

FREDERICTON MAN'S ADVENTURES IN INDIAN MUTINY OF 1857

Personal Contacts With Outram, Havelock and
Other Famous Men Described In Captain
MacKenzie's Story

(By H. M. Paint of the Daily Mail
Staff)

A little book attracted our attention the other day. It stood out among its companion volumes on the book shelf, neat and trim in its scarlet binding like a soldier awaiting inspection. Which was only proper for it was a book about the Army written by a Non-Commissioned Officer—or rather by a man who had risen from the ranks. The inscription on the fly leaf read:

My Life as a Soldier, by Captain Thomas MacKenzie formerly Sergeant to Her Majesty's 64th Regiment Field Bugler to the Generals Commanding in the Persian Campaign and Indian Mutiny.

In the simplest language, it set forth with no attempt at fine writing the adventures and hazards of a soldier's life. It was written by a man who has chosen Fredericton as his home after many years of honorable service in the British Army. After reading it we had a clearer appreciation of the meaning of the saying, "The British N.C.O. is the backbone of the British Army."

In 1841 (being then only eleven years old and 4 feet 2 inches in height) Thomas MacKenzie joined the fourth company of the 64th at their depot, in Templemore Ireland. Here he learned drill, and to play the flute, beat the drum and blow the bugle. In 1843 he took his place in the regimental life and drum band. In 1844 he was promoted to drummer. Says MacKenzie:

"In those days I have seen many men receiving from 100 to 500 lashes before breakfast of a morning, when all the troops in town or garrison would have to parade to witness it."

Let those whose day is spoiled unless they have a glass of orange juice and their favorite cereal on the breakfast table these degenerate days ponder this well—from 100 to 500 lashes BEFORE breakfast!

At the end of 1843 the regiment was ordered to Cork to embark for India. MacKenzie was then eighteen years old. Colonel Stopford took command here, being exchanged from the 43 Regiment Light Infantry. He had had a distinguished record and had already served with distinction in several campaigns in India.

Colonel (afterwards Brigadier) James Stopford was an uncle of Colonel G. J. Maunsell who held the position of commander of militia in New Brunswick for so many years after his appointment in 1865. The son of Brigadier James Stopford, George Stopford, at present a resident of Fredericton, was born at Kurrachee India. He married the daughter of Mr. Milner of Fredericton, but afterwards moved to Tidnish, N.S., later on returning again to Fredericton to establish a permanent residence.

MacKenzie gives an account of Stopford's death attacking a mud fort near Bushire in the Persian Gulf during the Persian campaign of 1856. The cause of the war was the refusal of the Persian forces to evacuate Herat on the northwest frontier of India, during their war with Afghanistan. Britain feared Russian influence behind the Persian advance and sent a punitive expedition to the Persian Gulf. MacKenzie had by then been appointed staff-bugler in constant personal attendance on the General Commanding. He was a young man of about 26 years old. To quote MacKenzie again:

"Colonel Stopford was the only man of the attacking force dressed in red — I made so bold as to remark to the Brigadier that he had made himself conspicuous in front of the enemy by wearing red and that as Brigadier it was not necessary for him to be with the firing line or skirmishers."

Stopford's reply was: "It is the first engagement the regiment has been in, and I will lead them." The mud fort about four miles from Bushire was defended by a dry ditch and steep bank, leading up to the low walls. While ascending the bank Brigadier Stopford was shot through the heart by a Persian from about a range of 20 yards. He fell back into MacKenzie's arms with the cry, "O my God MacKenzie, I'm shot." In a few minutes he was dead. The soldiers of the 64th enraged by the death of their colonel, shot or bayoneted most of the Persian garrison within the fort when taken.

It was after this action that the famous soldier Sir James Outram arrived to command the British forces. MacKenzie's duties as bugler caused him to be in constant personal attendance on the Lieut. General. To quote MacKenzie: "He was considered the soldiers' friend and always had a good thought for them. They were very glad when he arrived and took command."

A mutual respect and liking grew between Outram and his bugler after the Persian night attack on the British forces at Kooshab. Outram's horse fell and rolled on him. MacKenzie stayed by his unconscious commander, bathing his head with water till he regained consciousness, and was able to remount.

MacKenzie quotes proudly from the Life of Outram by Major General F. J. Goldsmith.

"His thought and care for his soldiers was such as is not often felt by generals for their men. He had during the Persian campaign an orderly bugler MacKenzie from the 64th. On the line of march I have seen him look down (from his horse) and say: 'MacKenzie you are not smoking.' 'No, Sir,' would be the reply, 'have no tobacco.'"

"The general's cheroot case was at once at the bugler's disposal, and he would stop his horse and from his own cheroot give a light to MacKenzie."

Says MacKenzie with honest pride—and what man or officer in the whole British Army would not have been proud to call Outram friend—"Often the like occurred as well as something to keep the cold out during our return march to Bushire!"

Outram, whose name was a household word in England in Indian Mutiny days, embodied all the finest ideals of the soldier. So high was his sense of personal honour that in his day he was called "The Bayard of India."

After the battle of Kooshab it was decided to proceed up river to Momeerah with a flotilla of gunboats. The river banks were lined with Persian forts and batteries, and the ascent had to be made under heavy enemy fire.

Outram as usual wished to be in the leading boat to ascend the river Karoon and to engage the Persian forts. Fearing that he would unduly expose himself, the officers made a kindly conspiracy to appeal to his well-known generosity. They went to him in a body and asked him whether he wished to keep all the honor himself or share it with his comrades. Outram at once said: "Well, then, I will go in the Seindian," which was the centre boat of the flotilla.

In gratitude to MacKenzie, 'Sir James,' as MacKenzie affectionately calls him, presented his bugler with a gold watch and a handsome Persian chain of gold, remarking before all ranks: "I have not forgotten the night attack at Kooshab."

During the Indian mutiny Outram's chivalrous generosity was splendidly shown when he refused to supersede his old comrade Sir Henry Havelock in command of the force relieving Lucknow. It was a prize which most men would have hesitated to forego. All England waited anxiously for word that aid had reached the beleaguered garrison. To the general in command of the relief force promotion, wealth and honors were assured. Outram was senior to Havelock. But there was no petty jealousy in 'Sir James.'

MacKenzie quotes an extract from the orders issued by Outram on this occasion:

"The Major General (Outram) in gratitude for and admiration of the brilliant deeds of arms achieved by General Havelock and his gallant troops, will cheerfully waive his rank on this occasion and will accompany the force to Lucknow in his civil capacity as Commissioner of Oude, tendering his military services to General Havelock as a volunteer."

MacKenzie draws an interesting comparison of the characters of these two famous Englishmen. He says:

"Sir Henry Havelock though carrying out discipline among the force always saw that the men received proper care and rest if possible; and during a march if time permitted he would always see that the men had a cup of coffee issued to them before the march was resumed. On Sundays he would rest the force if at all possible, and have church service on our camp grounds, himself acting as our clergyman. He was considered by the whole force under him to be a very good man as well as a good soldier. I can truthfully say that there was not a man in the force but expressed themselves as sorry for his death from the highest to the lowest."

"Sir James Outram was equally thoughtful for his force, but the orders given by him to the Prevost Marshall were strict, which prevented looting."

His foresight was marvellous for he could at all times see where an advantage could be gained, and make preparations for it beforehand. He was also very quick to see a fault in a movement or otherwise, and I do not think he committed a single mistake during the whole time I was with him that the force under him could complain of. But the whole force saw many times the advantages he gained. In front of the enemy nothing could stop him from being in front to lead his force."

It does not need MacKenzie's final sentence: "Where Sir Henry Havelock would order coffee for his brigade Sir James would order a dram of grog for his," to tell a soldier the feelings of their men towards their two commanders.

The soldiers admired and respected Sir Henry Havelock, but 'Sir James' was the soldiers' darling.

Throughout the story of Macken-

zie's life this love and admiration of

Sir James runs like a golden thread. During the second relief of Lucknow the relief force under Sir Colin Campbell had fought their way to within half a mile of the Residency occupied by the besieged garrison. Outram and Sir Henry Havelock who had carried out the first relief were besieged within along with the original defenders. In spite of the fact that the rebels were still numerous between the forces and the ground swept by a heavy fire, Outram and Havelock, with seven members of their staff came out to meet the relieving force and arrange details for the evacuation of the women and children. Captain Havelock, Colonel Napier, Sitwell and Russell were wounded during the short journey. When details had been arranged Outram saw MacKenzie and found time to offer him his hand before beginning the perilous return journey to the Residency.

"MacKenzie," he said, "I am glad to see you safe." Sir Colin Campbell said.

"Sir James, MacKenzie makes a good aide-de-camp."

Sir James' answer was, "I know it well."

When describing the capture of Cawnpore MacKenzie says in reference to the massacre:

"A man named Shephard who had been a prisoner but had been forgotten by Nana Sahib, came rushing up and led us to the house of death, which we viewed with horror. The floor was several inches deep with the blood of women and children. Locks of hair were sticking to the walls with the marks of the sword cuts and some of those thrown down the well were even then not quite dead. Each man here took a solemn oath not to show any mercy to Nana Sahib or his followers."

In the attack on Bithoor a little later MacKenzie says regretfully:

"The men were determined if possible to catch Nana Sahib, — but it was not to be, for he kept clear and well to the rear of his troops."

And again:

"Nana Sahib gave orders for, and was an eyewitness to the massacre of the women and children. . . . We could see him on his elephant, but he took care we should not catch him, although report said his elephant was shot."

And again:

"Here we could see Nana Sahib, but too far, to be caught either dead or alive. This was a great disappointment to all."

And again at Cawnpore:

"And here again Nana Sahib was seen on an elephant but could not be reached either by shot or bullet, and

he took good care that no man should catch him."

And once more in the assault on Bareilly:

"We were sure we had Nana Sahib here, but it was not to be as he got off at Nepal before the engagement was half over."

And a last time, sadly:

"Still it is surprising that Nana Sahib for whom the government has offered 10,000 pounds dead or alive escaped as well as Tantia Tope to some place unknown."

It is evident that the British soldier was deeply moved and wanted Nana Sahib even more than the Government.

Tantia Tope, the ablest of all the leaders of the mutineers was later taken and hanged but Nana Sahib disappeared forever as though the earth had swallowed him up.

A few extracts may show the metal of the British soldier when fired by a passion for vengeance. Speaking of a battle near Unao, MacKenzie says: "We could not see their masked batteries till we were close to them—they were able to fire round shot, shell, canister, and grape all at once which came among us. Fortunately for us their distance being as usual badly judged their shot went over our heads. Not so the grape, which did us most harm. It was fearful for a while. Still it did not check our men in the least for the advance went steadily on until we took our position to get a flanking fire on their line (there is nothing like it) which surprised them very much."

What a perfect genius for understatement combined with professional enthusiasm there is in the last few words—A flanking fire on their line (there is nothing like it!) which surprised them very much—as well it might!

Of the attack on Bithoor, MacKenzie says: "As soon as the enemy's position was observed our artillery at once opened fire on them. In a very short time the enemy retreated to a stronger position. While retiring their artillery from the batteries in the rear poured a very heavy shower of shot and shell on our advancing line. This was somewhat of a surprise to our men and did us some damage."

Of the heroic gallantry shown in the attack on the mess house, a large building with thick walls and cannon mounted as a fort during the relief of Lucknow, MacKenzie merely says:

"Again here our heavy and light guns had to be brought up to attack the rebels heavy guns, which were mounted on and near the building. For over two hours after continuously firing from our heavy guns, it appeared as if there had not been a (Continued on Page Seven)

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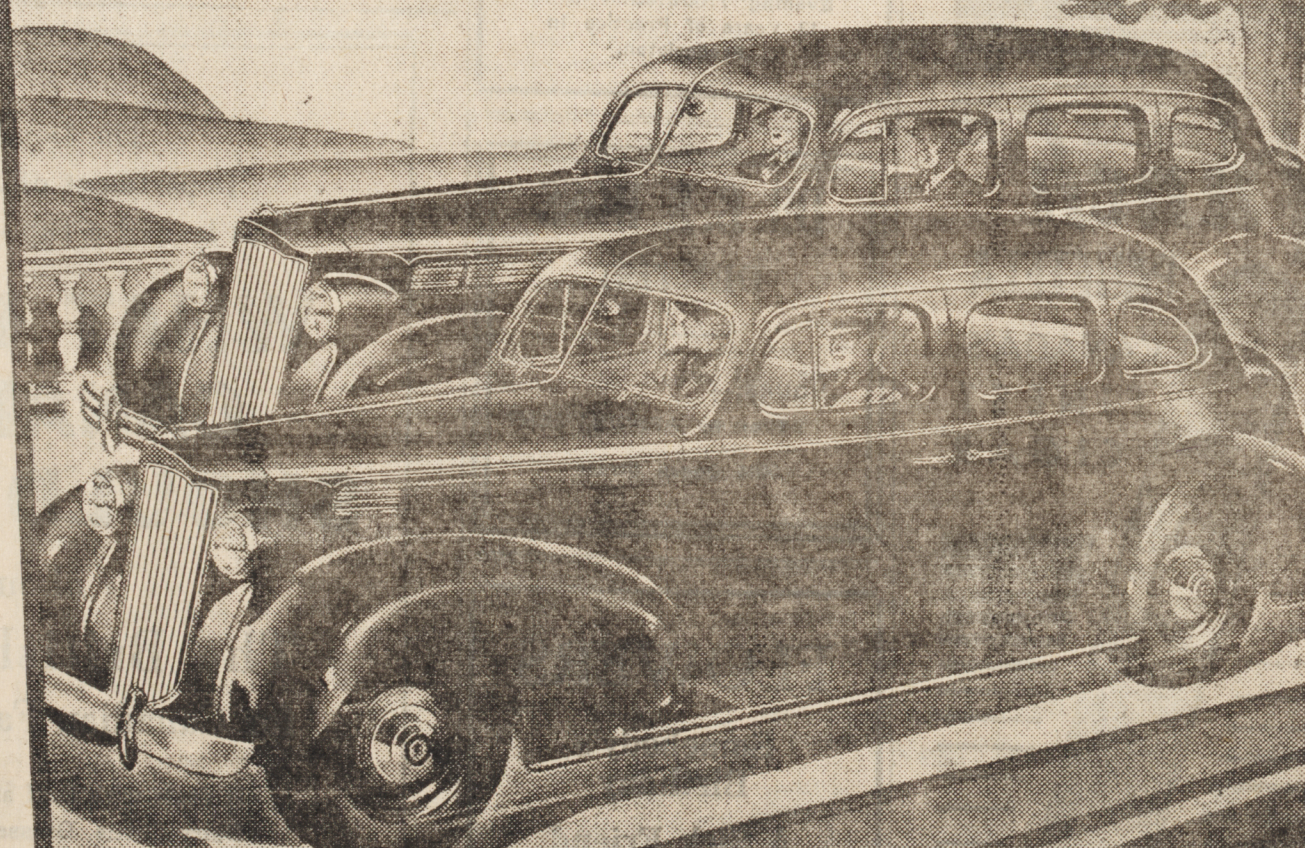
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