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The ladies of Lucknow and others : Anglo-Indian life and mutiny survival

Lori Sunderman Heathorn
San Jose State University

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**THE LADIES OF LUCKNOW AND OTHERS:
ANGLO-INDIAN LIFE AND MUTINY SURVIVAL**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Lori Sunderman Heathorn

December 2002

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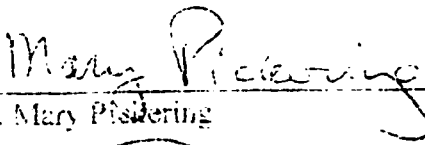
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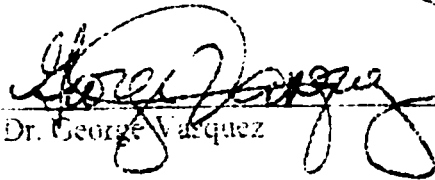
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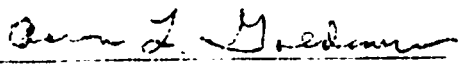
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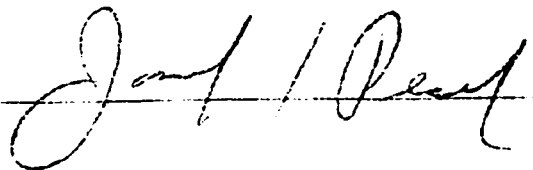
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY


Dr. Mary Pistering


Dr. George Varquez


Dr. Aaron Goldman

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY



ABSTRACT

The Ladies of Lucknow: Pre-Mutiny Life and Mutiny Survival

By Lori Sunderman Heathorn

This thesis examines the lives of British women in India prior to the Mutiny of 1857, the general causes of the uprising, and how the women survived in various cities, especially Lucknow. Many British women kept journals or diaries and wrote long letters home to their families and friends. These accounts are now the sources for this study, which examines the societal mores of the British in India and how, by maintaining these mores, the British women in Lucknow were able to survive 176 days besieged, with bullets and disease daily claiming the lives of friends and family.

The journals offer a pitiful, bloody, yet fascinating account of the siege and the societal barriers still standing within the walls of Lucknow Residency. What has been perceived as the negative characteristics of these women, e.g., their obsession with protocol and gossip, is actually what sustained them throughout the siege and evacuation.

To my father. David Dean Sunderman. with gratitude

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PREFACE

This study focuses solely on the British in India, without reference to the British in other parts of their empire. This is not to imply any differences in attitudes, actions, or judgments on the part of the British in China, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, or the West Indies. My observations, in many cases, apply to all areas of the British Empire, but for brevity, I chose to refer for the most part only to India.

Terminology and Spelling

This turning point of Indian history is known as the *Indian Mutiny*, the *Sepoy Revolt*, the *Sepoy Mutiny*, or the *Sepoy Rebellion*. This variety of names stems from the confusion surrounding the conflict itself. To determine which term is most appropriate, one must examine who participated in the conflict. Since the conflict remained in Bengal, primarily in the province of Oudh and chiefly among the sepoys attached to the militia, it could be considered a *sepoys mutiny*, although not an *Indian mutiny* due to the geographical boundaries. But to term it a *mutiny* would imply that the British government had a right to enforce authority over Indians, a notion that is distinctly out of step with twentieth-century ideas. Thus, I decided against using the term *mutiny*. For the same reasons I determined not to use *rebellion* or *revolt*, for although each is correct in indicating an altercation between authority and subject, once again, it assumes the validity of the authority. And although civilian natives joined the sepoys, or in some way

participated in actions against the British government. this was by no means a national movement. In many cases, mutineers forced villagers to join them, and once they departed, the villagers went back to their peaceful way. Thus, to term it an Indian rebellion or revolt is incorrect.

Yet the problem of what to call it remains. For the purpose of this paper, I intend to use the term *uprising* defined as “a popular revolt, sometimes limited or viewed as being the first indications of a more extensive rebellion”¹ because the term more accurately describes the conflict. But what to call the participants? Neither *rebels* nor *sepoys* nor *mutineers* is totally accurate, but *insurrectionists* is a bit unwieldy. *Natives* has a pejorative ring to it, besides which, many ‘natives’ were not fighting the British. Thus, I decided, for clarity and brevity, to use the word *rebels* to describe those actively fighting against the British and European communities throughout the Bengal Presidency.

The term Anglo-Indian is also questionable. In the nineteenth century it was used to describe a person or persons of British ancestry currently living in India. It was not widely used to characterize the children of mixed British-Indian blood. These children were commonly termed *half-caste*. As the century progressed, these half-castes appropriated the term Anglo-Indian to describe themselves. In this study, however, the term Anglo-Indian refers only to the British in India.

Although it is not politically correct to use the term *lady* when referring to female human beings, it was correct to do so in the nineteenth century. Thus, in my sources authors very often use the term ‘lady.’ Usually this refers to an upper-class or middle-

¹ American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd edition, s.v. rebellion.

class woman, with the term woman reserved for the lower class British woman, or non-European females. In keeping with more appropriate terminology I shall use the terms woman and women to describe the feminine gender, but keep to the original terms in direct quotations.

As for spelling, I have used the British spellings only within their quoted passages, thus the defense of Lucknow becomes the "defence" of Lucknow when quoted directly. Also, the various Indian place names have changed more recently, but I have stuck by the names used by the British, i.e., Bombay instead of Mumbai, Madras instead of Chennai. Another problem arose with the various attempts by the British to spell Indian place-names. Oudh is spelled Oude or Aoudh; Lucknow is Lakhnao; Cawnpore is Kanpur. I chose one consistent spelling and used it, unless it appears in a direct quotation.

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I would like to thank the Mr. Tim Collins and his staff at the Oriental and India Office Collections at the British Library, for their assistance and kind permission to reproduce illustrative materials. I would also like to thank Mr. Lionel Carter and his staff at the Cambridge Centre for South Asian Studies; the Inter-Library staff at San Jose State University for their unstinting efforts to locate my sources; my thesis committee, Dr. Mary Pickering, Dr. George Vasquez, and Dr. Aaron Goldman, for their help and efforts; Professor Irma Eichhorn, for her initial guidance and suggestions; and finally to my husband, Trevor, who lived with the Ladies of Lucknow for much too long.

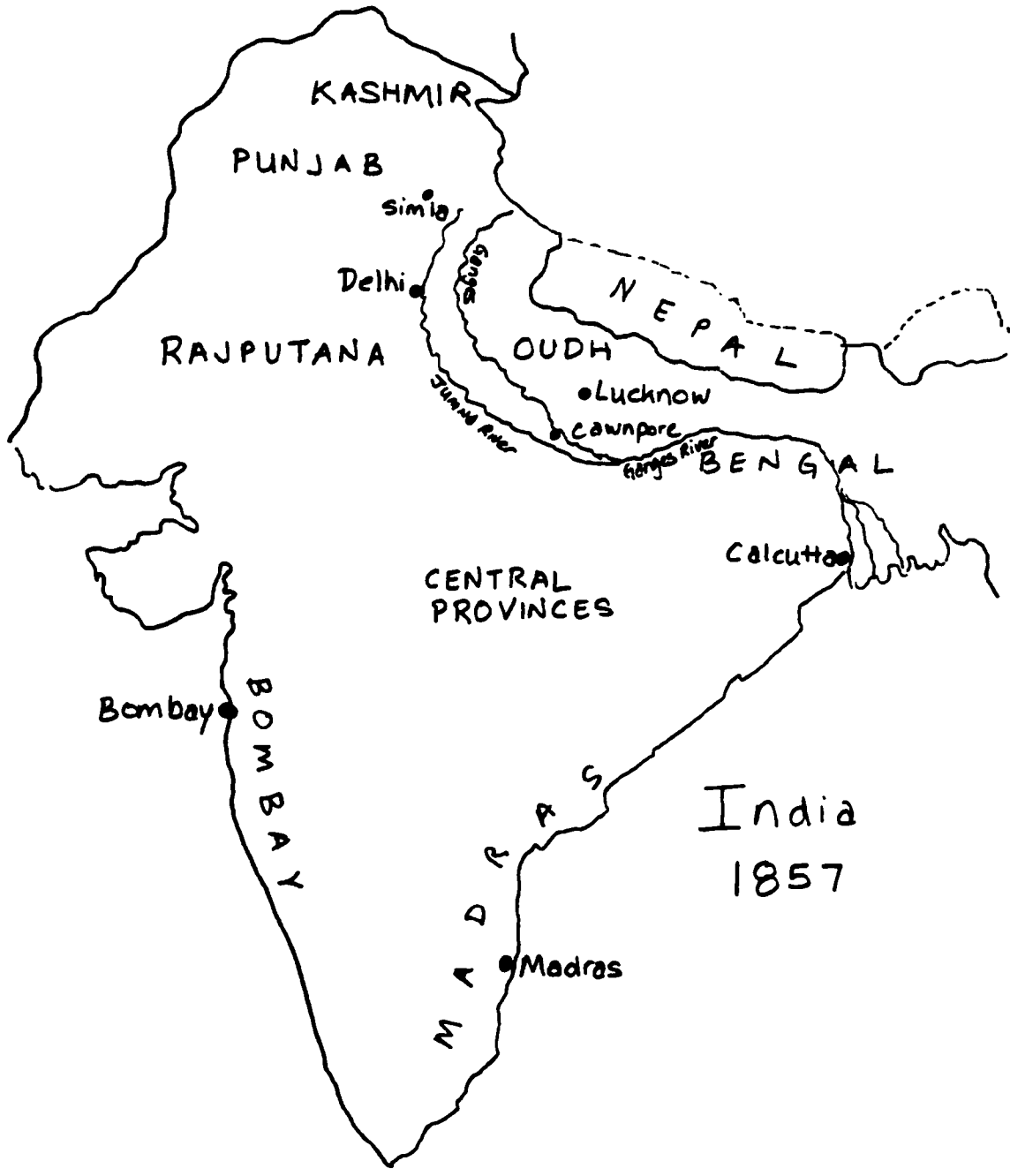


Figure 1
Map of India c.1857

I

INTRODUCTION

In the nineteenth century Britain scrambled to the top of heap of imperial nations as the British crown extended sovereignty over some three-quarters of the globe. Britons could proudly say that the sun never set on the British Empire and this was indeed the case. It stretched from North America to both coasts of Africa and the jewel of this empire was India. When Queen Elizabeth I granted the East India Company a charter to create eastern trade routes, India was a logical base. India had been under Moghul rule since 1483, when descendants of Genghis Khan and Tamberlane invaded the country and established a Muslim court at Delhi. The 'Honorable Company' approached the Moghul emperor, Jahangir, and received permission in 1613 to set up trading posts at certain coastal cities.¹ But the British were not the first of the great European nations to begin trading there. In 1510 Portuguese merchants organized a trading company that supplied spices and cloth to the rest of Europe. The Dutch followed in the early 1600s, and the French, relative latecomers, created settlements in 1664. The Mcghul emperor granted each of these countries permission to trade, but as Moghul power declined, British power increased, driving out its competitors. In 1757 Robert Clive, a clerk for the British East India Company, led an armed force, backed by the British government, against the French and the Indian princes who supported them. At Plassey in Bengal, Clive defeated

¹ Christopher Hibbert, The Great Mutiny: India 1857 (London: Allen Lane, 1978, reprint London: Penguin, 1978), 17 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

their combined forces, wiping out the French settlement while securing present-day Bangladesh for Britain. Henceforth the British East India Company held a virtual monopoly over India.

The British traders created settlements in or near Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta, but these settlements, although substantial, maintained a transient air, as traders never viewed India as their home. Until the early nineteenth century, British men came to India for one reason: to amass a large fortune as rapidly as possible which would enable them to return to England and live in comfort. The East Indies offered impoverished young men the opportunity to earn money quickly. Since this land was so distant from the parent company, a profit-seeking company man could literally cheat and bribe his way to a fortune. A man with the right native connections could, in ten years, put away forty or fifty thousand pounds, a veritable fortune in the early nineteenth century. Then these men could return to England to buy their way into a higher social class. By purchasing land in the English countryside, a trader could perhaps gain entry into the landed gentry and settle down to become a gentleman farmer.

These early traders adapted to Indian ways as much as they deemed necessary. Socializing with titled natives and marrying into native trading families easily made those connections necessary for their pocket-lining schemes. The traders integrated themselves to some extent into the Indian lifestyle by adopting some local dress customs and entirely changing their homes to suit the climate. Those who had not married into native families often kept Indian mistresses. Indeed, those who did marry native women received subsidies from the East India Company as such marriages encouraged trade relations and

prevented the Company men from perhaps marrying Roman Catholic Portuguese women.¹ As more and more Europeans arrived, the civil, military, and commercial population began to move away from the native ways, and adopt more traditional, e.g., British modes of living. As the eighteenth century drew to a close, a new moralistic spirit appeared in Britain and the Company began to worry about the character of its employees. Thus, in 1790, it advertised for unmarried women to go to India to provide its employees with white, Christian, Protestant wives.

[T]he Company had been forced in the name of decency, racial purity, and the prevention of venereal disease to open their dominions to English women and encourage young maidens deprived of suitors by the ravages of the Napoleonic Wars to seek husbands in the Company's service.²

These women later became known as the "Fishing Fleet," and those who were unsuccessful in finding a spouse, left India as "returned empties." Many of these women came from the lower-middle and lower classes, as the Company sought to improve their morals as well as those of their employees. The Company also sought gentlewomen to suit the requirements of their higher-ranking officials. In his history of the East India Company, John Keay quoted one governor as bemoaning "pedigrees went by the board. Be they what they will, at their arrival all pretend to be gentlewomen, high born . . . and scorn to marry under a factor [agent] or commissioned officer."³ As the nineteenth century continued, more and more British women arrived on India's shores, both in the

¹ Andrew Ward, Our Bones are Scattered: The Cawnpore Massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857 (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1996), 13.

² *Ibid.*, 73.

³ John Keay, The Honorable Company: A History of the English East India Company (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1991), 135.

official 'fishing fleet' and unofficially, via relatives. By this time, most came to accompany their husbands, or to be official hostesses to unmarried male relatives, and the Eurasian offspring of those earliest marriages become "shameful vestiges of a vanishing way of life."⁴ Michael Edwardes, a foremost scholar on British India, claimed that:

The women had little to occupy their minds. [They] were not interested in Indians, only in the inefficiencies of their servants. They wanted to create for themselves and their menfolk an island in the vast sea of India - and, to a large extent, they were successful.⁵

And India was vast and unknown. The very size of it was overwhelming, and the time spent traveling to and within India was immense. In the early nineteenth century, the journey to India from England could take anywhere from six to ten months. A reply to a letter might arrive a year later. A journey "up-country" to remote frontier stations often took two months, and one traveled with a virtual crowd of natives, the higher one's rank, the more 'necessary' retainers. In 1836, Isabella Fane traveled with her civil servant father, and he found he needed a retinue of five thousand natives. The governor-general of Bengal, Emily Eden's brother, needed twelve thousand when he went on a provincial tour in 1837.⁶

Besides the incredible size of India, the climate was completely new to many Britons. The so-called cold season temperatures were often around 65°, the typical summer weather for Britons. The hot season saw the thermometers rise to 100° and

⁴ Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 14.

⁵ Michael Edwardes, British India, 1772-1947: A Survey of the Nature and Effects of Alien Rule (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1967), 33-34.

⁶ Isabella Fane, Miss Fane in India, ed. John Pemble (Gloucester, England: Alan Sutton, 1985), 26; Emily Eden, Up the Country (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), 44.

higher. Europeans rose before dawn, eating a small breakfast before the men rode their horses, the women went for carriage rides. By ten o'clock in the morning, the heat was almost unbearable and Europeans retreated into their homes and offices. These high temperatures caused great lassitude and prevented men and women from following familiar routines.

Deprived of their usual pastimes, British women embraced activities that required little energy. They wrote in their diaries, penned letters home, and gossiped. More importantly, they presented an image of fragile womanhood that incalculated and supported the growing ideology of the "cult of domesticity," and they became in Coventry Patmore's words, the "Angel of the House."⁷

As the nineteenth century progressed, the position of the British in India changed. By 1813, the East India Company no longer traded, but rather managed land and collected rents from land it acquired through conquest or by gift. The English had come as traders; then they became armed traders; soon they needed soldiers to defend their settlements; and as the Mughal [*sic*] empire disintegrated 'spheres of power' became necessary if the Company was to survive."⁸ It was through these "spheres of power," i.e., treaties with local rulers, that the company gained much of its land and thus survived. Its

⁷ Coventry Patmore (1823-1896) was one of the premier poets of the Victorian era. Being blessed with a paragon for a first wife, Patmore immortalized her in his epic poem "Angel of the House." Published in two parts between 1854 and 1856, it glorified married love and wifely virtues. Emily Patmore died young of consumption and left her wedding ring for Patmore to give to his next wife, saying, "If you are able to marry again, do so happily, . . . [I] will love her who makes you happy." By Patmore's death, the poem had sold over 250,000 copies. Derek Patmore, The Life and Times of Coventry Patmore (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 84-85, 105.

⁸ Edwardes, British India, 18-19.

status changed as it became the executive, legislative, and judiciary powers of British India. Each province had its Chief Commissioner, Financial Officer, magistrates, clerks, revenue collectors, and numerous other positions. As the Company's holdings grew, so did its need for a standing army to protect them. Thus each of the three presidencies (Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta), created its own army, comprised of British officers and native troops. In 1835, the British ruled over ninety million native people and controlled an area of one and a quarter million miles, with only 24,000 British troops and 100,000 native troops.⁹ As the Company gained more power, the British government at home began to interest itself in this 'jewel,' hence the arrival of the Queen's army. With this army came more British men and women. Now the British were not only separated from the natives and European traders, but also from themselves as social hierarchies appeared between the civilian work force and the military. Another hierarchy emerged, as within the military there were two distinct branches, the British army under the auspices of the Crown, and the Company's.

The Queen's army had little to do with natives, except to employ them as servants and menial workers. The Company's men had a much more involved relationship with the native population. The officers, many of whom spoke fluent Hindustani, trained the Indian men and lived among them, albeit in comfortable bungalows rather than native huts. The native foot soldiers, the *sepoys*, respected and admired their officers. A close bond formed between officers and their men, a bond that would weaken as time passed. With the disdain of the Queen's army raining upon them and the influx of new ideas

⁹ Fane, Miss Fane in India, 15.

concerning race and inherent superiority, the officers of the Company's armies began to withdraw from their sepoy and consort more with brother officers. By 1850, much of the British population looked upon the natives as inferior, backwards creatures, in desperate need of both spiritual and industrial improvement. The British saw themselves creating an empire like that of Rome, promulgating better societies through law and order.¹⁰ Historian George Bearce observed,

Britons had an idea that they represented justice, humanitarianism, and freedom - and that the Indian princes and rulers should be happy to exchange their independence and land and suzerainty for these virtues. The British wanted to transform India into a western style nation using imperialism as the tool and progress as the final result.¹¹

One high-ranking civil servant, Martin Gubbins, illustrated this belief when he wrote in 1858 that the natives had enjoyed British rule and that, "it would indeed be strange if [the natives] had not been well affected to us. The worst British government is, in my judgment, preferred by the people generally, to a native rule."¹² In addition to improving the nature of government in India, the British wanted to "save" the heathen population. The British did not understand the caste system so central to every Hindu's existence, and the polytheistic nature of this religion appalled them so they sought, by various means, to bring Christianity to India, or rather, the Indian subcontinent to Christianity. As these attitudes permeated Anglo-Indian society, the natives became increasingly hostile to both

¹⁰ Thomas R. Metcalf, Ideologies of the Raj (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 10.

¹¹ George Bearce, British Attitudes towards India, 1784-1858 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 252, 256.

¹² Martin Gubbins, An Account of the Mutinies in Oudh and the Siege of the Lucknow Residency 2d ed. (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), 73.

Britons and Europeans.

This hostility manifested itself in a surprisingly small number of conflicts during the first half of the nineteenth century. Misunderstandings and ignorance caused most of these, but these were just a portent of what was to come. In 1857 the natives rose against British rule and massacred Europeans in various areas of the Bengal province. The “Honorable Company” was shocked that its loyal troops could have done such a treacherous and underhanded thing. If the natives had restricted themselves to killing soldiers, officers, and merchants, their actions, foul though they might be, would have produced a very different reaction from the British government and the British public. But when they laid hands on the delicate emblem of British purity, killing innocent women and children, the natives brought upon themselves the uncontrollable wrath of a nation. Suddenly everyone knew where Delhi, Lucknow and Cawnpore were, and the latter, especially, became a battle cry. “The reasons why that struggle roused so much passion and fury are still understandable for it was at Cawnpore that one of the most revered of Victorian institutions, the English Lady, was slaughtered, defiled, and brought low.”¹³ While the nation cried out for vengeance, the British government realized that this event created a precedent and severely undermined British presence in other parts of the world. To forestall signs of weakness the government determined to crush the Uprising and punish the native population. Thousands of British troops poured into India from England, Ceylon, China, and Singapore. William Russell, the famous *Times* correspondent, newly arrived in England from the Crimea, had but a month to prepare to

¹³ Pat Barr, *The Memsahibs: The Women of Victorian India* (London: Century, 1976), 113.

sail for India to cover a situation far closer to the British public's hearts than the Crimean War ever was. He went to report on the state of the British army and to verify shocking rumors of mutilated women and children. He found little evidence of mutilation, yet the horror stories still circulated. Ruth Coopland, in her journal detailing her narrow escape from rebels, seemed almost offended by his assertion that there were no incidents of mutilation. "*This I know, from authentic sources, that people were mutilated in the most frightful manner; a friend of mine saw two ladies in Calcutta who had had their noses and ears cut off.*" [Coopland's emphasis].¹⁴

This study used diaries, personal letters and journals such as Ruth Coopland's as primary sources for the events, actions and attitudes of the British caught in the Uprising. The journals of the men focused mainly on the military aspect of the conflict, while the women tended to stay within their own sphere and discussed their living arrangements, health, children, deaths, and the minutiae of daily siege conditions. Ruth Coopland's insistence that authentic sources depicted mutilations underlines the inherent danger of using journals and letters as primary source material in that it is almost impossible to determine the motivation of the authors. Many published accounts appeared years, even decades, after the events of 1857, with the author excusing any mistakes by stating that he or she wrote directly from memory, and humbly asking the public to forgive any grievous errors. The female authors of the published diaries and journals often wrote a kind of apologetic preface, pleading with readers to excuse their humble works and

¹⁴ R. M. Coopland, *A Lady's Escape from Gwailor and Life in the Fort of Agra during the Mutiny of 1857* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1859), 73.

begging the critics to be kind. One woman reproved her husband for “coloring” her memoirs with his personal opinions.¹⁵ Another woman, Mrs. Adelaide Case, wrote,

As I do not aspire to the ambition of an author, I feel that I shall be exempted from the criticism which invariably attends works of a more pretending character. It cannot but fail (for no woman is equal to the task) to do justice to the heroism, or to describe in adequate terms the great sufferings, but this [volume] will have to do until some more able and practised person shall undertake the task.¹⁶

This study does not use newspapers because the eyewitness accounts were often nothing of the kind or if actually so, were reproduced in subsequent book form. Sir William Russell, the famous London Times war correspondent, did not arrive in India until January 1858, so his accounts unfortunately offer little to this study. Instead, the newspapers relied on letters obtained from third parties, written by men and women who reported rumor and scaremonger tactics as truth. Indeed, some wrote these letters with the intent that they be published. As such they have been discounted and instead this study uses as much as possible the unpublished personal writings of the people involved.

History portrays the British colonial female at first as a gossipy, useless creature whose arrival on foreign shores heralded the demise of amicable and semi-sympathetic British (male) presence. The British females in India, the memsahibs, were seen as some of the worst examples of arrogant, vain, silly women with little in the way of intelligence

¹⁵ Mrs. Douglas Dunbar Muter, Travels and Adventures of an Officer's Wife in India, China, and New Zealand, vol. 1 (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1864), ii. In her preface, Mrs. Muter (her first name was never given) rather reprovngly and laboriously remarked on his so-called contribution to her journal. “Professional subjects are touched upon, which many of my readers will see could not have emanated from me. [He] used the opportunity of stating opinions he strongly held, and which he thought might be useful; but he would be sorry that they should be published under the shelter of a lady's name.”

¹⁶ Adelaide Case, Day by Day at Lucknow: A Journal of the Siege of Lucknow (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), iv.

and too much in the way of fashion. From the late 1700s to 1840s, a British woman in India was considered a bit bold and notorious. She was too intrepid, too rough, and too adventurous to be a good role model for impressionable young girls at home. These women traveled in the company of rough and tough men, exposing both their morals and their bodies to heathen foreigners. One such lady boasted of being able to ride thirty miles a day, “sleep rough,” and, all alone, confront wild animals.¹⁷ They wrote books with evocative titles, such as Delhi: The City of the Great Mogul, with an Account of the Various Tribes in Hindostan—titles meant to direct attention to themselves as explorers instead of themselves as wives and mothers.

However, after 1840, the memsahib’s image changed. From 1840 to 1857, she became a symbol of the Empire, exemplifying all that was right and good from mother England. With this role came restrictions previously neglected by society. Incongruity became the enemy. “If a young wife [in Britain] chose not to go to a church bazaar, no one muttered that the empire was going to fall.”¹⁸ It was her duty to go and uphold and exemplify a high moral tone.

Duty was a word which [sic] ranked with honour, peace, and justice in the imperial vocabulary and with ‘propriety’ in the social one. It is difficult to appreciate the absolute devotion with which the Victorians regarded the idea of service—it was a personal need . . . [in] the soldiers of the Empire as well as a requirement of their government that they should regard the giving of themselves in the service of their country and her beliefs as the consummate achievement of a lifetime [and] most of them expected their women to serve it too.¹⁹

¹⁷ Joanna Trollope, Britannia’s Daughters: Women of the British Empire (London: Random House, Pimlico, 1994), 146.

¹⁸ Margaret MacMillan, Women of the Raj (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1988), 11.

¹⁹ Trollope, Britannia’s Daughters, 117.

Duty was one of the major tenets of nineteenth-century morality. By coming to India with their husbands, these wives, whether upper-class or working-class, demonstrated their adherence to their roles as British Imperial women, and with the Uprising of 1857, from the Governor's wife to the regiments' washerwomen, they became the saviors of the Empire.

Before examining a specific situation, one must fully understand the lifestyle and the mentality of the memsahibs in India. Women journeyed to India for a variety of reasons. Some came because their parents or husbands were there and others came because they wanted husbands. They did not realize just how different India was until they arrived and found a new set of societal rules and hierarchies, based upon the extreme climate and Indian customs. Everything was different: food, weather, servants, etiquette, and even their sleep patterns. Men filled their days with sport, work, reading, and social calls, while the women spent their days visiting, writing letters and journals, and reading. With time on their hands, both men and women became more aware of emerging ideologies of race and gender, transmitted from Britain through letters, newspapers, and review journals.

When the Uprising began, British men and women in various parts of northeastern India found themselves in turmoil. This study examines some of the reasons for the Uprising, and some of the places other than Lucknow where British men and women struggled to save themselves and their children. The British female in India served as a symbol of Britain and of the beneficial Empire it sought to create. When

these women lost their husbands, children, and often their lives, it created a situation whereby the British male, and thus the Empire, became emasculated. With thoughts of violation, fueled by burgeoning racial beliefs, the British male exacted vengeance and used the idea of rape to justify horrific retribution against the Indian male.

The siege of Lucknow was the longest in the Uprising, although similar incidents continued sporadically in very remote parts of India until spring 1859. After looking at the general layout of the Lucknow fortification, the events of the siege, and the evacuation of the garrison, this study will examine how the siege experience differed by gender, and lastly, how the women coped with the loss of husbands, children, and their prescribed roles as mothers and wives. This study will show that while the women relied on correspondence, journals, social calls, and protocols, their male counterparts became disillusioned by their actions. Yet the besieged memsahibs of Lucknow chose to retain those social trivialities because they offered them a familiar framework and thus sustained them during the chaotic year that was India in 1857.

II**THE BRITISH IN INDIA, 1800-1857**

First, a sun, fierce and glaring, that scorches and bakes;
Palankeens, perspiration, and worry;
Mosquitoes, thugs, cocoanuts, Brahmins, and snakes,
With elephants, tigers, and curry.

G. F. Atkinson

The British found their new life in India to be very different from home. Daily life varied dramatically depending on where one was stationed. The climate, food, societal behaviors, and even insects were radically dissimilar to Britain's. Even courtship and marriage were affected. New hierarchies appeared, both social and racial. In India, the question of race and superiority arose every day, whereas at home it was more of a theoretical issue. But for the British living in India, there was plenty of time to study the theoretical issues of racism and even, unknowingly, sexism. In a country where the heat encouraged lassitude, books and newspapers were important commodities. One of the most popular magazine forms of the nineteenth century was the review journal, in which various books of all genres, were evaluated, giving the British men and women something to talk about among themselves. Thus, the ideas of social scientists on such topics as progress, humanity, and evolution, were able to affect the attitudes and behaviors of the British in India and ultimately contribute to the Uprising.

Daily Life

A memsahib started her new life the moment she boarded the ship that would carry her to India. From this point onwards she would endure discomfort, boredom, inactivity, danger, and the enforced company of people with whom, like it or not, she ought to maintain friendly relations. Until the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, passengers to India had but two options, both unattractive. They could do the entire journey by ship, sailing around the Cape of South Africa, or they could attempt the shorter, but more arduous, Overland Route. Passengers who chose the latter sailed to Egypt and then crossed by coach from Cairo to Suez and boarded another ship. On the first part of the journey, many people spent inordinate amounts of time searching for a congenial group of people with which to fill their coach. The method of traveling determined how much luggage one brought, as the Cape route offered no method of laundering clothes. In 1847, an advice manual listed the minimum amount of clothing a lady should take for the Cape route, which included "forty-eight chemises, thirty-six pairs of kid gloves, six pairs of riding gloves, thirteen dressing gowns, thirty-six nightgowns and fourteen dresses." These items represented only a partial list and did not include books, stationary, writing desks, toilet articles and even furniture. Passengers had to furnish their tiny cabins themselves, providing bedding, lighting, bookshelves, water filtration barrels, tables and chairs.¹

¹ Real Life in India, Embracing the View of the Requirements of Individuals Appointed to any branch of the Civil Service; The Methods of Proceeding to India; and the Course of Life in different parts of the Country, by an Old Resident (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1847), 144-45.

Arranging one's cabin was often easier than venturing forth into shipboard society. One had to be extremely careful not to offend those in power or encourage those who were not in one's class. When Maria Nugent sailed to India in 1811, she became the unwitting instrument of a social disagreement. Protocol at sea was as strict as that on land and when the ship's doctor determined that Maria ought not to sit facing the bright sails for fear of hurting her eyes, he suggested that she change seats. This meant that those sitting next to her had to move as well, and this would displace a Captain Midwinter of the East India Company Army and his wife. This gentleman refused to move, and a quarrel ensued, whereby the wronged Captain and his wife decided to eat all their meals in their cabin. Maria remarked in her journal that "poor Capt. M. still dines in his cabin as he will not apologize to Captain Templar for using bad language," and she describes both men as being "wrong-headed and not over well-bred and gentlemanlike." Later Captain Templar insulted another officer, striking him and using the selfsame language for which he had harangued Captain Midwinter. Everyone on board sided with the other man and the two eventually dueled on a nearby island with both men's honor being satisfied without loss of life.²

In later years, as the ships became more comfortable and faster, life aboard ship was more entertaining and amusing. Whereas a ship's journey previously took six months and meant confinement and boredom, by the late 1850s, the journey took six weeks, and a variety of amusements filled the time nicely. Passengers could wile away

² Nugent, Lady Maria, A Journal from the Year 1811 till the Year 1815, including a Voyage to, and Residence in India (London: n.p., 1839), 51-52, 59, 63-64.

the hours and days with theatricals, readings, shore excursions, and even dances. The cabins were still small, and there was a marked lack of privacy because of the thin wooden partitions, but even these could be seen as advantageous. One woman met her future husband when she overheard his repeated retches as he suffered through bouts of seasickness. She pitied him so much that she went out of her way to be nice to him, and they married some six months later.³

When a woman arrived in India, she discovered that she had to adapt herself to a strange world that seemed far removed from her previous one, and not just by distance. The climate demanded a complete change in routine, dress, social functions, and leisure activities. Even the language was different. When Rosalind and Madeline Wallace-Dunlop arrived in 1856 to visit their brother, a Collector for the East India Company, they were initially perplexed at the slang used by both officers and civilians. A *griff* or *griffin* was a newcomer to India and *gup* was slang for gossip. One rose at *gunfire* (dawn), ate a bit of *chota hazree* (breakfast), then wrapped warmly in shawls and blankets went for a ride in a *gharrie* (carriage), before returning home to dress, assisted by the *ayah* (maid), speak with the *kitmutgar* (butler), and then visit the *godown* (underground storeroom) to inventory the pantry. The Wallace-Dunlop sisters were horrified when they realized that they were expected to know, by sight, all the various military insignia, by which one could determine rank and regiment. "We were reduced to frightful state . . . as to the various titles of our new acquaintances; we could not call them

³ J. K. Stanford, ed., Ladies in the Sun: Mem-Sahibs in India, 1790-1860 (London: Gallery Press, 1962), 55.

all Colonels . . . and here was another difficulty: what regiment did they belong to? We dare not praise or abuse any particular [one] lest it might be theirs."⁴ A girl might have a little more freedom in India than at home, but she found she still had to play the game called "society."

Lifestyles varied tremendously depending on where one resided. Calcutta was very much like London, both in design and society. The governor-general represented the Queen, and he and his family were the leaders of high society. Balls and other amusements filled one's days. At dinner parties, people brought salt, pepper, glassware, silverware, plates and servants, who waited upon their masters and mistresses during the evening. The many mercantile establishments catered to European tastes, in food, furniture, and fashion. In the "Europe shops" one could purchase hermetically sealed tins of fruits, jams, fish, vegetables, cheese, and even reindeer tongues and other items similar to those available at the best food shops of London.⁵ On Sundays people often spent the day in Barrackpore, a leafy suburb where they could picnic. A hundred or more servants went out early to set up large tents and manicure the ground before twenty or thirty British arrived to play games, eat, flirt, and gossip.

In the cantonments,⁶ life paralleled city life but to a lesser extent. These cantonments, originally meant for the military needs of the city, now were miniature

⁴ [Madeline and Rosalind Dunlop-Wallace], The Timely Retreat: or a Year in Bengal Before the Mutinies, by two sisters, 2d ed. (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), 167.

⁵ Fane, Miss Fane in India, 20.

⁶ A cantonment, pronounced *cantonment*, was a European station attached to a native city. Thus a European speaking of Lucknow was referring to the British station of about 1500 Europeans. A native speaking of Lucknow meant the native city of some 600,000 people.

cities in themselves. Officers had elaborate bungalows here, and the cantonments offered entertainments such as a racecourse, tennis courts, public gardens, a theater, and cricket fields.⁷ The “lines” consisted of the officers’ bungalows, set in grid pattern, and natives’ huts, the latter filled with not only the sepoy but his family as well. One woman described her cantonment as “not unlike an English village, the bungalows being ranged in a line, on either side of a good broad road. We have a garden attached to our bungalow. . . . stocked with the most delicious mignonette roses, verbena, and heliotrope, to say nothing of the Indian flowers.” Yet this was definitely not England. The bathroom had centipedes, the occasional cobra lurked in the corners, and the verandah was home to owls and bats. One might easily awake to find a heavy-breathing Brahma bull standing over her. “Sparrows build their nests in the drawing room, and . . . dozens of frogs are squatted behind doors and in every available corner . . . the ants are particularly troublesome as everything eatable has to be guarded from their attacks by placing the feet of [furniture] in dishes of water.”⁸

A small station had even less to amuse Europeans. The inhabitants were usually from the East India Company, with just a few of the company’s soldiers as protection. Henry Lawrence, prior to his appointment as Chief-Commissioner of Lucknow, often contributed to the Calcutta Review, and in 1845, approved of the more flexible society in the more remote stations:

⁷ Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, A Fatal Friendship: The Nawabs, The British, and the City of Lucknow (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 129.

⁸ “Indian Life in Cantonment” Chamber’s [Edinburgh] Journal 2d ser., 2 (1854): 414, 415.

There still may be found folk who do not owe allegiance to those two most exacting of task masters, *Everybody* and *Nobody*: gentlemen who venture to wear white jackets when *Everybody* is perspiring in broadcloth; and ladies, who in the hot weather, pay visits in the evening instead of in the morning, though *Nobody* will be equally rational. [Lawrence's emphasis].⁹

But fourteen years later, society had arrived even at the smaller stations. In 1859, George Atkinson described a station's inhabitants in a satire worthy of London's *Punch*. The Judge, "the top of the social tree," does not want to go home to England, as he would find it too cold and lonely. He loves to open his house to travelers and subalterns and sets a good table. His wife lives to complain about the inferiority of her partner's offerings in the shared Mutton Club,¹⁰ or in her husband being passed over for promotion. She is a stern and thrifty housewife, who beats the servants and tradesmen with her slipper if necessary. The Magistrate is one step down socially from the Judge. It is his job to imprison the natives, direct roadworks, create Treasury buildings--all somewhat boring, but his wife redeems him socially. She fancies herself an operatic singer and collects "subs" as though she was collecting pets. The Colonel loquaciously reminisces about past Indian glories and preoccupies himself with reducing the temperature inside his house. He sits on the verandah all day, drinking coffee and smoking. His wife is very maternal towards the subalterns and loves to organize charity sales. She is enthusiastic about fashion and employs a tailor around the clock. The chaplain "combines sociability

⁹ Henry Montgomery Lawrence, "English Women in the Hindoustan" *Calcutta Review* 4, no. 7, (1845), 105.

¹⁰ Mutton, or lamb, was very important in a country where many servants could not handle pork, and others could not touch beef. By maintaining a flock shared with other Europeans by subscription, a British woman could be assured of some sort of familiar meat on the table daily.

with spirituality” and loves the playing field, but his sermons lack dignity. The station also has a Joint Magistrate, a sporting dandy, who takes morning court on his verandah with a racing paper in one hand, and the station doctor whose wife is intent on getting their daughter to the altar. There is the invalided Major, with a roving eye and a native wife he regrets marrying. He is fond of books and arguments to pass the time. Atkinson then described the Spins (spinsters) of a variety of ages, from the doctor’s daughter who takes after her mother in temperament and thus scares away any suitors, to the twenty-nine year old sister of the civilian doctor, who claims to prefer the unmarried state. There is sixteen year-old Bella, “plenty of head and scarcity of brain, adept at slang and all giggle . . . she has the skittishness of a two-year-old [horse] and will soon entangle some amorous ensign.” These inhabitants made up a typical station, with their gossip, their flirtations, and their entertainments, such as the *Burra Khanah* [dinner party]. With too much food and too much heat.

The procession is then formed. Away goes [Captain] Byle with the ‘Burra Beebee,’ who, on this occasion, is Mrs. Chutney, and Mrs. Byle appropriates Fitznoodle, the order of their going is pointed out, or fearful would be the consequences; for as we all know, the Tumeries are cuts with the Cardamons, and Mrs. McGhee is at variance with Mrs. Koofter, and the Chutneys don’t speak to the Gabys, and the Goddahs are at social enmity with the Ganders; and a few others are cuts with a few more and all because of previous inaccuracies and wilful[sic] divergences in matters of precedence.¹¹

Although Atkinson used puns and satire to describe the social life in the station, his descriptions accurately depict a rigid society, with little chance for individuality.

¹¹ George Franklin Atkinson, Curry and Rice on Forty Plates: or, the Ingredients of Social Life at “Our Station” in India (London: Day & Son, 1859), 101.

Individuality and self-reliance were almost a necessity at the frontier stations, usually found in the Northeast, near present-day Nepal. There were often only a handful of Europeans residing there, mostly unmarried, as the Company forbade European women from living in the area until after the Uprising. Some women did defy this order, but soon discovered that they had no one to talk with, except their husbands, and perhaps the European doctor. Frontier stations usually contained maybe five or six men, mostly civil servants, and often two or three military officers. Lieutenant John Fairweather, of the 4th Punjaub Irregulars, described a frontier station,

We reached Dera Ismail Khan and halted a day in that forlorn looking station . . . it was nothing but a few officers' bungalows and the mud hut of the sepoys dumped down in a wind-swept plain with not a tree or bush on it and in a perpetual dust storm. Here was stationed one of the three frontier ladies, the wife of Captain Hughes.¹²

Besides Mrs. Hughes, the other two "frontier ladies" were Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Cox, both wives of high-ranking Company men. These women lived hundreds of miles from each other, with no railroads, or even roads, to ease traveling. Fairweather remarked on how different the frontier was after the Uprising when the British government encouraged women to "civilize" the area. Apparently somewhat of a misogynist, he wrote,

The new officers were, in many cases, married, and as the restrictions against ladies on the frontier were either removed or in abeyance, more and more officers took to themselves wives. I would not venture to allege that this had any depreciatory effect on the Force, but whenever ladies came in it . . . the old order is changed. Instead of a rollicking lot of bachelors, free from domestic cares and ready to ride from one end of the frontier to the other for

¹² John Fairweather, "Memoir of the Mutiny: Through the Mutiny with the 4th Punjab Infantry, Punjab Irregular Force." *Memoir of Surgeon-General John Fairweather*, 1865, Cambridge Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge, England, 23.

a cricket match, or a hawking party, men began to stick to their stations, to play croquet of an evening with their wives, to attend dances and picnics. Toy churches were built at all the stations . . . and we become a civilized community.¹³

In marked contrast to the lack of European community in the frontier stations, the hill stations, especially Simla, often offered too much company. During the hottest months of summer, people flocked to the hills to escape the debilitating heat. Officers sent their families there to regain health and some wives insisted on going even if their health did not require it. The men living in the hills were usually convalescing, or on leave from their regiment and eager for female company, innocent or not. Henry Lawrence, later Chief-Commissioner of Lucknow, could appreciate the comforts the hill stations offered.

The Hills . . . offer mitigation to many of the trials [of living in India]. There is a 'refreshment' . . . in being able to keep the windows open all day, and always having something fresh and green without to rest the eyes upon. There is society in the blazing and crackling of the pine-wood fire of an evening; there is luxury in breathing the mountain air and watching its salutary effects on the children.¹⁴

But, despite their cool climates and healthy air, Lawrence recognized their danger to morality.

Society at our Hill Stations . . . consists for the most part of people who . . . have nothing to do. Men, who have several hours of every day to get rid of, naturally seek the society of any tolerably pretty and pleasant young woman, especially if her attractions are backed by a good tiffin on the table at two o'clock. Their attentions are agreeable [to women], and gradually create a

¹³ Ibid., 160-61.

¹⁴ Lawrence, "English Women in the Hindoustan," 110.

craving for this kind of stimulus; love of admiration involves petty jealousies, extravagant dress . . . and countless other evils, equally deteriorating to a woman's domestic character.¹⁵

In 1857, Charles Dickens wrote an evocative description of the benefits of Indian hill stations in his London magazine, but he also determined that the prevailing idleness there led to immoral behavior. "Unluckily, the chief hill stations have a bad name--not, I am sorry to say, entirely undeserved--for gambling, intrigue and dissipation of every sort. Half the scandal in India may be traced to these places; and court-martial after court-martial has taken place, consequent on the high play, quarrels, and dueling of officers . . ." ¹⁶ One woman wrote of the dangers to men from hill station women, "There are always plenty of females on the hills, consequently, the hills are dangerous to an idle man." The author describes the women of the hill stations as "the wives who *can't* live with their husbands in the plains: the 'grass-widows' (or widows put out to grass) as they are vulgarly termed: and as *won't* might very often be read as *can't*, perhaps they are (without any reference to the amount of their charms) the most dangerous that the idle man could encounter." [Marryat's emphasis].¹⁷ The Delhi Sketchbook offered satirical reasons why women went to the hills,

Good motherly Mrs. A. because her children's health required it, and little flirtatious Mrs. B. who had no children, because her own [health] did. Mrs. C. certainly lived at the dullest of out-stations and everybody knew its weather half-killed her . . . Miss O. went up because she was Miss O. - and

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁶ [E. Townsend], "Indian Hill stations" Household Words 17, (1857-58), 318.

¹⁷ Florence Marryat, "Gup" Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character (London: Richard Bentley, 1865), 101-02.

did not wish to be so any longer . . . while Mrs. L was determined that her daughters should not be so long in the plains, so took them up for their first season.¹⁸

The hill stations were like Pinocchio's Pleasure Island- amusing and gay, but also morally corrupt. They encouraged improper behavior by placing "the cad, the card, the fortune-hunter, and the flirt"¹⁹ in close proximity to lonely or bored wives and eager spinsters. The result was flirtation, gossip, and scandal.

Anglo-Indian Marriages

Flirtation and scandal often ended in marriage, and marriage in India was in many ways different from marriage in England. Courtships were brief, and in some cases, nonexistent, as many men wrote home for their families to choose a wife from among various cousins, and send her out by the next ship. Charles Betts' first wife was a cousin, whom, in 1845, "he'd hardly seen, but hearing that she was a devoted daughter to her widowed mother thought she'd make him a good wife."²⁰ She died in India in 1856, and he married Esther Anne (another cousin) soon after. Some long-distance engagements failed when the woman met someone else on the ship and arrived in Calcutta with one fiancé on shore and another in tow. Madeline Wallace-Dunlop thought the journey to India a good test of compatibility, especially the twenty-four hour desert portion, when

¹⁸ Pat Barr and Ray Desmond, *Simla: A Hill Station in British India* (London: The Scholar Press, 1978), 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁰ Esther Anne Betts, "Reminiscences of the Indian Mutiny," *Memoir of E. A. Betts*, 1902, Betts Papers, Cambridge Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge, England, 3.

more than one young man found his ideal to be less than amiable and foresaw many uncomfortable moments ahead if he married her. Courtships aboard ship were often just a pleasant way to pass the time, but if anyone, male or female, went too far, there were usually enough witnesses ready to gossip once the ship reached India. Some flirtations then, became the preludes to a wedding, lest society snub the indiscreet.

Courtship and marriage also differed by class. The daughters of the Company's enlisted men often married early and within their own regiments. Regiments were tight-knit communities: orphaned boys often became drummers, while orphaned girls married while still in their teens, primarily because the Company stopped paying their fathers a stipend for their upkeep after age fourteen.²¹ One such woman, married and a mother by fourteen, said her husband used to beat her regularly because she "would be out playing marbles with the boys when he was wanting his dinner. At that time I was in the light Company, the next husband I got was the Canteen Sergeant, and the man I have now is only a Lance Corporal."²² These women married often because the combination of the Indian climate and disease usually meant she became a widow frequently. Then, because her military pension lasted for just two months she had to marry again quickly. Until she did so, she had little money and no place to stay, since married soldiers lived in the barracks. One man knew of a woman who had buried three husbands in six months, remarrying each time just as her pension ran out. Another soldier made the observation that

²¹ Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 14.

²² Lawrence, "English women in The Hindoustan," 122.

He is fortunate a man who has two or three tolerable looking daughters on the eve of womanhood; he requires no fortunes to get them off his hands; but, on the contrary, . . . dozens of individuals, all ready to pay handsomely . . . for being permitted to marry into his family. Nor need the death of a husband be a matter of much regret to a woman, for she is besieged by admirers while the tears which decency demands are still coursing . . . down her cheeks.²³

The men were so anxious to marry European women that often the most hilarious mistakes occurred. One woman, on her arrival in India, had six proposals in one day, despite the fact that her husband was quite alive and well and, in fact, sitting next to her. His regiment heard he had died on the voyage out, so eager bachelors descended upon her, thinking her husband was a brother or cousin. Another enthusiastic bachelor proposed marriage to a widow as they left the funeral. The young widow burst into tears, and he apologized for being too hasty. In fact it was she who was too hasty, and now regretted having accepted a less lucrative offer on the way to the funeral!²⁴ Another young woman was the object of three proposals within one hour of her husband's last breath; within a week she was married. She married four times in this manner until she followed her last husband to the grave.²⁵ While society and morality might chastise the soldiers' wives for their lack of delicate feelings, or coarse behavior, one observer, Mrs. Postans, wrote that

²³ Staff Sergeant J. MacMullin, as quoted in Tom McGuffie, Rank and File: The Common Soldier in Peace and War, 1642-1914 (London: Hutchison, 1964), 123.

²⁴ Marryat, "Gup" Sketches, 158-62, and General Sir Neville Lyttleton, Eighty Years Soldiering (London: n.p., 1927), 79.

²⁵ Mrs. Postans, Western India in 1838, as quoted in Hilton Brown, ed., The Sahibs: The Life and Ways of the British in India as Recorded by Themselves (London: William Hodge & Co., Ltd., 1948), 254.

it is only just to notice the temptations, restraints, and miseries, to which this class of women are subject, in a country so little calculated to cherish their better feelings, or to provide them with necessary occupation, or common comfort. Unable, from extreme heat, to move out of the little room allotted to them in the married men's quarters, during the day, and provided . . . with a Portuguese cook boy who relieves them from the toil of domestic duties, the only resource of the soldiers' wives is in mischievous associations, discontented murmurings, and habits of dissipated indulgence . . . can society marvel that with such circumstances around her, the European women in India . . . falls into the practice of that dishonesty, drunkenness, and debauchery, for which she is so commonly and severely up-braided.²⁶

Mrs. Postans says little about the habits and practices of the women stationed in other outposts, or in England, but certainly garrison towns in England had reputations for coarseness and licentiousness that seems equally distasteful.

Middle-class women abstained from the barracks and preferred to do their hunting on the racecourse, in the ballroom, or within the auspices of the Officers' Mess. A colonel's daughter might marry into the regiment, but only to a high-ranking officer. Officers required the permission of their colonels before they could marry and it was often said that "subalterns should *never* marry, captains *might* marry, majors *ought* to marry, and lieutenant-colonels *must* marry,"²⁷ thus illuminating not only the economic advantages of marrying a higher rank, but the necessity on the part of the officer and his incumbent social life. Daughters, nieces, sisters, and even aunts of officers and civilians came to India to find husbands. Especially attractive to any women was the speed in which one could find herself courted, engaged, and finally married. If a European male

²⁶ Ibid., 254-55.

²⁷ Byron Farwell, Mr. Kipling's Army: All the Queen's Men (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1981), 233.

living away from one of the large cities decided to marry, he would apply for a month's leave from his desk or regiment, spend five or six days getting to Calcutta or Madras, and then have but twenty days in which to choose, woo, win, and wed a woman to whom he was bound for the rest of his life. As the years passed, the government found it did not have to induce middle-class women to go to India; they went willingly, glad of the opportunity to leave England and the small pool of prospective husbands and come to a place filled with lonely men.²⁸ Perceptions of these women varied as some saw them as greedy, grasping parasites and others as merciful angels sacrificing much to comfort brave, hardy, and lonely men in a faraway land. One author recalled the early years when the "fishing fleet" was just beginning to arrive, remarking,

The women of that era . . . deserved even the gratitude of the present [1845] generation . . . their advent was the beginning of social happiness in India [and thus] imparted a healthier tone to society. From the marriages formed . . . have arisen the wives, the daughters of the present race . . . The object in coming to India has long been changed; and instead of coming out to be married, women now came out to join the family circle of their own parents and relations.²⁹

Yet just two years later, R. N. Hutton wrote of the marriage mart being in full swing.

The race course is one of the principal auction marts, for the sale of an article of which a large supply is imported annually from England: we allude to young ladies, who [are] in a regular business-like manner consigned to an agent, whose duty it is to dispose of them to the best advantage. For this purpose a carriage is kept in which the poor girl is placed . . . and is driven about the race course every evening until she is seen, admired, and bought by some rich old colonel whose age would befit the character of grandfather better than a husband. The girl is perhaps considered lucky in having caught

²⁸ In some British towns single women outnumbered single men 40 to 1. By 1850, 35% of women between twenty and thirty-five living in Britain were unmarried. Trollope, *Britannia's Daughters*, 23.

²⁹ A. Duff and F. C. Skipworth, "Married Life in India," *Calcutta Review* 4, no. 8 (1845): 403-04.

a colonel . . . so barefaced is the system pursued that should the agent (for the girl herself is not at her own disposal) be on the point of concluding an agreement with some young man who has six or seven hundred rupees a month, and suddenly hear of an old man who has a thousand and who wishes to become a purchaser, the first engagement is broken off . . . and the young girl's *affections* transferred to the new *lover*. [Hutton's emphasis].³⁰

In 1852, this prospect was seconded by another writer, Robert Hobbes, who termed the young ladies as "jovial young huntresses, trained to the chase . . . if the fair Dianas cannot capture a General, they must be content with a Colonel, and if a Colonel does not present himself, a Major may be taken. As a last resource, Captains or even Subs . . . may be appropriated."³¹ Even the prospect of living in India did not daunt them, as many of their predecessors had spent a few years in India, then returned to England with half their husband's salaries and all the freedom of married women without any of the inconveniences. Hobbes concluded his above remarks by adding that "few of the fair daughters of Europe . . . contemplate or wish for a long sojourn in the field . . . they hope when they have achieved their object, to return whence they came as the companions of pensioners, or the wealthy relics of deceased husbands."³²

Thus, despite the similar husband-hunting characteristics, the Anglo-Indian marriage formed a distinctly separate institution from that in England. Queen Victoria would have been appalled at the almost nonexistent mourning period for both widows and widowers in India. At home one was expected to dress severely in black from head-

³⁰ R. N. Hutton, Five Years in the East, vol. 2 (London: Longman & Co., 1847), 167-68.

³¹ Robert George Hobbes, Scenes in the Cities and Wilds of Hindostan, vol. 1 (London: n.p., 1852), 6.

³² *Ibid.*

to-toe for one year and a day, then spend the next year in black with just a touch of white, or some decoration. The third year one could wear grey, or perhaps pale lilac, before setting aside mourning in the fourth year. For a widow to marry within a week would be more than scandalous; it would seriously undermine the very feminine ideal of British womanhood. Even more heinous, many women expected their husbands to remarry quickly, and in some cases, chose the next wife. Before Sir Charles D'Oyly's first wife died, she pointed out a Miss Ross, a relation of the Marquis of Hastings, to her husband, saying that she would be the best choice for the next Lady D'Oyly. After her death, Sir Charles followed his wife's advice and married Miss Ross.³³

Difficulties of Life in India

Quick deaths and hasty marriages aside, the problems the memsahib encountered in India were both annoying and unsolvable. The climate was harsh, with few of the technological improvements that are enjoyed today. Ice was hard to come by, and the thermadote (a large wood-frame covered in moistened sheeting) did little to cool the rooms. Large punkahs hung from the ceiling of every room, using billowing white cotton sheets to create a slight breeze and displace the innumerable insects that plagued every household. Stinkbugs, blisterbugs, frogs, ants, and spiders inhabited every corner. Snakes sought out the cool bathrooms and coiled themselves around water jugs and underneath chairs. Mosquitoes bit so often that frequently people were confined to their

³³ The Journal of Mrs. Fenton: A Narrative of her Life in India, the Isle of France (Mauritius), and Tasmania during the Years 1826-1830 (London: Edward Arnold, 1901), 105.

beds with swollen legs and arms. Heat rash was common as was sunstroke, apoplexy, and "brain-fever." One anonymous correspondent of an English journal wrote, with deliberate irony, an article entitled "Indian Luxuries" in which he derided the existence of luxury in India and claimed that what others at home might call a luxury was actually indispensable in India.

Is it a luxury to be denied the free and healthful use of one's limbs? to be perpetually troubled with dyspepsia? to be for eight months in the year thawing and dissolving, and the remaining four panting and withering under . . . a scorching sun? . . . Can there be any enjoyment in tossing and tumbling in one's bed, with a trumpet-band of mosquitoes sounding the *reveillé* from midnight until dawn? Is pleasurable existence compatible with cutaneous eruptions? with perpetual boils? with eternal apprehensions of cholera? with absence of home, and friends, and relatives? with lassitude, *ennui*, and insufferably stupid society? ³⁴

The victims of these afflictions could not even suffer in silence, as privacy was unheard of. If one did not have guests (and this was rare, as most British travelers were forced to stay with other Britons, whether they knew them or not), the servants swarmed over the house and garden. If these servants were more like those at home, then the life of the memsahib would have been much pleasanter. But cultural and linguistic differences caused the memsahib to declare the natives stupid, slow, and often dishonest. Mrs. Clemons, in an advice manual to young cadets sailing to India, wrote,

The servants you meet in India are naturally stupid and most tormenting to a European, and a temper that is the least irritable will be sure to break out into violence, from the constant provocation they cause you. It is . . . difficult . . .

³⁴ "Indian Luxuries," Bentley's Miscellany, 15 (London: Richard Bentley, 1844), 469.

to guard against this sudden anger when you see your orders forgotten or disobeyed.³⁵

Thus, the memsahib would issue her orders for the day and attempt to retire to her morning couch to rest (her night's sleep usually interrupted by heat and strange animal noises). Before too long, in would wander her butler, or tailor, or maid with some urgent problem for her to solve. If this did not occur, then the memsahib could be assured that her butler would show visitors in, although she had expressly told him she was "not at home." This inability to communicate caused many a young memsahib to attempt to learn the local dialect, only to give it up and retreat to the well-worn and time-honored "John Company's English" to make her wishes known. One memsahib wrote of trying to learn Tamil, but she found it such an ugly language, and so difficult to learn that she gave up, adopting the selfsame pidgin English she had so despised a few months earlier.³⁶

More serious than the climate, insects, or servants was the almost mind-numbing boredom that the memsahib endured. The editors of the Calcutta Review admonished British women in India to fight boredom lest it overcome them and their morals. "Indolence is the great enemy you will have to contend with, and you must fight him with undying energy, or he will conquer you, as certainly as he has already done many, who have but feebly resisted him. You will not, it is true, be able, as you would in England

³⁵ Mrs. Major Clemons, The Manners and Customs of Society in India; including Scenes in the Mofussil stations; interspersed with characteristic tales and anecdotes; and reminiscences of the late Burmese War: To which is added Instructions for the Guidance of Cadets and other Young Gentlemen during their first year's residence in India (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1841), 281.

³⁶ Julia Charlotte Maitland, Letters from Madras during the Years 1836-1839 (London: John Murray, 1846), 20-21.

‘to go about doing good.’ . . . English ladies cannot go out among the Natives, and by their personal example, shew [*sic*] how much good, may be done.”³⁷ With this and other strictures providing a distinct lack of approved outlets with which to fill her time, the memsahib was reduced to embracing those negative qualities for which she became famous. At home an upper-class woman might supervise home industries or immerse herself in good works. A middle-class woman could follow the same pattern and possibly help school her daughters. A working-class woman would be doing double duty as a working woman and a mother/wife. But in India, not one of these avenues was open to British women. Even the soldiers’ wives often had someone to cook for them, and only if they were *on the strength*, e.g., approved and registered wives of the British army, were they allowed to earn money by doing the men’s washing. Living in barracks was not an incentive to housekeep and so these women turned, in many cases, to drink (with some justification, according to the sympathetic Mrs. Postans).³⁸ With wet-nurses, tailors, and other servants innumerable, the middle class wife had even less to do. She might attempt to learn a language or do needlework, but most sports and activities were forbidden by either the climate or society. With her husband away all day, she could read, but books were expensive, and subject to mold, mildew, and insects. She could play the piano, if it was not warped and out of tune. She could try to convert the natives to usually unsuccessfully, or she could gossip, write letters, go visiting, and arrange entertainments. Thus, an Anglo-Indian social life was as necessary to life as breathing.

³⁷ Duff and Skipworth, “Married Life in India,” 411-12.

³⁸ Postans, Western India in 1838, as quoted in Brown, The Sahibs, 252.

Social Life in India

With a few concessions to the climate, the British in India continued to hold entertainments to fill the time and provide fodder for the rumor mill. Dinner parties, balls, picnics, theatricals, and tea parties appeared on a daily basis, even in the remotest stations. All that was required was a group of people of a somewhat similar social status. Although one might look down at those they considered beneath them, it did not do to have a single social class, as the time-consuming disagreements, feuds, and gossip relied on having a variety of classes. For both men and women, India's harsh climate meant inactivity and boredom, but at least the men had their official duties to perform. Stripped of their official duties of housekeeper and mother, women socialized. They wrote numerous chits,³⁹ and paid calls on those whose rank matched or exceeded their own. Some women occupied themselves with the flora and fauna of the country, while others collected insects or painted watercolors. Some traveled with their husbands or brothers, exploring the country while their male relatives did the Company's business. But many of them occupied their time with gossip and speculation as to whom might be marrying whom and whether Miss So-and-So might not be better than she ought to be. The so-called *fishing fleet* provided much entertainment and gossip. Lady Falkland, wife to the

³⁹ A chit was a short note, usually of little importance, thanking someone, or sending regrets, or quite often simply passing on a piece of gossip. Michael Edwardes writes, "The writing and answering of these notes, which were sent by the hand of a special class of servant, was one of the great preoccupations of European society. The chit system was greatly dependent on the servants who carried these missives. Very often, they delivered them to the wrong person- with interesting consequences, if they contained gossip and scandal." Edwardes, Bound to Exile: The Victorians in India (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 28.

governor-general of Bombay, wrote in 1848. "The arrival of a cargo (if dare I term it so) of young damsels from England, is one of the exciting events that mark the advent of the cold season. It can well be imagined that their age, height, features, dress, and manners become topics of conversation."⁴⁰ Gossip they might, but few dared to exhibit any originality concerning society.

The rules governing social calls were rigid. Instead of established residents making overtures to the newly arrived, the latter made the first gestures of sociability, and the male newcomer always made the first call to avoid the embarrassing *faux pas* of meeting social inferiors. This ritual carried over from the late eighteenth century when it was quite common for the lady of the house to be a native woman or a half-caste.

Even married men make their first round of cantonment calls without their wives and (if her acquaintance should be desired) the return visit is made by the gentleman and lady together. This custom must . . . have been instituted in those days when there was oftener an objectionable than an unobjectionable female among the officers' household furniture and some protection against their forcible entrance into respectable families was stringently needed.⁴¹

By the mid-nineteenth century this custom prevented (and protected) a 'good' woman from meeting a morally or socially inferior one. If an *unvisitable* did call, the mistress of the house would not be at home, quite often blatantly untrue, thus being a blunt snub ensuring the *person* (not the lady, or the woman) would not dare to call again.

One young wife, new to India, had much to say and little of it complimentary.

⁴⁰ Vicountess Falkland, Chow-Chow: being Selections from a Journal kept in India, Egypt, and Syria, vol. 1 (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1857), 94-95.

⁴¹ Marryat, 'Gup' Sketches, 10-11.

about society and social life in India. Mrs. Julia Maitland arrived in Madras in 1836, and was soon swept into the whirl of social events and all the trappings that accompanied them. She described Madras dinner parties as “rather grand, dull and silent . . . about four times as much food [is] put upon the table as would serve for an English party. After dinner the company sit around in the middle of great gallery-like rooms, talk in whispers and scratch their mosquito-bites.”⁴² She despised having to dress up and wait for people to call upon her and disliked having her morning taken up with chit writing. “Every inquiry after an acquaintance must be made in writing, as the servants can never understand or deliver a message, and would turn every *politesse* into an insult. These incessant chits are an immense trouble and interruption, but the ladies seem to like them.”⁴³ But most of all she disliked the obligatory open-house policy of India. In her letters to her sister she complains of the ill-mannered guests they are required to entertain. “People say this custom of receiving everybody without previous notice, and being received in return, is so ‘very delightful,’ ‘hospitable,’ &c. &c.; and so it may be—but it is also extremely inconvenient and disagreeable.”⁴⁴ She both disliked having to open her home to strangers and having to intrude on their privacy in return while traveling but the only alternative was staying in uncomfortable, ill-equipped *dak-bungalows*. She wrote in later letters of uninvited guests, one in particular, who assumed

⁴² Maitland, Letters from Madras, 24-25.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 137. Maitland claimed that although she did not know ten people in Madras, her morning was already wasted, what with composing her answer and then finding proper notepaper and sharpening her quill, etc.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

he had the right to appropriate his host's horse and then finally, "to my great joy, he took himself off [and then] left, without asking . . . all his luggage in our only spare room, to wait until he should like to come back again."⁴⁵ If a majority of her visitors resembled this uncouth young man, one can hardly blame Julia Maitland for this particular pet peeve.

Julia Maitland was not the only new bride to scorn Anglo-Indian society. But though Florence Marryat thought society in India silly and pretentious, she could at least see the humorous side of it. On her second day in her new home in a small station, a tremendous noise nearby startled her. Her husband reassured her it was just the neighbors preparing to come calling. Peeping through the trees, Mrs. Marryat could see her new neighbors, in proper visiting attire, sitting in a bullock cart, while their driver shouted and beat upon the oxen to make them move. Some twenty minutes later, they came thundering up the Marryats' drive, just as if they had traveled miles instead of feet.⁴⁶ The Dunlop-Wallace sisters found that when driving around the approved circuit of an evening, one bowed upon first passing acquaintances and then pointedly ignored them each subsequent pass. They also discovered that their new fashions caused quite a stir, as one half the station disapproved of the cherry-red bows on their shoes, while the other half embraced and emulated the fad.⁴⁷ Clothing, whether military uniform or civilian, often caused excitements, arguments, and scandals, and usually led to the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 102.

⁴⁶ Marryat, *'Gup' Sketches*, 13.

⁴⁷ Dunlop-Wallace, *A Timely Retreat*, 173, 138-39.

installation of some superfluous social rule. One woman was very distressed to hear a friend being talked about in an uncomplimentary manner until she realized her friend had simply worn a hat of which the station did not approve.⁴⁸ Even in the small frontier stations of the Punjab Dame Fashion ruled. Lieutenant Fairweather wrote in his diary of having to go to dinner parties in full dress uniform, including the very confining red wool jacket. His servant would bring a loose white jacket, and Fairweather would anxiously await his host's question as to why he had not worn the white one, and bade him to put it on. No one would dream of appearing in the more comfortable, cooler jacket, and no host would dream of not requesting his guest to change, but apparently it was *de rigueur* to make one's entry in the uniform jacket.⁴⁹

These rules and social conventions were even more firmly entrenched in India than at home. Sir William Russell noted "the social distinctions are by no means lost sight of in India: on the contrary, they are perhaps more rigidly observed here than at home, and the smaller the society the broader are the lines of demarcation."⁵⁰ Social historian Leonore Davidoff observed that official entertaining had always played an important part in consolidating the elites, and India was no exception. In fact, Davidoff agrees with Russell when she noted that colonial society was even more rigid and inflexible than society in England.⁵¹ Very few true aristocrats came out to India. The

⁴⁸ Fenton, The Journal of Mrs. Fenton, 67.

⁴⁹ Fairweather, Mutiny Memoirs, 7.

⁵⁰ William Russell, as quoted by Hilton Brown, ed., The Sahibs, 126-27.

⁵¹ Leonore Davidoff, The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season (London: Croom Helm, 1973; reprint, London: Cresset Library, 1986), 32, 83 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

British in India for the most part were upper-middle class and middle class, with soldiers and their families representing the lower classes. To emulate the upper class at home these Anglo-Indians were quick to adopt social conventions popular in England, even if they appeared superfluous or silly in India. By doing so, the upper-middle classes firmly entrenched themselves as the arbiters of fashion and etiquette, and hoped they appeared as a well-bred, well-heeled, well-cultured class. To maintain this appearance meant creating and upholding a distinct division between themselves and the lower classes. Thus, hierarchies appeared in every nuance of life in India, whether military, civilian, or societal.⁵²

Social Hierarchies

Basically, there were four categories of English in India: the officer/soldier, the civil servant, the merchant, and the planter. Society lumped together the merchants and planters and deemed them socially unvisitable. Sir William Russell wrote in 1857 that the civil service was the aristocracy and “a ‘merchant prince’ may force his way into good society in England . . . but in India he must remain for ever outside the sacred barrier, which keeps the non-official world from the high society of the services.”⁵³ Mrs. Clemons, in her advice manual to young cadets, warned them of socializing with merchants, no matter how wealthy or respectable they might be. She then related two

⁵² The term *civilian* encompassed the non-military British in India: traders, planters, and East India Company agents and clerks.

⁵³ William Russell, as quoted by Hilton Brown, ed., The Sahibs, 126-27.

stories of how this rule affected the relationship of four young men, one pair being brothers, now no longer on speaking terms because they had to follow this societal dictate!⁵⁴ Emily Eden, in one of her numerous letters to her sister, Mrs. Lister, wrote of the paucity of Simla society (she much preferred Calcutta) and even momentarily thought of lowering her standards, in order to assuage the boredom. "There was a lady yesterday. . . . I believe she was the wife of an indigo planter in the neighborhood and I was rather longing to go and speak with her. . . . but then, you know, she might not have been his wife, or anybody's wife, or he might not have been an indigo planter. In short . . . you know what a world it is - impossible to be too careful, etc."⁵⁵ For Emily, the reduced amusements at Simla, as well as her position as one of the governor-general's sister-cum-hostess, allowed her to express the desire to bend the rules even if she did not actually do so.

Planters and merchants aside, both the civil service and the military maintained their own hierarchical structures, which clashed frequently in the larger towns and cities. British-India needed both branches of service to survive but each branch thought the other unnecessary, pompous, and arrogant. Julia Maitland, a civilian's wife, noted, "the military and the civilians do not generally get on very well together. There is a great deal of foolish envy and jealousy between them, and they are often downright ill-bred to each other, though in general the civilians behave much the best of the two."⁵⁶ She also

⁵⁴ Clemons, The Manners and Customs of Society in India, 348.

⁵⁵ Barr and Desmond, Simla, 22.

⁵⁶ Maitland, Letters from Madras, 82-83.

compared the officers' wives and civilians' wives.

I perceive the officers' ladies are curiously different from the civilians. The civil ladies are generally very quiet, rather languid, speaking in almost a whisper, simply dressed, almost always ladylike. They talk of 'the Governor,' 'the Presidency,' . . . The military ladies, on the contrary, are almost always quite young, pretty, noisy, affected, showily dressed, with a great many ornaments, and chatter incessantly from the moment they enter the house. [T]hey talk about suckling their babies, 'the Officers,' and 'the Regiment;' and when the gentlemen come into the drawing-room, they invariably flirt with them most furiously.⁵⁷

For Julia Maitland, the officers' wives lacked social graces and refinement, evidenced by both their actions (flirting) and their conversation (breastfeeding). One can imagine her perceptions of the soldiers' wives, but it is unlikely that she met any.

The hierarchy among the civil service was rigid and unforgiving. There existed many an opportunity to offend someone, often at a dinner party. When coming into dinner, the host partnered the senior lady and the hostess, the senior man. After dinner, the hostess led the ladies away to the drawing room leaving the gentlemen to their port and cigars. At this point, the hostess lost all authority to the senior lady, who alone decided when the party should end. Until she left, no other lady (and hence, her escort) could depart. Miss Isabella Fane described a disastrous dinner party wherein her father not only took the wrong lady in, but "there were two [ladies] who ought to have gone before her. Unfortunately the injured lady they tell me is a great stickler about her rights, and is very likely to take it amiss."⁵⁸ Miss Fane does not say how she resolved the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Fane, Miss Fane in India, 60.

situation, but this was a very common problem. The government published a book listing the rank and seniority of every civil servant and the army followed suit, but still this situation occurred and provided amusing or malicious gossip for many. Even at small, informal dinner parties, one could fall foul of the dreaded order of precedence as Florence Marryat discovered. When two officers of her husband's regiment came with their wives to dine, her husband decided to take the older, but less senior lady in. "Being so very quiet a party, my husband thought it best to waive the subject of their relative position in the army. The next morning arrived a long epistle from the affronted husband of the lady who *ought* to have gone in first, reminding him of the oversight of which he had been guilty, and begging that it might not happen again."⁵⁹ Florence Marryat had little use for the strict rules of the army social life. She disliked the airs the women put on, all because their husbands had a high rank, she despised the "vulgar tuft-hunting,"⁶⁰ and the women "[who] thought that the standing of their husbands in the service entitled them to interfere in the private affairs of people not only better born and bred than themselves, but infinitely more capable of knowing what was the right thing to do."⁶¹ She illustrated this last point with the story of the time she thought it unnecessary for her to attend a ball given by a woman who outranked her. She scandalized a new acquaintance by saying that she could not see that she was "under the orders of Mrs. A---,

⁵⁹ Marryat, 'Gup' Sketches, 63.

⁶⁰ The term *tuft-hunting* refers to the toadying, fawning and ingratiating manner which some adopt towards people in higher positions. The tuft is a decorative ball on a regimental headdress. The higher the rank, the more ornate the decoration, and hence, the more important the 'tuft.'

⁶¹ Marryat, 'Gup' Sketches, 16-17.

as my husband was under the orders of the Commander-in-chief." Her companion agreed but thought since Mrs. A--- was the "rankest lady in Madras," she was due a great amount of respect.⁶² Lady West wrote in 1824 of the women of Bombay who thought of nothing much except their *local* rank [West's emphasis]. Twenty-four years later the women of Bombay were still so rank conscious that Lady Falkland wrote that they were more conscious of their rank than those at home in England.⁶³

Perhaps even more class and rank conscious than the civil service was the British army. The British army was more than just a trained military force to those who served. The most important part of the army was the regiment. Most men joined a regiment for life, and the noted military historian Byron Farwell described what the regiment meant to the men:

The core, the heart, the very essence of the British army was the regimental system. For officers, the regiment was a private, exclusive club, a fitting home for gentlemen. For officers and other ranks alike it was clan, a hierarchical extended family, offering a meaningful place in life. Each [regiment] was different - unique, in fact - and a man did not so much join the army as join a particular regiment. [It] was more a community than a bureaucratic sub-unit.⁶⁴

There existed a hierarchy between the regiments as well. "Although most soldiers regarded their own regiment as the best, there was, in fact, a social ranking, a pecking order among them that did not depend entirely upon their official order of precedence."⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid., 16-18.

⁶³ Hilton Brown, ed., The Sahibs, 126-27.

⁶⁴ Farwell, Mr. Kipling's Army, 25.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 44.

The cavalry looked down on the infantry, whilst the Guards, formed in 1660, looked down on all other regiments. The lowliest on the military social scale was the Royal Indian Army Services Corps, the R. I. A. S. C., which some said was an anagram for "really, I am so common."⁶⁶ Within the regiments, the men naturally fell into hierarchies based on their rank, with the lowly subaltern advised not to speak at mess until spoken to, and preferably, not to offer his opinion on any subject for at least two years. In one regiment, a subaltern was not allowed to stand on the hearth-rug until he had served at least three years with that unit.⁶⁷ Thus the army had its share of hierarchical regulations as well, but this might be expected from an institution that depended on classification and status for its continued existence. More surprising is the hierarchy that occurred between the two armies. With a blatant animosity simmering between the Queen's army and the Company's, even the officers' wives fell to disparaging each other's branch. The Queen's army always took precedence over the Company's army, even if the newly arrived Queen's army officer commanded a seasoned veteran of the Company army. The Indian officers disliked this situation, and the British army officer resented the fact that Indian army officers did not have to purchase their commissions. The Queen's Army officer thought the East Indian Company officer inferior because he commanded natives, the 'black infantry,' they called it. The Company officers thought the Queen's Army inferior because they had little experience and put on airs. Florence Marryat remarked on the former and their wives. "I am not going to dismiss the subject [of the behavior of

⁶⁶ Ibid., 44-45.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 62.

women] without animadverting on the conduct of some of the wives of officers in the English corps, who used, on account of their own supposed superiority, to affect greatly to *look down* upon the married ladies of the N.[ative] I.[nfantry], as well as upon their husbands.” [Marryat’s emphasis]. She concluded that after observing both for seven years she thought the Native Infantry officers to be more gentlemanly. “There may be a great deal of lords’ blood drafted into the European corps, but there is also a vast amount of shopkeepers’, and one is not quite certain on an introduction upon which one may fall.”⁶⁸ Her position is not surprising considering she was the wife of an officer in the Native Infantry.

There existed yet another hierarchy followed by the English in India: that of race. The English believed themselves superior to most of the world. Europe and the Americas included, and they did not hesitate to show their disdain for the French, Americans, and the Irish. Florence Marryat found that any attempt to “amalgamate” with women from Australia, Mauritius, or the Cape was a failure.⁶⁹ Sarah Watson, with ambitious plans for her only son, complained in her letters to him of the paucity of people in her social station and both mother and son had few good words concerning the Irish.⁷⁰ Mrs. Fenton, herself Irish, described how a young Irish girl married out of her class, and how her husband lost many companions because of her low birth. Now in India, this ex-peasant girl adopted the airs of the upper classes, which Mrs. Fenton found quite amusing.

⁶⁸ Marryat, ‘Gup’ Sketches, 60-61.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 41.

⁷⁰ Wayne G. Broehl, Jr., Crisis of the Raj: The revolt of 1857 as seen through British Lieutenants’ Eyes (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1986), 292.

I could not help laughing at the metamorphosis of the bare-footed Irish girl, the daughter of a village ale-house into a fine lady. It gave many persons here a strange impression of the manners and education of the higher castes in Ireland, as nothing could conquer the radical vulgarity and ignorance of this young woman.⁷¹

Helen MacKenzie spent many years traveling through India, New Zealand, and China with her soldier husband. She noted that the British attitude of superiority was especially hard to witness. "The usual haughty and domineering manners of the English make them as unpopular here [in India] as on the continent of Europe."⁷² If this was their attitude towards those of the same skin color obviously they saw themselves as much, much more superior to the natives. This attitude was not reserved for Indians, but for all people of color: Africans, Asians, and West Indians.

But the group of people whom they most disliked, distrusted, and deemed socially unfit were Eurasians, or as British termed them, *half-castes*. To the British these people posed a double threat; in many cases, they could appear European, e.g., white, but worse. Eurasian women married white soldiers and officers. Kenneth Ballhatchet observed that the British viewed the Eurasian as a dangerous link that threatened to close the gap between the people and the ruling class.⁷³ Most of the British living in India in the nineteenth century would not admit this, but instead chose to exclude the Eurasian male

⁷¹ Fenton, The Journal of Mrs. Fenton, 293-94. Note the interesting use of the term *caste*, as applied by a European to another European, to delineate a social hierarchy of a European country.

⁷² Helen MacKenzie, Six Years in India, Delhi, The City of the Great Mogul with an account of the various tribes in Hindstan; Hindoos, Sikhs, Affgans etc. (London: R. Bentley, 1857), 109.

⁷³ Kenneth Ballhatchet, Race, Sex, and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 4.

on account of his "black blood." A Eurasian female might be admitted to some social circles depending on the importance or acceptability of her father.⁷⁴ Miss Fane recounted the story of arriving at a city that contained both civil and military persons. Five ladies came to call, three being, as she put it, "ugly and vulgar," and one was "said to be quite mad," leaving Miss Reid, pretty, ladylike, and well-dressed as the best of the bunch, despite the "vast deal of black blood in her veins."⁷⁵ Julia Maitland described the Eurasian women she had met as "left-handed ladies," an uncomplimentary term since it implied insincerity, awkwardness, and possibly a link to the devil.⁷⁶ Often the British set up institutions for orphaned children of mixed parentage to school the left-handedness out of them. These schools existed to teach other things: Christianity and their place in the Empire. Not until the late nineteenth century would administrators set up vocational schools to provide their pupils with the necessary education and skills to make them viable members of the community. Until then, the Eurasian was a nuisance, lumped together with the natives and 'tarred with the same brush' of inferiority and savageness.

Analysis of the British in India

Nineteenth-Century Racism

The term *racism* did not exist at this time. The term *race* was first used in the sixteenth century as a definition for a group of people linked through a common origin.

⁷⁴ And her father would always be white. In the numerous sources consulted, not one refers to a marriage or alliance between a native man and a white woman, with the exception of mutiny horror stories.

⁷⁵ Fane, Miss Fane in India, 168.

⁷⁶ Maitland, Letters from Madras, 132.

As the centuries progressed, explorers and adventurers discovered new lands, often inhabited by people who looked different from them. With the advent of the printing press, books and journals portraying natives as different, and hence inferior, reached more of the public than ever before. European travelers to Africa wrote not so much of the pagan religious beliefs but of spectacular displays of human sacrifices, festivals, and other curiosities that tended to uphold the differences while submerging the commonalities.⁷⁷ By the nineteenth century *race* came to have four meanings: a biological subspecies; a synonym for species; a synonym for a national group, such as the English race; and lastly, a term to define a group of people whom society construes as belonging together because of their physical appearance.⁷⁸ It is the last two definitions that the British colonizer adopted; for themselves *race* clearly implied a positive national image, whereas, in their dealings with the inhabitants of the areas they annexed for the Crown, *race* became a negative image created by the physical appearance and perceived inferior characteristics of the natives. Tim Barringer observed that

Respectable society in Victorian Britain defined itself through a series of structured oppositions by which any group thought to adhere to different concepts of social and sexual behavior, of work and time, discipline, of value, and of religion, was accorded the status of an inferior and potentially hostile other.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Philip D. Curtin, The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850 (London: Macmillan & Co., 1965), 23.

⁷⁸ E. Ellis Cashmore, Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 214, 216-17.

⁷⁹ Tim Barringer, "Images of Otherness and the Visual Production of Difference: Race and Labour in Illustrated Texts, 1850-1865," in Victorians and Race, ed. Shearer West (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 1996), 34.

Christine Bolt concurred, noting, in her essay "Race and the Victorians" that the Victorians did not see race as it is perceived today, but rather used the term amorphously to explain hostilities and differences between various groups of people. She contended that as the nineteenth century progressed, racial attitudes became more unyielding as the Victorians struggled to place themselves in a world where hitherto accepted dogmas of creation and faith were falling to ascending ideas of science and evolution.⁸⁰ By describing the inhabitants as black or dark-skinned, with hairless bodies, flat noses, few clothes and a cult that worshiped something other than a white, male, and Christian God, Europeans created what are now termed racial stereotypes and set into motion the idea of different as inferior. In describing the native inhabitants as monsters, barbarians, savages, and heathens, Europeans were doing more than demoting the natives; they were elevating themselves.

The political ideologies of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau--theories that would affect how Britons saw themselves and the *Others*--influenced the growth of racial thought in the nineteenth century.⁸¹ Herbert Spencer's early ideas on laissez-faire policies and the notion of a progressive, tangible societal advance significantly contributed to this burgeoning racism. These ideas on absolute government, human nature, and society influenced Britons and Europeans alike and

⁸⁰ Christine Bolt, "Race and the Victorians," in Eldridge, British Imperialism, 126-27.

⁸¹ These are but three philosophers who influenced the ideas of race and humanity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Descartes, Montesquieu, Hume, and Kant, to name but a few, also contributed to emerging racial theories. For a more detailed analysis of their roles, see Ivan Hannaford's Race: The History of an Idea in the West.

created the atmosphere of superiority in which racial prejudice flourished.⁸² Britons believed they were superior to the rest of Europe, not to mention the rest of the world, because theirs was the first industrialized nation, with an admired model of government. By the early nineteenth century, this nascent nationalism meant that male or female, noble or vassal, franchised or not, Britons held their heads high whether on the “continent” or in more exotic climes. “The conquest, control, and reordering of [Indians] . . . enabled the dispossessed of Victorian Britain to luxuriate in an unaccustomed feeling of superiority and virtue.”⁸³ This was not a case of superiority determined by skin color, but by achievement through culture, technology, and long-established traditions and history. Any society that failed to meet the standards of government, morality, and economic well-being set by western nations found itself labeled as inferior and fair game for industrialized “superior” nations. It was in the spirit of reform that the English missionaries, planters, merchants, civil servants, soldiers, officers, and their families arrived in India, bringing with them a hierarchical structure of society that inherently upheld the ideas of progress, industrialization, and rationality. In judging other people by industrialization’s high standards, Victorians condemned them to be uncivilized, savage, heathen societies and failed to see their culture or history. One might argue, as many

⁸² Locke’s views on government particularly influenced British activity in India. He determined that if a ruler, whether king or government body, abused the will of the people, or failed to provide the protection, then the contract was broken and the people free of any obligation of obedience. This would apparently condemn the British conquests, but in fact justified them, as Locke’s government “regards all rulers as liable to be displaced if they govern tyrannically.” While he was referring to the right of the people to overthrow their own ruler, others might see it as an invitation to interfere in non-western countries that had bad rulers or governments, or lacked an approved form of government. G.D.H. Cole, Persons and Periods, Essay Reprint Series (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1938), 234.

⁸³ Denis Judd, Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present, (London: HarperCollins, 1996), 67.

British politicians did in the second half of the nineteenth century, that the racism displayed was a form of paternalistic and moralistic interference rather than an ideology or hatred, but as the diaries, journals, and letters will show, the British in India were practicing racism as known it today, albeit unconsciously.

The British as Nineteenth-Century Racists

Although racism per se did not exist before the late eighteenth century, the advent of the idea of 'race' to define groups of people, racism became "a set of beliefs, prejudices, and stereotypes devised by white civilization when brought into contact with the non-European world."⁸⁴ Douglas Lorimer noted "dramatic changes" between the racism of the eighteenth century and that of the nineteenth century due to the formation of a "new world order" based on the Industrial Revolution and modern imperialism.⁸⁵ By the mid-nineteenth century, according to George Mosse, racism became a pseudo-religion, and began to fuse with nationalism, thus impinging upon almost every idea and movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁸⁶ George Stocking termed racism as "characteristically a nineteenth century phenomenon."⁸⁷ Bolt noted how racism superseded class distinctions among the British, "from private soldier to district commissioner [all] had the same basic interest in claiming the deference due to the

⁸⁴ Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism (Paris, London: UNESCO, 1980), 70.

⁸⁵ Lorimer, "Race, Science and Culture" in West, Victorians and Race, 21-22.

⁸⁶ George L. Mosse, Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism (New York: Howard Fertig, 1978), xii-xiii, 34.

⁸⁷ Stocking, Race, Culture, and Evolution, 14.

British race . . . their race set them together and apart from all kinds of non-whites⁸⁸

Some embraced racial behavior because it elevated their position, like the lowly soldiers who went to special prostitutes, reserved just for white men, while native soldiers were forbidden to use these women.⁸⁹ Others, as Bolt wrote, practiced racism because it justified the dominant minority of the British and it preserved “both their distinctiveness and their vaunted superiority.”⁹⁰ The nineteenth-century racists were not so different from the racists of the present day. Sources show that the British exhibited the same traits as their twentieth-century counterparts. They were patronizing, condescending, and even contemptuous towards the natives. In fact, the Victorian Briton invented some of the irrational ideas connected with racism and people of color. They imbued the native with negative characteristics that would continue to be applied well into the mid-twentieth century. They believed in the myths that science and reason would deem absurd in the twentieth century. They used the familiar derogatory speech and viewed the natives as one might do an annoying child or performing pet.

But the most significant trait the British practiced and passed on was the idea of white supremacy. In an essay on racial stereotyping in the English language, Robert Moore asked why do good guys wear white and bad guys black?⁹¹ The answers to his

⁸⁸ Bolt in Eldridge, British Imperialism, 142.

⁸⁹ Anonymous sergeant quoted in Bryon Farwell, The Armies of the Raj: From the Great Indian Mutiny to Independence, 1858-1947, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1989), 149.

⁹⁰ Bolt in Eldridge, British Imperialism, 149, 134.

⁹¹ Robert B. Moore, “Racist Stereotyping in the English Language,” in Racism and Sexism: An Integrated Study, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), 270.

questions lie in the emerging racial attitudes of the mid-nineteenth century and the way twentieth-century racists used nineteenth-century racists as historical validation of their actions, values, and beliefs. Thus, what the Anglo-Indians were saying had a tremendous consequence on racial ideology. In the nineteenth century Britons firmly believed that the native was a savage creature, with little in the way of intelligence, piety, and morality. The British wrote long letters home describing the natives in very graphic, uncomplimentary tones, calculated to keep the native in the submissive position. Florence Marryat disliked natives and told her mother they were "ungrateful, deceitful, greedy, mentally and physically weak." The men, she wrote, were crafty, cruel, and indolent, while women were vicious, and both were liars.⁹² Thomas Malcolm agreed, writing to a friend that "their whole soul is in money and gain" and that the ingrates would "rob you in the end" after [you] being "ever so kind" to them.⁹³ Douglas Muter, using his wife's journal to air his opinions, called the natives "cruel Asiatics" who, during the Uprising "in [their] frenzy, spared neither women or child."⁹⁴ Isabella Fane determined that the young native girls were capable of "learning much that is useful but it is impossible to break them of the innate love for lying that all natives possess."⁹⁵ When

⁹² Marryat, 'Gup' Sketches, 31-37.

⁹³ Thomas Malcolm, Barracks and Battlefields in India; or The Experiences of a Soldier of the 10th Foot in the Sikh Wars and Sepoy Mutiny, 2 ed., ed. Cesar Caine. (Punjab: Patiala Languages Dept., 1971), 38.

⁹⁴ Mrs. Douglas Dunbar Muter, Travels and Adventures of an Officer's Wife in India, China, and New Zealand, vol. 1 (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1864), vol 1, 32. These words were obviously her husbands' rather than her own.

⁹⁵ Fane, Miss Fane in India, 144.

the Misses Dunlop-Wallace were traveling up-country they had to cross a swollen river, the "screaming Black Coolies" carrying their vehicle. They described it as uncomfortable being "at the mercy of a set of demon-like beings."⁹⁶ These ladies also thought native traders, or boxwallahs, to be very avaricious and possessing "cunning worthy of an Israelite," which clearly indicated their prejudice against both natives and Jews. Ruth Coopland believed that "most are cruel and bloodthirsty and are only kept by our superior power." and when she met a rajah she shook his hand but remarked on how limp and cold it was. "just like all natives."⁹⁷ Julia Maitland vacillated between criticizing the natives and criticizing the way Britons treated them. In a letter she first described the natives as

a cringing set [who] behave to us English as if they were the dirt under our feet; and indeed we give them reason to suppose we consider them as such. Their servility is disagreeable, but the rudeness and contempt with which the English treat them are quite painful to witness.⁹⁸

She then claimed they were very much like babies, and despite her best intentions not to speak to them in pidgin English, she thought she would eventually stoop to it since "the servants seem unable to understand the commonest direction till it is translated into gibberish."⁹⁹ In her next letter, dated 11 January 1837, she wrote of how she treated her language teacher. "He comes when I choose, and goes away when I bid him. If I am not

⁹⁶ Dunlop-Wallace, A Timely Retreat, 98-99.

⁹⁷ Coopland, A Lady's Escape from Gwailor, 37, 83.

⁹⁸ Maitland, Letters from Madras, 20-21.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

ready, he sits on his heels in the verandah for a couple of hours doing nothing till I call him. If I am tired in the course of my lesson, I walk away, and bid him to write a little; and there he sits . . . till I please to come back."¹⁰⁰

Even the children picked up these racial attitudes and many treated devoted native servants as their parents did, something no self-respecting English nanny would have tolerated. Each child had at least two servants: a nanny or ayah, and a boy to do the nanny's bidding. If the child had a dog or pony, then that animal had at least two servants as well. Surrounded by subservience, children learned early to assume the superior attitude so readily apparent in their parents. Gordon noted "children picked up and repeated the shop-worn terms of abuse employed by their parents in speaking of Indians: 'odious blacks,' 'nasty, filthy creatures,' [and] 'black vermin' were some of the terms in common use."¹⁰¹ In the fifth edition of the popular Birch's Management and Medical Treatment of Children in India, the authors warned mothers that British children raised in India, being spoiled by constant attention and gratified of every whim, could not possibly learn obedience, duty, discipline, or the virtue of hard work.¹⁰² One male author noted that it was impossible for young boys to learn honesty and courage in "the cowardly and untruthful atmosphere of India," because of the deceitful and cunning

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰¹ Donald C. Gordon, The Moment of Power (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 120.

¹⁰² C. R. M. Green and V. B. Green-Armitage, Birch's Management and Medical Treatment of Children in India, 5th ed. (Calcutta, n.p., 1913), 87; Flora Annie Steel and G. Gardiner, The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook, giving the Duties of Mistress and Servants, the General Management of the House and Practical Recipes for Cooking in all its Branches (London: William Heinemann, 1893), 143.

behavior of native servants.¹⁰³ Mrs. Clemons warned newly-arrived young men not to be surprised to hear a four-year-old berating a servant, perhaps saying, "Boy, why don't you bring the punker [punka fan], don't you see I am hot, you stupid fellow?" Mrs. Clemons predicted that these children would be due a great fall when it came time to send them to England for schooling and they learned they were not the center of the universe.¹⁰⁴

The British in India were quick to disparage native Indians but completely unaware that much of what they said contradicted itself. They saw the native Indian, while *inferior* to themselves, *superior* to the races of Africa. The Indian races (and the Chinese) had at least some redeeming features. Both were martial, and the British could admire their strength and militancy. More importantly, they thought these races were industrious and hence less indolent than the African races, while certain north Indian groups could, according to some British ladies, claim good looks, having very light skin and well-defined facial features.¹⁰⁵ But whereas Emily Eden thought brown babies so much prettier than white ones, and many British soldiers had native mistresses or patronized Indian brothels, many British looked upon the natives as ugly, lazy, stupid, incompetent, and ready to rebel given the slightest chance. One officer of the Madras army said, "I am of the opinion that there is in the heart of every black man an inherent dislike of the white man, which will always lead him to sympathize with those own his

¹⁰³ William Joseph Wilkins, Daily Life and Work in India (London: T. Urwin, 1888), 57.

¹⁰⁴ Clemons, Manners and Customs of Society in India, 184-85.

¹⁰⁵ Bolt in Eldridge, British Imperialism, 136-37.

own color, however they may differ in race, creed, or country."¹⁰⁶ This sentence would be equally telling if reversed to read "in the heart of every white man is an inherent dislike. . . ." Ruth Coopland admired the Taj Mahal but was completely indifferent to the fact that it was designed and built by the very people she despised as being cruel, bloodthirsty, insolent and annoying, and to whom she preferred to speak to in German or French, probably as a show of superiority.¹⁰⁷ Christine Bolt noted that Anglo-Indians saw the Hindu as the opposite of the public-school ideal man of honesty, integrity, wealth, breeding, and education, but were very surprised to realize that the Hindus thought the English inferior, a sentiment echoed by John Pemble, editor of Miss Fane's letters. He believed they would have been astounded to learn that the Hindus saw the inferior English as a threat to everyday faithful living.¹⁰⁸ Pemble quoted an anonymous woman writing on this subject in the Calcutta Review in 1845.¹⁰⁹ She claimed that despite the best intentions towards the natives it was impossible to treat them as they might servants at home because the natives viewed the British as polluting infidels.

[If] our servants are ill, they go to their own houses; we may stop at the door as we pass, and ask how they are, but our entrance would be unwelcome and often impossible; and, if admitted, we should find no reception for the

¹⁰⁶ Lieutenant-General Sir Patrick Grant, as quoted in Farwell, Armies of the Raj, 50.

¹⁰⁷ Derrick Hughes, The Mutiny Chaplains (Salisbury, England: Michael Russell, 1991), 75, and Coopland, A Lady's Escape, 18, 37.

¹⁰⁸ Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race. Studies in Social History Series, ed. Harold Perkins (London, Toronto: Routledge & Kegan Paul, University of Toronto Press, 1971), 173; Bolt in Eldridge, British Imperialism, 36; and Fane, Miss Fane in India, 9.

¹⁰⁹ Pemble erred when he attributed this quote to an anonymous woman. It was in fact Sir Henry Lawrence, the reviewer who made this statement. The Calcutta Review was organized in such a way that it is very difficult to determine whether the 'speaker' is the reviewer or is in fact quoting from one of the books being reviewed.

comforts we desire to administer. If we bring refreshment for the body, our touch has polluted it; if we would speak peace to the soul there is no common ground.¹¹⁰

Thus, the British living in India were aware that the natives viewed them as negatively as they did the natives, but tended to dismiss the natives' viewpoint as unmeritorious.

The British in India also perpetrated certain myths that would not be dispelled for many decades. Like the well-to-do women in England, many British women in India did not nurse their child, but hired a wet-nurse, someone who had recently given birth and was producing milk. In England it was not difficult to find a white wet-nurse, but it was virtually impossible in India. Thus, as in the southern United States, new mothers in India used women of color to breast-feed the newest member of the Empire. And like those mothers in the United States, Anglo-Indian mothers feared their children would inherit through the milk the physical characteristics of the wet-nurse. Isabelle Fane's noted that it would be very unusual if her young nephew did not go dark, "having been nursed . . . by a black woman."¹¹¹ Another myth that echoed both in India and the southern United States was the idea that men of color found white women irresistible. "To Victorians it was a 'well-known fact' that darker races were physically more attracted to Europeans than vice versa."¹¹² Another myth popular in India concerned the superior qualities of European blood. During the Uprising, one officer wrote in his

¹¹⁰ Fane, Miss Fane in India, 9, from Sir Henry Lawrence, "Englishwomen in Hindustan," Calcutta Review 4, no. 7 (1845): 105.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹¹² Gordon, The Moment of Power, 120.

journal of capturing a native carrying an axe stained with “the blood of a good Christian . . . by the color and quality of it.”¹¹³ It was through myths such as these that British kept their idea of white superiority alive.

Considering the various influences on the racial attitudes of the Anglo-Indian, it is easy to picture how these views found an outlet through the perceived superiority of white over colored. From lowliest privates, nicknamed Tommy Atkinses, to the Commander-in-Chiefs, all Britons believed in the vaunted superiority of fair skin. Byron Farwell, in one of his many books on the British army, described the privates secure in their visible superiority. “Tommy felt himself superior to all foreigners and quite superior indeed to those whose coloring was darker than his own, whom he usually called ‘wogs,’ [or] ‘niggers.’”¹¹⁴ A British subaltern, noted one observer, “drops easily into the belief that he represents the highest form of civilization, and he has only to snipe-shoot or pig-stick his way through the world.”¹¹⁵ Feminist scholar Kumari Jayawardena noted that the “colonial context required a differentiation based on race . . . that ‘us’ meant all whites, rich and poor, including *all* white women.”[Jayawardena’s emphasis]¹¹⁶ With this shared belief in superiority British women chose to identify themselves by their skin color, not by their gender, linking themselves with the white race, not the female race.

¹¹³ Unpublished journal of Captain Chardin Johnson, dated October, 1857 to December 1857, Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London, England, 3.

¹¹⁴ Farwell, Mr. Kipling’s Army, 90.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹¹⁶ Kumari Jayawardena, The White Woman’s Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia during British Rule (New York: Routledge, 1995), 3. Italics hers.

Interestingly, native women demonstrated that they identified with their gender, not their race. A Eurasian clerk, W. J. Shepherd, one of the few survivors of the Cawnpore massacre, wrote of a Mrs. Carter, who was a prisoner of the Nana Sahib. The widows of the late ruler, Bajee Rao, took pity on her and insisted that she be treated well, and actually threatened to kill themselves if anything should happen to her. The Nana abstained from any violence towards her until, with British troops closing in, he massacred some 200 women and children, Mrs. Carter and her month-old baby among them. Shepherd wrote, "[Mrs. Carter] appears to have been treated by the Paishwa's widows [with consideration and even kindness], who possessed the softer and kindlier feelings of womanhood, especially towards a suffering and unfortunate member of their sex."¹¹⁷ It was not uncommon for female servants to help hide their British mistresses and children from the mutineers, but those instances were characterized by loyalty to specific superior persons, not by strangers of the same gender. There is, however, no corresponding kindness towards native females by British women.

Anglo-Indians appeared to have viewed the native as either a performing animal, a young backward child, or as a valueless, sub-human object. Isabella Fane drove her carriage through a crowded marketplace "little caring about the chances of knocking down Blackee like ninepins," and later remarked upon the native armies, "it is so much more interesting when they do well [at drill] than when a white man does."¹¹⁸ While Isabella expected the natives to perform for her, she had no intention of doing so for

¹¹⁷ W. J. Shepherd, A Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Cawnpore, during the Sepoy Revolt of 1857, 2nd ed., rev. (Lucknow: London Printing Press, 1879), 122-23.

¹¹⁸ Fane, Miss Fane in India, 43, 207.

them. Some British, her father included, did not like dancing in front of native servants because they thought it might lower their consequence.

They [French military generals] wanted us very much to dance, which my father forbid our doing on account of the presence of the natives, for if we had they would have thought we did it for their amusement instead of our own. I am delighted we did not, as we would have been made puppets for the amusement of the natives.¹¹⁹

Keith Dunlop-Wallace agreed, telling his sisters that he did not want to dance in front of “a bunch of niggers.”¹²⁰ These attitudes were quite prevalent in Lucknow during the siege. Mrs. Adelaide Case was much annoyed when the siege interrupted the mail service and she could not receive her newspapers and periodicals. She wrote in her journal of a messenger who was captured by the enemy and that the two English journals he was carrying were lost, “which is provoking.”¹²¹ She made no mention of the certain death of the faithful servant, just the annoyance of losing two newspapers. One merchant, doing sentry and clerical duty, wrote in his daily casualty report, that “one doesn’t count the natives, of course.”¹²² Another, Major-General J. F. Hare, saw a shell land in the middle of a group of native workmen, all loyal to the British army. He reported that eleven died and seventeen were wounded, but “luckily, they were all

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 212-13.

¹²⁰ Dunlop-Wallace, A Timely Retreat, 142.

¹²¹ Adelaide Case, Day By Day at Lucknow: A Journal of the Siege of Lucknow (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), 262.

¹²² L. E. Ruutz Rees, A Personal Narrative of the Siege of Lucknow, from its Commencement to its Relief by Sir Colin Campbell (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1858), 137.

natives."¹²³ These stories serve to illustrate the callous indifference towards the natives that characterized the ideology of white superiority.

When the Uprising was finally over, new stereotypes and prejudices appeared on the part of the British, who now viewed the native as treacherous and cruel instead of tractable and mild.¹²⁴ Before the Uprising, many Britons believed that they were acting as guardians for the Indian people, governing India as it should be until such time as the Indians were capable, in the minds of the British, of governing themselves. However, Thomas Metcalfe, in his work on the consequences of the Uprising, wrote, "the British threw over the whole notion of Indian regeneration and consigned the Indian people to the status of permanent racial inferiority."¹²⁵ Bolt noted that after 1857, "the romance of India [did] vanish for many of the Britons who visited or settled there, and this contributed to the development of harsher racial attitudes."¹²⁶ She also indicated that the Uprising solidified the sense of superiority shared by all Britons by creating a shared hatred of the natives. Many of the soldiers resented the natives who had remained loyal to the British army, as these natives were, in the soldiers' minds, excessively rewarded. One officer wrote in his journal of such inequity, "The *niggers* [emphasis his] have all been promoted . . . and double pay given to them [while] we unfortunate officers who

¹²³ J. F. Hare, "Early Life in India and Letters Home during the Indian Mutiny," Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London, England.

¹²⁴ Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race, 178.

¹²⁵ Thomas R. Metcalfe, The Aftermath of the Revolt: India 1857-1870 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 304-05.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

kept these scoundrels together have our pay cut."¹²⁷ Another officer at Lucknow wrote of the grumblings of his men at the lack of monetary remuneration given to them, and noted that although his men were given one year's credit towards their pensions, the native soldiers received two.¹²⁸ These beliefs biased colonial Britons for many years. During the Second Afghan War (1878-1880) one young officer claimed, "I know nothing of politics, but I do know that if a nigger cheeks us we must lick him."¹²⁹ Another, speaking of the loyalty of Sikh soldiers during the Uprising, was just as blunt. "The Sikhs don't love us one bit, but they hate the sepoy's like poison . . . [the Sikhs] are on our side at present, but . . . there is no sympathy between us -- we despise niggers, they hate us."¹³⁰ These officers' statements exhibit the overwhelmingly superior attitude of all Britons, pre- or post-Uprising. Mrs. Douglas Muter ably summed up the racial attitudes of the British when she wrote, during the Second Maori War in New Zealand (1863-1866), of the animosity developing over native property rights and self-government: "Imagine the clenched hands and knit brows of a race whose lordly instincts can scarcely endure the equality of foreigners with skins as white as their own, condemned to be the slaves of a copper-coloured community of savages."¹³¹ British racial superiority was clear, even to

¹²⁷ Unpublished journal of Lieutenant-General O. Ludlow-Smith, from May 1857 to March 1858 in the Oriental and India Office Collection at the British Library, London, England.

¹²⁸ J. Ruggles, Recollections of a Lucknow Veteran, 1845-1876 (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1906), 96.

¹²⁹ Philip Woodruff, Men Who Ruled India: The Guardians, as quoted by Donald C. Gordon, The Moment of Power, 127.

¹³⁰ Johnson, Journal of Chardin Johnson, 5.

¹³¹ Mrs. Douglas Muter, Travels and Adventures, vol. 2, 283.

the women, who failed to realize, or choose not to recognize, that to British men, they ranked only slightly higher in terms of superiority than the savage male.

The Buying and Selling of Nineteenth-Century Sexism

It is very difficult to ascribe a twentieth-century notion to nineteenth-century people, but, as with racism, sexism reared its ugly head long before it gained its negative twentieth-century connotations. The word *sexism* did not enter the English language until the 1960s, but it existed for over two thousand years before, masquerading as reason, logic, and common sense, espoused by renowned philosophers, statesmen, and theologians.¹³² Now, in the twentieth century, historians see a strong link between racism and sexism, as both validate one existence through denigration of another, as well as legitimizing the ideology of gender and gender-specific characterizations that provide fodder for the ideology itself. But although racism and sexism may share certain traits and definitions, for the Anglo-Indian male they had one important difference: the white women living in India, no matter what their class background or marital status, always represented the superior color and race. The British female ranked much higher than any non-European male, as she belonged, albeit marginally, to the superior, conquering race. The classical education that many Anglo-Indian males received served to indoctrinate

¹³² As with racism, no single definition of sexism exists, as different agendas create different definitions. The Oxford English Dictionary defines sexism as "prejudice or discrimination against people, especially women, because of their sex." The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 7th ed. (1984), s. v. "sexism." The third edition of the American Heritage Dictionary adds a second definition: "Attitudes, conditions, or behaviors that promote stereotyping of social roles based on gender." American Heritage Dictionary, third ed. (1992), s. v. "sexism." A feminist dictionary interprets sexism as "as social relationship in which males have authority over females." Maggie Humm, The Dictionary of Feminist Theory, 2d ed. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1995), 258.

them with the idea of female inferiority, while Victorian mores became the tools that supported this conclusion.

For hundreds of years men excluded, ostracized, and marginalized women from society, citing sources such as Aristotle, Rousseau, and Schopenhauer, who created an ideal of feminine imperfection and irrationality. Aristotle saw women as flawed non-men, necessary to reproduction, but less of a contributor and more of a vessel for the fetus. To Aristotle,

the nature of man is the most rounded off and complete. . . . Hence woman is . . . more jealous, more querulous, more apt to scold and to strike. She is, furthermore, more prone to despondency and less hopeful than the man, more void of shame or self-respect, more false of speech, more deceptive, and of more retentive memory.¹³³

In other words, a woman is a suspicious, nagging, pessimistic, amoral, lying creature who never forgets or forgives an insult. Rousseau's preoccupation with nature and its dichotomies fed his ideas on women and caused him to echo Aristotle's cry of female inferiority and recommended withholding female education because it would make it harder for women to accept their subservient position. Arthur Schopenhauer was more vociferous, often portraying women as childish, irrational, cunning, and ugly. "It is only the man whose intellect is clouded by his sexual impulses, that could give the name of the fair sex to that under-sized, narrow-shouldered, broad-hipped, and short-legged race."¹³⁴ Schopenhauer thought women as neither a child who could be taught, nor an adult, but

¹³³ Aristotle, "De Generatione Animalium," trans. Arthur Platt, in Rosemary Agonito, History of the Ideas on Women: A Source Book (New York: Berkeley Publishing Group, 1977), 49.

¹³⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, "On Women" in Agonito, History of the Ideas on Women, 199.

instead, something between the two, whose ability to reason was quite limited both in quality and quantity. To him, women were devious, unjust, and extravagant.

Thus, it is easy to see that by the nineteenth century men viewed most women as appendages to themselves, created by God to reflect man's greatness through reproduction and adoration.¹³⁵ Both men and women in England and its colonies upheld this belief. The men became the sellers of sexism and the women bought it.

Angels or Devils? Anglo-Indian Sexism and the Uprising

As the more literate British men absorbed the new ideas about women and their apparent inferiority, these perceptions filtered throughout the Empire via journals, newspapers, and the new arrivals in India. Anglo-Indians accepted and promoted these ideas, as they did so many things, within the country that they had tried so hard to make as much like home as possible. Anglo-Indian men saw Anglo-Indian women as either compassionate angels or idle devils. Those women who successfully adapted themselves and their homes to India's climate and did not bother their husbands, fathers or brothers became "Angels of the House": pleasant, passive, gentle, devout creatures who occupied their long days with acceptable deeds, behaviors, and activities. The men considered those women who succumbed to boredom, heat, or flirtation as degenerates. An 1847 advice manual, "by an Old Resident" suggested that the woman who had "refined tastes and industrious habits," pleasant friends, social outings and the companionship of a

¹³⁵ This statement excludes working class women as they, although poverty-stricken and over-worked, held a valuable place within the economic framework. While their wages were usually needed to maintain the family unit, they also functioned within their traditional role as mother and wife.

husband and family, might indeed conquer boredom, "the demon ennui." but

without these resources [and] yielding to the influences of climate, and the evil suggestions of domestics, who are ever about her person, she falls victim to indolent habits and coarse indulgences-- the sylph-like form and delicate features which distinguished the youth of her arrival, are rapidly exchanged for an exterior of which obesity and swarthinness are the prominent characteristics, and the bottle and hookah become frequent and offensive companions.¹³⁶

One particularly vociferous critic of Anglo-Indian women was Sir Henry Lawrence, later the Commander-in-Chief of Lucknow. In an 1845 article for the Calcutta Review, after writing a seven-page review of the books in question, Lawrence devoted twenty-four pages on the perils of marriage in India and the behavior of Anglo-Indian women. Admonishing the soldier's wife, he warned that she must adapt herself to the soldierly life, but not to

become that most offensive hybrid, a soldierly woman. She may easily lay aside all that is becoming and delicate in her own sex, but she cannot in exchange assume any masculine qualities higher than those of slang and indifference. She has to bear [privations] and watch against its natural fruits, irritability, frivolity, slovenliness, procrastination.¹³⁷

In that same article, Lawrence determined "a woman makes an admirable *adjective*, enhancing the value of the *noun* to which she is joined, but is of comparatively little value when standing alone."¹³⁸ After remarking that British women, unlike British

¹³⁶ Real Life in India, embracing the view of the Requirements of Individuals Appointed to any Branch of The Indian Public Service; The Methods of Proceeding to India; and the course of Life in Different Parts of the Country. By an Old Resident (London: Houlson and Stoneman, 1847), 148-49.

¹³⁷ Lawrence, "English Women in Hindustan," 108.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 97. Italics his.

men, were incapable of living together without squabbling, he concluded that "these petty bickerings and childish peckings at each other are bad enough, but they are thrown into the shade by more glaring evils":¹³⁹ e.g., improbity, turpitude, selfishness, and vanity. He thought the Anglo-Indian women idle, vain, spendthrift busy-bodies whose disruptive presence in India was more to be lamented than praised. Apparently he alone had the exception to the rule, in his beloved wife Honoria. More adventurous than most wives, she accompanied him all over India and even into Nepal, the first European woman ever to set foot in that country.¹⁴⁰ She lived in bungalows, in tents and on barges, and still managed to run the "house" and fulfill Sir Henry's traditional role as wife and mother as well as collaborate on many of his articles for the Calcutta Review. Despite the remarkable example right under his nose, Lawrence believed that Anglo-Indian women were often a sinful and corrupting influence on Anglo-Indian men.

With the Uprising came a change in how Anglo-Indian men perceived the British women living in India. For some, the women caught in the conflict were still the irritating encumbrances they had always been. But for many, during the Uprising the women became more than angels -- they became martyrs. Men who had rarely given Anglo-Indian women a second thought found themselves waxing poetically over the heroines of Lucknow and Delhi, and swearing vengeance for the victims of Cawnpore. Those who admired the women usually did so for their actions that remained within the acceptable realm of womanhood. The men readily commended those women who

¹³⁹ Ibid., 111.

¹⁴⁰ MacMillan, Women of the Raj, 44.

nursed, kept house, and generally succored the besieged, but rarely mention any non-traditional women. One such woman, Bridget Widdowson of Cawnpore, broke away from the traditional role of victim to stand guard with a sword over some captured mutineers, who, after an hour of her “Amazonian surveillance”¹⁴¹ were then given over to male guards who let them escape. The Captain relating the story managed to deprecate her actions by remarking on her “rare physical strength” and wondered “what influence restrained [the mutineers] while under their female warder.”¹⁴² Ruth Coopland would have had plenty to say to him.

Some men may think that women are weak and only fitted to do trivial things, and endure petty troubles: and there are women who deserve no higher opinion: . . . but there are many who can endure with fortitude and patience what even soldiers shrink from. Men are fitted by education and constitution to dare and to do: yet they have been surpassed, in presence of mind and in the power of endurance by weak women.¹⁴³

The men who looked upon the women as heroines had much to say about the fortitude and resilience of the traditional women involved in the Uprising. The anonymous author of a newspaper-style account of the Uprising was especially poetic:

Delicate ladies and tender infants were compelled to shelter themselves in holes in the earth . . . yet amid all these horrors benevolence triumphed over selfish terrors. When we think of the ladies . . . tending and soothing the sick . . . it is as if the days had indeed come back when angels walked the earth.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Mowbray Thomson, The Story of Cawnpore (London: Richard Bentley, 1859), 76.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Coopland, A Lady's Escape, 116-17.

¹⁴⁴ Narrative of the Indian Revolt from its Outbreak to the Capture of Lucknow by Sir Colin Campbell (London: Geo. Vickers, 1858), 237.

A volunteer, W. O. Swanston, wrote in his journal of the

fair and delicately nurtured ladies [who] when bullets were flying about like hail . . . when many of them were bereft of husband and children . . . rise above their own misfortunes and devote themselves to works of charity and love [nursing]. When rations were reduced as low as they could be (and women's rations at the full were much less than those allowed men). I have seen them taking from their own small shares of flour and tea. . . . As long as English women are such, so long will English men be only too willing to die for them.¹⁴⁵

A young captain, Mowbray Thomson, one of the few survivors of the Cawnpore massacres, praised the women fulsomely, even to the point of naming names. In some official reports, the women are not even identified, but instead lumped together as "the married women and children of Her Majesty's Thirty-second Foot."¹⁴⁶ In his reminiscences, he wrote of Mrs. Evans, Mrs. White, Mrs. Williams, etc., and though identifying them through their husband's rank and unit, Thomson recorded the women's individual acts of bravery, compassion, and heroism as their own. In one statement, describing the women of Cawnpore in general, Thomson remarked that these women "all smeared with powder and covered with dirt [were] more to be admired than [whilst distributing ammunition and encouragement] than they had often been . . . when arrayed for the glittering ballroom."¹⁴⁷ But it was not just Cawnpore women that elicited

¹⁴⁵ [W. O. Swanston], My Journal, or What I Did and Saw between the 9th of June and 25th November 1857; with an Account of General Havelock's March from Allahabad to Lucknow, by a Volunteer (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1858), 50.

¹⁴⁶ List of Officers of H. M. and the Honorable Company's Service, Civil Service, and Others who have been Killed, also Those who have Died since 10 May, 1857, serving on the Bengal establishment, as far as Agra up to 15 December, 1857 (Lahore, India: Punjab Government, 1926), 13.

¹⁴⁷ Thomson, The Story of Cawnpore, 100.

rapturous accolades as Douglas Muter remarked on the courage of the women of Delhi.

who sprung down from the fortifications amid a storm of bullets-- who had waded through rapid rivers and walked under a sun whose scorching rays cannot be known save by those who have felt them-- stealing along paths occupied by a hostile population. What heroism! What endurance!¹⁴⁸

Those men involved in the siege of Lucknow were usually complimentary concerning the women. Thomas Kavanagh, lucky enough to be billeted with his wife and children, wrote in his journal of "women squabbling for the safest places"¹⁴⁹ but later described the women as

the dear kind, gentle creatures [who] were so patient and so generous! Women shine brilliantly in all those qualities that are most needed in affliction. She bears travail and trouble heroically [*sic*] and is so unselfish.¹⁵⁰

This last sentence is amply illustrated in his journal by numerous stories of women giving their rations to their husbands or to the wounded. His own wife offered barefaced lies as she served him her rations mixed with his own.¹⁵¹ Dr. Joseph Fayrer, in charge of some fourteen women living in his house, had only admiration for the women and the work they performed. When called upon to amputate a young woman's leg (the first female injured in the siege), two women ably assisted him in the gory operation and later helped

¹⁴⁸ Mrs. Muter, Travels and Adventures, 34.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas H. Kavanagh, How I Won the Victoria Cross (London: Ward & Lock, 1860), 19.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

bury her.¹⁵² Fayerer was very grateful for the women staying with him for the care they gave to his ailing wife and infant son. When the women were not thus engaged, they occupied themselves with “making clothing, cooking the food, attending to the sick and wounded and generally making themselves useful.”¹⁵³ When the relieving force broke through to Lucknow, a young officer wrote of the “wan, attenuated features of the garrison, both men and women-- the latter a noble example of the fortitude and endurance of which, in times of trial, the sex is capable, and proof of their being well worthy of the defence made for them by husbands and friends.”¹⁵⁴ Major North continued in a similar vein when he deplored the idea of the women and children forced to endure such a situation and remarked that “each individual seems a heroine” for having to watch their children dying for lack of fresh air, nutritious food and other basic needs.¹⁵⁵

One man was conspicuously faint with his praises for the women of Lucknow. Martin Gubbins, extremely vocal in his criticisms of all and sundry, devoted four pages in his memoirs about the courage and resolution of the men, but wrote only one paragraph (and a short one, at that) about the women and only of those women who nursed the wounded at the hospital.¹⁵⁶ In the next edition, however, he amended his meager commendation to add a much longer paragraph concerning the rest of the women:

¹⁵² Surgeon-General Sir Joseph Fayerer, Recollections of My Life (London: Blackwood & Sons, 1900), 163.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁵⁴ C. N. North, Journal of an English Officer in India (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1858), 201-02.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 221.

¹⁵⁶ Gubbins, An Account of the Mutinies in Oudh, 2d. ed., 353.

To their honour be it said, that these hardships and privations were always patiently and cheerfully borne. Never probably, indeed, has the noble character of Englishwomen shone with more real brightness than during this memorable siege . . . ready to tend to the sick, to soothe and comfort the dying, and to cheer and sustain the living by all those numberless offices of love and affection which women only understand.¹⁵⁷

Whereas Martin Gubbins grudgingly praised the women, some men continued to view Anglo-Indian women in the particularly negative viewpoint of the nineteenth century, despite their angelic martyrdom. Their mere presence in India during the conflict was more than enough to cause uncomplimentary attitudes. Many people, mostly military and government men saw the presence of the women in stations and towns as the very cause of the besiegements. Even some women saw the problems their presence created. Both Georgina Harris of Lucknow and Ruth Coopland of Agra acknowledged how difficult it was for the married officers and soldiers to do their duty or to escape danger with their wives and families at their sides.¹⁵⁸ Sir Colin Campbell, once he had rescued the Lucknow garrison, felt quite hindered by the women, children, and wounded men he had to get first to safety. "Until I am disencumbered . . . of [the] helpless creatures, I can hardly do anything more than stand still."¹⁵⁹ One of his officers described how the rescued women ate fifteen days' worth of food in two hours and how

¹⁵⁷ Martin Gubbins, An Account of the Mutinies in Oudh and the Siege of Lucknow, 3d ed. (London: Richard Bentley, 1859), 231.

¹⁵⁸ Coopland, A Lady's Escape, 107-08; and Georgina Harris, A Lady's Diary of the Siege of Lucknow (London: John Murray, 1858), 31-32.

¹⁵⁹ Lieutenant-General Lawrence Shadwell, The Life of Colin Campbell, Lord Clyde, illustrated by Extracts from his Diary and Correspondence, vol. 2 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1881), 30-31.

he resented them because he had heard that most had “behaved badly” towards the wounded by not sharing wine and other comforts.¹⁶⁰ Another was scathing in his description of the rescued women, who first usurped his tent, and then “helped themselves to” his teapot, a valuable commodity in Lucknow. He added a disparaging remark on how they came out of Lucknow so loaded down with plunder that they could hardly walk, although he did not actually witness the event, but “got it on the very best authority.”¹⁶¹ To this young officer, the avaricious women were contemptible, while the male soldiers’ looting was opportunistic and spoils of war.

For the most part, Anglo-Indian males revered their female counterparts in India during the Uprising. Many of the men trapped in a siege situation, whether it was with the singular Mrs. Tytler in Delhi or the hundreds in Lucknow, admired the women and their behavior. All agreed that the presence of the women was problematic and to those battling to reach outlying stations, the women were almost more trouble than they were worth. But never did the military leaders consider not rescuing them. Troublesome though they might be, British women and children represented the empire, and their entrapment was both the cause and the result of British ideals. Thus the women were angelic heroines and non-combatant encumbrances, and although according to male and military opinion, neither belonged anywhere near the Uprising, it was the Empire’s duty to liberate them and the ideals they represented.

¹⁶⁰ Johnson, *Journal of Chardin Johnson*, 16.

¹⁶¹ James P. Robertson, *Personal Adventures and Anecdotes of an Old Officer* (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), 221. One such woman might have been Maria Germon, who refused to leave her Bible, photographs and clothing behind. Her husband had given her some shawls that he had looted, but for the most part the items weighing her down were her personal ones.

III

THE UPRISING

My sword is thirsty for the blood of these accursed women-slayers.

Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley

Causes

Historians dispute the causes of the Uprising as they also dispute its very name. Ostensibly the native regiments mutinied over the use of a new rifle that required cartridges lubricated with animal fats abhorrent to most Indians. But this was just the tinder to the straw: the Indians had other grievances as well. There may be four names for this monumental event in British history, but there are a great many reasons why it occurred. These are described in some detail in P. J. O. Taylor's A Companion to the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Taylor examined diaries, journals, books, newspapers, and letters and found twenty-four possible causes, some are extremely tenuous, while others are extremely probable.¹ Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels sympathized with the rebels and thought the Uprising was the first war of Indian independence, a sentiment that some Indian historians share. Some politicians in London thought it was a Russian intrigue (later in the century this fear became a reality), while others, the opposition, naturally, thought it was the result of a bad, Liberal, Gladstonian government. It was also thought

¹ P. J. O. Taylor, ed. A Companion to the Indian Mutiny of 1857, (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1996), 244-45.

to be just an army revolt that spread; a massive conspiracy of unknown, but ominous origin: a reaction to overt Christianizing activities or a punishment for failing to convert the natives.² Certain rebel sympathizers thought the revolt represented not so much a battle against the white man, but the advantageous use of an opportunity to rid India of the British while they were vulnerable. Rumors and superstitions abounded, inducing sympathy and succor in people not immediately associated with the Uprising. One rumor concerned a plot to destroy caste by feeding human fat to the natives; another claimed the Government was to force marriage between British Crimean war widows and high-ranking Indian land owners. Superstitious Indians saw the Uprising as a reaction to the battle of Plassey (exactly one hundred years earlier) in which the British gained a monopoly over trade and created the entity known as British India.³ The most likely explanation is that it was, in its simplest form, an opportunistic expression of general dissatisfaction in the Bengal army that spread through the cantonments to the nearby towns, cities, and villages, and in doing so gathered adherents from the civilian native population.

In the years after the Uprising and indeed, up until the latter part of the twentieth century, many scholars and historians laid the blame for the Uprising, in a large part, upon Anglo-Indian women, particularly the idea of their presence and attitudes creating a distance between the Anglo-Indian officer and his men. But this was just one of the

² [W. J. Shepherd], England's Great Mission India (Lucknow: London Printing Press, 1879; reprint, "The Guilty Men of 1857: Three Anonymous Discourses" New Delhi: Academic Books, Inc., 1980).

³ *Ibid.*, 243-46.

many possible causes of the Uprising. Of the four most accepted causes: the cartridge incident; the annexation of Oudh; the intense proselytizing of non-Christians; and the obvious breach between European and Indian soldiers, it is utterly impossible for British women to have been involved in even the smallest measure in the first or second. They do, however, share some of the responsibility for the overt conversion and the quite apparent gulf appearing between British and native Indians. These four reasons have gained, over the years, predominance over all the others, with the most comprehensive being the changing attitudes of the British towards the native Indians. Many historians and scholars, both contemporary and modern, have pointed to the arrival of British women in India as the cause of this portentous change. Byron Farwell wrote

In all societies women have ever been the conservators of culture. When British women began to arrive in India in numbers, they brought with them British attitudes, British fashions, and British morality; they were soon imposing their ideas, standards, and customs upon their new environment.⁴

In the introduction to Dennis Kincaid's book on the British social life in India, James Lunt commented on the "rule of the memsahibs," pointing out the improvement of morality in India, but decline in the social relationship with the Indians⁵ Kenneth Ballhatchet noted the distance maintained by the British in India through their separate townships, both civil and military, and by the presence of missionaries. He also remarked on the influence of the Englishwoman:

In various ways their presence seems to have widened the distance between the ruling race and the people. As wives they hastened the disappearance of

⁴ Byron Farwell, *Armies of the Raj*, 61-62.

⁵ James Lunt in Dennis Kincaid, *British Social Life in India, 1608-1937* (Newton Abbots, England: Reader's Union, 1974), xvii-xviii.

the Indian mistress. As hostesses they fostered the development of exclusive social groups . . . [and] as women they were thought of by Englishmen to be in need of protection from lascivious Indians.⁶

But although British women were not blameless, it was primarily a combination of improvements in transportation, and the changing societal mores at home that caused the disaffection between the British and the natives. As Christine Bolt noted, "Officers and bureaucrats coming back from furlough brought with them a renewed stock of Western prejudices, were more mercenary, [and were] less well-informed."⁷ In the very early days of the East India Company in India, the British company officer spent a lot of time with his troops. He learned their language and taught them his. He looked upon his men as his responsibility and was not above socializing with them occasionally. The dearth of British females meant he might make regular visits to a Company-sponsored brothel⁸ or have an Indian mistress called 'sleeping dictionaries' since a man could consult her whenever he needed clarification of Indian language or customs.⁹ However, from 1800 onwards, as more and more British and European women arrived in India, the Company man found it difficult to continue his old way of life. Toby Sinclair laid the blame for the increasing gulf equally upon the British men and women.

By the end of the eighteenth century the atmosphere was slowly changing.

⁶ Ballhatchet, Race, Sex, and Class under the Raj, 5.

⁷ Bolt, Victorian Attitudes towards Race, 202.

⁸ Although the Company was against prostitution, it realized that the men would go to the brothels in any case, so they decided to run some themselves to guarantee the cleanliness of the girls as well as the patrons.

⁹ Toby Sinclair in the introduction to George Atkinson, Curry and Rice, 10.

With many more men coming from England along with new values and ideas of superiority, a growing contempt among the British developed for those they now ruled. The memsahibs had arrived in force with their prejudices and superiority.¹⁰

Also, as life expectancy was low, the East India Company had a high turnover, with men of two or three years experience dying from cholera or typhoid and new ones arriving fresh from Home, with new ideas of propriety, racism, and class, fresh in his mind. A Captain Bell remarked that the "weakest point in the English system in India is the newly-arrived, ignorant, insular Englishman." He lamented,

The mass of European idlers and nonentities in the civil and military services certainly don't add to the physical strength of England in India, while they detract from her moral strength, lower the native ideal standard of English ability and honour and introduce an element of insolence, contempt, and tyranny.¹¹

With the advent of faster transportation, people, letters, newspapers, and magazines arrived faster, and in increasing number than in the previous years; all of which meant in turn a faster and wider distribution of the changing mores. The newly arrived British men brought the current ideological trends, while the women brought the latest fashions. Thus, the British male, with his daily contact with the Indians had much more impact on their disaffection than his female counterparts ever had.

A second intangible cause of the Uprising was the continual attempts to convert the natives to Christianity, yet another charge laid at the feet of the British woman. With so much time on her hands and so few ways with which to occupy herself, it is little

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Captain Evans Bell, The English in India: Letters from Nagpore, 1857-1858 (London: John Chapman, 1859), 43-44.

wonder that the memsahibs looked to one of the few approved outlets for their energy and enthusiasm.¹² But the memsahib had little opportunity to interact with the natives outside her household whereas the soldier, officer, civil servant, and merchant encountered natives throughout the day. While she might organize a school, it was usually in tandem with her husband or other male relative, and she would have only minor contact with the students. Even her husband often left the teaching to his subordinate or converted natives and concerned himself only with examining the pupils and financing the operation.

More often it was the British male who sought to convert the natives. Previously banned from the country, missionaries abounded in India after 1800. India attracted a number of religious and social reformers, men such as James Mill, C. E. Trevelyan, and Thomas Babington Macauley. "There was literally no limit to their aspirations for India; within a generation or so, it was hoped, [Indians] would be Christian, English-speaking, free of idolatry, and actively engaged in the government of their country."¹³ James Mill thought India offered an unparalleled opportunity to command the social structure of India, based, of course, on Utilitarian precepts.¹⁴ There was an official missionary movement, through the church, and an unofficial one, through the army and civil service.

¹² Francis Hutchins offered a unique perceptive; he wrote that it was not the Englishwomen that caused the gulf between the British and the Indians, but rather, Anglo-Indian society itself. "It seems more correct to say that British Indian society caused a narrowing of outlook among Englishwomen by refusing them the opportunity of pursuing interests outside its confining limits." Hutchins, The Illusion of Permanence, 107.

¹³ *Ibid.*, viii.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, viii-ix.

The official missionaries attempted to Christianize the natives openly, setting up schools, orphanages, and proselytizing at every opportunity. The students became adept at memorization and repetition of the Bible, and the missionaries foolishly thought they created Christians. A doctor in the Bengal Civil Service, James Graham, observed in a letter to his parents that missionaries only succeed in widening the gulf between the British and Indians.¹⁵ These open and clumsy attempts were easy to circumvent, but the real danger lay in the Christianizing officers and civil servants, none of whom were, of course, women. At home in primogeniture-based England, the first son inherited the land, the second went into the military, and the third entered the Church. India in the nineteenth century offered impecunious younger sons opportunities to make money through the military or civil service, in a land with a significantly lower cost of living combined with a higher standard of living. Thus, India was full of younger sons, many who had some religious training or education. In the decade between 1820 and 1830, approximately 307 sons of clergymen became officers in the Bengal army, representing over fifteen percent of the total officers serving in that branch.¹⁶ It was this type of missionary that the sepoys usually encountered. Their attempts at conversion varied from informal schools to required Bible-study meetings. One magistrate commissioned two immense stone columns, engraved with the Ten Commandments, in a variety of native

¹⁵ Graham Indian Mutiny Papers, ed. A. T. Harrison. (Belfast, Northern Ireland: Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, 1980), xxii.

¹⁶ Bruce Watson, The Great Indian Mutiny: Colin Campbell and the Campaign at Lucknow (New York: Praeger, 1991), 24.

languages, and installed them on a major road for all travelers to see.¹⁷

Even with all that, some Britons thought that they were not doing enough proselytizing. Colonel Samuel Dewe White remarked in his Indian Reminiscences, "It is a disgraceful fact that the policy of the Indian government was, and had been for many years, to keep the native soldier in ignorance of the saving truths of the Bible."¹⁸ Ruth Coopland's husband, George, thought that the indulgent attitude towards the native religions was a severe mistake; to him, the Uprising was a punishment from God for pandering to the natives' "vile superstitions."¹⁹ Bishop Daniel Wilson of Calcutta remarked on the effect of non-Christian behavior on India, noting that Christians in India did not act like as such and "the general impression among villagers and other unenlightened natives . . . is that Christianity consists simply in indulging in spiritous liquors and eating the flesh of cows and swine."²⁰ The editor determined that British rule over India was ordained by God, and the Uprising a punishment for "failing to demonstrated proper Christian attitudes"²¹ John Monckton, in one of his last letters home, wrote that he believed the Uprising came about because the British gave the native Indians education without Christian religion "which only arms them with power which may be turned against us."²²

¹⁷ Hibbert, The Great Mutiny, 52.

¹⁸ Samuel Dewe White, Indian Reminiscences, (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1880), 86.

¹⁹ Coopland, 85.

²⁰ [Shepherd], England's Great Mission India, 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²² Monckton Papers (Wolverhampton, England: Moseley & Co., n.d.), Letter 1, page 2.

Mandatory church attendance was a minor irritant, but as the century progressed, the sepoy saw more insidious ways the British authorities attempted to break his caste and convert him to Christianity. In the 1806 some bright Company commander decided to have the men wear leather cockades in their hats, something akin to Christians spitting on the divine host. A quick mutiny decided against this course of action.²³ In the years leading up to the 1850s, the native troops had an agreement with the East India Company that they would not have to serve outside of a fifty-mile radius from their home. But in 1856, the General Service Enlistment Act demanded that all native companies must be available for any duty, of any duration, by land or sea. In order to remain pure, members of each caste had to carry their food, prepare it themselves and carefully purify their utensils and plates afterward. This was clearly not possible on a wooden ship with little room to segregate castes, much less offer separate kitchens and sleeping areas. The company army instituted new procedures whereby one Brahmin cooked for many, satisfactory to western eyes, but still problematic for the Brahmins, as hierarchical subgroups existed within each caste. It was ignorance and expediency that caused much of the disaffection among the natives.

More immediate and more tangible causes lay in the efforts of the British government to attain power over more Indian provinces. Many historians agree that the annexation of the province of Oudh, and the greased cartridge incident were primarily responsible for the Uprising. Annexations had been going on for some years prior to

²³ Ibid., 62, and Taylor, Companion to the Indian Mutiny, 336.

1856. In the name of progress and improvement, the governor-general of India, Lord Dalhousie and his predecessors annexed the Punjab and parts of Burma, extended the railroads, telegraph and postal services, and continued to fight against traditional Hindu practices of *suttee* and *thuggee*.²⁴ But by far Dalhousie's most consequential reform was that which determined that any Indian ruler without a blood heir forfeited his lands to the British. By ignoring the long-standing practice of recognizing an adopted heir he caused a great deal of resentment and ill-will among native princes. He ended his administration with the annexation of the province of Oudh, and his replacement, Lord Canning, had to put his predecessor's unpopular reforms in place there. Although the annexations had never been popular, the annexation in 1856 of the province of Oudh was particularly resented, especially for economic reasons. Martin Gubbins, the Financial Commissioner of Oudh, recounted that a village community paid its revenue to the king, through the *talooqdar*, a "greedy and rapacious Government official."²⁵ A number of middlemen eventually gained enough power to take ownership of the village. Gubbins observed that "if no redress [of this corrupt situation] was to be granted, and no wrong to be repaired, to what end was our mission in Oudh? and what business had we in the country?"²⁶ Gubbins believed that the annexation of Oudh caused animosity among various representative groups towards the new government. He validated the annexation by

²⁴ *Suttee* was the practice of burning the widow or widows of a deceased man on his funeral pyre. *Thuggee* referred to gangs who roamed the countryside plundering and robbing travelers. The English language gets the word *thug* from *thuggee*.

²⁵ Gubbins, *An Account of the Mutinies in Oudh*, 2d ed. 60-61.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 61, 67.

comparing the former, corrupt and worthless (by British standards) rule with the modern, efficient British system. Gubbins also referred to the economic changes wrought by the new government. With the king in exile in Calcutta, thousands of royal servants lost lucrative jobs. Almost overnight, luxury goods manufacturers, retailers, and raw material suppliers lost their market. And the dishonest *talooqdars* lost their status as well as their revenues, as the government replaced them with British civil servants. Retired royal servants lost the pensions previously provided by the king, and approximately three-quarters of the king's militia lost their positions. Of the 60,000 soldiers employed by the king, only 15,000 were able to find positions with the new government. Thus the annexation aroused hostile feelings in many of the people of Oudh, some stemming from a direct loss of power, prestige, or revenue, and some through the indirect economic losses caused by the removal of the debauched court. The annexation and its inherent economic reversals significantly affected the sepoy regiments, as out of two hundred thousand sepoys, one-fifth came from this province.²⁷ Most of this forty thousand also served there, and had numerous relatives nearby. Thus, any ill will concerning the annexation certainly affected the regiments there.

With such animosity brewing among the sepoys and discontent in the villages, all that was needed was an excuse to revolt. There was a rumor that the British had put bone dust in the flour used to make the sepoy's dietary staple, the chupattie. Another rumor (later substantiated) floated around about a British doctor who defiled a medicine bottle

²⁷ Edward H. Hilton, The Mutiny Records of Oudh and Lucknow, 1856-57, 7th ed. (Lucknow: Panko Press, 1911, reprint, Lahore, Pakistan: Sheikh Mubarak Ali, 1975), 20 (citations are from the reprint edition.)

by drinking from it, just before administering it to a sepoy patient. Yet these rumors, though inflammatory, did not push the sepoys to revolt. They needed a cause to rally around, some very visible sign of British oppression. This sign arrived one day in a shipment of Enfield rifles and their greased cartridges.

The Enfield rifle was considered to be a tremendous improvement over the muzzle-loading 'Brown Bess' that the British army had used since 1730.²⁸ This advanced rifle supposedly allowed the soldier to reload faster as the bullet cartridge need only be shoved down the muzzle, rather than loading individually with powder, wadding, and the bullet. The ease of this operation hinged on the lubricated cartridges issued with the rifle. Unfortunately it also required the soldier to tear open the packet with his teeth, since one hand held the packet and the other, the rifle. In the nineteenth century animal fat was one of the few lubricants available and a rumor spread that the lubricant used was cow and pig fat. As the Hindu Indians believe cows to be sacred and the Muslim Indians think pigs unclean, the rumor that the military had greased the bullets with beef and pork fat was another threat to caste and religion. Colonel Samuel Dewe White observed in his reminiscences,

It is a singular fact that this explicit, emphatic, and authoritative declaration [of the non-use of animal fat] had not the least effect of undeceiving [the sepoys] of their ridiculous fears. The truth was, that for one man who disbelieved the story, there were ten thousand who believed it. The Hindoo soldier possesses a child-like credulity.²⁹

On drill one day in Meerut eighty-five sepoys refused the order to bite the

²⁸ Antony Makepeace-Warne, Brassey's Companion to the British Army (London: Brassey's, 1995), 55.

²⁹ Samuel Dewe White, Indian Reminiscences, (London: Wm H. Allen & Co., 1880), 85.

cartridges and the commander at Meerut, General Hewitt, saw it as a revolt. He ordered them stripped of their uniforms, punished, and drummed out of the army. After publicly flogging the sepoys and breaking their caste, Hewitt put them in prison. This harsh and humiliating treatment caused more sepoys at Meerut to rebel and rescue their comrades. Thus the Uprising began.

Major Scenes in the Uprising

Although the Uprising remained primarily in the Oudh province, there were few places in that province that did not experience some sort of siege or battle. From Agra to Unao, British men and women feared for their lives, some in siege conditions, others in comparative safety. Many should have moved into the nearby garrison or to Calcutta, but were too afraid or too stubborn to leave their homes. Some officers could not leave because they had not received orders to do so. High-ranking civil servants determined not to leave because such a retreat would let the natives see their fears (something British arrogance could not allow), and also, more realistically, it might arouse more activity on the part of the undecided, sullen natives. Ruth Coopland wrote critically of the former and its utter failure:

When the mutinies first began, if all the ladies and children at the numerous small stations had been instantly sent away to Calcutta . . . their husbands and fathers would probably have had a better chance of escape. Instead of which, the lives of men, women, and children were sacrificed, through the efforts to avoid arousing the suspicions of the troops.³⁰

³⁰ Coopland, *A Lady's Escape*, 107-08. Ruth Coopland shared a room with Mrs. Innes, whose husband was a prominent figure in the Lucknow siege.

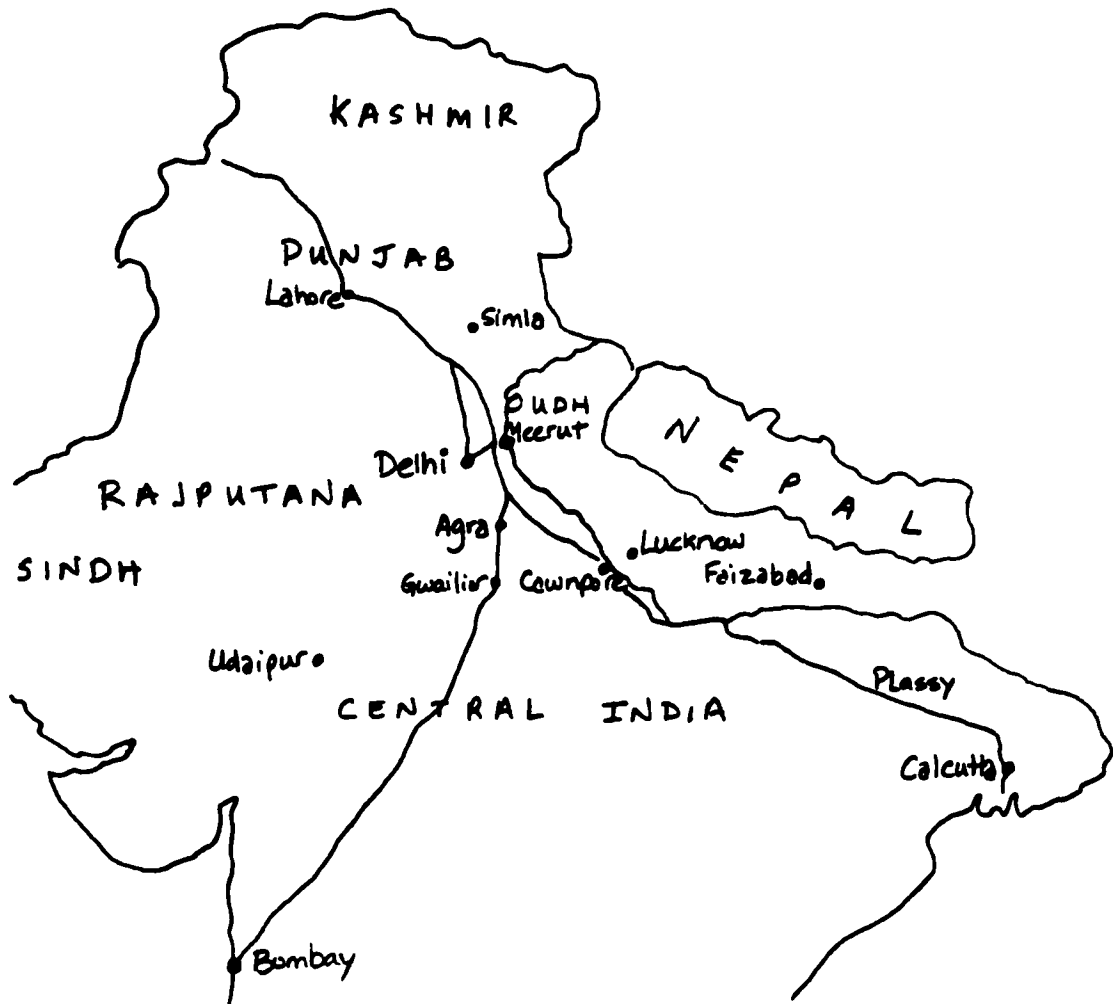


Figure 2
Map of the Province of Oudh

The result was that many people, including women and children, became trapped in makeshift fortresses and ill-protected stations, and many men died unable to reach safety.

Agra

In Agra, the British, under the leadership of Sir John Colvin, held out against the mutineers for some months before retreating into the fort. There they stayed from July to October 1857, never in a true siege, as food, mail, and supplies continued to arrive. The hardships once inside the fort might be exaggerated, but the peril that many experienced in reaching the fort was quite real. Ruth Coopland was one of the women at the Gwailor station when Meerut fell. After some anxious days, she and her husband prepared themselves for flight to Agra if the worse came. Ruth learned to load and fire a rifle "as we were determined not to die without a struggle."³¹ Each night for a week they lay out clothes for a quick escape and made small bundles of important papers. Finally, the crisis came, and they escaped through their garden to a neighboring house where they joined forces with some unaccompanied wives, including one who had just given birth hours earlier. Ruth and George Coopland, along with Mrs. Raikes and her infant, and Mrs. Blake, remained hidden thanks to the loyalty of one of Mrs. Blake's native servants, Muza. Unfortunately, the mutineers discovered their hiding place and dragged them into the open where Ruth saw her husband shot in the dawning light. After some hours, the mutineers decided to let the women and children go, and even gave them a large carriage. Even here hierarchies abounded, as the ladies, as Ruth Coopland would call them, had

³¹ Ibid., 111.

inside seats, and the wives of the sergeants hung on to the outside.³² A few miles away they came on some more sergeants' wives, and here Ruth Coopland displayed the social prejudices of the times: "Some nearly naked, and in great distress, having seen their husbands shot . . . poor things, their distress was very pitiable; their feeling being less under control than ours."³³ All the women inside the carriage had seen the very same thing that night, and it is doubtful that they were as calm and controlled as Ruth Coopland implied.

For five days the eight women headed towards Agra, every moment expecting to meet their deaths. They often ran across convoys of natives, loyal to a friendly raja, and pleaded for their help, but the natives refused, as they did not have the express permission of their master. One of the women, a Mrs. Quick, "fell down in an apoplectic fit, and became quite black in the face; some of the ladies kindly stayed with her, but in a quarter of an hour she died. The natives crowded around laughing at her."³⁴ They continued on and later that day reached the relative safety of a bungalow one day's journey from Agra, where a Captain Campbell waited for them. One of the women was his wife whom he thought dead, and another, Mrs. Gilbert, after the grueling journey and all the terror and uncertainty, gave birth. The next day they went on to Agra, Mrs. Gilbert and child being transported on a bedstead.³⁵ Once there they found things to be scarcely better. Clothing

³² *Ibid.*, 117-25.

³³ *Ibid.*, 129.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 141-42.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

was at a premium and there was little to spare. The shopkeepers had deserted Agra as did the native servants. Hot weather set in, and cockroaches swarmed everywhere. Women and girls as young as ten learned to load and fire muskets.³⁶ Ruth, always a pious woman, borrowed a Bible and took comfort from it until Agra was relieved on 10 October, 1857.

Faizabad

In Faizabad, the former capital of Oudh, another young widow, Maria Mill, experienced the hardship of being alone in a foreign country in the midst of a native Uprising, attempting to reach safety, but never quite sure as to whom she could trust with the lives of herself and her three small children. On 8 June 1857, the native regiments at Faizabad rose against the British presence there, but two of the three companies determined not to harm the British, but to send them down river to safety. Maria did not trust the boats or the natives, so she declined to go downstream. Her distrust was misplaced as the natives let the boats go as promised, although most on board were killed by a marauding regiment or by villagers farther down the river. Maria took her three children (Johnnie, Alice and baby Charlie) and wandered about for over a week, trying to find food, water, and shelter as best she could. At each village, she had to determine whether the inhabitants might be trusted, or whether they might appear friendly and then murder them or turn them over to a rebellious company. Traveling by night, she hid in native huts during the day, and finally got a message to a friendly rajah, Maun Singh. He

³⁶ Edith Sharpley's MS narrative as quoted in Hibbert, . The Great Mutiny, 154.

offered her shelter with some other women, mostly the Eurasian wives of sergeants. Once again, shared miseries did not bring the different classes together: "Besides the want of air and proper food, to be associated with these women, whose language was often dreadful to hear, was not the least of my miseries, for I was shocked that my children should hear it."³⁷ She certainly thought herself quite their superior, as she soon took charge of their little caravan. One day during the long overland trip to Calcutta, Sergeant Edwards' Eurasian child died. Maria Mill took it upon herself to administer the last rites, as her husband had baptized the baby. Maria was quite scandalized by the young mother's allowing a native to mutter prayers over the dead child while "she could not offer up one word of supplication to the only and supreme Disposer of all."³⁸ When, just a few days before arriving in Calcutta, Maria's youngest died, someone sent Mrs. Edwards in to comfort her. Maria Mill did not care for this and wrote in her journal, "Luckily, another European woman, a refugee; a very respectable person, came with her, and sat by me 'til the morning."³⁹ After all these trials and tribulations, Maria and her remaining children arrived in Calcutta, five months after they fled Faizabad.

Delhi

During Maria Mill's seven hundred-mile journey another woman experienced her own adventures in the capital city of Delhi. Harriet Tytler, née Earle, was born in India,

³⁷ Maria Mill, Unpublished journal, 1857, Cambridge Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge, England, 23.

³⁸ Ibid., 25.

³⁹ Ibid., 32.

in October 1828, and educated in England. She returned to India in 1845, when she was seventeen, receiving news of her father's death while en route to Calcutta. Her mother determined to return to England with the younger children, but Harriet would lose her Company pension if she left India, so she stayed, traveling nine hundred miles up country, alone, to reach her uncle. Soon after arriving, she met and married Captain Robert Tytler, and was eight months pregnant with her third child when Delhi was attacked on 11 May, 1857.⁴⁰ With other women and children, Mrs. Tytler, her French maid Marie, and her two children, Frank and Edith, went by means of a carriage convoy to the Flag Staff Tower, located on a ridge overlooking Delhi from the north-west. As there was no food, water, or supplies there, the commanding officer determined to remove everyone to Umballa. But carriages were in short supply, and Captain Robert Tytler sent his family with a Mrs. Gardner and others while he commanded his men for as long as they remained loyal. After some hours the carriage arrived at the rendezvous point and Captain Tytler found his family among the crowd. Mrs. Gardner could not find her husband, and Captain Tytler risked his life to find him farther down the road, about to be overtaken by angry natives. Continuing on, the wheel of their carriage broke, and they commandeered another, taking its sixteen-year old female owner with them, and thus saving her life. When this also fell apart, Captains Gardner and Tytler took possession of a rubbish cart and in went the two women, three children and the maid, Marie, plus an undisclosed number of other women. Both Mrs. Gardner (also heavily pregnant) and

⁴⁰ Harriet Tytler, An Englishwoman in India: The Memoirs of Harriet Tytler, 1828-1858, ed. Anthony Sattin (Oxford: 1986), x-xi.

Harriet Tytler suffered tremendously from the rough roads and overcrowding, and when they finally reached Umballa, Harriet Tytler retired to her bed for a full twenty-four hours.

Once recovered, Harriet Tytler was astounded by the ingratitude of Mrs. Gardner, who, despite Captain Tytler's rescue of her husband, point-blank told Harriet that the numerous Tytlers ought to move out of the crowded safe house. The Tytlers did so, and later Harriet discovered that Mrs. Gardner had also failed to give her a share of donated clothing and infant supplies. Such behavior was unfortunately quite common even in perilous situations, and this was not an isolated incident.

Captain Tytler determined to keep his family with him and then send them to safety after the British retook Delhi. The ragtag force moved south towards Delhi, encountering small pockets of agitators along the way. They halted at Alipore and then set up camp along the ridge overlooking Delhi, just a few miles away. It was here that the commanding officer, General Barnard, determined that the large number of women and children (which grew daily as refugees poured into camp), should be evacuated to safety to Meerut, long in the hands of the British. Mrs. Tytler wrote,

When I heard of the mode of traveling chosen for us, I was truly appalled by the very thought of a certain death for me, so I asked my husband to interview the General . . . he said 'Poor lady, poor lady. Let her stay.' So it was that I was allowed to stay the whole siege through, for they couldn't spare another man as escort for my escort. This was on the evening of the 19th [June], and my baby was born at two in the morning of the 21st.⁴¹

So she stayed throughout the siege of Delhi, giving birth under an ammunition wagon to

⁴¹ Ibid., 147.

her third child, to be named Stanley Delhi-Force Tytler, after the rescuing troops.⁴²

Three months later, after many privations, Delhi was once again under total British control and the Tytlers could move to proper housing. Captain Tytler continued in the service for some years with Harriet by his side.

Cawnpore

But there was one place in India where the rescuing troops found little to rejoice when they recaptured the city. This was Cawnpore, the scene of one of the most horrendous massacres in history. It was this city and its British residents that changed the entire nature of the Uprising. Before the massacres, as one military officer wrote in his memoirs, the British government desired simply to suppress the mutineers and end the rebellion. But after finding the bodies of innocent women and children brutally hacked to death, the British government wanted retaliation, and the troops wanted blood.

Located sixty miles northeast from Lucknow, Cawnpore had fallen under the Company's dependency in 1770, when the King of Lucknow asked for a soldierly attendance to guard against attacks upon Lucknow. From a small, tented encampment the Company's presence grew until it spread along the Ganges River for seven miles. From the early 1800s, Cawnpore had been of importance as a staging place for troops, supplies, and artillery intended for the northwestern provinces. In 1818, the East India Company determined to depose the last Mahratta monarch through a treaty and pension

⁴² Captain Tytler wrote in his journal of his son's birth. "Small groups of soldiers were formed about . . . and one of them said 'Now we will get our reinforcements, this camp was formed to avenge the blood of innocents, and the first reinforcement sent to us is a new born infant.'" Ibid., 197.

and put his lands under Company control. Bajji Rao signed the treaty and happily collected £80,000 annually while still harboring dreams of one day regaining his throne. He shared these dreams with his adopted son and heir Dhondu Pant, always known as Nana Sahib. When Bajji Rao died in 1851, Nana Sahib thought he should be entitled not only to his father's pension, but to all his previous titles, long since in abeyance. The East India Company did not see it his way at all; instead, they invoked the Doctrine of Lapse, stating that only natural blood heirs could succeed to the titles and honors. Despite sending emissaries to London in 1854 to plead his case, Nana Sahib remained unrecognized.

Although angered by his lack of success, the Nana made every effort to stay on a friendly footing with the British stationed at Cawnpore, where he made his stately home. He had English style furniture and portraits of the British royal family on his walls. The Nana entertained often, hosting elaborate banquets that he, of course, did not share, as it would break his caste. The ladies of the station came to view his menagerie and receive costly presents of pearls and cashmere shawls. He held balls and offered amusements, and the British titled him the *Gentleman of Bithur*.⁴³ Later the British would call him "fiend," "murderer," and "butcher." One biographer of Henry Havelock wrote "Nana Sahib, whose name will ever be conscious in the annals of crime, as the personification of perfidy and cruelty."⁴⁴

Thus, in this state of false *bonhomie* when the news of massacres at Meerut and

⁴³ Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered*, 52.

⁴⁴ John Marshman, *Memoirs of Major-General Sir Henry Havelock, K. C. B.* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, 1860), 272.

Delhi reached Cawnpore on May 16. General Sir Hugh Wheeler, commander of the division stationed at Cawnpore, began making preparations for what he predicted would be a quick mutiny with the rebellious troops riding off to Delhi after an initial Uprising.⁴⁵ Cawnpore was unusually busy this particular spring. Besides the numerous Officers' Balls in April, the station's population was enlarged by the wives, families, and the invalided of Her Majesty's Thirty-second foot regiment. The rest of the regiment went onto Lucknow, expecting their families to follow when accommodations were ready. Including the British officers, their families, and other Europeans, General Wheeler found himself severely outnumbered at 14 to 1, with many of the 750 Europeans being noncombatant women, children, or incapacitated soldiers.⁴⁶

With such odds, one might expect more to have been done to protect those unable to defend themselves. Unfortunately Wheeler's unswerving belief in the East India Company's hegemony resulted in too little being done too late. He spent more time praising his soon-to-be ineffectual efforts to his superiors in hopes of a long-sought promotion than he did in actual preparations. Not wishing to demonstrate any apprehension, Wheeler often walked about the lines unattended or sometimes with two of his daughters.⁴⁷ He accelerated the completions of a new line of barracks; because they were already underway, this activity did not arouse the natives' suspicions. He also

⁴⁵ Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 113.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 111; John Sherer, "Some Accounts of the Mutiny and Subsequent Events at Cawnpore." in G. W. Forrest. Selections from the Letters, Dispatches and other State Papers preserved in the Military Department of the Government of India, 1857-1858. vol. 3 (Aldershot, England: Selous Books Ltd., 1997), appendix A, xxi.

⁴⁷ Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 109.

began a trench encircling a nearby barrack, currently housing the families of the Thirty-second. Furthermore Wheeler met with local Eurasian merchants and Nana Sahib, who offered advice and promised support and loyalty, all of which he accepted.

On 21 May, Nana Sahib and his troops started towards Cawnpore with Wheeler's promise to pay their salaries if they would protect the Europeans. But with everyone's nerves almost to the breaking point, someone mistook the Nana's troops for mutineers, and started a panicked flight into the area known as the Entrenchment. Like lemmings to the sea, the merchants and the Company clerks snatched their families and crowded into the already packed barracks. With the Entrenchment barely finished, and poorly constructed to boot, the scene was pandemonium. One officer looked about in disgust at the lack of organization.

People of all kinds, of every colour, sect, and profession, were crowding into the barracks . . . all in terror of the imaginary foe . . . I saw quite enough to convince me that if any insurrection took or takes place, we shall have no one to thank but ourselves, because we have now shown to the Natives how very easily we can be frightened, and when frightened, utterly helpless.⁴⁸

On the twenty-second, the Nana had control of the Treasury and the ammunition magazine, again with Wheeler's permission. Two days later yet another false alarm sent the Europeans rushing for the supposed safety of the Entrenchment. Some ladies who lived close to the barracks went home during the day to enjoy cool baths and some semblance of a normal routine, but most lived too far away to return quickly, and they sweltered and suffered from too little space and a lack of the usual cooling amenities that

⁴⁸ Ibid., 123.

made India a bearable place.

On 25 May, Wheeler received a message saying his reinforcements would be delayed for approximately twenty-five days so he ordered supplies to be laid in, and people augmented this with their own tinned meats, spirits, and delicacies.⁴⁹ A few days later, on 2 June, Wheeler sent the most malcontented company, the Second Oudh Irregulars out to replace another company, whose loyalty was less suspect. Unfortunately, the Oudh Irregulars turned on their officers two days later and only one managed to escape being hacked to death.⁵⁰ While this was occurring, back at Cawnpore the long-awaited reinforcements arrived and Wheeler promptly sent most of them off to Lucknow, in a misguided attempt to impress Lord Canning with his ability to control the situation.⁵¹ He would have sent more than he did, but could not find sufficient transportation for them. "This leaves me a bit weak," he admitted, but he thought he could hold out until more reinforcements arrived.⁵²

But there was no time left for reinforcements to arrive. On 5 June 1857, the besiegement of the Cawnpore Entrenchment began in earnest. The Nana Sahib had finally decided which side to favor, and he reasoned that he would be more likely to gain his lands and crown back from the rebels than the British. Thus he wanted to capture the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 130.

⁵⁰ Ironically, it was Carey's equestrian skill acquired through the frivolous pastime of 'pig-sticking' that saved his life as he kept his seat on his horse and outran the murderous sowars. Ibid., 144.

⁵¹ Ward noted that it was more likely indecision on the part of the Sepoys, rather than anything Wheeler had done that delayed the Uprising at Cawnpore. Ibid., 131.

⁵² Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 148.

Entrenchment before allowing the rebels to join the forces at Delhi. The rebels had the heavy artillery; Wheeler lacked both firepower and shelter. It should have been an easy matter to vanquish the cowering Europeans, but the rebels had not taken into account the fortitude of the British. Like an animal cornered, with death almost certain, the British contingency determined to fight on until those expected reinforcements arrived. "All through this weary first day the shrieks of the women and children were terrific . . . but they learnt silence, and never uttered a sound except when groaning from the horrible mutilations they had to endure."⁵³ The British could not match the Nana's guns, either in strength, range, or power, but they maintained their posts hoping to be able to fend off a rebel charge. Officers manned their posts as if they suffered no privations, bagging sand, repairing guns, and issuing ammunition. One officer finally succumbed to heatstroke (temperatures ranged from 120° to 138°), and his wife wrote more sorrowfully of the result than the cause. "George . . . is, I grieve to say, obliged to abandon his post."⁵⁴

On 11 June, the shelling was so severe that, on average, one round of shot fell into the entrenchment every eight seconds. Windows, doorframes and roofs were lost to shells and the shots that followed ricocheted from room to room, sometimes killing one after wounding another. One child died after rolling into the center of a room in its sleep, only to have a shell land moments later. On 13 June, the rebels sent in incendiary shells that burned down much of the little shelter Wheeler had. After this, the death rate rose as more people were hit by mortars or succumbed to heat exposure. Their only well was in

⁵³ Mowbray Thomson, The Story of Cawnpore (London: Richard Bentley, 1859), 66.

⁵⁴ Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 203.

the middle of the Entrenchment and, with the fire losses, fetching desperately needed water became a suicide mission.⁵⁵ After a time, non-military persons were conscripted to help and many lost their lives to shot and shell. One of the few survivors of Cawnpore, Captain Mowbray Thomson wrote of seeing small children sucking bits of leather trying to gain just the smallest bit of moisture from it. One non-combatant bravely volunteered to fetch the water and managed almost miraculously to keep his job almost a week before being felled by snipers' bullets.⁵⁶ With little food and less water, Wheeler's position was precarious. Men buried the day's deceased in mass graves, sometimes being hit themselves in the process. Even with burial, the rotting corpses of the wounded and diseased, and the dead horses created an unpleasant miasma. When the Nana Sahib sent a Eurasian woman across the battlefield with an offer of safe passage down river, Wheeler, after deliberating with his officers, took it.

On 25 June, the guns stopped firing for the first time in three weeks, and the negotiations began the next day. The Europeans would march out of the Entrenchment and down to the river where thatched boats would be waiting to carry them down river to Allahabad. The Nana originally demanded that the British relinquish their weapons as they exited the Entrenchment, but Wheeler insisted on retaining them until the water's edge. That night the Entrenchment saw a pitiful celebration with double food rations and more than the usual thimbleful of water for all and everyone slept as well as they could

⁵⁵ Some of the more unscrupulous privates actually charged money for the water at first, but had to abandon the practice when the money ran out and it became clear that money was worthless in this situation. Thomson, The Story of Cawnpore, 86.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 86-7.

with the unaccustomed “almost painful” silence.⁵⁷ On 27 June, Wheeler and his family led the way towards the river. They were soon lost among a virtual melee as sixteen elephants and eighty palanquins carried the incapacitated, with those able to walk following behind, trying to keep families together, and rejoicing in the fresh air and the hopes of freedom.

Never, surely, was there such an emaciated, ghostly party of humans such as we. There were women who had been beautiful, now stripped of every personal charm, some with, some without gowns; fragments of finery were made available no longer for decoration, but decorum: officers in tarnished uniforms, rent and wretched . . . there were few shoes, fewer stockings, and scarcely any shirts: these had all gone for bandages.⁵⁸

They began entering the boats, unaware that farther back, the massacre had already begun. Colonel Ewart, well-known among the sepoys for his strict and harsh parade manner, had been stopped by his men and taunted as they chopped him to pieces in front of his family before turning upon them as well.⁵⁹ With some three-quarters aboard, a cannon-shot signaled hidden rebels to open fire on the hapless Europeans.

Rebels attacked from the water, pulling women and children into the river by their skirts and hacking the men with their tulwars, leaving the wounded for dead in the shallow water. They set the boats alight, and shot anyone seen clambering up the banks. They riddled the boats with cannon-shot and bullets. Two boats managed to pull away from the bank of the river, with approximately thirty people on each. In the end, only one

⁵⁷ Ibid., 158-59.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 161-62.

⁵⁹ W. J. Shepherd, Personal Narrative, 74.

boat managed to get out of range of the Cawnpore rebels, and of those thirty-odd people, only four survived longer than a few days and only two survived at all.⁶⁰ Within an hour the river was filled with blood and bodies, and those fortunate (?) to have survived the initial massacre were taken prisoner by the Nana's troops and locked away in a small, dark house originally built to house a shopkeeper's native mistress. After a few hours, the surviving men were removed from the house and executed in the courtyard in full view of their wives and families. Two days later, the Wheeler boat arrived and those men still alive were also shot. The wife of a civilian doctor refused to be parted from her husband and the sepoy shot her and her child along with her husband. The other women attempted to follow suit, but were too weak or wounded to resist the sepoy dragging them off.⁶¹ The remaining women and children joined the 250 women and children in the airless house. The next two weeks were like those experienced by concentration camp internees during WWII, with sadistic guards, no washing facilities, no exercise, little fresh air, and pitifully small amounts of food. After eighteen days of captivity, with their rescuing troops' artillery within earshot, the Nana and his cohorts determined to kill all possible European witnesses. The venomous 'Begum,'⁶² a Muslim concubine of Nana's,

⁶⁰ The first boat contained General Wheeler and his family and eventually held close to sixty people who had frantically climbed aboard from the water. This boat and all those still alive on it were captured farther down river and returned to Cawnpore and the Nana. The second boat lost most of its human cargo to their wounds or the sun and in the end only four men survived. These were Lieutenant Henry Delafosse, Privates Murphy and Sullivan, and the author, Captain Mowbray Thomson. Murphy and Sullivan expired from their wounds while floating down river on pieces of debris.

⁶¹ Nanuk Chund, Translation of a Narrative, xxi; John Fitchett, deposition, in Chund, Translation, 6: Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 340.

⁶² The term *Begum* usually referred to a native lady of high standing, such as a Rajah's mother, or his primary wife.

gleefully watched as sowars trooped into the Bibighar to march the women and children into the courtyard. But the women linked hands and clung to pillars and window frames, nearly suffocating their children hidden underneath their tattered skirts. Try as they might, the sowars could not extract the women and so returned to the courtyard alone. The Begum insisted they kill the women, so the sowars half-heartedly fired into the house through the wooden-shuttered windows. They did not have the stomach to continue so the Begum sent for her Muslim lover and his butcher colleagues to finish the job. They entered the house and began to hack at the women and children. Some children escaped their blades for the moment and ran about the enclosed courtyard as their mothers and the others were dragged out and dumped, some still alive into a large well. In the end, the children too were killed and thrown into the well, where the pitiful groans of the wounded could be heard through the night.⁶³ Of the nine hundred people in the Entrenchment in May, only thirty-one survived and only four of those were Europeans, the rest being Eurasian or converted natives who managed to escape using their race as a disguise.⁶⁴

The next day the Nana departed, and the day after, the British troops, under Colonel James Neill, arrived. They found the bloody native house and the gruesome well. A Highlander went into the well to investigate and saw a sock with the child's foot still in it, and others reported finding bloody handprints on the walls, indicating a child

⁶³ Nanuk Chund, Translation of a Narrative of Events at Cawnpore, 1858.

⁶⁴ W. J. Shepherd, Personal Narrative, xvii-xviii. Shepherd noted, however, that the rebels killed many Eurasian women and children too, one being Mrs. Letts, eight months pregnant, whom the rebels bayoneted in the stomach and who lingered three days in intense agony before expiring. Shepherd, Personal Narrative, 78.

was strung up whilst alive and made to dangle from a hook in the wall.⁶⁵ The men found bloody writing on the walls, and bits of personal goods lying about, mostly torn prayer books and Bibles. One young lady wrote an abbreviated journal starting the day they went down to the boats:

Entered the barracks, 21st May
 Cavalry left, 5th June
 First shot fired, 6th June
 Aunt Lilly died, 17th June
 Uncle Willy died, 18th June
 Left barracks, 27th June
 Made prisoners as soon as we were at the river
 George died, 27th June
 Alice died, 9th July
 Mama died 12th July.⁶⁶

It was scraps such as this that the soldiers and officers found when they arrived at Cawnpore. It was scraps such as this that ignited the passions of the phlegmatic Briton and elevated British womanhood to heights beyond all measure.

Analysis of Women's Roles in the Uprising

Without a doubt the massacre of the women and children at Cawnpore represented a pivotal point of the conflict. Until this time, the British government wanted to quell the Uprising and regain authority in Bengal, thus maintaining its hegemony

⁶⁵This was Margaret Spencer, who wrote of meeting this man, a Sergeant of the Seventy-eighth Highlands. It should be noted that Mrs. Spencer wrote this long after the event and that the soldier might indeed have exaggerated the claim to justify past atrocities, or to aggrandize himself. W. J. Shepherd, himself an eyewitness, noted that the well was filled to just six feet short of the rim. Margaret Spencer, Personal Reminiscences of the Indian Mutiny (London: Clifton, 1905), 80; Shepherd, Personal Narrative, 129.

⁶⁶ Lindsey papers, as quoted by Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 384.

throughout India. After the news of the well, however, every Briton wanted vengeance.

One does not mind Officers being killed so much, it is more or less expected to be the fate of soldiers, but these poor women and children-it makes one's very blood run cold to think what they have suffered. Such atrocities have never, I fancy, been so universally committed.⁶⁷

Garnet Wolseley, later Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley, wrote similarly:

To avenge the murder of our officers was not in our thoughts. Their business was to face death in all forms, and die like gentlemen when necessary, and all the officers of our Indian Army did so most nobly upon all occasions throughout this appalling Mutiny. But the remembrance of the treatment our women and children had received at the hands of these fiends roused all our worst instincts.⁶⁸

Another man wrote, even before he heard of the Cawnpore massacres, "it is impossible to feel the slightest pity for these black beasts," so one can just imagine his reaction to the Cawnpore news.⁶⁹ Even the official British government was not immune. The Governor-General of India wrote to various military leaders in India. "Let the rebels and their leaders know that if there is a repetition of the horrors of Cawnpore at Lucknow, the vengeance of the government will never sleep until retribution has been exacted."⁷⁰

Thus the British woman became more than just the "Angel of the House"; she became the assaulted symbol of the Empire while at the same time she justified atrocities

⁶⁷ Frederick Sleight Roberts, Letters written during the Indian Mutiny (London: Macmillan & Co., 1924), 28.

⁶⁸ Field-Marshal Garnet Wolseley, The Story of a Soldier's Life, vol. 1 (London: Archibald Constable & Co., Ltd., 1903), 263.

⁶⁹ Major-General J. F. Hare, "Early Life in India and Letters Home during the Indian Mutiny." Letter dated 10-13 June 1857, Hare Papers, Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge.

⁷⁰ Charles John, Viscount Canning, Governor-General of India, Calcutta, to Lieutenant-General Sir James Outram, K. C. B., Benares, 31 August 1857, transcript by G. F. Edmonstone, Secretary to the Governor-General, MSS Eur. C. 124/7 at Oriental and India Office Collection of the British Library.

against the natives and became an impetus for revenge. Most of all, however, she actualized a paradoxical situation whereby her violation damaged the male Briton's ego even as it simultaneously fed it, through rescue operations. Historian Jane Robinson summed up the reasons for British women in India. "They were sent out as portable little packets of morality, to comfort the men, keep the bloodline clean, and remind [men] of their mothers."⁷¹ And for all these reasons exaggerated stories of violations spread throughout the Empire, fueling the fires of vengeance. From her pedestal high above the dirt and degradation of everyday life, she was raised like a banner to heights beyond all comprehension. Major-General Charles MacGregor wrote about coming upon surrendering rebels.

The cowardly wretches knelt and crouched at your feet, licking and kissing them . . . and begged for their lives; but it would not do to forget that our women and children had no doubt begged their lives too, and been refused—or rather, I don't believe our women or even our children would beg it in such an abject manner.⁷²

For MacGregor there was no excuse whatsoever that would exempt a rebel from a death sentence. It was for these ladies and children that the British soldier fought on, taking no prisoners in many cases, and offering kangaroo court trials in others.

When the soldiers arrived at Cawnpore on 16 July 1857, looking for revenge, there was plenty of evidence to stoke their fervid imaginations. The native sweepers had stripped the bodies of jewelry and clothing before throwing them into the well, giving rise to the speculation of rape, something the British could not stomach. "The idea that a

⁷¹ Jane Robinson, *Angels of Albion: Women of the Indian Mutiny* (London: Viking, 1996), 13.

⁷² Sir Charles Metcalfe MacGregor, *The Life and Opinions of Major-General Sir Charles Metcalfe MacGregor, Quartermaster-General in India* (Edinburgh: Wm. Blackwood & Sons, 1888), 54.

native should have dared to put his hands upon an Englishwoman was too much for our insular pride."⁷³ The purity of Britain--Englishwomanhood – lay tainted by the dark specter of rape, and the bloodied bodies in the well.

It is perhaps impossible for a twentieth-century sensibility to conceive of the effect that the sight of the ladies naked and mutilated bodies had upon even these most hardened British soldiers of nineteenth-century India. Anglo-Indian men entertained Arthurian notions of inherent purity and virtuousness of English womanhood.⁷⁴

One officer came out of the Bibighar with a bit of bloodstained dress and vowed never to spare another native; if he faltered in this resolve, "the sight of [this dress, to be kept in his belt] and the recollection of this house, will be sufficient to incite me to revenge."⁷⁵ The situation was not helped by the fact that the men managed to find hidden stashes of alcohol, and no amount of discipline kept them from it. After they had drunk their fill, they disappeared into the native bazaars, looting, and raping in a frenzy of rum-and-blood induced rage. When Wolseley asked for a volunteer to hang a Cawnpore rebel, every man of his company stepped forward.⁷⁶ In 1903, in his memoirs, Wolseley wrote quite passionately about his stay at Cawnpore.

A more sickening, a more maddening sight no Englishman has ever looked upon. Upon entering these blood-stained rooms, the heart seemed to stop . . . and called up our worst passions. The coldest blooded . . . would have been deeply affected by it, but it awoke in us.

⁷³ Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life*, 272.

⁷⁴ Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered*, 438.

⁷⁵ Anonymous officer in Ball, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, vol. 1 (London, n.p., 1858), 383.

⁷⁶ Wolseley noted this with some awe as usually no one volunteered for such a duty. When he asked during the Crimean war for a such a volunteer, who would receive money and a ticket home from the filth of Sebastopol, not one man came forward. Wolseley, *Soldier's Life*, 271.

the countrymen of these helpless victims. a fiendish craving for the blood of the cowardly murderers who had ordered the massacre and the brutes who perpetrated it.⁷⁷

Edward Spiers noted in 1980 that even the Peace societies and ministers wanted vengeance and that Cawnpore united all ranks of all people--civilian and military--through a rage that longed for release.⁷⁸ This release would only be slightly assuaged by the brutal retaliation towards the natives.

When the Uprising began, the British government needed to act quickly to prevent it from spreading from Bengal to the other presidencies, and so it reacted harshly when it meted out punishments for the rebels already subdued and captured. Now the news of the treatment of the ladies and children at Cawnpore seemed to justify their earlier response while also acting as an excuse for further atrocities. Margaret Meek's fiancé, Mr. Spencer, wrote of three court-martialed natives from Arrah, "[They] were condemned; one to be burnt alive, one to be flayed alive, and the other to some equally mild punishment."⁷⁹ The European merchant Rees, in Lucknow, wrote of his "savage delight" at his hearing of the incredible punishment devised by General Neill at Cawnpore.⁸⁰ Neill wrote with a great deal of satisfaction,

Whenever a rebel is caught he is immediately tried and unless he can prove a defence, he is sentenced to be hanged at once; but the chief rebels I make first clean up a certain portion of the pool of blood, still

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁷⁸ Edward M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London; New York: Longman, 1980), 127, 130.

⁷⁹ Spencer, *Personal Reminiscences*, 76.

⁸⁰ Rees, *A Personal Narrative of the Siege of Lucknow*, 224-25.

two inches deep. in the shed where the fearful murder and mutilation of women and children took place. To touch blood is most abhorrent to the high-caste natives; they think by doing so they doom their souls to perdition. Let them think so. My object is to inflict a fearful punishment for a revolting, cowardly, barbarous deed. and to strike terror into these rebels.⁸¹

Rees also remarked upon how if a Cawnporian native soldier begged for his life, that the word *Cawnpore* was whispered in his ear as he was bayoneted.⁸² A *Cawnpore dinner* was six inches of steel straight down a rebel throat.⁸³ Muslim rebels were force-fed pork and Hindus beef before they were blown from a cannon's mouth. Some soldiers even had Muslims sewn into pigskin before tying them to the cannons, and many a Brahmin sepoy went to his death with beef fat smeared on him by the 'Untouchables' of Cawnpore. Others were hanged, and the soldiers deliberately mis-tied the noose to cause the utmost pain and lingering death.

Over the whole of the Sepoy War – there is no darker cloud. . . . It is on the records of our British Parliament, in papers sent home by the Governor-General of India . . . that 'the aged, women and children, are sacrificed, as well as those guilty of rebellion.' They were not deliberately hanged, but burned to death . . . Englishmen did not hesitate to boast . . . that they had 'spared no one' and 'peppering away at niggers' was a very pleasant pastime.⁸⁴

What little of these atrocities was reported to the public met with utmost approval. No one caviled at this wholesale destruction of human life until many years later, when the

⁸¹ James Neill, quoted in The Indian Mutiny to the Evacuation of Lucknow, to which is added a Narrative of the Defence of Lucknow, and a Memoir of General Havelock, 2d ed. (London: G. Routledge & Co., 1858), 149.

⁸² Rees, A Personal Narrative of the Siege of Lucknow, 322.

⁸³ Broehl, The Crisis of the Raj, 145.

⁸⁴ Kaye, J. W. History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857-58, vol. 2 (London, W.H. Allen, 1881), 269-70.

blood had cooled, and historians published the enormity of British actions.

For the British woman was more than the symbol of purity, she was the symbol of the Empire, of Christianity, and of Home. During the Uprising, she also became the symbol of British courage, heroism, and bravery. Whether stoically sleeping on the ground in the Entrenchment, handing out ammunition or tea, or guarding captured rebels, she embodied all that was to be admired of Britain. One biographer noted that while the British men were "bright in the valour" the Englishwomen were "still brighter in their fortitude."⁸⁵ When this symbol was assaulted, mutilated, murdered, and defiled, the embodiment of British authority in India, the British army, retaliated.

In reality, there was no medical evidence whatsoever of any sexual violation, just as the bloody writing on the wall of the Bibighar supposedly done by the captive women, was found to be false.⁸⁶ Thomson noted that when John Sherer entered the house there was no writing on the walls; "and it is supposed that the inscriptions were put there by the troops to infuriate each other in the work of revenging the atrocities."⁸⁷ But anyone who suggested that the stripping of the women was done after death was immediately turned upon.

[They were] attacked as apologists for inhuman fiends. And anyone who dared to suggest that most Indian men found British women repulsive were indignantly shouted down as naïve, perverse, and – to

⁸⁵ Marshman, Memoirs of Major-General Sir Henry Havelock, 273.

⁸⁶ The writing was apparently done by the first soldiers on the scene, in a frenzy of drunken rage. Most exhorted the reader to "Remember Cawnpore," or to "avenge our ladies." W. H. Russell, My Diary in India in the year 1858-59 vol. 1 (London: Routledge, Warne, 1860), 144, 192; Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 438.

⁸⁷ Thomson, The Story of Cawnpore, 213.

the extent to which Anglo-Indian men prized their ladies as possessions - insulting as well.⁸⁸

But the stories abounded, exaggerated to the point that scholars today must read with skepticism any report that begins with *I met a man who . . .* The stories circulated of rows of shoes with amputated feet still in them, and of bloody footprints of children scattered throughout the Bibighar. Adelaide Case at Lucknow wrote of little children being cut into pieces and roasted alive before their parent's eyes.⁸⁹ One particularly popular story revolved around General Wheeler's youngest daughter, Ulrica. Many eyewitnesses saw her being taken from the river by a sowar and taken away alive. At this point, however, the stories diverge, and some say she managed to kill the fiend before killing herself, while others maintain she became a Muslim and lived happily with her rescuer for many years. Obviously, this version was unacceptable to the British public, but so many Eurasians swore under oath that they saw her some months later in the bazaar, or riding with native troops, that it seemed as though it must be true. But in 1874 and 1878, reports surfaced again, placing her in the northern frontiers and later, in Cawnpore. In 1880, a Mrs. Clarke met a woman who seemed to be Miss Wheeler, and as Mrs. Clarke had known, at least by sight, the General's daughters, she might have recognized her. As Andrew Ward noted, in those days rape or dishonor *was* a fate worse than death, so it may be the Miss Wheeler chose not to return to her former life, knowing only disgrace and notoriety awaited her.⁹⁰ Her heroic tale of dishonor and death became

⁸⁸ Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 438.

⁸⁹ Adelaide Case, Day by Day in Lucknow (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), 206.

⁹⁰ Ward, Our Bones are Scattered, 504-505.

the fodder of the Victorian stage, and of numerous drawings because it fulfilled the Empire's perceptions of British womanhood.

These stories were popular because Britain needed to assuage its guilt over failing to save the women and children of Cawnpore. Soldiers repeated these stories in their letters home in a usually deliberate attempt to inflame. Alexander Duff meant his letters for immediate publication in national newspapers, and he told these stories, using vague words and second-hand rumors and thereby stirring the nation into a frenzy of hate.⁹¹ Maria Germon at Lucknow heard news of Cawnpore and wrote about women taken captive by individual natives. "And the sepoys rushed down and bayoneted the women and children, selecting some fifteen or eighteen of the young ladies who were taken off to their camp."⁹² Although she would have heard this story third hand at best, she wrote it as if it was unassailably true. Emma Larkins, trapped at Cawnpore, wrote a farewell letter to her children at home that eventually arrived twenty-months later, thanks to a faithful ayah. In this letter, she exhorted her daughters to be good Christians and place their faith unswervingly in the Lord, but told their older brother Henry, "If you saw the position your little brother and sisters are in at this moment" She certainly intended to arouse in him a reaction of anger, hatred and revenge.⁹³ These stories and the events at

⁹¹ Alexander Duff, The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results (New York: Robert Carter, 1858), 59.

⁹² Maria Germon, Journal of the Siege of Lucknow: An Episode of the Indian Mutiny, ed. Michael Edwardes (London: Constable, 1958), 66.

⁹³ Emma Ewart Larkins, Cawnpore, to Henrietta Ewart, England, L, 9 June 1857, Phot. Eur. 233, Oriental and India Office Collection at the British Library.

Cawnpore created a unique situation in which the British male ego was annihilated and then, with subsequent retaliation, gratified.

The paramount mission of men [in India] had not been to promote commerce or reform Indian society but to make India- especially its cantonments and thoroughfares- safe for their womenfolk. And at no place more than at Cawnpore had Anglo-Indian manhood so utterly failed to accomplish this fundamental mission. The soldiers' grief and outrage thus mingled with an intolerable sense of humiliation and guilt.⁹⁴

In 1859, journalist W. H. Russell noted that Cawnpore was so offensive and atrocious not only because of the carnage involved and the sex of the victims, but because it was perpetrated by the subject race.⁹⁵

When the Uprising was over, the British returned to Cawnpore. Its once beautiful cantonments with its assembly rooms, parks, and racecourse were gone, swept away in the fighting. The fateful Entrenchment and *Bibighar* had been dismantled. Eventually, it regained some of its former glory, but it was never out of the annals of treachery. As far away as New Zealand, the story of Cawnpore served as a warning to the ruling class of the perfidy perhaps lurking in the breasts of their subjects.⁹⁶ The soldiers moved onto Lucknow in their merciless quest to rescue those beleaguered by perhaps the very natives whose British-issued uniforms were still stained with British blood from Cawnpore.

⁹⁴ Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered*, 438.

⁹⁵ W. H. Russell, *My Diary in India*, 163-64.

⁹⁶ Muter, *Travels and Adventures*, vol. 2, 283.

IV

THE SIEGE OF LUCKNOW

Poor Mrs. Barber, the Bride and Widow.

Colina Brydon

Prior to 1856, Britons knew Lucknow as the center of the court of the King of Oudh, Wajid Ali Shah. After the annexation and his subsequent exile to Calcutta, Lucknow became the center for the new British presence in the province of Oudh. A handsome Residency stood in the center of the British quarter, with extensive cantonments stretching some distance from the city of approximately 700,000 native inhabitants. The Residency was the home of the Chief-Commissioner, representing the British East India Company, and was the seat of that company's presence in Bengal. In close proximity were the homes of prominent Company officials, as well as a church, a hospital, and a post office. The military officers, both Company and Crown, their men, and their families could be found in the outlying cantonments three miles away. When the trouble arose in Delhi and Meerut, Sir Henry Lawrence, the Chief-Commissioner, alerted all British families living outside the city, suggesting they take some sort of refuge with friends nearer to the Residency. He made that an order on the evening of 16 May 1857.¹

Lucknow would have gone the way of Cawnpore but for that one man. Lawrence had spent many years in the northern provinces of India and had a thorough

¹ The Hon. Julia Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow: A Diary (London: James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co., 1892), 8.

understanding of the country and native culture. Both he and his brother John rank to this day as two of the foremost authorities on nineteenth-century India. In the month that passed between the Uprising at Meerut and Delhi, and the start of the siege of Lucknow, Lawrence put up hoards of supplies and arranged defensive structures that augmented the Residency, enlarging it to shelter the garrison and the unprotected civilians arriving daily from outlying stations. He originally planned to keep both the Residency and a munitions fort, the Mutchi Bhowan, thus controlling the city and hopefully staving off a serious mutiny.² As early as 17 May, Lawrence instructed his chief engineer McLeod Innes to fortify both areas in preparation for a certain attack. Under Major Anderson and Captain Fulton, fatigue parties constructed walls, dug trenches, and moved large guns into place.³ Innes described the area that would three weeks later make a stand against thousands:

The Residency entrenchment lay on the edge of the high bank, from which the ground sloped down somewhat sharply, to the river Goomtee, on the north. Its shape was approximately a square . . . enclosing an area of between thirty-two and thirty-six acres. Its longer diagonal was about 700 yards, and the shorter one 450 yards. The face which looked on to the Goomtee may be called the North, or River front: then circling round with the sun came the East, or Baily Guard front; then the South, or Cawnpore front; and lastly, the West, or City front. On the North front lay the only clear space where the enemy could be massed in force and . . . where they had sites for batteries at effective range to breach the defences, fully exposed to them.⁴

² Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that the tiny garrison could not hold both positions, so Lawrence had the fort destroyed, to prevent any ammunition from falling into the hands of the enemy.

³ Edwardes, *A Season in Hell*, 65.

⁴ McLeod Innes, *Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny: A Narrative and Study* (London: A. D. Innes & Co., 1895), 103.

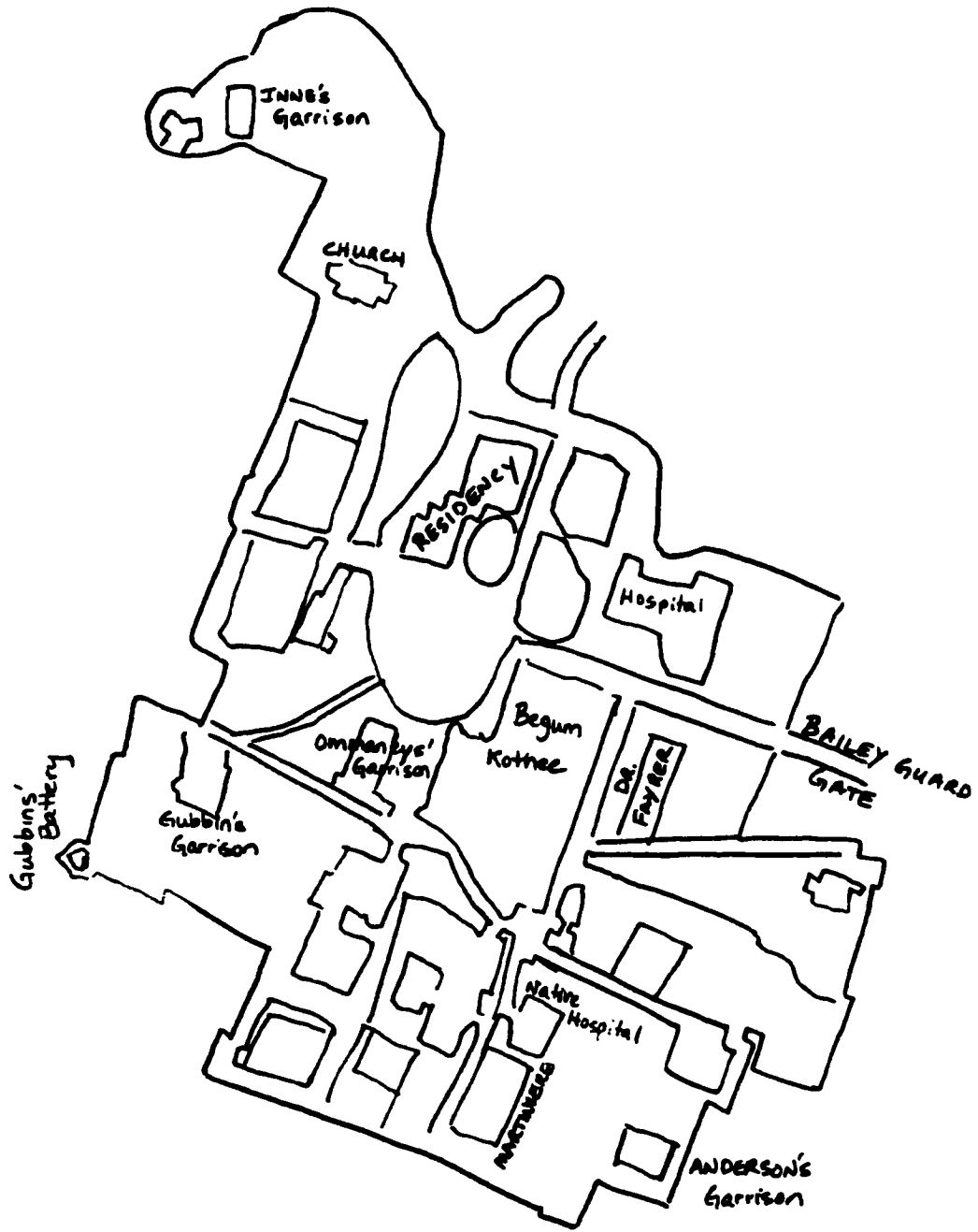


Figure 3
Map of the Lucknow Residency Compound.

This meant the Residency was effectively surrounded by buildings that, on the one hand, protected the garrison from large-scale attacks, but on the other, afforded protection to the highly effective enemy snipers.

The various houses and buildings within the Residency were allotted as outposts and also, in some cases, shelter for the 1,280 non-combatants, including six hundred women and children. The women and men whose diaries, letters, and journals offer so much information to historians today were located in various houses. Mrs. Inglis, Mrs. Case, and Mrs. Case's sister, Miss Dickson, stayed in the Residency before moving on to safer and more convivial accommodations. Mrs. Bartrum, Mrs. Kendall and other unfortunates from the outlying stations were housed in the very crowded Begum Kothi. Dr. Fayrer opened his own home, luckily well inside the Residency walls, to a variety of people, including Mrs. Germon, and Mr. Gubbins did the same. Some women found shelter in larger barrack-style houses where they shared rooms, sometimes, three families in a room originally meant as a bedroom. The men rarely stayed with their families as their duties kept them at their posts close to twenty hours a day, although some were fortunate enough to be posted at, or near, the buildings where their families lived. So the women and children had their lifestyle, the wounded in the hospital theirs, and the fighting men quite another.

The Siege

As far back as 1843, Sir Henry Lawrence realized the precarious position of the British in India and wrote many articles on this subject for the Calcutta Review. Although his prophetic warnings were ignored and ridiculed, he had never stopped

thinking that one day he might need to defend himself and others against overwhelming odds. Thus, when he arrived in Oudh in March 1857 to take up his new post of Chief-Commissioner of that province, he immediately took stock of the situation, and when the trouble began just two months later, even though it was 500 miles away, he began to make preparations. Native soldiers loyal to the Company supplied Lawrence with the rumors of possible mutinies, outbreaks, and attacks. One such rumor claimed that the sepoys of the Seventy-first Regiment would mutiny on 30 May at the evening gun. When nine o'clock came, Lawrence jokingly remarked that the mutineers were late, and as he did so, the cannon roared – and the insurrectionists set fire to the bungalows and attacked their officers. Many officers could not believe their men would hurt them, and they were the first to be wounded or killed. The British passed the rest of the night on their rooftops, armed with rifles and watching for further signs of attack. Lawrence took European soldiers and went after the malcontents, capturing sixty, but unfortunately the larger body of sepoys escaped with all their guns and ammunition. In early June, Lawrence conducted court-martials and hanged thirty-six natives. These were very public executions, meant to deter any would-be mutineer and drew large crowds of natives, whom Lawrence kept under control with a very large cannon and artillery regiments on the walls.

In addition to the public actions of the executions, Lawrence put up large reserves of grain, spirits, and any other necessity that would keep in the heat of an Indian summer. He brought in a herd of cattle and did not neglect ammunition and other military needs. He made sure of ample wells within the Residency's walls, and he did all this without

unduly arousing the suspicions of the native forces gathering in Lucknow. He allotted posts to all able-bodied men, including conscripted 'volunteers' from the city's European merchants. Thus Lawrence had enough food, water, guns, ammunition, and men to withstand an attack and protect the women and children, as Wheeler was unable to do at Cawnpore.

Chinhut

The siege began in earnest on 30 June 1857, when Sir Henry Lawrence received information about an enemy force massing on the other side of the river. He determined to attack their advance guard, numbering perhaps five thousand, hoping to defeat them and creating a wider buffer between the Residency and the native city. With this in mind, Lawrence planned to have his force of about 650 men march out under the cover of darkness, meet up at the Iron Bridge and continue on to the Kokrail Bridge before stopping to rest and breakfast.⁵ Unfortunately, nothing went as planned. His forces left late and arrived at the Kokrail Bridge to find the breakfast even farther behind. As his men rested, unfed, without even their standard issue of rum to brace them, Lawrence and his staff reconnoitered ahead, not realizing that a huge force of perhaps 15,000 natives was heading right for them. When the situation became clear, Lawrence attempted to fight them off, but his tired, hungry and sun-stroked troops were no match for the rebels. The loyal native troops, more used to the heat and well-fed (because they had their own

⁵ The number of men varies slightly from one account to another: Fitchett lists 686, Hilton, 586, Rees, 705, and Gubbins, 636 men. Fitchett, The Tale of the Great Mutiny (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1907), 156; Hilton, The Mutiny Records, 51; Rees, A Personal Narrative, 66; and Gubbins, Mutinies in Oudh, 2d ed., 207.

separate food and cooks) managed to do their part of the plan, but it was not enough. The English officers commanding them wilted under the strain, and many were cut down as they lay by the side of the road leading back to the Iron Bridge. Many of the retreating sepoys left their own wounded behind and carried the injured British officers and men back to the Residency. The most significant contribution to the retreat came from the volunteer cavalry, who not only cleared the way for the retreating force, but also rescued wounded comrades on the way. Rees remarked on their fortitude

. . . almost every cavalry volunteer [was] encumbered with 2, 3, even 4 foot soldiers. Thus each of that noble body individually was the means of saving the life of more than one European comrade, and collectively they saved the whole force that escaped.⁶

Lawrence had left Lucknow with a little over one-third of his entire fighting contingent, and on this day by nine o'clock in the morning he lost 111 men of the Thirty-second, plus four officers, a variety of small guns and an eight-inch howitzer, which proceeded to bombard the Residency from this day forth.⁷ At the news of the rout, Julia Inglis wrote:

The greatest excitement and consternation prevailed. I could remain in my bed no longer but posted myself at the window, from whence I could see our poor soldiers returning - a most mournful sight. They were straggling in by twos and threes, some riding, some on guns, some supporting their comrades. All seemed thoroughly exhausted.⁸

Maria Germon's husband, Charlie was one of the lucky survivors. She wrote of his

⁶ Rees, A Personal Narrative, 78-79.

⁷ Innes, Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny, 98-100. This miscalculation was one of Sir Henry's two mistakes, the other being an order not to destroy the natives' holy buildings lying near the Residency. Unfortunately, as Dr. Fayerer noted in his memoirs, this order allowed the natives more shelter and better sniper positions. Fayerer, Recollections of my Life, 169.

⁸ Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 45.

experience:

It had proved far different to the glorious expectations that had been excited on first starting, for the Native Artillery proved faithless and the enemy in far greater numbers than the spies had led us to expect, our little party was surrounded and it was only a wonder any escaped to tell the tale. The enemy began firing on us as they followed the retreating party- our gates were closed and the siege commenced.⁹

The Siege and First Relief

From the moment the gates closed on 30 June, the siege began in earnest. From that day to 20 July the insurrectionists made small but constant assaults on the British position. Sir Henry Lawrence decided to destroy the secondary position at the Mutchi Bhowan, since the small force inside the Residency could not safely hold both locations. He semaphored a message to the force inside the munitions fort to spike the guns and retreat, after setting explosives to destroy the remaining weapons. He distracted the mutineers with a barrage of bullets and the men made it safely to the Residency with two nine-pound guns.¹⁰ Twenty minutes later the fort exploded, frightening the women who thought the mutineers had managed to break through.¹¹ On 2 July a mortar from the Howitzer lost at Chinhut burst in Sir Henry Lawrence's room at the Residency, mortally wounding him. He survived two days, alternating unconsciousness with dictating orders and praying. His death affected everyone, from the lowliest Martinere schoolboy to volunteers and enlisted men. Dr. Fayrer attended Sir Henry at his death. "We carried

⁹ Germon, Journal, 54.

¹⁰ Fayrer, Recollections, 163.

¹¹ Germon, Journal, 57; Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 61; Harris, A Lady's Diary, 78.

him as carefully and tenderly as we could to my house and laid him on a bed . . . [it] was soon surrounded by his sorrowing friends . . . he ultimately became unconscious from exhaustion and died on the morning of the fourth and was buried that evening in the Residency churchyard, in the grave with the other dead of that day.”¹² Reverend Harris’s wife Georgina laid out the body for burial and saw one of the soldiers carrying the body lift the sheet and kiss Sir Henry’s forehead reverently.¹³

Until this point confusion reigned, but at Sir Henry’s death, Brigadier John Inglis assumed command of the military, with Major Banks in charge of the civil matters. They assigned every man, woman, and child a place in the various homes and outposts inside the Residency. Having taken a fairly accurate account of all food supplies, rationing began and Majors Anderson and Fulton kept the engineers and able-bodied men busy repairing protective walls, earthen and brick, as well as looping gaps in the defenses. Both drunkenness and theft were common, as was some disobedience, mostly from the non-military volunteers unused to martial hierarchies. The men were exhausted as during the day they repulsed minor attacks, and at night buried the dead--both human and animal--moved the wounded to the hospital, shifted guns to new positions, repaired broken defenses, and maintained watch at their garrison. The women filled their day with what household chores they could do and then sat underground or in the most inner rooms of their garrisons, reminiscing about days and family at home. The women of Dr.

¹² Fayrer, Recollections, 165-66.

¹³ Harris, A Lady’s Diary, 79.

Fayrer's house did not walk outside from 30 June to 1 October.¹⁴ Despite being in one of the more comfortable accommodations available, the women still had to contend with vermin, poor ventilation, and daily sniper attacks. The basement became so filled with rats and bad air that the women took to sleeping in the dining room, but bullets drove them downstairs again and again. One day a shell struck the house. Fayrer wrote in his diary:

It immediately exploded in the room where my wife was lying ill [on the bed] with Mrs. Boileau sitting by her side. A crash was heard. . . and much brickwork was knocked out. They had hardly realised this when a loud explosion took place: there was a rush of flame, with bullets and fragments of shell through the room, round them and over them: the bedclothes were set on fire. My wife immediately spoke to me out of the smoke and said she was not hurt, so did Mrs. Boileau. They were both perfectly composed and tranquil . . . the shell which had burst was a 9-lb shrapnel full of bullets.¹⁵

On 20 July the first major assault came. The enemy attacked from all sides. At Innes' post, just sixty-one men determined not to give up and held off a much larger force, shooting and throwing bricks and driving the enemy back so they could have a better shot.¹⁶ At Dr. Fayrer's, the attack was severe.

Everyone was at his post, and poured shot, shell, grape, and musketry into them as hard as possible. The noise was frightful . . . our two guns were firing as rapidly as possible as the enemy came swarming over the stables into the garden. They attacked all around in the same way and each garrison had its hands full in repulsing them.¹⁷

¹⁴ Germon, Journal, 99; and Harris, A Lady's Diary, 130.

¹⁵ Fayrer, Recollections, 197.

¹⁶ Edwardes, A Season in Hell: The Defence of the Lucknow Residency (New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1973), 105.

¹⁷ Fayrer, Recollections, 177.

Schoolboy Edward Hilton wrote in his memoirs of the attack:

They now made frantic efforts to dislodge us. The enemy was, however, not to be dismayed by failure; again and again they pressed forward . . . nothing now could be more terrific and more sustained than was the fire on both sides. It was continuous and incessant for hours together: the heat was overpowering. No space, no building, no shrub, no tree, no plant escaped the withering fire. We were now in the thickest fight—a spectacle once seen never to be effaced from the mind.¹⁸

One Eurasian soldier, Bailey by name, spoke Hindustani so well the mutineers mistook him for a native. They called him to join them and he refused most vehemently heaping abuse and bullets upon them until they managed to exhaust his supply of ammunition and silence his mouth by shooting him in the jaw.¹⁹ The attack lasted most of the day, finally lessening as the mutineers retreated, and took as many of their wounded as possible. They requested a temporary truce to gather their dead, and Inglis agreed, not wanting hundreds of corpses creating a miasma of disease and fouling the air.²⁰ On 21 July, the mutineers launched a second, more concentrated attack in which only one outpost stood between a continued defense and another Cawnpore--Gubbins's. Gubbins fired from an exposed position intent on keeping the enemy from mounting a low earthen hill and coming over the top. With just a few reinforcements he managed to hold them off until a mortar shell drove them away for the day.²¹

The next heavy attack came on 10 August when the mutineers began shelling.

¹⁸ Hilton, The Mutiny Records, 70-71.

¹⁹ Edwardes, Season in Hell, 105.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.

²¹ Gubbins, Account of the Mutinies in Oudh, 2d ed., 223-25.

exploding mines and even attempting to burn their way into the garrison. One mine succeeded in ripping a hole in the main wall of the Martinière post. The room now exposed was fortunately empty but the principal, Mr. Schilling, had to slam a door in the faces of the mutineers.²² Another defender stuck his bayonet through a loophole ready to fire and found himself grappling for the weapon with a mutineer who had managed to get through the outer perimeter. The defender retained his rifle and shot the mutineer.²³

At this point, Brigadier Inglis was losing hope. Without reinforcements, with his men suffering from scurvy, dysentery, cholera, and fatigue, he foresaw defeat and massacre. The women and children were also disease-ridden and dying. For some time, infrequent messengers had been able to bring in news, and Inglis sent messages out, hoping that they would find his relief out there somewhere. The first actual letter came on 25 July, reporting that the army was in receipt of Inglis's letter of 22 July and that they hoped to relieve Lucknow within the week. Since then, no letters had made it through, and now, the second week of August, things were looking bleak. When Ungud Tewari, a pensioned sepoy, brought that first message, he also brought horrible rumors of Cawnpore-where many of the Lucknow besieged had left family members and friends. On 4 August, Lieutenant-Colonel Tytler sent a note directing Inglis to prepare for a relief in four days time and to "aid us in every way, even by cutting your way out, if we cannot [get in]."²⁴ Inglis sent back a reply written in Greek letters in which he succinctly told

²² Hilton, Mutiny Records, 80-81.

²³Ruggles, Recollections, 65.

²⁴ Ibid., 67.

Tytler not to expect any help from the garrison.

You must bear in mind how I am hampered, that I have upwards of 120 sick and wounded, and at least 220 women and about 250 children. We are daily being attacked by the enemy. . . . their mines have already weakened our post, . . . their eighteen-pounders are within 150 feet of some of our batteries . . . and consequently the damage done hourly is very great. [We] are naturally losing confidence.²⁵

On 29 August, the first letter from General Henry Havelock arrived, in reply to Inglis's of 16 August, with the heartbreaking news that he was still at least a month away from relieving Lucknow. He hoped to reach the city with fresh troops by late September, and instructed Inglis "not [to] negotiate, but rather perish sword in hand."²⁶ This news hardened Inglis--the unbelievable story of Cawnpore must be true, and hopeless or not, Lucknow would not fall as it had. It would be another three weeks before he would hear Havelock's guns approaching.

Havelock and his army had had its share of troubles since he wrote to Inglis. The mutineers had forced him back three times and another time he had been ordered to aid General Neill, trying to retake Cawnpore from the mutineers. Now, on 22 September, Ungud returned with the news that Havelock had succeed in crossing the Ganges and should arrive by the twenty-fourth.²⁷ On the afternoon of the twenty-third, Lucknow sentries heard distant gunfire and saw large numbers of mutineers turn away from the Residency and towards the river and the as yet unseen relief. The mutineers were less

²⁵ Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 119-121.

²⁶ Innes, Lucknow and Oudh, 149.

²⁷ Military Department Papers, National Archive of India, as quoted by Hibbert, The Great Mutiny, 252.

active that night but spent the next day obviously preparing for Havelock's troops: fresh barricades and new loopholes appeared along the major avenues of approach. That evening the mutineers launched a heavy attack on Gubbins's post, lasting all night and the next morning. 24 September, a messenger arrived with the news that Sir Henry Havelock, commander of the relief troops, was in the suburbs of Lucknow. By four o'clock sentries saw European troops in Lucknow for the first time eighty-seven days, but the garrison could not aid them, since any gunfire might fall upon Havelock's men. By five o'clock, Havelock, Sir James Outram, and a slew of officers and enlisted men were pouring through a small break in the defenses. Inglis met Havelock at the Baillie Gate, hurriedly buckling on his dress sword that he had not worn since 31 June. It seemed though the men knew Havelock was near, the women had little idea of it. Mrs. Harris was on the portico that evening when Havelock's men arrived on her doorstep.

We had no idea they were so near . . . speculating when they might be in. . . . when suddenly, just at dark, we heard a very sharp fire of musketry quite close by, and then a tremendous cheering; an instant after, the sound of bagpipes, then soldiers running up our road, our compound and verandah filled with our *deliverers*, and all of us shaking hands frantically, and exchanging fervent "God bless you's" with the gallant men and officers of the 78th Highlanders. The big, rough-bearded soldiers were seizing the little children out of our arms, kissing them with tears rolling down their cheeks, and thanking God they had come in time to save them from the fate of those at Cawnpore.²⁸ [Harris's emphasis]

Mrs. Inglis was one of the first to be introduced to Havelock, but she only wanted to be alone with her husband and praise God for sparing him. "It was a moment of unmixed happiness, but not lasting. I felt how different my lot was to others': and of

²⁸ Harris, *A Lady's Diary*, 119-120.

course, Mrs. Case was my first care. She could not, but feel what her happiness would have been had her husband been spared."²⁹

Unfortunately, Havelock had lost so many men that he could not effect a rescue of the besieged. Instead of the expected 'relief', his was a reinforcement.³⁰ and as such both helped and hindered the garrison. On a positive note, his extra men meant that for the first time in almost three months, men could take rotation duty, and have time to sleep regularly and visit family. Also, Inglis and Havelock knew that with their combined forces, it was now just a matter of waiting until more troops arrived and subdued the rapidly diminishing mutinous natives. On the other hand, Havelock arrived without any of his supply train, having been forced to leave it three miles back at the Alambagh, so he and his troops became a drain on the already severely depleted food supply. Luckily, now that more men shared the duties, officers were able to return to some forgotten tasks and at this point discovered a large quantity of grain that had been overlooked when the Chief Commissariat had fallen at Chinhut. This grain, along with the extra bullocks that brought in the delayed baggage train, meant that the relieving force was indeed welcome.

The Second Relief and Evacuation

With the extra men available, Inglis, Outram and Havelock increased work parties and strengthened the outer perimeters and the hardest hit garrisons. They extended their

²⁹ Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 158-59.

³⁰ Ruggles disagreed and thought that it was indeed a relief. "If they had not arrived when they did, we should have lost the sepoys who stood by us so well. . . . it was indeed a relief, and ever grateful shall we feel to that force for their heroic efforts, for nothing but the greatest determination on their part could have succeeded in reaching the Residency." Ruggles, Recollections of a Lucknow Veteran, 88-89.

positions on all sides and took possession of three palaces along the river, where the soldiers posted there slept on silk couches and ate dinner off costly china.³¹ The women and children could now walk about the compound with less chance of a stray sniper's bullet catching them. Church services began again, and people began visiting friends, who, while just one house away, were literally incommunicado a few days before. But privations endured. While grain and beef were available, there was little in the way of fruit, vegetables, flour, milk, and other mild foods usually given to the wounded and sick. Many people, women and children included, suffered from a scurvy-like malady the doctor's called "Garrison's" disease. With no sign of a baker since Chinhut, there was no bread, and what little goat's milk went to the children and the wounded in hospital. Medical supplies were also depleted: bandages and chloroform were the most badly needed. Havelock's men, fighting their way through the streets of Lucknow, could not obviously carry any supplies with them: they were left behind, with a detachment to guard the supplies, at a former palace called the Alambagh, with which they were in daily communication by messenger. Clothing was also at a premium: auctions occurred almost daily with a dead officer's clothing, spirits, and cheroots commanding high prices. "All little delicacies such as tea, sugar, tobacco, and liquor of every description are not to be obtained for love or money . . . a flannel shirt sells for 25 rupees."³² One officer bought a pair of boots that the deceased had bought just two days previously.³³ Major-General

³¹ Edwardes, Season in Hell, 227.

³² Ludlow-Smith, unpublished journal, 107.

³³ *Ibid.*, 108.

Outram bought a dead man's coat and almost went to express his condolences to the widow while wearing it.³⁴ Slivers of soap went for exorbitant prices and many people did without, finding a paste of crushed grain a reasonable substitute, although some wondered if they should wash with it or eat it.³⁵

Things went on this way for the month of October. The enemy continued to harass the Residency enclosure, and, since the extension of Residency barricades, moved their guns away and uphill, providing a better shot at the interior of the British position. Mining and counter-mining continued and the newest members of the Lucknow force soon learned how to sink a shaft, and spent many hours digging trenches and then staying guard over them. One zealous mine-layer was Thomas Kavanagh, a rather unsuccessful civil servant who lived in Lucknow with his family prior to the Uprising. When news arrived of a forthcoming attempt to rescue the besieged, Kavanagh saw the proposed plan and realized it would have a much better chance of succeeding if the commanding officer had someone who knew Lucknow to guide him through the maze of streets and souks. Kavanagh was an adventuresome man who believed he could be that man, despite being a tall, red-haired, blue-eyed Irishman. He convinced a native messenger to disguise him and he walked undetected into a meeting of the commanding officers dressed in native rags. He managed to convince them to let him try, and he and the messenger, Kanauji Lal, waded through the river, and entered the mutineers' Lucknow. They met sentries along the way but Kavanagh was fluent in Hindustani and he and Lal managed to avoid

³⁴ Edwardes, Season in Hell, 244.

³⁵ Bartrum, Widow's Reminiscences, 50.

detection. He stole a carrot from a garden in passing, twice ran into native pickets, and crossed another river that succeed in washing much of the dye from his freckled skin. Luckily, they were close to a British cavalry outpost and Kavanagh and Lal succeed in delivering an accurate map to Sir Colin Campbell, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army.³⁶

With this new information, Campbell was able to formulate marching plans that he hoped would effect the rescue of the Lucknow garrison. Together with a naval brigade from the H. M. S. *Shannon*, a small cavalry unit, two Sikh regiments, and four British regiments, all told some forty-two hundred men, Campbell made his way towards the Residency on 12 November.³⁷ He reached the Alambagh and was able to use the semaphore to communicate directly with the Residency.³⁸ The next morning Campbell took Dilkusha Park and the Martinière College (not to be confused with the building inside the Residency called the Martinière), and on the sixteenth, his troops attacked the Secunderbagh. This was a close, hand-to-hand battle, with soldiers and mutineers using their bayonets and swords more than their guns and bullets. Campbell lost ninety-nine men, the mutineers almost 1,900. Campbell's men were hoarse with shouting

³⁶ Thomas Kavanagh, narrative in Rees, Personal Narrative, 303-11 and Narrative of the Indian Revolt, 242-244. For this undertaking the Queen awarded the Victoria Cross to Kavanagh, the first civilian ever to receive it.

³⁷ P. J. O. Taylor, A Feeling of Quiet Power: The Siege of Lucknow, 1857 (New Delhi: Indus, 1994), 132-33.

³⁸ Lucknow had a semaphore, used after Chinhut to order the destruction of the Mutchie Bowhan. Unfortunately, the officers and men who operated it had been killed or wounded, so it was inoperable until an ancient operating manual was found, and combined with information from the Penny Encyclopedia, the semaphore could once more send and receive messages. Ibid. 133.

“Cawnpore, you bloody murderers!”³⁹ With just twelve hundred yards separating Campbell and his men from the Residency, they were stopped by a rebel stronghold, the Shah Najif. Campbell wanted to occupy it by nightfall.⁴⁰ Having taken it with the advance of the Ninety-third Highlands and with the help of the *Shannon's* guns, Campbell bivouacked for the night, ordering the pipers of the Ninety-third to play “The Campbells are coming” as a signal to Havelock and Outram.⁴¹ The next morning, 17 September 1857, Campbell’s troops fought their way from the Shah Najif to the mess hall of the Thirty-second Regiment, long abandoned as it lay outside the makeshift Residency walls. From there, with the help of an impetuous young officer, Garnet Wolseley, Kavanagh’s knowledge of the city, and a sortie of men from the Lucknow force, Campbell arrived at the Residency gates, meeting Generals Outram and Havelock as formally as if they were at a regimental ball.⁴²

Campbell wanted to evacuate the Residency within two hours, but Outram convinced him that this was impossible, since no one had been able to make any arrangements for transportation, or packing. Some people, like Katherine Bartrum, had very little to pack, since she had only what she was wearing, and a few baby clothes for her son Bobbie. For others, especially those who lived within the Residency walls before the siege, packing was a logistical and emotional nightmare. The Thirty-second regiment

³⁹ Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny*, 340.

⁴⁰ Forbes-Mitchell, *Reminiscences*, 58; Watson, *The Great Indian Mutiny*, 72.

⁴¹ Watson, *The Great Indian Mutiny*, 76-77; Taylor, *A Feeling of Quiet Power*, 135-36.

⁴² Edwardes, *Season in Hell*, 281.

had presented Reverend Polehampton with a harmonium some years back, and with his death, his wife was determined somehow to rescue it. Maria Germon had a few clothes, some silver belonging to her mother, her diary and Bible, plus her husband's things. Someone attempted to bring a dining table that was soon abandoned by the roadside!⁴³ The authorities had to bring out the immense amount of treasure left behind by the departing merchants, princes, and other wealthy Indians, amounting to approximately £250,000.⁴⁴ Obviously, more time was needed. Campbell agreed to two days and everyone hurried about, locating their old carriages (often bullet-riddled and useless), arranging rides, making litters to carry the wounded, and choosing what personal items to take out with them. Dr. Fayrer was particularly hard hit: as everything he possessed was there in Lucknow. He collected his papers and various important books, some small items of his wife's, and a few clothes. For him, the most important possession, which he subsequently saved, was a chalk drawing of his wife, whom he feared would not survive the evacuation.⁴⁵ Campbell and Outram decided to take first the women, children and the wounded, using the very buildings the mutineers had recently held as a shield to cover their retreat. Miners and soldiers had blasted and dug passages through the buildings large enough to accommodate horses and carriages, and at noon, on 19 November, the convoy began wending its way out of the Residency walls and into the city. It was a slow

⁴³ Ruggles, Recollections of a Lucknow Veteran, 105.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 106. Treasure was extremely important to the military. Soldiers and officers received shares, or "Prize Money" based on their rank and seniority. Soldiers also looted treasure, which might include costly silk shawls, pewter jugs, jewels, or simply gold and silver coins. In the case of Lucknow, the authorities wanted to keep it not only for themselves, but to deprive the mutineers.

⁴⁵ Fayrer, Recollections, 236-37.

business: the few horses and ponies were as malnourished as the humans, there were very few carriages, and the carts were heavy. Captain Wolseley noted that the enemy was completely fooled:

To have conveyed the 500 women and children, the 1000 sick and wounded, safely away, without a hitch, and without any attack being made upon them was, I think, the best piece of staff work I have ever seen. The garrison withdrew through my picket at midnight on November 22. So completely were the enemy taken in, that the next morning they opened fire as usual upon the buildings we had held during the siege, and for some hours did not discover that we had vacated them. This Sir Colin Campbell effected in the face of an enemy many times more numerous than the force he commanded. He had vindicated our national honour by what he had done.⁴⁶

Colonel Inglis was the last to leave, saying to General Outram, "Please allow me to close my own front door."⁴⁷

It took twelve hours to move the convoy to the relative safety of Dil Koosha park, where tents and a makeshift camp sprung up. There they rested five days, waiting for the regiments to pull out of the Residency. It was here that Havelock died of dysentery, having just been knighted by Queen Victoria in September. The diaries of the men who fought and served with him are profuse in their words of respect, regret, and homage. The merchant Rees, who had never served under Havelock or met him until the first relief, wrote poignantly of Havelock's death:

On the 25th, an event happened which detracted not a little from the joy we were experiencing. The gallant, the noble, the undaunted Havelock died . . . Havelock expired at the very time when [England] . . . proclaimed him

⁴⁶ Wolseley, The Story of a Soldier's Life, 322-323.

⁴⁷ Lieutenant-General Sir James Outram, Sir James Outram's Campaign in India, 1857-1858, comprising General Orders and Dispatches relating to the Defence and Relief of the Lucknow Garrison and the Capture of the City, by British Forces; Also Correspondence relating to the Relief, up to the date when that Object was Effected by Sir Colin Campbell (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1860), 63.

entitled to the highest honour a nation can bestow, when his name was in everyone's mouth, and when we of the old Lucknow garrison . . . should have been still more happy had we seen him able to enjoy the honours in store for him. Yet the knowledge of having a place in the affection of the British nation, and the gratitude of every European in India, must have been, even on his deathbed, a sufficient reward.⁴⁸

Rev. William Fitchett, who had been with Havelock at the relief, wrote:

Havelock died [just after leaving] the slender and battered defences he had reached and held so gallantly. He was buried on the morning of November 25, and round his rude coffin, on which the battle-flag lay, stood his sorrowing comrades, a group of the most gallant soldiers that earthly battlefields have ever known. A shapely obelisk marks the spot where sleeps the dust of one of the bravest soldiers that ever fought for the honour and flag of England.⁴⁹

Havelock's biographer, Leonard Cooper, noted that "his name became a synonym for heroism with the people of England and he was the most widely acclaimed of all the heroes of the Mutiny."⁵⁰ Yet the women, for the most part, hardly mentioned Havelock's death. Mrs. Inglis wrote "he was a gallant soldier and a most excellent man," and Mrs. Harris noted "poor General Havelock died today."⁵¹ Maria Germon sandwiched a seven-word obituary in the middle of her description of her removal from Lucknow, and Katherine Bartrum was too busy worrying about her son to even mention it.⁵² Queen

⁴⁸ Rees, Personal Narrative, 354. It was not just England, but inexplicably America, that honored him. On the day the news reached the United States, flags flew at half-mast all day. Havelock's biographer noted that no English soldier had ever earned such an outpouring of sympathy. Marshman, Memoirs of Havelock, 262.

⁴⁹ Fitchett, Tale of the Great Mutiny, 235-36.

⁵⁰ Leonard Cooper, Havelock (London: n.p., 1957), 180-82.

⁵¹ Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 209; Harris, A Lady's Diary, 172.

⁵² Germon, Journal, 128.

Victoria honored Havelock posthumously and awarded his wife a large pension, and his son the baronetcy she had just conferred on Havelock senior.

On 25 November Brigadier Inglis rejoined his wife and the convoy moved on, covering nine miles in eight hours. Mrs. Harris described the scene in her journal:

The confusion of the march is perfectly indescribable; such a crowd of wagons, carts, camels, bullocks, elephants, loaded with baggage of every description, sick and wounded women and children, all moving along in one huge mass, without the smallest appearance or arrangement or order . . . every ten minutes we came to a stand-still; and waited perhaps an hour before the mass was in motion again; the dust was suffocating, the heat of the sun sickening, and when we reached the place [of encampment] where not a tent was pitched . . . one felt inclined to lie down and [die] from the fatigue and exhaustion.⁵³

Mrs. Case also found it bewildering, and she was traveling with the highest-ranking woman there, Mrs. Inglis, who, as befitting her station had two tents, multiple conveyances, servants, and her husband's aide-de-camp to help her. For other women, the march was an inexpressible hell. Katherine Bartrum came into the Residency with just the clothes on her back and her toddler son. During the First Relief in September, Dr. Robert Bartrum arrived with Havelock's troops. A moment away from reaching entering the Residency Robert was killed. When the troops came into the Residency, a fellow doctor met Katherine and told her to expect her husband soon. Katherine and Bobbie waited for two days until someone came to tell her Robert had died practically on the Residency doorstep. Now, with no one to look after her, Katherine and Bobbie became separated from the convoy, and after finally rejoining it, they slept most nights on the ground or in a cart, without blankets or food.

⁵³ Harris, A Lady's Diary, 171-72.

Had to make a forced march today [28 November] of thirty-eight miles. A most weary and fatiguing day. We did not reach [camp] until three the next morning. I had no tent, and sat on the wet ground until daylight, with my baby on my lap. It was a lovely night . . . but bitterly cold: no one came to speak to me. Who was there in all that host of my fellow creatures to care whether I was living or dead? I felt that night as though I was forsaken by God and man.⁵⁴

Campbell's column reached Cawnpore on the twenty-ninth, Allahabad on 7 December, and Calcutta on the thirtieth of January. The women and children went back to England on various boats. The ship carrying Mrs. Inglis and a few of the Lucknow women went down near Ceylon (all passengers survived). Katherine Bartrum's son, Bobbie, never recovered from the siege privations, and died just before they were to sail for home. Mrs. Polehampton sailed with the wounded and sick men she had cared for so assiduously during the siege. For Emily Polehampton, deprived of her husband, and childless, these men may have offered her the opportunity to continue her role as "Angel of the House." Or, they may have meant that she did not have to face the solitude of widowhood just yet. Whatever her reason, men, both civil and military, noted her devotion in letters and official dispatches.

Daily Life for Men

From the moment of their defeat at Chinhut not one man, be he soldier, officer, merchant, or schoolboy, had one moment's respite from grueling work, inadequate food, anxiety, and fear. Lawrence and Inglis assigned every man (and many of the Martinière schoolboys) to a post, and there they stayed. The boys did domestic work and helped

⁵⁴ Bartrum, *A Widow's Reminiscences*, 59.

make ammunition, while the officers learned how to load and fire the few remaining guns.⁵⁵ Duty shifts varied from thirteen to twenty hours depending on the activities of the insurrectionists.⁵⁶ The men rarely left their posts.

The nightly fatigue parties for burying the dead, repairing intrenchments [sic], altering positions of guns, and attending to the wounded, was [sic] severe work, and with the absence of all aid from servants and the constant labour involved, left little time for rest. Officers and civilians share the labour with the [soldiers] of burying dead horses and cattle.⁵⁷

Some, like Colonel Inglis and Charlie Germon, were billeted with their wives or near enough to allow safe, brief visits. Soldiers left their posts to be hospitalized or buried. Even while in hospital, these men fought during the heaviest attacks. “[They] used to crawl out, the weakest loaded guns, cripples fired from loopholes and healthy men standing.”⁵⁸ Maj. Robert Anderson wrote in his diary that soldiers coming straight on duty after their release from the hospital, said to him, “Well sir, we must all do our best.”⁵⁹

For the fighting men of Lucknow, everyday life varied only in how many of them were wounded or killed. In the first week of the siege, daily deaths ranged from fifteen to twenty, and ten daily in the second week.⁶⁰ They slept in their clothes with their rifles in

⁵⁵ Germon, Journal, 47, 50.

⁵⁶ Edwardes, A Season in Hell, 97.

⁵⁷ Fayrer, Recollections, 171.

⁵⁸ Anderson, Personal Journal of the Siege of Lucknow, 70.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

⁶⁰ Rees, Personal Narrative, 130, 137.

hand; Mrs. Case recorded in her diary how Brigadier Inglis had not changed uniform from 16 May to 1 September.⁶¹ The doctors and the chaplains did less actual fighting. Reverend Harris refusing to fire a weapon at all, the others usually more occupied with tending to the wounded.⁶² Dr. Fayrer described his usual day; "There is very little food, very little rest, an occasional wash or bath or change of some article of clothing, lying down in one's clothes to snatch a little sleep, but constantly being on call for something."⁶³ Rees remarked on the ever-present dangers: "As for death it stares one constantly in the face. Not daily, not hourly, but minute after minute, second after second, my life and every other's is in jeopardy . . . narrow escapes are so common that even the women and children cease to notice them."⁶⁴

In normal conditions, officers and even the enlisted men had native servants to do their more arduous chores, but in Lucknow all able-bodied men were conscripted into daily domestic work. Thus, besides, their usual duties as combatants, each man had to turn his hand to the cooking, cleaning, and laundry. The result was that the men began to feel a sense of loss of self: they were no longer regimented soldiers, successful businessmen, or respected civil servants. Jane Robinson noted that the Uprising was more humiliating for the men because the women restricted "men both physically and . . . emotionally."⁶⁵ One man felt less *British* because he was defending, i.e., hiding behind

⁶¹ Case, Day by Day in Lucknow, 178; Innes, Lucknow and Oudh in the Mutiny, 120-121.

⁶² Harris, A Lady's Diary, 205.

⁶³ Fayrer, Recollections, 173.

⁶⁴ Rees, Personal Narrative, 191.

⁶⁵ Robinson, Angels of Albion, 249.

the walls of the Residency, instead of fighting openly.⁶⁶ Without their families, they were no longer masterful husbands, fathers, or brothers, or even dutiful sons. Without a normal military or civilian hierarchy, they were no longer respected by their rank. And without the ability to protect their women and children, they were no longer that bastion of Victorian masculinity: the guardians of the Empire.

When the trouble began, many men faced the dilemma of abandoning their posts or their wives: most chose to send their families away and stay with their regiments, some never to see their families again. India at its best was not conducive to maintaining the role of fathers and husbands; now, under siege, often separated from their families and wives, the men trapped inside the Residency tried to maintain this role by adopting someone else's family. Dr. Fayrer best exemplifies this behavior as he had four "unattached" women-- he called them "his ladies," plus another three whose husbands and fathers died during the siege.⁶⁷ There were seven children, with an additional two born during the siege and two others dying.

It is needless to say that the anxiety of this time is intense: the responsibility of wives and children, and the dread of what they might be exposed to, was enhanced by the accounts . . . of ladies and children having been exposed to the greatest suffering or put to death. . . . In addition to my professional work, I also had the household to look after [and] it was no light charge to take care of so many.⁶⁸

Another doctor adopted Katherine Bartrum, whose husband was a surgeon still

⁶⁶ Inglis, *The Siege of Lucknow*, 85.

⁶⁷ Fayrer, *Recollections*, 205.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 136-37.

outside the walls fighting with his regiment. Dr. Derby brought Katherine sugar he stole, and another day gave her some arrowroot and flour, all precious commodities during the siege. It was he who told Katherine of her husband's death and brought to her the man who witnessed it so she could hear of Robert's bravery and his desire to see his wife and child again. When Dr. Derby was wounded and later died, Katherine declared herself "utterly friendless."⁶⁹ Some men managed to continue the role of provider, as Charlie Germon did; on various occasions he brought his wife soup, port wine, six bottles of mustard, and some ration biscuits. For their anniversary he contrived a pint of champagne, some sugar, and milk and gave his wife a feast of sugar cakes, cocoa, and champagne.⁷⁰ Others felt the loss of the protective role keenly. Rees described the pain of parenthood through his friend who

had the misfortune to be a family man; for to have a wife and children to think of and to work for . . . must be terrible. He had first told me of his wife being feverish and quite overcome . . . and then he talked to me of his boy Herbert; how he was attacked by cholera, and feared he was very ill; and how, instead of being able to watch by his bedside, he had been all night digging . . . and what little hope he had of his darling being spared them – how he had neither medicine nor proper food for his child . . . And then today, he told me with tears in his eyes that yesterday [his twenty-ninth birthday] his poor child was called away. Lawrence's case is not singular. Many another a poor parent's heart is thus torn.⁷¹

Another friend of Rees, Captain Need, avoided injury until late August. Rees wrote:

"[But] his children wanted food and he had to get firewood [to cook]."⁷² He was shot

⁶⁹ Bartrum, *Widow's Reminiscences*, 39-40, 45, 53.

⁷⁰ Germon, *Journal*, 61, 69, 109.

⁷¹ Rees, *Personal Narrative*, 189-91.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 203.

collecting it. Some men thought to kill their families if the mutineers got through and asked the doctors for poisons. Fayerer refused, although presumably other doctors complied as Mrs. Inglis reported that some women, Mrs. Couper for one, had prussic acid at hand.⁷³ Martin Gubbins recorded in his diary that at the beginning of July, "several of the men contemplated the destruction of their females." One officer went to Martin Gubbins with a proposition: he had agreed with his wife to "destroy her" should the mutineers get inside the Residency. If he was incapacitated or dead, he wanted Gubbins to do the deed. In exchange, the officer offered to do the same by Mrs. Gubbins should the need arise and Gubbins was dead. Gubbins did not agree, saying the necessity had not arisen, and he would be unable to do the deed in any case.⁷⁴ Major Banks asked Reverend Polehampton if it would be acceptable in the eyes of God to kill his wife to spare her violation and torture. Polehampton thought that it would be acceptable, if it prevented rape and dishonor, but not to kill the children. Polehampton believed that the rebels would kill them quickly, although evidence from Cawnpore purportedly showed otherwise.⁷⁵

As if the loss of the paternal role was not enough, the men trapped in Lucknow also had to deal with their loss of rank: military, civilian, and social. While officers still

⁷³ Fayerer, Recollections, 174; Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 101; Case, Day by Day in Lucknow, 118; L. H. Thornton, "Some Lucknow Memories," Army Quarterly 25 (October, 1932), 90.

⁷⁴ Gubbins, Account of the Mutinies in Oudh, 2d ed., 349.

⁷⁵ Major Banks was not the only one to ask this of the chaplain. The Commander-in-Chief, Brigadier-General Inglis had broached the subject earlier in the siege. Henry Stedman Polehampton, A Memoir, Letters, and Diary of Rev. Henry S. Polehampton, M. A., ed. Rev. Edward Polehampton, M. A. and Rev. Thomas Polehampton, M. A. (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), 270-71.

commanded, they now had to learn to do the jobs hitherto reserved for those men, such as making ammunition, loading cannons, and cleaning guns. One volunteer at Innes's post remarked that the officers had picked up the bad language of the enlisted men. "Not having been thrown into such society before."⁷⁶ At the various posts every man had to dig in and do whatever was required of him. Brigadier-General Inglis wrote to Lord Canning about the "labours in which all ranks and all classes, civilians, officers, and soldiers have all borne an equally noble part. All have descended into the mine, all have together handled the shovel for the interment of the putrid bullock, . . . have relieved each other on sentry, without regard to the distinctions of rank, civil or military."⁷⁷ Inglis's own aide, Colonel Birch, was exempt from fatigue duties, such as grave-digging, but one night when eight bullocks died and required immediate burial, he "thought it right to take my share of the disagreeables."⁷⁸ And yet, although the men lived and work without distinction of rank, some still acknowledged rank. When the French merchant Deprat auctioned off most of his stores, his friend and fellow merchant Rees noted that "of course" officers had preference and another officer noticed that a popular officer like Fred Birch could always find a better meal than his rations, which he usually gave away.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ J. C. Parry, Siege of Lucknow, by a Member of the Garrison (n.p., 1858), 38.

⁷⁷ John W. Inglis, Lucknow, to Governor-General of India, Lord Canning, Calcutta, L, 26 September 1857. Richard Warner Collection, Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London, England.

⁷⁸ Colonel F. M. Birch, unpublished diary included in Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 109.

⁷⁹ Rees, Personal Narrative, 127; Robert Danvers, Letters from India and China, 1854-1858 (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney, Ltd, 1898), 117.

The siege of Lucknow, indeed the entire Uprising, created a paradoxical situation wherein the idea of masculinity was both destroyed and celebrated. On the one hand, the attacks on helpless women and children, the massacres at Cawnpore, and the deaths of women and children in Lucknow damaged the ideal of man as protector and provider, while, on the other hand, the subsequent retaliation, atrocities, and eventual subjugation of the mutineers restored it.

Daily Life for Women

Daily life for the women trapped in Lucknow varied depending on where they were staying, to what class they belonged, and whether they knew influential people within the Residency. Some maintained a semi-normal way of life, with servants, social calls, and musicales. Others found themselves chopping wood, cooking, and scrubbing their own clothes. All of the women had to share cramped quarters with other women and children, so privacy was quite lost. Bullets could and did come in those tiny rooms, whizzing in with little warning. Dr. Fayer's infant son and his self-imposed nursemaid, Miss Schilling were hit with a glancing bullet, luckily causing just a minor wound.⁸⁰ Mrs. Dorrin was killed at Mr. Gubbins's house by a bullet that passed through two rooms before striking her in the head.⁸¹ Lieutenant Innes reported that one lady had a shot take away the chair she was sitting on and become lodged in her skirts. Miss Palmer, the first woman killed, was hit by a sniper's bullet while walking on an upper floor of the

⁸⁰ Fayer, *Recollections*, 187.

⁸¹ Gubbins, *An Account of the Mutinies in Oudh*, 2d ed., 228.

Residency. She died a few days later of her wound.⁸² All told, sixteen women died (three were killed), thirty-two were left as widows, and sixty-one children expired.⁸³

Lack of privacy and sniper bullets notwithstanding, there were also the chores that the women had not done since arriving in India, if they even had done any back home. They tried to share the chores; one did the cooking, another distributed the day's food, and another fetched water, or read aloud. If one had a servant or two, life was much easier. Every morning the commissariat sent over the day's rations and some people pooled it, while others used it to augment private supplies. There was quite a bit of visiting, within a certain distance of one's room. In Adelaide Case's diary, hardly a day went by without someone coming to visit or Mrs. Inglis or Adelaide's sister, Caroline, going out to someone's rooms.⁸⁴ Visiting was done despite snipers' bullets and cannon-shot coming over the walls, but because of these dangers, one did not venture too far from the relative safety of one's room. Maria Germon, for example, apparently never met Mrs. Inglis, although they lived within 200 yards of each other. Mrs. Harris who also resided with the Fayerers, wrote early in the siege, "The Inglises, from what I hear of

⁸² Innes, Lucknow and Oudh in the Mutiny, 173; Rees, Personal Narrative, 119; Ruggles, Recollections, 61. Miss Palmer's death was mentioned in almost every diary because she was the first woman killed by enemy action in Lucknow, rather than dying from disease.

⁸³The numbers are inexact. Hilton does not count any children born during the siege. Rees noted four women killed, while the others only three. But all make the distinction between women dead and women killed. Hilton, The Mutiny Records, xxv-xxxiii; Wilson, Defence of Lucknow, 219-223; Rees, Recollections, 365-380.

⁸⁴ Case, Day by Day in Lucknow, 197, 203, 208 (General Havelock came to breakfast), 216, 222, 233, 234.

them. must be excellent people.”⁸⁵ Thus even short distances became insurmountable barriers for the women. It was not until the first relief that one might be able to step outdoors and perhaps to the next shelter.

All of the women dodged snipers' bullets and experienced privations, but if one was lucky enough to be friendly with the highest-ranking lady, or one of those ladies who had homes within the Residency walls, then life was much easier than might be expected. Julia Inglis was the 'rankest' lady in Lucknow, both through her husband's position as military Commander of Lucknow, but also because the highest-ranking civilian, Sir Henry Lawrence, was a widower. Because of her high social position, Mrs. Inglis enjoyed a great deal of comfort during the siege.

Before the defeat at Chinhut, almost all the women and children stayed in the Residency itself. The Residency was crowded, and the only time Mrs. Inglis had her room somewhat to herself (and her children, Mrs. Case and Miss Dickson), was in the early morning when people went onto the roof for some fresh air. After Chinhut, the Residency became very crowded with the wives and families of the enlisted men and refugees from the outlying stations, so Brigadier Inglis determined to move his family, both real and extended (his friend Colonel Case had fallen at Chinhut), to a safer, less crowded location near the Brigade Mess.⁸⁶ For Mrs. Inglis, life was not too bad; she had

⁸⁵ Harris, *A Lady's Diary*, 17. By the end of the siege she had indeed met Julia Inglis quite often, and one wonders why Maria Germon never mentioned her.

⁸⁶ Even if they had not been friends, it would be unlikely that these ladies would want to leave Mrs. Inglis, as she was the highest-ranking wife and as such commanded better rooms and service. In fact, although her room was only 12ft x 6ft it had curtains for privacy and a second room, which they used as a bathroom--a true luxury by the standards of the day. Inglis, *The Siege of Lucknow*, 52.

nine servants, a couple of goats for milk for her children (all of whom survived), and her husband managed to see her regularly.⁸⁷ Mrs. Case and her sister, with their two servants, lived quite well with Mrs. Inglis and they obviously worshipped her, as Mrs. Case's diary bears out. "We now form a little mess of our own, Mrs. Inglis having the management of it, and we are, in consequence, much more comfortable. Mrs. Boileau, Mrs. Radcliffe, and their children join us, so that we sit down to dinner a party of twelve."⁸⁸ The commissariat sent over the daily rations of meat, rice, tea, coffee, and sugar, and Mrs. Case noted how Mrs. Inglis measured it out "with her own hand."⁸⁹ Her sister Caroline also admired Mrs. Inglis's housekeeping skills. "Mrs. Inglis says, that having to deal things out so sparingly makes her feel miserly. She manages very well indeed."⁹⁰

Colina Brydon and Emily Polehampton stayed with Martin Gubbins and enjoyed a standard of living almost as high as Mrs. Inglis. Martin Gubbins had a large stock of food, including champagne, tinned vegetables and preserved meats, and tea. His household had a cook, butler, and even an English maid, Chivers, plus seven other servants. Some of his guests had brought goats and so they often had rice pudding made with eggs and milk, along with three cups of tea a day, with milk and sugar.⁹¹ Later,

⁸⁷ Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 52-53.

⁸⁸ Case, Day by Day in Lucknow, 21.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁹¹ Gubbins, Account of the Mutinies, 2d ed., 202-203, 205.

some of the ladies had to move, as the upper rooms became too dangerous to inhabit. Mrs. Polehampton, now a widow, went to live at the hospital to be closer to the wounded she tended, and Mrs. Brydon and her husband went to stay with the recently widowed Mrs. Ommaney, where things were not so comfortable as before.

Maria Germon and Georgina Harris stayed with Dr. Fayrer, along with twenty-four others, seven of them children. Dr. Fayrer never stopped praising the women of his house for their hard work and fortitude. Maria Germon often wrote of the hard work she and other women had to perform, most often mentioning Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Schilling (who had sole care of the Fayrers' infant son, Bob). Maria Germon's early diary entries sometimes read as though the siege was a weekend houseparty.

Our party here is a very agreeable one- we meet at chota hazree and then after dressing, breakfast at ten- then have working, reading, and music (there are some good performers among our party), tiffin at two, dine at half-past seven and then the Padre reads a chapter and prayers and we retire.⁹²

Later entries in her diary show that tempers became frayed as the siege wore on. Mrs. Helford became angry when she was moved out of her room so Mrs. Barwell and her day-old son could move in. Another day "a great scrimmage with Mrs. Boileau about her European servant being allowed to cook for us- we carried our point."⁹³ Mrs. Harris's diary is so different that it seems as though the two ladies did not live in the same house. On the day of the "great scrimmage" with Mrs. Boileau, as Maria Germon put it, Mrs. Harris just mentioned Mrs. Need taking over the cooking voluntarily and on the day Mrs.

⁹² Germon, *Journal*, 28.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 77, 87.

Germon noted “a row between the Padre and a lady-clerical victorious and the lady going off in hysterics.” Mrs. Harris never mentions it, despite the *Padre* being her husband.⁹⁴

These women were fortunate to have either rank or connections to make their living situations better. For those arriving from outside the Lucknow cantonments, life was very much harder. Mrs. Bartrum, Mrs. Kendall, and Mrs. Hale came in from the outlying stations with literally what they stood up in, and no servants, or furniture. They were put in the Begum Kothi, where many wives without their husbands lived. They had to cook, clean, and launder for themselves, as well as caring for their individual child. They even had to gather and chop their own firewood, and so unusual was this that Martin Gubbins, Dr. Fayerer, and Julia Inglis mentioned their sad story. Mrs. Inglis was particularly shocked.

[They] had to do everything for themselves. All they ate was cooked by their own hands . . . and each had a young baby to attend to. These poor women must indeed have endured great hardships; at the same time, I cannot understand how, surrounded as they were by others who were certainly better off, a little help was not given them. I fancy they could have never made known their destitute condition, for, with few exceptions, I believe a very kind spirit pervaded the garrison, and many noble and self-denying acts of charity were performed.⁹⁵

Katherine Bartrum was grateful for the housework and child-minding she did, as it helped pass the time and kept her from brooding too much about her husband, still fighting the mutineers outside the Residency. She got some railings for firewood but had to cut them down with her dinner knife. She and Mrs. Kendall shared the cooking

⁹⁴ Harris, *A Lady's Diary*, 105, 108; Germon, *Journal*, 90.

⁹⁵ Inglis, *The Siege of Lucknow*, 226; Gubbins, *Account of the Mutinies*, 2d ed., 231.

between them, although Mrs. Bartrum admitted she was quite hopeless at it, but thought she would get plenty of practice before the siege ended.⁹⁶ Although these women were in less comfortable accommodations than some, the women and children of the Thirty-second regiment were by far the most deprived. These were the wives and families of the enlisted soldier, many of the women half-caste, and most from the lower social classes. These were the women who had been born in India; their fathers had been or were enlisted men and who married within their regiment. It was these women who often worked for the officers' wives in better times. They were all living cheek-to-jowl in the basement of the Residency, a place filthy with debris, dust and vermin, and the air rank and dank. Maria Germon described the scene in her diary as

a perfect barrack—every room filled with six or eight ladies, beds all round and perhaps a dining table laid for dinner in the center. Lots of the 32nd soldiers and their officers, and underneath all the women and children of the 32nd barracks—such a hubbub and commotion. I was so thankful I was not there—it is just like a rabbit warren.⁹⁷

Fanny Boileau went there on her arrival in Lucknow. "To my utter dismay and consternation we were shown into a large room utterly devoid of furniture," where Bessie Fayrer found her and took her and the children in. "I have always felt that . . . I owe my safety [to the Fayrers]. Many of my companions in our eventful flight from Secorora, perished in that very room from want of proper food and attention."⁹⁸ Later, all of the

⁹⁶ Bartrum, *Widow's Reminiscences*, 37, 40.

⁹⁷ Germon, *Journal*, 28-29.

⁹⁸ Fanny Boileau, unpublished journal, Boileau Papers, Cambridge Centre for South Asian Studies, J-E 3, 21.

women of Fayerer's house had to spend a day there, during heavy shelling and Mrs. Germon reported that it was "a perfect Babel it was . . . the number of children and the heat being so fearful up to then and no punkah going: it was enough to drive one wild."⁹⁹

Within the daily lives of these women, a distinct hierarchy existed that closely resembled the one back in England, or indeed, in India before the Uprising. It affected what they ate, where they lived, how much work they did, and even how much fresh air they breathed. For Katherine Bartrum, dishwashing, cooking, and cleaning were an everyday occurrence, whereas, for Mrs. Case, "one morning I swept the room, the ayah being [busy]."¹⁰⁰ For those of a high social, military, or civil rank, accommodations were better, with private stores of food, spirits, and clothing, while the lower classes made do with ordinary rations and what clothing Mrs. Inglis and others provided.

Mrs. Inglis often acted the role of the 'Lady of the Manor,' distributing largess, advice, and aid to those of a lower station than herself. She, Mrs. Case, and Mrs. Harris made clothes for the soldiers' wives and the refugees and sent "some little comforts, tea, etc., to a Mrs. Dorrin who had escaped from Seetapore after seeing her husband killed."¹⁰¹ She once gave some soup to Reverend and Mrs. Harris, "for which they were duly grateful."¹⁰² Prior to the siege, the children of the Thirty-second regiment,

⁹⁹ Germon, Journal, 33.

¹⁰⁰ Case, Day by Day in Lucknow, 61.

¹⁰¹ Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 31, 37; Case, Day by Day in Lucknow, 277; Harris, A Lady's Diary, 56.

¹⁰² Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 212.

commanded by her husband, had a dinner-dance to commemorate her son's birthday.¹⁰³ She was often told of a husband's death before the wife and had to break the news to her, a responsibility she sometimes delegated.¹⁰⁴ Brigadier Inglis himself rather abruptly broke the news to Adelaide, simply saying, "Poor Case."¹⁰⁵ Another time Dr. Boyd came to Mrs. Inglis looking for someone to take care of a small boy while his mother recovered from a stillbirth, but Mrs. Case did not record how Mrs. Inglis responded.¹⁰⁶ Adelaide Case is the best source of information on how besieged Lucknow regarded Julia Inglis and her actions as the highest lady present.

Mrs. Inglis never goes down (to the women of the regiment in the Ty khana) empty-handed. She is kind and considerate to every one, and often takes down some pudding or soup, which may have been at dinner, to a poor sick boy. A little tea, sugar, or any old clothes we can find to take with us to them is always very gratefully received, and it cheers their spirits to talk to them a little.¹⁰⁷

The most telling incident came on 14 August. "A very respectable-looking person, with a little baby in her arms came to the door of our room, and after asking Mrs. Inglis if she was 'the Brigadier's wife' said she had come to beg a little milk for her child." The woman, Mrs. Beale, said she had already lost three children, and she hoped to manage to get this one home to Kent, where her father was a clergyman.¹⁰⁸ Mrs. Case did not say

¹⁰³ Ibid., 76.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 28, 34, 45.

¹⁰⁵ Bartrum, A Widow's Reminiscences, 34, 45-46.

¹⁰⁶ Case, Day by Day in Lucknow, 87-88.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 151-52.

how Mrs. Inglis responded, but Mrs. Inglis wrote in her diary that she would have liked to help but could not spare any at the expense of her three children.¹⁰⁹ When the siege was over, and the women and children were safe in Allahabad, Mrs. Inglis, continuing in her role, gave Christmas dinner for the remaining women of her husband's regiment, while Mrs. Giddings and Reverend Polehampton's widow started a school for children of the same.¹¹⁰

While Mrs. Inglis acted her part as benefactor to the best of her ability in this situation, the lower-class women fostered that role by coming to her, as Mrs. Beale had done, for help and advice. Some of the women asked if she approved of suicide for the women, if the Residency fell. She replied that she would leave it to God's will.¹¹¹ Others came to do sewing for the Inglis party, and at least two approached her about going back to England as her servant.¹¹² A Mrs. Weston came to the Fayrer's as a servant to the Harrises, as did Mrs. Need for Mrs. Boileau, although both were appropriated for the entire household.¹¹³ Dr. Fayrer found a nurse for the widowed Mrs. Dashwood and her infant "from among the soldiers' wives."¹¹⁴ For the lower class women, these women--the Mrs. Inglis, Case, Harris, and others--had an obligation to them, and apparently the ladies agreed perhaps because this was one role they felt they could still perform. In

¹⁰⁹ Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 117.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹¹² Case, Day by Day in Lucknow, 263, 275, 279.

¹¹³ Harris, A Lady's Diary, 105, 107.

¹¹⁴ Fayrer, Recollections, 206.

many respects the women trapped in Lucknow, whether officer's wife or shopkeeper's daughter, felt a severe loss of their prescribed roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers.

As wives, the women were separated from their husbands, some by hundreds of miles, and others, by hundreds of feet, but whether feet or miles, both seemed insurmountable. Maria Germon saw her husband for a half-hour each day and often mended his clothes: she once sent him on his way with some dinner he was too tired to eat. Both Dr. Fayer and Reverend Harris were billeted with their wives, and Brigadier Inglis always managed to come by to see his wife and Mrs. Case. These women were fortunate to see their husbands daily, but others, like Mrs. Bartrum, had been separated for the duration of the siege and, in many cases, forever. Katherine Bartrum had not wanted to leave Robert and go into the Residency. "Often had I contemplated death with my husband, but not separation from him; . . . Most earnestly did I plead that I might be allowed to remain with him; but he convinced me [for baby's sake].¹¹⁵ Many women wrestled with just this dilemma: to stay and play the role of wife and send the children to England, or abandon the wifely role and be the good mother? Margaret MacMillan noted that British women were "bound to fail in part as wives and mothers" simply because they had to make this choice.¹¹⁶ Katherine Bartrum made her choice when she left Robert for the safety of the Residency, although it was really he that made the decision.¹¹⁷ These women even lost the ability to play the role of grieving widow, as

¹¹⁵ Bartrum, A Widow's Reminiscences, 11.

¹¹⁶ MacMillan, Women of the Raj, 14.

¹¹⁷ Bartrum, Widow's Reminiscences, 11.

there was little or no opportunity to go to church, visit a gravesite, or even wear complete mourning. Someone gave Katherine Bartrum a black dress that she hoped would last the siege, while Mrs. Inglis noted what "a great trial to [Mrs. Case] ever since her husband's death that she had been unable to wear suitable mourning; a black dress was all that any of the widows could procure."¹¹⁸ Many were too busy keeping themselves and their children alive to prostrate themselves as those at home might. Some sought escape by taking up the unpleasant and disheartening task of nursing, as Mrs. Polehampton, Mrs. Gall, and the 'bride and widow' Mrs. Barber.¹¹⁹ It was only when the women reached Allahabad or Calcutta did they allow themselves to mourn, although Mrs. Polehampton never abandoned her sick and wounded men.

If as wives, they felt less than successful, then as mothers, the women saw themselves as utter failures. A Mrs. Clark, living with Katherine Bartrum in the Begum Kothi, gave birth in a room overcrowded with nine people, then spent the next nine days in a gradual decline until she died. Her newborn followed her three days later, and her older child, a boy, two weeks later.¹²⁰ Fanny Boileau lived in comparative comfort with the Fayrers, but her children were also ill with lack of proper food and medication. From 1 September to 13 September, her journal entries focus on her "darling Ina" and how ill she was "with ulcerated sores and diarrhoea [sic]." Maria Germon, childless herself,

¹¹⁸ Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 227; Bartrum, Widow's Reminiscences, 50.

¹¹⁹ Julia Inglis wished she could have joined the women who nursed at the hospital, perhaps feeling the loss of her Lady-of-the-Manor role that she was so used to playing. Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 73.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 32-33, 36.

noted how sickly all the children were: "Bobby [Fayrer] very ill-he looks a perfect skeleton-as for Mrs. Dashwood's baby, you can count its bones –they are just covered with skin. It is a terrible time for the children."¹²¹ Undoubtedly she was glad that she and Charlie had no children, as was Mrs. Harris.¹²² Mrs. Couper had two children, and after numerous terrifying near-death experiences, she gave birth to a little girl, probably premature, and certainly undernourished. Mrs. Case had "never seen such a small child as hers in my life."¹²³ Mrs. Inglis was very worried about Mrs. Couper, whose boy, during the first relief, was ill with suspected bronchitis.

It was wonderful to notice the mother's love, so strong as to overpower all feelings of fear, excitement, or joy; . . . she who had been so nervous and downhearted during the siege now seemed to care for nothing and to hope for nothing but her child's life. And yet I had heard her say that she would not murmur if both her children were taken from her, for she anticipated a more dreadful fate for them.¹²⁴

But by far, the most pathetic story belongs to Mrs. Leeson, who had been caught out with her family when the mutineers overran Delhi. In trying to escape, she and her children became separated from the others and found by some natives, who pretended to help them.

No sooner had these treacherous brutes got them . . . they shot her first and she fell to the ground unconscious. Her baby was thrown out of her arms . . . and lay, some distance, moaning. The soldiers of the King came up to her [six-year old] boy and cut his throat. They then took her poor little girl [three

¹²¹ Boileau, Journal, J-E-6; Germon, Journal of the Siege of Lucknow, 80-81.

¹²² Harris, A Lady's Diary, 73.

¹²³ Case, Day by Day in Lucknow, 184-85.

¹²⁴ Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 158. Mrs. Inglis spelled it Cowper. Couper was also spelled as Cooper, in some journals. The two older children survived, but the infant died at three weeks old.

years old] and cut her from ear to ear through her mouth. [She] was some six hours before she died, all the time writhing away, in her agony, further and further from her mother till [her mother] heard one piercing shriek and then no more. There the baby lay on the ground, picking the grass and moaning pitifully, till he died too. The poor mother was helpless and unable to move.
¹²⁵

For Mrs. Leeson and so many others, the death of a child, or children, seemed to emphasize their inability to cope with the duties that nature proscribed for them by their gender. During the siege, the women failed, in many instances, as wives, homemakers, and especially mothers.

¹²⁵ Tytler, Englishwoman in India, 155-56. Harrier Tytler said she heard the story from Mrs. Leeson herself, and not third-hand, as many horror stories were.

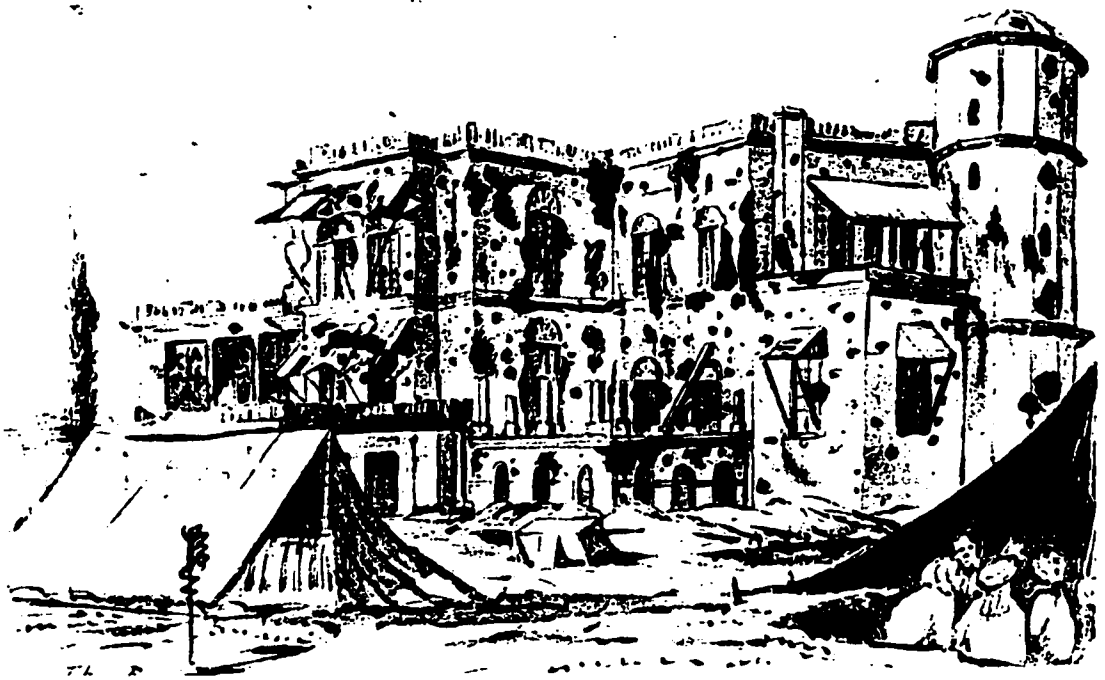


Figure 4

Sketch of the Residency at Lucknow, c.1858, by George MacBean and included in his book, Views of Lucknow. From Sketches made during the Siege. By permission of the British Library, W6105, reference R96/1808.

V

CONCLUSION

Men's Changing Perceptions towards Women

The women of Lucknow lost more than their physical roles during the siege; they also lost their symbolic role of the "Angel in the House." It was this role that deeply affected the men, perhaps secondary only to the deaths of their children. When a man buried his child, he grasped the impact of the loss; the grief was tangible and understandable. When the women lost the role of the emblem of purity, the men did not understand it was because of the very presence of the women in the front lines of the fighting. War was for men, as they expected their women to stay safely at home, on the pedestal of sweet innocence. The presence of British women disturbed the mental picture British men carried with them. That mental picture became distorted by the everyday actions and reactions of the women trapped in Lucknow. Some men enjoyed the excitement, the camaraderie, and perhaps even the killing involved in what military historian Byron Farwell called *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*.¹²⁶ But the presence of the women changed all that, as one soldier noted in his journal. "It is the fair sex whose presence in this country has made this such a *dreadful* war." [italics mine].¹²⁷

In an age where piano legs wore pantaloons so as not to excite the sensibilities of either gender, suddenly women were seeing men's naked throats, legs, and arms. Indeed, the women too, often appeared in ragged and torn clothing, exposing parts of their bodies

¹²⁶ Byron Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972).

¹²⁷ Blomfield, David, ed. *Lahore to Lucknow: The Indian Mutiny Journal of Arthur Moffat Lang* (London: Leo Cooper, 1992), 133.

that normally only their husbands might see. Young, unmarried Margaret Meek awoke one morning and seemed unconcerned to find a young man sleeping next to her. "I turned and saw, on the other side of me, Mr. Lind, fast asleep . . . with his boots still on."¹²⁸ Living in such close proximity disillusioned some of the men. Instead of imagining their Angel safely at home, guiding the family's morals, and presenting picture of goodness, she was there, in the squalor of Lucknow, fearful and fretful. The Angel was sullied--not by immoral behavior--but by simply being there.

Conversely, the attitudes and behavior of the British women during the Uprising could be seen in a positive light. The presence of British women during the Uprising was dreadful, but it allowed the men to see the women in a new way—as role models—not for their children, but for the colonized native. When the women portrayed positive British attributes such as courage, steadfastness, and fortitude, they proclaimed Britain as the superior nation. For the colonizing British male, those attributes enhanced the image of the British throughout the Empire; an image that the paternal Briton wanted the inferior native to emulate. Could this be the foreshadowing of Homi Bhabha's post-colonial discourse on the "Mimicry of Men" whereby the Colonized adopt, voluntarily or through necessity, the attributes of their Colonizer?

In 1989, Bill Ashcroft determined that "women in many societies have been relegated to the position of 'Other', marginalized, and in a metaphorical sense, 'colonized.' They share with colonized races and peoples an intimate experience of the

¹²⁸ Spencer, *Personal Reminiscences*, 47.

politics of oppression and repression.”¹²⁹ Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, in their Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory, noted women were “double-colonialized” through participation in a patriarchal society that was under colonialism as well.¹³⁰ Bhabha’s theory of mimicry noted that the imitation was not only (perceived) flattery, but also (unperceived) mockery; and as the imitator became more successful, the differences between the two became blurred, constituting a threat to the Colonizer.¹³¹ The two were “almost the same, but not quite,” the latter offering a distorted image of the former; the very distortion a menace to the Colonizer’s self.¹³² By exhibiting these traditionally male, Western attributes, did the women become the first of Bhabha’s mimics? If so, does this explain why British colonial men, in many cases, chose to ignore the positive actions of the women during the Uprising? Was the combination of the rebellious natives and unconventional British women just too much for the men to bear?

Lucknow affected the women in ways not even the men understood, much less the women themselves. They became inured to the many dangers of daily living and lost their air of refinement. Men found themselves arguing with a woman about the size of the shells crashing around them, and she would often be right.¹³³ A number of women went daily to the hospital to attend to the men there and some even moved there to be

¹²⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature (London: Routledge, 1989), 174.

¹³⁰ Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory, (London: Prentice Hall, 1997), 198.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 131-32.

¹³² Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), 86.

¹³³ Gubbins, Account of the Mutinies, 2d ed., 304.

able to nurse the patients day and night.¹³⁴ Nursing at this time was not the honored profession it would become in later years. Until the Florence Nightingale's work in the Crimea in the 1850's, nurses were often perceived as slovenly drunkards. It was not an accepted activity for women, as it was thought to be inappropriate for women to tend so intimately to men. Also, the women would run the risk of infecting their children after working in such a disease-ridden atmosphere. But the doctors in the Residency had lost their Indian staff, and could not manage without help. The men were busy with the defense so it fell to the women to do what they could. The women who nursed at the Residency hospital were exposed to terrible sights, sounds, and smells, as Mr. Couper described in his dispatches:

There were no antiseptics or disinfectants or anesthetics towards the end of the siege. One sponge had to be used for all, vermin filled the wounds. The operating table was in the same room with the patients, and in the absence of chloroform the cries of the agonized sufferers added to the misery of their fellow patients.¹³⁵

But it was not just the women at the hospital who nursed. In each building, every day, someone was ill, and the women took turns looking after the patients. The ladies staying with Dr. Fayerer helped him in some amputations and minor operations. Mrs. Inglis described how one soldier's wife, Mrs. Bruere, assisted a doctor in removing a bullet from her ayah's eye, having first watched him removed the eye itself. "Her mistress actually held her while it was being performed. It was astonishing how

¹³⁴ Edwardes, *A Season in Hell*, 89.

¹³⁵ Thornton, "Some Mutiny Memories," 93.

accustomed, I will not say hardened, one had become to sights which once even to talk of would have sickened one."¹³⁶

Mrs. Inglis should have used the word "hardened," because it seems quite likely that the women were suffering from post-traumatic shock syndrome. Garnet Wolseley, a young officer with Sir Colin Campbell's relieving force, saw ample signs of this 'shell-shock.' One of the first through the gates of Lucknow, he remarked in his journal the immediate necessity of rescuing the women and children "who were too stunned by what they had endured at Lucknow to be even grateful to their rescuers."¹³⁷ A merchant trapped in Lucknow remarked on the changing behavior of the women towards the wounded during the siege:

All felt the deepest compassion . . . the women flocked around them, and gave them ice-water [a true luxury] . . . fanned them, supplied temporary bandages, and showed [much] solicitude. It would have been well for the unfortunate sick and wounded if the same kindness had been showed to them throughout the siege . . . but unfortunately such scenes became so common that scarcely a thought was afterwards bestowed on the poor sufferers.¹³⁸

Of course, as the siege continued the women had few luxuries to give away, and focused their attentions on their ailing children and husbands. Some continued to show the "deepest compassion"--the women living at Dr. Fayer's house consistently attended the wounded staying there. Yet a young private wrote scathingly in his journal of the callousness of the Lucknow women, in general.

¹³⁶ Inglis, The Siege of Lucknow, 195.

¹³⁷ Sir F. Maurice and Sir George Arthur, The Life of Lord Wolseley (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd. 1924), 24.

¹³⁸ Rees, Recollections of a Lucknow Veteran, 92.

Who actually refused [to] help a fellowcountryman [sic] . . . He calls on her for a drop of water [and to his consternation] she points to a well and says ‘There is the well, my man, and you can get the water yourself’ and this to a dying man! These poor fellows now found to their sorrow that it was useless fighting for women that were completely destitute of gratitude.¹³⁹

Sir Colin Campbell, who never had much patience with the women and children he had to escort from the Residency, once remarked that the ladies thought only of their comforts and had little thought for thirteen-hundred wounded men coming out of Lucknow.¹⁴⁰ Wolseley noted too that the women seemed ungrateful to their rescuers.

Everyone coming out of Lucknow had to pass through my picket, so all my company had a good opportunity of seeing the women they had fought for—alas, too many of them were widows. Their faces bespoke privations, bad food and illness, and their careworn features told us not only of bodily suffering but of sorrow bravely endured. Amongst this straggling crowds were widows and orphans left by gallant soldiers who had nobly died for England in the defence of this place. They seemed too sad and down in their luck to manifest any joy at their escape. I did not see a happy or contented or a smiling face amongst that crowd; not one of them said a gracious word to the soldiers who had saved them, a fact which my men remarked upon. Indeed, poor creatures, they did not make a favourable impression upon any of us, for they seemed cross; they certainly grumbled much at everything and everybody.¹⁴¹

Were these women perhaps rejecting the traditional role of victim the men expected to see? Or were they simply doing what women had done for centuries—picking up the broken pieces of their lives and starting over again? During the siege there was little time

¹³⁹ McGuffie, Rank and File, 295.

¹⁴⁰ “Mrs. Marriot’s Narrative”, Westminster Gazette, 28 May, 1907, p. 10.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 317-18. This melancholy could probably be explained by the fact that most women had lost at least one loved one: husband, children, parent. They were leaving possessions and more importantly, the graves, or at least the excuse for one, back in the Residency walls, where they would never be returning.

for the “poor me” mentality, and with the rapid evacuation immediately following Campbell’s arrival, the women had other things to occupy their minds. Yet despite leaving their homes, and often the graves of loved ones, the relieving force still expected the women to greet rapturously their rescuers. These men expected gratitude. They demanded adoration. Instead, these “Angels” practically ignored them as the women immediately attempted to restore some normality to their lives by getting back to Britain as soon as possible. Thus, for these men, some of the women of Lucknow no longer represented the icon of purity and innocence they once had. Some of their angels had become tarnished.

Analysis of Women’s Response to the Siege

It seems then that the women of Lucknow were just what history portrayed them to be: gossipy, superficial, arrogant, self-centered whining creatures, whose only thoughts on their rescue were how to return as quickly as possible to their insular lives. And perhaps some were indeed like that, but for many, this attitude was simply a mechanism, a way to cope with the horrors, privations, and heartbreak that they had endured. These women wrote letters and kept journals, visited the sick women, made social calls, and adhered to protocol because these rituals offered a familiar support to prop up their flagging spirits and to comfort them in their most trying times.

The journals and letters these women wrote were more than just a way to pass the time. Many had no idea that the public would be eager to read about their trials and privations, and they wrote mainly as an outlet for their fears, hopes, and frustrations. Dr.

Fayrer wrote of how well all his ladies lived and worked together. but in her diary Mrs. Germon often described disagreements between the women often hinging on the suspected laziness of some of them. Mrs. Brydon's journal, unpublished until 1979, showed a marked annoyance with her companions at times. more so after she moved to the Ommaneys' house. which was not so well stocked with private stores of food as the Gubbins'. Katherine Bartrum's diary became her catharsis, in which she focused all her anguish over her husband's death and all her fears for her son's life. Her letters home after the siege were a continuation of this. and after her son died. it seemed as though Katherine died too. as no letters exist after that date.¹⁴²

More important than their journals was the maintenance of a social hierarchy. which allowed women a secure and familiar context. Because women of like social backgrounds were billeted together. the Uprising made them more able to function as a cohesive unit. whether it was as cooks. nurses. or mothers. Mrs. Inglis's visits to the women and children of her husband's regiment comforted them as well as herself by allowing her to play her role as Lady-of-the-Manor. When she attended the confinement of Mrs. Couper. she did so in two capacities--that of friend and that of the Brigadier's wife. Either way. she fulfilled an unwritten contract that was in effect both at home and abroad. When she "entertained" officers and their wives. both she and they were acting out their roles as superior and subordinate. But. in Lucknow during the siege. these visits did more than raise spirits; they were also valuable methods of communicating

¹⁴² Katherine Bartrum returned to England. remarried three years later and bore three children. Edwardes, *Season in Hell*, 300; Robinson. *Angels of Albion*. 251.

information whereby men and women discussed the latest news of Cawnpore or shared a rare English-language newspaper. In this way, information and rumors, such as the story of Thomas Kavanagh's heroic journey to meet Sir Colin Campbell, made their way around the Residency.

But there was more than an information network in effect at the Residency. Within each "household," women and men networked to provide basic needs to each other and their families. Maria Germon traded some *dal* (legumes) and wheat for some rice, and thought she got the better deal.¹⁴³ Some women took the place of sickly wives, as Mrs. Germon and Mrs. Anderson did at Dr. Fayer's house, when they took over the supervision of the household.¹⁴⁴ Other women took on the role of mother to newly orphaned children, or to children whose own mother was incapacitated, as Miss Schilling did for the Fayers, and Mrs. Orr for Mrs. Anderson.¹⁴⁵ Mrs. Dashwood lived with the Fayers with her two boys and was expecting her third child. Both boys, Herbert and Ally, were ill and Herbert died just before Mrs. Dashwood gave birth. Mrs. Harris looked after Mrs. Dashwood's ailing older boy, Ally, even before Mrs. Dashwood was confined, and she continued to do so after Mrs. Dashwood and the baby had moved to another house.¹⁴⁶ In fact, many people became responsible for the children of their temporary homes. At the Ommaney's, Colina Brydon noted that the women shared food

¹⁴³ Germon, Journal, 114.

¹⁴⁴ Fayer, Recollections, 176.

¹⁴⁵ Fayer, Recollections, 179, 199; Colina Brydon, Diary of a Doctor's Lady, ed. Geoffrey Moore (Bedford, England: n.p., 1979), 35.

¹⁴⁶ Harris, A Lady's Diary, 102, 140.

among themselves for the children, with the men bringing goat-milk, tapioca, and sago for them.¹⁴⁷ People networked among their social group for clothing, food for the children, and information, while the lower-classes, in times of great need, looked to the upper-classes for help and advice.

After the Uprising was over, the women, for the most part, went home, some leaving husbands and children behind in the graves of the dusty churchyards. A few remarried and returned to India, but many others stayed in Britain, trying to forget the horrors of the last nine months. The men were acclaimed as heroes for rescuing the women, and the women as heroines for simply surviving the ordeal. British India would never be the same again, although many people tried to make it so. But no matter how many balls, banquets, and amusements, no matter how many women returned to India, no matter how many missionaries arrived to continue to convert heathens, India was a changed place. The British never felt truly comfortable there again, and the government there metaphorically looked over its shoulder at the slightest tremor of discontent from the natives.

¹⁴⁷ Brydon, *Diary of a Doctor's Lady*, 39.

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