The Indian Mutiny

1857-58
SELECTIONS

FROM THE

LETTERS DESPATCHES AND OTHER STATE PAPERS

PRESENTED IN

THE MILITARY DEPARTMENT

OF

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

1857-58

EDITED BY

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WITH MAPS, PLANS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME II

CALCUTTA

MILITARY DEPARTMENT PRESS

1902
V2, L: 51, M57
C 3.2
351
PREFACE

The first volume of the Selections from the Letters, Despatches and other State Papers in the Military Department of the Government of India, 1857-58, contained the documents from the first outbreak of disaffection to the siege and storming of Delhi by the English troops. These volumes contain in a similar form:

All papers relating to the mutiny at Lucknow and the defence of the Residency by the garrison: General Havelock’s march from Allahabad and the first relief of Lucknow: General Outram’s defence of Lucknow: Sir Colin Campbell’s relief of Lucknow in November 1857: Outram’s defence of the Alum-bagh: General Windham’s defence of Cawnpore: Sir Colin Campbell’s storming and capture of Lucknow. All documents relating to the outbreak at Cawnpore, the defence of the intrenchment, and the massacre of the survivors.

As the letters and despatches do not, however, furnish an unbroken narrative of events and are somewhat full of technical detail, I have thought it advisable, as in the case of the previous volume, to construct from these official materials a continuous story and to prefix it as an introduction. Since the publication of the first volume seven years have elapsed, but the labour of investigation has been very great and the years which I have devoted to the work have been none too many for so delicate and difficult an enterprise. The documents in the two present volumes illustrate a larger number of important episodes than did the previous calendar. The introduction to the Delhi volume contained one distinct narrative. The present introduction, it will be seen, contains eight distinct and complete narratives, and it has not always been easy so to arrange them that the course of events should
ever be clear and distinct and the reader be not too frequently called upon to break off, and resume, the threads of different operations in different parts of the empire.

It is on the sure ground of official documents that I have mainly relied, but they have been fortified by the contemporary literature which is both varied and abundant. A large number of private letters and diaries have been placed at my disposal and it has been my anxious care to draw from them useful material by separating facts and just inferences from matters and opinions honestly given as testified by the senses of the writer, but which in truth are founded on the current statements and warped feelings of the hour. Besides the printed matter and the manuscript documents, I have had the advantage of actual conversation with many who witnessed the transactions.

Military operations however extend over so wide a field that no actor can have a personal knowledge of all the circumstances. By putting together fragments of information which I have received from several witnesses, marking where they agree and where they differ and comparing them with the whole collection of written statements, I have endeavoured to arrive at a complete and correct conception of the combination of scenes which a battle or the storming of a fortress presents. My own conceptions have been corrected by the technical and sagacious criticisms of military experts, and the work of a civilian on the operations of war is therefore offered with less fear. In order to strengthen the text and to enable the reader to form his own judgment of the evidence, abundant citations from the original authorities have been inserted as footnotes; I have also incorporated extracts from the despatches and letters in the text of the introduction with the object of bringing the reader into touch with the actors.

The story of the defence of Lucknow, one of the most dramatic incidents in our national history, is told in the contemporary narratives of the man who did the fighting and the
women whose courage never faltered; and they are fertile in tragedy. I discovered that the diary of Captain George Fulton, whose cheerful bearing and noble temper inspired officers and men with his own energy and cool determination, was in Australia. In response to my appeal his sons kindly sent me a copy, and of this I have made free use in the introduction. The fine and modest temper of the man to whom his comrades gave the proud title of "The Defender of Lucknow," is seen in his plain narrative of facts. Sir Joseph Fayrer has also given me leave to quote from his manuscript diary.

The story of Cawnpore, a tale of disaster and unutterable woe illumined by gallantry and patient, heroic courage, is told in part from the narratives of Captain Thomson, Lieutenant Delafosse and Mr. Shepherd, the three male survivors, and from an account written for me by one of the two women who escaped the massacre at the bank of the river. Her name, for the sake of her family, cannot be disclosed. Her story has been minutely compared with the voluminous evidence before me and of its substantial accuracy there is no doubt. The depositions of sixty-three witnesses, natives and half-castes, taken under the directions of Colonel Williams, Commissioner of Police in the North-Western Provinces, have been consulted, but their evidence is full of discrepancies and must be treated with extreme caution. The confidential reports from officials, petitions from private persons, depositions of witnesses, unofficial examinations, have been studied with care. They show that although the darkest tints predominate, the picture is not so black as it has been painted. As Colonel Williams states: "The most searching and earnest enquiries totally disprove the unfounded assertion that at first was so frequently made and so currently believed that personal indignity and dishonour were offered to our poor suffering countrywomen." The evidence also proves that the sepoy guard placed over the prisoners refused to murder them. The foul crime was perpetrated by five ruffians of the Nana's guard at the instigation of a
courtesan. It is as ungenerous as it is untrue to charge upon a nation that cruel deed.

The sketch of Sir Colin Campbell's relief of Lucknow in November 1857 is drawn from Sir Colin's own despatch and other primary sources. The journal kept in his official capacity by Captain George Allgood, C.B., who accompanied Sir Colin as Assistant Quartermaster-General with headquarters in the campaigns of 1857, 1858 and 1859, are now printed for the first time and they have been of great use to me. Sir David Baird, who was one of Sir Colin's Aides-de-Camp, at my urgent request sent me a short narrative of what occurred when he, Lieutenant Roberts and Captain Hopkins planted under a shower of bullets a regimental colour on one of the turrets of the mess-house.

The narrative of Major-General Windham's operations at Cawnpore has been written with an anxious regard to state facts without unduly raking the ashes of an old controversy. The draft of the narrative was read by the late Sir John Adye, who was Windham's Brigade-Major, and pronounced by him to be accurate and impartial. I pointed out to Sir John that his semi-official defence of General Windham's strategy printed in 1858 is mainly based on the word "outside" which is not in the original manuscript of the "Memorandum by the Chief of the Staff for the guidance of Major-General Windham." Colonel Lewis Jones (88th Régiment), who captured the enemy's guns on the 26th November, has conferred upon me a favour by sending to me a brief account of what took place on that day. General Chamier, who commanded with so much distinction the Madras guns on the 28th of November, when Brigadier Carthew was forced back into the intrenchments, has, by imparting to me much valuable information, helped me to understand the true nature of that conflict. But of all the materials on which I formed my account none has been of more value to me than the original draft of Brigadier Carthew's "Detailed report of the operations of the Forces placed under my command on the 26th, 27th
and 28th ultimo." As the report came into my private possession from a private source, and is not to be found in the Military Records, I am precluded from treating it as an official document which ought to be printed in these volumes. General Chamier vouches for its accuracy.

The account of the march of the three columns from the eastern frontier of Oudh to Lucknow has been mainly constructed from the despatches of their respective commanders. Much useful information relating to the march of General Franks's force has been supplied to me by General McLeod Innes, v.c., who accompanied it as Engineer Officer, and showed how great professional skill and calm judgment can be combined with valour of no ordinary order.

A detailed account is given of the operations on the plain of Alumbagh, by which Outram held the armed hosts of Lucknow in check until the Commander-in-Chief was in a position to undertake the capture of the city. It has been mainly based on Outram's own reports, which bear in every line the stamp of the man who impressed himself upon all the events with which he was connected and shaped them by the force of his individual character. He lives in the hearts of those who knew him, and from his comrades I have received many striking reminiscences of his courage and chivalry.

The sketch of the siege and capture of Lucknow, an operation which will always be considered a striking illustration of the art of war, is drawn from Sir Colin Campbell's despatch and Outram's memorandum of the operations carried on under his command. The "Reports on the Engineering Operations at the Siege of Lucknow in March 1858," by Major-General Sir R. Napier, k.c.b., Colonel Harness, c.b., and Lieutenant-Colonel Lennox, Royal Engineers, have enabled me to trace the daily progress of the siege. General Sir J. J. H. Gordon, who took part in the stern conflict at the Kaiser Bagh which again made us masters of Lucknow, has assisted me to reconcile many discrepancies in the contemporary narratives.
Field Marshal Earl Roberts, whose name is often mentioned in the despatches, has conferred on me an important favour by reading the introduction and furnishing some important suggestions and corrections. Finally, I have to express my deep thanks to General Sir Henry Norman, G.C.B., for his kind supervision of the proofs of the State papers and for giving me by his notes an opportunity of availing myself of his knowledge and study of the subject. Some of the official papers were written by him, and in most of the scenes he played an important and gallant part.

The sources of the narrative are State documents, but the introduction has no official character or authority. My earnest endeavour has been to state salient authentic facts in a spirit that will not revive the virulent race animosities which were aroused by bloodshed and carnage and perverted the history and criticism of the hour. There have been tongues and pens enough to narrate the excesses which have raised the Indian Mutiny to the rank of a world-wide tragedy. It is useful that these crimes should be remembered and freshly pondered, but it is equally wise to study the opposite picture. The brave and turbulent population of Oudh with a few exceptions treated the fugitives of the ruling race with a marked kindness. Not only the loyalty and the courage but the calm heroic spirit with which the sepoys in the Lucknow Residency endured dangers and trials is worthy of all honour. The devotion and fidelity of humble native attendants and loyal sepoys, the patient endurance and calm courage of our countrymen and countrywomen, the high energy and valour of the British soldier, afford some relief to the most terrible features of a tale of wrath and fury.

GEORGE WILLIAM FORREST.

INDIA OFFICE;
1st August 1901.
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