

The Making of a Paladin

Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India:
The Early Campaigns of Major W.S.R. Hodson (1845-1846)

Compiled from original field letters and
dispatches, edited by Rev. G.H. Hodson.

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TWELVE YEARS
OF A
SOLDIER'S LIFE IN INDIA:
BEING EXTRACTS FROM THE LETTERS OF
MAJOR W.S.R. HODSON, B.A.
FIRST REGIMENT EUROPEAN FUSILIERS, COMMANDANT OF HODSON'S
HORSE.
INCLUDING
A PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF THE SIEGE OF DELHI AND
THE BATTLE OF THE KOWAN RIVER.
EDITED BY HIS BROTHER,
THE REV. GEORGE H. HODSON, M.A.
FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.
LONDON:
JOHN W. PARKER AND SON, WEST STRAND.
1880.

CRIMINOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

BY DR. MRIDUL SRIVASTAVA

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BY GEORGE H. HODSON, B.A.

(REV. COLBOR, SHIMLA)

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N. W. PARKER

Twelve Years in India: The Rise of Major W.S.R. Hodson

1845–1851: Baptism of Fire and Early Command

Formation of the Guide Corps

Appointed to the newly raised Corps of Guides in 1847 to keep frontier tribes.



Arrival and the Sutlej Campaign (1845–46)



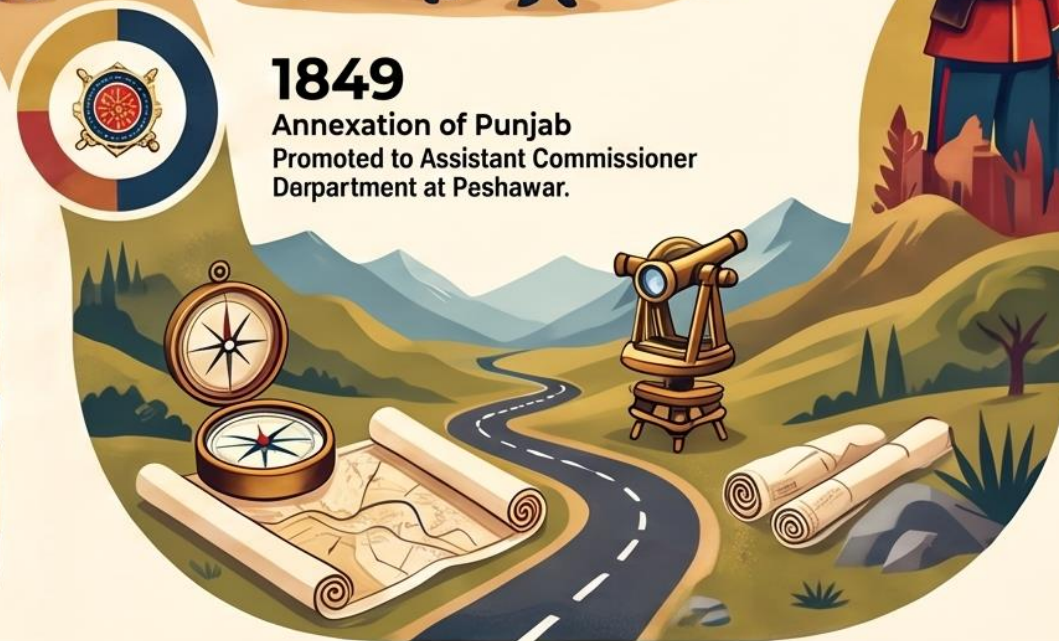
Hodson survived the brutal battles of Muoukee and Subraon shortly after landing in Calcutta.

1845

Sutlej Campaign
Fought in four general engagements within his first four months.

1849

Annexation of Punjab
Promoted to Assistant Commissioner Department at Peshawar.



Civil and Military Surveying in the Punjab

Managed road-making and surveying projects following the annexation of the Punjab in 1849.

1852–1858: Command, Conflict, and The Siege of Delhi

Leadership of the Guide Corps (1852)

Earned high praise for attaching the Guides to himself through mutual honour and daring.



1857

Siege of Delhi
Captured the King and Princes, effectively ending the rebellion in the city.

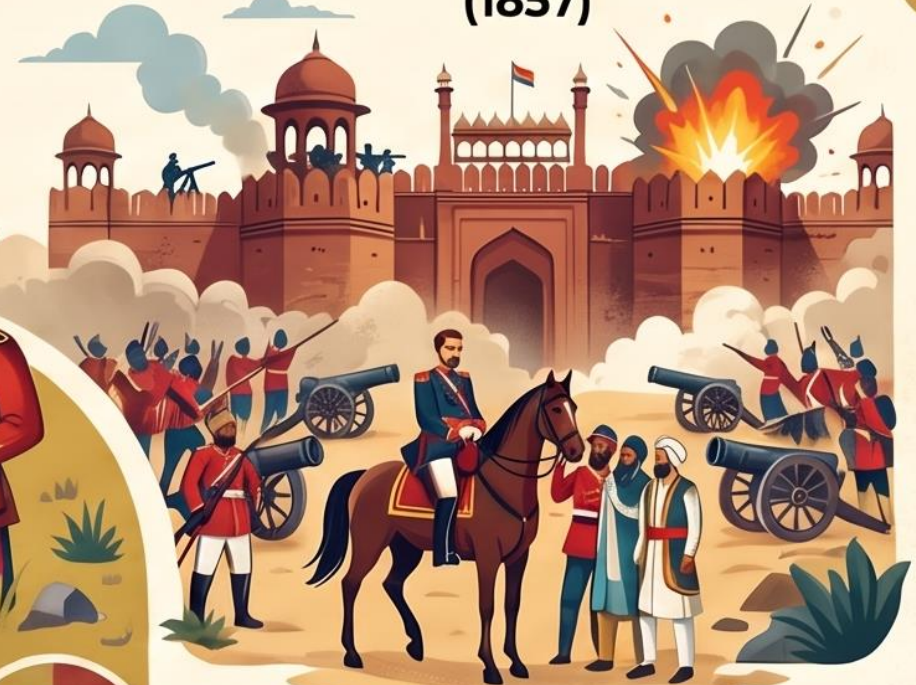


Final Action at Lucknow (1858)



Hodson met his death in March 1856 during the capture of the Begum's Palace.

The Siege of Delhi (1857)



Conducted intelligence operations and led the daring capture of the King of Delhi.

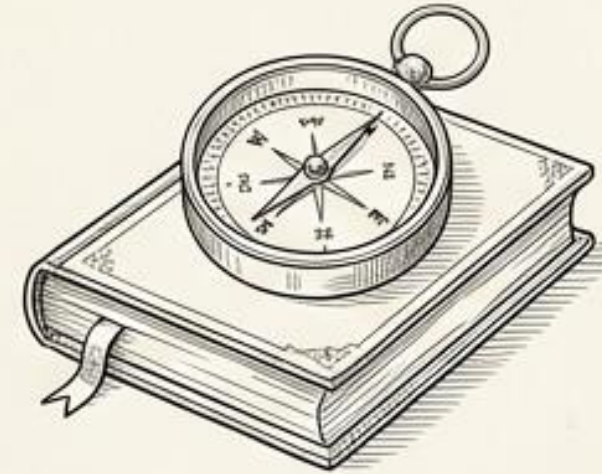


The Spanish Paladin



Reckless daring and an eagle eye
Thrilling voice in combat
Captain of free-lances
A sound of terror to enemies

The Christian Soldier

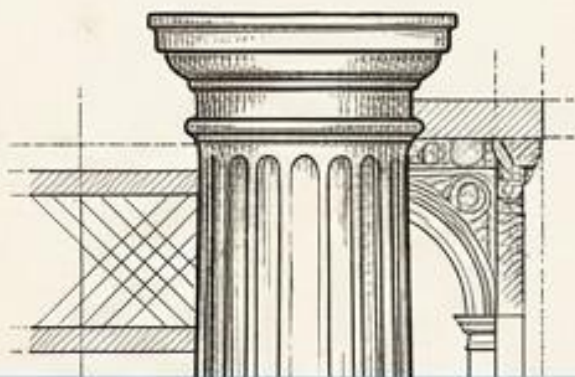


Highly educated and duty-driven
Womanly tenderness and stern determination
Keen appreciation for civilised refinement
Strategic intellect over mere bravado

“One seems transported back from the prosaic nineteenth century to the ages of romance and chivalry...”

The Raw Material: 1821–1845

Physical & Moral Authority *Rugby School*



Built immense stamina running the Crick run (6 miles in 89 minutes).

Served as a praepostor under Dr. Arnold.

Protected younger boys and restored shattered institutional discipline.

Intellectual Capacity *Trinity College, Cambridge*



Cultivated deep knowledge of classical and general literature.

Maintained athletic vigour through competitive boating.

Persisted despite a constitutional tendency toward severe headaches.

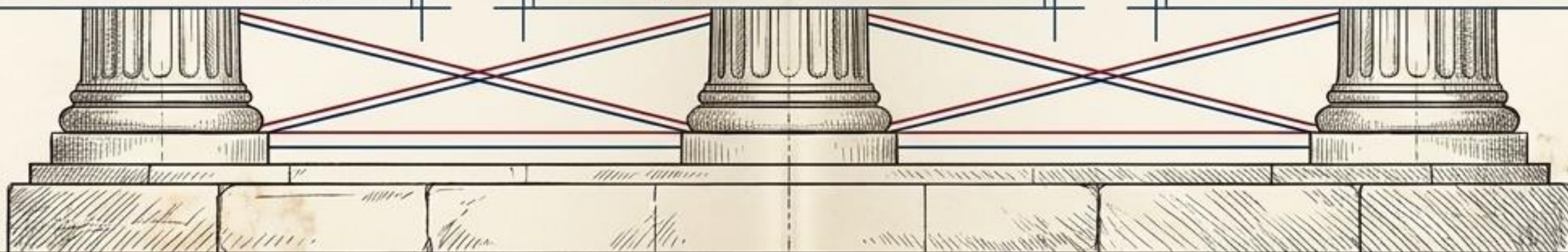
Practical Military Zeal *Guernsey Militia*



Commissioned locally to avoid military superannuation.

Dedicated to the strict, analytical study of military principles.

Praised by Major-General W. Napier for intense zeal and ability.



September–November 1845: Calcutta to Agra



Standard English Town



0 100 600 100 yards
0 100 200 11 feet

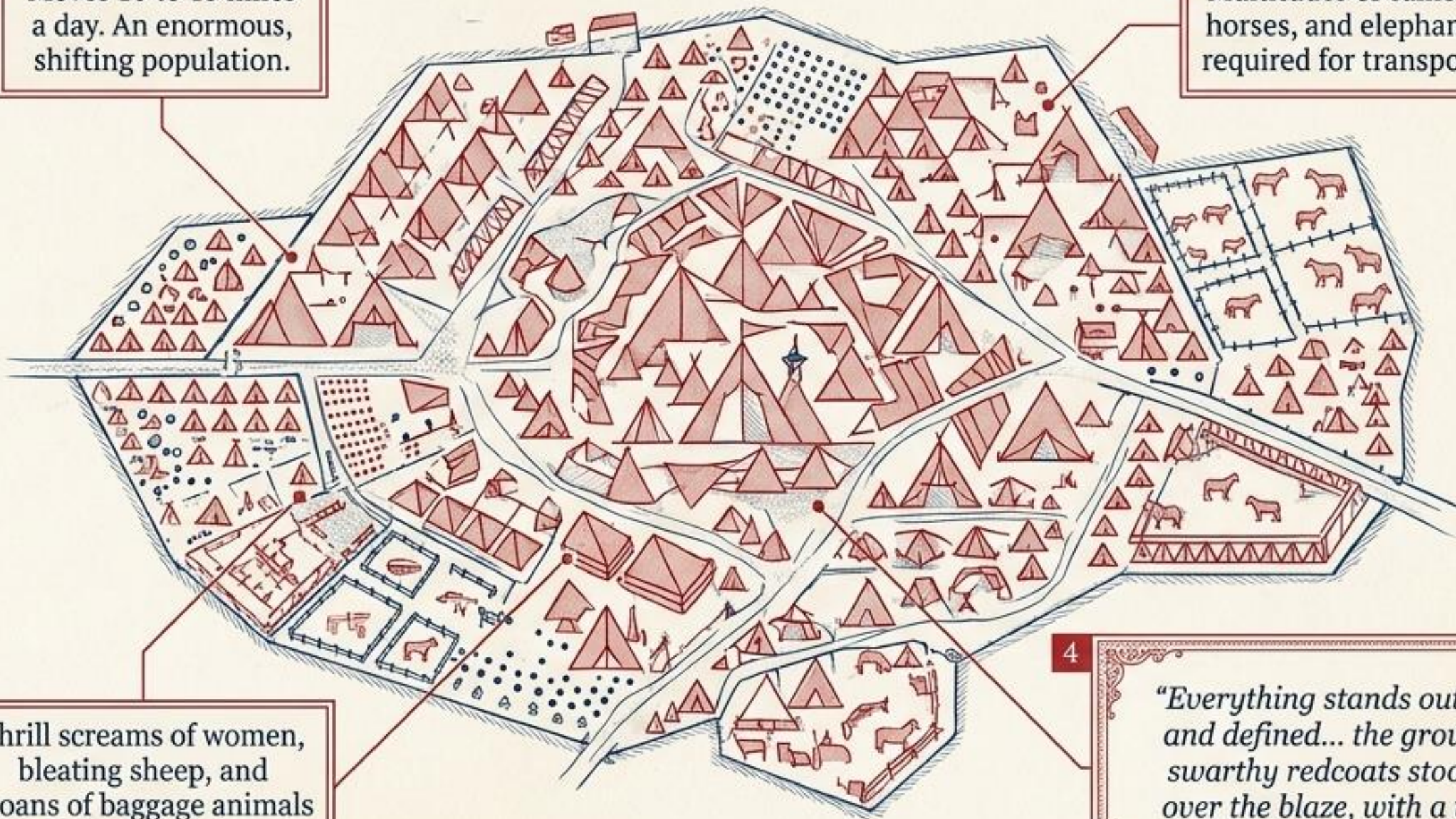
The Canvas City

1 Moves 10 to 15 miles a day. An enormous, shifting population.

2 Multitudes of camels, horses, and elephants required for transport.

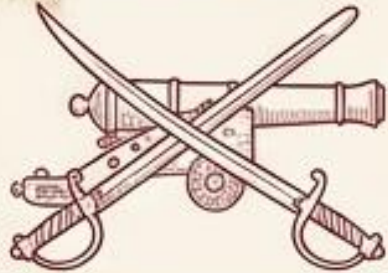
3 Shrill screams of women, bleating sheep, and groans of baggage animals filling the night.

4 *"Everything stands out clear and defined... the groups of swarthy redcoats stooping over the blaze, with a white background of canvas..."*



• 12,000 Troops at Umbala (December 1845) •

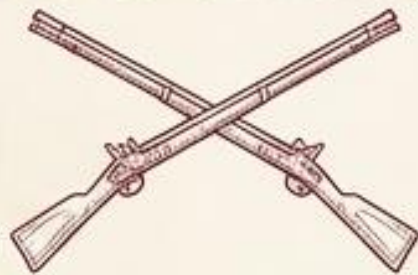
The Elite



English Horse Artillery & 3rd Queen's Dragoons

Described as most splendidly mounted and appointed.

The Core Infantry



British Footmen & Native Infantry

Stern British regulars standing side-by-side with tall, swarthy brethren from the Ganges and Jumna, obeying the exact same words of command.

The Irregulars



Native Cavalry

Dressed in fanciful, non-uniform attire. Noted specifically by Hodson as being the true 'men for service'.



Daily Temperature Extremes: Calcutta to Agra (1845)



Data: Temperature spikes violently to 90° or 100° immediately upon arriving at the new camp site.



• Into the Fire: The Sutlej Campaign Begins •

Phase 1: The Forced Marches

Pushed up to 30 miles in the scorching daytime with scanty food.

Followed immediately by a secondary fasting march of 25 miles.



Phase 2: The Twilight Engagements

Summoned to battle unexpectedly at half-past four in the afternoon.

Engaged at twenty yards amidst blazing grape shot and musketry in the dark.



Phase 3: The Bivouac

Sleeping directly on the cold ground under arms.

Waking to find casualties utterly dismembered by Sikh swords.



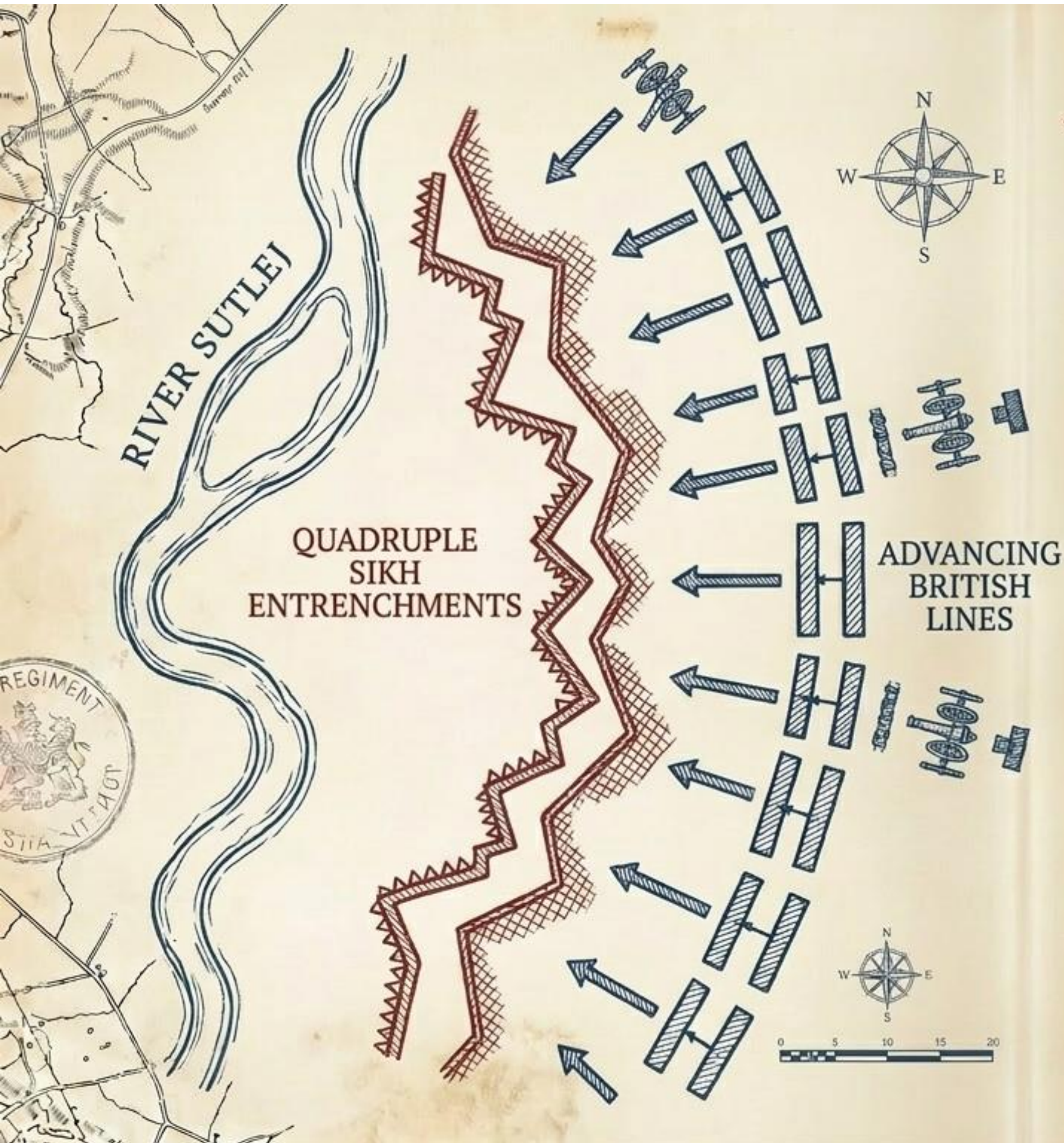
Insight: The campaign acted as a wonderful dispeller of false notions and young imaginations.

• The Bengal Army Under Fire •

Troop Type	Observed Discipline	Action Under Fire
British Regiments (e.g., 80th Queen's)	Advanced silently and firmly through black darkness.	Effectively carried out bayonet charges and spiked monster guns under heavy fire.
Native Sepoys	Lamentably Lamentably deficient in discipline, specifically toward native commissioned officers.	Quailed under the tremendous fire of Sikh artillery; broke formation when faced with dense grape shot.

Strategic Conclusion

Hodson's Assessment: Radical improvements in discipline are required for extended hostilities. The widespread evil of poor discipline is firmly blamed on the complacency of the European officers.



• THE ADVANCE (FEB 10, 1846) •

Moving at 3 AM toward the entrenchments. Heavy mortars, rockets, and guns commence a magnificent fire at daybreak.

• THE CRUCIBLE •

Infantry advances under a fearful crisis of grape shot. Hodson is hit in the leg by a bullet and survives two massive shell explosions (one enemy shell, one friendly magazine).

• THE AFTERMATH •

Sikh forces driven pell-mell into the river. An intercepted letter shows 20,000 killed, wounded, or missing. Sixty days see the total overthrow of the Sikh army.

Catalogue of Pests

THE DUST STORMS



Darkens the air entirely;
fills mouth, eyes, and ears.

Thickens drinking coffee
into "clotted cream".

Splits writing pens from the
sheer dryness of the air.

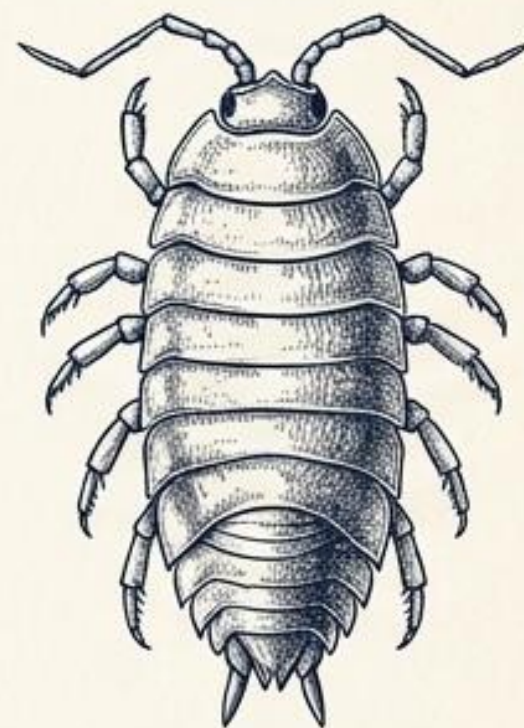
THE HOT WINDS



A blast of wind identical to
holding your face over a stove.

The only defense is hiding
behind a soaked grass tattee.

THE WOOD-LICE



A plague of huge pale lice,
in "numbers numberless".

Completely covers beds and
tables, preventing any sleep.

PATH 1: THE DISCIPLINED SOLDIER

- Transfers to the 1st Bengal European Fusiliers at Subathoo.
- Regiment is reduced to just 256 men under arms after the war, but enforces much stricter, European-standard discipline.

PATH 2: THE MENTEE

- Moves to Simla and shares a room with Major Lawrence, Agent to the Governor-General.
- Recognized by Lawrence as a sensible young fellow with a superb foundation from Dr. Arnold's Rugby.

THE CONVERGENCE: THE SIMLA SUMMIT

Hodson rapidly transitions from a purely military role in a decimated regiment to serving as Sir Henry Lawrence's personal political apprentice.

Task 1: The Précis

Condensing massive volumes of confidential papers and diplomatic letters into concise, actionable summaries for the Agent.



Task 2: The Survey

Given practical field lessons in using the theodolite and other precision surveying instruments, preparing him for the Surveying Department.



Task 3: The Observation

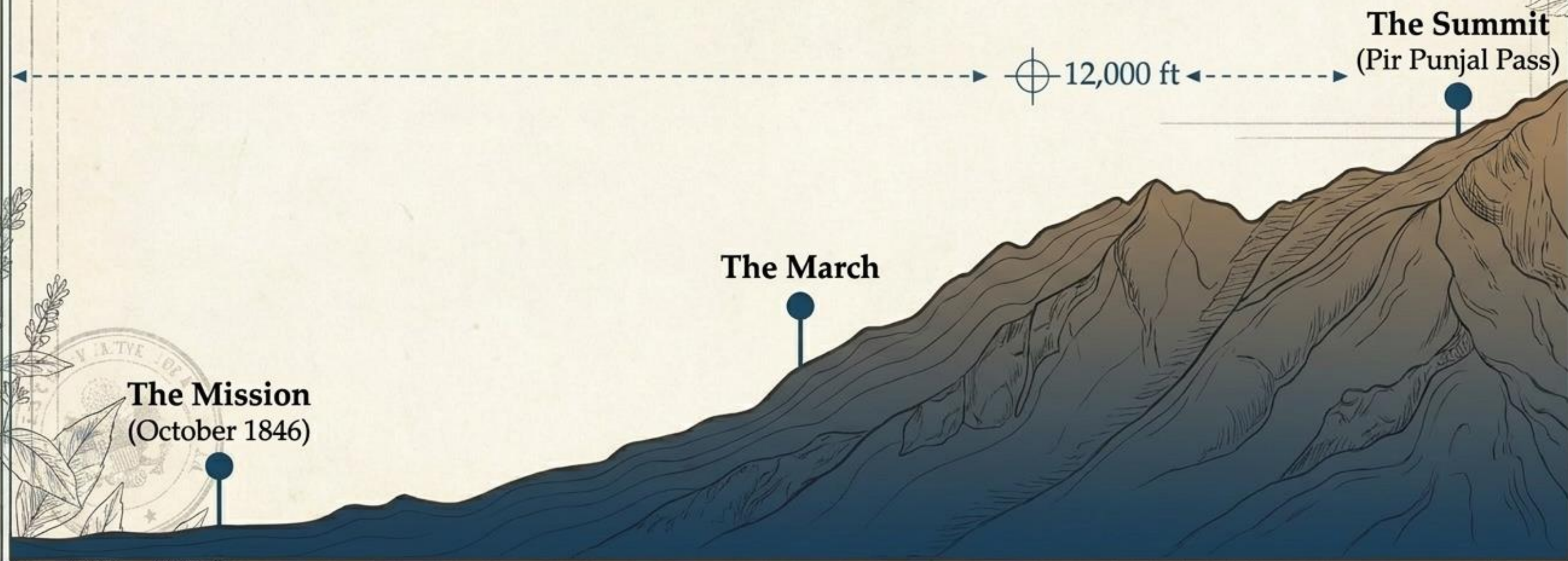
Sitting silently in a room swirling with natives, rajahs, princes, and military officers, absorbing the chaotic mysteries of political business.



Coerce the rebellious Sheikh Imaumodeen into submitting to Maharaja Gholab Singh, using purely the threat of British backing.

An aggressively paced movement, covering 70 miles on the very first day out of Lahore.

Crossing the pass at 12,000 feet. Sleeping in the freezing cold amidst the deafening uproar of followers, horses, and yelling men crammed in a tiny courtyard.





Character Profile Card

Target Profile: Maharaja Gholab Singh



The Facade

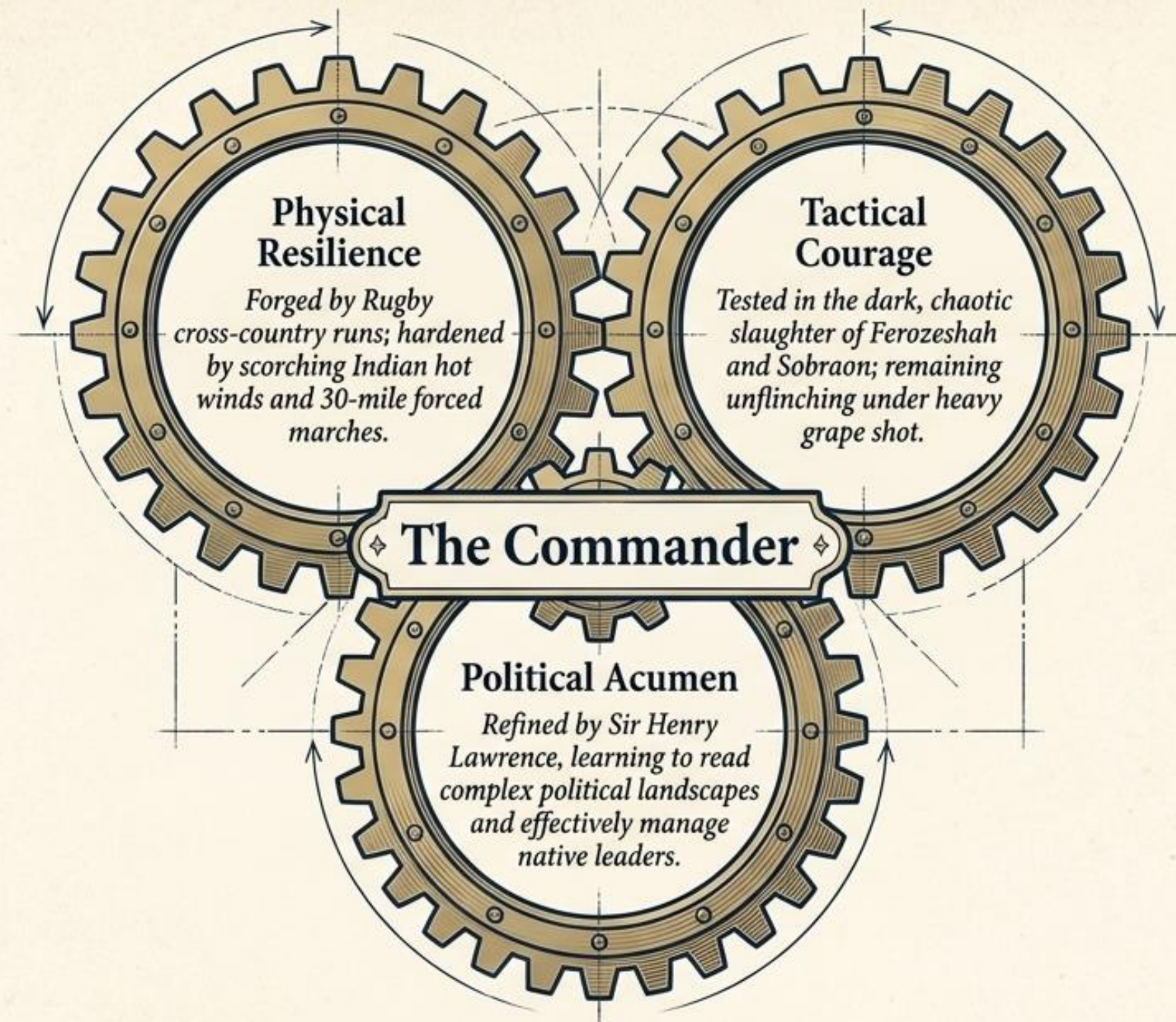
A fine, tall, portly man. Possesses an expressive face, gentle voice, and exceptionally pleasing manners.

The Reality

A clever hypocrite driven completely by avarice. Accused of flaying 12,000 men alive (he calmly confessed to 'only three hundred').

Force Composition: The Auxiliary Army

A picturesque, chaotic mingle of forces severely lacking uniformity compared to British standards. Comprised of spare stalwart Sikhs, huge-limbed Afghans, proud Brahmins, and diminutive Ghoorkas.



The invincible cavalry leader of Delhi was not born a Paladin; he was systematically engineered in the crucible of the 1845–1846 campaigns.

