

HONG KONG  
**INVADED!**  
A '97 NIGHTMARE

Gillian Bickley



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## Historical Introduction

Queen Victoria had been on the throne for sixty years and Hong Kong celebrated her Diamond Jubilee with élan.<sup>52</sup> St John's Cathedral held a Thanksgiving Service on Sunday, 20 June 1897.<sup>53</sup> Mount Austin Hotel held a Ball on the Monday evening. (Each guest was given a fan bearing Queen Victoria's portrait as a souvenir.) On Tuesday evening, there was a magnificent spectacle at Happy Valley racecourse. Two thousand two hundred soldiers and sailors with forty-seven officers were reviewed, each company being warmly applauded as it passed. Following this, there was a musical performance by the combined bands of The Prince of Wales's Own The West Yorkshire Regiment, the Hong Kong Regiment and HMS *Undaunted*, and a choir of three hundred male and female voices. The enthusiasm when the whole of the vast assembly, including the soldiers and sailors, joined in singing the last verse of 'God Save the Queen' was intense. The same night, wherever the spectator went on water or shore, his eyes gazed on a City of Dazzling Light. Illuminations outlined the sloping contours of Hong Kong Island with bold and brilliant magnificence, and business and other institutions lit their premises with ingenuity and a display of appropriate patriotism.<sup>54</sup> On Wednesday, 23 June, memorial stones were laid for the Hospital for Women and Children and the Diamond Jubilee Road.<sup>55</sup>

In Shanghai on the Chinese Mainland, events included a splendid garden party and a musical bicycle ride. Thousands of Chinese thronged the streets. Their admiration of decorations and illuminations sounded like 'the continuous roar of a great waterfall'. British Admiral Buller's loyalty, however, was



constrained by 'the antiquated superstition that the firing of guns by men of war in Shanghai breaks windows on shore, and the *Daphne* was silent'.<sup>56</sup>

At the celebrations in London, Hong Kong was represented by a military contingent. The Emperor of China was represented by Sir Chang Yin-huan, Special Ambassador to England for the Diamond Jubilee.<sup>57</sup> In Shanghai, later, when a 'cinematograph' exhibited the London Jubilee procession, 'on the appearance of Her Majesty the Queen, the audience stood up and sang "God Save the Queen"'.<sup>58</sup>

In Hong Kong, however, there was concern at the state of its defence. On 27 September 1897, *The China Mail* published an article from the Hong Kong correspondent of *The North China Daily News*, referring to 'the present slender garrison' at Hong Kong.<sup>59</sup> On the Chinese Mainland also, a show of strength was desired. The Chungking correspondent of *The North China Daily News* wrote that 'the sight of the British gunboat, even if only a torpedo-boat, would distinctly tend to revive the drooping spirits of certain of Her Majesty's loyal subjects'.<sup>60</sup>

*The China Mail* first published *The Back Door*, part by part, from Thursday, 30 September to Friday, 8 October 1897. The timing was clever. The annual camp of the Hong Kong Volunteers at Stonecutters' Island was to take place from 9 to 18 October.<sup>61</sup> It was clearly expected that public interest in the camp would secure additional readers for this story of the fictional fall of Hong Kong, in which one hundred men and six officers of the Volunteers take part.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, the Volunteers themselves — civilians isolated from their normal lives and undergoing a brief period of training in military skills — would have a greater opportunity than usual, to consider the serious topic of the defence of Hong Kong, which the story addresses by telling the story of its capture. As additional incentives, *The Back Door* makes the camp location — Stonecutters' Island — the scene of some of the events in the narrative. The fall of Hong Kong is complete when Stonecutters' itself falls.

The ploy was successful. When the series had been running for only a couple of days, *The China Mail's* gossip columnist, Brownie, showed an understanding of the main point that was being made. His column, 'Fragrant Murmurs', murmured:

That, according to your contributor, writing under the heading of 'The Back Door', it would appear that the hinges or panels of that entrance are rather in bad repair.

That I don't quite see whither the 'Back Door' writer (who seems to know what he is writing about) is taking us; but his realistic sketch is suggestive of many improvements upon present conditions.

That I have often heard of schemes of defence of the South side (or 'Back Door') which would safely and economically make things secure.<sup>63</sup>

Another Hong Kong daily newspaper of the time, *The Hong Kong Daily Press*, also took up the image, reporting the departure of those attending the camp like this: 'The men embarked with great eagerness, most of them doubtless proudly thinking to themselves that they would help to fix the Big Bolt on the Back Door.'<sup>64</sup>

The two countries who jointly attack Hong Kong in *The Back Door* are France and Russia.<sup>65</sup> Hong Kong historian, G. B. Endacott, looking back at the period immediately prior to this, wrote: 'The extension of the colony's boundaries [by the lease of the New Territories in June 1898] took its origin in the fear of Russian aggrandizement in the Far East, and of the French, who after their acquisition of Tongking following the Sino-French War of 1884–85 threatened to control China's southern provinces. It also arose from the altered balance of power in the Far East as a result of the Franco-Russian alliance of 1893 and the claims of Germany for influence in the Far East. Rivalry between the great powers was thus intensified.'<sup>66</sup> In 1897, however, the lease of the New Territories — named by the same historian as 'the greatest single measure of defence' during Sir William Robinson's time as governor<sup>67</sup> — had not been announced. Events were still unfolding, and real apprehension was current in Hong Kong.<sup>68</sup>

Concern about Russia's initiatives in China (and concern at Britain's apparent lack of response) had appeared in *The China Mail* as recently as 11 September 1897.<sup>69</sup> In at least two later September 1897 issues, *The China Mail* had carried items showing the close relationship between France and Russia,<sup>70</sup> giving a third of a column to the Franco-Russian Alliance and a description of a visit to Russia by the French President Fauré and his reception by Emperor Nicholas.<sup>71</sup> On 22 September, *The China Mail* published a paragraph from the Tientsin correspondent of the *Mercury*: information filtering through Peking suggested that China, Germany, Russia and France had an understanding with each other, while Britain was in alliance with Japan.<sup>72</sup> On 27 September, the same newspaper carried a brief item, stating that there was no doubt but that Russia and Japan were preparing for war — apparently against each other — in the near future.<sup>73</sup>

Shortly after the *Mail's* serialization of *The Back Door* had ended, *The Hong Kong Daily Press* captioned a Reuter's telegram, published on 11 October 1897, 'Russian Designs on India'.<sup>74</sup> On 12 October, *The Hong Kong Daily Press* carried a leader initially targeting Russia's designs on Manchuria, but concluding on a broader note of warning: 'Russia . . . is making the most of the time to hurry forward her preparations for securing the mastery not alone

of China but of all Asia. Persia is already her most obedient to command; Mongolia would be only too willing to transfer its allegiance to the Great WHITE CZAR; China is a ripening pear, to be absorbed by degrees as may be safe or convenient; and India can be fought for when all else is secured. . . . While so many sinister reports are current concerning the designs of Russia, it will be well to observe the greatest caution, and though doing our best to preserve friendly relations with the reputed enemy, to keep our powder dry.<sup>175</sup>

From a modern point of view, looking back after the passage of over a century, the reality of the Russian threat is made more immediate by evidence that it had infiltrated the popular consciousness. When Hong Kong acquired the New Territories in 1898, it acquired with the land a number of villages, some of which are still remote. In 1902, some students at school in these villages did not know what country had acquired control. The *Report of the Committee on Education*, 1902, states that, 'many of the scholars were at the last examination ignorant that Hong Kong was a British Colony: a number hazarded the opinion that it belonged to Russia.'<sup>176</sup>

There seems no doubt at all that *The Back Door* was intended to play a part in urging the authorities to take action on behalf of Hong Kong. In about December 1897, copies of the pamphlet version of *The Back Door* were sent to several named individuals in the Colonial Office in London, where this purpose was clearly understood. The copies had arrived by 4 February 1898,<sup>77</sup> and were registered under the topic 'Defence' among the Colonial Office correspondence.<sup>78</sup> One official considered it 'cleverly written and worth skimming through'. Another suggested that it might be sent to the Foreign Office. A third, for whatever reason (departmental rivalry? knowledge of decisions already made in London?) rejected this idea as 'hardly worth while'. Perhaps he was focussing on the negotiation of the impending lease of the New Territories. A copy was also sent to Captain Nathan, Royal Engineers, later (July 1904 – April 1907) Governor of Hong Kong.<sup>79</sup>

*The China Mail* kept up the topic. A week after the conclusion of the series, *The China Mail* dismissed speculations that the military authorities were planning, either, to take over the Peak Tram, or to build another funicular railway of their own. In the *Mail's* view, 'the existing tramway would be available should any sudden movement of the troops be required in time of emergency.'<sup>80</sup> By saying this, the *Mail* was reflecting what actually happens in the defence of Hong Kong as described so recently in *The Back Door*.

On 19 October, *The Hong Kong Daily Press* responded to its fellow newspaper's initiative by publishing a long article by the Harbour-master, the Hon. R. Murray Rumsey,<sup>81</sup> under the title 'Hong Kong Defence: What Can Hong Kong Do Towards It?'. In this, Captain Rumsey tacitly accepts the validity of the imagined capture of Hong Kong, narrated in *The Back Door*.

He considered that any invading force would certainly attack at night and unexpectedly, giving no time for any defence preparation in Hong Kong. 'Such an attack . . . would be carried out by a squadron of the enemy's fast cruisers bringing from some established base, not far distant, a body of troops to be augmented on arrival by the crews of the ships. This squadron would pass the vicinity of Gap Rock say at 8 p.m. — thus their approach could not be signalled even if international obligations did not preclude the telegraph cable from being used for this purpose seeing that the Gap Rock is Chinese (assumed neutral) territory. Within three hours the squadron, if not observed, could be in a favourable position for landing a force in one of the bays on the South side of Hong Kong, and, under cover of darkness, there would be a fair chance of their being able in say four hours more to land a sufficient force to occupy positions from whence they could cover the landing of the remainder. . . . The telegraph cable may be cut, and we may wake up one morning to find an enemy's squadron in the act of landing an invading force covered by troops already in position.'<sup>82</sup>

Rumsey itemized two ways of dealing with such an attack. One was for the enemy squadron to be attacked at sea by a squadron of British ships. In this case, he believed Britain would undoubtedly defeat the enemy. However, the British fleet might not be in the area. In this case, the only possible response would be to attack the enemy boats while they were disembarking the invading force.

In Rumsey's view, Hong Kong possessed such exceptionally large resources in the shape of steam launches,<sup>83</sup> as to be capable of delivering a vigorous attack on the disembarking boats. These 'would probably be so crowded with men as to be powerless to offer more than a very feeble resistance, while they could not be covered by the ships without being exposed to a fire not intended for them, and the necessity for utilising every available boat of the squadron for disembarking purposes would not admit of their being escorted.'

There was no doubt in Rumsey's mind that the main Hong Kong effort should be to prevent the enemy's landing. He proposed a warning system to be put in place at the first hint of a possible attack. 'This notice can only be given at night by an afloat patrol.'<sup>84</sup> Sixteen steam launches (at least) — the fastest available — should be suitably manned and armed, to act as scouts, possibly served by a volunteer corps.

Rumsey's inconsistency was pointed out the following day. 'It might prove to be a case of locking the stable door after the steed has been stolen.'<sup>85</sup> If an *unexpected* attack might well be made, what would be the value of deploying scouts only *after* hints of war were given? 'It would seem . . . that however elaborate and well designed may be our provision against attack by an enemy we must still, as the saying is, "take some chances".'<sup>86</sup>

The following day, *The Hong Kong Daily Press* carried the news that the

south side of Hong Kong Island would soon be fortified.<sup>87</sup> In a leading article, this was welcomed. The writer summarized the existing position, presumably reflecting the order of concern, describing three areas of exposure: first, the harbour, second, the Kowloon hills and Mirs Bay, and finally — the main focus of concern in *The Back Door* — the south side of Hong Kong Island. The harbour was regarded as well-protected already. Ongoing negotiations for a ‘rectification of the frontier’ were seeking to address the second area of weakness. And now there were solid plans for defending the third area of weakness. ‘With the powerful batteries protecting the harbour no enemy, it is believed, would attempt to force either the eastern or western entrance, and the city may therefore be deemed safe from attack from that direction, unless, indeed, the enemy managed to come over the Kowloon hills and establish himself in force on the peninsula. That is a danger which has been recognised and is one of the chief reasons for desiring a rectification of the frontier, in order that it may be guarded against. A more immediate danger, however, was the unprotected condition of the south side of the island,<sup>88</sup> where an enemy might make a sudden landing in force and occupy important positions before the defending troops could be brought up to oppose him. Under the new scheme we understand all the available landing places will be covered by guns, so that the way will no longer be left open to the enemy to attack us from the rear. To provide for the working of the guns there will of course have to be<sup>89</sup> a proportionate increase to the garrison.’<sup>90</sup>

*The Hong Kong Daily Press* continued: ‘The danger of an attack by way of Mirs Bay and the Kowloon hill passes will still remain, but further representations as to the importance of a rectification of the frontier are being made by the local authorities to the Imperial Government. It is to be hoped that success may attend those representations.’ In due course, as we know well, Hong Kong leased the New Territories from China in 1898 for a period of ninety-nine years. As a direct result, the whole of Hong Kong (including parts that China had previously ceded to Britain in perpetuity) was returned to China at midnight, 30 June 1997.

## COMPARISON BETWEEN 1897 AND 1941

In between 1897 and 1997, however, Hong Kong was the object of actual attack during the Second World War, and surrendered to the Japanese on Christmas Day 1941, a century after the British administration of Hong Kong began in 1841. It is recorded that, prior to surrender, the Governor of the time, Sir Mark Young, was haunted by the thought that it would be the first time in almost two hundred years that a British possession had surrendered

itself to the enemy.<sup>91</sup> During the period 1897 to 1997, much had changed. Weapons of war had developed. Air-power existed, armoured cars.

The fictional invasion and defence of Hong Kong described in *The Back Door* pinpointed serious gaps in Hong Kong's defence. By 1941 some at least of the problems had been addressed. Even so, there are interesting similarities (as well as differences) between the fictional and the real fall of Hong Kong. Not least of these, the three areas pinpointed for defence in 1897 were those considered for attack in 1941.

In both cases, the colony fell quickly, a victim to surprise. The fictional fall of Hong Kong in 1897 took three and a half days. The battle for Hong Kong in 1941 took eighteen. In both, the possibility of a successful coastal defence was slim.<sup>92</sup> In 1897, apart from the absence of fortifications on the south side of Hong Kong Island, 'the five torpedo destroyers and the harbour defence ship *Ajax*' were not in port. In 1941, the battleships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* were away from Hong Kong. On 10 December, they were caught on their way to intercept a Japanese landing force, and destroyed at sea off the coast of Malaya by the bombers/torpedo planes from the Japanese 5th Carrier Force.<sup>93</sup> Worse than this, the original plan — that Hong Kong would hold out somehow for ninety days until the American fleet could arrive from Pearl Harbour — was in tatters.<sup>94</sup> The American fleet at Pearl Harbour had already been wiped out, although no aircraft carriers were at the base.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the Japanese airforce destroyed almost all<sup>96</sup> British planes on the ground at Kai Tak airport in an early morning raid at the very beginning.<sup>97</sup> In both, supplies of food were short.

In both cases, the invaders advanced through the New Territories and Kowloon. In both, the odds were uneven. In 1897, more than fifteen thousand Russians and French were landed<sup>98</sup> of about eighteen thousand in the invading force. For the fictional defence of Hong Kong in 1897, the British Commander-in-Chief, General White, had two thousand six hundred and eighty-nine men in arms, including British and Indian regiments and the Volunteers. For the real invasion in 1941, the Japanese had twenty thousand<sup>99</sup> and the British defence under Commander-in-Chief Maltby — including British, Indian and Canadian regiments and the Volunteers — had ten thousand six hundred and seventy-nine.<sup>100</sup> The casualties were great. In the fiction, the dead and wounded on the Hong Kong side were one thousand four hundred and sixty-six. In the real invasion — according to one authority — the dead and wounded on both sides totalled twelve thousand.<sup>101</sup>

*Captive Christmas*, a linked series of extracts from contemporary accounts of the day-by-day events leading up to the surrender of Hong Kong on Christmas Day 1941, quotes the final plans for the invasion as given on 17 December by the Japanese Commander-in-Chief, General Sakai. 'The navy will support the landing. On a day pre-determined for landing the navy will stage a

demonstration movement along the southern coast of Hong Kong Island in order to deceive the enemy into thinking that the landing will be carried out there.<sup>102</sup> According to one account,<sup>103</sup> Major-General Maltby — taking warning from Japanese landings on Lamma Island on 11 and 12 December — considered that Japanese landings on the south side of Hong Kong Island might occur at the same time as an attack from the Mainland. He therefore decided that the whole perimeter of the Island should be defended. Nevertheless, it seems, General Sakai still wanted to emphasize this message.

Was this merely textbook military strategy? Or was it more than this? It is the dangerous lack of defence on the south side of Hong Kong Island that *The Back Door*, published forty-four years previously, had particularly insisted on.

Many writers have testified to the thoroughness of Japanese intelligence work in preparation for the invasion of Hong Kong. Had this perhaps included reading *The Back Door*?<sup>104</sup> If so, not only did this 1897 fiction teach the way to defend Britain's colony. It also taught an enemy one way to attack it. While, short-term, the pen is powerless before the sword, it *can* instruct the sword where to fall, as well as when to pause.

## THE BACK DOOR<sup>111</sup>

### Note by the Editor of *The Star of Uruguay*<sup>112</sup>

This document was found amongst the papers of the late Mr Reginald Brooks, after his death in 1916 at Estancia,<sup>113</sup> 'Saint Cecilia',<sup>114</sup> near Colonia,<sup>115</sup> and by permission of his executors is now published. It illustrates in miniature in a curious manner the fatuous state of unpreparedness of what was once believed<sup>116</sup> to be 'The powerful British Empire'. The author was apparently one of the residents in Hong Kong, who, if not connected with, was apparently intimately acquainted with, the government of that island,<sup>117</sup> and evidently an old friend of Mr Brooks'. Of Mr Brooks himself, his early life, little was known here, beyond the fact that he was an Englishman, who retired from business in China, probably Hong Kong,<sup>118</sup> in 1889, with a large fortune, which was afterwards considerably augmented at the death of a distant relative. The deceased gentleman was passionately fond of yachting, and had apparently frequently revisited, and for long periods, the scenes of his early labours and successes, in his large schooner yacht the *l'Étrel*.<sup>119</sup> He appears to have left Hong Kong, about the time indicated by the author,<sup>120</sup> for an extended cruise in the South Pacific, *en route* for Valparaiso.<sup>121</sup> On a voyage from the Society Islands<sup>122</sup> the yacht was wrecked on Flint Island,<sup>123</sup> Mr Brooks being the sole survivor. He was rescued from Flint Island by the Peruvian liner *Manco Capac* in 1905, and first learned then of the collapse and downfall of his country.<sup>124</sup> Some two years afterwards it seems he met his friend the author on the Parana;<sup>125</sup> a ruined man, like himself.<sup>126</sup> His (Mr Brooks') marvellous aptitude for languages and magnificent business abilities enabled him speedily to amass a very considerable fortune.<sup>127</sup> He resided principally at Saint Cecilia (continuously for the last six years), where he died on 16 November last year,<sup>128</sup> beloved by all who had the privilege of his acquaintance. Of the author nothing is known; probably he disappeared, with many other adventurous spirits, in the stormy year of 1910, during the rebellions of the Italian and German Immigrants.<sup>129</sup> — 16 April 1917.<sup>130</sup>



PAYSANDU,<sup>131</sup> 12 October 1907.<sup>132</sup>

DEAR BROOKS, — Our unexpected meeting last week was a great pleasure to me, and, you were good enough to assure me, to you also. I will (I cannot say with pleasure) afford you all the information that lies in my power, about the miserable events in Hong Kong, of that most wretched of years '97 — just ten years ago — as verily a *Débauche* for us as was 1871<sup>133</sup> for the French.<sup>134</sup> Curious how both for China and for England the sixtieth year of a woman's life in the former case,<sup>135</sup> and of a Sovereign's reign in the latter,<sup>136</sup> should have brought in their train for both such misery unspeakable, such overwhelming humiliation. Both anticipated with such eagerness, both ushered in with such pomp and splendour,<sup>137</sup> and both closing in disaster and ruin, so utter and complete.<sup>138</sup> In China's case in 1894, though the Japanese successes<sup>139</sup> were at first somewhat of a surprise to the good people at home, and even to us out yonder,<sup>140</sup> who thought we were familiar with the rottenness and corruption of the Empire,<sup>141</sup> the utter collapse of Garnet Wolseley's bogey<sup>142</sup> 'the Chinese hordes'<sup>143</sup> was a revelation.

In Hong Kong we knew our weakness — locally — and that we merely existed on sufferance — dwellers in a fool's paradise,<sup>144</sup> — otherwise, to our case the parallel did not seem to extend. The glories of the Naval Review<sup>145</sup> and the gatherings of the Sons of the Empire<sup>146</sup> were still fresh in our minds — yet even then was preparing that bolt from the blue<sup>147</sup> that destroyed the fair fabric,<sup>148</sup> the foundation of which our forefathers laid with such stern determination, at cost of so much blood and treasure — wasted, wasted all, by their degenerate and emasculated descendants.

John Bull<sup>149</sup> had been sleeping on his moneybags for forty years,<sup>150</sup> and yet believed in diplomacy, that is, backing down.<sup>151</sup> He had no conception that blows could be struck first and war declared afterwards<sup>152</sup> — such a course being impossible with his Parliaments of 'Babble and Parochial Squabble'.<sup>153</sup> He had a nicely cut and dried programme, diplomacy failing. Coaling stations<sup>154</sup> would be reinforced and victualled. The fleet in the Mediterranean<sup>155</sup> augmented. Coastguards and Reserves called out. Militia mobilized.<sup>156</sup> Subsidized cruisers taken up.<sup>157</sup> Etcetera. No doubt it would have all worked well had the enemy had the generosity to have accepted and abided by our dates, instead of selecting their own time, and further omitting the formality of a solemn declaration of war, with heralds 'casting the spear',<sup>158</sup> etcetera. It was all very informal and improper, but completely successful; it demonstrated our utter unreadiness and incapacity for sudden action.

Had the three additional European regiments<sup>159</sup> and the five hundred extra artillerymen<sup>160</sup> that were talked of when you were last in Hong Kong<sup>161</sup> been in the island, the reserve batteries on the south shore been constructed,<sup>162</sup> the roads round the thousand-foot contours built,<sup>163</sup> the barracks overlooking

landing places erected,<sup>164</sup> the blockhouses<sup>165</sup> on the crests of the hills commanding Mirs Bay been made, the five torpedo destroyers<sup>166</sup> and the harbour defence ship *Ajax* been in the port,<sup>167</sup> and the Colony victualled,<sup>168</sup> all might have been different, and the first of the crushing blows dealt at the British Empire warded off, and returned; but it was all comprehended in that saddest of expressions ‘might have been’, that phrases lost opportunities, the roofing of the place paved with good intentions.<sup>169</sup> We have heard what the Russians have since made of Hong Kong — an ‘impregnable’ city.<sup>170</sup>

John Bull, in his lethargy, had not noted the ever increasing of the pack of curs<sup>171</sup> baiting and ringing him in.<sup>172</sup> The French poodle<sup>173</sup> continuously yapping about Egypt.<sup>174</sup> The Russian sleuth-hound, with his ostentatious love of peace and of the aforesaid poodle.<sup>175</sup> The German boar-hound, with his suddenly awakened interest in Africa,<sup>176</sup> and equally rapidly evolved affection for the Dutchmen of the Transvaal, and sympathy with their heroic efforts to shake off England’s cruel yoke.<sup>177</sup> The Yankee mongrel, with his curious interest in the Venezuela boundary<sup>178</sup> and his perennial love of the pelagic seal.<sup>179,180</sup>

All these things, I say, had conveyed nothing to the sluggish mind of John Bull. He had suddenly awakened for a few years, created a great navy<sup>181</sup> (not adequate for his needs), had serious thoughts and even made some slight efforts at fortifying and garrisoning his bases<sup>182</sup> — then came the Jubilee<sup>183</sup> and a burst of self-gratulation.<sup>184</sup> Everything had gone well. Everything would continue to go well. True, the Belgian and the German were cutting in uncomfortably into his trade<sup>185</sup> — but things would right themselves, and he turned over for what he fondly hoped would be another forty year’s snooze. It did not last four months,<sup>186</sup> and the awakening was rude. We in Hong Kong got the first shake.

Let me see; you left Victoria<sup>187</sup> in the *Petrel* at the end of August, or was it in the beginning of September 1897? You were very near the beginning of the end. On Thursday, 23 September 1897, the English mail left Hong Kong (for the last time as it proved) — the *Rohilla* (Captain Cole)<sup>188</sup> — at noon. Everything was as usual, business was improving consequent on a slight appreciation of the now obsolete dollar,<sup>189</sup> then standing at ten dollars to the pound.<sup>190</sup> The weather was thick and rainy, as indeed it had been the whole year. The *Rohilla* must have passed within sight of the enemy’s fleet about four in the afternoon, but whether she did and was deliberately allowed to pass without molestation, or whether she slipped past without being seen, was never known; at any rate, the *Rohilla* made no report of an alarming nature on arrival at Singapore on 28 September. Doubtless the transports<sup>191</sup> kept well to the westward, coming from Saigon.

Mr Shiverly, the British Consul at Saigon (where we were only represented by a merchant in business), had made no representations of a disquieting nature.

For many weeks past our communications with Saigon had practically ceased, having been confined to the Messageries Steamers,<sup>192</sup> Marty's vessels,<sup>193</sup> and two German tramps,<sup>194</sup> the *Mathilde* and *Sabina Rickmers*, both of which vessels were commanded by men of the name of Berg.

The restrictions latterly enforced on foreign vessels had resulted in the withdrawal of British shipping from the Saigon trade,<sup>195</sup> and even with Bangkok — from whence rumours of military preparations in French possessions might have been received. The shrinkage of and diversion to Singapore of the rice trade<sup>196</sup> had rendered communication uncertain and infrequent, thus no cause for anxiety or necessity for using the cable<sup>197</sup> existed. The Danish telegraph ship the *Store Nordiske* had only the month previously been in the port and effected some slight repairs.<sup>198</sup>

The Reuter<sup>199</sup> of 23 September, received at forty minutes past two in the afternoon, had reported the complete pacification of the north-west frontier of India after the severe defeats inflicted on the tribesmen,<sup>200</sup> and that the bulk of the troops recently employed had returned to their respective cantonments.<sup>201</sup> The evacuation of Thessaly was being rapidly carried out.<sup>202</sup> Monsieur Droz, the Swiss Governor of Crete,<sup>203</sup> had landed at Canea<sup>204</sup> amidst the thunder of salutes from the fleets of the European Concert.<sup>205</sup> The Dervishes<sup>206</sup> were disheartened by numerous defections. The outlook was profoundly peaceful. Her Majesty's Ship *Undaunted*, which had been all the summer off<sup>207</sup> the Dockyard refitting,<sup>208</sup> had sailed to rejoin the Admiral<sup>209</sup> at Nagasaki on 21 September. The American mail, the *Belgic* (Captain Rinder) had been despatched on 21 September via Shanghai and Japan. The only men-of-war in the port were the *Plover*, Lieutenant-Commander De Horsey, refitting, *Swift* and *Rattler*, old-fashioned gun-boats laid up in ordinary,<sup>210</sup> and the *Wivern* and *Tweed*, which it was gross flattery to call harbour defence vessels. In the depot were two first-class and four second-class torpedo boats.<sup>211</sup> The old *Victor Emanuel*, flying the Commodore's<sup>212</sup> broad pennant, and the *Tamar*, to which it was shortly to be transferred, could not be reckoned as in the first line of defence.<sup>213</sup>

## THE INVASION BEGINS

About sunset on 23 September, after a heavy thunder-storm lasting nearly an hour, the sky had cleared over Hong Kong and Lamma, and a few stars peeped out after dark, though the clouds were still heavily banked to the south and westward. On this evening it chanced that Messrs Meugens and Hazeland, two Colonial Officers,<sup>214</sup> had gone round in the *Lun On*, the Aberdeen ferry-launch, to that place, where they had hired a sampan to go fishing for rock cod off the south-east end of Aplichau Island. They had not long been anchored to the eastward of the Assistance Rock, when to their astonishment they made out the loom of a large vessel coming up slowly from the southward past the east end of Lamma Island — showing no lights. At this time — it was about ten at night — two other ships were observed following the first, in line ahead.<sup>215</sup> The three ships — which afterwards proved to be the *Saratoff*, of three thousand four hundred and fifty-eight tons, Captain Stromsky, the *Yaroslave*, two thousand eight hundred and seventy-one tons, Captain Ostolopoff, and the *Moskowa*, two thousand two hundred and forty-five tons, Captain Andrieff — headed in for Deep Water Bay (where we have had many a jolly afternoon's golf<sup>216</sup> together, but never shall again). A large junk that was hovering off the entrance to the bay suddenly showed a green flash to seaward, which was immediately answered by two short red flashes from the forecandle<sup>217</sup> of the *Saratoff*, the leading ship. The junk immediately turned northwards and preceded the strangers in towards Deep Water Bay.

The whole proceedings were so suspicious that Meugens and Hazeland, who had lifted their anchor and paddled in softly towards the bay at the approach of the vessels on seeing the exchange of signals, at once sheered off<sup>218</sup> to the north-west for Aberdeen, pulling as hard as they could. At the first splash of their oars they were hailed from the *Saratoff* in Chinese (which Hazeland spoke fluently),<sup>219</sup> and bidden to come alongside, being promised a good price for their fish. Disregarding the hail, however, they pulled hard for Aberdeen, and on landing rushed up to the Police Station where they only found one Scotch constable — Robert Findlay<sup>220</sup> — who, after some demur, consented to telephone to the Central Police Station in Victoria, 'Three large ships showing no lights gone into Deep Water Bay.'<sup>221</sup> Just after doing so, the Sergeant in charge (Peter McNab) arrived from patrol. Meugens and Hazeland had no difficulty in making him understand the gravity of the situation. Two of the four Indian constables belonging to the [Aberdeen Police] Station<sup>222</sup> had just started on patrol. A Chinese constable was sent to recall them from the westward. Another man was sent down to the launch *Lun On* to order the fires to be drawn forward at once,<sup>223</sup> and a full head of steam<sup>224</sup> got up.<sup>225</sup> Meugens was to proceed in her, accompanied by Constable James Morrison (who had been recalled from the Water Police gig),<sup>226</sup> to Deep

Water Bay; Hazeland accompanied McNab and the two remaining Indian constables by road to Deep Water Bay, orders being left with Findlay that when the other two Indians arrived they were to be sent on after them.

There being no rockets or other fireworks at the [Aberdeen Police] Station that could be used for signalling, it was arranged that two or more rifle shots would signify 'Enemy landing', which was to be at once telephoned to the Central [Police Station]. Two blasts of the steam-whistle<sup>227</sup> in quick succession was to convey the same meaning. Though there were stables, there were no Police horses at Aberdeen, so Mr Kerr, the Superintendent of the Aberdeen Dock (then not in use), and the only other European in the place (Duncan, the clerk, being absent), volunteered to carry information by the Pokfulam Road,<sup>228</sup> travelling on his bicycle. Kerr had been roused by McNab's orders.

It was impossible to communicate with Watts and Lee, the two Europeans at the Brick Works, as they were practically at the scene of action. The Paper Mills had ceased to employ any Europeans. Hazeland wrote a short note to Mr Miht, the Captain Superintendent of Police, who was living at Hillside, the Peak, and sent it off by a Chinese constable up the road to Mount Gough. A telephone [call] had been received from Cuthbert at Pokfulam [Police] Station, stating that nothing was in sight in Telegraph or Sandy Bays, in reply to one from Aberdeen. After that nothing more came from Pokfulam — the wire had been cut; and it is impossible to doubt — in the light of after events — but that French agents, who had represented themselves as destitutes and been cared for by the Fathers at Douglas Castle,<sup>229</sup> destroyed the line. By midnight all the telephone wires throughout the island were cut.<sup>230</sup> Being Government lines the mere non-working would under ordinary circumstances have aroused no suspicion — interruption of communications being very frequent.<sup>231</sup> All the cables had, however, ceased to work,<sup>232</sup> and the land lines to Canton were found to be interrupted.<sup>233</sup> It was very easy to fish up the shore ends of the cable from junks in Telegraph<sup>234</sup> and Deep Water Bays. It was subsequently discovered that the Gap Rock<sup>235</sup> had been taken possession of at seven in the evening. The light was of course kept going.<sup>236</sup> But for the accident of the premature discovery by Hazeland and Meugens, in another hour or so no communication by telephone could have been made. Findlay was left at the Aberdeen Police Station with five Chinese Water Police constables armed with cutlasses, and two of the land force, the latter having Sniders.<sup>237</sup>

# Chronology of Events in and Related to the Publication of *The Back Door*

## NOTES

[ ] indicates fictional events.

Different typefaces are used to differentiate between the actions of each of the French, the Russians, and Hong Kong people. When both allies are referred to, or either of them — unspecified — underlining is used.

Not all events are included.

## EVENTS<sup>340</sup>

[1889: Mr Brooks retires from [or — less likely — to] China (Hong Kong).]

[end August/beginning September 1897: Mr Brooks leaves Hong Kong.]

[August? 1897: The Danish telegraph ship, *Store Nordiske*, is in the port of Singapore [?], effecting some slight repairs.]

[From many weeks previous to 23 September 1897: Hong Kong's communications with Saigon have practically ceased.]

[7 September 1897, a ship of the Russian volunteer fleet, the *Orel*, leaves Vladivostock for Saigon as the French are short of transport.]

[Week beginning Monday, 13 September 1897: *Wivern*, at Hong Kong, has her half-yearly commission and cruise.]

[15 September 1897, Russian expedition leaves Vladivostock and goes down outside, east of Formosa.]

[Tuesday, 21 September 1897: American mail ship, *Belgic*, is sent from Hong Kong via Shanghai and Japan.]

[21 September 1897: HMS *Undaunted* is sent from Hong Kong to join the Admiral. There remain in Hong Kong port, the *Plover*, refitting, *Swift* and *Rattler* (old-fashioned gunboats laid up in ordinary) and harbour defence vessels *Wivern* and *Tweed*. In the depot are two first-class and four second-class torpedo-boats. There are also the *Victor Emanuel* and the *Tamar*.]

[Thursday, 23 September 1897, noon: The English mail ship, *Rohilla*, leaves Hong Kong for the last time.]

[23 September 1897, 2.40 p.m.: Reuter's telegram is received in Hong Kong.]

[23 September 1897, about 4.00 p.m.: The English mail ship, *Rohilla*, passes within sight of the enemy's fleet, but whether she is seen or not is not known.]

[23 September 1897, 4.00 p.m.: Planned rendezvous of the allies twenty miles south of the Gap Rock. The French are late, so the Russians decide to go it alone.]

[23 September 1897, by about sunset: The sky clears over Hong Kong and Lamma.]

[23 September 1897, 7.00 p.m.: The Russians capture Gap Rock.]

[23 September 1897, after 7.00 p.m. and before 9.30 p.m.: The fast Russian steamer, *Harbarovsk* and the Torpedo-Destroyers *Borgo* and *Revel* pass well to the westward of the Little Ladrões, appear off the Chinese customs station at Chung Chow in the Macau passage, land 150 soldiers and take possession of the customs station. They seize the two armed Customs launches, *Chop Sing* and *Hui Kwan*. They send the *Chop Sing* to cruise off Green Island.]

①

[23 September 1897, 9.30 p.m.: The fast Russian steamer, *Harbarovsk* and the Torpedo-Destroyers *Borgo* and *Revel* go north of Lantau and stop off Cap-sui-moon. They seize the Chinese Customs Station there and hold it with 200 men. They take possession of the two armed customs launches, *Kow Shui* and *Fan Sau*. They go to Chin Wan Bay, where they run alongside and capture the *Feihoo*, Chinese Revenue Cruiser.]

②

③

[The *Harbarovsk* goes in as close as the water allows, and with the aid of native boats quickly lands 300 men to cut the land lines and patrol the short strip to Tolo Harbour.]

④

[The *Borgo* proceeds up the [Pearl] River, and about 15 miles above Deep Bay runs alongside the *Fatshan* and *Powan*, at anchor there, and captures them. Prize crews are left on board. About two miles further up, the *Pasig* and *Tai On* are seized. The *Borgo* leaves her prizes with orders to follow as fast as they can and rejoins her consorts at the rendezvous off Green Island.]

⑤

⑥

[23 September 1897, about 10.00 p.m.: Meugens and Hazeland, in a sampan (hired at Aberdeen, which they had reached by the Aberdeen ferry-launch), anchored to the eastward of the Assistance Rock, off the south-east end of Aplichau Island, see three ships, showing no lights, the *Saratoff* (3458 tons), leading, the *Yaroslave* (2871 tons) and the *Moskova* (2245 tons). One is coming up slowly from the southward past the East end of Lamma Island. The two others are following in line ahead. A large junk, hovering off the entrance to Deep Water Bay, shows a green flash to seaward, immediately answered by two short red flashes from the forecandle of the *Saratoff*. The junk immediately turns northward and precedes the three Russian ships in towards Deep Water Bay.] ⑦

[Meugens and Hazeland lift anchor, paddle in towards Deep Water Bay, see the exchange of signals, sheer off to the north-west for Aberdeen, are hailed in Chinese by the *Saratoff*, disregard the hail, land at Aberdeen, and rush to the Police Station.] ⑧

[Arrangements are made to convey a warning by telephone to the Central Police Station. A telephone message is sent to Pokfulam Police Station. Messages are sent by bicycle along the Pokfulam Road, by foot [?] to the Peak up the road to Mount Gough.]

[A telephone message is received from the Pokfulam Police Station. Soon after, the wire to the Pokfulam Police Station is cut by French agents, who have been posing as destitutes and cared for by the Fathers at Douglas Castle. The land lines to Canton are found to be interrupted.]

[23 September 1897, perhaps about 10.00 p.m.: The Russian destroyer, *Sveaborg*, accompanies the three large troopers, but keeping about a mile to the eastward, seizes the armed Customs' launch *Kaipan Lu* off Stanley, and with her remains patrolling the mouth of Deep Water Bay to cover the troopers.] ⑨  
⑩

[23 September 1897, 10.55 p.m.: First wire from Aberdeen received at the Central Police Station. Messengers are sent from the Central Police Station to Murray Barracks, the Commodore, the Hong Kong Regiment at Kowloon and the McGregor Barracks. Telephonic messages are sent to the Gap and Mount Gough Police Stations, directing that several other persons should be informed. Many other messages are sent by various means.]

[23 September 1897, 11.05 p.m.: The Assembly sounds in every barracks in Victoria and signal rockets are being fired from Scandal Point to alert those in Kowloon.]

[23 September 1897, 11.10 p.m.: The Commodore is playing whist with De Horsey of the *Plover*, his own Commander (Naylor) and Barlyon Cellairs, his torpedo lieutenant, on *Victor Emanuel*, when Mackie's letter is delivered to him. The Commodore gives various orders.]

[23 September 1897, 11.12 p.m.: Rorden with two companies of the West Borks, leaves Murray Barracks at a run for Wongneichong, leaving orders for others.]

[23 September 1897, nearly 11.15 p.m.: Meugens (who has gone by steam launch



to Deep Water Bay with a water police constable) creeps close to the three Russian vessels, observes them landing men and guns, is seen and chased, but not fired at, and sends the pre-arranged signal, 'Enemy landing', to the Aberdeen Police Station, which telephones the Central Police Station with this message.] ⑪

[The pinnacle is rapidly overtaking Meugens. Meugen's boat fires at the pinnacle, which returns fire. At the same time, the sound of musketry is heard from Deep Water Bay.]

[Meugens grounds the launch among the sampans in the bight between the Docks and Aberdeen village. He fires his launch and the sampans.]

[Meugens reaches Aberdeen Police Station, where, finding the telephone wires cut, and seeing a large troop-boat full of men being towed round the point from Deep Water Bay, fires the station and escapes by the back through the bush to the Mount Gough Road.]

[The Police remaining at the Aberdeen Police Station go towards Deep Water Bay. Hazeland and others have already gone by road to Deep Water Bay. Hazeland and his companions exchange fire with the enemy. An Indian is shot dead, Hazeland is wounded, is left behind and is later bayoneted.]

[23 September 1897, 11.25 p.m.: Tristful (in Kowloon) receives Mackie's note and orders the Assembly to be sounded. He sends Lieutenant Creagh to Kowloon Wharf with a guard to seize any and all launches, junks, etcetera, that might be off the Godown Company's piers. Hetallick is ordered to follow with every available man with all possible despatch. He sends a messenger to Gun Club Hill (Kowloon) to Hartrum (in command of the company of West Borks there), directing him to join Hetallick at the Wharf.]

[23 September 1897, 11.40 p.m.: Tristful starts with Captain Ray's Company. At the Wharf he finds that Creagh has three vessels ready for the men. Also at the Wharf, Inspector Hanson of the Water Police informs Tristful that three more vessels are being prepared to tow over the rest of the Regiment.]

[23 September 1897, after 11.40 p.m./24 September 1897, past midnight[?]: Ray's company and Tristful reach and land at Bowrington.]

[23/24 September 1897, by midnight: All telephone lines on Hong Kong Island have been cut.]

[23/24 September 1897, about midnight: The *Harbarovsk*, the Torpedo-Destroyer *Revel*, the *Feihoo* and the *Kow Shui* proceed for Green Island, sweeping well round to the westward. The *Fan Sau* is left at Cap-sui-moon to bring to everything that passed. The crews of all the junks, boats etcetera there being landed on [Green] island, the vessels are scuttled.] ⑫

[23/24 September 1897: In Victoria about midnight a fire breaks out in Winglok Street, the work of incendiaries. Part of the Fire Brigade are quickly on the spot. Two other fires break out across the street, also the work of incendiaries. Bands of

marauders also appear, many armed, and begin looting. The Police are ordered to fire, do so, kill nineteen men, and order is restored. The Fire Brigade cannot cope with the conflagration. After some delay, powder is procured, as well as the services of two sergeants of the [Royal] Engineers; and the end houses abutting on Morrison Street and Hillier Street are blown up. All four blocks between these streets, from Bonham Strand to the Praya, are burnt or blown up. There is considerable loss of life. Robberies take place in several parts of the town, including the Peak, Queen's Road, Eastern District, Bonham Road. Robbers attempting to break into stores in Queen's Road are prevented and several of the robbers killed. In the Eastern District, a police inspector can keep order only by shooting freely.]

[23/24 September 1897, about midnight: Lamont and two Indian constables from Stanley, on patrol, arrive at the eastern limit of the Stanley District (the crest of the hill at the eastern end of Deep Water Bay), discover large vessels anchored at Deep Water Bay, hear shots at the western end of the bay, and (by the light of the enemy searchlights) see the bay alive with boats. They rush down and fire at the landing troops until they have no more ammunition.]

[23/24 September, as midnight chimes: Rordon and his men from Murray Barracks reach the crest at Wongneichong Gap.]

[A few minutes past midnight, 23/24 September: Rordon sends Darry Brew's company down by the short cut through the jungle to hold the eastern side.]

[A few minutes past midnight, 23/24 September: Rordon goes down with Brice's company to bar the road and western side. As they are doubling down the road, the searchlights expose them, they are shelled and two men are killed. Rordon sends the right half company into the bush above the road and makes the others lie down behind the curve just beyond the third bridge, where they are sheltered by a spur from the fire. The Russians double up to the bridge and are fired on by Brice's men lying down above the road. Rordon extends his left down into the valley to join hands with Darry Brew and prevent the enemy cutting in between them.]

[24 September 1897, 00.30 a.m.: Major Hills arrives with his and Farey's Companies, 94 Marines and a few Engineers, with reserve ammunition, and joins Rordon.]

[24 September 1897, immediately after 00.30 a.m.: Tristful and a company of the Hong Kong Regiment reach the scene of action, and are at once pushed forward along the Eastern Hills.]

[24 September 1897, sometime between 00.30 a.m. and 1.00 a.m.: General White gallops up with his Aide-De-Camp and directs operations in person.]

[24 September 1897, about 1.00 a.m.: Phillips and Carpenter arrive with their companies (West Borks), escorting the guns of the Asiatic Artillery (all from Murray Barracks). The guns open fire at once on the disembarking enemy. However, the cannon of the troop ships respond and put out the right gun, killing two Sikhs. Limmonds and Gordon keep their guns moving, being chased by the searchlights.

Eventually the base of the new dam is found to give much shelter, as well as providing excellent positions for sweeping the lower part of the road and western beach.]

[24 September 1897, previous to 1.00 a.m.: The Russian second-class torpedo-boats are busily employed towing round some forty odd large junks and house-boats from Aberdeen to Deep Water Bay, to assist in re-embarking the troops in case of a reverse.] ⑬

[24 September 1897, 1.00 a.m.: The Russian second-class torpedo-boats are sent outside Aplichau, towards Green Island.] ⑭

[24 September 1897, by 1.30 a.m.: Hetallick, with the other three double companies of the Hong Kong Regiment and Hartrum's company of the West Borks (all from Kowloon) get into action. Some 130 men of the Artillery have also arrived under Major Tanham.]

[24 September 1897, 1.30 a.m.: General White, finding no other attacks have developed, sends orders for Hush and Rox's men, with Farey's engineers and Harrington's Maxims, to move at 2 o'clock, the two last to come down by the Wanchai Gap Road.]

[24 September, since about 1.30 a.m.: The stream of Hong Kong wounded begins trickling down, quickly filling the Government Civil Hospital, then the City and Masonic Halls, the Supreme Court House, the floors of the Banks and Clubs. Empty store and auction rooms adjacent are turned into receiving wards. The doctors are assisted by the sisters from the Italian and French convents, clergymen of all denominations, and several ladies who have attended ambulance classes. Wives attend their husbands, and many widows assist the very men who have killed their husbands.]

[24 September 1897, by 2.00 a.m.: The *Borgo* has rejoined the *Harbarovsk*, *Revel* and *Feihoo* off Green Island. The *Chop Sing* is placed in the deep shade close to the landing place at Green Island, moored with slip ropes heading eastward. The *Kow Shui* is similarly moored just north of Green Island and east of the red sector of light showing over Kellett's Bank. Two of the second-class torpedo-boats are at anchor as close in as they can get to the rocks under Mount Davis, just round south and east of the range-finding staff. The *Feihoo* lies with a kedge down about a mile south-south-west, covered by Green Island from Stonecutters', with the *Borgo* on her starboard, and *Revel* on her port quarter well aft and almost astern, and two second-class torpedo-boats broad on each bow, about a quarter of a mile off and a cable apart.] ⑮

[24 September 1897, 2.00 a.m.: Four guns of the Volunteer Field Artillery (including the Dock detachment) arrive at Deep Water Bay, under Captains Chapman and Machell, and go into action.]

[24 September 1897, 2.00 a.m.: Hush and Rox's men, with Farey's engineers and Harrington's Maxims, start with a cheer, the Maxims swinging and bounding along with almost as many men on the heel ropes to check them as on the drag ropes.]

Hush's men are first past Pokfulam, down by the Reservoir Road, with Rox's hard behind them. They pass through Aberdeen at a run.]

[24 September 1897, by 2.00 a.m.: Naylor is ready to start in the *Wivern*, with Flumer in the *Tweed*, Cellairs in first-class torpedo-boat Number 71, Menzies Leslie in Number 72, and Smith, Tanyard, Larke and Soper respectively in second-class torpedo-boats Numbers 33, 34, 35 and 36. They proceed west down the harbour. They steer for the Sulphur Channel. Closing Sulphur Island, the searchlight from Stonecutters' shows the *Kow Shui*. Finding herself discovered, the *Kow Shui* opens fire.] ⑩

[The Battle of Sulphur Channel ensues. At the end of it, only seven of the defenders engaged survive.]

[A solitary second-class Russian torpedo-boat, with her funnel spouting fire from bullet holes, steams off to the *Harbarovsk*.]

[24 September 1897, after 2.00 a.m. [and before 3.00 a.m.?]: The *Harbarovsk* steams slowly eastward, firing at all lighted houses (on the Peak and Mount Kellett).] ⑪

[24 September 1897, 3.00 a.m.: Hush and Rox's men, with Farey's engineers and Harrington's Maxims, first feel the enemy in the wood at the junction of the Wanchai and Aberdeen Roads, and a fierce combat takes place. The enemy is constantly reinforced and drives the two companies of West Borks backwards on Aberdeen, till the Maxims get into action and volleys from Farey's men on the enemy's right flank from the Wanchai Road crush the attack along the Aberdeen Road.]

[24 September 1897, 3.30 a.m.: Hush and Rox's men, with Farey's engineers and Harrington's Maxims, pushing on with the guns in the centre, Hush's company leading, seize the saddle. The Battle of Deep Water Bay continues. The Russians retreat and re-embark. The defenders' artillery opens on them on the beach, smashing and sinking numbers of the boats. The whole ridge is a mass of combats. The remains of Hush and Farey's companies, in knots of five and six, fight with clubbed muskets, or stab with the bayonet, ringed in with white-coated, green-coated swarms. The wounded fire between their comrades' legs. It is a very stubborn contest till Hill's and Hartrum's men, with some of Tanham's gunners, bring relief, and sweep the enemy down to the beach, when the Maxims are manned again, and fire reopens; the fire from the Maxim in the square has never ceased. Over 700 Russians die on the beach and 186 British. Some 1200 Russians escape on board the troop-ships, which slip anchor and go to sea, firing their stern guns. Nine Russian field guns are captured (all that have been landed). 160 prisoners, all mostly wounded, are taken.] ⑫

[All men who have not been in action are sent up to relieve those who were in the action. The survivors lie down to sleep in the batteries, guards having been posted. The residents send out excellent and plentiful meals to the troops, with a liberal supply of beer, tobacco, etcetera.]

[Six thousand coolies, under the Public Works Department and Royal Engineer staffs,

are set to work on the field of battle to bury the dead in trenches. The coolies, contractors and headmen (whose stock of tools are required) give some difficulty.] Police Inspector Mackie, whose Indian Police have collected them, is supported by fifty of the Asiatic Artillery with a gun. He offers them the choice of working or being hanged. One of the principal contractors is led out under a lamp-post with a rope round his neck. The difficulties vanish. Nevertheless, the work gangs are guarded, both going to the valley and at work. Sentries are posted overlooking the work, with orders to shoot all attempting desertion. The men are promised \$1.50 a day each, and they are later paid on the spot by the Colonial Treasurer. Considerably over 3000 Russians are buried.]

[Unwounded prisoners are lodged in Gaol. (All offenders against Municipal regulations and debtors are released.)]

[630 wounded Russians and also Hong Kong wounded are removed under the superintendence of the Principal Medical Officer and the Army Medical Staff. All available medical men work in receiving and dressing the wounded as the ambulances and chairs arrive. (All public chairs are utilized and numbers of private chair-coolies requisitioned.)]

[24 September 1897, 4.00 a.m.: The French arrive twelve hours late at the planned rendezvous twenty miles south of the Gap Rock. They have 10 000 men in six ships, including the *Orel*, convoyed by the cruisers *Descartes* and *Eclairer*, and the ironclad *Triomphante* (the reserve ship in Saigon).]

[24 September 1897, about 5.00 a.m.: The Assistant Harbour-Master and the senior boarding officer are sent out in two launches to see what has become of the enemy. One goes into Picnic Bay, Lamma Island and walks over the hills. The other keeps on (in his launch) round by the east side of Lamma, and comes round Green Hummock into South East Bay. The launch comes on the *Sveaborg*. The *Sveaborg* opens fire and kills the master, sinking the ship.]

[24 September 1897, about 7.00 a.m.: The *Sveaborg* proceeds south to the Gap Rock.] ①9

[24 September 1897, 7.00 a.m.: A meeting of the Legislative Council is held. Martial Law is proclaimed. It is decided to expel aliens and to enrol, as a Home Guard, all British subjects between the ages of 17 and 55, capable of bearing arms. Faced with some squabbling, the Governor makes a speech. Those present give him a cheer. The two Chinese members express solidarity. The meeting ends.]

[24 September 1897, 7.00 a.m.: After consultation with the General, the Commodore despatches the *Swift* and *Rattler* round by D'Aguiar for Tytam. They then make defence preparations in the Tytam area.]

[24 September 1897, 7.00 a.m.: The Commodore, with the Master Attendant, tows down the nine German merchant steamers and the one French sailing ship in port, and moors them in a double line across the Lyeemoon passage. Heavy cables are

passed along them, taken in astern and passed out of the hawse-holes forward. The ends are secured ashore. The shore ends are floated on cargo boats and no openings at all are left. The Harbour-Master and Staff Commander Jones moor the eight other foreign steamers and a Hawaiian barque similarly across the Sulphur Channel.]

[The Europeans from the Peak, Kowloon and outlying districts have come crowding down, across, and into the town, and are housed in the upper floors of the Banks, in the Hotels, Government, Headquarter House and Bank House, the Government offices, and the European shops in Queen's Road, generally collected about the centre of the town. Women of all creeds crowd the churches, praying on their knees.]

[All the police from the outlying districts, except Tsim-tsa-tsu, are recalled.]

[The British elect a committee of seven to organize the Home Guard. Old Volunteers turn out quickly. So do members of the Rifle Association. Once there are adequate numbers, they are sent to receive arms and very basic uniform. Much private money is spent on providing for the comfort and efficiency of the men. 180 Indians volunteer as soldiers, carriers of ammunition, provisions, water and the wounded. More than 800 Portuguese volunteer.]

[The Home Guard is entrusted with the expulsion of the aliens. The Committee members place themselves at the head of detachments of the Home Guard and march the aliens down to the *Powan*, which is manned by all the foreigners (European) from the ships in the Harbour. 1200 are put on board. About 400 Portuguese women and children also leave in the *Powan*. No British leave on her.]

[24 September 1897, 8.00 a.m.: General White holds a Council of War at Headquarter offices and, expecting a further attack, gives various orders relating to defence.]

[24 September, by 8.30 a.m.: The *Swift* and *Rattler* round [D'Aguilar] and push right up to the head of Tytam inner harbour. Each takes up a different position. A party is landed to make a small redoubt.]

[24 September 1897, about 9.00 a.m.: The French fleet arrives near Hong Kong, seen by Robinson (still on Lamma). It is accompanied by one prize, the *Phra Chula Chom Klao*. It consists of the *Orel*, *Adour*, *Dordogne*, *Guadalquiver*, two other large vessels which he cannot recognize, and the men of war listed above. The French fleet anchors [off Lamma Island?]. A council of war is held on board the *Triomphante*. They begin hoisting out torpedo and troop-boats. The *Eclaircur* is despatched to the eastward, where she subsequently captures the *Sungkiang* and the *Verona*. The wounded are hoisted out for landing together with tents to shelter them.]

(20)

[24 September 1897, Robinson goes to his launch, the *Vancouver* in Picnic Bay.]

[24 September 1897, 10.00 a.m.: The burial parties finish.]

[24 September 1897, 10.00 a.m.: More than 20 000 men (including the burial parties) are at work making trenches.] All the civil engineers with their overseers, are assisting the engineers and the Public Works Department staff, superintending sections of the

line. The bulk of the forty-pounders are placed at Wongneichong Gap to command Deep Water Bay, and on the left by the cross wall to fire down what was the Tytam Road. Four forty-pounders are placed at Pokfulam Gap, two in Victoria Gap, two on the 'Hacienda' commanding Aberdeen and one at the Military Sanitarium.]

[24 September 1897, shortly after 11.00 a.m.: The *Powan* leaves with nearly 1800 on board and disappears beyond Chung Chau towards Macao, without molestation, as far as the British ever know.]

[24 September 1897, shortly after 11.00 a.m.: Robinson arrives in Victoria from Picnic Bay and makes a report of what he has seen (the French fleet) to General White.]

[24 September 1897, nearly noon: It is generally known that the Russians have been joined by the French.]

[24 September 1897, about 2.00 p.m.: The *Hankow* and *Canton* are seen coming out of the Cap-sui-moon pass, flying the British flag. Huzzard is not deceived and sinks both with a couple of 10-inch shell from Stonecutters' West.]

[24 September 1897, about 2.00 p.m.: The lookouts report the departure of the *Dordogne* and *Heungshan* (from South East Bay, Lamma Island), escorted by the *Sveaborg* (which had returned [from Gap Rock] with the French fleet) by the Shingshimoon Pass, round D'Aguilar and then North, past the Ninepins, evidently bound to Mirs Bay.] <sup>21</sup>

[24 September 1897, 4.00 p.m.: By this time, there are nearly 1400 men in the British Home Guard.]

[24 September 1897, 4.00 p.m.: The three men-of-war assembled off Tytam Head, the *Eclairneur* escorting her prizes, the *Verona* and *Sungkiang*, the two latter being sent off to South East Bay, Lamma Island. The *Triomphante* and *Descartes* proceed slowly westward.] <sup>22</sup> <sup>23</sup>

The *Eclairneur* enters Tytam Bay, preceded by two torpedo-boats. The *Eclairneur* stops about three-quarters of a mile from the entrance to the Inner Harbour. The leading boat is blown to pieces by the fire of the *Swift* and the *Rattler*. The *Eclairneur* shells them, knocking the redoubt and the Nordenfelts to pieces, and kills half the men before they have time to run down the hill.]

[24 September 1897, evening: Colonel Yardhill sends Dr Horsey out another Nordenfelt with orders to plant it just below the crest, on the west face, where it commands the Shaukiwan Road.]

[24 September 1897, after 4.00 p.m.: The *Triomphante* and *Descartes* steam slowly west, stop between Round Island and Aplichau and fire at the new earthworks on the crests of the hills above Deep Water Bay. The fire is returned, revealing the Hong Kong position. Half an hour later, four Hong Kong guns have been dismantled.] <sup>24</sup>

[24 September 1897, all day long: Launches, guarded by armed Englishmen, tow over cargo-boats full of Chinese women and children to Sam-shui-po (then, 'Chinese soil'), and all the shopmen, clerks, compradores and Chinese residents generally are sent across. They are given three days' rice each.]

[24 September 1897, by evening: only some 30 000 able-bodied Chinese men remain in the town.]

[24 September 1897, before 5.00 p.m.: The French, under General Renard, in Mirs Bay, have landed 2000 men and are joined by the 300 Russians guarding the line to Tolo Harbour as well as the detachment from Cap-sui-moon.]

(25)

[24 September 1897, by 9.00 p.m.: The enemy are bivouacked for the night amongst the sand hills north of Hong Kong territory.]<sup>341</sup>

[24 September 1897, as soon as it is dark: Hong Kong defenders start repairing the earthworks. They throw an embankment across Pokfulam Road in place of the stone wall which has been destroyed. They throw up small redoubts on the spurs below the batteries on the crests.]

[24 September 1897, 9.40 p.m.: Mixed party under Banderson leaves to attack the right of the enemy.]

[24 September 1897, 10.00 p.m.: Two mixed parties, one under Rerger, one under Bowcroft leave, the former for the French centre and the latter for the French left.]

[24 September 1897, 11.15 p.m.: Rerger's and Bowcroft's parties are to attack the French.]

[25 September 1897, by 1.30 a.m.: All parties are back.]

[25 September 1897, towards daylight: The enemy are on the move and Hong Kong pickets are driven in.]

[25 September 1897, 5.00 a.m.: The assault is delivered in earnest, the storming party coming on to attack the hill, the key of Tristful's position. Battle ensues. At the same time an attack is being delivered on the Island. Numbers of junks are escaping west (Lyeemoon is blocked.)]

[25 September 1897, 7.15–8.00 a.m.: The assault on Tristful's position is desultory.]

[25 September 1897, 8.00 a.m.: The assault on Tristful is renewed.]

[25 September 1897, 10.30 a.m.: The enemy draws off.]

[26 September 1897, about 3.00 a.m.: The enemy is observed moving out of South East Bay. The *Heungshan* (which has returned during the night from Mirs Bay) is loaded with men and run right on to the beach in Stanley. The *Fatshan* and *Honam* are also respectively run into Chunghom and Tsimshui Wan bays. The *Pasig*, escorted by six torpedo-boats and followed by the *Eclairneur*, enters Tytam Bay.]

[26 September 1897, as soon as it is light: The *Pasig* creeps close round the peninsula



forming the inner harbour (Tytam Harbour). As soon as *the Pasig* rounds the point, she is shelled by the *Swift* and sinks. The torpedo-boats rush the *Swift* and the *Rattler*. Some torpedo-boats are sunk. The *Rattler's* guns are disabled. Hearing the *Rattler's* guns, the enemy pushes along the Shaukiwan Road and a land battle ensues, while the sea battle continues.] (26)

[26 September 1897, by 7.00 a.m.: The allies have landed 8000 men.]

[26 September 1897, after 7.00 a.m.: The *Tai On* enters the Aberdeen Passage and is fired on to such effect that she has to be beached on Aplichau Island, from where the troops she is conveying are ferried across to Hong Kong. Landing is effected also from two of the troopers in Telegraph Bay.]

[26 September 1897, about 8.00 a.m.: The men-of-war appear off Sandy Bay, batter Rordon's earthworks and dismount his 40-pounders.]

[26 September 1897, by 9.00 a.m.: The allies have every available man ashore (8000 French regulars, 2000 Russians, and nearly 1000 seamen and marines from the ships of war and transports). (About three thousand one hundred had been killed at the Battle of Deep Water Bay and prisoners also had been taken.)]

[26 September 1897, by 10.00 a.m.: Every rock and hill from Quarry Bay Gap to Pokfulam is belching forth fire and smoke and the assault creeps upwards and nearer.]

[26 September 1897, soon after 10.00 a.m.: The enemy manages to get two 9-pounders up the hills.]

[26 September 1897, by 10.30 a.m.: Hong Kong has lost 35 men killed, two Maxims disabled and the walls breached in several places.

[26 September 1897, about 11.00 a.m.: General White is taken down mortally wounded and Yardhill now has supreme command.]

[26 September 1897, after noon: Yardhill is killed.]

[26 September 1897, about 3.00 p.m.: The firing in Pokfulam ceases. Knowing that this means that the western batteries are in enemy hands, Huzzard and Rookshank dismount the heavy guns and burst the dam of the filter-beds.]

[26 September 1897, about 5.00 p.m.: The men-of-war come through Lyeemoon, but are met off North Point by strong fire from Stonecutters' batteries, and retreat. *The Descartes* is beached in Shaukiwan to prevent her sinking in deep water.] (27)

[26 September 1897, by sunset: The blazing town is in the hands of the enemy, but firing is still going on here and there on the hills. The British flag still flies over Stonecutters' where the gunners and 50 of the Home Guard are still.]

[26 September 1897, after dark: General Renard communicates with General Morbleu.]

[27 September 1897, about 3.00 a.m.: Renard sends over some small parties of men

who land at the eastern end of the island, get into the Civil Magazine, lay trains, light matches and retire to the Peninsula.] (28)

[27 September 1897, about 4.15 a.m.: The Magazine blows up with a fearful explosion and shock like an earthquake, bringing down houses and walls in Victoria and tumbling down the ruins in Kowloon. It dismantles the Stonecutters' Forts. Huzzard collects all the survivors in the west fort and does what is possible to barricade the breaches, etcetera.]

[27 September 1897, at sunrise: The French come over to [Stonecutters' Island].]

[27 September 1897, before 8.00 a.m.: [French Reinforcements from Hong Kong are landed on the southern shore of [Stonecutters'] Island.] (29)

[27 September 1897, after 8.00 a.m.: The French kill the last of the defenders and tear down the Union Jack.]

[28 September 1897: The English mail ship, *Rohilla*, arrives in Singapore.]

Saturday, 9 October 1897: Review of *The Back Door* published in *The China Mail*.

Tuesday, 12 October 1897: Leading article on *The Back Door* published in *The China Mail*.

December 1897: *The China Mail* republishes *The Back Door* in pamphlet form, together with the review and leading article, also previously published in *The China Mail*.

2 February 1899: Copies of *The Back Door* are received at the Colonial Office in London.

[1905: Brooks wrecked and rescued while on a cruise in the South Pacific.]

[1907 (during the week prior to 12 October 1917): Mr Brooks meets writer (an old friend) on the Parana.]

[12 October 1907: Writer's letter to Brooks, which contains *The Back Door* narrative.]

[1910 presumed disappearance of writer during the rebellions of the Italian and German immigrants, presumably in Uruguay.]

[16 November 1916: Mr Reginald Brooks dies and *The Back Door* (by a friend of his, a former resident of Hong Kong) is found among his papers.]

[16 April 1917: Note by Editor of *The Star of Uruguay*.]

April 2001: New edition of *The Back Door* is published as *Hong Kong Invaded! A Ninety-Seven Nightmare*, edited by Gillian Bickley, published by Hong Kong University Press, with new drawings by Arthur Hacker, maps, sketches and tables, explanation and notes, introduction and appendices. By now — over one hundred years after the first publication of *The Back Door* — a specific literary genre, 'future war fiction' is studied internationally, and *The Back Door* is recognized as a significant work in this field.

# Indices

## INDIVIDUAL PERSONAL NAMES AND INDIVIDUALS

Cross-references are made between actual names and their fictional code but not vice versa (for which, see 'Actors in the Drama', pp. 123–136, above, which — with its notes — provides additional information about both actual and fictional names). When an individual's name in the fiction is the same as in real life, the two are listed separately. Fictional names are listed by surname only, except where there is more than one entry with the same surname. When an actual name occurs only in the notes or as the subject of a photograph, the entry below may be more complete. The main text, endnotes (excluding references and acknowledgements to publications) and part of the preliminaries only are indexed. Illustrations are indicated by bold print.

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