

NANA SAHIB.

THE MASSACRE OF CAWNPORE.

FROM THE "LAND OF THE VEDA," BY REV. DR. BUTLER, INDIAN MISSIONARY OF THE M. F. CHURCH.

To-day we present our readers with a portrait of Nana Sahib, whose capture was recently reported, although subsequent accounts cast doubt upon the identity of the person in custody. With it we give the following account of the terrible massacre of Cawnpore, from Dr. Butler's "Land of the Veda," which supplies a connected and succinct narrative of the fearful tragedy and the events that preceded it:

"The massacre of Cawnpore" has been truly called "the blackest crime in human history." Every element of perfidy and cruelty was concentrated in it. No act ever carried to so many hearts such a thrill of horror as did the deed that was done there on the 15th of July, 1857.

The city of Cawnpore is situated on the banks of the Ganges, six hundred and twenty-eight miles from Calcutta, and two hundred and sixty-six miles from Delhi. At the time of the great Rebellion, the English general commanding the station was Sir Hugh Wheeler. He had under his command four Sepoy regiments, and about three hundred English soldiers. In addition to these, there were the wives and children of the English officers and of his own force, and of the force at Lucknow. Oude having been but recently annexed, the families of the officers in Lucknow could not yet obtain houses there, and so were left for the present under the care of Sir Hugh Wheeler at Cawnpore. When the alarm began to extend, the ladies and children of the stations around also went to him for protection, so that before the rebellion broke out, the General found himself responsible for the care of over five hundred and sixty women and children with only three hundred English soldiers and about one hundred and forty other Europeans, for their protection.

Sir Hugh had been over fifty years in India. His age and his confidence in the loyalty of the Sepoys under his command ill-fitted him for the position he then held. He would not credit the imminence of danger, nor make that provision against it which some of those under his orders believed to be urgently necessary. He still trusted the loyalty of the Nana Sahib, and placed the Government treasure—an immense sum of money—under his care; and there was even a proposal to send the ladies and children off to the Bithoor palace for safe-keeping. There was a strong magazine on the banks of the Ganges, well provided with munitions of war and with suitable shelter, to which Sir Hugh might have taken his charge, and where, it is believed, he could have held out till relief reached him; but, unfortunately, he thought otherwise, believing himself not strong enough to hold it. So he crossed the canal and took a position on the open plain, in two large one-story barracks, and threw up a low earth-work around it, and thought himself secure till assistance could reach him from Calcutta. He did not take the precaution to provision even this place properly or in time, and also left the strong intrenchment on the Ganges stored with artillery of all sizes, and with shot and shell to match, with thirty boats full of ammunition moored at the landing-place—left all to fall into the hands of his enemies; and it was actually used, profusely used, against himself in the terrible days that followed. The few cannon which he took with him were no match for those he left behind and which he had afterward to fight so fiercely and at such disadvantage.

On the 14th of May intelligence reached them of the fearful massacres of Meerut and Delhi. On the 5th of June the Cawnpore Sepoys broke into open mutiny, having been joined by other regiments from Oude. The Nana Sahib had been in intimate communication with the ringleaders; yet for some reason or other, probably a disinclination to murder their officers or to face the few English soldiers there, the Sepoys seemed more inclined to leave the station and march for Delhi than to remain and attack the English. They actually started, performed the first stage, and encamped at a place called Kullianpore. The wily Azeemoolah and his master now saw that their hour had come. Arriving in the camp, they persuaded the Sepoy host to return to Cawnpore and put all the English to the sword before they left the place. Their unwillingness was overcome by the promise of unlimited pillage, and the offer by the Maharajah of a gold anklet to each Sepoy. They retraced their steps. That night the English officers were some of them, sleeping in their own houses, imagining that they had seen the last of that Sepoy army. But the intention was shown to commence the attack at once, and there was barely time to summon the officers and families outside ere it began. Every thing of



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value, clothing and stores of all kinds, had to be suddenly abandoned. He who in that close and sultry night of midsummer had sought a little air and sleep on his house top might not stay "to take any thing out of his house;" he who had been on early service in the field might not "turn back to take his clothes." Few and happy were they who had time to snatch a single change of raiment. Some lost their lives by waiting to dress. So that, half-clad, confused, and breathless, the devoted band rushed into the breastwork, which they entered only to suffer, and left only to die.

Within this miserable inclosure, containing two barracks designed for only one hundred men each, and surrounded by a mud wall only four feet high, three feet in thickness at the base, and but twelve inches at the top—where the batteries were constructed by the simple expedient of leaving an aperture for each gun, so that the artillerymen served their pieces as in the field, with their persons entirely exposed to the fire of the enemy—within this inclosure were huddled together a thousand people, only four hundred and forty of whom were men, the rest being women and children. Here, without anything that could be called shelter, without proper provisions for a single week, exposed to the raging sun by day and to the iron hail of death by day and night, these Christian people had to endure for twenty two days the pitiless bombardment, the rifle-shots, and storming parties, launched at them from a well appointed army of nearly ten thousand men.

How well these four hundred and forty men must have fought, when, with closed teeth and bated breath, the Brahmin and the Saxon thus closed for their death grapple, where no quarter was asked or received, may be imagined. But who can imagine the terror and the sufferings of that crowd of five hundred and sixty ladies and children, not one of whom could be saved, even by all the valor of those brave men who fought so hard and died so rapidly to protect them! Of the whole number, only three men escaped—Captain Delafosse, Major Thompson, and Private Murphy.

America and Europe have ever forbidden their warriors to point the sword at a female breast. But Asiatics have no such scruples. The Hindoos, who allow their women few or no personal rights, and the Mohammedans, who doubt if they have souls, have no tenderness for the position or treatment of the weak-

er sex. The sharpshooters and gunners of Nana Sahib were true to their heathenism. They gave no rest, and showed no mercy. Some ladies were slain outright by grape or round shot, others by the bullet; many were crushed by the splinters or the falling walls. At first every projectile that struck the barracks, where they were crowded together, was the signal for heart-rending shrieks, and low wailing, more heart-rending still; but ere long time and habit had taught them to suffer and to fear in silence. The unequal contest could not last long. By the end of the first week every one of the professional artillery men had been killed or wounded, besides those who had fallen all around the position. Sun-stroke had dazed and killed several. Their only howitzer was knocked clear off its carriage, and the other cannon disabled, save two pieces which were withdrawn under cover, loaded with grape, and reserved for the purpose of repelling an assault. Even the bore of these had been injured so that a canister could not be driven home, and the poor ladies gave up their stockings to supply the case for a novel but not unserviceable cartridge. As their fire became more faint, that of the enemy augmented in volume, rapidity, and precision—casualties mounted up fearfully, and at length their misfortunes culminated in a wholesale disaster. One of the two barracks had a thatched roof. In this, as more roomy, were collected the sick, and wounded, and women. On the evening of the eighth day of the bombardment the enemy succeeded in lodging a lighted "carcase" on the roof, and the whole building was speedily in a blaze. No effort was spared or risk shunned to rescue the helpless inmates; but, in spite of all, two brave men were burned to death. During that night of horror the artillery and marksmen of the enemy, aided by the light of the burning building, poured their cruel fire on the busy men who were trying to save the provisions and ammunition, and living burdens more precious still, out of the fire, while the guards, crouching silent and watchful, finger on trigger, each at his station behind the outer wall, could see the countless foes, revealed now and again by the glare, prowling and yelling around the outer gloom like so many demons eager for their prey.

The misery fell chiefly on the ladies; they were now obliged to pass their days and nights in a temperature varying from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and thirty-eight degrees, cowering beneath such shelter as the

low earth work could give, and all this to women who had been brought up in the lap of luxury, and who had never till now known a moment of physical privation. There were but two wells within reach; one of these had been used to receive their dead for they could not bury them—the other was so rained upon day and night by the shell of the enemy that at last it became the certain risk of death to remain long enough to draw up, from a depth of over sixty feet, a bucket of water for the parched women and children. Yet necessity compelled that risk, while it made the sip of water rare and priceless, but left none to wash their persons or their wounds. A short gill of flour and a handful of split peas was now their daily sustenance. The medical stores had all been destroyed in the conflagration—there remained no drugs, or cordials, or opiates to cure or alleviate. The bandages for the newly wounded were supplied off the persons of the ladies, who nobly parted with their clothing for this purpose, till many of them barely had enough left to screen their persons. And to this condition were these once beautiful women reduced—herded together in fetid misery, where delicacy and modesty were hourly shocked, though never for a moment impaired. Bare-footed and ragged, haggard and emaciated, parched with drought and faint with hunger, they sat watching to hear that they were widows. Each morning deepened the hollow in the youngest cheek, and added a new furrow to the fairest brow. Want, exposure, and depression speedily decimated that hapless company, while a hideous train of diseases—fever, apoplexy, insanity, cholera, and dysentery—began to add their horrors to the dreadful and unparalleled scene. Alas! even this does not by any means exhaust the list of terrors, but we can go no further. American ladies will add their generous tears to those which have been flowing for their sorrows in many an English home during the past few years.

They tried hard to communicate with the outside world—with Lucknow or Allahabad—for they had a few faithful natives who ventured forth for them; but so close were the cavalry pickets around their position that only one person ever returned to them. These spies were barbarously used. The writer saw some of them after the Rebellion in their mutilated state—their hands cut off, or their noses split open; and one poor fellow had lost hands, nose and ears. The native mode of mutilation was horribly painful, the limb being sometimes chopped off with a tulwar—a coarse sword—and the stump dipped in boiling oil to arrest the bleeding.

Events had now reached their dire extremity. The sweetness of existence had vanished, and the last flicker of hope had died away. Yet, moved by a generous despair and an invincible self-respect, they still fought on for dear life, and for lives dearer than their own. By daring and vigilance, and unparalleled endurance, these brave and suffering men staved off ruin for another day, and yet another. Long had their eyes and ears strained in the direction of Allahabad, hoping for the succor that was never to reach them. The 23rd of June dawned—the anniversary of the battle of Plassey. The Nana Sahib had vowed to celebrate that centenary of the rise of the English power in its utter overthrow; the Sepoys had sworn by the most solemn oath of their religion to conquer or perish on that day. Early in the morning the whole force was moved up to the assault; the guns were brought up within a few hundred yards of the wall, the infantry in dense array advance, their skirmishers rolling before them great bales of cotton, proof against the bullets of the besieged, while the cavalry charged at a gallop in another quarter. It was all in vain. The contest was short but sharp. The teams which drew the artillery were shot down, the bales were fired, the sharpshooters driven back on their columns, and the saddles of the cavalry were emptied as they came on. The Sepoy host reeled before the dreadful resistance and fell back discouraged—nor could they be induced to renew the effort. That evening a party of them drew near the position, made obeisance after their fashion, and asked leave to remove their dead. This acknowledgment of an empty triumph was a poor consolation to these gaunt and starving Englishmen, under the shadow of the impending doom of themselves and those whom they so well defended.

The result of this day's conflict produced a sudden change in the plans of the Nana Sahib. He began to despair of taking the position by storm, and events were forbidding him to wait for the slower process of starvation. The Sepoys were already grumbling, and another repulse would set them conspiring. The usurper saw he must bring matters to a speedy conclusion; for, in addition to Sepoy discontent, rumors had already reached him of an avenging force having left Benares to save those whom he had resolved to destroy. He had not a day to lose. It behoved the monster to bring the matter to a speedy conclusion by any means, even the very foulest, as all others had failed. He therefore resolved to instate white