

Edwin Arnold

Then downcast sank, with his true knee, to earth
 In proud humility. So dear it seemed
 To see the Prince, to know him whole, to mark
 That glory greater than of earthly state
 Crowning his head, that majesty which brought
 All men, so awed and silent, in his steps.
 Nathless the King broke forth, 'Ends it in this
 That great Siddārtha steals into his realm,
 Wrapped in a clout, shorn, sandalled, craving food
 Of low-borns, he whose life was as a God's?
 My son! heir of this spacious power, and heir
 Of Kings who did but clap their palms to have
 What earth could give or eager service bring?
 Thou should'st have come appalled in thy rank,
 With shining spears and tramp of horse and foot.
 Lo! all my soldiers camped upon the road,
 And all my city waited at the gates,
 Where hast thou sojourned through these evil years
 Whilst thy crowned father mourned? and she,* too, there
 Lived as the widows use, foregoing joys,
 Never once hearing sound of song or string,
 Nor wearing once the festal robe, till now
 When in her cloth of gold she welcomes home
 A beggar-spouse in yellow remnants clad.
 Son! why is this?'

'My Father!' came reply,
 'It is the custom of my race.'

'Thy race,'
 Answered the King 'counteth a hundred thrones
 From Maha Sammât, but no deed like this.'

'Not of a mortal line,' the Master said,
 'I spake, but of descent invisible,
 The Buddhas who have been and who shall be:
 Of these am I, and what they did I do,
 And this which now befalls so fell before
 That at his gate a King in warrior-mail
 Should meet his son, a Prince in hermit-weeds;

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

And that, by love and self-control, being more
 Than mightiest Kings in all their puissance,
 The appointed Helper of the Worlds should bow—
 As now do I—and with all lowly love
 Proffer, where it is owed for tender debts,
 The first-fruits of the treasure* he hath brought;
 Which now I proffer.' [. . .]

See also: Aurobindo; McKay; Naidu; Tagore; Vivekananda.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON (1809–1892)

The Defence of Lucknow (1880)

I

Banner of England, not for a season, O banner of Britain, hast thou
 Floated in conquering battle or flapt to the battle-cry!
 Never with mightier glory than when we had reared thee on high
 Flying at top of the roofs in the ghastly siege of Lucknow—*
 Shot through the staff or the halyard, but ever we raised thee anew,
 And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

II

Frail were the works that defended the hold that we held with our
 lives—
 Women and children among us, God help them, our children and
 wives!
 Hold it we might—and for fifteen days or for twenty at most.
 'Never surrender, I charge you, but every man die at his post!
 Voice of the dead whom we loved, our Lawrence* the best of the
 brave:
 Cold were his brows when we kissed him—we laid him that night in
 his grave.

'Every man die at his post!' and there hailed on our houses and halls
 Death from their rifle-bullets, and death from their cannon-balls,

Backward they reel like the wave, like the wave flinging forward
again,
Flying and foiled at the last by the handful they could not subdue;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

IV

Handful of men as we were, we were English in heart and in limb,
Strong with the strength of the race to command, to obey, to endure,
Each of us fought as if hope for the garrison hung but on him;
Still—could we watch at all points? we were every day fewer and
fewer.

There was a whisper among us, but only a whisper that past:
'Children and wives—if the tigers* leap into the fold unawares—
Every man die at his post—and the foe may outlive us at last—
Better to fall by the hands that they love, than to fall into theirs!
Roar upon roar in a moment two mines by the enemy sprung
Clove into perilous chasms our walls and our poor palisades.
Riflesman, true is your heart, but be sure that your hand be as true!
Sharp is the fire of assault, better aimed are your flank fusillades—
Twice do we hurl them to earth from the ladders to which they had
clung,
Twice from the ditch where they shelter we drive them with hand-
grenades;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

V

Then on another wild morning another wild earthquake out-tore
Clean from our lines of defence ten or twelve good paces or more.
Riflesman, high on the roof, hidden there from the light of the sun—
One has leapt up on the breach, crying out: 'Follow me, follow
me!—
Mark him—he falls! then another, and *him* too, and down goes he.
Had they been bold enough then, who can tell but the traitors had
won?
Boardings and rafters and doors—an embrasure! make way for the
gun!
Now double-charge it with grape! It is charged and we fire, and they
run.
Praise to our Indian brothers, and let the dark face have his due!

Death in our innermost chamber, and death at our slight barricade,
Death while we stood with the musket, and death while we stooped to
the spade,
Death to the dying, and wounds to the wounded, for often there fell,
Striking the hospital wall, crashing through it, their shot and their
shell,
Death—for their spies were among us, their marksmen were told of
our best,
So that the brute bullet broke through the brain that could think for
the rest;
Bullets would sing by our foreheads, and bullets would rain at our
feet—
Fire from ten thousand at once of the rebels that girdled us round—
Death at the glimpse of a finger from over the breadth of a street,
Death from the heights of the mosque and the palace, and death in
the ground!
Mine? yes, a mine! Countermine! down, down! and creep through
the hole!
Keep the revolver in hand! you can hear him—the murderous mole!
Quiet, ah! quiet—wait till the point of the pickaxe be through!
Click with the pick, coming nearer and nearer again than before—
Now let it speak, and you fire, and the dark pioneer is no more;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew!

III

Ay, but the foe sprung his mine many times, and it chanced on a day
Soon as the blast of that underground thunderclap echoed away,
Dark through the smoke and the sulphur like so many fiends in their
hell—
Cannon-shot, musket-shot, volley on volley, and yell upon yell—
Fiercely on all the defences our myriad enemy fell.
What have they done? where is it? Out yonder. Guard the Redan!
Storm at the Water-gate! storm at the Bailey-gate! storm, and it ran
Surging and swaying all round us, as ocean on every side
Plunges and heaves at a bank that is daily devoured by the tide—
So many thousands that if they be bold enough, who shall escape?
Kill or be killed, live or die, they shall know we are soldiers and men!
Ready! take aim at their leaders—their masses are gapped with our
grape—

Thanks to the kindly dark faces who fought with us, faithful and few,
 Fought with the bravest among us, and drove them, and smote them,
 and slew,
 That ever upon the topmost roof our banner in India blew.

VI

Men will forget what we suffer and not what we do. We can fight!
 But to be soldier all day and be sentinel all through the night—
 Ever the mine and assault, our sallies, their lying alarms,
 Bugles and drums in the darkness, and shoutings and soundings to
 arms,

Ever the labour of fifty that had to be done by five,
 Ever the marvel among us that one should be left alive,
 Ever the day with its traitorous death from the loop-holes around,
 Ever the night with its coffinless corpse to be laid in the ground,
 Heat like the mouth of a hell, or a deluge of cataract skies,
 Stench of old offal decaying, and infinite torment of flies,
 Thoughts of the breezes of May blowing over an English field,
 Cholera, scurvy, and fever, the wound that *would* not be healed,
 Lopping away of the limb by the pitiful-pitiless knife,—
 Torture and trouble in vain,—for it never could save us a life.
 Valour of delicate women who tended the hospital bed,
 Horror of women in travail among the dying and dead,
 Grief for our perishing children, and never a moment for grief,
 Toil and ineffable weariness, faltering hopes of relief,
 Havelock* baffled, or beaten, or butchered for all that we knew—
 Then day and night, day and night, coming down on the still-
 shattered walls
 Millions of musket-bullets, and thousands of cannon-balls—
 But ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

VII

Hark cannonade, fusillade! is it true what was told by the scout,
 Outram and Havelock breaking their way through the fell
 mutineers?
 Surely the pibroch of Europe is ringing again in our ears!
 All on a sudden the garrison utter a jubilant shout,
 Havelock's glorious Highlanders answer with conquering cheers,
 Sick from the hospital echo them, women and children come out,

Blessing the wholesome white faces of Havelock's good fusileers,
 Kissing the war-hardened hand of the Highlander wet with their
 tears!

Dance to the pibroch!—saved! we are saved!—is it you? is it you?
 Saved by the valour of Havelock, saved by the blessing of Heaven!
 'Hold it for fifteen days!' we have held it for eighty-seven!
 And ever aloft on the palace roof the old banner of England blew.

Opening of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition by the Queen (1886)

Written at the Request of the Prince of Wales

I

Welcome, welcome with one voice!
 In your welfare we rejoice,
 Sons and brothers that have sent,
 From isle and cape and continent,
 Produce of your field and flood,
 Mount and mine, and primal wood;
 Works of subtle brain and hand,
 And splendours of the morning land,
 Gifts from every British zone;
 Britons, hold your own!^{is*}

II

May we find, as ages run,
 The mother featured in the son;
 And may yours for ever be
 That old strength and constancy
 Which has made your fathers great
 In our ancient island State,
 And wherever her flag fly,
 Glorifying between sea and sky,
 Makes the might of Britain known;
 Britons, hold your own!

