

## CHAPTER XXX

1857

INDIAN MUTINY — SIR COLIN CAMPBELL — LORD DAL-  
HOUSIE — COMMERCIAL CRISIS

ALL was going smoothly for Palmerston in Parliament, and there were no manifest rocks ahead, when suddenly, as a clap of thunder out of the blue, came, one fine morning in June, the news of the mutiny of Bengal regiments at Meerut, of the massacre of the officers, and of the escape of the mutinous throng up the Ganges to Delhi.

Well do I remember the morning on which we read of this disastrous event. It was our custom at that time to breakfast at an open window, a little above the level of the flowers of a very pretty parterred garden. It still comes back to me how sick we felt with anxiety, how alarming the prospect appeared, and how all our flowers had lost their glory. From that moment my attention was wholly engaged by the Mutiny and its consequences.

It is of course the custom in all Governments that when any department is filled by a Minister in the House of Commons, some substitute or representative is supplied in the House of Lords, who answers for the Government on the subject of that department. Sometimes this substitute in one House for a chief that is in another had the formal position of an Under-Secretary of State. But where there is none such, some other member of the Government takes up the duty. Ever since the Aberdeen Government had been formed, it had fallen to my lot to answer for the Indian Depart-

ment. Partly, perhaps, owing to my connection with Dalhousie, and partly to my personal knowledge of the subject, this duty had been chiefly left in my hands, and I had given my mind to it in a special manner. The method by which I proceeded was to read the official papers as they reached our hands—to read them thoroughly and in their order. It is easy to read what are called Blue-books with little benefit. Extracts are given by the press, and quotations in many speeches; but what is wanted, if we desire to know the truth, is to follow events in the true order in which they occur, for on this very often the whole interpretation depends.

Some mutinous symptoms had appeared at Barrackpore soon after Lord Canning had reached India in February, 1857. But, though serious, they were not alarming. Ellenborough had raised a debate on them on the 9th of June, and had given some currency to an injurious report that Canning was disposed to interfere with the religion of the natives of India. Granville and Lansdowne gave a prompt denial to this ridiculous report. But when the great crash of the Mutiny came, and all the world realized its formidable proportions, every fool who had ever objected to anything in the policy or acts of the Government of India was shouting in some form or another, 'Didn't I tell you?'

One result of my close reading of all the facts was an early and firm conviction that we had to deal, not with a popular insurrection, but with a military mutiny, and with that alone. But there was another conviction forced upon my mind—namely, this: that the Mutiny was due to a genuine religious panic, communicating itself from mind to mind under the uncontrollable impulses of superstitious fears. It was not in its origin any political conspiracy, although, of course, it set up conspiracies without number, racial, political, and religious. But many of the phenomena were not only curious, but mysterious.

Regiments, after having stood firm for weeks, suddenly joined the mutineers, just at a moment when their success was impossible, and when they were sure to be disarmed or shot. There was no reason in their action, no opportuneness in their conduct. They seemed to go suddenly mad, like shying horses or stampeded mules. The savage slaughter of the officers came at the end of years of sympathy and affection. It was as if some evil spirit were let loose, which, at the most unexpected moments, lighted upon and took possession of the Sepoy corps, converting them into demons of treachery and destruction. And yet, in the middle of this raging storm in the spirits of men, there were abundant examples of the most splendid fidelity and courage.

Following all these facts, as I did in the minutest detail, I saw the folly and the danger of the furious cry for vengeance which arose in England, and of the reckless blame cast on Lord Canning, embodied in the name given to him in the press of 'Clemency Canning.' I saw that whilst punishment of mutineers ought to be swift, if possible, it ought above all things to be discriminate. I therefore took an active part in defending Canning against the attacks made upon him in the House of Lords, and I was gratified, at a later date, by hearing from Canning himself that he had been struck by the accurate knowledge of the detailed facts of the case I had shown in my replies.

On the 27th of July, in reply to a speech from Lord Ellenborough, I took occasion to expose the opposite directions from which censure had been cast upon our Indian Government, and to point out how dangerous it would be to come to any hasty conclusion on the real causes of the Mutiny, or as to any changes of policy which would be desirable. A few days later I was able to contradict Lord Ellenborough, when he attributed to Canning procrastination in dealing with the first symptoms of suspicion and alarm among the native troops. But

all these details were soon forgotten in the two tremendous struggles—one for the recapture of Delhi, the other for the relief of Lucknow. The only comfort we had, during the dreadful months when those struggles were going on, lay in the magnificent courage, energy, and resource displayed throughout India, not merely by the great soldiers whose names are for ever memorable, but by individual officers and civilians, who were taken by surprise in small stations all over the country, and who often contrived to defeat the mutineers or to escape from them. It cheered us all beyond expression to see that the virtues of a governing race had not departed from us, and that under the most adverse conditions, our men and women showed indomitable courage and resource.

At Delhi there was no garrison to be relieved, no valuable lives to be rescued. On the other hand, we knew that invaluable lives would be lost in the siege and capture. But our dominion and Empire depended on it, and we cheered our gallant countrymen when, in the fiercest heats of an Indian summer, they undertook the recovery of the capital of the Moguls. With Lucknow it was different. There we had a gallant garrison, with women and children, to rescue from bloodthirsty villains and from a cruel death. It was evident that the work of rescue would be most difficult. We had plenty of heroic men, such as Havelock and Sir Henry Lawrence and Outram. But we had no one man to co-ordinate our separate forces, and to combine all their efforts to supreme results.

To my intense relief, Palmerston and the Cabinet determined to send out Sir Colin Campbell, as Commander-in-Chief over the army of India. I went to him directly, and, finding him at home in a small house in Knightsbridge, I told him of his appointment, and asked him how soon he would be ready to go. His reply was instantaneous: 'To-morrow afternoon.' He left England on the 12th of July, and on the 22nd of November every one of the threatened victims of

massacre in Lucknow had been redeemed from a dreadful death, and had been restored to safety.

I did not at that time know anything about Sir Colin's origin or his history, although his name indicated that he came from my own country. All this knowledge came to me in a curious and very accidental way. I was on one of my visits with my wife to my estates in Mull, and one day we were in a boat with the factor, who was a Campbell and a native of Islay. As we were passing a slated house near the shore, which I had not seen before, I asked who lived there. The reply was: 'An old man whose name is Macliver, who is the father of Sir Colin Campbell.' 'The father of Sir Colin Campbell!' I repeated in great surprise. 'Do you mean the General?' He said he did, and explained that Sir Colin's real name was Macliver, but that his mother was a Campbell, and an uncle had adopted the boy at an early age, had educated him, and had bought for him a commission in the army.

We landed, and went up to see the old man. We found him above eighty years of age, but very erect and tall, with the dignified and courteous manners of the genuine Highlander. The most remarkable feature about him was a very large and rather globular head, with gray curly hair matted round his forehead. I left the old man's house feeling that I now knew Sir Colin as I had never known him before, and that I had a kind of personal interest in his fame. Sir Colin was extremely like his father. He was of shorter stature, but the head was of the same character, and also the curly grey hair, giving a general aspect not unlike a West Highland bull. Lines of power coursed across his brow, and ridged it up into a deeply corrugated surface. With a gentle manner, there was a fiery expression lurking in his eyes, whilst his whole aspect and demeanour were soldierly in character. He had a square and massive figure, giving one the impression of a man capable of great physical endurance. The whole aspect of the man inspired confidence.

He seemed the very type of a soldier, by profession, and by the experience and education of a life of service.

It is impossible, in my opinion, to exaggerate the combination of high qualities which Sir Colin exhibited in this dangerous labour of duty and of love. I am never tired to this day of reading the detailed account, and wondering at the precision, the foresight, the sagacity, the resource, the determination, and the moral as well as physical courage involved in the operation as a whole, and in all its complicated details. It was a splendid piece of work, and for a prize of unspeakable value.

It is now somewhere about a hundred and fifty years since the Supreme Court of Law in Scotland declared that clans in Scotland had no longer any existence—that nothing could belong to, or be due to, any man as member of a clan. And all that is true. But, though dead as an institution, clanship survives as a sentiment; and I confess it made me proud and happy when I found that a clansman of my own, born and bred in one of those western isles I loved so well, was standing out before the world, not merely as the rescuer of valuable lives, but as the subduer of a fierce enemy and the saviour of India. When he came home as a Peer of the Realm I had the honour of being one of the two members who introduced him to the House, and my wife and I made as intimate a friend of him as his retired habits would allow. On one occasion, when a vacancy was about to occur in the county seat, I offered to exert all my influence to secure his election, feeling quite sure that the county would have been proud to have him as member. But, though pleased and surprised, he declined absolutely, telling me that he had never been anything but a soldier, and had no interest in ordinary politics.

In September, 1857, I was, as usual, for some weeks Minister in Attendance on the Queen at Balmoral. One day, when no members of the Royal Family were present except the Prince Consort, it happened that I

was sitting at dinner next the Queen. On Her Majesty's other side was Lord Chelmsford, who had come accidentally to Braemar with his wife, and had been asked to dinner. A daughter of Lord and Lady Chelmsford was the wife of an officer stationed at Lucknow when the Mutiny broke out, and with her husband formed part of the beleaguered garrison. Of course, the Chelmsfords were both in a state of the most anxious suspense, as to the progress of the relieving columns. In the middle of dinner a servant came behind the Queen's chair, and passed one of the well-known red boxes into Her Majesty's hand. The Queen at once slipped it under the tablecloth, so as to be able to open it out of sight of Lord Chelmsford. He, however, was a man of very alert perceptions, and, although he gave no sign of having seen anything, I saw the strain under which he kept his countenance unmoved. The Queen read the telegram underneath the tablecloth, and then in a gentle voice of sympathy said to Lord Chelmsford: 'Not relieved yet.' In his excitement he did not catch the word 'yet,' and he repeated in a suppressed voice of great alarm: 'Not relieved?' The Queen then laid special stress on the word 'yet,' and so mitigated as far as possible the painful anxiety of her guest.

It was during this stay at Balmoral that I heard of Palmerston's resolution to bring in a Bill for the abolition of the East India Company, and the assumption by the Crown of the government of India. He had not mentioned it in the Cabinet before I left town, and in conversation with myself I had never heard him allude to it. I do not think he cared much about it. But he was just the man to take up the broad, popular impression—very ignorant, but very widely spread—that somehow or other the mutiny of the Sepoys was the result of the rule of the Company. Although I was disgusted with the senseless abuse heaped by the Press upon the Government of India, and especially upon the great man who had just left the

scene of his labours, I did not entertain any objections to the change in form which Palmerston was going to propose. On reaching London, I wrote in my political journal as follows: 'I have no belief that this change will render the administration much more successful than it has been; but I think it necessary and desirable, in order to remove the very gross delusion which prevails at present in this country as to the real nature of the Indian Government. There is no driving it out of people's heads that the Company is not still a commercial body, or that the Crown does not really possess already very complete control over the measures of the administration. The result, therefore, is that people are continually running on false scents, attributing every evil to causes which have no connection with the subject. Moreover, the Government at home is tempted not to defend the Indian Government as it ought. I have frequently been warned in the House, "Oh, don't commit yourself too much in defence of the Company," and this, not because any real fault could be found with the action of the Government of India, but because the directors and the Company are so unpopular that it is considered best to keep, as it were, in a separate boat.'

What troubled me most was the chorus of attacks which were now directed against Lord Dalhousie. He had done too many great things with a high hand and a strong arm not to have offended and irritated many people. His resolute character, too, had found expression in minutes and despatches of brilliant ability, but which were not conciliatory to his opponents. Now that he was down, and an overwhelming calamity had suddenly affected a great part of the native army, all his enemies rushed upon him with their weapons. As became the dignity of the great office he had so long held with splendid results, he maintained a rigid silence. He knew that ignorant clamours would find their level. He had held that office, at the request of the Government, longer than his broken health could



bear. He had sent his wife home in anticipation of his return. But she had died on the way, on shipboard, almost in sight of England. The blow broke him completely down. In the autumn after my return from Balmoral, I heard that he had taken rooms in the hotel at Arrochar, at the head of Loch Long, about twenty miles from Inveraray. Finding it impossible to hope for a visit from him, I drove over to see him.

I found him sadly changed from the happy day when I sat beside him at the great meeting in Edinburgh, when all political parties had united to rejoice over his appointment. He was then a spare man, with very fair hair and fairer skin. He was now very stout, and he seemed unable to rise from his chair. There only remained unchanged his large, splendid eyes, and his thin, compressed lips, giving one the idea of unbending resolution. An air of sadness and depression was only too apparent. I was, I confess, much vexed to see so great a force so nearly spent. But I did what I could to be cheerful with him, and, thinking the employment might be useful to him, I spoke of his answering in some form some of the attacks then being made upon him. His reply was prompt: 'My dear Argyll, I never will say one word in my own defence until I can say it in the House of Lords.'

Alas! I knew and saw only too clearly what that must mean, and I formed the determination to do for him as best I could what he never would be well enough to do for himself. I left him with a heavy heart, and was glad to refresh my spirit by that contact with external nature which is an ever-living fountain for the weary and the sad. The mountain passes through which my road lay—Glencroe and Glen Kyle—are among the most beautiful in the West Highlands. They had been familiar to me from childhood, with streams and rocks and lakes and restful arms of the sea, and they made me feel how little Nature takes heed of the infirmities of men, and with what composure we must accept them, whether in others or in ourselves.

I could not but remember the shouts of gratulation with which Lord Dalhousie was speeded on his way to take up that great office, the brilliancy of his administrative achievements, his uncontested supremacy above all the ablest men in India, the widened boundaries of our marvellous Empire; and now, on the other side of the picture, his return in ruined health to a desolate home, made the target of every ignorant opponent whom he had brushed aside in India, and whom he could have brushed aside in England, if only he could but stand and speak. All this passed through my mind as I left the inn at Arrochar with a sadness which was really inexpressible.

Lord Dalhousie lived till 1860, and after his death I had the satisfaction of writing and publishing in the *Edinburgh Review* an account of his splendid years of public service in the greatest office under the British Crown, at a momentous epoch in the history of our Eastern Empire.

Cabinet office has one advantage in public life: that it brings one into contact with a great variety of subjects about which otherwise one might never feel called upon to think at all. This was my case in December, 1857, when a Cabinet was called suddenly to deal with a great financial crisis. When we met, our Chancellor of the Exchequer had to tell us of a very alarming state of things. Some of the largest houses in the city of London were within a few days of bankruptcy. Even the soundest were in great alarm, and would probably fall into the same condition unless something were done to help them. To my astonishment, George Lewis told us that some of the oldest banks in Scotland, which I had been accustomed to regard as being as safe as the Bank of England, were also in a very shaky condition. How could the Cabinet remedy this condition of things, dangerously affecting the credit of the commercial world all over the three kingdoms?

Lewis told us we could 'suspend the Bank Act.'

And what would that do? It would enable the Bank of England to issue more paper-money in the form of notes than, under the existing law, it was allowed to do. Peel's Act of 1844 had placed the issue of paper-money under strict limitation, and the fact of that limitation, if it did not cause, did at least aggravate the monetary panic. George Lewis assured us that he had considerable confidence in the remedy of simply for a time withdrawing the limitation, and allowing the Bank of England to exceed its statutory limits in regard to paper. Of course, we agreed, because there was nothing else that we could do. But it roused misgivings in my mind that have never been solved. Could that law be a wise one—could it be founded on really sound principles—which imperatively needed to be suspended when times of monetary difficulty came? And as the actual effect of suspending it was nothing whatever but a larger issue of paper-money, were not the panic and the crisis itself caused by an artificial restriction on that issue which ought not to be restored? Of course, we could not of our own authority suspend an Act of Parliament, without applying for an Act of Indemnity. But hours and even moments pressed, and we did authorize the Bank of England to issue notes beyond the legal number, to a definite amount, and then summoned Parliament to sanction what we had done.

If I was surprised by the nature of the panic and by the remedy proposed, I was still more surprised by the effect of that remedy. It was immediate and complete. The panic vanished like a nightmare when a man awakes; and yet, I could not but remember, not one farthing had been added to the wealth of the country by what we had done. Not one single article that money could purchase or represent, not one item in the food or in the clothing, or in the miscellaneous consumption of the people, was increased in quantity or in value by anything we could do. All that we did was to tell the Bank of England that it might violate a law on which great value was set by many—the law,

namely, which forbids the issue of paper promises to pay without a certain amount of gold or of securities to back the promise. We told them that they might issue such paper promises to the extent of two millions, even although they had no gold to secure their soundness. This did seem to me to be a strange remedy for a general want of trust. It seemed to me more like a new element of insecurity. But there is no arguing against facts, and the follies of the human mind are amongst the most powerful of all facts. All the people that had been rushing for their money at the banks were quite reassured when they heard that the Bank of England had been allowed to issue paper-money, which represented nothing but paper. This made it all right, and the panic ceased. I wondered then, and I wonder still, at the terms of currency and of banking of which these transactions are the result. But it is a difficult subject, and I am glad to leave it, as I left it then.

I think that in the autumn of 1857 Aberdeen's mind was a little under the influence of a most natural irritation on account of Palmerston's sweeping success at the polls. In no other way can I account for a sentence in one of his letters, in which he said that we 'deserved to be turned out for India, as much as we did before for the Crimean affair.' I never allowed my love for Aberdeen or my veneration for his character to silence me on such occasions in our intercourse. I made this letter of his, therefore, an opportunity of telling him my matured opinion on the Indian Mutiny, at a moment when the public mind was still agitated by angry and revengeful passions. After telling him that I could not understand his sentence about our supposed delinquency, I proceeded thus: 'In the first place, I never admitted, and I do not now admit, that we deserved to be turned out for the Crimean disasters; but in the second place, if we did, the Indian business has not yet reached a stage at which anything can be attributed to the Home Government, unless you refer

to Palmerston's request to send troops viâ Suez. Though it seems the best way, I doubt if it would really be the quickest or the most practicable.' I then passed to my 'diagnosis of the convulsion,' which I wish to record here because it was so mature at a very early time.

'The Indian Mutiny is too horrible, but I see nothing to make me doubt that in the main it is a military revolt. The part taken hitherto by the population has been less hostile than might have been expected. When order is suspended and licence reigns, all the vagabonds and ruffians come out of their holes, like other doleful creatures in the dark, and their deeds give an aspect of general revolt, which other facts, I think, contradict. Still, the fanaticism of the Mahomedans has no doubt been roused outside the army. I have no fears of the result, not merely with respect to the future Government of the country. People talk very wildly about never having confidence in native troops again, when at this moment we are quelling the insurrection by the help—the efficient help—of the native levies, and when the whole armies of Bombay and Madras seem—as yet, at least—to be faithful. There is no doubt that the foundation of the revolt has been laid in a relaxed military discipline throughout the Bengal army, and it is not the first time in the history of the world that the danger of the decay of discipline in armies has been felt. You will see in the Blue-book some very curious evidence as to the extent to which a loose, disorderly, sulky spirit had prevailed, and had been observed to prevail during the last twelve months—an aggravation of the old inferiority of mere discipline which has been notorious for years.'

Subsequent events have proved the correctness of this view, but it was one in which I was in a small minority at the time.