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of 1857-8, Volume 6

John Kaye and George Bruce Malleon

Excerpt

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# HISTORY OF THE INDIAN MUTINY

## BOOK XVIII.—THE CIVIL DISTRICTS.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE TERRITORIES UNDER THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF BENGAL.

I PURPOSE, in this final volume, to place on record the deeds of those Englishmen in India, not necessarily soldiers, who, placed in most difficult circumstances, with no support but that afforded by their own brave hearts, living in the midst of a population surging around them, exposed to imminent danger, not only from the revolted Sipáhis, but from the prisoners whom they had sentenced now broken loose from the gaols, and from the miscreants whom they had once controlled but who had now become the leaders in slaughter and outrage, never lost their nerve, never ceased to bear themselves proudly, never forgot what was due to their own honour and their reputation as Britons. The glorious action of these men in the stations, which were also military stations, has been recorded in the five preceding volumes. Whenever it may be necessary to return to those stations to recount, as in the case of Kánhpúr, the civil measures which followed military retribution, I shall ask the reader to accompany me thither. But my main object, in this volume, is to tell the story of the stations which were not military stations, in which the civilian, isolated from his fellows, uncheered by the society of any one, save, perhaps, of a stray planter or an assistant, or, as in some cases, having upon him the responsibility for the lives of women and children, had no aid but that afforded by his trust in God, by his own stout heart, and by a fixed determination, that, happen what might, he, at least, would show himself not unworthy of the land

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## 2 TERRITORIES UNDER LIEUT.-GOV. OF BENGAL. [1857.]

which gave him birth, that to the very last hour, however terrible the trial, he would do his duty. The record will show that the Civil Service of India possessed, as I believe it still possesses, many such men, heroes in the truest sense of the term. Of the dangers to which such men were exposed, of the trials they endured, of the resolution and gallantry with which they fought their way to ultimate triumph, this volume will, I hope, be a permanent record.

I propose to take the subject in its geographical arrangement, constituting each Governorship, each Lieutenant-Governorship and each Chief Commissionership the initial unit, parcelling out then each unit into its several particles called divisions or commissionerships, each division into its several districts, each district into its several stations. In this manner I shall take the reader to every spot in British India in which there was tumult or outbreak during the period of the revolt of the Sipáhis.

I begin with the territories under the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.

The territories under the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, called sometimes the Lower Provinces, lay\* between longitude 82° and 97°, the most westerly portion being Bhokár in the Chutiá Nágpúr Commissionership, and the most easterly point, that of Sadiá in Upper Ásám, and between latitude 20° and 28°, the most southerly point being the Chilká Lake in Orisá, and the most northern points Tirhút and Sadiá. These territories were bounded to the north by Nipál, Sikkim, Bhután, and the lands occupied by the Áká, Duflá, Míri, and Mishmí tribes; to the east, by Burmah; to the south by Burmah, the Bay of Bengal, and the Madras Presidency; to the west, by the Central Provinces, Rewá, and the North-Western Provinces. The area of these territories was estimated at 280,200 square miles, the population at sixty-five millions. The races constituting this population are more various than those of any other part of India. The Hindu population contains all the castes of the Hindus with many subdivisions. Of these the Kayaths, proceeding from a Kshatriya father and a Sudrá, or low-caste, mother, are the most numerous. These supply the clerks and

\* I use the past tense because since the events of 1857-8 Ásám and some outlying districts were severed from the territories under the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and formed into a separate Chief Commissionership. This occurred in 1874.

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NAMES OF THE DIVISIONS.

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copyists, of whom Bengal is so prolific. The Brahmans trace their origin to Brahmans who immigrated from Kanáuj when that famous city felt the tyranny of the Muhammadan invader. The Muhammadan population, which is most numerous in the south-eastern parts of Bengal, consists of descendants from Afghans and a large number of converts from low Hindu, Arakanese, and aboriginal tribes. Aboriginal tribes, who cling to their old customs, are chiefly met with in the mountainous parts of Ásám, in eastern Bengal, in Orísá, in Chutiá Nágpúr, and in the Rajmahall hills. Immigrants from these tribes are freely employed in the tea districts of Ásám. The languages spoken are as various as the populations. In Bengal there is Bengálí with its several dialects; in Orísá, Uriyá; in Ásám, Ásámese; in Bihár, Hindi and Hindustání. I am unable to enumerate all the languages spoken by the aborigines.

In the time of Clive these territories were spoken of as the provinces of Bengal, Bihár, and Orísá; but at the present day this division is purely geographical. The territories under the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal were, in 1857, divided into divisions or commissionerships, and these again were subdivided into districts, that is, every Commissioner of a division had under his control a certain number of districts under an officer responsible primarily to himself. These districts combined went to form the division.

Modern  
nomenclature  
of these  
territories.

In 1857 the number of divisions was eleven. They were Orísá, containing three districts, Katak, Púrí, and Báleshwar; Bardwán; Western Bengal, with its five districts, Bardwán, Bánkurá, Bírbhúm, Húglí and Haurah, and Midnapúr; the Presidency, with Calcutta and the twenty-four parganahs, Nadiá, and Jessor; Rájsháhi, with its seven districts, Murshidábád, Dínájpúr, Máldá, Rájsháhi, Rangpúr Bagurá, and Pabná; Koch Bihár, with Dárjiling, Jalpaiguri, and the tributary state of Koch Bihár; Dhákah, with its six districts, Dhákah, Farídpur, Bákirganj, Maimansingh, Silhat, and Kachhar; Chitragáon, with Chitragáon and the hill tracts, Bhaluá (Noakháli), Tiparah and Hill Tiparah; Ásám, with its nine districts, Goálpár, Kámrúp (Gauhatti), Durang, Naugáon, Síbságar, Lakkhimpur, the Gáro hills, the Khasiá and Jaintiá hills, the Nágá hills; Patná, or, more correctly, Western Bihár, with its six districts, Patná Gayá, Sháhábád, Sáran, Champáran, and Tirhút; Eastern Bihár, with Munger, Bhágalpúr, Púrniá, and the Santál par-

Names and  
numbers of  
the divisions  
and dis-  
tricts.

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ganahs; Chutiá Nágpúr (the south-west frontier Agency), with Lohárdágá, Hazáribágh, Singhbhúm, Mánbúm, and certain tributary Mahalls, such as Bhokár, Koreá, Sirgújá, Udaipúr, Jashpúr, Gangpúr, Bonai, Sarúndá, and others equally small, covering altogether an area of 12,881 square miles,

I begin with Orísá with its three districts, Katak, Púrí or Orísá. Jagannáth, and Báleshwar\* and its nineteen tributary Mahalls. Until 1803 Orísá had belonged to the Maráthá family called the Bhonslá, which ruled in central India, with Nágpúr as its capital. But in that year Marquess Wellesley and his illustrious brother had wrested the province, as it was then called, from the Bhonslá, and it has since remained an integral part of the British dominions in India. The majority of the inhabitants are called Uriyás, but the term is often applied to indicate the lower classes only. The chief classes among the Hindus are the Brahmans, the Karans, the Khandaits (swordsmen); there are also Talingás and Bargís, descendants of the Maráthás. The Musalmáns of this division are chiefly descended from the Patháns, who, under Sulaimán Kararání, King of Bengal, and his general, Kálápahár, defeated, in 1567, Mukund Deo, the last Hindu king of Orísá. In the tributary Mahalls are still to be found aboriginal tribes, some of whom, such as the Konds, were in the habit, within the experience of living men, of sacrificing human beings. These aboriginal tribes speak a language differing from Uriyá, which is the general language of the division.

Katak is in one respect the principal district of Orísá, for its capital, also called Katak† forms the headquarters of the division. This town is built on the apex of the delta of the Mahánadí river, which rising in the Raipúr district of the central provinces, and running a course of 529 miles, pours down upon the delta through the narrow gorge of Naráj, seven miles west of the town, and, dividing into two streams,

\* Báleshwar is generally spelt by the English "Balasore." The spelling is barbarous and incorrect. Nothing can be clearer than the derivation and meaning of the name as correctly written. Báleshwar means "Young Lord," and is applied in the Hindi writings to Krishna. The name commemorates the visit of the incarnate deity to the district.

† The word "Katak," written improperly in English "Cuttack," and wrongly accented on the last syllable, means, in Sanskrit, "a royal metropolis," "a city," and also "an army." The people of Orísá adopt the first meaning. *Vide Murray's Bengal.*

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PEACEFUL SIPÁHIS.

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encircles Katak on the north and east, and by its branch, the Kátjurí, on the west. The town contains fifty thousand inhabitants. In 1856 the officers, to whom was confided the charge of the division of Orisá, were the commissioner, Mr. G. F. Cockburn; the judge of Katak, Mr. J. J. Ward; the magistrates, of Katak, Mr. R. N. Shore; of Púrí, Mr. A. S. Annand; of Báleshwar, Mr. H. M. Reid; and the deputy collector at Púrí, Mr. C. Jenkins.

But few signs of disaffection occurred in this division in the early days of the general revolt. In his narrative of events the Secretary to the Government of Bengal was almost invariably able to give the happy assurance that "the public peace has remained undisturbed in this district and the tributary Mahalls." So undisturbed did that peace continue that, as related,\* the Government were able to direct that the Madras troops there located should march to a part of the country where their service would be more useful. The Sipáhis of that army had resisted the suggestions made to them by some malcontents that it would be to their advantage to take the law into their own hands, as European troops were coming to disarm them and then to march them hundreds of miles away, and had continued faithful to their salt. A slight variation from the customary favourable report took place in November 1857, by the mention of the fact that the Rájah of Bamnughátí was apprehensive of an outbreak amongst the Dharuahs, one of the aboriginal tribes of the division. But under the influence of events which occurred at no great distance from the scene of apprehended disaffection about this period, notably the defeat of the rebels by Major English at Chatrá,† in Chutiá Nágpúr, the Dharuahs changed their minds, and did not venture to disturb the public peace. Nor after this period was there any suggestion of disturbance in the province of Orisá, save that which may have been occasionally caused by passing bodies of fugitive Sipáhis. It will be seen in the course of the narrative that this comparative tranquillity in his own district had the effect of impelling Mr. Cockburn, the commissioner, to work with untiring energy and success for the maintenance or restoration of order in districts which were not so fortunate.

From the division of Orisá we proceed to that of Bardwán. This division is bounded on the East by the river Húglí, to

Peacefulness  
of the Orisá  
division.

\* Vol. IV. page 98.

† Vol. IV. page 100.

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the north by the Santál Parganahs, to the west by Chutiá Nágpúr, and to the south by Orisá. Its principal inhabitants are Hindus of all castes with a proportion of Muhammadans. The languages spoken are Bengálí and Hindustání. The division, which is also called the division of western Bengal, is subdivided into five disticts, viz., Bardwán, Bánkurá, Birbhúm, Húglí and Haurah, and Midnapúr: to this last pertained, in 1857, the salt stations of Tamlúk and Hijlí. The chief station of the division is Bardwán. In 1857 the officers stationed in this division were the Commissioner, Mr. W. H. Elliott; four judges, Mr. J. H. Young, Mr. P. Taylor, Mr. H. V. Bayley, and Mr. G. P. Leycester; the magistrates, Mr. H. B. Lawford, Mr. A. J. Elliott, Mr. J. J. Grey, and Mr. G. Bright; the collectors, Mr. P. H. Schalch and Mr. W. H. Broadhurst; the deputy collector, Mr. H. C. Raikes.

The division of Bardwán was fortunate in having no history during the time of the great Mutiny. It had, no doubt, its alarms and its occasional episodes of interest. Thus it was at Haurah that, as recounted in the second volume,\* Neill astonished the station-master by forcibly detaining the train till his troops should reach the right bank of the river. It was from Chinsurah, in the Húglí district, that the Highlanders marched to disarm the Barrackpúr brigade. But there was no outbreak. The fate of the Bardwán division was linked with that of the Presidency, and the fate of both depended on the turn affairs should take in Calcutta, at Barrackpúr, at Jalpaigurí, in the two Bihárs, and in eastern Bengal.

The division next to that of Bardwán is called the Presidency division. It comprises the capital, Calcutta, and the twenty-four Parganahs, Nadiá, Jessor, and the Sundarban,† a marshy district south of the twenty-four parganahs, intersected by many branches of the Ganges and rivers such as the Matlá, the Kapadak, the Mollinchu, the Marjatá, and the Haringhátá. It is unnecessary to name all the officers, civil and military, of this division. Those upon whom lay the greatest weight of responsibility, and who contributed the most to ensure the safety of the capital, will be mentioned in the following pages.

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\* Pages 98-9.

† The word "Sundarban" is derived from "sundar," beautiful, and "ban," a forest.

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MISTAKES OF LORD CANNING.

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The political events which occurred in Calcutta and the neighbourhood during the memorable years 1857-8 have been recounted with sufficient fulness in the <sup>Calcutta.</sup> preceding volumes. It has been abundantly proved that the members of the British mercantile and trading communities were not only free from panic, but that they discerned the signs of the times and the proper method of dealing with the difficulties of the hour far more clearly than did the officials who surrounded Lord Canning. To that noblemen I have endeavoured to render full justice. In 1857 he was yet new to India, and he dealt with the sudden emergency on the advice of the officials he had inherited from his predecessor; hence his early mistakes. It is not too much to affirm that on every one of the points on which he differed from the non-official community he was wrong, and the members of the non-official community were right. I need only mention (1) the first refusal to accept the offer of the European community to form a volunteer corps; (2) the slowness in dealing with the mutiny at Barhampúr, and the mode of dealing with it; (3) the delay in depriving the native troops at Barrackpúr of their arms—a delay which caused the memorable panic of the 14th of June, a panic which did not reach the members of the mercantile community nor the European residents of Calcutta generally, but which drove many of the highly-placed officials to take refuge or to send their families to take refuge on board the ships lying in the river, and thousands of Eurasians to scour in terror the plain leading to Fort William. Of this I was an eye-witness.\* The fourth matter in which the mercantile community showed greater prescience than the ruling power, was in the earnestness with which they pressed disarming of the regiments at Dánápúr. In the famous interview their leaders had with Lord Canning at a moment, be it remembered, when

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\* For making this statement in the *Red Pamphlet*, written on the spot and with the most complete knowledge of the events, I incurred the lasting enmity of the men who either went themselves, or sent their families, to take refuge on board the ships in the river. When, some ten or twelve years ago, my name came up for selection to the "Athenæum Club," one of these, a member of the committee, declared that even if I were elected by every one present, he would exercise his right of veto. He subsequently explained that he had no personal dislike to me, but that he had felt so keenly the statements made in the *Red Pamphlet*—which, I may add, have never been denied and are absolutely true—that he had vowed that its author should never be enrolled in the club to the membership of which literary men naturally aspire.

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that nobleman had in hand a sufficient number of troops for the purpose, and when those troops were being sent off daily by the river route which would take them by Dánápúr, they foretold all the evils which would happen if the Government should fail to display a lack of firmness and decision. Attached at the time to the Military Audit Department of the Government of India, I naturally was not present at the interview, but I received an account of what happened there within half an hour of its conclusion from the lips of the principal spokesman and leader of the mercantile community, Mr. Daniel Mackinlay.

From him I learnt that Lord Canning was very curt, and very downright in his refusal; that, after he had listened with firmly-pressed lips to the prayer of the deputation to the effect that they had vast interests in western Bihár, that those interests would be seriously imperilled if the earliest opportunity were not taken to disarm the native regiments at Dánápúr, and that such an opportunity now presented itself; he replied in the fewest possible words that these troops should not be disarmed. The actual instructions which the Government gave on the occasion \*—the thrusting of the responsibility which properly belonged to them on to the shoulders of an old officer at the station itself—have been related in the third volume. The four subjects I have referred to indicate the measure of foresight and capacity which characterised the men whom Lord Canning had inherited from his predecessor as the advisers whom he could trust. They were the unsafest of guides. Their advice was always wrong. In every instance they had to retrace their steps, and to do that which they had publicly declared they would not do. But their incapacity to arrive at a right decision, to act on that decision after it had by accident been arrived at, marked them out as most unfortunate advisers to a Governor-General new to India and her traditions. A Wellesley, indeed, would have swept them aside with a contemptuous wave of his hand; but Lord Canning, though a brave, conscientious, and, in many respects, an able man, was not a

\* Regarding this, Lord Dalhousie, the immediate predecessor of Lord Canning, wrote at the time: "The last business of Dánápúr exceeds all powers of imagination. General Lloyd, it is said, put undue faith in the Sipáhis; but why was it left to General Lloyd, or to General or Mr. Anybody, to order the measures so obviously necessary to safety?"—Trotter's "Dalhousie," pages 205-6.



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Wellesley. When, then, one of these men advances the claim, as one of them has done, to have been "the right hand of Lord Canning" during the earlier stages of the revolt, and whilst that Lord was yet in Calcutta, he prefers a claim which his opponents may well admit, for it is absolutely condemnatory of himself.

To the general feebleness and incapacity of the counsellors and staff-officers of the Governor-General there were exceptions. To one of these, Mr. J. P. Grant, I have made special reference in the third volume. Mr. Grant

Mr. J. P.  
Grant.

was a man of remarkable ability. He pointed out to Lord Canning in vigorous words the dangers of the situation. To his penetrating glance, Mr. Beadon's line of six hundred miles was all "moonshine." He was constantly urging action, and action in the right direction. Had Mr. Grant's advice been followed matters would have progressed far more satisfactorily. But Mr. Grant was not a soldier; and there were two soldiers in the Supreme Council, Sir John Low and Sir Patrick Grant. The latter had come up on special call from Madras, because, from his previous acquaintance with the Bengal Army, of which he had been Adjutant-General, he was supposed to possess the knowledge requisite to enable the Government to deal successfully with the situation. It was but natural then that on military matters Lord Canning should prefer the advice of this experienced soldier to the counsels of his civilian namesake. Of the proceedings of Sir Patrick Grant in Calcutta two stand revealed. There are, in fact, no others of moment.

Sir Patrick  
Grant.

On reading what these two proceedings were, one is tempted to inquire whether, to obtain such advice as he gave, it was worth the trouble and the expense to send for Sir P. Grant from Madras. The first of these refers to his reasons for not taking the field in person: \* the second to his thrusting on the shoulders of General Lloyd the responsibility of disarming or of not disarming the Sipáhis at Dánápúr.† It may be urged that Sir Patrick knew General Lloyd, and that a commander-in-chief is justified in casting a portion of his responsibility on a subordinate whom he knows and trusts. The result proved that Sir Patrick's action was a mere shifting of responsibility to a man who, if Sir Patrick knew him at all, he must have known was not strong enough to bear the burden. The occasion was eminently one in which a strong man would have said: "The

\* Vol. III. pages 20-21.

† Vol. III. page 40 and note.

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times are critical; everything, possibly the very safety of Calcutta, depends upon the prompt disarming of the three Sipáhi regiments at Dánápúr. We have troops at hand who will pass that station. I will warn General Lloyd and tell him he must take the first opportunity to deprive these men of their muskets. The disarming will not then detain the regiments more than twenty-four hours at the utmost. A great danger will then be removed. I will at once issue the necessary orders." A strong man, I repeat, would have argued in that way. Sir Patrick Grant did not. He, I repeat, was content to shift the responsibility to the shoulders of General Lloyd. But though he shifted it for the moment, the real responsibility of the non-disarming of the Sipáhis and of the consequent horrors and bloodshed rests, and will rest, on the shoulders of Sir Patrick Grant.

I can fancy some of my readers exclaiming in words similar to those employed by Sir John Kaye when the evidence in favour of the Government was too weak for him to express an unexplained approval of its policy: "It is so easy to be wise after the event."\*

But my contention is that Mr. Mackinlay and the mercantile community were wise at the time. They pressed the policy, now admitted to be the right policy, upon Lord Canning and Sir Patrick Grant. Their vision, at least was clear. It was the Government of India which was blind and deaf at the time and became wise only after the event. The mercantile community possessed the prescience in which the Government was deficient.

Some of the members of the Government have, indeed, since admitted that on one point at least the Government were wrong, and those whom the Government persecuted were right.† And I have no doubt whatever but that they have made the same admission with respect to other instances. I am sure that Lord Canning would have done so. His conduct after he had shaken off his Calcutta advisers presents a marked contrast to his conduct during the time he was under their influence.

An officer who rendered marked service to the Governor-General in Calcutta during the early days of the mutiny, and indeed to the very end, was the Town-Major, Major, now Sir Orfeur, Cavenagh.

Major Orfeur  
Cavenagh