CHAPTER XCIII

INDIAN SUMMER

In the Crimean War, Great Britain fought for the road to India. It was thus an irony indeed that, after her struggle with Russia was over, India herself should develop a revolt:

April 27, 1859: . . . It was a prophetic saying of Mackintosh forty years ago at Roehampton that it remained to be proved whether the acquisition of our Indian Empire was in reality a gain to us, and we must hope that the remark will not be illustrated in our days by seeing England herself placed in danger by her exertions to retain or reconquer India, whose value is so problematical and of which nothing is certain but the immense labour and cost of her retention.

The Commander in Chief in India himself wrote Greville a warning:

May 1, 1857: . . . George Anson writes to me from India that there is a strange feeling of discontent pervading the Indian army from religious causes, and a suspicion that we are going to employ our irresistible power in forcing Christianity upon them. It is not true, but the natives will never be quite convinced that it is not, as long as Exeter Hall and the missionaries are permitted to have *carte blanche* and work their will as they please in those regions.

In the conflict that followed, the fear was that France would turn and rend her former ally:

July 13, 1859: . . . There is no denying that the Emperor Napoleon has played a magnificent part, and whatever we may think of his conduct, and the springs of his actions, he appears before the world as a very great character. Though he can lay no claim to the genius and intellectual powers of the first Napoleon, he is a wiser and soberer man, with a command over himself and a power of self-restraint.

July 15, 1857: . . . The alarm created here by the Indian news is very great, and Ellenborough (reckoned a great authority on Indian matters) does his best to increase it. The serious part of it is that no one can tell or venture to predict what the extent of the calamity may be, and what proportions the mischief may possibly assume. It is certain that hitherto the Government and the East India Company have been in what is called a fool's paradise on the subject. They have been so long accustomed to consider our Empire there as established on so solid a foundation, and so entirely out of the reach of danger, that they never have paid any attention to those who hinted at possible perils. . . . The Press, and the public who are always led by the Press, took the same easy view of the subject. While the Russian War was going on a clamour was raised against Government for not calling away *all* the British troops in India and sending them to the Crimea, and those who went mad about the Crimean War would willingly have left India without a single European regiment, and have entrusted all our interests to the fidelity and attachment of the native army. Though our government was willing enough to enter into anything that the passion of the multitude suggested, they were not so insane as all that; but as it is, we may consider it most providential that the mutiny did not show itself during the Russian, or indeed during the Persian war. If it had happened while we were still fighting in the Crimea, we could not have sent out the force that would have been indispensable to save India. At the present moment the interest of the public is not greater than its apprehensions and alarm.

July 19, 1857: Although it is impossible that any fresh accounts should have come from India, reports are rife of fresh insurrections and of all sorts of evils. Amidst all the bad news from India, the good fortune is that so many of the native troops, and not only the military, but the whole population of the Punjab, have shown so much fidelity and attachment to the British Government. It is the strongest testimony to the wisdom and justice of our rule, and of the capacity of the natives to appreciate the benefits they derive from it, for, beyond all question, the introduction of European civilization into the East, and the substitution of such a government as that of England for the cruel, rapacious, and capricious dominion of

Oriental chiefs and dynasties, is the greatest boon that the people could have had conferred upon them. Our administration may not have been faultless, and in some instances it may have been oppressive, and it may have often offended against the habits and prejudices of the natives, but it is certainly very superior in every respect, and infinitely more beneficent than any rule, either of Hindoos or Mahometans, that has ever been known in India. However, people much more civilized and more sagacious than the Indians do not always know what is best for them, or most likely to promote their happiness, so it will not be surprising if these disorders should continue to increase, supposing the means of immediately and effectually suppressing them should be found wanting.

December 8, 1857: . . . The account of Lucknow just come by telegram is very alarming, and keeps one in a state of nervous excitement, difficult to describe.

The recent memory of Alma, Inkerman, and Balaklava had dispelled the glamour of "the civil war in India, for such it may be called":

September 22, 1857: . . . It is a curious circumstance (which I have heard no one else remark) that, with all the deep interest universally felt on account of this Sepoy war, not only as it regards our national interests, but out of feeling and sympathy for the vast numbers of our countrymen and women exposed to its horrors and dangers, it does not produce the same degree of enthusiasm as the Crimean War did, in which we had no real interest concerned, and which was only a gigantic folly on our part. People are very anxious about this war, and earnestly desire that the mutiny may be put down and punished, but they regard the war itself with aversion and horror, whereas they positively took pleasure in the war against Russia, and were ready to spend their last guinea in carrying it on. A subscription has been set on foot, but although there never was an occasion on which it might have been expected that vast sums would be subscribed, the contributions have been comparatively small in amount, and it seems probable that a much less sum will be produced for the relief of the Indian sufferers than the Patriotic Fund or any of the various subscriptions made for purposes connected with the Crimean War.

Indeed, Greville was "so struck with the backwardness of the Government in rewarding General Havelock for his brilliant exploits" that he wrote a letter of protest, after which Havelock "got a good service pension, is made Major General and K.C.B."

After all, Lucknow was a long way off. And (October 19th) Greville's racing friends at Newmarket "were too much occupied with the business of the place to think much about India."

Dunrobin Castle, October 2, 1857: . . . We are justly punished for our ambition and encroaching spirit, but it must be owned we struggle gallantly for what we have perhaps unjustly acquired. Europe behaves well to us, for though we have made ourselves universally odious by our insolence and our domination, and our long habit of bullying all the world, nobody triumphs over us in the hour of our distress, and even Russia, who has no cause to feel anything but ill will toward us, evinces her regret and sympathy in courteous terms. Whatever the result of this contest may be, it will certainly absorb all our efforts and occupy our full strength and power, so that we shall not be able to take any active or influential part in European affairs for some time to come. The rest of the Great Powers will have it in their power to settle everything as seems meet to them without troubling themselves about us and our opinions. For the present we are reduced to the condition of an insignificant power. It is certain that, if this mutiny had taken place two years earlier, we could not have engaged at all in the Russian (that is, the Crimean) War.

Lord Shaftesbury, the evangelical leader, pointed the moral:

London, December 2, 1857: . . . Shaftesbury too, who is a prodigious authority with the public, and who has all the religious and pseudo-religious people at his back, does his utmost to make the case out to be as bad as possible and to excite the rage and indignation of the masses to the highest pitch. He is not satisfied with the revolting details with which the Press has been teeming, but complains that more of them have not been detailed and described, and that the particulars of mutilation and violation have not been more copiously and circumstantially given to the world. I have never been able to comprehend what his motives are for talking in this strange and extravagant

strain, but it is no doubt something connected with the grand plan of Christianizing India, in the furtherance of which the High Church and the Low Church appear to be bidding against each other; and as their united force will in all probability be irresistible, so they will succeed in making any government in India impossible.

January 7, 1858: . . . The real meaning, however, of the Exeter Hall clamour is, that we should commence as soon as we can a crusade against the religions of the natives of India, and attempt to force Christianity upon them.

For the Mutiny also, there was ordered "a day of humiliation," to arrange for which Greville was summoned to Balmoral:

September 22, 1857: . . . I was in hopes this miserable cant and humbug would not have been repeated on this occasion, but the pseudo-religious part of the community never lose an opportunity of clamouring for such pious manifestations and the Government never dare to treat their nonsense with the contempt it deserves.

Gordon Castle, September 27, 1857: Granville told me the Queen was furious at having any fast day at all, and when she was compelled to order one she wanted to have it on Sunday, but Palmerston (who he believed was goaded on by Shaftesbury and William Cowper) said it must be on a week day, and very reluctantly she gave way. What made the whole thing more ridiculous was that she gave a ball (to the gillies and tenants) the night before this Council.

London, October 6, 1857: . . . Clarendon said that if it was possible for Havelock to maintain himself a short time longer, and that reinforcements arrived in time to save the beleaguered places, the tide would turn and Delhi would fall; but if he should be crushed, Agra, Lucknow, and other threatened places would fall with renewals of the Cawnpore horrors, and in that case the unlimited spread of the mutiny would be irrepressible, Madras and Bombay would revolt, all the scattered powers would rise up everywhere, and all would be lost.

Frognal, November 14, 1857: The news of the capture of Delhi and the relief of Lucknow excited a transport of delight and triumph, and everybody jumped to the conclusion that the

Indian contest was virtually at an end. Granville told me he thought there would be no more fighting, and that the work was done. I was not so sanguine, and though I thought the result of the contest was now secure, I thought we should still have a great deal on our hands and much more fighting to hear of before the curtain could drop. But I was not prepared to hear the dismal news which arrived to-day, and which has so cruelly damped the public joy and exultation. It appears that Havelock is in great danger and the long-suffering garrison of Lucknow not yet out of their peril, for the victory of Havelock had not been complete, the natives were gathering round the small British force in vast numbers, and unless considerable reinforcements could be speedily brought up, the condition of the British, both military and civilians, of men, women, and children would soon again be one of excessive danger.

December 29, 1857: . . . By the Indian papers just arrived it appears that the relief of the Residency of Lucknow and the deliverance of all who were confined in it was complete, but there was no great battle (which everybody expected), though much severe fighting, and Lucknow itself was still untaken. The mutineers, though always worsted, seem to fight better than they were thought capable of doing, and everything tends to show that the suppression of the Mutiny is still far from being accomplished.

The Cabinet differed as to "the calling out of the militia":

November 17, 1857: A council was held yesterday at Windsor to summon Parliament, where I found the Ministers much dejected at the news from India. There was a letter from Colin Campbell, expressing great alarm at the position of Outram and Havelock, whom he thought to be in a great scrape, though without any fault of theirs, and there was also a report from Sir John Lawrence that affairs were in a ticklish state in the Punjab, and expressing a great anxiety for reinforcements, which he had very little prospect of getting; in short, the apparently bright sky in which we were rejoicing only a few days ago seems to be obscured by black clouds, and the great result to be as uncertain as ever.

January 7, 1858: . . . We have news of . . . the death of Havelock, the hero of this war, who, after escaping unhurt through

battle after battle, has succumbed to disease, not having lived long enough to know all that is said of him and all that has been done for him here. It is impossible not to feel the loss of this man as if he belonged to one individually, so deep is the interest which his gallantry and his brilliant career have excited in every heart.

Curiously, it was the Sikhs—lately in arms against Britain—who helped to save the situation:

London, December 17, 1857: . . . Captain Lowe, lately aide-de-camp to poor George Anson, and who was in the storm of Delhi, an intelligent officer . . . says that nothing can be more inexpedient than the scheme, propounded here with great confidence, of forming the native force, on which we are hereafter to rely, of Sikhs instead of Hindoos. He says that, inasmuch as they are very brave and excellent soldiers, it would only be to place ourselves in a state of far greater danger and uncertainty, for though the Sikhs have proved very faithful to us, and rendered excellent service, it is impossible to predict how long this humour may last, and whether circumstances may not arise to induce them to throw off our yoke and assert their own independence. It is marvellous and providential that on this occasion the Sikhs were disposed to side with us instead of against us, for if they had taken the latter course, it would have been all up and nothing could have saved us. *À propos* of this consideration, he told me a curious anecdote. A Sikh was talking to a British officer in a very friendly way, and he said, "Don't you think it very strange that we, who were so recently fighting against you, should be now fighting with you? and should you be very much surprised if a year or two hence you should see us fighting against you again?"

Toward India, the nation, conscious of depressed trade, was resentful:

November 17, 1857: . . . A general cry is getting up for making India pay for the expense of this Indian war, which, even supposing it to be just and reasonable, will make the ultimate settlement of the Indian question more difficult, and a measure little calculated to reconcile the native population to our rule.

London, December 2, 1857: Yesterday morning Lord Sydney

received a letter from Lady Canning, who said that although undoubtedly many horrible things had happened in India, the exaggeration of them had been very great, and that she had read for the first time in the English newspapers stories of atrocities of which she had never heard at Calcutta, and that statements made in India had turned out to be pure inventions and falsehoods. Yet our papers publish everything that is sent to them without caring whether it may be true or false, and the credulous public swallow it all without the slightest hesitation and doubt.

The Governor General, son of the great Prime Minister, was ridiculed as "Clemency Canning":

November 2, 1857: . . . The Press goes on attacking Canning with great asperity and injustice, and nobody here defends him. Though I am not a very intimate or particular friend of his, I think him so unfairly and ungenerously treated that I mean to make an effort to get him such redress as the case admits of, and the only thing which occurs to me is that Palmerston, as head of the Government, should take the opportunity of the Lord Mayor's dinner to vindicate him, and assume the responsibility of his acts. His "Clemency" proclamation, as it is stupidly and falsely called, was, I believe, not only proper and expedient, but necessary, and I expect he will be able to vindicate himself completely from all the charges which the *Times* and other newspapers have brought against him, but in the meantime they will have done him all the mischief they can.

Greville, mindful of his early loyalty to the elder Canning, appealed to Granville, leader in the House of Lords, to defend the Governor General. And "not trusting to Palmertson" (November 4, 1857)—which phrase, writes Greville, "he [Granville] begged me not to breathe to anyone"—made such a speech at a Mansion House dinner to the Duke of Cambridge:

Hatchford, November 8, 1857: . . . He writes me word it was "rather uphill work," and I was told it was not very well received, but nevertheless it produced an effect, and it acted as a check upon the *Times*, which without retracting (which it never does) has considerably mitigated its violence. It was the first

word that has been said for Canning in public, and it has evidently been of great use to him.

Palmerston followed at the Lord Mayor's Dinner with "a glowing eulogium on Canning . . . which will infallibly stop the current of abuse against him" and "has already turned the *Times*." In other respects, "this swaggering speech was bad enough, full of jactance and bow-wow, but well enough calculated to draw cheers from a miscellaneous audience. He told them we had a military force now embodied as strong as we had before the Indian Mutiny, which I take to be a downright falsehood.

According to Clarendon, the Prime Minister, Palmerston "was very flippant and offhand in his views of Indian affairs." He "had jumped to the conclusion that the Company must be extinguished."

London, October 19, 1857: . . . At the Cabinet on Friday last he said, "They need not meet again for some time, but they must begin to think of how to deal with India when the revolt was put down. Of course everybody must see that the India Company must be got rid of."

February 3, 1858: . . . In a Committee on Indian affairs and the intended bill [to abolish the Company], at which Bethell was present, on some objection or possible objection being suggested by one of the members, Palmerston said in his usual jaunty way, "Oh, they will fall in love with our bill when they see it"; when Bethell, in his niminy-piminy manner and simper, said, "Oh, my dear Lord!"

"This brief announcement did not meet with any response" and "it is clear that the Company do not mean to be summarily extinguished without a struggle."

December 7, 1857: . . . Lyndhurst is decidedly against any strong and subversive measure about India, and is for improving and not upsetting the present system. Public opinion, led by the Press, has hitherto leant to the dissolution of the Company and the Directorial Government; but as time advances and the extreme difficulty of concocting another system becomes apparent, people begin to dread the idea of destroying an ancient system, without any certainty of a better one replacing it.

And why should Vernon Smith, merely "a diligent clerk," have the duty of reorganizing "the Indian Empire"? Hitherto, "the Leadenhall Administration" of the Company had been everything and the Board of Control, representing the nation, had been "looked upon as a very subordinate department, and one of mere routine, which anybody might fill." Lord John Russell had offered it to Sir James Graham, who had "treated the proposal as an insult." Greville was lachrymose:

January 7, 1858: . . . I begin to have the most dismal forebodings upon this Indian question. I continue indeed to believe that by dint of enormous exertions, by a vast expenditure of money, and sending out every man we can raise and make a soldier of we shall sooner or later conquer the mutineers and suppress the rebellion, but I expect we shall lose our Indian Empire. I may possibly not live to see the catastrophe, but those who are twenty or maybe ten years younger than I am in all probability will. All our legislation is conducting us to this end. We are taking this moment of war and confusion to revolutionize our Indian Empire and government, to root up all that the natives have been accustomed to regard with veneration, and to pronounce sentence of condemnation upon the only authority of which they know anything, and which has been the object of their fears and hopes. And sometimes of their attachment. The Government is about to hurry into this measure as if the existing system had been the cause of the present rebellion and conflict, and that the one they propose to substitute would be so much better and capable of repairing the mischief which the government of the Company has caused by its alleged mismanagement. I have no prejudice or partiality for the Company but I believe any great change at this moment to be fraught with danger, and that the notion of improving the state of affairs by the abolition of what is called the double government is a mere delusion.

Happily he was able, a few weeks later, to be a little more cheerful:

March 12, 1858: . . . The great question of suppressing the rebellion and reëstablishing our rule is virtually settled, and though we may yet have a great deal of trouble and even difficulty, all serious danger is at an end, and . . . we are as secure of

possessing India as of any of our colonies. The apprehensions I had on the subject, and which I have expressed, have been very far from realized, and those who took more sanguine and confident views of the issue of the contest have been justified by the event.

All parties were agreed that John Company must depart. What was proposed by Palmerston, a Whig, was carried out by his Tory successor, Lord Derby.