

**LETTERS FROM INDIA
AND CHINA DURING
THE YEARS 1854-1858**

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Letters from India and China during the years 1854-1858 by Robert William Danvers

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ROBERT WILLIAM DANVERS

**LETTERS FROM INDIA
AND CHINA DURING
THE YEARS 1854-1858**



R. W. DANVERS,

June 1857.

BEFORE STARTING FOR OGDEN.

Frontispiece.

TO MR. J. M. WILSON
AND MR. J. M. WILSON

LETTERS FROM INDIA AND CHINA

DURING THE YEARS
1854 — 1858

BY
ROBERT WILLIAM DANVERS

70TH BENGAL N.I.

ATTACHED AS INTERPRETER TO H.M.'s 3TH FUSILIERS IN THE FORCE SENT
TO RELIEVE LUCKNOW UNDER GENERALS SIR JAMES OUTRAM
AND SIR HENRY HAVELOCK

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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1898

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INTRODUCTION

ROBERT WILLIAM DANVERS, the writer of the following letters, was the third son of Frederick Dawes¹ and Charlotte Maria Danvers,² and was born on July 30th, 1833. He was delicate in his childhood, but he grew up to be a strong, healthy youth, and developed into a fine, well-grown man, attractive in appearance and engaging in manners. He was brought up with the idea of taking Holy Orders, and in 1850 went to King's College, London, for the purpose of pursuing his studies and going through a course of theology in view to his ultimate ordination. He had not been there long, however, before a change came over his feelings, and he eventually expressed a strong preference in favour of the army as a profession. His parents were at first disappointed at his choice, but seeing that his mind was made up offered no opposition, and the nomination to a direct cadetship in the Indian army was given to him by Mr. Russell Ellice, then Chairman of the East India Company.

He started for India in February 1854, and from

¹ F. D. Danvers, Esq., was for many years Registrar and Clerk of the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster.

² Daughter of John Juland Rawlinson, Esq.

that time to his death in August 1858 he kept up a constant and regular correspondence with members of his family. The letters now printed have been selected as an interesting record of his short career, especially that part of it which included the attempted relief of Lucknow, under Outram and Havelock. The letters which give an account of these operations and of the beleaguered garrison at Lucknow do not appear in print for the first time. They were sent to the newspapers soon after their receipt—now forty years ago—under the impression, which was fully confirmed, that they would help to satisfy a yearning for any particulars of occurrences which were then exciting the public mind to an intense degree. It need hardly be said that it never crossed the writer's mind that they would have a wider circulation than the domestic circle. They are therefore the genuine and unreserved expression of his feelings and opinions. They reflect what passed in his mind at the time he was writing, and describe the first impressions of what he saw, giving such particulars and details as he thought would entertain his correspondents both young and old. At the same time they are typical of a young British officer. He thought and acted as thousands have done; and, in recounting the scenes through which he passed, he describes the kind of service which the British soldier is continually performing in all parts of the world. As regards his mental and moral qualities, the inner man so comes out in these private letters

that the reader is able to form his own judgment of his character without the necessity of drawing attention to any particular traits. It is clear that he possessed a good head and a good heart.

The circumstances of his death were peculiarly sad and distressing. It will be seen that, after the beleaguered at Lucknow had been relieved by Sir Colin Campbell,¹ Robert Danvers received orders to join his regiment, the 70th Bengal Native Infantry, which, having remained staunch, had been selected for service in China. He had, of course, been in the thick of the fight and exposed to dangers on every side, both in engagements before and after the relief of Lucknow and during the siege of the Residency. He had a horse shot under him and had several very narrow escapes, but was only once wounded. While at Canton he was attached to the Military Train in an expedition commanded by General Sir Charles Straubenzee against the fort of Namtow and took part in the assault. The fort was taken in gallant style, and the day after, before re-embarking, the men were ordered to discharge their muskets. While this was being done, Robert Danvers was accidentally shot through the body. Thus was ended, in the prime of early manhood, in the words of the General commanding, the career of "a most promising young officer" and the life of a devoted and dearly loved son, a warm-hearted and affectionate brother, and a genial and highly esteemed comrade.

¹ Afterwards Lord Clyde.

"O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
Who pledgest now thy gallant son;
A shot, ere half thy draught be done
Hath still'd the life that beat from thee."¹

His loss was mourned not only by his sorrowing family, and, as the General in his official dispatch said, "by the force," but by the public, who had seen his letters from Lucknow.

Numerous notices appeared in the Press. They all expressed the same sentiment, and the following extract from one is a specimen of the general feeling:

"So died, at the early age of 25, an officer for whom those best qualified to judge predicted eminence in his profession, and whose sterling goodness is even a greater loss to the service. It will be long before those who knew him forget the cultivated intellect, the true and tender heart, and the deep, though unobtrusive, piety of this brave young soldier. The country and the friends of such men may well feel that the same qualities which embitter soften their loss, and that England can afford to be thankful for her very dead."

He was buried in the "Happy Valley" at Hong-Kong, and a tomb was erected there by his brother-officers "as a mark of the high esteem and affection in which he was held" by them. In the Chapel Royal, Savoy, a memorial tablet has also been put up, on which are likewise recorded the deaths of his father and mother.

¹ Tennyson, "In Memoriam."

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