

The Delaware College Review

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ALUMNI, ATTENTION! HOME-COMING DAY JUNE 16

“The Black Hole of Calcutta”

(A STORY)

HOWARD HOPKINS PROUSE, '09

THE little village of Calcutta or Fort William, during the 19th of June, 1756, was the same quiet little spot of colonization that it had been for several years. The palm houses hidden in the shade of foliage were lifeless except for the occasional appearance of a Sepoy servant or a half dozen book-keepers loafing in their door-ways, conversing amid the lazy wreaths of smoke which floated upward from their pipes. The large factory of the East India Company which lay a short distance from the shore of the Ganges was alive with busy men. Some were in their offices making out invoices, others preparing ledgers, or indexing the books of the Company. A ship, half laden, scraped her sides lazily against the wharf timbers as the inundations of the waves bore her slowly up and down. Sepoys hurried in and out of her holds, handling great bundles of spices and raw materials, which were stored away into the dark recesses. The same routine of the slow, but pleasant and almost happy life, was to be found at Calcutta, which its inhabitants had been leading ever since the commercial enterprises had induced the East India Company to purchase that spot from the Great Mogul.

But the great, red sun of the 20th of June poured its last glaring rays of the evening upon an entirely different scene. The air of quiet and security gave way to a stir of warlike unrest and ferocity. The lovely streets of yesterday were now thronged, not with the men of the Company, but by black, ferocious soldiers. It was the day of terror for Calcutta. Surajah Dowlah, the subahdar of Beyil, a selfish, pampered being, who for the sake of vengeance or to satisfy his blood-thirsty desire to behold torture for torture's sake, had swooped down on the hitherto unmolested village like a bird of prey, and with his great host had taken prisoners all those who had not time to escape. The poor Englishmen and the few women who had broken all home ties in their native isle to follow their husbands to the far-off shores of India, were huddled together in the main hall of the factory, dreading the worst from him whom they knew to be heartless.

It was the summer solstice, the season of the year when the natives themselves can scarcely endure the intensity of the heat, and Englishmen, tempered to a more moderate clime, can only sit and face and endure it until it passes, and pleasant breezes begin to blow. Crowded together as the white prisoners were in that hall, though there were large doors to admit fresh air, they waited the decree of the subahdar in almost a state of suffocation.

Amid the perspiring mob there was one woman who had fainted in the arms of her husband. Her delicate features had become like iron and her pale, tender lips twitched convulsively as the gentle hands of her husband unfastened the clasp at her neck and fanned her bosom and face with his hat. They were both very young in appearance not past twenty-five at the most, and both seemed to bear lines of nobility in their faces. He was a stalwart, black-haired youth, and held her in his arms as one would an infant. After many attempts at restoring her to consciousness he finally noticed a faint quiver on her face and slowly, gradually her eye-lids lifted and a pair of deep hazel eyes stared wonderingly up into his anxious countenance. He stooped and pressed his lips to hers, whispering a few words of relief.

"Are—we—still—in the factory?" she managed to gasp, as he raised her to a sitting posture upon his knee.

"Yes, darling. But I see a stir in the Director's office, and I believe the Subahdar has made his decision, and someone is coming to announce it. Be brave, little woman, and let us hope for the best."

"Mark, if it means death, will you stay with me until the last?"

"Don't talk about it! Don't mention it! They dare not hurt you until they have killed me. Let one of those black-hearted black-faced slaves touch you, and he will find a quick road to hell.—Hush! The rajah's servant speaks. What's that? By God, the beast had heart enough to let us live, and they say he will let us free in the morning."

"It would be better, Mark, for us to thank God, than to swear that way. She nestled close in his arms and began to sob out the reaction of the nervous tension of the last few terrible hours. But the intense heat again overcame her slight physical powers and she swooned a second time.

Black soldiers advanced upon the prisoners and started them out of doors. Gladly did the half-suffocated men and women escape from the oven heat of the factory and crowd into the fresh air of the shaded street. Mark Howard lifted his little wife with his strong arms and followed the crowd, anxious now to place her where she could get pure air for her lungs. He sat down with the crowd beneath the arched branches of a laryan tree and laid her on the ground, awaiting the further orders of Surajah Dowlah.

"Isn't this much better than roasting in one of the subahdar's torture ovens?"

Mark was startled by this sudden expression from his wife, whom he did not suspect of having recovered, and who was now looking up into his face with twinkling eyes.

"Just think," she continued, "tomorrow they will all leave and we can start our little home all over again, though they have plundered it. That is more comfortable than being sliced to pieces by these black slaves."

"I should say so," rejoined Mark, "and when I have my commission next year in the home office, as Sullivan promised me, we can go home and tell them all about our thrilling adventures in the far East."

"I can think comfortably now that we are out of that hot old factory. Was I unconscious long?"

"Only while we were waiting here a few moments as they commanded."

"Mr. Hanover's calling you, Mark. He's coming over this way. Oh, don't go with him anywhere! Please don't leave me for anything until the ugly creatures leave the town. I couldn't bear the idea of your being away from me as long as there is any danger."

"Mr. Howard!" exclaimed Mr. Hanover, approaching the couple with a tremor of uneasiness apparent in his voice, and a countenance disturbed with emotion, are you willing to make a sacrifice for these your friends," waving his hand toward the one and a half hundred people scattered around and guarded closely by the native soldiers; "and your little wife here?"

"What are you driving at, Hanover? What can I do for them more than the rest of us? And if that be to fight I can surely stand as firm as any, though it would be suicide to attempt such folly in this mob of savages."

"Howard, not that. There is something that you and no one else can do to save all of us from a terrible end. Take this from me—that sneaking rajah is not so good-natured as he pretends to be. He declares that he will give us freedom tomorrow. But it is my belief that he intends to stay here for weeks, if necessary, and harass our lives until we produce the hidden treasure which he suspects us of having, and then he will cut us down like dogs, and leave our flesh to decay and our bones to whiten beneath the parching sun. I have heard one of the rajah's soldiers say that Morari Row and a large band of natives are marching eastward, and are within a hundred miles of us, directly southwest. You are the only man among us who is acquainted with Morari Row, and who could have the slightest influence over him in getting him to assist us, in our distress, against Surajah Dowlah. He knows you as a personal friend of Captain Clive, and for anyone who is Clive's friend he would fight to his last breath. One man could easily slip past those reckless guards, now that the twilight is darkening into night, and hasten for Row and his army. We will care tenderly for this little woman and meanwhile hold Dowlah's vengeance from us by promises of the supposed hidden treasure until you arrive with Row and his host."

"Oh, Mr. Hanover, how can you ask him to leave me, when I am so defenseless and dare not leave him from my sight? You will not do it, will you, Mark?" pleaded those beautiful lips, and the hazel eyes at the same time besought as much with their expression.

Mark had arisen when Mr. Hanover approached. Now he stood with stooped shoulders and head and eyes closely scrutinizing the ground. There was a battle raging within him between duty and personal inclination. Several minutes he remained thus, not stirring an inch, Hanover eagerly gazing into his countenance and his despairing wife with outstretched arms begging him to remain with her. All around them were their friends and neighbors seated together in little groups, discussing their own respective affairs in connection with the late disaster and their hopes for tomorrow's release and the departure of that black thronging mob that guarded them. A hot evening breeze, more intense than one of our August breezes at mid-day, brushed itself through the foliage and breathed upon the cheeks of the trio as it passed.

As if suddenly awakened by the breeze, Mark Howard lifted his head, and utterly ignoring Hanover, knelt beside his wife and taking one of her hands in his began to speak to her in a firm but gentle tone:

"Alice you were always brave. You left your own father and mother to battle against the world with me, even to forsake all that had been nearest and dearest to you; to come thousands of miles into the dangers of this Oriental land. I have lived for you and I will die for you. I could never leave you here by yourself, not even to save these, our friends, from calamity, if I were not shaken with the dread which Mr. Hanover's words have just stirred within me. I should have known from the beginning that Surajah Dowlah never intends

THE DELUGE

DELAWARE, 3; TRINITY, 20.

Durham, N. C., Saturday, April 10th.—Delaware College was to-day defeated by the fast Trinity College team. The Delaware Collegians were tired from travel. They arrived in Durham at 11 o'clock Saturday morning, having been on the road for 13 hours. The game was listless and many of the spectators left the grounds before the game was half finished. Score by innings:

Delaware	....	.....	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0—3
Trinity	....	.....	2	0	5	6	0	0	3	4—20

Two base hits—Eliason, McGarvey.

A SURPRISE

TRINITY, 2; DELAWARE, 0.

Durham, N. S., April 12th—The Delaware nine surprised the Trinity boys in the second game of ball. After the easy thing that Trinity had on Saturday (20—?) they expected to again run away with the boys from the Diamond State. Such was not the case, as can be seen by the score. But for an overthrow in the first inning, on which two men scored, they would be still playing. Cann's pitching was superb, only three hits being made off his delivery. Score by innings:—

Delaware	....	.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0—0
Trinity	....	.....	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0—2

AGAIN DEFEATED

A. & M., 9; DELAWARE, 0.

The first game at A. and M. was called off on account of rain. The second game, which was played on April 14th, was a walkover for A. and M. Delaware was weak both at bat and in the field, one outfielder having five errors. Captain Edgar did not play in this game, as he was taken ill during the previous day and returned north. Score by innings:—

Delaware	....	.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0—0
A. and M.	.....	.....	0	3	0	2	1	3	0	0—9

A CLOSE GAME

DELAWARE, 2; UNIVERSITY OF CAROLINA, 3.

Chapel Hill, April 15th.—U. of C. to-day defeated Delaware College, 3 to 2. Cann pitched a great game, holding the Carolinians down to six hits, most of which were scattered. Greenwood made a long drive for three bags, which scored Delaware's two runs. The score by innings:—

Delaware	....	.....	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0—2
University Carolina	..	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	x—3

POOR FIELDING

DELAWARE, 4; U. of C., 12.

Chapel Hill, N. C., April 16th.—Carolina easily defeated Delaware to-day,

TENNIS

Where is the Tennis manager?

The winter frost has entirely disappeared and still the tennis court resembles a relief map of the Rocky Mountains. Somebody should "get busy." If the manager is busy on an illustrious thesis he should have an assistant on whom to unload the "dirty work."

BASKETBALL FACULTY TO THE FRONT

On March 25th we received a treat, one that made "Barnum's Greatest in the World" look like a country merry-go-round. The Faculty and Senior basket ball game was this rare treat. The Senior team was composed of men from the Senior class, who had never before played the game. The Faculty team was composed of six "huskies" from that austere body. The game, tho' devoid of science and passing, was interesting at all times. The final result of the game was, Faculty, 8; Seniors, 6. Rothrock and Watson came together rather severely in a scrimmage and both received some bruises. At another time "Pop" Wingett, the two-hundred pound guard, fell heavily on the head of Professor Short; but the "Prof." did not retire from the game—he did nothing but grin and bear it. The star of the game for the Faculty was Tiffany, who did most of the scoring. "Vic" Jones was the "bright light" of the Senior aggregation. The line-up:

Faculty.		Seniors.
McVey	Forward	Rothrock
Tiffany, Watson	Forward	Stewart
Short	Center	Tinney
McCue	Guard	Wingett, Watts
L. Smith	Guard	Carswell, Keppel

Goals from field—Tiffany 1, Watson 1, Short 1, Jones 2, Stewart 1. Goals from foul—Tiffany 2. Referee—Haley. Timekeeper—Shipley. Time of halves—20 minutes.

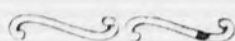
SOPHOMORES VICTORIOUS

In the deciding game of basket ball for the class championship, the Sophomores defeated the Seniors, 21—15. The game was fast throughout, a little too fast for the Seniors, who were "all in" during the latter part of the second half. The Seniors played well during the first half and were ahead at that time, 6—2. But the pace the "Sophs" set for them was too fast and they were not in the game at the finish. McGarvey did most of the scoring for the Seniors. Houston carried off the honors, in this line, for the Sopromores. The line-up: —

Seniors.		Sophomores.
Prouse	Forward	Houston
McGarvey	Forward	Houston
Ward	Center	Kidd, Patterson
Papperman	Guard	"Joe" Marshall
Jones	Guard	"Ort" Marshall

Goals from field—McGarvey 5, Houston 5, Hagner 2, "Joe" Marshall 2.

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