

Day by Day at Lucknow

Mrs Adelaide Case and her sister Miss Caroline Dickson were trapped at the Residency at Lucknow in India, along with many other women and children, for 5 months during the Indian Mutiny. The siege of Lucknow lasted from 21st May to 19th November 1857. All around them people were dying of small pox, typhoid and injuries sustained in battle or from the enemy bombardment. It was not until early December 1857 that they finally reached safety.

Early on in the siege Mrs Case's husband, Colonel William Case of the 32nd Queens Regiment was killed. Mrs Case kept a journal throughout the siege, it was published in 1858 by Richard Bentley of New Burlington Street, London with the title Day by Day at Lucknow. The book was recently republished by Elibron Classics www.elibron.com and can be purchased from www.Amazon.co.uk

Here are a few extracts from the book to give an idea of what they had to endure for 5 months:

Monday, July 6th

Last evening there was a rumour among the natives that two regiments were coming in. I believe that there was some fighting going on in the direction of the Dil Koosha; it is supposed to have been among the natives themselves. This is the best thing that can happen for us, as it takes them away from this place. The enemy were very close to us yesterday, and burnt down a tent which had been prepared for Mrs Inglis, when she was first seized with the small pox. Last night was fine and light, and much quieter than the previous. Colonel Inglis breakfasted with us today. Some nights ago the rebels looted the city, and the yelling and screaming were terrific. If they could only effect an entrance here, how dreadful would be our fate! Firing is still going on, but nothing compared to what it was during the past week. The natives in the garrison say that the insurgents are constructing a mine to blow us all up, but we have heard no real information to that effect. How long is all this to last? My poor heart is so weary and sad, that I feel truly desolate and lonely now in the world; and well indeed may I feel so, having lost one who was truly every thing to me.

Thursday, August 6th

Last night, while we were at prayers, a shell burst close to our door, just behind the punkah wallah. It struck into the ground with a great noise, and made us all rush to the door to see where it had fallen. Not many minutes afterwards a bullet came close to the ayah, and with a tremendous clatter broke a plate, which she had beside her. This also was just at our door. Several other shots were fired into our little courtyard, and so near did they appear, that Mrs. Inglis began to think they must be taking particular aim at this place, thinking that Colonel Inglis slept here. I believe that there was some heavy firing during the night, but I am thankful to say I slept well, and did not hear it.

This morning poor Mr Studdy, of the 32nd, has had one of his arms taken off by a round shot in the Residency. I hear that he is likely to lose both, and that it is even doubtful if he will live. Poor young man! We were very sorry indeed to hear of this, he has behaved so well all through the seige. No news of any kind. It is now twelve days since we have heard anything from outside, and our relief was then supposed to be within three marches of us. Tomorrow we and the servants are to be put on half rations. How dreadful it will be when they are obliged to commence that with the fighting men!

Yesterday evening Mrs Inglis and I walked through the Sikhs' compound and Begum Khotee. When one sees the walls and narrow roads within which we are enclosed, escape seems an impossibility if these wretches were to get in!

Friday, September 18th

Last night, about twelve o'clock, there was some heavy firing, but it soon subsided. This morning, when we were dressing, one of the enemy's shells or shrapnel burst, and brought down a quantity of brick in our courtyard, pieces of which hit the khansamah and ayah's boy, touching them, however, very slightly... An enormous piece of wood, three inches in circumference, and thirteen inches long, was sent over the house and fired into the ladies' square this afternoon. No one could believe such a large mass could have come in that way, unless they actually saw it. It is now supposed that the insurgents have 18 and 32 pounders.

For more information please purchase the book Day by Day at Lucknow by Adelaide Case