

**THE CATHOLIC SOLDIER'S
GUIDE DURING
HIS STAY IN INDIA**

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The Catholic soldier's guide during his stay in India by George Wenninger

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GEORGE WENNINGER

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✠ L. MEURIN, S. J.,

Bishop of Ascalon, Vicar Apostolic of Bombay.

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PREFACE.

THE object the author has in view in publishing this little book is to place in the hands of young soldiers, who have to serve in India, a friendly adviser, a good companion and guide.

By way of introduction, an old Soldier tells his story, how, in his time, men were enlisted and came out to this country. Things are now quite different, and greater advantages attend the young soldier under existing circumstances than in the time of the old East India Company.

Since the Troopships have begun to pass through the Suez Canal, the danger and tediousness of a voyage round the Cape has disappeared. On their arrival at Bombay, men are now better cared for, and, within a short space of time, they find themselves comfortably lodged in a military station.

What the author writes about the Bombay Presidency may be applied also to the other Presidencies. The first Chapters of the book are intended to lay the foundation for a good Christian life. The Chapter on Temperance and Temperance Societies is an important one for young and old soldiers alike. We next accompany the soldier through the various phases of his life in India : in hospital, in prison, and at school, and point out to him the many opportu-

nities of self-improvement he possesses ; the use he can make of his time and of his money. The married quarters, which are styled 'Patcherics' in India, are not so numerous now as they were ten years ago, before the introduction of the Short-Service system. However, mention had to be made of the married soldier's state, of his wife, and life in the Patcherie, and also of his children.

Old soldiers are getting scarce now. But it is a fact, that in many military stations they once formed the best and steadiest part of our congregations. After having led a dissolute life in their younger days, they turned over a new leaf, (at least a good many of them). Long and sad experience had taught them the right road. These were the men who attended at the evening devotions with great regularity ; went to Holy Communion every month ; were enrolled in the Confraternity ; were generous in their subscriptions to Chapels and Schools ; and kept away from the Canteen and from all those places, whence their misfortunes once originated. Almost all of them were natives of the Emerald Isle, most of them illiterate, but staunch Catholics, strong in their faith, who showed great respect for their clergy. And so were the Irishwomen, who still taught their daughters to courtesey to the Priest, as they had learned to do from their own parents in Ireland.

However, these remarks do not imply that young soldiers are all wanting in piety. On the contrary, we

witness in these days many heroic actions of piety and penance done by young men in the ranks. As a rule, they have had the advantage of a better education, and have been brought up in one of those institutions which, through the exertions of the English and Irish Bishops, have been established in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, and many other towns in England and Scotland, where Irish families are numerous. Some of them have enlisted, because they thought that such was their vocation ; some have run away from school and home to seek out the Recruiting Sergeant, by whom they have been relieved from present troubles. Such young men must be well cared for. By instruction, advice, and a little encouragement given to them with kindness and affection by a zealous Chaplain, they will become and remain good Catholics.

The young soldier is a stranger in this country, and perhaps during his whole stay he has no true friend to advise him. Thus, he is exposed to all kinds of dangers, surrounded by many occasions of sin ; and when he once gets into bad company and used to bad habits, he cannot easily extricate himself. The Priest must be to him in the place of a parent ; and it can be proved by facts that the exertions of a sympathizing Priest have, in many cases, been crowned with great success.

It is but natural that such men, who spend only four or five years in India, should not look on this

country as their home, and should constantly long for the day of their return to Europe; nevertheless a great deal of good can be done for them even during the short period of their stay. In the military service they have learnt habits of regularity, obedience to orders, and have had also opportunities afforded to them to improve their spiritual and temporal welfare. Many go back to Europe completely changed, and settle in life there under the most favourable circumstances.

Should this little book chance to fall into the hands of Catholic soldiers at Aldershot or Woolwich, who are under orders for India, the perusal of it will give them the most desirable information and warn them to be on their guard during their future career.

Each Chapter is illustrated by examples, all of which are real facts, many of them having been brought to the author's notice during the last fifteen years, during which he has been engaged in administering to the spiritual wants of soldiers in several Stations of the Bombay Presidency.

There are also several extracts from Butler's "Lives of the Saints," especially in Chapter V., certain critical notices which do not concern the ordinary soldier having been left out. Soldiers not unfrequently find such books as "Lives of the Saints"

tedious; but they will take interest in short examples from the lives of holy men, who have distinguished themselves in the military profession.

CATHOLIC SOLDIERS,

Here then is a friend of yours. He wishes to be your guide and companion during your stay in India. You may have many other friends at home and abroad, but not every one you meet is a sincere, true friend. Many persons are your friends only as long as they can expect something from you, but in time of need, just when you are in want of their assistance, they forsake you. This is an every-day occurrence. It happened long ago to holy Job, as we read in the Bible. You may take it as a sure sign, then, that a man is your real friend when he perseveres and assists you in your troubles, in the hour of distress. False friends, deceitful companions, are often met with; such, I mean, as lead you to sin. A comrade who takes you to the Canteen, and causes you to become intoxicated; another who employs bad language; another who induces you to gamble; or one who shows you the most wicked places in the bazaar; all these are false friends who, under the cover of friendship, bring about the ruin of your soul and body, and thus injure your eternal and temporal welfare.

Now, listen! A true friend, a sincere companion, a valuable guide presents himself to you in the shape of

this little book. Read the good advice and stick to it. There are different instructions here, which are calculated to enlighten you on certain very important subjects, and you will notice many hints concerning your religious and military duties. Take advantage of them ! They are meant for you particularly !

Kirkee,

THE AUTHOR.

Feast of St. George, 1883.