THE VICTORIA CROSS; AN OFFICIAL CHRONICLE OF THE DEEDS OF PERSONAL VALOUR ACHIEVED DURING THE CRIMEAN AND BALTIC CAMPAIGNS, THE INDIAN MUTINES AND THE PERSIA, CHINA, AND NEW ZEALAND WARS Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

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The Victoria Cross; An Official Chronicle of the Deeds of Personal Valour Achieved during the Crimean and Baltic Campaigns, the Indian Mutines and the Persia, China, and New Zealand Wars by Various

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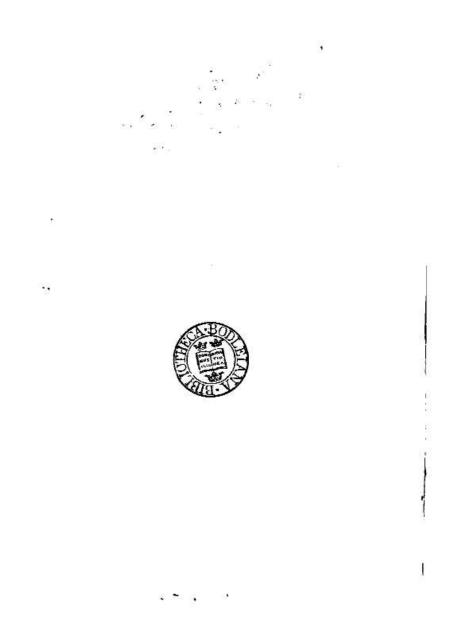
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## CONTENTS.

<u> </u>	PAGE
Preface	5
Preface The Royal Warrant Instituting and Creating the Order of the Victoria	1 K
Cross	9
Inauguration of the Order	15
Nominal List of the Members of the Order, as announced in the Gazett	s 25
A Narrative of the Deeds of Valour Performed by the Mombers of the	8
Order	37
THE NAVY	7 to 48
Тив Авму 49	to 123
The 2nd Dragoon Guards	49
The 2nd Dragoons	. 50
The 4th Light Dragoons	. 51
The 6th Dragoons	61
The 7th Hussars	52
The 8th Hussars	. 62
The 9th Lancers	63
The 11th Hussars	57
The 13th Hussare	
The 14th Hussers	
The 17th Lancers	68
The Royal Artillery	. 60
The Royal Engineers	. 64
The Military Train	. 67
The Land Transport Corps	69
The Grenadier Guards	. 69
The Coldstream Guards	
The Scots Fusilier Guards	
The 1st Foot	
The 3rd Foot	
The 4th Foot	
The 5th Foot	75
The 7th Foot	76
The 8th Foot	
The 10th Foot	
The 13th Foot	
The 17th Foot	
The 18th Foot	
The 19th Foot	
The 23rd Foot	
The 32nd Foot	
The 34th Foot	
The 40th Foot	
The 41st Foot	
The 42nd Foot	
The 43rd Foot	
The 4ith Foot	
The 47th Foot	
The 49th Foot	
The Royal Marines	
The 52nd Foot	
The 53rd Foot	
The 55th Foot	
The 57th Foot	
The 60th Rifle Corps	88
The 61st Foot	. 100
The 64th Foet	

#### CONTENTS.

34 14

The 65th Foot The 67th Foot The 67th Foot The 71at Foot The 71at Foot The 71at Foot The 71at Foot The 75th Foot The 75th Foot The 78th Foot The 78th Foot The 78th Foot The 84th Foot The 90th Foot Th	17.	CONTENTS.
The 67th Foot The 71st Foot The 72sth Foot The 75th Foot The 75th Foot The 75th Foot The 78th Foot The 88th Foot The 88th Foot The 90th Foot The 107th Foot The 71st Bengal Faropean Light Caralry (late) The 71st Bengal Faropean Caralry (late) The 11st Bengal Faropean Caralry (late) The 11st Bengal Faropean Caralry (late) The 11st Bengal Artillery The 11st Bengal Artillery The Bengal Artillery The 11st Bengal Artillery The 38th Bengal Native Infantry. The 38th Bengal Native Infantry The 38th Bengal Native Infantry The 38th Bengal Native Infantry The 58th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 68th Bengal Native Infantry The 68th Bengal Native Infantry The 68th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 68th Madras Native Infantry (late) The 68th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 88th Andras Native Infantry (late) The 18th Madras Native Infantry (late) The 88th Bendy Infantres The 18th B	The 65th Foo	
The 68th Foot The 71at Foot The 72ad Foot The 75th Foot The 75th Foot The 78th Foot The 88th Foot The 88th Foot The 88th Foot The 93rd Foot The 93rd Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The 77th Foot Foot The 77th Foot Foot Foot The 77th Foot Foo		
The 71at Poot The 75th Poot The 75th Poot The 78th Poot The 86th Poot The 86th Poot The 86th Poot The 86th Poot The 97th Bengal Native Infantry The 13th Bengal Native Infantry The 97th Bengal Ordinace Department The Bengal Ordinace Department The Bengal Ordinace Department The 97th Madras Native Infantry The 18th Madras Native Infantry The 18th Madras Native Infantry The 18th Benday Native Infantry The 97th Benday Active Infantry The 97th Benday		
The 72nd Foot The 78th Foot The 78th Foot The 78th Foot The 86th Foot The 86th Foot The 93rd Foot The 93rd Foot The 97th Foot The 1000000000000000000000000000000000000		
The 75th Foot The 78th Foot The 78th Foot The 78th Foot The 84th Foot The 84th Foot The 80th Foot The 90th Foot Th		
The 75th Foot The 78th Foot The 78th Foot The 86th Foot The 93rd Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The 75th Sengal European Light Caralry (late) The 5th Bengal European Cavalry (late) The 5th Bengal European Cavalry (late) The 5th Bengal European Fusiliers (late) The 5th Bengal Harriers The Bengal Interpreters The Bengal Interpreters The 5th Bengal European Fusiliers (late) The 5th Bengal European Fusiliers The 5th Bengal Artillery The Bengal Artillery The Bengal Mattive Infantry The 11th (late 70th) Bengal Native Infantry The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 66th (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The 66th (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The 66th (Bonzka) Bengal Native Infantry The Bengal Artive Infantry (late) The 66th Bengal Native Infantry The Codenan Regiment The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bengal Ordinance Department	The find Poo	
The 7th Foot The 84th Foot The 84th Foot The 84th Foot The 87th Foot The 97th Foot The 11th 107th Foot The 97th Foot The 11th 107th Foot The 11th 107th Foot The 11th 107th Foot The 11th 107th 107t		• •••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••
The Sth Foot The Sth Foot The Sth Foot The Sth Foot The Oth Foot The Ith Oth		6
The Sour Foot The Sour Foot The Sour Foot The Off Foot The Off Foot The Jiff Foot The Jiff Foot The Internal European Light Carairy (late) The The Bengal European Carairy (late) The Source Bengal Horse Artillery The Bengal Horse Artillery The Bengal Horse Artillery The Bengal Horse Artillery The Bengal European Fusiliers (late) The Source Bengal European Fusiliers (late) The Bengal European Fusiliers The Bengal Bengineers The Bengal Mative Infantry. The Bengal Native Infantry The Source Bengal Native Infantry The Source Bengal Native Infantry The Source Bengal Native Infantry (late) The Bengal Army (unattached) The Bengal Ordinance Bepartment The Bengal Army (unattached) The Bengal Army (unattached) The Bengal Ordinance Bepartment The Bengal Ordinance Bepartment The Bendare Egnineers The Isth Madras Native Infantry The Source Army Native Infantry The Source Army Native Infantry The Source Army Native Infantry The Source Army Native Infantry The Bendare Army Native In		· ····································
The south Foot The 93rd Foot The 93rd Foot The 93rd Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The 97th Foot The Prince Consort's Own Rifle Brigade The Ist Bengal European Light Caralry (late) The Ist Bengal European Caralry (late) The Ist Bengal European Caralry (late) The Ist Bengal European Caralry (late) The Bengal Antillery The Bengal Antive Infantry The Bengal European Fusiliers The 1st Bengal Native Infantry The Ist Bengal Native Infantry The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 55th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 56th Bengal Native Infantry The 66th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 57th Bend Ordinane Benerice The 57th Bendy Light Cavalry The 37th Booheay Active Infantry The Addinane Mather Mather Section The 57th Bendy Ishit Cavalry The Bendy Attive Infantry The 24th Bendy Attive Infantry The 18th Bendy Native Infantry The 18th Bendy	The 84th Foo	5 ····
The 95th Foot The 95th Foot The 95th Foot The 95th Foot The 7th Foot The Prince Consort's Own Rifle Brigade THE INDIAN ARMY The Ist Bengal European Light Caralry (late) The The The Bengal European Caralry The Bengal Artillery. The Bengal Artillery. The Bengal Artillery. The Bengal European Fusiliers (late) The 7th Sort Bengal Artive Infantry. The Bengal Pusiliers The 1st Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 3th Madus Infantry The Article Artive Infantry (late) The 3th Madus Infantry The Artive Infantry (late) The 3th Madus Infantry The Artive Infant	The 86th Fee	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
The 35rd Foot The 37th Foot The 37th Foot The 17th Foot The 17th Foot The Prince Consort's Own Rifle Brigade The Prince Consort's Own Rifle Brigade The The Net Hengal European Light Cavalry (late) The 5th Bengal European Cavalry (late) The Bengal House Artillery The Bengal Artillery The Bengal Artillery The Bengal European Fusiliers (late) The Jan Bengal European Fusiliers (late) The Bengal Rationers The Ist Bengal Rative Infantry The Jan Bengal Native Infantry The Jan Bengal Native Infantry The 11th (late 70th) Bengal Native Infantry The 31th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 55th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 55th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 66th Rengal Native Infantry (late) The Bengal Ordanee Department The Bengal Ordanee Department The Bengal Ordanee Department The Bengal Ordanee Department The Bengal Ordanee Regimeers The 13th Madras Native Infantry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry The Sing Bombay Light Cavalry The Sing Bombay Katter Infantry The Sing Bombay Katter Infantry The Sing Bombay Katter Infantry The Sing Bombay Katter Infantry The Bombay Light Cavalry The Bombay Light Cavalry The Bombay Active Infantry The Bombay Active Infantry The Bombay Active Infantry The Sing Bombay Katter Infantry The Bombay Active Infantry The Bombay Active Infantry The Bombay Active Infantry The Sing Bombay Active Infantry The Bombay Actin Infantry The		
The 90th Foot The Joyne Foot The Joyne Consort's Own Rifle Brigade The 107th Foot The Fine Consort's Own Rifle Brigade Track Index A ANY The Joyne Consort's Own Rifle Brigade The Joyne Consort Stream St	The 93rd Foo	<b>1</b>
The offit Foot The lift Foot The Prince Consort's Own Rifle Brigade	The 95th For	t
The Finite Consort's Own Rife Brigade	The 97th Foo	d
THE INDIAN ADMY       124         The Ist Bengal European Light Carairy (late)       124         The fits Bengal European Carairy (late)       128         The fits Bengal European Carairy (late)       128         The Bengal Artillery.       128         The Bengal European Fusiliers (late)       128         The Bengal Artillery.       128         The Bengal European Fusiliers (late)       128         The Bengal European Fusiliers (late)       128         The Bengal Pusiliers       128         The Ist Bengal Pusiliers       128         The 14 Bengal Native Infantry .       128         The 14 Bengal Native Infantry (late)       128         The 141 Bengal Native Infantry (late)       129         The 141 Bengal Native Infantry (late)       129         The 37th Bengal Native Infantry (late)       129         The 36th Bengal Native Infantry (late)       129         The 36th Bengal Native Infantry (late)       129         The 60th Rengal Native Infantry (late)       129         <	The 107th R.	of
THE INDIAN ADMY       124         The Ist Bengal European Light Carairy (late)       124         The fits Bengal European Carairy (late)       128         The fits Bengal European Carairy (late)       128         The Bengal Artillery.       128         The Bengal European Fusiliers (late)       128         The Bengal Artillery.       128         The Bengal European Fusiliers (late)       128         The Bengal European Fusiliers (late)       128         The Bengal Pusiliers       128         The Ist Bengal Pusiliers       128         The 14 Bengal Native Infantry .       128         The 14 Bengal Native Infantry (late)       128         The 141 Bengal Native Infantry (late)       129         The 141 Bengal Native Infantry (late)       129         The 37th Bengal Native Infantry (late)       129         The 36th Bengal Native Infantry (late)       129         The 36th Bengal Native Infantry (late)       129         The 60th Rengal Native Infantry (late)       129         <	The Prince C	interestin Own Diffe Theter It
The ist Bengal European Light Caralry (late)       124         The ist Bengal European Caralry (late)       126         The ist Bengal Horse Arally       128         The Bengal Arange Caralry (late)       128         The Bengal Horse Arally       128         The Bengal Horse Arallery       128         The Bengal Fullery       128         The Ist Bengal Paulors       128         The Ist Bengal Native Infantry       128         The 11th (late 70th) Bengal Native Infantry       128         The 38th Bengal Native Infantry (late)       128         The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late)       128         The 68th Bengal Ordmance Department       128         The 28th Bengal Ordmance Department       128         The Bengal Ordmance De		
The fit Bengal European Cavary (late) The fit Bengal European Cavary (late) The Bengal Artillery. The Bengal Artillery. The Bengal Artillery. The Bengal Artillery. The Bengal European Fusiliers (late). The Sengal Artiflery. The Bengal European Fusiliers (late). The Sengal Artiflery. The Bengal Native Infantry. The ist Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 11th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 11th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 11th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 37th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 60th Rengal Native Infantry (late). The Bengal Array (unstlached). The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bengal Ordinance Department. The Madrus Native Infantry The 2nd B musy Light Cavary. The 3rd Bouley Light Cavary. The Bouley Artive Infantry. The Bouley Artive Infantr		
The Shi I variable Gaulty The Bengal Arollery The Bengal Arollery The Bengal Arollery The Bengal Arollery The and Bengal Arone and Bengal Street The state Bengal European Fusiliers The State Bengal European Fusiliers The State Bengal Native Infantry The State Bengal Native Infantry (Iste) The State Bengal Native Infantry (Iste) The State Bengal Native Infantry (Iste) The State Bengal Native Infantry The Goale Bengal Native Infantry The Goale Bengal Native Infantry The Bengal Army (unstrached) The Bengal Ordinace Department The Bengal Ordinace Bengartment The Madrus Native Infantry The Stat Madrus Native Infantry The State Bonkay Light Cavalry The State Bonkay Light Cavalry The State Bonkay Light Cavalry The Bonkay Light Cavalry The State Bonkay Calles Estimated The Bengal Police Bontay Light Cavalry The Londow Active Infantry The Londow Cavalry Cavalry The State Bonkay Calles Bontay Calles Bontay The State Bonkay Calles Bontay Calles Bontay The State Bonkay Calles Bontay The State Bonkay Calles Bontay The State Bonkay Calles Bontay The State B	THE LET Deng	ai European Light Cavairy (late)
The Shi I variable Gaulty The Bengal Arollery The Bengal Arollery The Bengal Arollery The Bengal Arollery The and Bengal Arone and Bengal Street The state Bengal European Fusiliers The State Bengal European Fusiliers The State Bengal Native Infantry The State Bengal Native Infantry (Iste) The State Bengal Native Infantry (Iste) The State Bengal Native Infantry (Iste) The State Bengal Native Infantry The Goale Bengal Native Infantry The Goale Bengal Native Infantry The Bengal Army (unstrached) The Bengal Ordinace Department The Bengal Ordinace Bengartment The Madrus Native Infantry The Stat Madrus Native Infantry The State Bonkay Light Cavalry The State Bonkay Light Cavalry The State Bonkay Light Cavalry The Bonkay Light Cavalry The State Bonkay Calles Estimated The Bengal Police Bontay Light Cavalry The Londow Active Infantry The Londow Cavalry Cavalry The State Bonkay Calles Bontay Calles Bontay The State Bonkay Calles Bontay Calles Bontay The State Bonkay Calles Bontay The State Bonkay Calles Bontay The State Bonkay Calles Bontay The State B	The oth Beng	ni European Cavalry (late)
The Bengal Hores Artillery The Bengal Artillery The Bengal Hores Artillery The Bengal European Fusiliers (late) The 2nd Bengal Native Infantry. The 2nd Bengal Native Infantry. The 2nd Bengal Native Infantry. The 11th Bengal Native Infantry. The 11th Bengal Native Infantry. The 11th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 25th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 25th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 55th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 66th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 72nd Bengal Native Infantry (late). The Bengal Ariny (unattached) . The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bengal Ordinance Department The Madras Fasiliers. The 18th Madras Native Infantry The 18th Madras Native Infantry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bombay Light Light Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bombay Light Light Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bombay Light Light Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bombay Cause Light Light Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bombay Light Light Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bombay Cause Light Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bombay Cause Light Light Cavalry. The		
The Bengal Artillery	T 00 700 1.00	TATIO CRATERY
The Bengal Engineers The Gengal Engineers The Jat Bengal European Fusiliers (late) The 2nd Bengal Native Infantry. The and Bengal Native Infantry. The 1th Gengal Native Infantry. The 1th (late 70th) Bengal Native Infantry The 1th (late 70th) Bengal Native Infantry The 37th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 60th Bengal Native Infantry The 60th Bengal Native Infantry The 72nd Bengal Native Infantry The 72nd Bengal Native Infantry The 60th Rengal Native Infantry The 52nd Bengal Native Infantry The 52nd Bengal Native Infantry The 60th Rengal Native Infantry The 12nd Bengal Native Infantry The Bengal Ordnance Bepartment The Bengal Ordnance Department The Madras Fasiliers The 18th Madras Native Infantry The 3rd Houley Light Cavalry The 3rd Houley Active Infantry The 3rd Bouley Light Cavalry The 3rd Houley Active Infantry The 3rd Houley Active Infantr		
The ist Bengal European Fusiliers (late) The ist Bengal Native Infantry. The ist Bengal Native Infantry. The ist Bengal Native Infantry. The ist Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 66th (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The 66th (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The 72d Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 66th (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The Dengal Army (unattached) . The Bengal Army (unattached) . The Bengal Ordnance Department The Bengal Ordnance Infantry The Bengal Ordnance Infantry The Isth Madras Native Infantry The Srd Bonkay Light Cavalry The Bonkay Light Cavalry The Bonkay Artive Infantry The Srd Bonkay Artive Infantry The Srd Bonkay Artive Infantry The Srd Bonkay Artive Infantry The Stath Bonhay European Begiment Inte) The Bengal Police Beatalion The Bengal Police Beatablebonent		
The int length European Fusitiers (inte). The int Bengal Native Infantry. The int Bengal Native Infantry. The ith Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 11th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 25th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 55th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 55th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 66th Rengal Native Infantry (late). The Bengal Army (unstached). The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bengal Ordinance Department. The Madrus Native Infantry The 2nd B mbay Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bombay Light Light Cavalry. The Bombay Light Light Cavalry. The Bombay Light Light Light Caval		
The ist Bengal Pusifiers The find Bengal Native Infantry The ind Bengal Native Infantry The ith Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 35th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 55th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 56th Bengal Native Infantry The 68th (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The 72ad Bengal Native Infantry The Dengal Aruny (unattached) The Bengal Ordmance Department The Bengal Ordmance Department The Bengal Ordmance Department The Madras Engineers The 13th Madras Native Infantry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry The Bombay Light Cavalry The Bombay Artive Infantry The 3rd Bombay Mative Infantry The 3rd Bombay Mative Infantry The 3rd Bombay Kapineers The 14th Bombay Artive Infantry The 3rd Bombay Kapineers The 14th Bombay Artive Infantry The 3rd Bombay Kapineers The 3rd Bombay Kapineers The 3rd Bombay Kapineers The 3rd Bombay Engineers The 3rd Bombay Artive Infantry The 3rd Bombay Artive Infant	The lat Benin	al Euronean Ensiliare (Inte)
The field Bengal Native Infantry. The field Bengal Native Infantry. The 11th (late 70th) Bengal Native Infantry The 13th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 36th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 36th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 36th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 66th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The Bengal Army (unattached). The Bengal Ordinace Department The Bengal Ordinace Department The Madrus Native Infantry The 2nd B mbay Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bookey Light Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bookey Cavalry. The 3rd 3	The 2nd Bene	al European Fusilions
100 Ind Bengal Native Infantry. The 4th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 25th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 25th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 57th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 57th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The Bengal Ordinance Department. The Isth Madras Native Infantry. The 18th Madras Native Infantry. The Sard Bombay Light Cavalry. The Bombay Light Cavalry. The Bombay Engineers The Sard Bombay Kative Infantry. The Bombay Light Infantry. The Bombay Light Infantry. The Isthe Andry Sartive Infantry. The Bombay Light Infantry. The Isthe Sard Bombay Kative Infantry. The Isthe Bombay Light Infantry. The Isthe Bombay Light Infantry. The Isthe Bombay Isthe Infantry. The Isthe Is	The 1st Rener	al Pusilions
The 1th (late 7th) Bengal Native Infantry The 13th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 25th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 57th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 57th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 60th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The Bengal Army (unstached). The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bengal Ordinance Department. The Bengal Ordinance Department. The Bengal Veterinary Establishment The Madras Armite Lifantry. The 2nd B mbay Light Cavalry. The 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry. The Bombay Light Cavalry. The Bombay Light Cavalry. The Bombay Light Infantry. The 2nd B mbay Native Infantry. The 10th Jonaby Artive Infantry. The Bombay Light Cavalry. The Bombay Light Infantry. The Jonabay Army Infantry. The Jonabay Army Infantry. The Jonabay Descriptions. The Jonabay Descriptions. The Jonabay Descriptions. The Bombay Light Lifethery. The Bombay Light Lifethery. The South Bombay Native Infantry. The Jonabary Descriptions. The Bengal Police Battablishment. The Jonabay Descriptions. The Jonabay Descriptions.	The 2nd Ban	ml Natino Informa
The 26th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 26th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 66th Goorkal Bengal Native Infantry The 66th (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The 72ad Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 66th (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The 72ad Bengal Native Infantry The 72ad Bengal Native Infantry The 4th Renjaw Infantry The Bengal Army (unstached) The Bengal Native Infantry The Bengal Native Infantry The Ard Bombay Light Cavalry The Bombay Light Cavalry The Bombay Artillery The Bombay Artive Infantry The 24th 4 mabay Native Infantry The Army Native Infantry The Iodina Civil Service The Bengal Police Battablishment The Jodina Medical Enablishment	The 4th Beng	al Native Infantry
The 26th Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 26th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 56th Bengal Native Infantry (late). The 66th Goorkal Bengal Native Infantry The 66th (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The 72ad Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 66th (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The 72ad Bengal Native Infantry The 72ad Bengal Native Infantry The 4th Renjaw Infantry The Bengal Army (unstached) The Bengal Native Infantry The Bengal Native Infantry The Ard Bombay Light Cavalry The Bombay Light Cavalry The Bombay Artillery The Bombay Artive Infantry The 24th 4 mabay Native Infantry The Army Native Infantry The Iodina Civil Service The Bengal Police Battablishment The Jodina Medical Enablishment	The 11sh date	Today Brown 1 27 11
The 3rd Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 3rd Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 5rd Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 6rd Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 6rd Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 6rd Bengal Native Infantry The 7rd Bengal Native Infantry The 2rd Bengal Native Infantry The Coolian Regiment The Bengal Army (unattached) The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bonhosy Engineers The 18th Madrus Native Infantry The Sord Bonhosy Light Cavalry The Sord Bonhosy Light Cavalry The Sord Bonhosy Active Infantry The Sord Bonhosy Active Infantry The Sord Bonhosy Light Light Cavalry The Sord Bonhosy Light Light Light Departs The Sord Bonhosy Light Light Light Departs The Sord Bonhosy Light Infantry The Sord Constant Covid Service	The 12th Day	( voin ) Dengal Native Infancry
The 3rd Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 3rd Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 5rd Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 6rd Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 6rd Bengal Native Infantry (late) The 6rd Bengal Native Infantry The 7rd Bengal Native Infantry The 2rd Bengal Native Infantry The Coolian Regiment The Bengal Army (unattached) The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bonhosy Engineers The 18th Madrus Native Infantry The Sord Bonhosy Light Cavalry The Sord Bonhosy Light Cavalry The Sord Bonhosy Active Infantry The Sord Bonhosy Active Infantry The Sord Bonhosy Light Light Cavalry The Sord Bonhosy Light Light Light Departs The Sord Bonhosy Light Light Light Departs The Sord Bonhosy Light Infantry The Sord Constant Covid Service	The Octh Den	gal Native Infantry (inte)
The softh Bengal Native Infanity (late). The softh Bengal Native Infanity (late). The 60th Bengal Native Infanity (late). The 60th Goorka) Bengal Native Infanity The 72nd Bengal Native Infanity (late). The Angian Infanity . The Bengal Army (unattached). The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bengal Ordinance Department The Madrus Native Infanity The 2nd B mbay Light Cavalty . The 3rd Bouley Light Cavalty . The Bonhay Engineers The 18th Madrus Native Infanity The 3rd Bouley Light Cavalty . The 16th Son by Engineers The 16th Bonhay Engineers The 16th Bonhay Knive Infanity . The 3rd Bouley Attive Infanity . The 3rd Bouley Light Infanity . The 21th Bonhay Light Infanity . The 18th An Wy (late)	- HO #OUG 490B	Chi Nativo Infantry (Mic)
The Goth Bengai Native Infantry (late) The Goth (Goorka) Bengai Native Infantry The Goth (Goorka) Bengai Native Infantry The Codiana Regiment The Bengai Army (unattached) The Bengai Ordinance Department The Bengai Veterinary Establishment The Bengai Veterinary Establishment The Bengai Veterinary Establishment The Madras Engineers The 13th Madras Native Infantry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavafry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavafry The Bombay Light Cavafry The Bombay Light Cavafry The Bombay Light Cavafry The Sind Bombay Engineers The 3rd Bombay Attive Infantry The Sind Bombay Attive Infantry The Infant Civil Service	The orth Ben	gal Native Infuntry (late)
The Goth Bengai Native Infantry (late) The Goth (Goorka) Bengai Native Infantry The Goth (Goorka) Bengai Native Infantry The Codiana Regiment The Bengai Army (unattached) The Bengai Ordinance Department The Bengai Veterinary Establishment The Bengai Veterinary Establishment The Bengai Veterinary Establishment The Madras Engineers The 13th Madras Native Infantry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavafry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavafry The Bombay Light Cavafry The Bombay Light Cavafry The Bombay Light Cavafry The Sind Bombay Engineers The 3rd Bombay Attive Infantry The Sind Bombay Attive Infantry The Infant Civil Service	The soin Ben	gui rutive infantry (latc)
The Gold Penga Native Infantry (late) The Gold (Goorka) Bengal Native Infantry The 72ad Bengal Native Infantry The 4th Canjaab Infantry The Loadiana Regiment The Bengal Army (unstatched) The Bengal Veterinary Establishment The Bengal Veterinary Establishment The Madras Fagineers The Lat Madras Fagineers The 1at Madras Artive Infantry The 2nd B mbay Light Cavalry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry The Bombay Light Infantry The 2nd B mbay Native Infantry The 2nd B mbay Native Infantry The 2nd B mbay Light Infantry The Solid Bombay Light Infantry The Solid Bombay Light Infantry The Isolan Navy (late) The Isolan Navy (late) The Isolan Medical Establishment	THE DOLD DED	USI MALLY Infantry flatel
The Yaol (Boork) Bengal Native Infantry The Yaol Bengal Native Infantry The Looduna Regiment The Bengal Ariny (unattached) The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bengal Ordinance Department The Bandar Faultiers The 18th Madras Native Infantry The 18th Madras Native Infantry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry The 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry The Bombay Engineers The 3rd Bombay Engineers The 3rd Bombay Engineers The 3rd Bombay Engineers The 3rd Bombay Antive Infantry The 24th Bombay Native Infantry The 18th An Ava (late) The Infant Ovil Service The Infant Ovil Service The Infant Ovil Service The Infant Medical Establishment	THE ODDI DEB	251 Pattye Lutentry (late)
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#### PREFACE.

In military feats of individual valour performed as often by obscure as by conspicuous persons, the sources of the first illustrations of the most noble families of Europe are to be found. And of this prime feature of their pedigree the descendants of these families are usually more proud than they are of any subsequent honourable achievements. Indeed, so much is martial descent coveted by those who have risen to aristocratic rank, that, where veritable chronicle fails to confer it, tradition and fable are even by law and commerce frequently appealed to, to supply the deficiency. No other renown, we all feel-it may be very unphilosophicallyemblazons like military renown. The highest civic dignity, the worthicst acts of civic virtue, look pale in the comparison ; and Dr. Johnson was right when he said, that our greatest lawyer-the omnis homo, the all-accomplished Lord Mansfield -would feel inclined to creep under the table if the Duke of Marlborough were suddenly to appear before him. Since the mediaval era, however, it is only great captains who have inspired this sense of superiority. The subordinates of both services, and the common soldier and common sailor, have long since escaped all particular attention ; and we must go back to the ancient times of Greece and Rome, and to the middle ages-to Troy, to Marathon, to stories of Horatii and Curiatii, to Ascelon, to Azincourt, and to Poictiers-to find

#### PREFACE.

personal prowess and bravery brought into prominent relief, and so rewarded as to hand name and fame down to posterity. It is true that the art of war being thoroughly revolutionised by the invention of gunpowder, exploits of the kind alluded to have no longer the paramount importance they possessed previous to that discovery. But we have come very erroneously to the conclusion, that, because they have, for this reason, sunk, generally as soon as enacted, into oblivion, they have ceased to be abundantly displayed by modern troops. The rich catalogue of the heroic actions of officers and men of all ranks in our army and navy, published in the Gazette, which announces the first distribution of the VICTORIA CROSS, may be compared, even to the enhancement of their lustre, with any either pagan or chivalric epochs have produced ; and this record of deeds of extraordinary daring should inspire those mentioned in the glorious roll with the same sort of legitimate pride a nobleman feels when pointing to the like feats of the first founder of his family.

We have made these remarks, associating the exploits recorded in the *Gazette* with historic events of a like kind, because noble actions, like fine paintings, should be placed at some distance from us, and set in a rich mellow light, in order to bring their beauties out into full display. With the same purpose in view, let us suppose that these exploits belonged to the period of ohivalry, and that they had been religiously preserved through centuries by some of our most time-honoured aristocracy, not as traditionary stories, but as facts clearly stated in the official annals of the time. In that case, what precious heirlooms they would be considered, with what superb satisfaction they would be contemplated, and how proudly would they, on rare and select occasions, be exhibited

vi.

#### PREFACE.

by their possessors as their original title-deeds, their first letters-patent of nobility or of family distinction.

The private, graced with such a distinction, is no longer a plebeian. He is not one of the multitude, but one apart from the multitude. Even if his social and military rank should remain unchanged, he is raised morally much above his former self; and we are glad to see that many who have earned the VICTORIA CROSS as privates, or as corporals or scrgeants, wear it first over an officer's uniform. With conduct in peace equal to their valour in war-and the latter seems to guarantee the former-these men cannot fail of promotion ; and officers decorated at the same time with the same badge, for the same deeds of daring in close conflict with the enemies of their country, must already feel on an equality, in the highly-prized glory of personal intrepidity, with those who, as companions and brothers, have taken, in such equalising moments, as often as not the lion's share in their common perils. Between superior and inferior, so associated in signal dangers and signal rewards, there must necessarily be cordial respect and admiration; and this chivalric sense of honour, raising the soldier, in one respect, to a par with the officer, must needs mitigate and strengthen discipline, and give the service generally a higher standing than it has ever heretofore possessed, both in its own estimation and in that of the public.

The VICTORIA CROSS, with its inseparably appendent memorial of individual heroism, discriminates as no other badge of military merit has ever done. It picks out from all ranks single persons for a special dignity awarded to deeds of a very narrowly special description, and thus bears upon it the very image and superscription, as it were, of each valiant

vii.