

Memorandum by Private Murphy, late of 84th Regt., narrating events during siege of Cawnpore (Khanpur) in 1857 (supporting his application for employment in Corps of Commissionaires)

Publication/Creation

1869

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Royal Victoria Hospital Netley

15th February 1869.(N^o 1.)

Enlisted in The City of Cork in The Month of June 1853. at The age of 18 years and went from There to Chatham where I joined my Depot which was The gallant 84th Regiment I was a very short time There when I went to join my Regiment which was at The time in Madras, Going to Rangoon where we were Stationed for very near 4 years, when There was a sudden Court came for The removal of The Regt to Calcutta at a very short notice which we did so accordingly and Landed in Calcutta in The month of April 1857. and proceeded to Barrackpore where The Regt had very hard duty to do. and to contend with a very large body of The enemy at The time. until General Hecsey K.E.B. ordered one of The ringleaders to be hung which was Mangs Pandey. I do believe at The time that he belonged to The 19th Native Infantry. and shortly after this The 19th Native Infantry was disbanded and allowed to go about Their business which They did and according to Their own words were very proud of The opportunity - when they proceeded to The different large Stations where They joined and formed large Brigades during The Mutiny. It was on. or about The 22nd or 23rd of June 1857 when we left Sum-down in Jarrays to go to Cawnpore There was only so many could leave at a time it might be 12 or 14 per diem until There was 2 Companies of The Regt on Their way to Cawnpore. There was The 6th Company which led off first got to Benares and remained There until They were relieved by The 7th Company of The same Regt. and they proceeded to Cawnpore and in a few days after The 7th Company were relieved by a Company of The 10th Regt of Foot and then we started for Cawnpore in Horse order and arrived There at about 11.00. on The following evening at Cawnpore, it was a beautiful moonlight night and we were conveyed to The old Hospital as it was then called and as soon as we got There There was six men and a Corporal mounted guard which I shall never forget. and at about 1 or 2 o'clock there was a man rode by The gate where The Sentinel was posted on The main road leading from Cawnpore to Allahabad The Sentinel challenged him

but he made no answer as he rode by as fast as he could but at different intervals there was fixed sentinels posted under trees which were the fourth Light Cavalry and when they challenged this man fired at them and went off like lightning so the next morning the General came to the old Hospital and was accompanied by another officer. The two officers were mounted and inquired of the guard what had occurred during the night previous it was explained to him and the General said "Never mind men I know who it was but you keep a very good look out and do not fire until I give you an order." So the following night the 1st Company was ordered off to Lucknow in charge of Captain Whelan of the same Regiment and as soon as they left the Barracks where they were stationed this 2nd Company was ordered to replace them it was done so accordingly this night there was no sign of anything extra until the next morning when the General ordered some Waggons to go out to the different stores and bring in all the arms & accoutrements they could find which was done immediately at the same time there was a great number of the Inhabitants collecting in the Barracks and about 12 or 1 o'clock the General ordered a gun to be fired so as to acquaint the Inhabitants to get into the entrenchments as quick as they could in a very short time they came flocking from all directions, but I am very sorry to say there was a great many failed in doing so and met with an untimely death this occurred I am sorry to say on the 21st of June or as near that date as I can recollect and on the same day the General and Captain Moore of the 32nd Regiment assembled all the Europeans who were in the entrenchment including the women and children and told them off to their posts and after this we were all ordered to go and bring all the furniture there was, such as Tables, and Bedding, Forms, Boxes, and everything that could be got to place all round to prevent the Cavalry from charging upon us so at about 7 o'clock the same night there was about 90 or 100 Sepoys in the entrenchment as it was called and I was on duty at the time on the main entrance such as it was so these people came to me and wanted to force their way out I would not allow them out as it was my orders from the General to let no person out but to let all who could come in there then were to keep them getting out that I was fully determined upon firing on them but in a short time the General heard of this and he and Captain Moore of the 32nd Regt. came over the officers and allowed them to go so off they went and on the same night there was a great number of horses in fact nearly the whole of them tied outside. They made to the horses and carried them

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at away to their own lines and no attempt was made to prevent them. At about 9.30.
which The General gave the Artillery an order to fire into the Enemy's lines. which was done.
fired and in a very short time the Enemy commenced its return on our fire with a vengeance from
and every direction. At the time the writing broke out there was not a morsel of European
in. The provisions in the Camp only a little grain and such like which was in stores for the cattle.
and the provisions came in daily on a Elephant from the Commissariat so that we were
a very badly prepared indeed. We only had 4 or 5 small guns which were very soon dismantled
and disabled so there was no cover for them. There was a considerable quantity of Ammunition
a follows and that was the only thing we could boast of. And certainly that was but of little service
which do the large guns. for we could only use it with the Muzzlers. And after the first three or four
battalion days there was very few men left to man the guns they were all killed or wounded. So
night Women and children had to do the duty which they were scarcely able to do such as carrying
ordnance Ammunition too and for between life and death. in performing the above duty there
turnouts was a great number got slain both Women and children. There was but
a chamber one well in the Entrenchment, which supplied the whole with water. and in
a short time it became quite impossible to get water from there. so there
was a constant fire kept on it day and night. and it was impossible to
but I am obtain a bag of water even for Ten or Fifteen Rupees. The only chance of obtaining
truly death it was about three or four o'clock in the morning. At this time there was four
men and a Sergeant constantly employed at night to bury the dead. and they
assembled had only to carry the bodies about twenty yards from where they fell as there
d told was holes dug for that purpose as convenient as possible. Every other
the day there was corters and charges made on them. and each time with con-
siderable loss on our side. as our party was very weak indeed. and it was
abhor a great deal more to their advantage. There was the new Barracks which was
and I was not finished at the time. and two Barracks at which we always kept a
one small party to keep rebels off as well as they could. Some days we might get
as from a little to eat and then at other times we would be for two or three days without
food any. Every man was in good spirits. expecting relief daily. Still no sign of
time relief came. and we were falling off like flies for want of food.
and that The few Horses which were in the Entrenchment were served out to all.
Horses and in very small quantities to men, Women, and Child. and it was
them quite impossible to get it cooked. So you had to use it as it was given

(29th)

to you, and it was very acceptable even in its raw state, certainly it was very hard upon the Ladies and Gentry, who thought it would never come their turn to eat raw Horse flesh, but I am sorry to say they were very thankful to get it, besides endure the hardships which they had to endure, in the Month of June which is one of the warmest Months in the Season in Central India, And when the Nana Sahab found that we were starved out, in fact starved to death almost, he sent a woman to us by the name of Mrs Brown to the New Barracks she had a young child in her arms she was escorted by a Troop of the South Light Cavalry to see if the General would surrender, and Captain Moore 32nd Regt and some other officers went to see what she came for and she told them the message she brought from the Nana Sahab, at the time there was a white flag at both sides and there was not a single shot fired during the time, and everything was as silent as possible on both sides so they returned to the Entrenchment unmolested and told the General the Nana's terms and what he intended to do, So the next morning at about 12.06 the General came to all the men and asked them their opinion in the matter, All the men, women, & children were against it so he went away and on the next morning at about 11.06 there was a small tent pitched and there Captain Moore and five other officers went to send a treaty, it was going on for about four hours when they returned unmolested, During the time there was a report told Captain Whiting of the Royal Artillery that there would not be one Indian, Woman, or Child go safe to Allahabad, so when they returned the General told Captain Moore of it, and he said "It is all rubbish, all will go safe." But we all had our own opinion, still it was of no use, I am sorry to say it proved too true to our sorrow, The treaty ran thus "That all Europeans could go safe to Allahabad except any one that was serving under Lord Dalhousie's Government" There was one man that this did affect by the name of Mr Ventris who died a few days previous of the Small Pox, It was agreed that we were to take 2400 Rounds of Ball Ammunition each and our Rifle, and to give up all the Treasury and all that was in the Entrenchment, And that we were to hold

ourselves in readiness to embark at day break and that we were to get all conveyances to take all the sick and wounded to the beach. The next morning came, we were in readiness but to our sorrow we were disappointed, we did not go until the next day which was on the morning of the 24th of June, at the time they were getting the Gens down to the River and were hid behind parapets and marched within twenty yards of them and could not see them they were hid in the long grass, certainly we were supplied with all sort of consequences to the point we were allowed to get into the River and some on board of the boats when they opened fire from all the Batteries at both banks of the river I happened to be one of the rear guard myself with the General and his Family and partly in the water when the firing commenced the General did not get to any of the boats he was seized and brought out of the water and what became of him after I cannot say. I threw my clothes off me and I began swimming to the next boat which was about one hundred yards from me I was attacked by some of the Cavalry and they came quite close to me so when they came within about ten yards of me I dived and got on the bottom and commenced crawling on the bottom as long as I could remain under water when I rose again to the surface I was about two hundred yards away from them when they gave whip and spur to their horses and after me again all this time their horses were snorting and their carbines and Ammunition got wet which providence sent at the time, and all this time I had a pair of drawers on me and I could not get time to take them off some of them came so close as that they cut the leg of the drawers of me I was standing at the time that is was all over with me still I trusted to my Maker and it did not fail and after a long struggle I got my drawers off and after that I had good hopes after this that I had a chance, still at the same time in about a half a mile from here the river was crammed with dead, and red with blood both Cavalry and Infantry cutting down both men, women & children at sight their horses and themselves got tired and they returned to where the slaughter was going on this gave me a chance of a shot

I proceeded down the current between life and death and the men following me on both banks of the River and kept up a continual fire at me all the time I had a small cap pouch on my leg which was tied with a silk handkerchief round my calf and could not spare time to take it off. I swam all that day until 5 o'clock in the evening when I overtook a boat that got away the first thing in the morning and got into her and shortly after we were overtaken by another boat belonging to the enemy and they wanted to capture us and to bring us back to Campore to be slaughtered but as the Lord ordered it there was twenty-five or thirty men in this boat and about forty or fifty women & children there was also muskets and ammunition in it which proved us very good friends they commenced firing and so did we it lasted until about 7 o'clock in the morning when they went away and shortly after this there was about twelve troops seen riding after us and going to every village giving the alarm. When they came to meet us on the banks of the River and gave us a very warm salute from guns as well as from the muskets so at about 8 o'clock the same morning our boat got stranded on account of all the water which got into from the gunshot and no way of getting it out so on the left bank of the River there was a very large village about one mile and from there came a large party of men some in Regiments and some in Native costume and when they came within about one hundred yards of our boat they commenced firing at us so there was a Civil Officer in the boat by the name of Wilbert he gave orders that there was two officers twelve men to go and face the party at the time, we had no clothes we got a piece of cloth and tied it round our waists and carried with us about 30 rounds of ammunition we drove them back about six hundred yards and returned to the boat to see if we could get her off the bank and at the same time every one that was left of the boat went into the River to see if we could get her off but it was impossible to do so as the was half full of water, so they came so close to our

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men a time that we were ordered to face them again so we followed
 them so far that we were cut off from the boat altogether and we
 had to retire by the bank of the River for about seven miles and
 all the time a party after us firing at us so they captured the
 boat and brought her back to Cawnpore where they kept and tortured
 until the advance of General Havelock R.E.B. when they were strangled
 and slaughtered and then threw into a well which lay in the compound
 they separated the men from the women & children. They sent the men to a
 long Bungalows which lay on the plain about six hundred yards from where the
 barracks were they remained there for some days and shortly before
 the advance of General Havelock they were brought out of the Bungalows
 and placed in a large ditch which was in the compound and were shot
 and cut up like dogs so the fourteen of us had to retire and keep
 as close to the bank of the River as possible until we reached a small
 temple about six miles from where we left the Boat, all this time
 there was a party of the Enemy firing at us as fast as they could, and
 during the time we had Muskets and Ammunition with us. still we got
 to the temple and on trying to enter it, it was with great difficulty we
 got account of a mob which lay waiting for us to give us a salute, which
 they did by killing one Sergeant, and one man severely wounded in the thigh
 they surrounded us and brought a large gun and loaded it with
 ammunition and commenced operations they brought large bundles
 of dry brushwood and placed it across the entrance of the temple
 which they set fire to and threw large bags of Gunpowder into the
 place for the purpose of stifling us and burning us out during the time
 party we kept the powder off as well as we could while others were employed
 and firing at the blood thirsty mob which were outside and we were a
 considerable time when the Rajah of the place came mounted and about
 one hundred with him and he immediately gave orders for the temple to be
 pulled down to the ground and if possible to take us alive, at the
 time we were utterly exhausted from hunger and thirst and could not
 hold out any longer so we proposed at first to shoot each other 2nd
 to have so many at a time to make a charge at the Enemy through

The fire which extended about ^{four} from yards from the doors of the Temple and in a wall that was about five feet high but before leaving we threw our Rifles and the bags we had into the fire and as soon as they were consumed we left the Samany house at first there was seven of us started to get over the wall and to make a charge to the River which was about eight hundred yards from the Temple and out of the seven there was ~~three~~ ^{four} got to the River one of which was wounded in the Head that was Major Thompson, ^{Gunner} and Major Telefoos fell into the fire and was severely burned. I was severely wounded in the shoulder. At the time we were going to the River the only thing we had to defend ourselves with was some Bricks and Stones which was laying in the Samany house. The other poor fellows were cut up like dogs before our faces and we could not assist them so we commenced to swim to Allahabad which was a distance of about thirty miles from here. After being almost starved to death for we did not break our fast for five days only the water we drank. We proceeded on our journey swimming between Life and Death until about four o'clock in the evening when we discovered a large party of Natives on the Left bank of the River and they were all armed with Matchlocks and they hailed us to come to them and said that they were friendly to the Government. Still we could not trust them on account of the way we were treated, the officer spoke to them and they said that the Rajah was loyal and that if we were to come out of the water they would take us to the Rajah and we would be taken care of so at last we consented to go ashore and he decided our way or another so when we got into shallow water where we could stand, we were trying to go ashore but we were not able for as fast as we stood up we fell down again with weakness and fatigue so some of the Natives on the bank came to our assistance and we got out so when we got out on to the bank we sat on the grass, our feet were so sore that we could not stand on them. At this time we were as naked as God brought us into the world. I had 30 Rupees hidden about me at the time and I presented it along with a ring which I had on my finger to the Chief of the party. At least I took him to be such. They then converged us

x tied round his leg in a handkerchief

Is a village which was about one mile from the River, it became very wet and cold but we were still naked so we sat under a large tree which was in the village and shortly after this there was a very old woman came up to us and brought us some cakes which at the time we could not make use of on account of being so weak and fatigued so at last she took and tore a sheet and made four parts of it and gave us an equal share to cover our nakedness so we remained there about three hours when they sent a message to the Rajah about us so we were to proceed to the Rajah at once but before this they consulted together about casting me adrift on the river so that I could not tell the Rajah that they took the money from me, all this time I could not tell what they were saying but the officers did and they told them that we were very sorry that we could not do more for them at present so after much persuasion they let me off and did not send me adrift so in a short time we got an order to proceed to the Rajah and we started so we went about four hundred yards when we were obliged to sit and could not proceed any further so there was an Elephant and a pony come to meet us, we then proceeded to the Rajah's Palace about one or eleven o'clock at night when he and his sons and soldiers were waiting for us so when we got there we dismounted and got into the centre of a large square which was formed we were to sit down and we did so, the Rajah then looked at us and appeared to feel very much for us at the time he asked the officers a great many questions concerning the outbreak and other affairs so that we were sitting there about two hours when he showed us up to a large empty house where there was a little dry grass sprinkled on the ground for which we were very thankful for it was a long time since we had the opportunity of having any sleep so in the morning the Rajah came to us and remained with us about four hours, he allowed us plenty of food and he got us some Native clothes and shoes made and very glad we were for to get them, he sent Scouts through the country to have a look out so that the enemy should not come upon us we remained there during the month of July, when word came that Nana Sahib

was coming with two Companies of Infantry and some Cavalry so
 we were sent to a Village about eight miles from there where we remained for
 for about a week. we were sent from there to another Nagah across
 the River where we remained for five or six days and he sent us to
 Allahabad. we were on our way when we met a party of our men on their
 way to Cawnpore commanded by Lieut Woolhouse and Lieut Smith
 of the Royal Artillery which we joined and marched with them to
 Cawnpore where we joined General Nodding's force and went with him
 to Lucknow where we were besieged until we were relieved by
 the Commander-in-Chief and then remained there at Allahabad
 for four months until the Commander-in-Chief came over a second
 time and then commenced at Lucknow the second time. this was the
 final fall of Lucknow. I after that I formed a part of General
 Ligado's force through and Jerglespore and all the minor
 engagements. Her most gracious Majesty was pleased to grant me one
 years service for the defence of Cawnpore and one years service
 for the defence of Lucknow. I have continued to soldier up to the
 present day until my wounds broke out again and my health is com-
 mencing to break down. When the 4th Regt came from India they
 were stationed at Sheffield and in a very short time after the
 Commander-in-Chief came with his Staff, and the Colonel
 of my Regt which was then Colonel Lightfoot brought me to his
 Royal Highness's notice who requested me to give him a detail of the matter.
 And I did so. and he told me he was very sorry to see me in such
 a delicate state of health as I was then in, he said that I was
 not fit to soldier any longer, but on account of my being a
 young soldier and without any home or hesitation I was permitted
 to remain in the service, which I am sure, had I have been discharged
 at the time I might have received some benefit from HM Government
 which would have enabled me to go through life with credit
 to HM Service and to myself. and I hope and trust that it will
 be kindly taken into consideration now that I consider myself
 unfit for further service. I sincerely hope that Her Majesty's

Government will be so kind as to grant me a favourable liberation
 remains so will enable me to maintain myself and family with credit
 in accordance to H. M. Government.

I beg to subscribe myself
 Sir

Your most obedient humble servant
 J^{ms} Murphy, P^{te} 3rd Reg^t
 8th Allen's Reg^t of Foot

An application has been made to get P^{te}
 Murphy into the Corps of Commissionaires
 F. L.

1-10-1914
G. M. L.
G. M. L.

Wm. L. L.