

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Jerome Rilke George
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Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
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Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
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Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
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Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
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John Nicholson The Lion of the Punjaub

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"My Lord, you may rely upon this, that if ever
there is a desperate deed to be done in India,
John Nicholson is the man to do it."
Sir Herbert Edwardes to Lord Canning,
March 1857.

**TO
GILBERT BRANDON WHITE**

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"Seize those men!" commanded Nicholson fiercely, as he pointed out the ringleaders *Frontispiece*

One by one dropped through into the narrow street below

They seated themselves and fixed their eyes upon the object of their adoration

"You have just five minutes to read it and give me any message for your husband"

They saw Nicholson himself fastened with ropes to a tree

Portrait of John Nicholson

He saw Nicholson's great form riding steadily on as if nothing was the matter

A sepoy leaned out . . . and pointed his musket at the tall figure beneath him

JOHN NICHOLSON

CHAPTER I.

EASTWARD HO!

High up on the crest of the wild and rugged Margalla Pass, on the north-western frontier of India, stands a plain stone obelisk. It looks down on to the road that winds from Rawal Pindi to Hasan Abdal, the road where once only the Afghan camel-train passed on its way to and from Peshawur, but where now a railway marks the progress of modern India. Severely simple in its exterior, the obelisk is yet one of the most notable monuments to be seen in our great Eastern Empire, for it commemorates a soldier-hero of high fame. On its base is inscribed the name of John Nicholson.

This Margalla monument is not the only memorial to Nicholson in India: there is a tablet to his memory in a church at Bannu, the scene of his administrative work; and there is at Delhi, where he lies buried, a fine bronze statue of recent erection. But the stone obelisk in the frontier pass will stand for ever as the most striking tribute to the man who played so prominent a part in the saving of India. Its very position appeals strongly to the imagination. Here it was, in the district which he ruled so wisely and well, that Nicholson's early reputation was made; and here it is that among the wild tribesmen whom he tamed to his will his memory is still fondly cherished.

Who was John Nicholson? The question may well rise to the lips of many, for the writers of history textbooks have hitherto done him scant justice. And yet the tale of the Great Mutiny cannot be properly told without due acknowledgment being made to his genius. Those who know how the fate of India trembled in the balance in those dark days of 1857, know what we owe to him among other strong men whom the occasion brought to the front. It is now fifty

years since Nicholson fell in the hour of victory at Delhi; the present year is, therefore, a fitting time to retell the story of his short but glorious career.

Like his distinguished chief, Sir Henry Lawrence, John Nicholson was an Irishman. He was born, in December 1822, at Lisburn, near Belfast, where his father, Dr. Alexander Nicholson, had a flourishing practice. On the paternal side he came of a family which had been established in Ireland since the sixteenth century, while through his mother, who was a Miss Hogg, he was connected with a well-known Ulster family, of which the late Lord Magheramorne was a representative.

Of young John's early life several stories have been preserved which give some indication of his character. According to Sir John Kaye, he was "a precocious boy almost from his cradle; thoughtful, studious, of an inquiring nature; and he had the ineffable benefit of good parental teaching of the best kind." Both his father and mother were deeply religious people, and their children—seven in all—were brought up with an intimate knowledge of the Bible. One day, it is said, when John was three years old, Mrs. Nicholson found him alone in a room with a knotted handkerchief in his hand and striking furiously at some invisible object. On being asked what he was doing, John answered, "Oh, mamma dear, I am trying to get a blow at the devil! He is wanting me to be bad. If I could get him down, I'd kill him!"

The boy's willingness to be taught enabled him to learn how to read and write at the early age of four. When, five years later, his father died, and the family removed to Delgany, in County Wicklow, he was sent to a school in that town. Thence he proceeded to the Royal School at Dungannon, where, although he did not greatly distinguish himself as a scholar, he made good progress. His chief characteristics were a fiery temper and a reputation for truthfulness and courage. A relative has placed on record her remembrance of having heard as a child that her cousin John was always leader in games, and was never known to tell a lie. "He was quite a hero from the first," she says.

Another feature of the boy's character was his very real love for his mother. With two girls and five boys to bring up on a slender

income, Mrs. Nicholson was sometimes worried as to their future, and at these times John, as her eldest son, would do his best to smooth away the wrinkles from her forehead. "Don't fret, mamma dear," he would say; "when I'm a big man I'll make plenty of money, and I'll give it all to you." The mother no doubt smiled her pleasure at these brave words, but she little guessed then how faithfully her son would keep his word in the years to come.

The only other anecdote recorded of John Nicholson as a boy tells of a serious accident, which came very near to putting an abrupt end to his career. While spending a holiday at home in Lisburn he was playing with gunpowder, when some of it unexpectedly exploded in his face. With his hands over his eyes he ran into the house calling out that he was blinded. Mrs. Nicholson on looking at his face saw that it was a blackened mass, the eyes being completely closed, and blood trickling down his cheeks.

"For ten days," says Sir John Kaye, "during which he never murmured, or expressed any concern except for his mother, he lay in a state of total darkness; but when at the end of that time the bandages were removed, it was found that God in His mercy had spared the sight of the boy, and preserved him to do great things."

By the time John was sixteen he was ready to leave the school at Dungannon. The question of a profession for him now presented itself, and at this juncture a good fairy stepped in in the person of his uncle, Mr. (afterwards Sir) James Weir Hogg. Mr. Hogg, who was a Member of Parliament and a Director of the East India Company, had had a remarkable career. Going out to the East as a mere youth, he had found fame and fortune at the Calcutta Bar. Having become a man of wealth, he had returned to England to enter public life. He felt now that he ought to do something for his sister and her large family, and offered to obtain for John a cadetship in the Bengal Infantry. To this Mrs. Nicholson gladly assented.

In the days of "John Company" the interest of influential persons was sufficient to procure entry into the service. Young Nicholson was therefore spared the ordeal of an examination or special course of training. In the New Year of 1839 he went up to London to meet his uncle and make final arrangements. An outfit was bought for him by Mr. Hogg, and, at a momentous interview with the "hon-

ourable Directors of the East India Company" at their office in Leadenhall Street, John took the necessary oath of allegiance.

A few weeks later he sailed for India in the *Camden*, with his uncle's sage counsel to work hard and live carefully, and his mother's last injunction, "Never forget to read your Bible, John," treasured in his heart.

CHAPTER II.

FIGHTING THE AFGHANS.

After a five months' voyage Nicholson reached Calcutta safely. Here he spent a little time with certain of his uncle's friends, until at last he was temporarily appointed to the 41st Regiment of Sepoys quartered at Benares. At this station he studiously mastered his drill and prepared himself for the permanent appointment which was promised him. This followed at the end of the same year, 1839, when he was placed in the 27th Native Infantry at Ferozepore, on the Sutlej.

The young ensign was now to experience his first taste of war. Soon after he had joined his new regiment, the 27th was ordered up into Afghanistan and despatched to Jellalabad. At that time Afghanistan was occupied by British troops, and to all intents and purposes was well disposed towards us, but appearances were deceitful. Though hardly anyone knew it, trouble was brewing in the Amir's capital. Below the surface of calm, feeling ran high against Shah Soojah, the unpopular Afghan ruler, and his supporters, the British; and the followers of Dost Mahomed, the rival claimant to the throne, had no difficulty in fomenting a general revolt. The blow fell on the 2nd of November 1841. On that day Sir Alexander Burnes, the British envoy at Cabul, was assassinated, and the streets of the city ran red with blood.

When the insurrection thus blazed forth, John Nicholson was at Fort Ghuzni, nearly a hundred miles to the south of Cabul. His regiment had been ordered there some months previously to relieve the 16th. In three weeks' time the hill fortress was surrounded by Afghan warriors, and Colonel Palmer, the commandant, found himself in a state of siege. Unfortunately for the little garrison, the winter was now upon them. Situated very high up, Ghuzni was exposed to the full severity of the pitiless snowstorms which swept over the neighbourhood. These not only added to the discomfort of the troops, but had the effect of checking the advance of a relief column under General Maclaren that had started from Candahar.

For a time the enemy was kept at bay without the city, their old-fashioned *jezails*, or matchlocks, failing to produce much effect. Then treachery made itself felt. Actuated by humane motives, Colonel Palmer had refrained from expelling the Afghan townspeople, and the latter now repaid this act of kindness by undermining the city walls to admit their countrymen. One dark December night the Afghans poured in through the breach, driving the Sepoys and their British officers into the shelter of the citadel.

For a month the little garrison held out bravely, suffering some loss from the enemy's bullets and suffering even more from the scarcity of water. While the snow fell it was possible to melt it and replenish their store, but when the storms ceased they were in a desperate case. Instructions now came from General Elphinstone at Cabul that the fortress should be surrendered. Colonel Palmer, who was loth to believe the message, prolonged negotiations as long as he could, but reflection showed him that he had no choice but to submit. The water supply was at an end, and the Afghans threatened to renew the siege in a more determined manner than before. Very reluctantly, therefore, he yielded, having first bargained that the garrison should be permitted to march out with the honours of war and should be escorted in due time to Peshawur.

To this course the enemy's leaders agreed. But an oath counts for little in the Afghan mind, and Nicholson quickly learned of what depths of treachery this people were capable. No sooner had the sepoy of the 27th marched out to the quarters assigned them in the city than a crowd of *ghazis* fell upon them, massacring many of the poor fellows in cold blood. Nicholson himself, with Lieutenants Crawford and Burnett, was on the roof of a house near by and saw the terrible deed. In the building were two companies of sepoy. Joining these without delay, the officers prepared to make a bold stand.

The attack on the house was not long in coming. Storming the door in their furious desire to get at the hated infidels, the Afghans endeavoured to effect an entrance. When it was seen that this could not be done, the place was set on fire, and soon the flames and smoke drove the inmates from room to room. Before very long the position became untenable. With the few men remaining Nicholson

and his brother officers cut a hole with their bayonets in the back wall of the house, and one by one dropped through into the narrow street below. Fortunately, the two other buildings in which Colonel Palmer and his sepoy had taken refuge, were close by. In a few moments the fugitives had joined forces with their comrades.



“ONE BY ONE DROPPED THROUGH INTO THE NARROW STREET BELOW.”
(See p. 15.)

