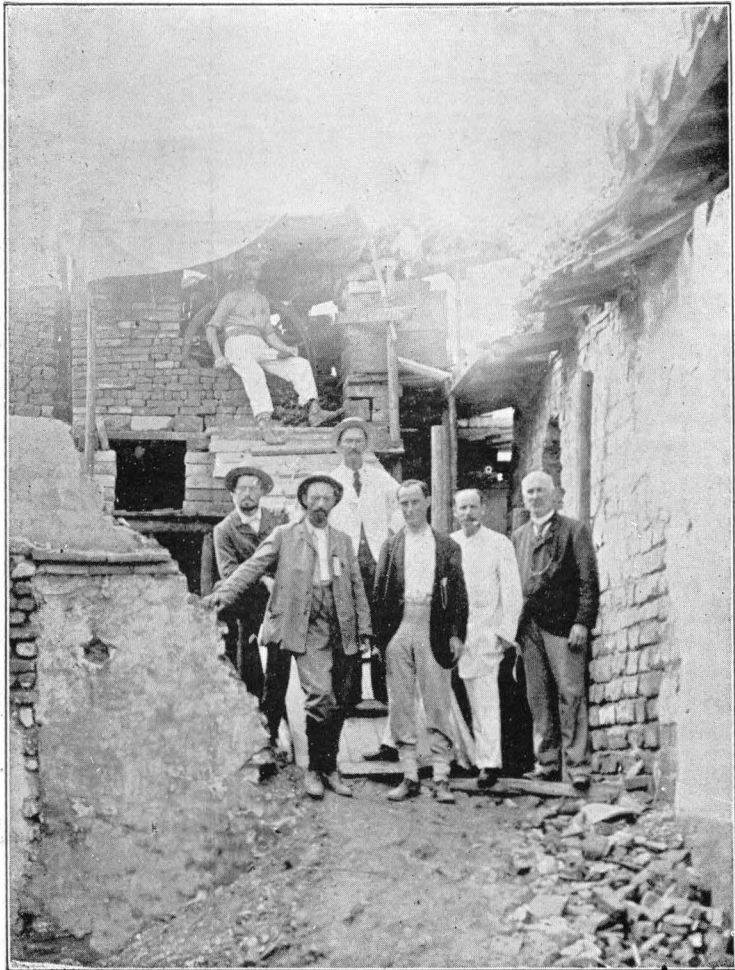


Two Famous Modern Sieges.

BY ARTHUR H. SMITH.

A

SIEGE is defined as a complete investment of a place in war, with a view to its capture. As war is an ever present and world wide phenomenon in human history, so also are sieges; and, as the example of Ladysmith shows, whatever the effect of incessant improvements in the practice of war as an art, the modern siege yields nothing in



NORDENFELT QUICKFIRER AND GUNNER AND SIX OF THE FORTIFICATION STAFF AT PEKING,

spectacular or dramatic interest to anything in the past. There are not, however, many sieges which permanently stand out so as to appeal to the popular imagination and dwell in the popular memory. Perhaps the only one of which, within the past twenty years—not to say within the century—this has been true is the siege of Lucknow. To this will assuredly hereafter be added the siege of Peking. The exceptional and perennial interest of these two events is due to the recognised certainty that defeat and destruction would have been synonymous terms.

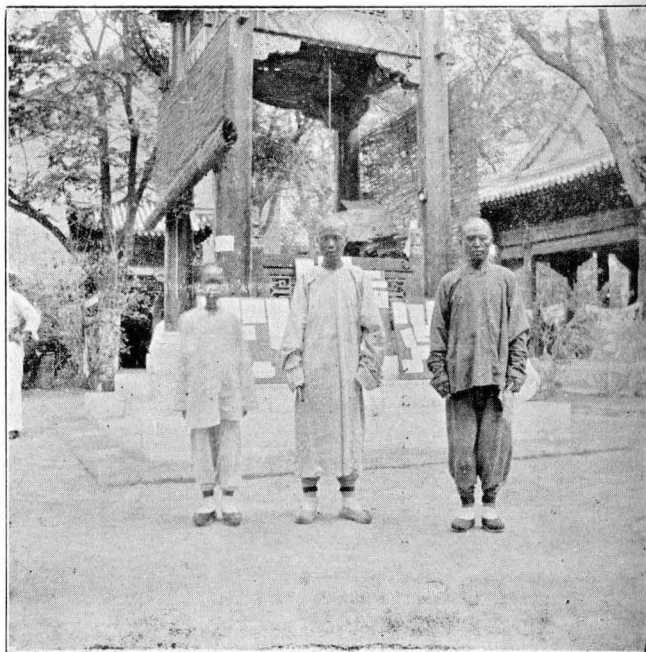
It is the object of this paper to invite attention to some striking resemblances between the two sieges just named as well as to certain contrasts. Each was a prominent incident in a wide and complicated uprising, involving a large part but not the whole of a great Empire. In each case this uprising occurred mainly in the northern part of the country. In each case the causes had been in operation for a long time, were gradually developed, and came to rapid culmination. The causes of "The Sepoy Revolt," as summarised by one of the latest and most critical writers on the subject (Lieut.-General McLeod Innes, v.c.), whose comprehensive work with the just quoted title is cited hereinafter as authority for all statements on the subject, were mainly five. For the first four the administration of Lord Dalhousie was responsible in creating or fostering disaffection; first, by the gradual extension of dominion; second, by the refusal to recognise the adoption of heirs to the rulers of independent native states when direct descent failed; third, by the resulting enlargement of the Sepoy force, incidentally accompanied by the reduction of the British force; fourth, by the introduction of an autocratic system which reversed the traditions of administration, slighted many of its essential elements, and greatly increased the difficulties of his successor. To this formidable quadrilateral the administration of Lord Canning, which followed, added the very grave error of an Act revolutionizing the future terms of service of the Sepoy army, requiring them to be prepared to cross the ocean, which would oblige them to break caste. This became an agitating topic in the native regiments, and led to the sinister rumours that the Government was aggressively inclined toward the ancient creeds of the land.

The causes of the unexampled upheaval in China may not as yet have been fully understood and impartially investigated. When they have been analysed, so far as it is possible for Occidentals to do it, they will probably be found to comprise all the following elements (as well as numerous others less important), named in the inverse order of their influence. First, those relating to political economy, covering the replacing of native articles and processes by foreign, leading to industrial disorganisation of late rapidly increased by the expansion of foreign trade, by the growing use of steam and the opening of mines—*all* the profits of which changes were believed to enrich foreigners and impoverish China; second, those relating to ethics and religion, embracing the threatened disappearance of Buddhism and Taoism, and the essential modification of parts of Confucianism; third, those growing out of the projected reforms of 1898, with numerous serious political and dynastic complications; fourth, the sting of recent and growing foreign aggressions, especially territorial—the

Germans in Kiaochow; the Russians in Port Arthur and Manchuria; the British in Weihaiwei, the hinterland of Kowloon, and the threatened sphere of influence in the Yangtze Valley; the French in Kwangtung, Yunnan, and Szechuan; the Japanese in Formosa and Fukien; the Italians in Chekiang; with lesser "Powers" yet in ambush, and a standing menace of the "partition of China"; fifth, race-hatred—natural, hereditary, and acquired, rooted in colossal pride and ignorance, undiminished by lapse of time, and constantly augmented by longer and wider experience of foreign intercourse. In India, the coming crisis was foreseen by no man in high position except Sir Henry Lawrence. In China, on the other hand, no one high in position foresaw the crisis at all, although in each case abundant warnings were uttered in vain. In each case the most obvious precautions were studiously and ostentatiously neglected; there was an extraordinary incapacity for viewing the situation from an Indian and a Chinese standpoint, and for perceiving what was in plain sight to those with eyes to see; and the most blind confidence in unfounded presupposition as to what the natives would and would not do. Indian officers were sure the trouble was distant and local—"My regiment will never mutiny." Old "China hands" in the Legations at Peking smilingly mentioned that they had experienced many massacres in the past and were still alive, and declared that the whole thing was "child's play," unworthy of serious notice. Within seven days of the destruction of Fengt'ai the British Minister wrote to Lord Salisbury that, in his opinion, a continued fall of rain to break the drought would accomplish more to put an end to the rising than anything which either the Chinese or foreign governments could do. Were other Powers as frankly indiscreet as the British in the publication of their Blue Books, more citations—interesting and instructive—could doubtless be made.

In China, as in India, the first signs of the coming storm were visible (to those who could see them) in the early months of the year. The first mutiny in

India was in May, and by the end of that month the revolt was under full headway and



THE THREE SUCCESSFUL MESSENGERS.

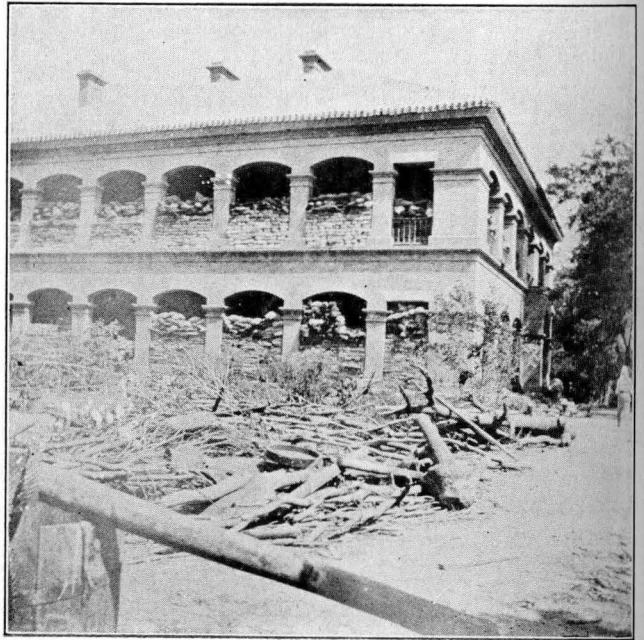
thoroughly recognized. The first outbreak of the Boxers in the vicinity of Peking was in the same month, on the 28th of which Fengt'ai was attacked, the railways and telegraphs destroyed, and communication between Peking and the world severed. Although a score or more messengers were sent to Tientsin in all sorts of disguises, all but three were understood to have been either killed or captured. The decisive blow was struck at Lucknow by the disaster at Chinkut, about five miles distant, where seven hundred British and native troops were out-flanked and forced to retreat to the Residency on the 30th of June. In Peking the whole company of foreigners was driven into its Legations when the dangerous situation was at last made indisputable by the murder of Baron von Ketteler, June 20th. The first siege of Lucknow (which is the one usually intended by the term) lasted twelve and a half weeks, from June 30th to September 25th, when General Havelock fought his way into the city. The siege in Peking continued eight weeks, from June 20th to August 14th, when the Allied Relief Expeditionary Forces fought their way into Peking.

The siege of Lucknow was divided into about four stages of about three weeks each, by three general all-round attacks on July 20th, August 10th, and September 5th. That in Peking was parted into two periods of four weeks each, during the first of which the attacks, except once for but a few hours, by bullet, shot, and shell were never discontinued; while in the other there were no shot and no shell except during the last forty-eight hours, and comparatively little rifle-firing for three-fourths of the time. The combatants of the Lucknow Garrison, including officers, numbered 1,700, of whom 700 were Sepoys. The other inmates of the intrenchment were 700 natives and 600 Christians, total 1,300, bringing the whole number to be fed up to 3,000. Among the 600 Christian non-combatants there were 240 women and 270 children, besides 50 schoolboys. The number of foreigners in the various Peking Legations at the beginning of the siege, excluding marines, was 245 men, 149 women, and 279 children, a total of 673 civilians. The marines, excluding 40 guarding the Roman Catholic Northern Cathedral, were 388 men and 19 officers, total 407. The Catholic and Protestant Chinese Christians brought the total number of persons to be fed to considerably over 8,000, besides a few score non-Christian Chinese caught within the lines, some of whom were given rations until they were sent away.

The forces that fought against the British at Chinkut consisted of parts of ten regiments of native infantry and two of cavalry, with two batteries and the followers of three of the chiefs near Lucknow. They were at once joined after the action by two other regiments—by the military police, and by all the armed Mohammedan population. The force attacking the Peking Legations consisted of a part of General Tung Fu-hsiang's Kansuh soldiers, a part of the troops of Jung Su, who was Generalissimo of the Peking Field Force, and not improbably of fragments of other organisations. During the last two days of the siege, the attacking soldiers seemed to be changed, with new and more formidable weapons (Mannlicher rifles) and an evident determination to do a maximum of mischief in a minimum of time. The actual number of Chinese soldiers employed against the Legations at any one time cannot be

known, but it probably varied from three thousand to twice or even three times that number, serving in relays and always entirely concealed behind lofty barricades. Lucknow was defended by more artillery than could be manned and worked, while in Peking there were in the Legations no cannon whatever, except an old Chinese piece found in a blacksmith's shop. There were four machine guns, an American Colt's Automatic, Australian Maxim, British Nordenfeldt, and small Italian one-pound shell gun, with a limited amount of ammunition. The first three were useless against barricades, and the last was too light to be of much real service. The Russians had no gun, but about eighty shells, which in a temporary panic were let down a well and spoiled, but when refilled served as projectiles for the old Chinese cannon, which, although ineffective at a distance, was formidable at short range. The Chinese had cannon mounted on the wall of the city fifty feet high, at two of the gates; two gun platforms twenty-five high inside the Imperial City wall, and on a level with it, with two guns on each; two guns north of the Suwangfu in more or less constant use, and others in different positions at different times. Probably eight or ten guns were in simultaneous operation for a part of the time. At Lucknow, the enemy's artillery entirely failed to breach or seriously damage the lower parts of the defences. In Peking, the shells demolished the second story of the Hotel de Pekin, ruined many of the buildings in the German, Japanese, and British Legations, and did

great damage in the French, American, and Russian Legations. But the outer walls of the British Legation were never seriously injured—not to say breached—and very few shells were fatal to life: perhaps not a single solid shot directly harmed anyone (contusions, however, occurred from falling bricks), although the aggregate number of shot and shell discharged by the enemy, according to the tallies kept, was over 2,900! In Lucknow, the weapons used were the old-fashioned muskets: in Peking, the



THE BRITISH LEGATION.

most modern rifles, with smokeless powder and expanding bullets, millions of which must have been projected, but a trifling number of which took effect.

At Lucknow the enemy expended great labour and exhibited much ingenuity in efforts to drive mines under the defences. This caused the utmost alarm to the garrison, as any single mine undetected might make a huge breach, which, from its suddenness, the defenders might be quite unable to block or defend, but through which the enemy, duly prepared, might rush forward in their thousands and in a few minutes exterminate the garrison. This might occur at any single effort, and if the enemy were to try to mine simultaneously at say fifty points (for which they had ample means), the defenders would be totally unable to oppose them. Against this great danger the garrison guarded by detailing at every outpost intelligent men to listen for sounds of mining, and by the digging of counter-mines, to which the men of several posts were trained, the most dangerous work being left to Cornish miners. Including the mines exploded in the three attacks the enemy made thirty-seven distinct and separate mining efforts against Lucknow. Only one of the whole number succeeded, the noise of the mining being smothered by the stamping of horses of the Sikh cavalry. A breach was made thirty feet long in the rampart, but the enemy was not ready to storm. It was day time, and the square was commanded on three sides by the garrison buildings, the fire of which kept off the enemy till the breach was barricaded and the defences there restored. In every other case the explosions were harmless, owing to the mines being short of their mark. The stormers failed, as they found no breach, and they rarely reached—they never penetrated—through the obstructions; the artillery fire damaged only the roof and upper stories; the musketry did little harm, as the defenders kept well under cover; while the defenders' artillery played havoc among the stormers as they came on in mass, and was well supported by the musketry fire through the loopholes of the buildings and parapets. The defenders carried out successfully one aggressive mine, and blew up a house the occupation of which, by the enemy, had practically relieved a battery. On the fall of the house, the battery came again into use.

In Peking, the Chinese attempted a mine from a Carriage Park building to blow up the two-storied students' mess and library building in the British Legation. The work was detected and a counter-mine begun. This the enemy in turn detected, and in dread of an encounter appear to have deflected their mine in a rapid curve. The air was so foul that a light could not be kept burning; without a light it was impossible to see a compass (even if one was used), and without a compass the most expert engineer could not be sure of his direction. As a result, this formidable mine ended in a pocket fifty yards from the starting point, at a much greater distance from its objective than where it began. In the French Legation two very destructive mines were exploded on July 14th, partly burying two gentlemen, the Austrian Chargè d'Affaires, Mr. von Rosthorn, and M. Destallon, a Professor in the Imperial University, neither of whom were injured. Two French marines were entirely buried, and their bodies never recovered. Two dwelling-houses were blown up and burned in this catastrophe, besides a great number of other buildings, and in

the ensuing attack most of the remaining houses were burned, and fully two-thirds of the Legation lost.

In speaking of the siege of Peking, it is convenient to confine attention to the attacks on the Legations, but it should be mentioned that at the Roman Catholic Northern Cathedral, several miles distant, much greater use of mines than elsewhere was made by the Chinese. Four explosions occurred, an Italian officer being buried five feet deep in debris from the roof of his bed-room, whence, when there was leisure for it (he being supposed to be, of course, dead) he was dug out unhurt! Two tremendous explosions left huge crater-pits and killed great numbers of Chinese, especially children in the orphanage, which was directly over the mine. Notwithstanding this terrific onset the Cathedral premises were not captured, although of considerable extent, and defended by only forty marines.

The Lucknow Residency lay on the south bank of the Goomtee River, near the Iron Bridge, and was only a tiny spot of some thirty-four acres in the midst of a densely populated city five miles long and two miles wide. Besides the prestige attaching to it, it possessed important advantages for purposes of defence. It was a healthy site, well supplied with water, and with means of shelter and accommodation, and stood high, commanding the river and the ground adjacent to it, and being nowhere itself commanded by sites on which artillery batteries could be erected.

The Legation quadrangle of Peking lies immediately adjacent to the south wall of the Northern City, which, as mentioned, is fifty feet in height, and from its broad surface absolutely commands whether by artillery or rifles almost the whole of every Legation defended, as well as those of the Netherlands and Italy, which were lost. The broad expanse and large buildings of the Carriage Park immediately adjoining on the west of the British Legation (separated only by a thick brick wall) made an

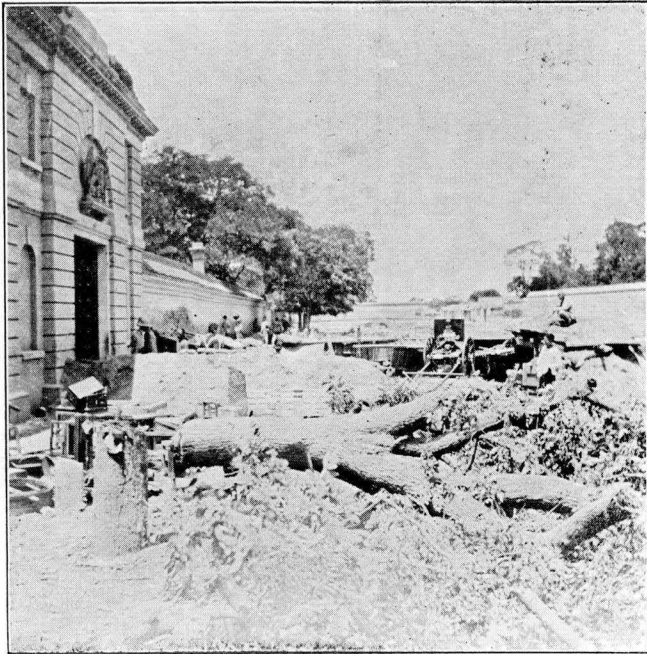


NATIVE CHRISTIANS DIGGING COUNTERMINES.

excellent point of attack for batteries, rifle-firing and mines. The illustration on p. 237 shows an outside view of the Legation Gate, with Nordenfeldt gun and barricades.

The wall across the street in the distance is the wall of the Imperial city; it was pierced by the Chinese soldiers, and a cannon, protected by iron shields, placed there. The buildings along the wall at the right were also occupied by soldiers and "Boxers," who from this position, kept up an incessant rifle fire. The Hanlin University buildings, joining the Legation on the north, proved, until destroyed by the fires set by the Chinese to burn the Legation, a source of the greatest danger, and the enemy's outposts in that area were a serious annoyance to the end. The control of the wall of the Imperial City a few hundred yards to the north of the Legations gave the Chinese an advantage of attack, which in conjunction with their overwhelming superiority of position on the city wall (only a small stretch of which was held by the defenders) and their unlimited supplies of artillery, ought to have been fatal to the defence. The water-supply of all the Legations was ample, and that of the crowded British Legation with its five serviceable wells excellent in quality and inexhaustible. Owing

to the exceptional foresight and wonderful energy and resolution of Sir Henry Lawrence, enough cattle had been brought into the Residency, with fodder to support them, to furnish meat up to Havelock's arrival, while the ample grain supply fed the whole force, including Havelock's, until Sir Colin Campbell arrived and withdrew the garrison late in November. In Peking, no siege was anticipated, as the proposal of the Tsungli Yamèn to escort the Ministers to Tientsin would ultimately have been accepted, but for the murder of Baron von Ketteler, which showed the certain result of such a course.

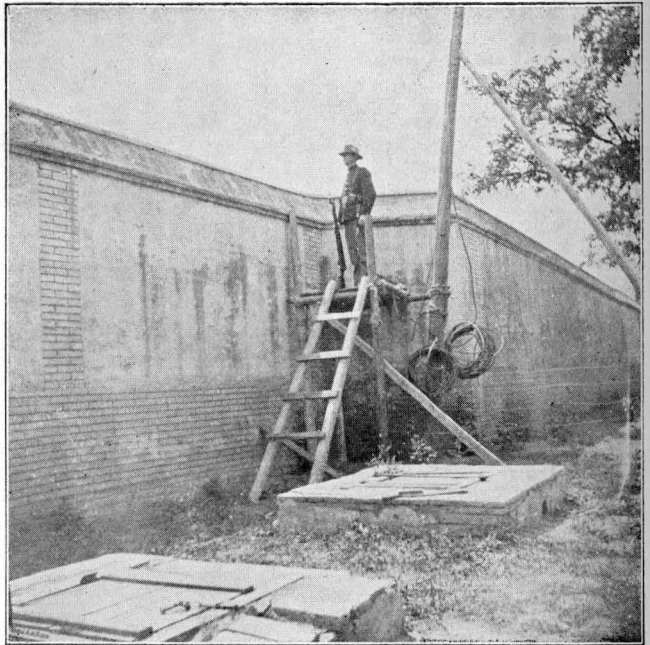


GATE OF BRITISH LEGATION.

Besides this, the relief expedition of Admiral Seymour was known to have started from Tientsin ten days before the siege began, and was daily expected to put an end to it. No food supply of any kind had been laid in for the emergency. The necessary meat was furnished by about a hundred racing-ponies and mules mostly belonging to the besieged, and these were kept alive by straw stacked near Legation Street and skipped by the devastating fires. Fifty or more tons of new wheat were

found in a grain shop within the lines, and an immense quantity of white and yellow rice, Indian corn, beans, sorghum, and millet, far more than sufficient for all the needs of those besieged. In Peking, as in Lucknow, the food-supply was strangely under-estimated, in the former a great quantity of wheat and rice remaining on hand when the siege was raised. In Lucknow, the line of defence was continuous, with no gaps. Wherever there was not a wall or building duly loopholed, there were scarped revetments and parapets with ditches, fronted by obstructions, such as palisading, abatties, chevoux de frise, stakes, cow's-feet and the like, through which the enemy were never once to be able to force their way. The Commandant of each post was responsible for its defence, and for due vigilance, care, and knowledge of everything that went on before him and on his flanks. No one was allowed to leave his post without the Commandant's permission, the staff and the engineers only went freely over the position. The families were distributed throughout the interior or more sheltered buildings, and were never allowed to wander from them, or to go to their exposed faces.

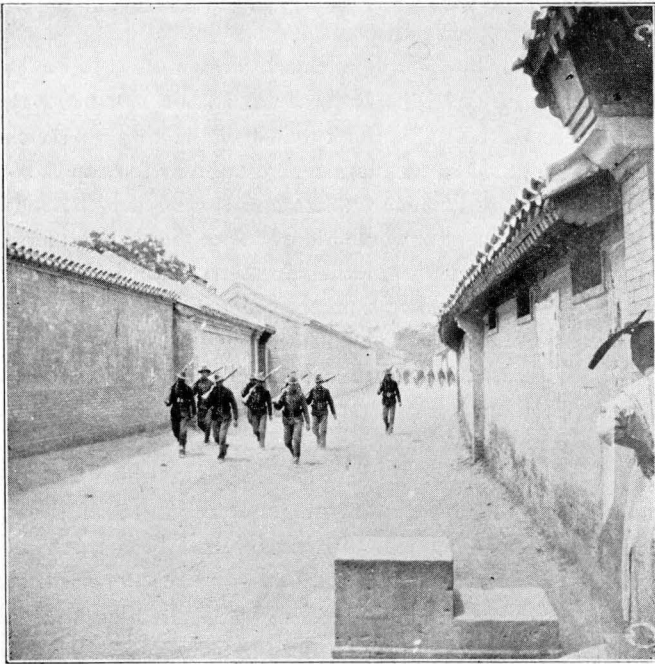
In Peking, seven Legations were defended, all except two forming the other line of defence. These could only be reached in passing from one to another by crossing a broad street exposed to fire. There was practically no restraint at any time on the movement of foreigners, except in visiting outposts. Men and loaded carts traversed Legation Street with more or less freedom whatever firing might be going on. The long and



IMPROVISED STAND FOR GUARD.

extremely circuitous line of defence made it impossible to guard more than a few posts with the limited force of defenders, a considerable number of whom were always on the city wall. The British Legation, a tract about 800 feet in length, and a little more than twice as long as it is broad, was crowded with seldom less than eight hundred and at times a thousand people. There were not, as in Lucknow, any shelter buildings from the constant cross-fire. Except during the worst shelling and rifle-attacks, the ladies and children moved about at pleasure, experience showing

that the risk was very slight. No children were ever hit during the whole siege, and a lady was only struck by a stray bullet after the relief party had entered the Legation. None of the numerous bomb-proofs were ever entered to escape shells. In Lucknow, with one exception, the adjacent buildings had been demolished (blown up as already mentioned) leaving only the ruins of their lower stories to act as a screen to the foot of the defences from the enemy's artillery. These ruins served as shelter for the enemy's infantry and as starting ground for their mines. They were only fifty and twenty-five yards distant from the defenders on the eastern face and from thirteen to ten on the southern. In Peking the surrounding buildings were a perpetual menace until destroyed by the enemy, who fired them on every side hoping to burn the Legations. When this in each case failed, the defenders were always in a better position than before, but the ruins covered the Chinese attacks until they were driven out, and the outposts extended. The distance between the posts of the besieged and the besiegers was often reduced to a few yards, a few feet, or a few bricks. On two occasions the Chinese flags leaning against a wall defended by the British and the French were captured by a dash,



PATROL RETURNING AFTER HAVING CLEARED STREETS.

and it was not uncommon especially at night for those on guard to be seriously injured by bricks hurled from short distances falling with force from a height.

The first communication from the outer world to the garrison in Lucknow was after the siege had lasted twenty-five days. The first messenger which reached the Legations from Tientsin was on July 18th, after the siege had been in progress twenty-eight days. Each message announced the coming of a relief force, that of General Havelock, already on the way, was expected to arrive in five or six days. That for the relief of Peking was said to consist of 24,000 Japanese, 4,000 Russians, with smaller contingents of British, Americans, French and Germans. In each case the expected and promised relief failed. There is a striking resemblance also between this first

attempt of Havelock to reach Lucknow, and that of Admiral Seymour to get to Peking. Havelock started on July 7th, with 1,965 men, fighting a battle on the 12th, and engaging in two actions on the 15th. On the 16th he fought three separate actions and recaptured Cawnpore. In fighting the enemy, as well as by cholera, Havelock lost one sixth of his force. Hearing of the mutiny of three regiments at Cawnpore which destroyed the chance of early reinforcements, his advance against the enemy in full strength was at present hopeless, so that he reluctantly retired on July 31st to Mungurevar on the Ganges to await supports. Admiral Seymour left Tientsin on July 10th with about 2,400 men, and on the 14th a part of his force was at Yangfang, twenty miles from Peking. The country swarmed with Chinese troops and Boxers. The railway was torn up much faster than it could be repaired, and a retreat became imperative, which was vigorously disputed at every step, and was much hampered by the long train of wounded. The relief expedition had itself to be relieved when near to Tientsin, where it arrived June 26th, having lost 62 killed and 228 wounded.

There is reason to think that, had the relief of Lucknow been postponed, the enemy, reinforced by the mutineers released by the capture of Delhi, would have given them much more serious trouble than before. It is morally certain that the Legations could not have held out much longer than they did under the repeated and pressing assaults. The civilians in the Northern Cathedral were entirely out of food when relieved, having for some time been reduced to two ounces a day, what was left being now reserved for the combatants.

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that the relief of the Residency of Lucknow accomplished much less toward discouraging the Indian Revolt than had been hoped. In the following March, Sir Colin Campbell with 19,000 men and 120 guns began operations to capture the city of Lucknow, which had been strongly held for nine months. After two weeks' fighting the city was taken with a British loss of 127 killed and about 600 wounded. "Lucknow had been taken, but the foes had not been crushed or even punished, and they were free to reassemble elsewhere in their thousands or tens of thousands. Peking was entered by the allies on August 14th, after a fight lasting but a few hours. But the following morning the Court escaped, and the Chinese armies "were free to reassemble elsewhere," though, for various reasons, they never did so.

In spite of the indecisiveness of single captures like that of Lucknow, the Indian Mutiny was thoroughly suppressed. The present strong, just, conservative, and liberal rule over the great Empire has its roots in the past fifty years following the uprising. May we not hope that the new China yet to be will date from the capture of Peking by the Allies, and that a century hence our successors will look back upon the Siege of Peking as we now do on the Siege of Lucknow, as a troubled but transient dream introducing a new and a happier era!