THE ARMY OF INDIA MEDAL.

BY CHARLES WINTER.

AFTER the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, the Government decided to confer a medal, of one design and metal, on all ranks who were present during the three days' fighting.

This decision on the part of those in high places, created among the junior rank and file a feeling of neglect and lack of appreciation of all the hard fighting and privations that they had endured in all parts of the world, both on land and sea, from the end of the 18th century until the fall of Napoleon and his exile to Elba in 1814. This led to a great deal of comment; but, though appeal after appeal was made to the Government of the day, no medal or decoration was granted until the year 1847, when one was authorized to be given, but only to survivors still living.

The period to be covered dated, for the Navy, from 1793 to 1840; and for the Army, from 1801 to 1814. The earliest action recorded on a bar issued with the Naval General Service Medal was the capture of the French vessel Cléopatre by the Nympe on June 18th, 1793, the latter being commanded by Captain E. Pellew, afterwards Lord Exmouth. The last bar granted was for services off the coast of Syria, by the Fleet under the command of Admiral Stopford. No less than 230 different bars for naval services were issued; but those for the military were only 28, recording services mostly in the Peninsula, a few in the West Indies, three in America, one in Egypt, and another for Maida.
The issue of these two medals left those noble veterans of our Indian Army who had followed General Lake, Wellesley and others, without a reward to record their arduous services under a blazing Eastern sky.

On July 20th, 1847, a letter was sent from the Government of Madras to the Court of Directors, requesting their favourable consideration of a letter from the Adjutant-General, which reads as follows:—

"Sir,

"In forwarding the accompanying Memorial from Lieut.-Colonel Armstrong, 19th Regiment, N.I., I have the honor by order of the Commander-in-Chief not only to recommend the subject to the favorable consideration of Government and the Honorable Court of Directors, but to request particular attention to the circumstances of the object of the decoration for the Burmese War being less favorably understood by the Native Army in consequence of the Medal being withheld from European officers and soldiers who would highly appreciate the honor of being allowed to wear what was nobly won, and once held out to their expectations.

"His Excellency therefore, takes this opportunity of expressing his hope that the peculiarity which attaches to the grant of an honorary reward for service in Ava may cease, and that the European portion of the Army may be allowed a distinction which will not only be gratifying to their professional feelings, but to those also of their native comrades who will perceive more clearly the estimation in which their services are held.

"I have, etc.,

"R. ALEXANDER, Lieut.-Colonel,
"Adjutant-General of the Army."

"The Secretary to Government,
Military Dept., Madras."
This was followed by another letter from East India House:—

"Sir,

"We have the honor at the request of the Court of Directors to forward to you a Collection of Memorials lately received from the Govt. of Madras, in which the Home authorities are solicited to grant to the European Officers and Soldiers who served in the Burmese War, the honorary Decorations which were granted to the Native Officers and Soldiers who were employed in the same service.

"2.—The immediate cause for these Memorials appears to have been the announcement of the gracious intention of the Queen to confer a Medal upon every Officer and Soldier who was present in any Battle or Siege during the Wars from 1793 to 1814, to commemorate which Medals for the General or Superior Officers had been struck by command of Her Majesty's Royal Predecessors.

"3.—The Court observe that in the specification of Battles and Sieges declared to be included in the Royal Grant, there is one only, viz. Java, in which any portion of the Army serving in India is included.

"4.—This absence of recognition of the services of the Army in India appears to have arisen out of the fact that it had not been the practice to grant Medals specially to General or other Officers who had distinguished themselves in action in campaigns on the continent of India.

"5.—The Court of Directors were most anxious that the practice in this respect should be altered and assimilated to that in Her Majesty's Service; and at the close of the Nepaul War they unanimously adopted Resolutions having this object in view. These resolutions were not, however, at that time acted upon, as it was understood that in the Military Order of the Bath, then recently enlarged, all such distinctions were intended to merge.

"6.—Her Majesty's Govt. having now adopted a different course with retrospective effect to Battles and Sieges in the
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Peninsula, America, and (in one instance) in the Indian Ocean, the Court of Directors would submit that the survivors of those who participated in the glorious battles which were fought in India during the earlier part of this century, as at Assaye, Laswaree, Delhi (Siege and Battle), Deig, in Nepaul, at Kirkee, Maheidpore, Nagpore, Corygaum, Bhurtpore, Rangoon, etc., etc., have likewise strong claims to an honorary decoration.

"7.—It would be most gratifying to the East India Company and to their Officers and Soldiers, if the Royal Grant of a Decoration were extended to these services; but if it should be thought preferable to follow the example of Seringapatam and the late examples of the Battles on the Sutlej, etc., and to allow of the Decoration being conferred by the Company, with permission on the part of the Crown for its being accepted and worn by H.M.'s Troops, and for its being worn by the Company's Troops, the Court would prepare for your acquiescence a plan for carrying the arrangement into effect.

"We have, etc.,

"H. St. G. Tucker.
"J. L. Lushington."

"The Right Hon.
Sir John Hobhouse, Bart., M.P.,
India Board."

This resulted in authority being obtained in 1851 for the issue of the Army of India Medal to be granted (under the same conditions as the Naval and Military General Service Medals), both to Europeans and Native troops, and it was intended to cover a period from 1799 to 1826, which dates will be found in the exergue of the medal, commencing with the capture of Seringapatam, 1799, and ending with the capture of Bhurtpore, 1826. But as the Honourable East India Company had already conferred medals upon the troops, both European and Native, for services at Seringapatam, it was afterwards decided to date the services for the Army of India Medal commencing with that against the Mahrattas in the September of
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1803, when the fortress of Allighur was captured. This change
of date seems to have escaped observation when the dies of the medal
were approved, hence the date 1799 appearing in the exergue.

The obverse of the medal bears the head of Queen Victoria,
diademed to left: legend, VICTORIA REGINA. The reverse,
I venture to think, is one of the finest of William Wyon’s war medal
designs. In the centre is a semi-nude figure of Victory, seated,
facing to the left, and holding in her right hand a branch of laurel,
in her left a laurel wreath under which a lotus flower is resting on
the ground. On the left of the background is a palm tree, at the
base of which is a trophy of Native arms: legend, TO THE ARMY
OF INDIA: exergue, 1799–1826, with the initials W.W. The
medals were struck at the Royal Mint, and were mounted with
scroll suspenders attached to pale blue ribbons. Twenty-one
different bars were granted for the following actions:

Storm of Allighur ... September 4th, 1803.
Battle of Delhi ... 11th, 1803.
Battle of Assy ... 23rd, 1803.
Siege of Asseerghur ... October 21st, 1803.
Battle of Laswarree ... November 1st, 1803.
Battle of Argaum ... 29th, 1803.
Siege and Storm of Gawilghur December 15th, 1803.
Defence of Delhi ... October, 1804.
Battle of Deig ... November 13th, 1804.
Capture of Deig ... December 23rd, 1804.
War in Nepaul ... 1816.
Battle of Kirkee and Battle and Capture of Poona ... November, 1817.
Battle of Seetabaldee and Battle and Capture of Nagpore ... November and December, 1817.
Battle of Maheidpore ... December 21st, 1817.
Defence of Corygaum ... January 1st, 1818.
War in Ava ... 1824 to 1826.
Siege and Storm of Bhurtpore January, 1826.
These bars are known as the Indian type, and are the usual broad pattern with a scroll at each end, and the lettering is in bold block letters. Two pairs of dies seem to have been used for the medals, differing in minor points, viz. on the obverse the letters of the legend are larger on what I will call the “English dies,” and smaller on the “Indian dies”; also on the reverse of the latter the legend slightly differs in size of letters, and a long hyphen is used between the dates. Two events are recorded on the bars for which medals had been previously issued to Native troops, viz. Nepal and Ava: but as these medals were only granted to certain of the Native troops, and not to Europeans, the former, who had received the Company’s medal, were excluded from the grant of the bars.

The lapse of time from the dates of the events to the grant of the medal, and also the issue being limited to those still living in 1851, have made the Army of India Medals for the early actions exceedingly rare. The bars of the medals seem to have been made by a London firm, and the dies of same are still in existence. This, unfortunately, led to unprincipled persons adding some of the rare bars to the commoner medals. The official rolls of medals issued to the Europeans are still in existence at the India Office, but medals have been met with occasionally with names that do not appear in the list. This can be accounted for by the medals having been applied for after the original lists were completed.

Colonel Biddulph, in his book *Indian War Medals*, on p. 14, says:

“One thing is certain, viz. that practically every medal issued to a native was sent out to India unengraved; and in that country some were rudely punched, others engraved, and probably a good number were issued plain.”

My own opinion, owing to the slight difference in the size of the lettering in the legends, the length of the hyphen, and the absence of the W.W., is that the punches were prepared in England, and sent out to India for the purpose of making the dies. At least,
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those medals I have seen which were issued to natives have been all struck from what I have called the “Indian dies.” Another reason which may confirm this is that, although so many of the natives’ medals were engraved, some were neatly stamped, and the latter process would have required the medal to have been placed in the collar under the original dies; therefore, I think this must have been done at the Indian Mint.

When examining some medals some time ago at the India Office, I noticed that there were two types of bars used for Seetabuldee, Corygaum and Maheidpore; and on the Kirkee and Poona bar sometimes the conjunction “and” is used in full or in the form “&”.

A number of Naval officers and men received the medal with bar “Ava” for the Burmese War of 1824-6. The following ships of the Royal Navy and Indian Marine were present:

Royal Navy—

Alligator, Arachne, Boadicea, Champion, Larne, Liffey, Slaney, Sophie, Tamar, Tees.

Indian Marine—

Asseerghur, Diana, Emma, Ernaad, Exeter, Hastings, Margaret, Matchless, Nereide, Pluto, Sophia, Teignmouth, Trusty.

Many of the vessels were very small, which makes the Naval medals rare to an individual ship’s crew.

Medals with three bars are very rare, as only 13 officers, 18 non-commissioned officers, and 72 men received combinations of three bars. Medals with four bars are exceedingly rare; as only 13 officers and 10 men received this number of bars. Medals with five and six bars are of the highest rarity, as only 3 officers, 1 non-commissioned officer, and 4 men received a five-bar medal, and 3 officers a six-bar medal. One man was able to make good his claim for the unique combination of seven bars, viz. Sergeant William Colston, of the 15th and 31st N.I., who received the first
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bar of the medal for Allighur, 1803, and completed his services at the capture of Bhurtpore, 1826, thus covering the whole of the period for which the Army of India Medal was issued.

I am indebted to Messrs. Spink and Son for the loan of the exhibit of what must be a unique collection of this beautiful and rare series of medals of the Army of India.