



Sharpe's Fortress: Richard Sharpe and the Siege of Gawilghur, December 1803

By Bernard Cornwell

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"The greatest writer of historical adventures today."

—*Washington Post*

Critically acclaimed, perennial *New York Times* bestselling author Bernard Cornwell (*Agincourt*, *The Fort*, the Saxon Tales) makes real history come alive in his breathtaking historical fiction. Praised as "the direct heir to Patrick O'Brian" (*Agincourt*, *The Fort*), Cornwell has brilliantly captured the fury, chaos, and excitement of battle as few writers have ever done—perhaps most vividly in his phenomenally popular novels following the illustrious military career of British Army officer Richard Sharpe during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In *Sharpe's Fortress*, Ensign Sharpe's adventures in India reach a grand finale at the Siege of Gawilghur during the Maharatta War in December 1803, as Cornwell's hero uncovers a foul treason and seeks a righteous revenge. Perhaps the *San Francisco Chronicle* said it best: "If only all history lessons could be as vibrant."

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Fighting in the millet fields of India circa 1803, Richard Sharpe knows trouble when he sees it: dissension in the ranks, a feverish and arrogant enemy, nobody to confide in. Unbeknownst to his comrades, Sharpe has buried a fortune in booty along the way. He knows his freedom is coming, and it's only a matter of time before he can feast on the spoils. *Sharpe's Fortress* is the 17th in Bernard Cornwell's series starring this colonial British soldier who has risen in the ranks despite blunders and misadventures, not to mention his own suspicions of the men around him.

Treason, near-death experiences, cannonballs hidden in the tall grass "sticky with blood and thick with flies, lying twenty paces from the man it had eviscerated," these are the elements of Cornwell's war stories, which rely heavily on long, involved--and involving--battle scenes, marvelous description, and bawdy dialogue in the trenches (a highlight: arguments over whether there's such a thing as breasts that look like grapes). For readers who hunger for humorous, complex characterizations, Sharpe proves vivid and three-dimensional. He holds tightly to his dreams of treasure, eavesdropping on betrayers, ultimately hatching a desperate plan to make his way to the fortress in the sky, Gawilghur. Cornwell's hero is an honest soldier, and also a pragmatic one. He doesn't care as much about the medals and the glory as he cares about dodging cannon fire and finding a place to sleep. --*Ellen Williams*

From Publishers Weekly

Already a bestseller in the U.K., this 16th volume chronicling the heroic escapades of Richard Sharpe, a British soldier with Gen. Sir Arthur Wellesley (later the duke of Wellington), resumes the marathon historical narrative in India during the final battle of the Mahratta War of 1803. With an amorous French widow waiting for him back in Seringapatam, and carrying a fortune in jewels he has liberated from the Tippoo sultan, Ensign SharpeDnewly promoted from sergeantDis struggling to make a successful transition to officer responsibilities. Led by the murderous English turncoat Col. William Dodd, the Mahratta army withdraws to the impregnable mountaintop fortress of Gawilghur, where Dodd intends to defeat Wellesley and perpetrate a final treachery that will make him ruler of all India. Assigned to the service of Captain Torrance to assist with the supply train, Sharpe uncovers a large cache of misappropriated military supplies. The captain realizes that Sharpe suspects him and his sergeant, Obadiah Hakeswill, Sharpe's old nemesis, of stealing the supplies. He hands Sharpe over to Hakeswill, who takes his jewels and turns Sharpe over to a bandit leader to be killedDbut all is not lost. Resplendent with color and action, the stirring saga overwhelms the senses with the flash of sabers and the gore and din of battle. True to his adoring readers, Cornwell leaves no treachery unpunished as Sharpe again proves his mettle.

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From Library Journal

After marching his hard-fighting British rifleman Richard Sharpe through innumerable campaigns in the Napoleonic wars and beyond, Cornwell uses this latest novel to revisit a turning point in Sharpe's early career. *Sharpe's Fortress* is set in British India in late 1803, immediately after Arthur Wellesley (the future Wellington) has made Sharpe an officer. Typical of Cornwell's books, it quickly places the long-suffering hero in a nasty crisis and never lets up. Sharpe must fight two wars: one against the Mahratta, who defy British rule from their apparently impregnable mountaintop stronghold, the other against the class-conscious and narrow-minded British officers who won't accept an officer up from the ranks. One of the most intense and engaging Sharpe stories, this novel gains much from William Gaminara's strong reading. A can't-miss

addition to libraries with patrons who appreciate well-crafted historical fiction.

-R. Kent Rasmussen, *Thousand Oaks, CA*

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