

**KHANDESH BHIL CORPS.**

**Dedicated**  
**'TO LOVERS OF KHANDESH.'**

A MEMOIR  
OF THE  
KHANDESH BHIL CORPS  
1825-1891

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COMPILED FROM ORIGINAL RECORDS.

BY

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*Collector, East Khandesh*

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WITH A PREFACE BY

Lieut.-Col. R. M. BETHAM, the 101st Grenadiers

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## PREFACE.

**I**N these prosaic days, the "Pax Britannica" having been established throughout India, it is hard to realize that, not so very long ago, the country was overrun by armed gangs, and that a state of lawlessness, somewhat similar to that which now prevails among the tribes on the North-West Frontier, existed.

These gangs proved a veritable pest in their immediate neighbourhood. They terrorised the populace by murder, looting, robberies and dacoities. It was, therefore incumbent on the Government to take steps to establish law and order in those provinces where such gangs existed.

The employment of regular troops proved unsatisfactory. It was found that their discipline suffered on being split up into small detachments, and that they contracted much sickness by serving in unhealthy localities. Further, it was not always politic to use them, and the cost was prohibitive.

These circumstances led to the formation of Local Corps, such as the Khandesh Bhil Corps. The wisdom of the decision arrived at, subsequent events have abundantly proved.

The object in raising a Local Corps is to restore order in a lawless District and to preserve it thereafter. This is effected by inducing those who take to the road, as the Bhils did, to join its ranks. At the start, it is a difficult task. Men who have been in the habit of plundering, murdering, robbing and looting, are most difficult to allure into the net of discipline. They are suspicious and look askance. It must be pointed out to them that an honest livelihood is preferable to one connected with theft, robbery and crime, which punishment is sure to follow.

Once prejudice and fears have been allayed, it is self evident that these are the very men required. They are brave to a fault; no enterprize is too daring for them; they are acquainted with every hill path, refuge, retreat and forest in the Province. It is also more than probable that all the bad characters are known to them.

To make them law-abiding subjects, however, is no light task. The best method to obtain this end is that their officers should endeavour to enlist them personally, to shew them that they trust them and mean to be their friends, and then to make them understand that much is expected of them. After this come drill and discipline,

proper clothing and housing. So much effected they gradually learn to see that an honest living is the best. At first any material that offers must be accepted. Later it is better to restrict recruiting to young men. The advantage of this is that they are more easily led and instructed, as well as weaned from bad habits, should such have been unfortunately contracted.

The duties of a Local Corps are dual. They require to be sufficiently well drilled and disciplined to be able to take the field alone, or beside the regulars. In times of peace their duties are akin to those of the Police.

When it is necessary to raise a new Corps, it is evident that the officer selected for the duty should be possessed of exceptional qualities. Great administrative ability is not the only consideration, he must be capable of winning the affection and confidence of those with whom he will be required to serve. It was indeed fortunate for the welfare of the Khandesh Bhil Corps, that the choice fell on Outram, the Bayard of the East, of whom it can be truthfully said that he was "Sans peur et sans reproche." Although but 22 years of age when the task of raising the Corps was assigned him, he proved he was fully capable of coping with it. It is more than probable that the experience gained then, combined with the responsibilities connected therewith, had much to do with the formation of his character, and led up to his brilliant achievements in later life.

While perusing the records of "The Khandesh Bhil Corps" so ably collated by Mr. A. H. A. Simcox, one cannot fail to be interested, nor can one but acknowledge the wonderful services the Bhils performed, and how extraordinarily useful they proved themselves to be. As one closes the pages of the book a tinge of regret appears at the thought that this gallant body of men no longer exists, and that its extinction is due almost entirely to the part the Corps itself played in restoring law and order in Khandesh. There is, however, one consolation, namely, that the past can never be taken from the Corps. In publishing these records Mr. Simcox serves to keep its memory green and appeals not only to "lovers of Khandesh," but to all lovers of brave men and their deeds of daring.

R. M. BETHAM, LIEUT.-COL.,  
*The 101st Grenadiers.*

## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD.

THOSE who dwell nowadays in the Bombay Presidency live in a peace so profound, that it may seem to them difficult to imagine any very different conditions. That the Marathas were once the most feared race in India, that hordes of ill-paid mercenary Arabs wandered armed and oppressed the country in the name of this or that master, that the Bhils descended from their eyries and swept the plains of many a fair district, that the Pindaris were a constant menace on the eastern frontier ; all these things influence modern life as much, and are as often in the public mind, as the Wars of the Roses in England. Yet it were not well that the names and deeds of the great men to whom we owe our present peace and comfort be forgotten. It is true that so long as an Englishman remains in India, the name of Outram can never die. But even Outram is remembered at Lucknow and forgotten in Bombay. That he worked as hard, and sacrificed himself as readily, when he was a Subaltern as when he was a General, is little known. As for the many other less prominent, but still admirable, men whose names appear in this book, it would be safe to say that few of the present generation have even heard of them. In fact, many of their names are better kept alive in the traditions of the country people than in the literature of the educated.

Where would be the prosperity of Bombay, if every available acre in Khandesh were not sown with cotton ? What would be the feelings of the soldiers at Poona, Ahmednagar, and Aurangabad if they were required to patrol the Satpuras and Satmalas in force every season ? Not a soldier now remains in the Province, nor is the need of military force ever felt. Ravenous beasts are so scarce, that it is hardly worth while for the shikari to come to Khandesh.

I trust I have given sufficient reason for this book, a small addition to the glorious traditions of the Bombay Presidency, both military and civil.

My readers will please note that I have assumed a general knowledge of contemporary history, and more particularly of the events of 1818 and of 1857-58. I have not attempted comparisons of local events with those occurring elsewhere, nor connexions between local events and the general history of India, but have confined myself to the history of the Province and its local corps, seeking only to keep alive the memory of great men and great deeds, and leaving my readers to compare, connect, and conclude as they will.

I make no excuse for quoting freely from official letters, quaint as is sometimes their language. Nor have I attempted to 'hunterianize' the spelling of the old records. It is familiar enough to those who know India, that what was once Candeish is now Khandesh, that Dhurrungaum and Dharangaon are the same place, and that Bhyria is phonetic for Baherya. I must plead guilty to having placed a few stops in some of the old letters. Critics may possibly say that I have not placed enough. If one might find fault with Outram, one would say that his sentences are longer, more pauseless and breathless than his forced marches.

It remains to express my gratitude to those who have assisted me. Sir F. B. Outram has most kindly sent me many interesting family records, on which I have freely indented. Mr. Rudyard Kipling has assisted me with valuable suggestions. Mr. R. D. Bell, Under Secretary to Government, has had the Secretariat files searched, and Mr. Balvant Mahadeo, the Record-keeper, has kindly sent me the files I needed, and has even been at pains to mark the pages for me. Mr. Curtis has also sent me some extracts from the Commissioner's records. Mr. K. R. Bamanji, Collector of West Khandesh, has been most kind in allowing me the use of many of his office files. Colonel Burrard, Director-General of Indian Surveys, has had the accompanying map prepared for me. The Officers Commanding the Regiments from which the Bhil Corps officers were drawn and the Station Staff Officer, Poona, have kindly searched their regimental records for information regarding those officers, not always with success. Sir Lesley Probyn, Mr. Crawley Boevey, Dr. Pollen, Mr. M. Kennedy, and Mr. H. M. Gibbs have supplied me with reminiscences of Oliver Probyn. Last, but not least, my dear wife has copied out for me all the extracts from old records embodied in the book. Timeworn and crabbed as many of them were, the task was not an easy one. To all these I render my sincere thanks, and trust the result may not disappoint them.

The binding is an attempt to reproduce Outram's old colours, dark blue with green facings, and the Mutiny medal which the Corps so well earned.

Judge, criticize, condemn as you will, yet be a little merciful to one of your number, for to you, as the title page says, I commend my work, O Lovers of Khandesh.

A. H. A. SIMCOX.

CAMP AT RAVER,  
16th January 1912.



*CORRIGENDA.*

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