

THE
SHANNON'S BRIGADE IN INDIA

BEING SOME ACCOUNT OF
SIR WILLIAM PEEL'S NAVAL BRIGADE IN
THE INDIAN CAMPAIGN OF

1857—1858

BY
EDMUND HOPE VERNEY

LIEUT. R.N.



LONDON
SAUNDERS, OTLEY, AND CO.
66 BROOK STREET, HANOVER SQUARE
1862

CHAP. IX.

SIEGE OF LUCKNOW. — THE KAISER-BAGH. — THE RESIDENCY.
THE GREAT IMAUM-BARAH. — STORY OF MRS. ORR.

▷ *March 15th.* — Two guns were advanced up to the mess-house, which was stormed and taken by the 42nd Highlanders. We hear that many lives have been lost by powder blowing up, which was left about loose in large quantities by the Sepoys, probably on purpose. One of our engineers, Henri, purchased a sword and belt from a Sikh for 1*l.*; the knowing Sikh had touched the hilt with a file to see if it was silver gilt, but finding it the same colour throughout, sold it: Henri was much astonished to find that the hilt and mountings of the scabbard and belt were all of solid gold; some jewels which had been inlaid in the hilt were extracted before he bought it.

♂ *March 16th.* — 3. P.M. Four guns were advanced and got into position in the Residency, and the Great Imaum-barah was captured. 7. Opened fire on the city with shells and rockets. This afternoon I went to the Kaiser Bagh with Lieut. Young, and we climbed to the top of a large building containing a throne room

and hall of audience. Here was a gallery which had been used as a look-out place ; but before we had been there many minutes, we found ourselves the centre of general attention ; a number of Sepoys who were still hanging about the palace opened fire upon us : of course at that great elevation, and from their rude matchlocks, the shot were very erratic, but still on the whole we deemed it prudent to descend : in some store-houses at the base of the building we found large crates of crockery emblazoned with the King of Oude's arms, which had never been opened, and were evidently of French manufacture : we sent into camp as much as we needed for our own use ; a day or two later I passed the same spot, and saw that the whole of this beautiful china had been wantonly smashed. From one of the rooms, I cut a couple of pictures out of their frames, but almost all of them had been destroyed or defaced by swords and bayonets. In one of the courts I picked up a plated bit mounted with the royal arms of Oude.

‡ *March 17th.* — Yesterday evening six of our guns were advanced to the Residency, where they now are, occasionally firing a shot over the town : all seems quiet, and there is a report that the inhabitants are going to ransom their city, and turn the Sepoys out. I have purchased several arms that have been looted in the city ; amongst others an old flint lock fowling-piece the stock and barrel of which are most beautifully inlaid with silver and gold, the sights and flash-pan being of

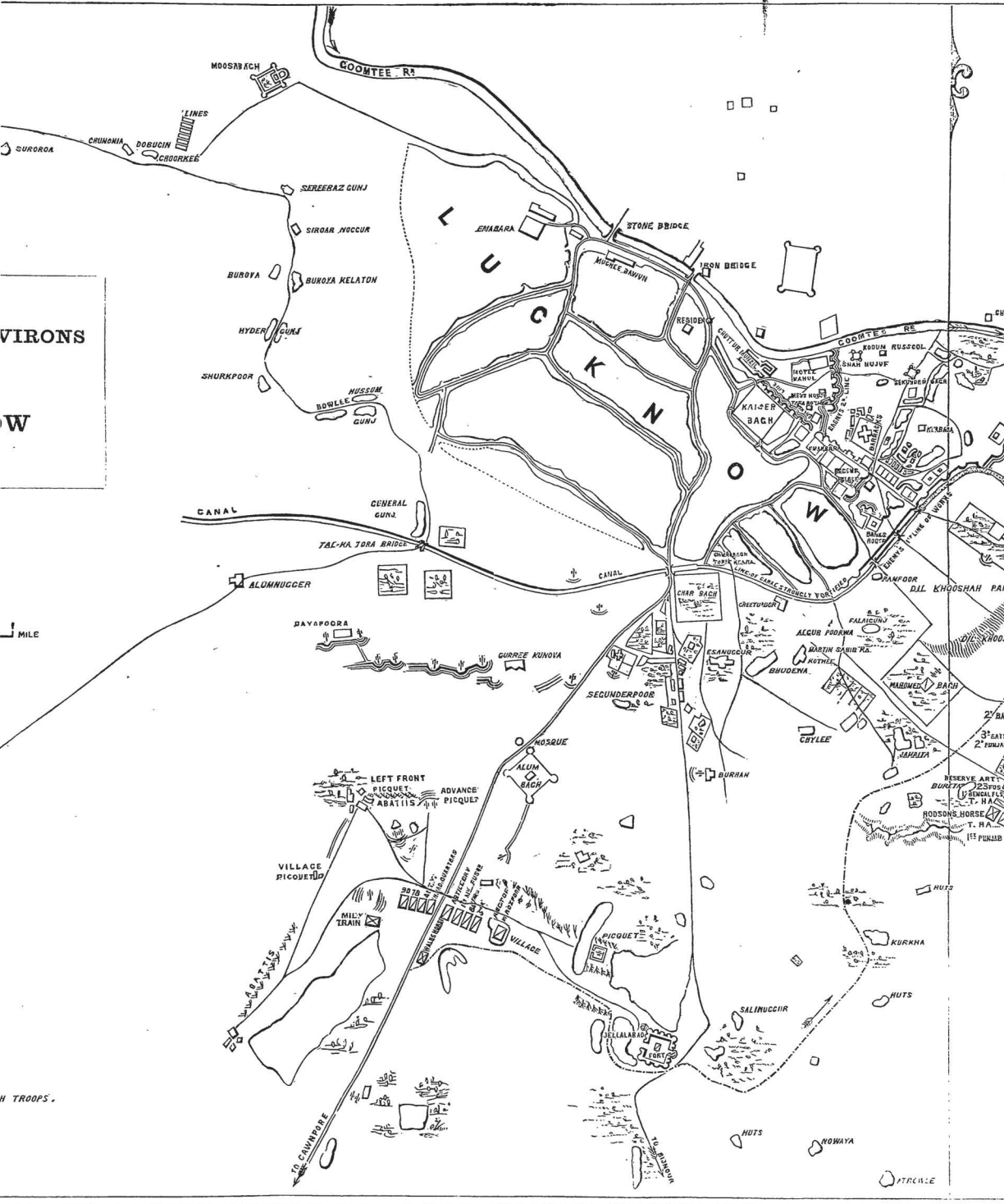
pure gold. I have been into the Dilkushah to see Captain Peel and to give him a tulwa which he asked me to procure for him ; the halls of that palace were crowded with sick soldiers, most of whom were burnt all over from head to foot by the dreadful explosions that have taken place in the city ; they were covered with cotton wadding, and by the side of each sat a native with a paper fan to keep off the flies : the sighs and groans of these poor fellows, reduced to mere pieces of burnt flesh, were those of men who literally felt life to be a burden, men without hope of recovery to whom death could be but a relief : the scene was most harrowing. Yesterday morning I went down from our battery in the Residency to the Goomtee with Lieut. Wilson, to have a bathe, but the river was so choked with Sepoy corpses that we could not make up our minds to jump in. Some of our men caught a goat, milked her and drank all the milk ; I then asked for some, but they had none left ; however they took her down to the Goomtee, where she drank her fill ; they then passed a bowline round her horns, ran her up and down the battery half a dozen times, milked her again, and brought me the milk, which I drank ; it was rather watery, but passable under the circumstances. In battery in the Residency we have suffered from a plague of flies ; I never before appreciated how terrible a thing a plague of flies could be ; they have been bred by the innumerable dead bodies of men and animals ; the moment

one sits down they settle on every exposed part of the body; they drown themselves in tea and gravy, immolate themselves on the end of cigars, accompany to one's mouth all one's food, and render sleep next to impossible: indeed the only way to obtain any rest is to get under a mosquito curtain; at about sunset the mosquitoes relieve guard, and the flies have their watch below. I was sent down to the Great Imaum-barah this afternoon to bring up a prisoner from the guard-room. Instead of going through the main street, I tried a short cut through the native town; I had not ridden five hundred yards from the Residency before I found myself an object of great attraction to numbers of budmashes who were skulking about the deserted town, and amused themselves by firing at me from every available window or door. This was not pleasant; so with my revolver in my hand I put my horse into a gallop and dashed along considerably at random, as in those narrow and tortuous streets it was not easy to keep one's dead reckoning; no one attempted to stop me, and I was considerably relieved when I saw the tall minarets of the Great Imaum-barah towering over my head, and heard the sentry's challenge. From these minarets a beautiful view of the city can be obtained, and its appearance is very picturesque from every house being built round a court containing trees, gardens, and sometimes fountains and greenhouses; thus, when viewed from any height, it looks like succession of gardens. The body of

VIRONS
W

1 MILE

H TROOPS.



the building of the Great Imaum-barah, which is now used as a barrack, is of white stone, and remarkable for the extreme beauty of its architecture and the delicate tracery of its adornments; it contains a high pulpit covered with exquisitely embossed plates of silver, which is fortunately under the charge of a sentry.

○ *March 21st.* — We have now in the Residency, four guns and eighty men, who are relieved every forty-eight hours: the town is all apparently quiet, but we know there are still many rebels about. Since we left Calcutta, a drill-sergeant of the 78th Highlanders has been attached to us; yesterday he was sent to rejoin his regiment, with a camel to carry his traps &c.: passing through a portion of the native town, at some distance from our guards, about a dozen Sepoys suddenly rushed out, killed the camel and its driver, and took his things: providentially he was following a little distance astern, and just escaped with his life.

▷ *March 22nd.* — The last body of rebels evacuated the town. I have visited the Shah Nujeef, and seen the spot where poor Daniel fell and was buried. The Sikhs are very knowing fellows: a Sikh serjeant will watch a party of Europeans enter a house for the purpose of plundering, and immediately plant sentries all round, and as each man comes out, he is told that there are strict orders against looting, and that he must disgorge his plunder; this of course he does with a very bad grace, and walks away looking sadly crest-

fallen : as soon as the whole party have thus gone off, the sergeant calls in his sentries, divides the loot, keeping the lion's share for himself, and they all go on their way rejoicing.

4 *March 25.* — Captain Peel's wound is still going on favourably. To-day I visited the observatory, which was formerly one of the best in India : it is now little better than an empty house, a few rooms of which have been furnished for the use of General Sir Edward Lugard. When returning to camp, I passed two ladies in a carriage drawn by a pair of oxen ; these were Mrs. Orr and Miss Jackson. Mrs. Orr saw her husband, Captain Orr, and Miss Jackson her brother, Sir Mountstuart Jackson, murdered by the Sepoys at the outbreak of the mutiny. These two ladies were then carried into Lucknow, where they have been kept until a few days ago when they were discovered and released by some English soldiers. The cruelties to which they have been subjected, are enough to extinguish any feeling of pity that one may retain for the rebels : at one time they were confined in a mud hut containing two rooms, in one of which they were placed while their guards occupied the other ; they overheard the wretches talking and agreeing that it was quite right they should be killed, but neither was willing to do the deed : at last one of them got up and went away saying that he would leave the other to do it, and while they sat momentarily expecting their death, the other man arose and

also departed, and thus at this time their lives were spared. When they were first made prisoners Mrs. Orr had a little daughter with her, in connection with whom occurred a remarkable manifestation of Divine Providence. Mrs. Orr first gave out that her child was sick and afterwards that it was dead, and it was then conveyed in a bundle of dirty linen to her brother-in-law in the Alumbagh by a faithful native; when she stated that it was sick, some medicine was given her for it, wrapped up in a piece of torn paper: on examining this, it proved to be a piece of the leaf of a large Bible, and on one side was written, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you; who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass: and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?" and on the other side was written, "Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over; and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street to them that went over."

Surely it is not presumption to regard this as a direct message of consolation from our Heavenly Father to one of His afflicted children.

‡ *March 26th.* — I rode down to the Residency to-day. A palace stands on the banks of the Goomtee called the Chutta Munzil, consisting of the usual conglomeration of courts, gardens, and rooms full of chandeliers; and through this a straight road has been cut to the Bailey Guard Gate of the Residency. I rode first through a court, then a hall, a throne-room, a garden, an artificial pond partially filled up, through more rooms, and at last out through a court and gateway, and it was by this road that our guns were brought up, and all subsequent supplies of ammunition, &c. When I returned, I rode along the banks of the Goomtee; the river was full of dead bodies that had caught among the weeds, and swamped near the Chutta Munzil was a miniature frigate, the ruined houses and palaces gave the city altogether a melancholy air of desolation.

‡ *March 27th.* — There is a wonderful rhinoceros in the camp, the property of the 53rd; he was found in Lucknow and is very tame; every day he is driven to a well to drink, guided by little taps from a twig which one would have thought could hardly have been felt through his thick hide: if, however, any one ventures to do more than touch him very lightly with it, he at once gets angry. He is very old, poor fellow,

and suffers from some sort of ophthalmia, which has rendered him all but blind.

○ *March 28th.* — Last night our four guns were withdrawn into park from the Residency. This morning Captain Peel has been out for a little exercise in a doolie, and is considerably better. One of our men, who was wounded in the thigh by a musket-ball, died last night of disease of the heart. Poor fellow! he was just recovering from his wound.

◊ *March 29th.* — Amongst other *souvenirs* of Lucknow, I have got from the palace a very handsome glass chandelier, with four branches; for each branch are two shades, one red and the other clear. We always use two branches; and when we have company to dinner four, which make our tent look very handsome. We hear that Captain Peel is going on as well as can be expected, but his severe wound will take some time to heal. To-day we have sent our two 8-in. howitzers and six 8-in. guns into park in the small Imaumbarah; the latter are the guns we brought from the Shannon, and we have now handed them over to the Artillery; and here they will remain, may I say it with pardonable pride, a memorial of what sailors *can* do on land. The word "Shannon" is cut deeply into each carriage, and must last as long as the wood does.

♂ *March 30th.* — A few days ago I was sent in to the Kaiser Bagh with ten men to bring out one of the King of Oude's carriages for Captain Peel's conveyance

to Cawnpore. I selected the best I could find ; and, having brought it into camp, our carpenters padded it, lined it with blue cotton, made a rest for his feet, and painted "H. M. S. Shannon" over the royal arms of Lucknow : when, however, he saw it to-day, he declined making use of it, saying that he would prefer to travel in a doolie like one of his blue jackets.