave him the jim-jams and he fled to the docks to consult the Superintendent John Hext, who was an old friend of the Muir family. Between them they solved the acrostic.

Our wedding day! Throughout Christendom and indeed beyond it a wedding is the glorification of the Bride, the bridegroom playing the rôle of Ugly Duckling. The ring was to me the climax—the dark enigma—the irrevocable act. Her father and the best man, Polly Carew, vanished. We two became entirely separated from the congregation; all by ourselves up at the High Altar. Then we went to the vestry where it was free kisses for everyone; not just cheek-pecks by any means; even a man I knew had wanted to marry her—he got a kiss. I felt no desire to be just one of a crowd. Then back and when the Wedding March struck up and we had got at least half a dozen steps down the aisle what was my horror when my Bride suddenly turned round, ran back to the Clergyman, and asked him whether she should keep her face veiled or throw the veil back. He told her and the example of so much calm under the fire of at least a thousand eyes gave me a much-needed fillip.

The Doge of Venice wedded the Adriatic by casting a gold ring into her waters. Ring a bull and a child can lead him along like her lap-dog. But a ring on the third finger of a girl, where are you then—where indeed?

My mind humming with suchlike confused images, behold me driving back amidst cheers and confetti as fast as a four-in-hand could take me with my Wife! A group-photo having been taken we changed into travelling kit; fled in an ordinary Victoria to the docks and embarked on the Viceregal motor-launch which was to take us away to Barrackpore, a lovely spot bearing the same relation in situation and distance from Calcutta as Kew Gardens does to the East End of London. There we

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were to spend the night in Lord William Beresford's romantic villa with the biggest banyan tree in the world within a couple of hundred yards of us. A very fine spread was on the table and there were feather beds enough for six honeymoons, not to mention flower beds outside. Yet there was one grave omission. Wine was, as press reporters put it, conspicuous by its absence. There were no shops or houses within reach but Lord Herbrand (familiarily Hatband) Russell, another of the Viceregal Staff, had a bungalow of his own within the gardens. So we went over there; he was away and all we could raise from the servant left in charge was one small bottle of poorish claret. Jean rose to the crisis splendidly. She might have sighed, sulked, or had she been a present-day girl, sworn. Far from it. At once she began to laugh and went on until we both laughed. Then everyone was happy—always her aim God bless her.

By next evening we were beginning to get into our stride—just as well seeing the surprise packet awaiting us. A compartment had been reserved for us on the night train for Darjeeling where we were to spend our honeymoon. In due course the train came along and after a little shunting we were off! At one of the first stops a tea planter tried to open our door. Quite clearly he had been celebrating and as he was making a devil of a din I went to the window and explained, 'This is reserved for a lady.' At once he bawled out to a group^y of his friends, also half tipsy, 'Hi! you chaps, I've found a bearded lady!' Luckily the guard blew his whistle and the train moved off before they could take any steps to verify his extraordinary discovery. Next station, still feeling uneasy, I put my head out of the window and found the platform clear, but from another window in our own coach, nearer the engine, came a voice—a lady's voice, which seemed familiar to me—calling out 'Ian! Ian!!' I looked; great Heavens, it was my Mother-in-Law! She went on—'We did not tell you because we were afraid it might fuss you but just before you drove off John got a cable saying he must return to Scotland by next week's mail. As you know, I've seen nothing of Jean and I was so distressed that John took pity on me and said he'd take me up to Darjeeling.' 'And is Cousin John¹ in the carriage too?' 'Of course,' she said and off the train started. I staggered in to tell Jean. 'What *do* you think?' I said, 'Mum and Cousin John are in our train! This will make us the laughing stock of all India. This is frightful.' She didn't turn a hair—indeed a horrid suspicion darted

¹ My family name for Sir John.

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through me that she was pleased to think her home folk were standing by. 'If we are to be the laughing stock of India we had better begin by doing a bit of laughing ourselves.' 'No, no!' I exclaimed, 'this is really beyond a joke!' 'Why?' she asked me. 'Why is it beyond a joke? Haven't you told me yourself that one fresh and original idea is worth a dozen of the cut-and-dried sort? Fate has given you a Mother-in-law for your honeymoon on a mountain: here you have originality thrust upon you!'

Sure enough, the news of my honeymoon party spread far and wide and many a sly dig was scored at my expense; but all I can say about it is that, in those days, I could stand the shot and that nowadays I'd give all I have left of earthly gear to have it all over again.

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Where a spur ran out to the northwards from the great central *massif* of Jacko and then rose some hundreds of feet into a knob at its far end we had taken a marvellous house at Simla called Stirling Castle. Whilst Jean and I were honeymooning at Darjeeling Neville Chamberlain had engaged all our servants and now, breathless with excitement, we were to see them. Sure enough, out stepped the *khansamah* or chief butler and great was our awe. His beard was white as snow and he wore a long, dark-blue frock-coat trimmed with silver lace and with light-blue facings. At meal times he was attended by a dwarf who aped the part of footman and brought in the dishes. The cook was called a *mug* cook; supposed to be the best sort of cook but as will be seen by the sequel we were the mugs.

We began our careers as hosts by having a few men to luncheon, Charles Harbord for one, but his was a particularly simple case as his speciality was a suet roll with golden syrup. So soon as the rains came on we thought we'd throw a regular dinner party including several society leaders—Lady Thuillier, Jock Cunningham, the Foreign Secretary and one or two other swells. Ten was the number fixed for this ambitious repast. Everyone accepted and after the walls of the drawing-room, crammed with decorations *à la mode*, had been admired we moved in to dinner. Soup was brought and glasses filled. At that period there was a fashion of emptying the sherry into the soup. Jean led the way. They followed suit but what was my agony as host to observe that one taste seemed to be enough for everyone. And then, seeing that I was about to sample it for myself, the *khansamah* confessed! He had filled the wine glasses with whisky instead of sherry!! Recovering by degrees from this staggering

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blow the dinner-party went on quite nicely until we came to the savoury. There is a fish in India known as Bombay Duck. Down there they don't cook it at all but just dry it in the sun which lends it a pungent flavour all its own. It ought only to be taken in minute quantities with curry. The cook, however, had pounded up a number of Bombay Ducks and had made a substantial dish of them. When the dwarf opened the door the smell was so pestilential that we rose from our seats on one impulse and bolted for the door. Poor Jean who had meant to make everyone so happy was sadly mortified by these mishaps, but the guests were very jolly about them and all would have been well if worse had not happened. During the rains in the Himalayas everything gets so saturated with damp that ladies cannot possibly keep their hair waved or curled to last out even one evening. So they fixed this up by slipping in one or two little fringes of artificial hair. Each knew that the other did it but each pretended they believed in the other's pretence. After dinner I had broken up a packing case and was bending over the fire to make it blaze when Jean stooped down to warm her hands. As she did so her curls brushed my face. Being very much in love I caught the curl between my lips; she pulled her head away and lo! the curl was dangling from my mouth! And Lady Thuillier had congratulated her on her curls and she had accepted the compliment. We never forgot our first dinner-party.

XII

KIPLING'S FIRST STORY

(1887-1893)

Looking back over a long life I feel grateful indeed to God for having so wonderfully answered the prayer of a small boy for a good wife. Time after time I taxed Jean's patience but her patience and understanding were always forthcoming in full measure and truly only once—once to the best of my belief—was she really hurt by my behaviour. I had written a small volume of verses and had as usual handed them over to her for her advice and remarks. At that time I was in constant touch with Rudyard Kipling. Every Sunday I lunched with him at the house of Lord 'Hatband' Russell (afterwards Duke of Bedford) together with Walter Lawrence, and one way or another hardly a day passed when I did not see him. He knew about these verses and was keen that his sister Trix, a charming girl and favourite dancing partner of mine—nothing more—should take a look at them before she went back to England. Jean was out so I nipped the MS. off her table and sent it to Trix for perusal and return. That's all!! Only a storm in a tea-cup *you* may say, but, speaking as a husband, *I* say give me a storm on the ocean.

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Fifty-five years later there has arisen a curious sequel to this Ancient Mariner yarn. On the 17th of August 1942 I was dining with some literary friends one of whom told us Kipling never took money for a poem as an instinct warned him that if he did he would never write another. Several of the company at table disputed this statement either because they thought they had proofs of the contrary or for some other reason. The argument waxed high and promised to be inconclusive, so I chipped in saying I would write to his sister Trix and she could and probably would authoritatively settle the question. Here is her answer:

4 West Coates, Edinburgh, 12
20th August 1942

My dear Sir Ian,

What a pleasure to hear from you again. I purposely held back from

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writing to you when the Parting of the Ways came, though my thoughts and prayers were constantly with you both. . . .

To the best of my belief and recollection, it was only poems of a serious sort that Ruddy took no money for. See p. 148, Chap. VI of *Something of Myself*—about 'Recessional'—'I gave it to *The Times*. I say "gave" because for this kind of work I did not take payment. . . . I should not like the people whose good opinion I valued to believe that I took money for verses on Joseph Chamberlain, Rhodes, Lord Milner, or any of my South African verse in *The Times*.'

All his life long he drew a careful distinction between verse and poems. In one of our last talks together he said he could only lay claim to having written a dozen poems in the whole of his life—'No too many—half a dozen more likely. The rest were just verses.' Some of those verses were, I believe, paid for in three figures. His two literary agents—his wife the first and keenest—a true business Yankee, and Mr. Watt kept a firm check upon his generous impulses.

He told me—by word of mouth—that before the launch of the *Queen Mary* he was offered a blank cheque for appropriate verses and replied—'Let Masfield do his own job, he used to be a sailor.' He certainly had very strong feelings about his Daemon and the possibility of a gift used unworthily being withdrawn. In my lesser degree I had the same feeling in my fortune-telling days—unless every penny went to charity I knew I should 'lose my faculty'—though I sometimes gave offence by declining a new fancy dress—White Witch—or Sibyl—'out of the funds'. A reputable Greek insurance firm in Calcutta once offered me a handsome salary ('no deductions for failures but a good percentage for successes') if I would occasionally read the hands of applicants for insurance!! I was not tempted. . . .

Do you never come to Edinburgh now—to see your Scottish legion? Princes St. is full of nothing but Poles and Canadians. Now that the Duke of Connaught is dead, you and General Kays (Emily Colvin's husband) are the last of my Simla Partners. General Rimington, R.E.—a lesser one—passed on lately.

Jack joins me in greetings.

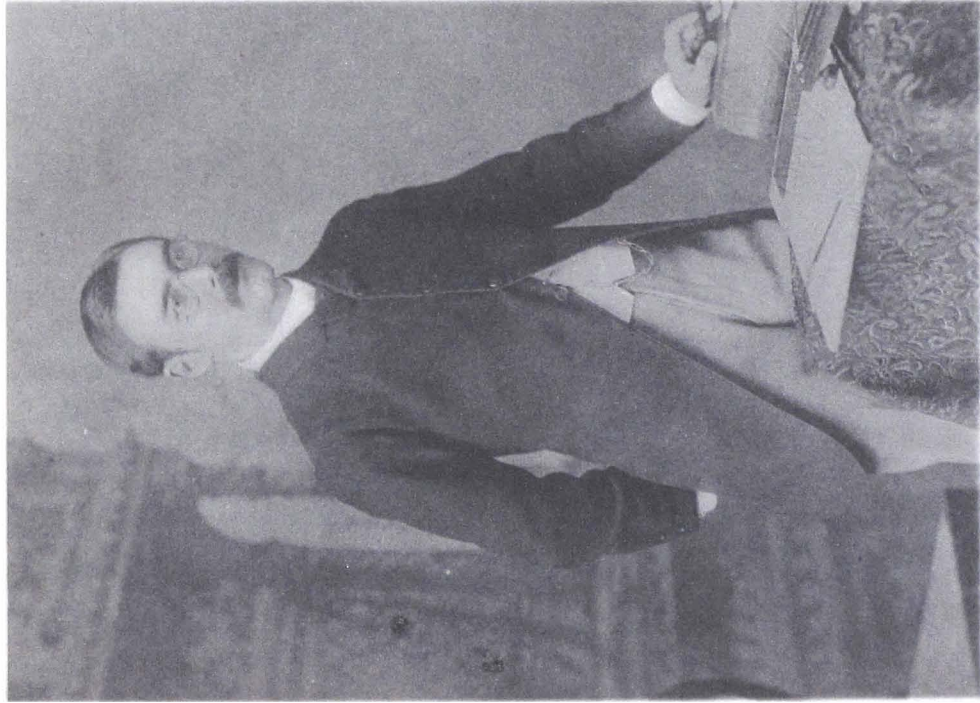
Yours ever,

TRIX FLEMING.

Many people seem to think that Kipling suffered none of those rebuffs

Ian H. in Stirling Castle Drawing-room





Rudyard Kipling
in 1886



Trix Kipling
(wearing the Mooltan pottery dress)

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and disappointments which fall to the lot of most young authors. The truth was otherwise. As I was the means of sending his first story to England, the following anecdote as to its adventures may be of interest.

In 1886 I wrote to Vereker, who was then in London, telling him I had been seeing a good deal of a young fellow called Rudyard Kipling, who had a pretty talent for writing and was anxious to publish something in England. I told him that the MS. of a short story selected by the author would soon reach him and suggested that he might show it to Andrew Lang, the author of *Ballads in Blue China*, and William Sharp who wrote as a woman under the *nom de plume* of Fiona MacLeod, with both of whom he was well acquainted and then to the editors of two magazines, after which he was to report the results.

Kipling's MS. duly reached V. and was sent off to Lang. It was soon returned under cover of a very strong letter of condemnation one sentence of which is firmly imprinted on my memory: 'I would gladly give Ian a fiver if he had never been the means of my reading this poisonous stuff which has left an extremely disagreeable impression on my mind.' Lang went so far as to say that any attempt to make a start in English literary circles with a magazine article of this nature would be most detrimental to the author's chances of future success supposing, even, he could get anyone to touch it which he very much doubted. It is only fair to add that some years later Lang changed his view of Kipling as a writer and extolled his work with both voice and pen.

Lang's verdict was so uncompromising that V. thought the chances that Sharp would think favourably of the MS. were greatly increased; for it would have been difficult to find two men more different in their tastes and points of view. He therefore sent the story to Sharp with some confidence that it would appeal to him. William Sharp's reply was even more decisive—indeed quite extraordinarily so. William Sharp said, or at least this was the gist of his remarks, 'I would strongly recommend your brother's friend instantly to burn this detestable piece of work. If I would not be considered to be going beyond my brief,' (here I really do remember the actual words) 'I would like to hazard a guess that the writer of the article in question is very young and that he will die mad before he has reached the age of thirty.'

The MS. continued its travels. It visited in turn the editors of the two magazines but these gentlemen very quickly sent it back. V. began to be nettled. At first, he wrote me, he had been only mildly interested in the

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adventures of the MS., but the rebuffs which had been flung at what appeared to be a strong and original little story, irritated and also puzzled him. So he decided to have a try-out on his own.

'I decided, before returning the MS. to India, to read it out to a selected audience of young painters just to see what impression it would make on them,' he wrote in his book *Things that Happened*. 'My audience consisted of my wife, two or three other ladies and my old fellow students, Holroyd, Furse, and Strang. Their names were unknown to the general public then, but in course of time each of them made his mark—Sir Charles Holroyd as Director of the National Gallery; Charles Furse as a brilliant painter; and William Strang as an etcher. Strang indeed was a mass of energy who worked with equal thoroughness on copper, paper, canvas or wood. They all possessed liveliness of imagination and independence of view, so they were a good audience for such a test as I proposed.

'The reading took place one night in my studio and the outcome was that the story was greeted with enthusiastic appreciation by the whole company. It was agreed that there was a strong flavour of the horrible in the tale; but our literary taste was not thin-skinned and this flavour did not prevent the company from admiring the originality of the theme and the style in which it was narrated. The MS. then went back to India.

'For a few years nothing more was heard of it; and then, suddenly it appeared again in England—this time in the full light of publicity for Kipling had meanwhile made his name. It formed one of several short stories in a volume which had an instant success. The original story had not been altered in any particular but it had been given a new title—*The Mark of the Beast*.'

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At this period I got two goes of leave home in very short succession; the first time Kipling being absolutely unknown: the second time 'Rudyard Kipling' being words to conjure with as I realized at a grand dinner party at Arthur Balfour's at Whittinghame consisting mainly of literary celebrities, 'Souls' and people of that sort. Sitting there a shy and unconsidered guest it became known that I had associated with Rudyard Kipling in the flesh. Instantly the grand people there assembled were silenced by Lady Francis Balfour, in order that they might all share in the excitement of listening to one who had actually met the hero of the hour *in propria persona*.

Meanwhile, the tenor of the foregoing correspondence had so turned

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the minds of my brother Vereker and his wife Lily Indiawards that they decided to stand themselves a holiday jaunt out to Simla and thence to Kashmir where they would be guests to Jean and myself. Their wedding had taken place only a few months before our own. Vereker had got a portrait on the line at the Royal Academy—on arrival at Simla he was set to work under the personal supervision of Sir Fred Roberts on a large picture of the battle of the Peiwar Kotal in Afghanistan; Lily, as a medalist, had already earned the commendation of the famous Legros, Professor of the Slade School of Art who taught a small band to make medals in the direct Cinquecento Pisanello tradition. Suddenly, upon these young people there fell from the blue a brilliant stroke of luck. One of the richest Princes in all the gorgeous East had come of age and was being installed upon his throne; and he commissioned them to come along at once to Kapurthala and commemorate this magnificent function, placing at their disposal a suite of apartments as well as a studio. All went swimmingly, but it is not so much with those far-away events that I am at present concerned as with the astonishing sequel.

On the 26th of July 1943 a large envelope covered with stamps of the King Emperor arrived by air mail from India. With something of the same sensations as those with which a poor fisherman, on the shore of an Arabian lake, once eyed a bottle sealed with the seal of Solomon, I slit it open, unwrapped the tissue paper coverings, when out stepped the portrait of a handsome young man of seventeen, no less, in fact, than Raja I Rajagan, Raja Jagat Jit Singh Sahib Bahadar, Ahluwalia of Kapurthala in the Punjab. His Highness had seen in *The Tatler* a family group taken at a beano celebration of my ninetieth birthday and had written me an autograph letter expressing his pleasure at this patriarchal type of *tamasha* and sending me a reproduction of the very picture painted of him by my brother Vereker fifty-three years previously. So now whoever reads this book will see it for the first time, as I did. My brother told me how he and Lily became very fond of their host who entertained them right maharajahly. Sitting for his portrait he was festooned with many strings of enormous pearls. One day, at the end of a sitting, when rising from his chair a rope of pearls broke, so that huge pearls went rolling all over the floor. Vereker and Lily were down on their knees like a shot and began gathering them up but the Maharajah serenely waved his hand, indicating that the matter was of small importance and that they were not to trouble. Lily, however, knew very well that the State Treasurer had an exact count

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of all the royal jewels and that, if one happened to be missing, suspicion would attach to them for ever afterwards. So the two of them refused to leave until the Treasurer had been summoned and all the pearls safely collected and checked.

Whilst Vereker was painting, Lily always accompanied him and did careful pencil drawings of His Highness and from them made a medal. The reverse, she felt, must be an elephant. All the state elephants were therefore ordered to parade and she selected the chief state elephant as model. So he was caparisoned in gorgeous trappings and saddled with the ceremonial howdah, his blunted tusks adorned with bands of gold. Every afternoon he was brought round to the palace and made to kneel down as for mounting whilst Lily sat in the courtyard and modelled him. The Maharajah was so pleased with this medal that he ordered twelve copies to be cast and presented one to each of his twelve State Councillors; so it became quite historical and very select.

Now although the state portrait was the *raison d'être* of the visit and the subject of the Maharajah's gift to me, yet it is the medal which has received the greatest acclaim in the artistic world for it is one of the best medals which has ever been cast. It is in bronze, five inches in diameter, and although sculptors affect to regard the achievements of the medallist as very small potatoes, a view which the general public would probably endorse, there is a small band of numismatists who know that the late Lilian Hamilton's works rank for all time with the great medals and who consider this Kapurthala medal to be her best work. Amongst connoisseurs at home and abroad the medal is very well known; it is reproduced in the standard book of reference on medallists and was bought by the Dresden Art Gallery and the Musée du Luxembourg at a time when no other British medal had a place in the collection; but the fact that few dare speak or write the word numismatist keeps the circle select. In any country but England there would have been some public recognition of a woman who did something as well as anybody has ever done it.

* * * * *

We started off for Kashmir by the Murree route and in very light marching order, our wardrobe being scanty and peculiar as we were dying to shake off the trappings of civilization. Vereker and I marched ahead doing some shooting by the way, Jean and Lily travelling more slowly after us; but when we got to the border we realized that we could



The Maharajah of Kapurthala in 1890
painted by Vereker Hamilton



The Maharajah to-day

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not move another yard until we had reported our arrival and received the permission of the Resident.

I have one or two vivid memories of Srinagar; the Chinar trees, gold and green: the magenta of the Woolar Lake with no reflections; the exciting moment when Jean who was carefully making a sketch discovered she was within twenty yards of a wounded bear. As to detail, I remember how the girls were dressed—short skirts, puttees, little gloves on their feet with the big toe separate and grass shoes. This to them at that date was an extraordinary emancipation. I remember, too, that when the grand barge came down from the Resident old Parry Nisbet with an invitation for us all to stay at the Residency, a violent dispute arose as to whether we should accept or not, the ostensible reason given by me for accepting being that, by going to the Residency, we would be sure to get a permit enabling us to enter the great game sanctuary at Wangat Nullah. But there were other reasons, perhaps, below the surface as became apparent on the first night at dinner, when Jean produced a red silk tea gown which against the agreements and rules she had tucked away into a bag (uncreased by Belassoo who had passed it over a lamp) and sailed into dinner in it.

We had arrived in the early morning and were shown our rooms, approached by a maze of wide passages of light-coloured wood, exquisitely wrought in patterns. It was here that I perpetrated a *gaffe* of the first magnitude. Returning to what I thought was my room, after seeing Vereker installed in his, I opened the door and found myself face to face with a lady stepping into her bath, stark naked with a sponge in her hand. When a lady is naked it is not possible for any stranger meeting her for the first time to know whether she is a real lady or not. Could she be my hostess? The thought was too terrible to contemplate.

Horried I fled to Vereker to recover my composure and invoke his aid. We started out together into the maze of passages but there was something particularly confusing about the design of these passages for Vereker did not assume the absolute confidence in pointing out my room which I had expected. We were however agreed as to the Lady-with-the-Sponge room—the room which must at all costs be avoided. I decided to try the door of the next one. What was my horror on opening the door to find myself face to face with the stark naked lady once more, only this time she was getting *out* of her bath but still with her sponge in her hand. On going down to breakfast I was relieved to find she was not my hostess

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after all, nor was she ever quite sure if it was I or V. who had barged in on her.

When we went to church on Sunday with the Resident he gave us an astonishing exhibition of his power. The clergyman being, he thought, a little prosy he suddenly pulled a large gold repeater out of his pocket and made it strike. In one second the clergyman collapsed and the service was over. There is something worth while, after all, in being a Resident of Kashmir.

One night, when I had a threatening of a cold, Jean without my knowing anything about it put a hot water-bottle in my bed—an article I had never had communion with before. On getting between the sheets after blowing out the light, I felt with horror something warm. I leaped out with my hair positively standing on end and said to Jean, 'There is a rat or a cat or a snake in my bed.' The candles were lit; more candles were brought in; Jean got hold of the top of the bed clothes with both hands and I stood close by with an enormous broomstick. On the word, 'Now!' desperately ejaculated by me, the clothes were whisked off; the broomstick descended on a hot water-bottle—and burst it. After this we had many delightful adventures on quite other lines before V. and Lily finally returned to England and Jean and I returned to Simla.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Those early days in Simla, first at Stirling Castle and later at a large mansion we had called 'The Retreat', are recalled by a letter I got from Trix when I sent her my Memoir of Jean lately; so I will put it in here:—

Edinburgh,

27th August 1942

My Very Dear Sir Ian,

How more than good of you to give me that precious Book of Remembrance of the beautiful lady who fascinated me 57 years ago, when she was the loveliest girl I had ever seen. She has always lived in my thoughts as *the* one fair beauty—and Pamela Grey (who used to be Wyndham) as the one dark beauty I have been privileged to see. And now they are—

'That City's shining spires
We travel to.'

All the early pages—and the Simla photos—give me my 17 and 18

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year-old memories again. How I used to watch for 'Miss Muir' on the Mall, or at dances, and note in my diary if I had seen her.

Of course in 1886 we were all on the alert, hoping that dull-faced Prince Louis would not be the favoured one. I *knew* it would be all right for I had seen the difference in her expression when she rode with you and when with him. A lighted lamp—and an unlit one. Her eyes were delightfully tell-tale, you might have said with Bassanio,

'From her eyes, I did receive fair speechless messages.'

You both looked so happy together, I used to think the phrase 'Gallant and gay' might have been invented for you. No wonder Simla found your romance so much more attractive than the one of 'The Lost Tribe—and Our Hatband' as Lord Clandeboye would call them. I don't think anyone guessed there might have been a third 'romance of the peerage' that season, if I had been less of a critical little prig. Funnily enough though Lord D. loved me for my good sense, Lady D. never forgave me, and she had always been so nice to me before. Of course a penniless daughter-in-law was the last thing she wished for, but she said openly that she had always thought me a really sweet and charming girl—but—if her 'splendid Arch' was not good enough for me—she gave me up. What could I expect? He was not fickle, for next year after Lord D. became a Marquess he suggested that though I didn't think him up to much it might amuse me to be a countess. 'Too expensive,' said I and he explained at length in his stodgy schoolboy way that though of course I should have to be 'presented on my marriage', my wedding dress with a train of family lace would be A.1 and a small tiara that had belonged to his beautiful Granny would suit me far better than 'the fender full of shamrocks Mother sports'. His profile was an abiding joy to me and I've always liked Irishmen, but I drew the line at marrying them somehow—four times I drew it—though they were very nice.

Oh, the photo of your 'Stirling Castle' drawing-room. I can identify some of the framed photos, I still have that one of Lord D.

I *love* her poems, especially the Last Romance. I should illuminate it on vellum for my room if I could do it well enough, and the last two lines are as enchanted as one of her own pastels.

This is a terribly long letter, but I've not begun yet—there are so many things I want to tell you and to ask you. The peaceful end of your good old Simla *khansamah* who came to us in Calcutta in 1903, stipulating that

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when General Hamilton Sahib returned to India as *Jungi lat*,¹ he must return to him at once to order his noble household befittingly. He had *chits* from you both.

General Grant's version of the pin curl you innocently kissed out of place—'Ian, you know is often *un peu malin*. She took it beautifully but we all wanted to hit him!' I said it didn't sound like you at all (this was in 1892) and *now* I know I was right. The man I mean was Inspector of Cavalry that year, and rather amusing.

It would be a *real* joy to see you again, when you come to Edinburgh do ring me up and I will come and sit on your doorstep if necessary. . . .

I am very thin and grey now, distinctly witch-like, but a *recent* Valentine from a boy cousin informed me he

'Knew a lady, who's far past three score
Yet eyes, smile, heart are sunshine to the core,
Yes, she's a child, while I at 24,' etc.

I congratulated him on the truth of his *first* line. Seriously, dear old Friend, it would do my heart good to hear you talk, try and fit me in.

My love to you,

Yours ever,

TRIX FLEMING.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Since the days when I had worked and sweated to improve the standard of my Regiment in musketry fire I had, as I have told, secured the powerful support of Sir Fred Roberts who, on our return from Burma in 1887, had made me Assistant Adjutant General for Musketry at Army Headquarters. The results proved so satisfactory that two years later Sir Fred used his independence from Hythe shackles—in so far as the training of the native army was concerned—to bring in a course curtailing bullseye shooting and containing celerity and precision practices as well as practices combining mobility with fire, more like the conditions likely to be encountered on the battlefield, and encouraged me to re-write the whole of the Native Musketry Regulations on my own lines.

'With us a target stands quite still and bolt upright,' I had written in *Fighting of the Future* in 1884, 'and even when, under the new orders, the head and shoulders of a man are painted on it, the colours employed are jet black and dazzling white. Now a flying Afghan is neither still, upright,

¹ War Lord, i.e., Commander-in-Chief.

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nor black and white, but on the contrary is a rapid mover, crouches and is the colour of mud.'

I will not go into all the changes made; let it suffice to say that the new regulations were framed to prepare for realistic warlike conditions. The results were so outstanding that the Home Musketry Regulations had to follow suit a couple of years later and the army newspaper the *Broad Arrow*, paid tribute to the fact in July 1892, by writing: 'There is no doubt but that the real British School of Musketry is at Simla and not at Hythe.' At Attock, this same year, Sir Fred caused a field firing to be carried out with a battle realism never before attempted. Markers hidden in deep trenches worked running or disappearing targets under a hail of bullets and when the attack closed in to 250 yards tossed out balls three feet in diameter made of canvas stretched over strips of bamboo, which bounded down the steep *glacis* upon the firing lines faster than even charging ghazis would have rushed. Units possessing fire discipline shot them to bits—others missed them clean.

I may add that the main cause of the crushing superiority in rifle fire we achieved last century—a superiority only to be countered by deep trenches and equalled only once before in history, i.e. by the bowmen of Créçy and Agincourt—was due to the generous allowance of ball cartridge for practice. Our troops obtained this on a scale quite beyond the means of the huge conscription armies of the Continent. When I was Commandant at Hythe in 1898 I caused a comparison to be made from which it appeared that, counting ammunition expended by regimental rifle clubs (in India then a large item), a British reservist joining on mobilization would have fired during his service over seven times as many rounds as the Continental conscript. These precious rounds were not got without heavy battles with Military Departments, Secretaries of State, and Personages who wished to spend part of it buying more Cavalry horses. In this battle of the budgets to which we mainly owed our Musketry supremacy, Sir Fred fought harder and much more effectively than anyone else.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

At several points in my checkered career when it seemed suddenly to come to a dead stop, friends and rivals have comforted me, with sorrowful faces but hidden glee, by telling me I was suffering from too rapid promotion. An absurd statement: no one in our army suffers from too rapid promotion—the army suffers from too slow promotion amongst

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Officers and N.C.O.s. The Army Council and Committee of Imperial Defence consider youth *per se* as being a drawback. As for myself, I furnish an instance which can hardly be beaten of an officer having been denied promotion which was his due, not by favour or affection but by Royal Warrant.

Here are extracts from a Dispatch on the subject to the Secretary of State for War from the Commander-in-Chief in India:

Calcutta, 28th January 1891

My dear Mr. Stanhope,

When I sent you copies of my official letter No. 19233, dated the 20th November 1890, and of two demi-official letters to Sir George Harman of the 18th November 1890 and the 4th January 1891, on the subject of the promotion of Lieutenant-Colonels Nicholson and Hamilton to the rank of substantive Colonel, I hoped that you would have been spared the trouble of reading them, as the claims of these officers to the rank attaching to the appointments for which they had been selected appeared to me to be hardly open to question. I have since received a reply, dated the 1st January 1891, from the Military Secretary (a copy of which I enclose) maintaining the objection in Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton's case, and withdrawing it in a somewhat vague and inconclusive manner in Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholson's case.

As the arguments now advanced in support of the previous decision of His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief are in my opinion inconsistent with the terms of the Royal Warrants of 1887 and 1890, and with the interpretation of Article 15 (*a*) hitherto accepted, and indeed insisted on, by the Horse Guards and War Office, I venture again to bring the matter to your notice, in the interest not only of the officers immediately concerned, but also of those belonging to the British Service in India generally, promotion among whom is liable to be seriously retarded by the present ruling. Its effect will be that officers on the Home Establishment selected for posts carrying the rank of Colonel will invariably be given that rank, inasmuch as the fact of their selection shows them to be considered qualified for promotion by the Horse Guards; whereas equally or perhaps more deserving and capable officers, who have been a long time in this country, and whose claims are therefore only partially known to the Home authorities, will be liable to have their promotion negatived, even though the propriety of their selection may be acknow-

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ledged, and notwithstanding the strongest recommendations on their behalf on the part of the Commander-in-Chief in India or the Government of India. . . .

In explanation of my repeated efforts to obtain for Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton the promotion to which I consider him to be entitled, it is, I trust, almost needless to state that, although this officer is a personal friend of my own, I have selected him for the important post he at present holds exclusively on public grounds. I know of no other officer, either at home or in India, who possesses in equal degree the special qualifications which pre-eminently fit him for directing the musketry training of the Army. Although as a Lieutenant he was Musketry Instructor of his regiment for only about 16 months, he succeeded during that period in raising the Gordon Highlanders from seventeenth in the order of merit to the top of the list, and equally satisfactory results on a much larger scale have attended his officiating and permanent tenure of the principal appointment on the musketry staff of the Army in India.

I regard musketry training as such a vitally important branch of a soldier's education, and it is so unusual to find an officer possessing all the requisite qualifications for bringing such training to the highest pitch of efficiency, that in the interest of the State, even more than in that of the individual, I should deeply regret to see Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton, who has devoted himself heart and soul to this work, and who, in addition, has repeatedly distinguished himself in the field, denied the promotion which under the provisions of the Royal Warrant appears to be his due, equally with other officers on the Head Quarters Staff who hold appointments certainly of no greater importance, and of far less responsibility.

Believe me,

Very truly yours,

FRED ROBERTS.

The reason for this refusal on the part of the War Office to obey its own rules was that even Royal Warrants were dishonoured when by chance an officer of the wrong 'Ring' was about to benefit by their provisions. The story is illuminating:—

Lord Wolseley had determined in the interests of the Army to make promotions to the higher ranks hinge upon the holding of one of a certain number of catalogued posts. In other words, the Major-Generals could only be taken from the Full Colonels in the Army—and a mere

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Brevet Full Colonel, remaining on his regimental cadre, would not be eligible—and could never and would never become a General Officer. I can see now that this idea must have proved fatal to any Army which adopted it in permanence. The inward intention or motive of the innovation was to restrict the higher commands of troops to men who had, for their own advantage, or impelled by their own characteristics, renounced the command of their Regiments in order that they might work out their fortunes upon the Staff. But Staff Officers do not as a rule make good Commanders of men any more than good Commanders make Staff Officers. Be that as it may, my interest in the scheme centred in the fact that amongst the scheduled appointments which lifted an officer gazetted to them out of his regimental cadre and made him a full colonel in the Army, was that of Assistant Adjutant-General. Now I was not a Wolseleyite and yet—marvellous to relate—I was an Assistant Adjutant-General! How was that? Because I was the only officer in the whole of the British Service of that time who was qualified under the Regulations to hold the post of Assistant Adjutant-General for Musketry in India—otherwise, naturally, the War Office would not have approved of my appointment. This may seem a very astonishing statement but it was so. My regimental rank was in order and also I held the two other indispensable qualifications—an 'extra' musketry certificate taken at Hythe and a 'Higher Standard' in Hindustani Certificate taken in Calcutta. There were hundreds of other officers with the rank; there were dozens with the rank plus the 'extra'; there were half a dozen with the rank plus the 'H.S.' but there was *none but me* with the rank, plus the 'extra', plus the 'H.S.'! Therefore it was impossible for anyone to prevent my appointment and once I had been appointed, the new Royal Warrant—when it came in—ought to have operated automatically. In other words, directly it came into force I should have found myself cut out of my regimental cadre and popped into the super-select lucky-bag in which alone the hand of Fate would grope for the names of the Generals and Field-Marshal of the future. This seemed too good to be true: it was. When the *Gazette* which carried the wonderful new Warrant into effect arrived at Simla, Army Headquarters in India were, if not altogether broken-hearted, at least surprised and agitated, to find that there was no mention at all of their boon companion Nick;¹ nothing about Bill Beres-

¹ Brevet-Col. William Nicholson, Military Secretary to C.-in-C. India, afterwards Field Marshal Lord Nicholson.

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ford;¹ nothing for Johnny Hamilton. To a man the crowd of qualified officers in England had been jumped up but as to us—the three young eligibles in India—we were wallflowered; we had been publicly turned down.

Then began a battle between the Rings ever memorable in the annals of officialdom. The Commander-in-Chief in India wrote home to the Military Secretary for India, Sir Martin Dillon. He got back such a nice letter but *most* unfortunately that little matter of the Royal Warrant had clean slipped the memory of 'The Land of Promise'—as good old Sir Martin was called. Next he wrote Sir George Harman, the Military Secretary, a perfect gentleman who committed the solecism of his life by forgetting to answer at all. The correspondence continued for several months without any satisfaction having been obtained. Last Sir Fred took up the question in one of those positively stupefying epistles he wrote at fixed intervals to the Duke of Cambridge. Except Kitchener's letters from South Africa to Mr. Brodrick these are the most lifeless documents ever produced by a live human being. It was my task to draft these painful exercises from which my Chief would completely delete any real observation and substitute a platitude or a *cliché* but this time—for once—a sparklet of feeling was allowed to remain inside the envelope. This time at least the answer was brutally direct,—he, His Royal Highness—none other—did not intend to apply the Royal Warrant in these instances. Ordinarily the matter would have ended there—an authoritative *non possumus*; a regulation broken; three careers cornered. But one of those careers was what might be called a career with a vengeance; it could not be cornered. Nick; familiarly 'Old Nick', predestined to be Field Marshal Sir William and Chief of the Imperial General Staff, had a good cheek and had never been known to turn the other one. At once, aided by Bill Beresford, he got very busy. The exact movements of a mole are not very easy to follow but when you see sudden mountains appearing on the surface of the lawn you mowed and rolled so carefully before you went to bed you know, for sure, he has been busy. The Duke, Wolseley, Buller and the great Harman all went to bed with their beautiful Warrant curled up in their bosoms. They slept the sleep of the unjust, and well they might. But next morning . . . why did Martin Dillon grow pale—why the old Duke himself so rubicund? A Dispatch from the Govern-

¹ Brevet-Col. Lord William Beresford, Military Secretary to the Viceroy.

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ment of India in Council to the Secretary of State for India! There it lay, the argument set forth in dry, terse sentences curiously anticipatory of the style of a future Chief of the Imperial General Staff who was to fulminate from that very War Office at whose august head he was now slinging his ink. Followed the signatures of 'Dufferin' and all the little tin gods of Simla. A Cabinet matter by Jove! Bravo Old Nick! Bravo!! One hasty meeting and the walls of the War Office Jericho fell flat. The garrison had not a reason; not an excuse; none which could stand for their photographs anyway—and so they put up their hands.

We were all promoted—in my case the repugnant officials managed to delay matters until I was more than a year lower than my rights—but even so I was the youngest Colonel in the Army and that should surely have been good enough.

These matters remind me of what happened to Sir Fred Roberts himself a couple of years later. Early in 1890 he had been offered the post of Adjutant-General at the Horse Guards in succession to Lord Wolseley by the Secretary of State for War and had accepted the offer gladly. But it had proved too difficult to replace him as Commander-in-Chief and so although the appointment had been ratified by the Cabinet he had been asked to stay on for a couple of years in India.

Jean wrote to me from London that spring that one day, when she was visiting the Holfords at Dorchester House, Prince Eddie¹ had come in and had called out to her in a most decided way right across the room, 'I hear Sir Fred is going to stay another year in India.' So she said, 'Is he, Sir, I didn't know of it,' to which he replied, 'Yes, he will like that won't he?' But it was three years that Sir Fred had to stay.

At last in April 1893 after banquets, testimonials, farewell addresses and gifts had been showered upon him in recognition of his great services to the State he returned to England, eager for home employment and wrote to me from Rome:

28th April 1893

Dear Johnny,

I wrote to you a day or two ago but in case you may not hear from Nicholson² this mail, I must send you an extract from a letter I received

¹ The Duke of Clarence, elder brother of King George V.

² Sir George White had succeeded Sir Fred as C.-in-C. and I had succeeded Nicholson as Military Secretary to the C.-in-C.

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from him yesterday. He says: 'The first person I met at my tailor's was Polly Carew who told me

(i) That the Duke of Connaught has heard a rumour that you are anxious to succeed to the Aldershot Command, and H.R.H. is very anxious about it.

(ii) That the Duke of Cambridge is perturbed in spirit at the marks of your popularity in India, especially with the Army in that country, and is desirous of getting you out of England as soon as may be. You are therefore to be pressed to reconsider your refusal of the governorship of Malta.

(iii) That the man against whom you will have to be particularly on your guard is Redvers Buller whose obstinacy is only equalled by his duplicity.

This is rather amusing Johnny is it not? Perhaps after all I may find myself at Aldershot which is the berth you want for me for a time. . . .

On arrival in England he wrote to me from London:

17 Dover Street,

18th May 1893

Dear Johnny,

I think I told you in my last that I had arranged to have an interview with Mr. Campbell-Bannerman—well, it came off yesterday, and was, I think, satisfactory. I began by saying that the Papers were wrong in stating that I was ill and wanted rest—that I was perfectly well and wanted employment.

At first he was a little stiff and said that it was very difficult to find any appointment for me. I then said that I should like to open my heart to him: he replied he would be glad if I did so. On which I pointed out that I disliked greatly having to talk about myself, but that it seemed to me clear from the manner of the Duke and Buller that there was no idea of finding employment for me. That up till the present time I had never asked for any appointment or reward, but that if I were to be left out in the cold now, I should suffer from getting quick promotion, and from being considered the person best fitted to hold high military positions. I then said that tho' the Comd.-in-Chiefship in India is well paid, the expenses are great, and that owing to loss of exchange I had been able to save but little. About this time Campbell-Bannerman's manner quite changed. He admitted that I was in a very difficult position, and that he was very sorry for me. I then told him how unwilling I was to be made a Peer, and that unless I got some increase to my income, it would be impossible for me to live in London, or even attend the House of Lords.

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He then asked if I would like to be made a Field Marshal, as he thought that would be a graceful honour to confer upon me on my return from India. He was extremely complimentary about my work, etc., I said I should of course value the rank, but it would be a drawback to me if it prevented my getting further employment. This he admitted, and said what can you have. Ireland is full, and so is the A.G. and even if it were not, would it not be a come down for the Comd.-in-Chief in India to hold it? I said it might be a come down, but that I would not consider that part of the business. He then alluded to Aldershot and the Duke of Connaught's wish to go there, and the Queen's desire he should have it. I said that Aldershot was the appointment I would like, and I thought it was so important that it might properly be made a full General's Command.

It ended in Campbell-Bannerman saying he felt deeply for me, and that I might depend on his doing all he could to help me. Oh! I forgot about Malta. He asked why I had refused that. I said partly because I did not wish to serve abroad again, but also on account of the expense. He said that was reasonable.

The conclusion I came to was that I shall be given Aldershot. I hope I shall, as that will suit me very well, especially if made a General Officer's Command. Campbell-B. did not seem to think that the Duke of Connaught had any claim.

The Horse Guards people evidently want to get rid of me, and Buller, I hear, talks openly about the wickedness of my refusing Malta! Rather amusing is it not?

Lady Lytton lunched here a day or two ago—She has aged greatly, but is as nice as ever. You can't think how nicely we have been received by everyone.

I had a most interesting party at a Restaurant given by Algernon Borthwick to the Prince of Wales, next to whom I sat—Lord Randolph, Vernon Harcourt, Chamberlain, Henry James, and Balfour were of the party. Chamberlain sat on my other side. After dinner he, Balfour, Harcourt and I talked for more than an hour. Harcourt was most amusing and told several stories about Lord Beaconsfield.

Good night dear Johnny,

Your affect.

ROBERTS

So many thanks for your letter from Simla—I rejoice that the Hon. Member was bowled over by your Chief. R.

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17 *Dover Street*,
2nd June 1893

Dear Johnny,

It was delightful getting your letter of the 4th May, and hearing all that was going on. Here we are struggling with gaiety! I do not care for it, and shall be glad to be away from London, but I am sure it is best for us to stay here for a while. I have not seen, or heard anything of Campbell-Bannerman since I last wrote you, but Nicholson was told by Charlie Burn the other day that the Duke of Connaught had not yet got Aldershot, much as he wanted it. I am sure it would be the best place for us to go to. We spent Saturday and Sunday with Rawly¹ and his wife at Camberley, and rode all about the country, which is quite delightful. Evelyn Wood has asked me to Aldershot on the 7th to see some Militia Regiments, and later in the month Ladyship and I are to visit him for a couple of days. I think it is nice and forgiving of him to ask me to Aldershot.

I met Colonel Sterling, who commands the Coldstream Guards, at dinner last night. He said to me 'You will not be long out of employ. The Duke is quite ready to resign, but the FitzGeorges keep him from doing so, when he goes the Duke of Connaught will succeed him, and then there will be a berth for you in Ireland, as Wolseley will be Chief of the Staff.'

I dined on the 30th with Saintsbury. Two of Arthur Balfour's brothers were present, Andrew Lang, Pollock the Editor of the *Saturday*, and one or two more literary men. Funny eno' I did not take a fancy to Lang, and this was without knowing who he was, for Saintsbury mumbled his name so that I did not hear it. I liked all the rest and had a most enjoyable evening. Last night I met Archibald Forbes² at the Kemballs. He is a terrible wreck.

Sir John Muir has very kindly proposed that I should be given the Freedom of the City of Glasgow when we pay him our visit in August. This is a great honour Johnny old boy. Thanks for what you say in your last letter about Hugh Gough. I was determined not to mind anything he may have said when writing to your Chief, as I knew he was smarting under bitter disappointment—so it is all right.

We saw Onslow Forde's studio the other day when we lunched with

¹ Afterward Lord Rawlinson of Trent, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G.

² The great War Correspondent of Crimean days.

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your brother and his nice wife. I was rather horrified at a horse Onslow Forde showed me. Not like an Arab certainly, altho' it was meant for one. I hear Gilbert is the best artist in that line.

Old Neville is here writing for me hard all day. I don't know what I should do without his help and Nicholson's. The latter is simply invaluable. Please thank your Chief for his kind letter. I hope to write to him next mail.

I have done nothing about my seat in the House of Lords.

Your affect.

ROBERTS

17 Dover Street, W.

4th July 1893

Dear Johnny,

Since I last wrote to you, I have received a letter from Gipps offering me Gibraltar, or, if I preferred waiting for a few months, Malta. Of course, I refused, on the grounds that the pay is inadequate to meet the expenses connected with the position. I thought it better to stick to that point, rather than to say anything about not wishing to serve abroad. The letter is written by a clerk, but there is a P.S. to it in Gipps's handwriting to the following effect. 'In making you the foregoing offer and referring to your conversation with H.R.H. at his last Levée I am desired by him to add that he considers, and the Sec: of State fully concurs, that it would be undesirable, indeed impossible, to offer the command at Aldershot to any officer who had held such a high position as that you have recently vacated.'

This does not look well for Aldershot does it? I took no notice of the P.S. in my reply, and since then I have heard nothing further. I wonder how it will all end! I am quite sure that the Duke and all about him would be delighted to get me out of England, but that they will not do for any army command.

I do not think the Viceroyship is looking up—for I should doubt my being pressed to take Gibraltar if such a thing were contemplated. The Duke might not know of its being thought of but C. Bannerman would. Then I gather from the manner of Lord Kimberley and others that they are not thinking of it. They are civil enough, but that is all. I strolled into the House of Lords yesterday as I had a couple of hours to spare before going to Blackheath, and I found the Duke of Argyll speaking about the

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iniquity of making India pay so large a share of the expenses of the Home Army. He made a good speech and was followed by Lord Northbrook who spoke well also. I did not intend to speak, indeed I had no idea that the debate was coming off, but I could not resist saying a few words—especially as Lord Northbrook begged me to do so. I was extremely well received, and I was told that my little speech was thought well of.

Ladyship and I spent from Saturday to Monday with Lord and Lady Cowper at their lovely place 'Panshanger'. There was a delightful party in the house, and we enjoyed the visit. Miss Margot Tennant, who I think you know, was there. . . .

I found myself next to Sir F. Leighton after the ladies had left the room at a dinner given by the Jeunes not long ago, so I asked him what he thought of your brother's pictures. He said he liked the paintings, but he could not judge as to whether the figures were good—characteristic. I said on that point I could assure him. He expressed himself pleased to hear this, and said 'Mr. H. is a rising young artist.'

I have visited several sculptors' studios with Ladyship and Aileen. The three best are Gilbert,¹ Brock² and a young fellow named Bates.³ I do not think that any of the others could be trusted to make a really good statue.

Please note young Ricketts who is doing duty with the Bays for the Bengal Cavalry. His Father helped to raise Hodson's Horse, and would like the son to be in the 9th or 10th B.L. if possible. I am being constantly written to by men wanting me to use my influence with your Chief to help them on, but I always refuse, as I am determined not to write to him about anyone. It would be unfair—he might not like to refuse, and he of course has his own ideas about 'men', and his own friends to look after.

Goodbye

Your affec.

ROBERTS

It was, however, more than two years before employment was found for Lord Roberts, and then it was as Commander-in-Chief in Ireland and not at Aldershot or the Horse Guards.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In December 1893 I set forth to shoot tiger in Nepal with high hopes of adventure. The company consisted of the Commander-in-Chief Sir

¹ Sir Alfred Gilbert, R.A., M.V.O.

² Sir Thomas Brock, R.A.

³ Harry Bates, A.R.A.

KIPLING'S FIRST STORY

George White, Wylie the Resident, Dick-Cunyngham and myself. Camping in the magnificent virgin forest with the sacred, crystal-clear Baghmatti river flowing around was a foretaste of Paradise. Moments like these quickly repay years of work and grind in India. In the evening the string band of the 1st Nepalese Bodyguard Regiment played soft music to us while we dined.

A grand-scale tiger shoot is a wonderful sight. First comes a swaying line of four or five hundred elephants sweeping the jungle; then, after a cry of *Bagh, bagh*, all the elephants race for their lives, as they are beaten over their tails with spiked clubs by the mahouts. The straight line now becomes a great irregular half-moon, the two ends coming ever closer to form a ring, the small elephants keeping level with the tiger who begins to feel the heat and pressure of heavy elephants coming along behind him. The ring is then closed with the elephants jammed together, head touching tail and looking inwards.

On this occasion they had posted me as a stop about a mile beyond everyone else. The immense line of elephants was coming slowly along driving miles of jungle and forest before them. Their left flank was beating up to a small stream with the banks on either side covered with reeds and bulrushes. I had been posted there as they did not want the game to go that way. The first thing that happened was a deer, perhaps only a fawn, came pattering along and was seized either by a tiger or a panther and began to scream most terribly. I said to the mahout, 'Oh, why does it scream so?' A foolish question wisely answered by his replying, 'Sahib, in every living creature the seed of life has been so planted by Destiny that it must struggle to preserve itself, even when all seems lost.'

The line now formed a complete circle in which were not only tigers but many other sorts of game including, I remember, porcupines because elephants are terrified of them. *Shikar* elephants of exceptional pluck and size now went into the ring and began to beat the enclosure, levelling trees amidst roars and occasional charges. Suddenly amidst trumpeting, shrieks, trees falling down and general uproar the tiger appeared, a sudden patch of yellow in the sunlight, and made a grand charge first towards the C.-in-C. who fired and then doubling back came straight towards me. Although fatal, my shot being only second wound I could not claim the skin.

In the afternoon, we were out for a second time and I wrote off a post-script to Vereker about it:—

KIPLING'S FIRST STORY

Nepal

Evening 26.12.93

Another huge tiger!!! 10' 3"—I never saw anything more splendid than the fight he made. The roaring was tremendous and he got home in one of his charges. I knocked him over *first* and gave him his death wound too. But H.E. had fired off his rifle and whether he hit it or not it is then declared the Lord Sahib's. I see it will be very hard to get one as my *very* own and carry off the skin. However I have shot real straight which is the great thing. Just got a present from H.H., Argus pheasants, wood, swamp, and black partridges, jungle fowl in cages. Some Thibetan sheep and goats. Two wild pig in great wooden cages—100 jars of honey—sugar cane—an elephant load of rice, etc., etc.

A day or two later, on an off-day when I was allowed to take out my elephant (to which I was becoming quite attached) and to potter about the nearby jungle, my mahout spotted a man-eating crocodile who had killed several women at the washing pool. Now, unless you can shoot a croc right through the head, it invariably gets away—so the pundits say—but I took steady aim and hit him right behind the shoulder when after one shudder he gave up the ghost. He was not very big, only ten feet long, and he was slung in a loop behind the howdah. Suddenly my elephant gave a shrill trumpet, threw up her trunk and raced off at her top speed through the long grass. I was not alarmed as the one thing you can rely upon in an elephant is that it will not let you down. When it is upon the hard high road, at the Zoo for instance, it just walks along like any other quadruped. But when it is in the jungle its trunk tests everything it is about to put its weight on to. She however had gone mad. She fell right over a log, head over heels. I thought I was dead but emerged still a live Military Secretary and not a pancake from a mass of mahout—trunk—legs—tail, etc., etc. The driver and mahout were both hurt, I had not a scratch. The croc had played the mischief with us by coming to life and biting the poor lady on the bottom. Everyone in camp was astounded to hear of my extraordinary accident.

XIII

THE PROPHETIC LETTER

(1893-1897)

Turning over some old papers one day, I struck on the strange letter Vereker wrote me from Kilberry in Argyllshire in October 1893—truly an astonishing instance of ‘the sight’. The opening sentences alone would have made the future of half a dozen clairvoyantes. As long ago as 1893 he not only suggested I should come to Hythe which I did nearly five years later but named the time—two years—a period unrecognized in the tenure of military appointments. I then became Assistant Adjutant-General for six months to Sir George White then at the War Office as Quartermaster-General—as indicated in the letter—after which he took me as his A.A.G. not to North Africa as Vereker had foretold but to South Africa. To get command of a brigade in this campaign and be awarded a K.C.B. are remarkable enough as apt prophecies to stand by themselves. Then, most startling of all comes ‘Be specially sent on a mission to Japan, write a book that causes a furore throughout Europe.’ The idea of Japan as a possible field of action had never crossed my mind at that date but I *was* specially sent on a mission to Japan eleven years later, that is in 1904, and I *did* write a book that caused a furore throughout Europe; and the strange thing is that ‘furore’ is exactly the right word in so far as it has some association with ‘fury’, which was the feeling predominant, for instance, in King Edward’s mind.

For months on end I had been the one solitary European with 42,000 Japanese on the Heaven Reaching Pass at Kuroki’s Headquarters during the Russo-Japanese War and had become a part and parcel of the machine—so thoroughly saturated with Japanese lore, with their characteristics, their pride, their reactions to outside pressure—that when, at the end of the war, King Edward stopped the publication of my second volume of *A Staff Officer’s Scrap Book*, President Roosevelt wrote him a personal letter begging him to remove his embargo as it was vital that the voters of the U.S.A. should get so vivid a picture of the Rising Sun imprinted upon the retina of their eyes that they should understand not only

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the calibre of Japan's armed forces but the perfidious character of their leaders and the nature of her ordinary citizens.

The trouble had arisen from a story told in the first volume: no Japanese would for a moment have taken umbrage at this story unless indeed the Emperor had in any way been brought into it. The great Marquis Oyama, Chief of the Staff of the Japanese Armies in the Field, was the hero of the tale which ran as follows: 'The Marquis is a shade above the average Japanese height, and is not handsome according to the European standard (quite different from the Japanese standard) his large round features being deeply pitted with small-pox. I heard a story about him and one of his old friends which rather amused me. Once upon a time the two men were staying together at a tea-house, and the friend came to the bath, where he found the Marquis sitting up to his neck in hot water. "Just shake the sponge, will you, a moment," he said, "and hold your head steady, so that I can see which is which."' ¹

The Japanese can stand a lot of heat in their baths but the hot water in which Oyama had sat was tepid compared with that into which the story plunged me. Before publishing I had taken every precaution. Lord Lansdowne had read the galley proofs at the Foreign Office. On his advice I persuaded Baron Hayashi, the Japanese Ambassador, to read them and he passed them. But, out in Tokio, Terraoutsi the War Minister had given a reception. During the reception the Austrian First Secretary said to him, 'I do not know whether your Excellency is aware of it but the whole of Europe is amused or indignant according to their sympathies with the caricature drawn of the great Marquis Oyama in his bath by General Sir Ian Hamilton.' Terraoutsi (father of the recent War Minister) was accustomed to the manœuvres of diplomats and was well aware that it was part of their business to run one another down. Japanese personages spend hours in their baths and might even give receptions there without exciting comment whereas to depict a British Prime Minister or Commander-in-Chief without a stitch of clothing would hardly be according to Cocker. So he was not much impressed. Just to make sure however, he called next day on our Minister, Sir Claude MacDonald. Sir Claude, his Military Attaché Colonel Charles Hume being present, said, 'I think myself it is a pity the book was printed. There are many stories which may be harmlessly told over the port and walnuts though they will not stand cold print.' Instantly Terraoutsi took alarm. 'His own

¹ *A Staff Officer's Scrap Book*, p. 24.

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people do not stick up for him,' were the first words he uttered when he got back to the War Office; I have this from one who heard him. Straight-way a cable was dispatched to London asking that my second volume, by now printed in book form, should be closed. The fiat went forth. A day or two later there was a Levée at St. James's Palace—when King Edward cut me. There is no authentic record in modern times of a Snub Royal so portentous, so damaging being conferred or inflicted upon a subject. Ever since the reign of Edward the Confessor it had been known that the touch of a King would instantly cure scrofula. But it was left to me to prove that a King's frown will give scrofula. The King looked clean over my head when I bowed and did not seem to see me but Society with its hundred eyes saw that he did not see me. Had I been a Japanese I should have disembowelled myself. Being myself I went to see Mr. Haldane. He said we must consult Esher. But nothing came of it except that a shooting invitation to Castle Rising and another farther North where I was to have met the King mysteriously fell through; also one other where the King was not going. My wife, too, got splendid opportunities of spotting her real friends and the rotters amongst her circle of acquaintances until, all at once, like St. George galloping at the Dragon, that perfect brick and chivalrous gentleman, Theodore Roosevelt, appeared with his letter to the King; and once more the sun shone and the birds sang and the pheasants croaked.

The book was translated into French, Italian, German, Japanese, and (by two different translators) into Russian and copies of it have been sold ever since, a new Japanese edition appearing in 1935. But it is time now to give the reader the Prophetic Letter complete and verbatim:—

*Kilberry, Tarbert, Argyllshire,
11th October 1893*

My dear old Ian,

Yours of 20 ult. arrived to-night. I incline to think that to come home soon is the best step. I certainly wouldn't let extra Indian pay weigh for a moment—a few thousand here and there is nothing, and I don't see that a C.B. is much to a man of a large mind unless it distinctly helps him to something else. Why not come home, run Hythe brilliantly for a couple of years, act as A.A.G. at the War Office for six months, get command of a Brigade on active service—say for the conquest of Morocco, get your K.C.B. Be specially sent on a mission to Japan, write a book that

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causes a furore throughout Europe. Invent an entirely new sort of projectile, be received by me at the Royal Academy Banquet (I by this time being President). Have a rest, stalking and fishing. Off suddenly to command an Army Corps in an Afghan War. Be made a Baron and presented with the freedom of the City (I by this time being Lord Mayor having taken to finance and made the largest fortune on record). Go out to India as Commander-in-Chief (your powerful interest and my colossal fortune have by this time made me an Earl and Viceroy of India). We thrash Russia and annex the valley of the Oxus where we have some devilish good pheasant shooting. You are made a Duke, and return to England as Commander-in-Chief. Conquer Spain (you get me created Duke of Andalusia). Jean wears the Spanish Crown jewels, presented to her by a grateful country. You next put down a serious Revolution in England, make friends with both parties and are declared King of England with acclamation. (You create me King of Ireland). We watch the death struggles of France and Germany; when we step in, conquer Germany and annex France. I crown you as Emperor of Europe. We flee surreptitiously from the cares of state, and disguised as subalterns, hire a boat on the Woolar Lake at R. 2 a day and the following year I get my first Barra singh. Disguised as old Highlanders returning to their native land from emigration we purchase a small property in Argyllshire where we spend the evening of life in catching whiting and stalking an occasional black-cock, and in watching the fiery orb sinking in the wide waters of the Atlantic.

There's a life for you!

Hoping Jean is as fit as ever, and will feel equal to the above excellent adventures.

Yours ever,

VEREKER M. HAMILTON

Since 1893, the idea of coming home for a spell had grown more and more alluring. Three years later there had seemed to be a chance that Lord Wolseley might give me the Assistant Adjutant-Generalship in Dublin, which was to fall vacant in January 1897. Lord Roberts, who was then Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Ireland, wrote to tell me of this; but nothing came of it in the end. In the meantime, however, there was plenty to do as Deputy-Quartermaster at Simla, then (perhaps still) one of the hardest worked billets in Asia. After a long office day I used to get back home to dinner pursued by a pile of files three to four feet high.

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The Quartermaster-General, my boss, was a clever, delightful work-glutton. So we sweated and ran together for a while a neck and neck race with our piles of files but I was the younger and he was the first to be ordered off by the doctors to Europe. Then I, at the age of forty-three, stepped into his shoes and became officiating Quartermaster-General in India. Unluckily, the Government at that moment was in a very stingy mood. They refused to provide pay to fill the post I was vacating and Sir George White, the C.-in-C., had to ask me to duplicate myself and do the double work. My heart sank but there was nothing for it but to have a try. The day came; the Q.M.G. went home *and with him went the whole of his share of the work*. As for my own share the hard twelve hours' task melted by some magic into the Socialist's dream of a six-hours' day. How was that? Because, when a question came up from one of the Departments I had formerly been forced to compose a long minute upon it, explaining the case, putting my own views and endeavouring to persuade the Quartermaster-General to accept them. He was a highly conscientious man and if he differed from me he liked to put on record his reasons—several pages of reasons. Or, if he agreed with me, still he liked to agree in his own words and to 'put them on record'. Now, when I became Q.M.G. and D.Q.M.G. rolled into one I studied the case as formerly but there my work ended; I had not to persuade my own subordinates: I had no superior except the Commander-in-Chief, who was delighted to be left alone: I just gave an order—quite a simple matter unless a man's afraid: 'Yes,' I said, or 'No'.

The moral of my reminiscence is plain; the higher up the ladder you climb the less work you should have to do, provided: (1) you have some courage; (2) you have some trust; (3) you have your office so organized that you don't have to deal with more than three or four responsible heads. If a 'mass of work' falls upon 'the unhappy shoulders of a Minister of Defence', as I have seen it stated, it will be his own fault. *If big men are overwhelmed with detail it is always their own fault.*

In 1896, Sir Robert Low sent for me to act as Assistant Adjutant-General and Quartermaster-General on his Lines of Communication in the operations of the Chitral Relief Force. A small detachment had been besieged in Chitral Fort, which lies in a long valley on the borders of Afghan territory in the far north, only fifty miles from the Russian frontier. The Relief Force, as it pushed its way north, had to be supplied over pathless mountains, bridgeless rivers and snow-bound passes swarm-

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ing with hostile tribesmen. Thousands of animals, donkeys, mules, bullocks, camels had to be kept on the move laden with food, forage, and ammunition for the Force up at Chitral in constant danger of being cut off. My life was a never ending struggle to extemporize methods of coping with bandits, fire and flood and it was all I could do to keep my hair on or my head above water. At one moment when General Low went on to Chitral leaving me at Dir, whilst General Stedman went off down the line inspecting with Kemball and his A.D.C., I and my clerk were left in charge of 15,000 fighting men plus goodness knows how many doctors, hospital assistants, postal, telegraph and transport officers.

The country was like Kashmir and so was the climate. A letter to Vereker from Broz in the Chitral Valley dated the 26th June 1896 describes the scenery:

‘A hot little valley just stuffed with wild olives, pomegranates, walnut trees, and mulberries. Above the mountains shoot up sheer precipices in the most giddy and dramatic proportions. And down below the Chitral river spins along huge and inky black straight from the glaciers of the Hindu Kush. Towards Chitral you look right away up a narrow valley like a funnel with the black water racing at the bottom of it. And far in the distance the funnel is closed by a heavy belt of dark blue mountains. When there are clouds on these mountains you see nothing more. But if perchance those clouds should lift, the astonished traveller beholds towering in the background, darting skywards, the most stupendous bulk of a pure snow mountain. At first he fears no earthly mountain can be so vast and wonderful. Then he realizes he is gazing at Tirich Mir the 4th largest mountain in the world and its first wonder.’

As to the fighting, which had many ups and downs and ended with the flight of Umra Khan who had started all the trouble by invading Chitral, the one experience vivid enough to stand on its own legs and remain as clear cut as yesterday is a battle of insects. As I was climbing the Janbatai Pass I noticed a big fly about the size of a dragon-fly diving down at something in the short grass a yard or two on the left of my path. I stepped out to see and beheld a large tarantula spider at which the ichneumon fly, for that is what it was, made its dive; instantly the spider threw itself on its back and stretching out its legs held off the enemy, successfully this time. So it went on for a couple of minutes when the spider tired and the ichneumon got in and delivered its sting. Instantly the tarantula went all limp and the fly seizing it dragged it along a couple of feet to its

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den. The entry was surrounded with wings, scales, legs of grasshoppers and small beetles. It looked as though the spider was going to be stuffed into its own hole. Or was this the home of the ichneumon fly? I could not determine but there was something of horror at the whole affair and very wrongly, I dare say, it drove me to put my foot on the lot of them and end the story.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Operations having ceased and the Dublin appointment having failed to materialize I came home on leave the following year. There was trouble, however, brewing among the Afridis, fierce tribes who lived north-west of Kohat in the Tirah country on the borders of Afghanistan. As they had joined the revolt, the Government of India decided to send a punitive expedition into the heart of their country, which lies about a hundred and fifty miles south of the scene of the fighting the previous year, among tremendous mountains east of the Khyber Pass; so in September '97 I was sailing back to India with Sir William Lockhart and Captain Aylmer Haldane in the hopes of taking part in the Tirah campaign. As we got to Aden and transhipped into the P. & O. for Bombay, I was terribly anxious to know what news awaited me there and whether the war was over or whether some chap at Simla might not have done me out of my show. A letter to Jean gives the news:—

P. & O. S.S. Shannon

13.9.97

Yesterday was rather a memorable date in my little earthly career. I do not yet call it a Red Letter Day, for that will depend on the ultimate results. Sir William, Lord Methuen, Haldane, and I went ashore to lunch with Saddler who is acting at Aden in General Cuninghams's place as Resident. From there Sir Wm. got a telegram marked 'Secret' from Sir George White. It mentioned the names of two Divisional Commanders and six Brigadiers and Sir Wm. had to show it me to take my advice about certain of the Brigadiers. Then I came to know that I was to have the first Brigade subject to Sir William's approval. Sir William was awfully nice about me although he has objected to one or two of the others so humanly speaking I am all right now as far as getting my chance goes—and no one should ask more than that. Don't please mention a word to anyone about Sir William showing me this telegram or consulting me about it. I fancy as soon as Sir George got Sir William's telegraphed re-

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marks he would publish the composition of the force and in that case you will know all about it long before this reaches you. Remember I shall be General Hamilton now until the war is over, supposing of course that there is no slip between the cup and the lip. He! He!! He!!! Even you will have to begin to be respectful now I should hope!

It should be remembered that I was still on leave and out there entirely at my own expense. That meant I might have been ordered home again unless I could wangle myself on to the Indian establishment. Luckily Sir William Lockhart was very friendly. On one occasion he had been reading about the battle of Cannae and Scipio Africanus and as I was passing by on my way to the upper deck he called out 'Hulloa, Hannibal!' Everyone laughed but I considered the slip of good augury.

On the 6th October I was writing from Peshawar:—

'I am collecting a number of troops together to take over the Kohat Pass to Kohat and there are a number of more or less complicated orders to issue in this connection. *Most* unfortunately *both* my staff officers are down with high fever, just at this juncture when I had such special need of their services. So Sally Swanston and I have had to do all the work and orders, etc. between us. . . . My force to take across the Pass is not my own Brigade as it will ultimately be, but a scratch lot consisting of the Gordon Highlanders, the Devons, the 4th Gurkhas, the Nabha Infantry—(Imperial Service) also the 16th Lancer Machine Gun—Two Devonshire Maxims—a British Mountain Battery, and a lot of Field Hospitals, Commissariat Stores, etc., etc.'

Five days later there is a description of going through the Pass:—

'I have brought my column all right through the formidable Kohat Pass and only a very few men went to Hospital although the last march was a twister. It was only 18 miles long it is true but the track was covered with boulders and loose round pebbles and lay through an intensely hot and breathless narrow defile. Then at the end we had to climb a very steep ascent followed by as steep a descent. I am very glad we were not molested en route as the defile would have been very difficult to defend. René Bull of *Black and White* made several sketches en route which give a very good idea of the place so you should buy a *Black and White* regularly now and look at it as the pictures will be real and not faked up for the occasion. . . . The present idea is that we do not move on from here

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for a whole week now—i.e. until the 17th when we shall be in the thick of it very soon as I think we ought to be at, or very near, the Sanpaga Pass by the 22nd. Penn Symons is my Divisional General and a very good one I think he will be. But Lockhart does not like him and he is so much guided by his personal feelings and inclinations in everything he does that I fear this may militate against us, at any rate until he realizes that we are better than he thinks. I have a grand Battalion in the Devonshire Regt. and another very good one in the 2/1 Gurkhas. The 30th P.I. are also good and if only the Derbyshire (who have not joined me yet) are anything like the Devons we ought to do pretty well. I have a fine red flag in front of my tent with $\frac{1}{2}$ in white on it. Had I only known before I left England I would have got you to make me one of silk.'

'On the 15th October all is joyful preparation:—

'I march from here to-morrow in command of a tremendous force—not all of it my own—in fact only two Battalions of it my own. When we have done two or three marches from here towards the enemy's country I shall get my remaining Battalions and shed off the troops that don't belong to me. *Then* we shall be ready for the fray and if the enemy stand to it we shall be in the thick of it within a week—so in ordinary course everything should be settled, one way or another, before you get this.'

All these fine hopes of mine were, however, doomed to disappointment:—

Kohat, 19.10.97

My darling wife—

I have half a mind to tear open and read my other letter to you which will go by this mail but it would harrow my mind too much to do so as I am sure it was full of all the delightful preparations I was making. Now all is over for the present and you will not be Milady this journey anyway!

I was riding quietly along when my pony shied at some veiled women on donkeys—slipped up on the road and fell bang over on his side. I almost threw myself clear but was caught by both stirrups in my big shooting boots and he rolled over my leg smashing it and then got up and dragged me by the other foot which had still stuck in. When I jumped to my feet I felt my leg crack and bend and then it came over me in one bitter instant that the show was at an end for me.

I had such a fine Brigade too,—and everything worked out and going as smooth as clockwork—and a staff who suited me and old Nicholson as

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Chief of the Staff so altogether I am not likely to have such a chance again, in a hurry!

I have had the most charming and sympathetic telegrams from half India I think—including the Viceroy—Sir Wm. Lockhart and of course the Chief. Also messages from the Corps in my Command.

But I can't really bear to write about it any longer.

My idea at present is to take 3 months' privilege leave and go home the mail after this reaches you but you will know all this in a day or two—Had this cruel misfortune not happened and I had come through even the next 10 days all right I should have been coming home a deuce of a swell and with so strong a position that I could with an easy mind have taken off my hat to India for the present and waited at home until something turned up. But as it is I really don't know, and won't decide at present, what is the best course to pursue. Goodbye my darling. If I do come home it will be jolly seeing you so soon anyway.

Your loving

IAN.

Just as, after Majuba, I was the first case of Lister's excision of the wrist to be carried out on the field, so, now, the setting of my leg was to be in the nature of an experiment. The leg was set and then encased in plaster of paris after which it was warranted to stand any amount of knocking about on its journey out of the battle zone. A very pretty scheme on paper but in plaster of paris not so pretty because the darned stuff refused to solidify—having been so long in store its parisian properties had perished. Let us hope that no similar cases of negligence in the overhaul of medical supplies have been allowed to occur since. I had refused to take chloroform when the leg was originally set and I refused it again at this the second setting but it was agony. On the top of everything I got dysentery which is like swallowing and evacuating red-hot iron. I began to wonder if I should have to take a trip home as I had done during the Afghan campaign in order to get fit. On the 9th November I wrote to Jean from Simla:—

'As the Whites will have told you I have had rather a bad time. I wish no one worse than to have a broken leg and sprained ankle plus high fever and thorough stomach derangement. However, I am now convalescent and have a very nice nurse to look after me in every way. There is no use trying to make plans till I see how my leg is on the 26th. If I am all right and get no more fever it would be absurd to run home on 60 days which

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is all I can get without forfeiture of my appointment. On the other hand if I am not all right and if I get any more fever I *must* come home, *coûte que coûte*. I am unwilling anyway to come home as long as there is a soldier in the field as if I can only get really fit there is no saying but a contrary stroke of Fortune's wheel might yet set me back in command of a brigade.'

And a week later:—

'As regards myself, I am quite free from the fever and getting as strong as possible again. After ripe consideration I feel that I *must* absolutely stay out here until this show is over. No one can say what may not happen or what, at present, unforeseen opening may not suddenly offer itself; and I shall be fit for service by the first week in December and if on the spot and available all might yet be retrieved.'

I still had hopes of slipping back in some capacity or another across the frontier. In December my leg was pronounced a perfect join by the doctors, and I began to hobble about. Jean, who had been dissuaded by me from coming out while there was still a chance I might get back to the front, now decided to come out on the first P. & O. in January. In the meantime General Westmacott went sick and Lockhart wired asking me to take his place. So my poor Jean's plans were upset once more and on the 22nd December I was writing to her from Calcutta:

'If I can pass a medical board this morning, I am off to the front again and all your poor wee mousie plans are upset. Providence should have created you a good bold vagrant rat when it decided that you should link your destiny to mine, instead of which a poor little mouse, loving a warm and ornate nest and to be settled with all her comforts around her, is now whirled out over the Red Sea to India and again a week or two later, after she has sent off all her things, remanded to England for a period which is upon the knees of the gods. How this may affect our plans (if it comes off) it is truly impossible to say—but one thing appears probable,—viz. that 3 months' leave (special) will be given to officers who have taken part in this campaign and that I may now, either get home to bring you out to Simla in spring, or else get home later for three months of the summer. If I lose my small reputation, as so many have already done in this show, then I shan't care a hang what happens and plans will be as you think best. If on the other hand I should hold command for some time and come out of the business well then I shall feel much more free than at present to follow my own inclinations. . . . I have passed my board all

THE PROPHETIC LETTER

right. So another obstacle between me and the front has been swept away. You should have seen me run round the table when they asked me to, altho' I really have a regular marked limp yet. However, it is getting less every day.'

But Fate was against me. When all seemed settled, a wire was sent asking Lockhart when I should start. To this after three days' delay he replied saying that General Westmacott was feeling better and did not think that, after all, it would be necessary for him to leave the field. So there I was, sold again! Sir Bindon Blood then wired for me to command his Line of Communications in Boner but they would not let me go and sent a man called Schalch instead, which was a bitter disappointment. Then H.E. told me I must go and take command at Peshawar, but even this, third best that it was, failed to materialize:

Fort William, 13.1.98

Fortune is still hard at work playing football, or shuttlecock, or whatever you like to call it, with unfortunate me. Three days ago I was told positively I must be in Peshawar on the 20th inst. to take over from Elles, who was to take the 2nd Division *vice* Palmer, who was to succeed Lockhart. I got all my badges of rank changed back yesterday from Colonel to Brigadier and naturally I hear to-day that Lockhart is going to stay on an extra fortnight to wind up the whole affair as the Afridis are said to be coming in. This means that I shan't go to Peshawar to do which, *per se*, I was no-wise keen but also that the last chance of service in command of a Brigade is vanishing. With this also disappears my last hope, or rather my best hope of getting home to England. For I cannot really bear to leave India after all these years with the brand of failure hot upon me. I must give it a little tiny bit to cool. I am much worried about you. It was by H.E.'s advice I wired you about Peshawar. Of course my hope was that you would never need to come out at all and that I would be going home for good about May. But now I think we had better work on the idea that you are coming out for the Simla season. In the present contrary mood of Dame Fortune this is our best chance of getting out of India. I shall therefore take a house at once.

But in February my chance came at last:

THE PROPHEPIC LETTER

Fort William, 3.2.98

My own darling sweetheart,

During the past 3 days I have been in more of a ferment than usual even. The day before yesterday I got positive orders to go to Peshawar at last to command *vice* Elles who got Palmer's post, who got Lockhart's. Yesterday Lockhart determined not to go to England, so none of these vacancies took place, so my orders were cancelled. To-day Lockhart asks for me to go and command the 3rd B^{de}. in place of Kempster who has been recalled to Madras and unless the unforeseen occurs again I am off there sharp. You need not be anxious dearest one—The 3rd B^{de}. is in a very safe place. I am going to take Jim Turner¹ as Orderly Officer if he can be spared. If not I am going to take young Churchill. As to how this affects your movements, I think you had better not start for India unless I wire you to that effect. Altho' Lockhart has specifically asked me to officiate as Q.M.G. I mean to get out of it if I possibly can and come home after this campaign. In fact I am so keen on it this time that I think I shall pull it off if all goes well. . . .

I must go now and look about for my kit and pack up. Darling wife what a time this has been. If only I can manage to run my show properly all may turn out to have been for the best. I don't think I shall wire you till I get to my Brigade—I have had so many disappoints. already and there may be another slip yet in store for me.

You had better begin to creep about quietly soon looking for a wee wee house in town in case I am fairly certain of getting home and wire you to stay in England—

Goodbye darling,

Ever

Your loving

IAN.

When I got up to Camp Bara in the Tirah country a week later, I found myself sitting in the same tent and writing at the same camp table as I had been on that afternoon in October when, within a few hours, I was fated to break my leg. I had a tremendous force under me—really a Division and not a Brigade at all; seven Battalions of Infantry, a battery and two companies of Sappers; and we made ourselves as comfortable as might be:

¹ Afterwards Major-General J. G. Turner, C.B.

THE PROPHETIC LETTER

Camp Barkai, 21.2.98

We have bought a cow and all yesterday Jim was making a house for it and arranging how to feed it. We think a great deal about our food too as people always do on service and Jim, so far, has done splendidly. Amongst other things we have cakes sent by parcel post and yesterday a cold cooked fowl came in a letter from Peshawar. We have built a big wall round our tent and dug out the ground underneath leaving blocks of earth wherewith to sustain the tent poles—so we have a very spacious palace and with the united ingenuity of the Staff have constructed a fireplace at one end thereof. At first it smoked so terribly that our eyes used to pour with tears at meal-time—but now the creature is becoming more manageable.

Failing this old campaigner's trick we should have been sniped out of existence in one night and as it might be a help to our comrades in North Africa I put it down here. Suppose your shelter is a bell-tent—you screw together the two halves of the tent-pole and drive the pegs into the ground. Then you begin to excavate. You dig out the earth to the depth of five feet leaving the tent pole based on the ground level. Unless the enemy bomb falls exactly on the top of the pole you remain as cosy as a bug in a rug however heavy the bombing or sniping.

It was during the operations in the Bara Valley that I first saw young Winston enjoying himself amongst the bullets: Care and Fear have had no hand in his make-up for which may Providence be praised.

XIV

WINSTON

Setting the fair sex tenderly but firmly on the mantelpiece, nobody, not even Lord Bobs in all his glory, has touched my life at so many points as Winston Churchill. So much indeed has he done so that were my pages to give no glimpses of his strange voyage through the years, showing him sometimes as the Flying Dutchman, scudding along under bare poles; sometimes as the Ancient Mariner under flapping canvas in a flat calm; sometimes as a small boy playing with gold-fish; my story would not be complete. As a sample—on the 6th of January '41 Bardia had fallen:—red-hot news. Before it began to cool it must be hammered into all sorts of shapes and handed out through many channels leading to Finance, Parliament and the World. Every second was priceless yet he paused to let his mind fly back forty-one years to send a special message to an old comrade of the wars who had long since ceased to interest Press, Parliament or Finance.

Post Office Telegram

London 12.54

General Sir Ian Hamilton—Blair Drummond—Perthshire.

I am thinking of you and Wagon Hill when another January 6th brings news of a fine feat of arms.

WINSTON

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In 1897 Winston had got leave from his Regiment the 4th Hussars and had managed to get himself attached to the 35th Sikhs taking part in the Malakand Campaign among the hill tribes of the N.W. Frontier where he did very well. When the operations of that Force came to an end, he had hoped to join the Expeditionary Force for Tirah on the Afghan border west of Peshawar; but his Commanding Officer, two thousand miles away in Bangalore, thought otherwise and ordered him to return.

By the time I got command of a Brigade in the Bara Valley of the Tirah country, the famous action on the Dargai Heights in which the Gordons had so distinguished themselves had taken place and we were

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involved in what was politely called an evacuation, but was really a 'get away' of the worst type, for it was a matter of bribery as well. The details were secret at the time but by now they must have become dead secrets and fit subjects for a post mortem. Characteristically, Winston had set his heart on sampling this, the most dangerous, disagreeable and thankless task in the whole military box of tricks. Sir William Lockhart was still in Valley with the bulk of the Force but under pressure from Simla, who were sick of the expense and of the whole business, he had patched up a peace with the Maliks or Heads of the Afridi tribe. Under the terms they had surrendered some thousands of their rifles, most of them captured or stolen from us, and were being given umpteen heavy bags of silver to induce them to go on pretending they had been defeated. Then it was that Winston, who with his brother officers of the 4th Hussars had fitted themselves out with a splendid team of ponies and had been working like fiends to win the all-India polo tournament, wired to me from Meerut, 600 miles away, begging me to fix him an interview with Sir William Lockhart. Sir William who had known my father and was always more than kind to me agreed and Winston managed to persuade him to take him on as an extra aide-de-camp. Hardly had he done so when he (Sir William) was recalled to Simla to take up his duties as Commander-in-Chief. And there was Winston! Really it was enough to make a cat laugh.

Meanwhile I myself was standing literally as well as metaphorically on the edge of a precipice. I was commanding the only formed force left in the Valley—for a long line of some 20,000 troops marching with bag and baggage and thousands of camp followers along a narrow road through a series of deep ravines could hardly be considered a tactical unit. My Brigade, strengthened by several batteries of Artillery, occupied a secret fortified camp over the border at the foot of range upon range of beetling cliffs; the spot was called Gudda Kalai which in the Pushtoo language means 'The Den of Thieves'. Thence we had to cover the get-away of our troops during the last few miles which lay between them and the British Frontier. And it was needed. For although the Maliks of the Afridis had given us a safe-conduct there were a large number of outlaws, cut-throats, and murderers who didn't care two hoots for their own Maliks and if they had any respect for God had been taught by their Mullahs that the best passport to His affection would be to slaughter as many infidels as possible.

WINSTON

To deal with these gentry the only way, we found, was to crown the crest-lines by dawn with light armed scouts—mostly Gurkhas—who, carrying nothing but their rifles, kukris, bandoliers, and water-bottles, and supported by gun-fire from our camp, occupied the heights without much trouble. But when they had to disengage themselves in the evening to get back within the shelter of their own camp picquets, then there was the very deuce to pay. The Afridis would come on with shouts and press hard on their heels. So they had to form a second line on the mountain side, two or three hundred yards in rear, and then make a sudden simultaneous bolt to pass through this second line and get back by alternate rushes. If some men were wounded or killed the delay and the target thus offered were apt to result in serious losses and one corpse might make a dozen.

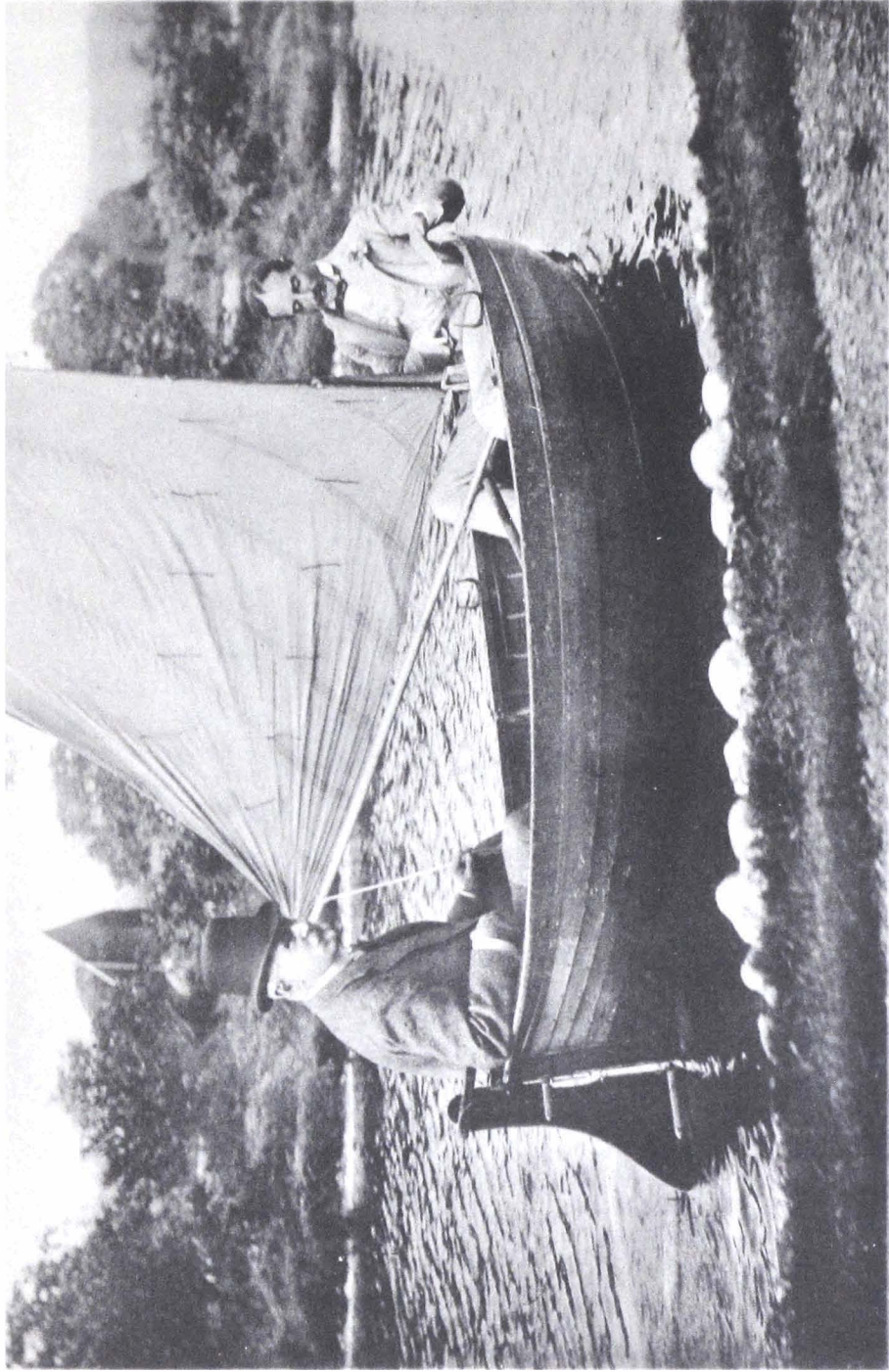
Winston was several times out with these parties and was not only a real help, but learnt a great deal more about soldiering and the strenuous and dangerous side of war; about dodging bullets, taking up rear-guard positions, and laying ambushes than he would have learnt by years of parades and polo matches with his regiment. In fact he learnt exactly what he was to put into practice three years later at Diamond Hill.

Just as the battle of Diamond Hill meant the true turning point of the South African campaign, so the decision I had to make at Gudda Kalai was to be the be or not-to-be of my own career, now on the point of burying itself in a Scottish graveyard. The fighting was coming to an end when I received a wire and a cable. The wire was from Sir William Lockhart offering me the magnificent post of Quarter-Master General in India on a salary of £3,000 a year; the cable was from Sir Evelyn Wood offering me the post of Commandant of Musketry at Hythe in England at a quarter of the salary. A simultaneous offer of two choice billets must be very unusual but after thinking the matter over for twenty-four hours and consulting General Penn Symons—afterwards killed at Talana—I closed with the offer of Hythe at £800 a year. Thus, and thus only as it turned out, was I enabled to take part in the South African War.

As I was on the point of starting home I got the following letter from Winston, who was now burning to see active service in Egypt, as I had been fourteen years earlier. He had just published his first book, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*.



In Camp, Kohat, February 1898



Ian H. at Deanston with Lord Bobs

WINSTON

*4th Hussars,
India*

My dear General,

I have just got Lady Jeune's letter. It says that Sir E. W.¹ told her to tell me that if I got leave in August, he would see that I got to the front. That is of course good enough. I must however forgo England which is painful. How painful you on the verge of starting home will appreciate.

The book has apparently been well received. The only criticism which really pleased me is the only one which condemns the ridiculous mistakes that disfigure each page. The *Athenæum* says, *inter alia*, 'The book is a literary phenomenon. . . . It resembles in its present style a volume of Disraeli, revised by a mad printer's reader. It here and there yields passages worthy of Napier's history. Yet words are shamefully murdered and sentence after sentence is disfigured by the punctuation of an idiot or of a schoolboy in the lowest form. Yet—thinks the critic—with a little correction on each page it will rank as a "military classic".'

The severe censure enhances the praise. I may repeat the style without the faults. At any rate my vanity, which you know is extraordinary, has not been shocked.

I have written on Lady J.'s suggestion a long letter to Sir E. W. I am anxious to get something at home after Egypt as I do not want to leave the army until I am fixed in politics. But what. The only thing I can think of is the I.B.² I have some qualifications. But perhaps you would know whether this was in any way possible. It would interest me, and I believe I might be of use, as my pen is mightier than my sword.

I wonder whether the letter has been published! What fun—if it has. I have also written a story and an article. The story I send you as it may amuse you for an hour on the voyage. The article is on the frontier question and has been evoked by the cordial invitation of the Journal of the U.S. Institution in which it is to appear. I trust you will like it. I have chosen a circuitous, insidious, but none the less effective method of defending the Forward Policy. I hope you duly received the copy of my book which I told them to send with my very best wishes.

Please say nice things about me to everyone at home. If you would call on my mother—35a Gt. Cumberland Place—she would be very grateful for news of me and to meet one who has shown me much kindness.

¹ Sir Evelyn Wood.

² Intelligence Branch.

WINSTON

I must congratulate you on your appointment in England—it is I suppose what you wanted. The other was one of greater power. But I suppose you think with others 'Better fifty years of Europe, than a cycle of Cathay'.

Here I am back at duty, the monotonous routine only broken by the ceaseless scratching of my pen. The novel is nearly finished. Another month will see it on its way to the publisher. Au revoir my dear general—may we meet again when rifles are loaded and swords sharpened—if possible before an audience which will include 40 centuries.

Yours very sincerely,

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

Au revoir my dear general
- may we meet again
when rifles are loaded and
swords sharpened - if possible
before an audience which will
include 40 centuries.

Yours very sincerely,

Winston S. Churchill

The novel was *Savrola*, and I brought the MS. back with me and handed it over to his mother Lady Randolph Churchill in London, a fact which was duly recorded on the fly-leaf of my presentation copy in my wife's

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hand. Winston says now that he has consistently begged his friends not to read it and, as his taste in literary matters is impeccable, I must accept his judgment. It was first serialized in *Macmillan's Magazine* and then published as a book in 1900 when Winston presented me with a copy at Ladysmith.

My next letter from Winston was written from the Sudan and gives such a vivid account of his personal experiences fighting the Dervish host at Omdurman that I must give it *verbatim*. Afterwards he wrote a description of the battle in his book *The Nile River War* but there is a personal quality about these comments written down red-hot at the time which gives the letter a very special interest. The original is partly written in pencil and is almost illegible in places:

In the train
Sudan Military Ry.
16th Sept. 1898

My dear General,

I received your letter yesterday at Atbara Fort and was the more glad to get it because all my correspondence has miscarried and is I think wandering forlornly up and down the Nile. Yesterday's mail was the first I have received.

Well, all is over and the words Khalifa and Khartoum may now be handed over to the historian, soldiers having no further use for them. You will have read of the 'Battle'—everything here is a 'Battle'—till you are probably very tired. I will only tell you some personal matters.

First of all, I hope you may have seen the *Morning Post* and have recognized my handiwork therein. I will not repeat what I have written there. Purely Personal—will that bore you? I hope not.

I had a patrol on 2nd Sept. and was I think the first to see the enemy—certainly the first to hear their bullets. Never shall I see such a sight again. At the very least there were 40,000 men—five miles long in lines with great humps and squares at intervals—and I can assure you that when I heard them all shouting their war songs from my coign of vantage on the ridge of Heliograph Hill I and my little patrol felt very lonely and though I never doubted the issue, I was in great awe.

Then they advanced and I watched them, fascinated and of course scribbling messages perpetually to the Sirdar and O.C. 21st Lancers. Their cavalry patrols which consisted of five or six horsemen each made no attempt to drive me back and I waited until one great brigade of per-

WINSTON

haps 2,000 men got to within 400 yards. I didn't realize they could shoot and thought they were all spearmen. Then they halted for a quarter of an hour and treated me and my 7 Lancers with complete disdain. Foolishly I dismounted 4 and opened magazine into the brown of them. Thereat they sent out 20 Riflemen and began to make very close practice. Finally I had to gallop and as we did so I did not hear less than 30 bullets. Luckily, (you know how capricious Fortune is) we never had a man touched. If we had it would have meant others.

I then sent the patrol behind the hill and went up to the top myself. I dismounted but my grey pony was a target and it got too hot for me to stay although the scene was worth looking at. Various frantic people, Adjutant, trumpeters, etc. then arrived and brought me back to my squadron. But I assumed so very lofty a position, pointing out that no men had been hurt (and they admitted the value of the information) that I was allowed to go off again. I attributed the fact that we had no casualties to my 'experience' etc. It was really due to the Almighty's amiability. For candidly the fire was for the time being as hot as anything I have seen—barring only those 10 minutes with the 35th Sikhs—a year ago to-day.

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WINSTON

Then the whole attack developed and they cleared the Cavalry into the zeriba and we listened for an hour to 20,000 rifles, near 60 guns and 20 maxims without seeing much. Watered and fed etc. A few bullets, all high as good cover down by bank. At 8.30 the attack weakened and we were trotted out of the zeriba to left flank. We halted on the old ridge and messed about with carbines for a quarter of an hour. Beyond the ridge thousands of Dervishes could be seen as I thought fugitives, 'meet to be cut up'. I made use of the expression 'supine apathy' here.

At 8.40 we mounted and rode slowly towards these crowds. I was confident that we should spear them till we could not sit on our horses. But between us and the distant fugitives was a single line of 150 men. We all thought these spearmen. They let us get within 250 yds in silence. We proposed, at least I think this was the idea, to move round their flank and slip a squadron at them and then on to the better things beyond. The ground looked all right and besides we did not intend doing anything from that direction.

We trotted in column of troops across their front from right to left. As we did so the enemy got down on their knees and opened a very sharp fire. There was a loud brisk crackle of musketry. The distance was too short for it to be harmless on so big a target and I realized that there were only two courses open, viz: Left wheel into line and gallop off—coming back for wounded—a bad business, and Right wheel into Line and Charge. I think everybody made his own decision. At any rate while the trumpet was still jerking we were all at the gallop towards them. The fire was too hot to allow of second lines, flank squadrons or anything like that being arranged. The only order given was Right wheel into Line. Gallop and Charge were understood.

I went through the first 100 yds. looking over my left shoulder to see what sort of effect the fire was producing. It seemed small. Then I drew my Mauser pistol—a ripper—and cocked it. Then I looked to my front. Instead of the 150 riflemen who were still blazing, I saw a line nearly (in the middle) 12 deep and a little less than our own front of closely jammed spearmen, all in a nullah with steep sloping sides, say 6 foot deep and 20 foot broad.

After the Frontier I thought—Capital the more the merrier. I must explain my position. I was right troop leader but one. I saw we overlapped. I was afraid we would charge into air. I shouted to Wormald—7th Hus-sars—an excellent officer) to shoulder and we actually struck the enemy

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in a crescent formation. Result of our shoulder was this—my troop struck nullah diagonally, and this decreasing slope enabled us to gallop through not jump it. Result we struck—faster and more forward than the centre troops.

Opposite me they were about 4 deep. But they all fell knocked A.O.T. and we passed through without any sort of shock. One man in my troop fell. He was cut to pieces. Five or six horses were wounded by back-handers etc. But otherwise—no scathe. Then we emerged into a region of scattered men and personal combats. The troop broke up and disappeared. I pulled into a trot and rode up to individuals firing my pistol in their faces and killing several—3 for certain—2 doubtful—one very doubtful. Then I looked round and saw the Dervish mass reforming. The charge had passed through, knocking over nearly half. These were getting on their legs again and their Emirs were trying to collect them into a hump again. I realized that this mass was about 20 yards away and I looked at them stupidly for what may have been 2 seconds. Then I saw two men get down on their knees and take aim with rifles—and for the first time the danger and peril came home to me. I turned and galloped. The squadron was reforming nearly 150 yds. away. As I turned both shots were fired and at that close range I was grievously anxious. But I heard none of their bullets, which went heaven knows where. So I pulled into a canter and rejoined my troop, having fired exactly 10 shots and emptied my pistol, but without a hair of my horse or a stitch of my clothing being touched—very few can say the same.

I am glad to have added the experience of a cavalry charge to my military repertoire. But really though dangerous it was not in the least exciting and it did not look dangerous—at least not to me. You see I was so confident we should spear them and hunt them and the realization of our loss did not come to me until we reformed and I saw the wounded etc. It was I suppose the most dangerous 2 minutes I shall live to see. Out of 310 officers and men we lost—1 officer and 20 men killed—4 officers and 45 men wounded and 119 horses of which—56 were bullet wounds. All this in 120 seconds!

I never saw better men than the 21st Lancers. I don't mean to say I admired their discipline or their general training, both I thought inferior. But they were the 6 year British soldier type, and every man was an intelligent human being that knew his own mind. My faith in our race and blood was much strengthened. As soon as we got through, I reformed

WINSTON

my troop getting about 15 together and I told them they would have to go back and perhaps back again after that. Whereupon my centre guide said in a loud voice, 'All right sir—we're ready—as many times as you like.'

I asked my second sergeant if he had enjoyed himself. He replied 'Well I don't exactly say I enjoyed it, Sir—but I think I'll get more used to it next time.' This mind you was at 9.15 a.m. and looking out on the possibilities of the day, I thought we should have lots more.

I was very anxious for the regiment to charge back because it would have been a very fine performance and men and officers could easily have done it while they were warm. But the dismounted fire was more useful though I would have liked the charge—'pour la gloire'—and to buck up British cavalry. We all got a little cold an hour afterwards and I was quite relieved to see that 'heroics' were 'off' for the day at least.

I send you a rough sketch, which may interest you. I did not distinguish myself in any way—although as my composure was undisturbed my vanity is of course increased. I informed the attached officers on the way up, that there was only one part of the despatch in which they could hope to be mentioned. They asked what part. I replied 'The casualty list'. And the words were nearly prophetic because out of 8 we had 1 killed and 2 badly wounded.

I am in great disfavour with the authorities here. Kitchener was furious with Sir E. Wood for sending me out and expressed himself freely. My remarks on the treatment of the wounded—again disgraceful—were repeated to him and generally things have been a little unpleasant. He is a great general but he has yet to be accused of being a great gentleman.

It is hard to throw stones at the rising sun and my personal dislike may have warped my judgment, but if I am not blinded, he has been on a certainty from start to finish and has had the devil's luck to help him beside.

Hoping to see you at the end of the month.

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

P.S. I wish you would imitate Sir B. Blood and write to me as 'Winston'. Churchill is very formal. W.S.C.

[*Written on the back.*] The envelope may interest you—it is one of the first ever stamped with the Khartoum postmark. W.S.C.

WINSTON

During the South African War Winston gave the embattled hosts at Diamond Hill an exhibition of conspicuous gallantry (the phrase often used in recommendations for the V.C.) for which he has never received full credit. Here is the story:—My Column, including Broadwood's Cavalry and a lot of guns, lay opposite and below a grassy mountain, bare of rocks or trees, not unlike our own South Downs where they meet the sea. The crest line was held by the Boer left. The key to the battlefield lay on the summit but nobody knew it until Winston, who had been attached to my Column by the High Command, somehow managed to give me the slip and to climb this mountain, most of it being dead ground to the Boers lining the crestline as they had to keep their heads down owing to our heavy gun-fire. He climbed this mountain as our Scouts were trained to climb on the Indian Frontier and ensconced himself in a niche not much more than a pistol shot directly below the Boer Commandos—no mean feat of arms in broad daylight and one showing a fine trust in the accuracy of our own guns. Had even half a dozen of the Burghers run twenty yards over the brow they could have knocked him off his perch with a volley of stones. Thus it was that from his lofty perch Winston had the nerve to signal me, if I remember right, with his handkerchief on a stick, that if I could only manage to gallop up at the head of my Mounted Infantry we ought to be able to rush the summit. At that moment another message was handed in from Sir John French saying that our extreme left was falling back. A strong counter-stroke seemed therefore as if it might come in the nick of time. Lord Airlie's charge (and death) at the head of his Lancers had for the moment completely cleared the face of the mountain—there was nothing moving but a field ambulance—so I called up my men and jumped on to my little black waler. Before I had got my right foot into the stirrup (luckily) a blow like a punch from the fist of a giant struck my right shoulder and I was flung out of the saddle. A shrapnel bullet had struck me, but the range being extreme had only decorated my back with a big black and blue bruise, nothing more, no blood, no wound pension, no nothing, so on we galloped. Pole Carew and the Guards followed suit and we were right in among the Boers firing from horseback, a most glorious scrimmage, before they knew where they were; but they were in the soup all right and lo and behold! the left flank of the Boers was turned. Looks quite simple, doesn't it—on paper? Louis Botha has himself told us in his memoirs how he had been on the point of delivering a crushing blow at

WINSTON

French and his Cavalry on our extreme left which would have sent him (so Botha was persuaded) scampering back to Pretoria when, his own left having been turned, he had to forgo his *coup* and fall back with the whole of his force.

The capture of Diamond Hill¹ meant the winning of the battle, ending as it did in a general retirement by the Boers; also it meant the turning point of the war. The capture of Pretoria had not been the true turning point but rather this battle of Diamond Hill which proved that, humanly speaking, Pretoria would not be retaken.

Persistent efforts were made by me to get some mention made or notice taken of Winston's initiative and daring and of how he had grasped the whole lay-out of the battlefield; but he had two big dislikes against him,—those of Bobs and K. And he had only been a Press Correspondent—they declared—so nothing happened. As it was under me at Gudda Kalai that he had enjoyed a brief but very strenuous course of study in the art of using ground to the best advantage either for attack or defence, this made me furious with impotent rage and I would like the numbers of penmen who are making good copy out of Winston every day to bear this fact more constantly in mind: that he had his full share of bad luck as well as of good before he reached his present high perch on the political Diamond Hill, where now everyone shouts bravo! each time he opens his mouth.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A book sallies forth into this gay and gaudy world much in the same fashion as in the old days Gallants of either sex would attend a ball at Vauxhall; peradventure veiled or masked; peradventure plainly as themselves. In one of his books masquerading as me, Winston has done me proud and said things that I could never have said or dared to think about myself. The title *Ian Hamilton's March* might lead his more simple-minded readers to believe that they were really marching along with bleeding feet and tightened belts under 'Old Full Compliments and Half Rations' (my nickname with the rank and file); marching, marching, out-marching Bobs himself; the great K; the Guards, and the whole jing-bang of the advance on Pretoria—an interesting enough story in its way. But there is another reason why the book, which has been so charmingly written and sets off with such a bang, was penned. Winston wrote it partly, I imagine, to clear up the matter and manner of his escape after

¹ So named by me in my Dispatch after they had told me that a large diamond had not very long ago been found there.

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his capture by the Boers from the prison at Pretoria. As he vaulted over the garden wall surrounding the prison every sort of fable hopped out after him. Annoyance at having been outwitted lasts a long time, especially with women, and when several years later General and Mrs. Botha were lunching with us to meet Winston and he let slip the name of someone who had helped him during the hue and cry, Mrs. Botha flashed out, 'I always said that man was a traitor!' But there is more to it than that:—re-reading the book after many years I see the elements of style in it and passages that do more, much more, to bring the real human sides of war and peace home to the conscience of mankind than weeks spent in listening-in to the complacent optimism of the B.B.C.

Winston Churchill's life, like that of the heroes of classical antiquity, has been largely a struggle for fame and immortality through both action and letters. I doubt whether Demosthenes ever took so much trouble with his pebbles as Winston did with his periods. For the first six months after his election to Parliament he wrote a speech a day. Every day regularly, walking up to the Horse Guards I used to look in at the Duke of Marlborough's flat, 105 Mount Street, which he had lent to Winston who was always busy writing speeches. I remember his joy in telling me that he found he could hop like a bird off the bough of a tree away from his prepared speech into impromptu and then hop back again before anyone could catch him. Living so hectic a duty life small wonder if, in his brief intervals of ease, he should devote himself to pursuits and enjoyments so smooth—so calm, that no outsider could easily imagine them. His first line of resistance to worries lies in a big box of fragrant weeds; his next in his private fish ponds. On learning that the Council of the London Zoo were seeking to economize over tigers and lions by getting good citizens to adopt them, he offered to adopt a gold-fish. A very fine specimen was sent him and the Council were so pleased with the patriotic spirit thus displayed that they followed up the donation with a consignment of several thousand freshly hatched specks of gold now safely domiciled at Chartwell. He adores these animals. The hours glide blissfully by as he nourishes them with pinches of ants' eggs taken from what looks like a snuff-box; or, in manipulating a miniature ram whereby the overflow from the pond is automatically pumped up and reintroduced to his unsuspecting children by adoption as fresh from the bowels of Mother Earth; thus, as some may think, playing it rather low down on the little fishes.

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A strong natural gift for painting lent another by-pass of escape to Winston who could thereby slip away into the clouds of fancy, concealed for the time being from the plague of place hunters. His talent for putting light and shade on to canvas is remarkable and he found unalloyed bliss in its exercise as did I in watching him. One of his best pictures is in my possession: *Ightham Moat* is the subject. It is a brilliant piece of work and experts have pronounced three-quarters of it to be beyond criticism. Over the remaining quarter he must have let himself get bored, for it is not painted with the same zest.

One such audacious slip-away in the midst of a crowd of witnesses is imprinted too vividly in my mind to be ever forgotten. Winston lived then at 41 Cromwell Road and he had 'phoned over to me to come and see him as he had several urgent matters to talk over in connection with the Dardanelles Commission. Calling at his house about midday they told me he had gone round to the studio of Mr. Lavery the artist for a lesson. Knowing the Laverys intimately I followed him there; told the parlourmaid not to trouble to announce me; ran upstairs and throwing open the studio door found a triangular painting party in full swing. Lavery was painting the son of Marcus Samuel, the Shell oil magnate, who was dressed in uniform and looked quite martial. He was close by the door with his back to it. I knew his father rather well, in a curious sort of way because we had got into the habit of riding together every morning in Rotten Row, starting at 8 a.m. precisely and parting on the tick of quarter to nine. At least once during the ride he used to say to me, 'Buy Shell'; always I shook my head. Had I nodded I would, I suppose, long since have owned a castle, a yacht, a string of race-horses and other soul-destroying items. Winston had been duly allotted his task; he was set back at an angle some fifteen feet from the door to paint Lavery in the act of painting Samuel. This was a pretty tall order! Lavery was not still for a moment; as was his custom he was jumping about like a pea on a drum; sometimes crouching down, sometimes rushing close up to his sitter—who by the way was standing. Indeed, looking back, I am inclined to put the blame for this awkward affair more on Lavery than on Winston. The moment Lavery caught my eye he gave a vigorous sign to me with his head to go over to Winston, who just smiled at me and carried on. I squinted over his shoulder. *The wretch was not attempting to paint Lavery; he was making an outrageously funny caricature of Samuel.* Hardly had I got my features under control and pulled myself together when the door

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was again opened, this time by the parlourmaid announcing, 'Mrs. Samuel!' 'Don't let me interrupt you,' she exclaimed to Lavery in silvery tones and walked straight up to Winston, who, quick as lightning, took hold of his palette knife with its blade of flat steel; scraped the blobs of colour off his palette and with a turn of his wrist smeared out the features of his victim.

*'Like a snowflake on a river
One moment seen then gone for ever.'*

But had they gone for ever? I remember them! A certain constraint fell upon us and it was a relief when Lavery said it was time to stop for luncheon.

Next day I chanced to meet young Samuel, in his uniform again, just coming out of the Park. Passing the time of day he remarked, 'You saw Churchill's skit on me yesterday? Politics were at the bottom of it.'

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In July 1914, most fortunately for the nation, Winston was still Boss at the Admiralty. By his flair and his fearlessness in shouldering responsibility the Fleet remained mobilized after the naval manœuvres; and if anyone wishes to put his finger on the winning move of the war there he has it; he won't find a better. When stalemate set in on the Western Front the idea was broached, early in 1915, of forcing the Dardanelles in order to relieve the Caucasus and to open a fresh line of supply with the Russians. Winston backed the plan for all he was worth; indeed, I fancy he originated it.

After the naval attack had failed and the War Council had decided upon a joint naval and military attack upon the Gallipoli Peninsula, he did all he could to pilot it through the Cabinet and Committee of Imperial Defence; thus, as is recorded in one of my Dispatches, the Navy became father and mother to the Expeditionary Force throughout the landing operations and afterwards. There were those, however, amongst his colleagues who were more like the wicked stepmother of a fairy tale than any legitimate parent. To them the Dardanelles was a 'side-show' and Winston a discredited showman. So it came to pass that in the desperate see-saw of battle, when a prompt reinforcement by quite a small contingent would have turned the scales in our favour, there was a Cabinet crisis in full swing and my prayer for help was not even considered by War Council or Cabinet for three weeks. Remarking on this the Royal Commission on the Dardanelles makes the following observation in

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their Report: 'After the failure of the attacks which followed the first landing there was undue delay in deciding upon the course to be pursued in the future. Sir Ian Hamilton's appreciation was forwarded on the 17th of May 1915. It was not considered by the War Council or the Cabinet until the 7th of June. The reconstruction of the Government which took place at the most critical period was the main cause of the delay. As a consequence the dispatch of the reinforcements asked for by Sir Ian Hamilton in his appreciation was postponed for six weeks.'

Thus do politics cut across high strategy and Winston, who saw that we might do at Gallipoli what was in fact achieved by Allenby in Palestine two years later, i.e. the disruption of the Turkish Empire and the opening of Germany's back door, found himself before long out of favour and then out of office. I wrote in my diary at the time:—'Private feelings do not count in war, but alas! how grievous this set-back to one who has it in him to revive the part of Pitt, had he but Pitt's place.' Winston left the Admiralty in May but retained a seat in the Cabinet and, after a painful time serving without any real power on the Dardanelles Committee of the Cabinet, resigned in November and went out to the front.

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At the end of May 1916 Jean and I were staying at Postlip near Cheltenham when Winston, who was back from France, came down for the week-end. His object was to paint the famous laburnum tree avenue whilst, incidentally, he lent a hand to my wife who was doing a pastel of the house. The following Saturday the first alarmist announcement of the Battle of Jutland sent out by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Balfour, brought us back to London and on Monday, the 5th of June, Winston was dining with us at 1 Hyde Park Gardens when he told me that he had at last persuaded the Cabinet to lay the Gallipoli papers on the Table. He had selected about twenty instances of my cabled entreaties to the War Office to send high explosive instead of shrapnel; of protests against Sir John Maxwell holding up a whole Army meant for me on the pretext of guarding Cairo and the Suez Canal from the attack of a Bogy Man called the Senoussi. These appeals had all been bottled up by K. of K. and not one had been shown to the Cabinet when he had met them during the campaign and professed to expound the situation. Winston now wanted me to come over next morning and carefully check these items. Accordingly, I went over to Cromwell Road at midday on the

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6th of June, sending the motor back for Haller Brooke, Ronnie Brooke and my wife as Clemmie Churchill had invited us all to lunch. Lady Blanche Hozier was staying in the house also Milly Sutherland, the Duchess. Winston and I were alone downstairs when suddenly we heard someone in the street crying out Kitchener's name. We jumped up and Winston threw the window open. As he did so an apparition passed beneath us. I can use no other word to describe the strange looks of this newsvendor of wild and uncouth aspect. He had his bundle of newspapers under his arm and as we opened the window was crying out, 'Kitchener drowned! No survivors!'

A changed world that cry meant to both of us. We looked at one another with a wild surmise like Cortes at the Pacific from the heights of Darien. I felt dreadful. Had I put the idea of going to Russia into his head? There had been some question of my being sent to give the Czar his Field Marshal's baton as I had got on like a house on fire both with him and the Grand Duke Nicholas at pre-war manœuvres. This had been confided by me to K. and he was very imitative. Fitz gone too—it was awful. When we came into the dining-room, Winston signed to everyone to be seated and then, before taking his own seat very solemnly quoted: 'Fortunate was he in the moment of his death!' I felt stunned and very sad. A great character marred by a mass of foibles and tricks. The fact that he should have vanished at the very moment Winston and I were making out an unanswerable case against him was one of those *coups* with which his career was crowded—he was not going to answer! It was a nightmare lunch—no small talk—Winston said K. might yet turn up but I told the company that he always had a horror of cold water, and that the shock of the icy sea would at once extinguish his life.

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Some weeks later, Winston telephoned me to come and see him, as the Government, yielding to parliamentary pressure, had appointed a Royal Commission on the Dardanelles. This seemed to them the lesser of two evils, for publication of the Dardanelles documents would have shown up Lord K. with altogether too bright a searchlight beam and put them all in a hole. 'It seems to me quite impossible to publish correspondence and telegrams dealing with the operations subsequent to your successful landings,' wrote General Callwell¹ to me on the 5th July,

¹ Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell, K.C.B.

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after scrutinizing the documents with a view to publication, 'because they must give away Lord K. if the story is fairly told. The tragedy of the *Hampshire*¹ simply precludes publication at present.'

A Royal Commission would take time to deliberate and much less need be disclosed. So ten Commissioners were appointed 'to enquire into the reasons of the failure of the Expedition and go into the origin, inception and conduct of operations of war in the Dardanelles and Gallipoli.' At once I wrote the following letter to Mr. Asquith:

1 *Hyde Park Gardens, W.2.*

21.7.'16

Dear Prime Minister,

In your speech last night you told the House that Australia would be represented upon the Commission of Enquiry into the Dardanelles Expedition. The representative name which at once suggests itself is that of Mr. Fisher and that is why I feel bound, before you come to any decision as to the composition of the Commission to submit to your consideration a certain disability under which he seems to labour.

I believe Mr. Fisher to be pre-eminently a sincere and honourable man—the sort of man in whose hands a soldier might confidently leave his reputation. But, in the Dardanelles matter, Mr. Fisher might be held to have been prejudiced against the British part of the Expeditionary Force.

Mr. A. K. Murdoch was introduced to me by Mr. Fisher. He would never have got to the Dardanelles had it not been for my respect for Mr. Fisher. His letter depreciating the conduct of British Generals, Staff Officers and troops was addressed to Mr. Fisher. Mr. Fisher is a friend of Mr. Murdoch's. Therefore, the judgment of Mr. Fisher might hereafter be held to have been biased in advance.

But, if Mr. Fisher were to declare that his mind were perfectly open, then I, for one, would accept such an assurance with confidence.

I have felt bound to draw your attention to these points. Having done so, I am content with whatever course you may elect to pursue.

Yours sincerely,

IAN HAMILTON

¹ Lord K. had been drowned when H.M.S. *Hampshire* struck a mine.

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To this I received the following reply:

10 Downing Street,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

24th July 1916

Confidential.

Dear Sir Ian,

The Prime Minister wishes me to thank you for your letter of the 21st. The point which you mention had occurred to him. It must be remembered however that the Australian Government behaved very well in the matter of Murdoch's report, and for the reason which you yourself give as to Mr. Fisher's character, he does not think he need be biased by Mr. Murdoch's opinions.

Yours very truly,

M. BONHAM CARTER

So Mr. Fisher remained upon the Commission whilst Mr. Justice Pickford supported Lord Cromer and Mr. Grimwood Mears, who afterwards became Chief Justice of the High Court of Allahabad, was the Secretary. Other members were Captain Stephen Gwynne; Walter Roch, M.P.; Admiral Sir William May, representing the Navy; Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson (the Old Nick of Simla days) the Army; while Sir Thomas Mackenzie represented New Zealand. Two further members of the Commission, Mr. J. A. Clyde, K.C., M.P., and Sir Frederick Cawley, M.P., retired during the sittings when they became Lord Advocate and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster respectively.

Perhaps I should have been shaking in my shoes but it is conscience that makes cowards of us all and my conscience was clear. How venial were my faults compared with those of our Quartermaster-General's Department who had loaded ships all upside down, guns in one ship and shell in another; or those of the Master-General of the Ordnance who had allowed the High Explosive shell I had asked for in lieu of shrapnel to be seized and expended on its passage through France. So I felt that as I had never shirked fighting I might find that pluck brought luck and so escape hanging. Now I learnt from Winston that Old Nick was to be the Military Member. Nick, who delighted in making mischief and had taken umbrage at my supposed neglect of him, resembled Count Fosco in *The Woman in White*, that villain who was fond of canaries. Only, in Nick's case, not canaries but begonias were the objects of his affection; also everyone was impressed by the fact that he knew Isaiah, Job, Jeremiah, Pro-



Ian H., Winston Churchill, and Roger Keyes
at a Reunion of the Royal Naval Division, Crystal Palace, 1938



Ian H. at 1 Hyde Park Gardens on his ninetieth birthday

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verbs, Psalms, Genesis, and Exodus by heart. Winston, who was a personal friend of his, was enchanted. But as time went on he did have some qualms about me and advice to give me. 'You know, I can't help being anxious about you,' he said to me one day in November. 'With that mischievous Old Nick as Military Member a fresh complexion is put on everything and old Squiff himself will be made to sit up before it's over. I've been talking things over with F. E. Smith;¹ he thinks you ought to be represented by Counsel and suggests Marshall Hall.' The suggestion gave me a shock—the shock of my life in fact—I felt horrified. By reputation I knew Marshall Hall as a genius who could play upon the emotions of juries and chop logic with judges. To pluck murderers from the gallows was child's play to him. Had it got as bad as that? However, Winston was insistent and I said if it must be it must be. 'You'd better go right off now and see him,' said Winston, 'and it will cost you £700 down.' I felt uneasy and my wife said, 'I wish I felt I could thoroughly trust Winston about you; I think he is fond of you in a way and if it *also* aids *Winston* he will be glad to help you.'

However the next day off I went. F. E. received me with open arms and assured me that this was going to be an historic trial and that, as he had explained to Winston, I would never be able to face up to the cross-examinations, etc., without trained legal assistance. He suggested his brother should act for me and said £700 would be sufficient and that there would be no refreshers or whatever these things are called. The die was cast and I had opened the door to go home feeling perfectly miserable and wishing I could have asked my wife's advice first, when F.E. called out, 'Of course you understand that when you attack K. I shall defend him.' This brought me back into the room with a round turn. 'Attack K.!' I repeated, 'I'm not going to attack K.!' 'Oh yes,' he said, 'so far as I can size up the lay of your case—you *must*!' 'I'm sorry,' I replied, 'but I'm damned if I do! If that was your assumption our deal is off!' 'Yes,' he agreed, 'the deal is off but you'll be sorry some day, I more than suspect.' And so, like a bird escaping from the net of the fowler I flew back happily home; nor did I ever regret my decision.

The Dardanelles Commission had held its first meeting in August 1916 and had begun regular sittings in September, but Lord Cromer who presided at the first sittings became ill and died, his place being taken by

¹ The Attorney-General, afterwards Lord Birkenhead.

Mr. Justice Pickford. After twenty-two sittings the Commission issued an Interim Report which concludes: 'We think that, although the main object was not attained, certain important political advantages, upon the nature of which we have already dwelt (para. 118), were secured by the Dardanelles expedition. Whether those advantages were worth the loss of life and treasure involved is, and must always remain, a matter of opinion.'

After a further period during which they held sixty-eight sittings and heard a great deal of evidence from 170 witnesses, none of which has ever been published, they presented their final Report on the 4th December 1917. Reviewing the operations the Commission stated that the authorities were 'reluctant to abandon a project, the realization of which would have had such far-reaching effects' and that 'the Dardanelles Expedition, even if unsuccessful, was justified by the fact that it neutralized or contained a large number of Turkish troops who otherwise would have been free to operate elsewhere.' It was acknowledged later, after Allenby's final victory over the Turks in Palestine that the 'flower of the Turkish Army had been destroyed at Gallipoli'.

Among other matters put on record was the observation that the investigation was 'rendered more difficult than it would otherwise have been by the death of Lord Kitchener who was, for a long time, the sole mouth-piece of War Office opinion, and who held strong opinions as to the necessity of secrecy in military matters and seldom communicated his intentions or his reason for action to anyone.'

The Commission's conclusions on the landings at Anzac and Suvla Bay in August 1915 are, perhaps, not without interest at the present time, when landings on the Mediterranean coast of the continent of Europe are once more being discussed:—'We think that the plan of attack from Anzac and Suvla in the beginning of August was open to criticism. The country over which the attack had to be made was very difficult, especially at Anzac. In order to obtain if possible the element of surprise, the main advance of the Anzac force up the north-western spurs of Sari Bair was undertaken at night, the risk of misdirection and failure being much increased thereby. The plan, however, was decided upon after a consideration of other plans, and with the concurrence of the commander¹ of the Anzac Corps, who had been in command since the first landing.²

¹ Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood of Anzac and Totnes, G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., D.S.O.

² The first landing took place on April 25th.

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'The operations at Suvla were a severe trial for a force of troops who had never been under fire, but we think that after taking into consideration and making every allowance for the difficulties of the attack and the inexperience of the troops, the attack was not pressed as it should have been at Suvla on the 7th and 8th of August, and we attribute this in a great measure to a want of determination and competence in the Divisional Commander and one of his Brigadiers.'

The plans that went awry were, however, carried out by certain individual units proving they were not impossible plans:—Captain John Still, a Ceylon planter, and his 6th East Yorkshires achieved their objective at Suvla on time, and Major Cecil Allanson¹ with his 6th Gurkhas climbed the Sari Bair by night according to plan and chased the Turk from the summit and down the reverse slope. From the top they saw the Straits below them and Major Allanson wrote in his diary: 'The key of the whole peninsula was ours and our losses had not been so very great for such a result. Below I saw the Straits, motors and wheeled transport, on the roads leading to Achi Baba. . . . I remained on the crest with about fifteen men; it was a wonderful view; below were the Straits, reinforcements coming over from the Asia Minor side, motor cars flying, we commanded Kila Bahr and the rear of Achi Baba and the communications to all their army there.' This was the Promised Land which alas! was never to be reached.

Finally, the Commissioners reported: 'We recognize Sir Ian Hamilton's personal gallantry and energy, his sanguine disposition, and his determination to win at all costs. We recognize also that the task entrusted to him was one of extreme difficulty, the more so as the authorities at home at first misconceived the nature and duration of the operations, and afterwards were slow to realize that to drive the Turks out of their entrenchments and occupy the heights commanding the straits was a formidable and hazardous enterprise which demanded a concentration of force and effort. It must further be borne in mind that Lord Kitchener, whom Sir Ian Hamilton appears to have regarded as a Commander-in-Chief rather than as a Secretary of State, pressed upon him the paramount importance, if it were by any means possible, of carrying out the task assigned to him.

'Though from time to time Sir Ian Hamilton represented the need of drafts, reinforcements, guns and munitions, which the Government

¹ Afterwards Colonel-Commandant C. J. L. Allanson, C.M.G., C.I.E., D.S.O.

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found it impossible to supply, he was nevertheless always ready to renew the struggle with the resources at his disposal, and to the last was confident of success. For this it would be hard to blame him; but viewing the Expedition in the light of events it would, in our opinion, have been well had he examined the situation as disclosed by the first landings in a more critical spirit, impartially weighed the probabilities of success and failure, having regard to the resources in men and material which could be placed at his disposal, and submitted to the Secretary of State for War a comprehensive statement of the arguments for and against a continuance of the operations.'

Sir Thomas Mackenzie, in his Supplementary Report, says, 'Regarding the conduct of the military operations as a whole, it will be asked: "Was Sir Ian Hamilton the right man to command the expedition?" This question, in my opinion, we shall never be able to answer because he was hurriedly despatched,¹ imperfectly instructed,² and inadequately provided with men, artillery and munitions. Later on the deficiency in men was rectified but although Lord Kitchener had said this was a young man's war, some Generals were sent out to Sir Ian Hamilton who were unequal to the task.'

At this point it will complete the clearing up of my own small adventure within the setting of the great adventure being thrashed out by the Royal Commission if I put in a letter dated the 14th July 1916 in answer to one I had written to Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, saying I hoped I might get further employment.

Committee of Imperial Defence
2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.
14th July 1916

My dear General,

I will do what I can. To treat you as the Government have done, when you have successfully accomplished one of the greatest feats in the history of the world and only failed to achieve complete success for lack of proper support, is simply to discourage initiative in the whole corps of General Officers. (*Vide* enclosed extract from Napier's Peninsula War.)

Personally I am quite convinced that publication during war would not

¹ I was appointed on 12th March and left at midday on 13th March 1915.

² No plan of operations was drawn up by the War Office nor were any maps provided.

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be in the public interest. There is only one precedent—the Walcheren expedition—and the result was disastrous (see enclosed extract), but the real reasons are military.

I agree that this is the more reason for not leaving you unemployed.

Yours very sincerely,

M. P. A. HANKEY

Extract.

. . . To the ministers however he (the Duke of Wellington) complained that his generals, stout in action personally as the poorest soldiers, were commonly so overwhelmed with fear of responsibility when left to themselves that the slightest movement of the enemy deprived them of their judgment, and they spread unnecessary alarm far and wide. Instead of expressing his surprise, he should rather have reflected on the cause of this weakness. *Every British general knew that without powerful interest his future prospects and reputation for past services would wither together under the first blight of misfortune; that a selfish government would offer him up a victim to a misjudging public and a ribald press with whom success is the only criterion of merit. English generals are and must be prodigal of their blood to gain reputation, but they are necessarily timid in command when a single failure even without a fault consigns them in age to shame and misery: . . .*

Extract.

The precedent is not a happy one. The publication of the Walcheren Papers led immediately to debates in Parliament which lasted without intermission from the end of January to March 17, 'absorbing thus', as Alison says, 'nearly the whole time both of the Government and of the country at the very moment when the concentration of all the national thought and energies was required for the prosecution of the gigantic campaign in progress on the Continent.' The Government escaped defeat by a small majority, but to quote Alison once more, 'the obloquy which it brought upon the Government, and the narrow escape which they made from total shipwreck on its result, roused into a flame the ill-smothered embers of a conflagration in the Cabinet, and led at this critical moment to a change in the most important offices of the State.'

The task of capturing the Gallipoli Peninsula had not been impossible. Speaking at Dundee in June 1915, Winston had referred to 'those few miles of ridge and scrub' beyond which lay 'the downfall of a hostile

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empire, the destruction of an enemy's fleet and army, the fall of a world-famous capital, and probably the accession of powerful allies.' Before the landings at Suvla and Anzac he had written to me:—

'Well done and with good luck, or mistakenly done and with bad luck, if done in the end, it will repay all losses and cover all miscalculations in the priceless advantages it will win for the Allied cause. . . . I never look beyond a battle. It is a culminating event, and like a brick wall bars all further vision. But the chances seem favourable, and the reward of success will be astonishing.

'Your daring spirit and the high qualities of your nature will enable you to enjoy trials and tests under which the fleshly average of commonplace commanders would quail. The superb conduct and achievements of the soldiers would redeem even a final failure, but with a final success they will become a military episode not inferior in glory to any that the history of war records. Then there will be proud honour for all who have never flinched and never wavered. God go with you.'

He had been confident; but looking back to that time, he remarks perhaps a little wistfully, in his *World Crisis*: 'I did not understand how far the actual performances of the War Office were to lag behind their paper programme. The actual facts were far less satisfactory than I knew.' Winston is probably right when he asserts that the Battle of Suvla Bay was not lost in August but at the end of June or beginning of July when the Cabinet crisis and reconstruction of the Government had paralysed all action for several weeks. This paralysis at home had repercussions on the battle front where the Turks were given time to double their army. But to go back farther still, it was the resignation of the First Sea Lord, Admiral Jackie Fisher, who had shut himself up in his room with the blinds drawn and refused to see Winston, or indeed anyone, which provoked the Cabinet Crisis of May 1915 and led to Winston's eclipse. Of all the grievous blows which were dealt to the Dardanelles Expedition this was the worst, for Winston had been the prime instigator and mover of all that concerned the Expedition. When it comes down to brass tacks, destinies of peoples and the whole course of events still hinge on the personal relationships of certain individuals in high places at particular moments in history.

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Even in the old days Winston could hardly touch anything or anyone without putting 'go' into them. Of Botha and myself at Diamond Hill I

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have given an example. If it was a tank he poured petrol into it. Others shared with him, no doubt, in the triumph of the tank—several of them put in claims and were duly acclaimed to the tunes of varying wads of bank notes. But Winston had played incomparably the greater part in the material creation and production of that decisive Mother Tank produced at Hatfield Park on the 2nd February 1916. He had pawned his reputation; shouldered grave personal risks and grave official financial risks before he could get as far as he did in arranging this crucial demonstration for Lord Kitchener and handing over these super war engines to the Army.¹

I drove down with Lord K. and sat with him throughout the proceedings. Had he been impressed? Wearing a poker face he did not allow anyone to guess his thoughts. But he *had* been impressed. Although it was too much to expect that a whole fleet of monsters like the tanks could be kept up the sleeve of Britannia and suddenly loosed in one great 'finish the war' swoop, yet K. meant to have a try. But he reckoned without the Ordnance Department—the same people who had performed a conjurer's vanishing trick with our gun ammunition at the Dardanelles.

It was in January 1915, that Winston had written to the Prime Minister urging that experiments should be initiated with bullet-proof shelters mounted on a caterpillar system in these pregnant words: 'These engines, prepared secretly and brought into position at nightfall, could advance quite certainly into the enemy's trenches, smashing away all the obstructions and sweeping the trenches with their machine-gun fire, and with grenades thrown out of the top.' A year later, in February 1916, when the landships sponsored by Winston and the Admiralty had been taken over by the War Office and given a new name, Colonel Swinton wrote in his official *Notes on the Employment of Tanks*: 'It follows, therefore, that these machines *should not be used in driblets* (for instance, as they may be produced), but that the fact of their existence should be kept as secret as possible until the whole are ready to be launched together with the infantry assault, in one great combined operation.'

Actually, on the 15th September 1916, thirty-two tanks took part in the Battle of the Somme, of which nine broke down from mechanical

¹ 'Up to the 20th of December 1915, the whole cost of the experimental work had been defrayed by the Admiralty, which had also provided in the shape of No. 20 Squadron R.N.A.S. for carrying out the work.' (*Tanks in the Great War* by Major-General J. F. C. Fuller.)

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trouble and five became ditched; ten days later thirteen went into battle and in November, at the Battle of the Ancre, eight. They were not used again that year: the caterpillar had dribbled out of the bag.

In the field, Haig's lack of imagination or even of that sporting boyish instinct which might have replaced it, will show up to the historian of the future a good, laborious, go-by-the-ground Generalissimo making a complete mess of the introduction into his front line of battle of one of the most tremendous military secrets of the ages.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Many years afterwards I was invited by the Churchills to a man's dinner to meet Hertzog, the South African Prime Minister who had fought against us in the Boer War. Mrs. Churchill was upstairs receiving the guests but was not coming down to dinner. As I was making my bow to my hostess Hertzog advanced on me with outstretched hand and seemed so pleased to see me that she left us to ourselves. What we talked about will be shown in the following epistle:—

20.10.36

Dear General,

I wonder if you remember? In 1930 a dinner was given in your honour by Mr. Winston Churchill. Whilst the company was assembling you began to talk to a fellow guest and to exchange recollections of the war. Dinner was announced but just as you were leaving the drawing-room you said to your new acquaintance, 'By the way, there used to be an old fighting general called Jan Hamilton—he is dead, is he not?' To which question the following reply was given, 'He was very nearly killed on Amajuba in 1881—and again at Elandslaagte 1899: on Wagon Hill; and at Doornkop he only escaped by the skin of his teeth but he's not dead yet and has been speaking to you.'

You were surprised but will be still more surprised to get this letter and to learn that Jan Hamilton is not only going on living but is writing to ask of you a favour which will, if granted, give pleasure not only to your ex-enemies but also, I think, to all the people in the world who have generous human hearts. In the enclosed papers you may read of the sadness and want which has overtaken some of the *Ruoibatchis* and *Khakis* who fought against you. At 62 they are too old for their jobs and yet not old enough for the pension due to them at 65. What I want from you is your blessing on our *matinée* and a money donation. *Not* State money—your own

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private money and the amount is of small account compared with the gesture.

Yours sincerely,

IAN HAMILTON.

Grand President of the South African War Veterans' Association

Hertzog responded most nobly to this appeal and sent me a handsome donation from his own private pocket.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There are many ties between Winston's household and mine. Lullenden Farm in Surrey, near the borders of Sussex and Kent, was his until he went to live at Chartwell and sold it to us. We still have country ties. Winston's Belted Galloway cows are now staying on my farm at East Grinstead as P.G.'s 'for the duration'. As they trace their descent from a member of my herd there is no ill-feeling on the part of their sisters and cousins and aunts. As to how this connection originated: on Sunday, the 20th October 1935, Jean and I motored down to my farm and then on for a cup of tea at Chartwell. We found a number of people there,—Randolph; a son of Goonie's and Jack Churchill; a French Count and Countess—a good-looking couple; a Mrs. Pratt, darkish and rather nice; Charles Emmott and one or two more. Mussolini was making preparations to lay hands on his African Empire and there was much talk about daggers that gleam in the moonlight. Someone hazarded the opinion that everyone present had an axe of his own to grind. I demurred to this and Winston said, 'Well, what did you come for anyway?' 'I have come to give you a cow,' I replied. 'Why do you want to give me a cow?' asked Winston suspiciously. 'Because your stocks are rising,' I said, at which the table laughed. 'No, no!' retorted Winston, 'You, my dear Johnnie, are a foul-weather friend.' But I gave him the cow.¹

¹ His stocks have continued to rise. On the arrival of a new calf in October 1943, promptly christened 'Winnie' by the farm hands, I suggested he should run over from Chartwell to see it and had the following characteristic reply:—'How lovely about the calf. Alas, I cannot make any plans being tied by the leg and both ears. Yours always, W.'

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Twenty-five years had slipped into old Father Time's Never Never Land since my first landing at the Apollo Bunder when, with the valour of ignorance, I had put my private fortune into the hands of my bearer Teppoo. Now it was all over bar the scribbling:—the trans-Indus frontier; the mud fort at Dera Ishmail Khan; the giant peaks of the Himalaya, home of the red and black bears, the markhor and ovis ammon; the virgin forests of Nepal; the jungle with the swaying trumpeting line of elephants, the sudden striped tiger flashing out of the jungle, the hateful crocodile lurking in the pool.

To Simla, too, with its exotic civilization, swarms of gay ladies, their husbands left sweating in the plains; to our oriental Palace at Lucknow and all our other Indian homes, for ever farewell!

Tirah marked the end of my Indian epoch. Thenceforth London, hub of our whole, round-the-globe Empire, was to be my own personal hub also. I sailed for home in April 1898 and took up my billet at Hythe in May.

One of the first letters I got after landing was the following from Sir William Lockhart, ex-C.-in-C. India:—

Milton Lockhart, Carluke, N.B.

16th May 1898

My dear Hamilton,

Many thanks for your letter of the 14th. Yes, it is very satisfactory I know that our traducers are silenced, and that the theory of a Tirah 'fiasco' has been exploded. . . . On arrival at Carluke the other day I was met by the local Volunteers and escorted down to the beginning of Milton Avenue. I made a speech which has been fearfully and wonderfully mis-reported and I have no doubt that *Truth* and other papers will make sport thereon. I told the Volunteers that the Afridis said to me, at the end of hostilities, that after forcing my way into Tirah they would have believed me had I announced my intention to take an army up into the sky. I am now reported to have said that *on ordering the attack on Dargai* I was told that it would be as possible to carry a position in the sky as to carry that of Dargai. It doesn't much matter. We live so fast in these days that

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praise or blame, or even ridicule, cannot remain in the public memory for more than a few hours. . . . I hope you will like your new berth. There is no doubt about the advantage yr. appointment will be to the service.

Yours sincerely,

W. S. A. LOCKHART

As the Indian volume closes another begins. Elandsplaagte lies before me, 'the only battle fought on orthodox lines in the whole South African campaign,' so said the German General Staff, old Hindenburg once told me; the march to Pretoria and the triumphal ride through the streets of London on my return with Lord K. of K. in a State carriage, that must surely mark the high-water mark of my whole career; Jean going to Court in oyster satin with a train caught up with golden flowers ran it pretty close though; my camp life with Kuroki on the Heaven Reaching Pass contains a good many tips for those now about to fight the Japs; Tidworth House with its balls and banquets graced by royalty and notabilities of every sort when I had the Southern Command in England; our island kingdom of Malta and the Inspector-Generalship of Overseas Forces which took me in the pre-Great War years to almost every country in the world; the Epic of the Dardanelles, also very topical and as a tale of heroism undimmed by any other song or story of our time; the founding of the British Legion; post-war Germany and my meeting with Ludendorff in 1922, with Hindenburg in 1934 and with Hitler in 1938, when I led a party of British Legion ex-Service men to the Kyffhauser mountain where Barbarossa sleeps in an enchanted slumber, to lay a wreath in the Hall of Remembrance in memory of those who died in the Great War.

But in all these journeyings, ranging from the Arctic snows of Russia to the Antipodes, never shall I forget India as I knew her for twenty-five glorious years of dangerous living, India with her splendid native Officers and regiments, the cut-and-come-again spirit of the Rank and File, the pageantry of the Rajahs' courts, her diverse races, religions and languages, her stately peoples, her jungle teeming with luxuriant vegetation and wild life of every kind, her northern approaches guarded by the untrodden peaks of the Himalaya—India, the brightest gem in our Imperial Crown.

Havoc might be wrought in a week by any great Power which has not yet learnt the delicate balance of opinion on which, like Nietzsche's

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tightrope dancer, we carry on. There are folk talking Portuguese in Goa; there are masses talking French in Pondicherry; there are many millions talking Tamil from Ceylon to a line drawn from Cannanore to Ootacamund; there are the Pushtu speakers of the Frontier and the Sikhs who are to the Hindus as Protestants are to Catholics. Pondering over the difficulties of unity under these circumstances an idea has come to me which I have just had the rare opportunity of laying before some leading Indians here on a visit of ceremony to our Government. Apart from the police and troops of the Imperial Government all these millions inhabiting the sub-continent of India and its borderlands have one slender bond of union; every functionary from Ceylon to Peshawar—from Rangoon to Bombay, can speak and understand a little Hindustani. To pass the Lower Standard examination of Hindustani, including the power of reading a little in the two characters, takes three months' pretty hard grind by an average intellect. If it could only be accepted that no one, however important, should express his views on any post-war scheme of reconstruction for India until he had passed the Lower Standard and had studied Indian problems *on the spot*,—automatically getting the feel of the land into his veins, so to say—India might be saved.

The Palace Warren Hastings built will endure for just as long as we remain true to ourselves and our tradition. With this savage war upon us and the whole planetary system in the melting-pot, let us hold on and behave as Sahibs are expected to behave. Fearlessly and justly, avoiding the snares of politicians and bureaucrats who, if left to themselves will, after a terrible blood-bath, end by placing a Grand Mogul or a Jap upon the throne built for him with so much solicitude by Lutyens at Delhi.

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