



## **The Maharajah's General (Jack Lark, Book 2): A Fast-Paced British Army Adventure in India**

*Paul Fraser Collard*

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**In *The Maharajah's General* by Paul Fraser Collard Jack Lark returns to the battlefield under a new name to face greater adventures in a brutal land. A must-read for fans of Bernard Cornwell and Simon Scarrow. 'Collard ... evokes the horror of that era with great brio. Enthralling' *The Times***

Jack Lark barely survived the Battle of the Alma. As the brutal fight raged, he discovered the true duty that came with the officer's commission he'd taken. In hospital, wounded, and with his stolen life left lying on the battlefield, he grasps a chance to prove himself a leader once more. Poor Captain Danbury is dead, but Jack will travel to his new regiment in India, under his name.

Jack soon finds more enemies, but this time they're on his own side. Exposed as a fraud, he's rescued by the chaplain's beautiful daughter, who has her own reasons to escape. They seek desperate refuge with the Maharajah of Sawadh, the charismatic leader whom the British Army must subdue. He sees Jack as a curiosity, but recognises a fellow military mind. In return for his safety, Jack must train the very army the British may soon have to fight...

## The Maharajah's General (Jack Lark, Book 2): A Fast-Paced British Army Adventure in India Details

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Author : Paul Fraser Collard

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## **From Reader Review The Maharajah's General (Jack Lark, Book 2): A Fast-Paced British Army Adventure in India for online ebook**

### **Andy says**

And swiftly we are back with Jack Lark.... all part of the summer vibe reading as I really enjoyed the opening book of the series.

This time “Jack” is in India & again we find the private masquerading as a Captain where he has assumed the commission of a dead captain from the Crimea campaign. Upon arrival he is thrust into the machinations of the officer class & gentry which he is most uncomfortable with, feeling totally out of place, as it’s in the role of commander in the field that he revels in. His “colleagues” are a mixed bunch & not all to his liking especially his “popinjay” of a subordinate! Great interactions with the new characters & Jack Lark is someone I’ve really grown to like as he strives to be the best at what he does, a true leader who looks to earn the respect of his men whilst treating the officer (privileged) classes with the disdain that many deserve. A straight talker for sure.

As to other characters we come across we have, a potential love interest (or two), a bad guy to Boo Hiss along with, a Maharajah who you’ll have to decide what side he’s really on & finally a good ol’ self-serving religious zealot (minister) to get yer goat! There are other cameo’s to, mostly stereotypical, if, you’ve watched the same films that I have (and the author!), who all fit perfectly & entertainingly into the story. The love interest & their dialogue is a tad cringe worthy at times (for a modern eye) but it’s done in the style of the era & so authentic in an old style B&W film if you like.... Petulance, endless flirting, swirl of skirts, stamping of feet, longing glances..... you know the sort of style..... Rolls eyes!

Another observation of the writing & dialogue..... If you've ever watched the film Zulu as much as I have you'll recognise some of the one liners from it bring used in these books which is all good fun imo. And at the end this becomes even more apparent during the authors “Historical Notes” where the regiment used in the book, the 24th Foot, were the company who went on to fight in the Zulu Wars, most notably at Isandlwana & Rourke’s Drift!

A grand mix of characters overall with lively action & a good adventure story to boot where the military action & knowledge is second to none & amongst the best I have read.

What more would you want for an easy summer reading vibe?

4.25 stars rounded down to Four – A star deducted for the “love action” – Laughs

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### **Ian Langham says**

Jack lark the hero of the Scarlet Thief is back and once more he has taken the identity of a dead British officer. This being the follow up to the writers debut "The Scarlet Thief" it is the difficult second novel. As the first introduced the hero of the series a so called "Jack Lark" and this builds on his exploits.

There is much to credit this novel with plot twists and turns. From the first encounter meeting the Maharajah where Jack proves either his bravery or stupidity by standing in front of a lancer charging down on him.

Soon his real identity is discovered and Jack must take flight and throws himself and his initial rescuer a Miss Isabel Young-Summers on the tender mercies of the Maharajah. Here while Jack is made welcome some are not best pleased to have him there at first. After proving his courage he is promoted to the rank of General. This of course while pleasing Jack does cause a conflict of loyalties. As the dastardly British have plans afoot to annex the kingdom of the Maharajah into the care of The East India Company. So does Jack stay a General or does he revert back to the British red coat? Not being a traitor he does what he thinks is best and fights in the rebellion leading a heroic defense for the British in the face of overwhelming odds. No doubt based on Rourke's Drift. Here the twin talents Jack has for violence and command really take hold. Followed by an ending that was rather bitter sweet. So go read/buy this book and follow the trail of a fugitive from the British army. A great second book building into an even better series.

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## **John Walker says**

Having tried out Mr. Collard's first novel in the Jack Lark series it was only fair to give the second one a go. Once again Mr. Collard writes gripping battle scenes and his history is right on. He admits that most off this story is not totally true, but the lives of the British and Indian's are well portrayed. In this story Jack Lark begins with stealing another identity, which he does in the first novel Scarlet Thief, and it looks like things will go well especially with the young Isabel Youngsummers . Yet the man Lark replaces pops up sooner than expected and so begins a terrific story between the British forces and the Maharajah of Sawadh.

People the second novel in a series falls apart at some point...Not this story. The Jack Lark character grows, the characters are well drawn and the history of what will become the Indian Mutiny shows the problems just before that time. will definitely read the next in the series.

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## **Erin says**

Find this and other reviews at: <https://historicalfictionreader.blogs...>

The Maharajah's General by Paul Fraser Collard picks up only a few months after the final chapter of book one and sees Jack returning to an old ruse to pursue his professional ambitions and avoid punishment for his original crime. Now I'm not a fan of rehashing and generally knock stars from series that recycle plot lines, but Jack's deception plays out very differently in The Maharajah's General and I think it important to give Collard credit for creatively reimagining how Jack's subterfuge played out. The end result is far from repetitious as it forces Jack into new situations and leads him to grow in ways neither he nor the audience expect.

There is a certain romanticism to the exotic kingdom of Sawadh, but the fictitious setting pays due homage India, its culture, and the final days of the East India Trading Company's domination of the region. The story explores the nature of commercial interest in India and the rampant exploitation of both the country and its people, but it was the legacy of James Broun-Ramsay, 1st Marquess of Dalhousie and Governor-General of India, that captured my imagination. I was entirely unfamiliar with the Indian Mutiny when I picked up this book, but Collard's illustration of the bureaucratic policies that led to it fascinated me to no end.

Collard's inclusion of not one, but two strong females is also worthy of note. Isobel's strong-will proved an entertaining foil for Jack, but I think there's just as much to be said for Lakshmi's subtle charisma and guidance. Strength evidences itself in a myriad of different ways and I liked how Collard's work acknowledged this truth through the relationships Jack shares with both women.

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## **Paul Bennett says**

top notch stuff...full review soon

Jack is back. He survived the Alma River battle on The Crimean Peninsula and being the enterprising and resourceful person he is, assumes the name and rank of an unfortunate Captain who perished before reaching his post in India. The British colonization of India is not a subject I have read much of, in fact my knowledge of the period can be attributed to Sean Connery, Michael Caine and Rudyard Kipling in the movie *The Man Who Would be King*, so it was with eager anticipation that I read the second volume of this splendid series; not only because of the location but I wanted to find out how our hero fared in his new disguise. He emerged from book one knowing that he could indeed lead men in battle and that he is an accomplished killer, both attributes are put to good use in *The Maharajah's General*. Mr. Collard has written a tale that is an easy flowing, riveting one that is hard to put down once you pick it up. The character of Jack Lark continues to develop into one of my favorite historical-fiction protagonists, one who becomes more sure of himself as he continues the path of deception he has chosen, though it does play a little havoc on any long term relationships. :- ) 5 stars with a Hoover Book Review admonition - read this series, I for one will be continuing with it in book 3, *The Devil's Assassin*.

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## **Lucinda says**

A riveting romp through bloodthirsty battles and unforgettable adventures

This vibrant, bold book transports you to the heart of a time of conflict, intensity and rivalry. Brilliantly realize 'The Maharajah's General' encapsulates the turbulent times with clarity, dynamic prose and exuberant characters. Set within an exotic, piquant backdrop the profoundly impacting narrative took me on a stirring voyage of new discovery. Fans of *Bernard Cornwell*, *Simon Scarrow* and *Conn Iggulden* will simply love this explosive historical novel, which encapsulates authentic Military History at its very best.

*You can smell the sweat...*

*Hear the muskets and shouts from officers...*

*See clouds of swirling dust...*

*Feel a part of the action...*

Jack Lark is an unforgettable new hero; he is a Redcoat, Leader and Impostor. Loyalty and courage are constantly challenged in a world of warmongering and domineering rivals, with the enemy never far away. Daring and wilful, Jack is a force to be reckoned with, who embodies all the traits of someone individualistic, distinctive and supremely singular. {For instance reminiscent of "Captain Jack Sparrow" or "Konawa Swift Dragon" (Iron Elves)}. This utterly brilliant, thrilling tale is wrought with electrifying intensity, through compelling drama full of heated vehemence and fervour. The extraordinary main

protagonist from 'The Scarlet Thief' is back with great gusto...

Anyone seeking a sensational story that's well written, full of substance and depth then look no further. Included is also a useful glossary of terms.

\* I won an '**Uncorrected Proof Copy**' of Paul Fraser Collard's novel through a first-read giveaway on Goodreads. \*

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## Marat Beiner says

Another good installment in the series.  
Nice story, good action, not a single dull moment.  
Moving straight into the 3rd book.

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## susan murray says

Jack assumes the identity of a dead officer and hopes to get away with it. When he arrives he immediately makes an enemy of a fellow officer not intending to. While out on a picnic with the reverend and his daughter they are ambushed and at ken prisoner later ends up a prisoner of his own people as they found out he's an imposter. Jack is a lovable rogue who has a heart of gold and nothing ever seems to go right for long as he finds out when he escapes and seeks refugee with the other side. Really enjoying this book and all the characters in it are brought to life. I also learnt things along the way about what happened and the way of life in those days especially the redcoats

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## Robin Carter says

### Review

Maharajah's General: Reading this book has been a pleasure, Since book one The Scarlet Thief I have been a fan of Paul Collards writing, he has an engaging style, he writes like able characters. One thing that hamstrung him slightly in book one was book brevity, as a debutante he had been limited to a low page count, and as such the book was edited down, removing, I feel some of the extra depth and flavour of the Crimea and the books characters.

This doesn't happen in book 2, I devoured book 2 in a single day, and then broke my normal never return to a book rule and read it again the next day. This is the first book in years I have enjoyed that much that I had to go back and read it again immediately, (I just have too many books to do this). What we the reader have here is a new Sharpe, it's not since I first picked up Sharpe's Eagle that a single character captured my imagination so totally, this supported by a fast fluid pace of writing, and a vivid portrayal of the Indian country, people, time period, the East India company and as usual the brutal, uncompromising and occasionally morally

bankrupt officer corp coupled with the efficiency of the ordinary men of the British army, all this condensed into 336 pages of explosive action, violent emotions, uncompromising unbending discipline and a man with the courage to do what is right.

The impressive thing about this book is that it hooks you in from the first page with realism, i have read in reviews that there is no way a man from the ranks could impersonate an officer, This isn't as far as i can see a valid point, there are examples of officer impersonation in history, Jack Lark as an orderly was around officers enough to be able to copy their mannerisms etc, so that point for me is covered. His skills as a soldier..well we see him learn most of them on the battle field, and as most officers learned the same hard way, again this is not going to make him stand out. So to any naysayers, "sit back and enjoy the book, stop looking for fault where there is none, just enjoy a bloody good book." Oh and a very nice fitting nod to the authors love of Zulu with the use of regiment and last ditch battle (loved it, as its one of my favorite films).

The spirit of Sharpe lives again in another time, in another war, in the guise of Jack Lark, buy the books and enjoy the adventures. I hope the publisher have the sense to get book 3 underway quick smart.

Very Highly recommended

(Parm)

Series

Jack Lark

1. The Scarlet Thief (2013)
2. The Maharajah's General (2013)

A riveting tale of battle and adventure in a brutal land, where loyalty and courage are constantly challenged and the enemy is never far away. Jack Lark barely survived the Battle of the Alma. As the brutal fight raged, he discovered the true duty that came with the officer's commission he'd taken. In hospital, wounded, and with his stolen life left lying on the battlefield, he grasps a chance to prove himself a leader once more. Poor Captain Danbury is dead, but Jack will travel to his new regiment in India, under his name. Jack soon finds more enemies, but this time they're on his own side. Exposed as a fraud, he's rescued by the chaplain's beautiful daughter, who has her own reasons to escape. They seek desperate refuge with the Maharajah of Sawadh, the charismatic leader whom the British Army must subdue. He sees Jack as a curiosity, but recognises a fellow military mind. In return for his safety, Jack must train the very army the British may soon have to fight...

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## Speesh says

Paul has come up with a sneakily clever idea of re-generating his 'Jack Lark' - well, in the books I've read so far - with each tale. Enabling him to be not so much born again, but at least assume a new persona and begin anew at the start of each book. Still with the baggage - not to say problems - from the previous novel, but also from his own personal beginnings.

While he is pretending to be something he is not, his motives are different from what you might think. He's not a Jack *The Lad* Lark, doing it for financial gain, he is in effect fighting the class conventions of his time. From both sides, as it were. Many in the lower classes seemingly fought against those who wanted to make

something more of themselves, by dragging them back, branding them class traitors and basically operating under the idea that 'rubbish like us can't change our station in life' They've been dealt the wrong hand, and they're sticking. Those who wanted more, felt they had more to offer, basically annoyed because they showed the others' lack of ability to change themselves. Jack Lark is from a typical - for the period - working class background, so his future was bleak before he joined the army and his future in the army, as cannon fodder, was going to be bleak, and short. But he sees something in himself that says "no!"

At the end of the first book, *The Scarlet Thief*, Jack's way out is given to him - albeit perhaps unwillingly - by a Captain about to take up a commission in India. So here, we start with Jack arriving in India as someone he isn't. He soon realises, that everyone out there is pretending to be people they're not as well. Of course, having a go at the class system in India, is kicking at an open door, the easiest of easy targets. It's what you do with it, that makes the difference. Paul FC, I think (well, look what I say here is what I got from it, even if it wasn't what PFC intended) shows that Jack is being himself, while being someone else. The people he meets are never themselves, while being something society has demanded. Those who command are also pretending to be something they're not. Competent. And civilised, even. English manners (of the period) are seen, by us now, as a pretence, a mask society was felt to demand. Too deep? I don't know. Intriguing and worth reading the books for, absolutely certainly.

Interestingly, and shocking to Jack when someone is astute enough to point it out/notice - he is pretending to be someone he is not, on more levels than the obvious. He is pretending to be a Captain in the British Army in India. Pretending to be a 'normal' person, when under that, worryingly for Jack to think, his 'true nature,' is a 'corroded soul,' who finds joy and fulfilment in fighting and killing. That's what Jack fears is underneath.

The other characters out in India where Jack ends up, are also more than just stock British in India, mid-19th Century. Jack upsets more than a few of them of course, partly by being himself. Their anger is not because he has committed a criminal deception by impersonating a Captain, but that he deceived them. By being himself, he is making fools of them, this they realise and they come to see that he has exposed their gullibility and showed them not just that they aren't up to the job, but that he was.

Jack Lark may often not be the real thing, but these books most certainly are. They read easily and at a good pace, so it'll pay you to slow down and savour them. The evocation of British Army life and conditions of the period is absolutely superb. I started to sweat when he reached India, and that wasn't just because of the narrow squeaks, daring escapes, and the backs to the wall desperate close quarters fighting. I'm pretty sure I got sunburn reading this book!

Unmissable, unputdownable - only thing wrong? It wasn't twice as long. Buy the books, buy the series, for the wonderfully written, evocative adventures, and you get so much more, for free!

Read all of my reviews in one place: [Speesh Reads](#)

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## **S.J.A. Turney says**

Anyone who's been keeping up with my sporadic reviews will remember how highly I rated Paul Fraser Collard's debut novel: *The Scarlet Thief*. Indeed, a week ago it made it into my top ten reads of 2013.

Well those of you who were tempted by my review into buying it will be pleased to hear that I've finished



reading the sequel and Collard does not disappoint. Book two of the Jack Lark series is actually better!

Firstly it's worth noting one thing: the Scarlet Thief was such a nice, unusual, refreshing idea for a tale, one might even be tempted to say 'unique' which is something you don't hear often. Therefore, following up the tale of the imposter officer with a second tale of masquerading as a British captain would seem doomed to being at the very least repetitive, if not downright pointless. Well put that worry aside. Despite leaping into the papery fray with a similar idea at the heart of the tale, the Maharajah's General is nothing like a carbon copy of the first book.

This novel explores a whole different side of Lark's life and character and delves a lot deeper into his psychological makeup, giving the reader an unexpected connection with the protagonist. Lark is, after all, an anti-hero and has worn so many metaphorical 'black hats' and 'white hats' that he has become something of a grey area in himself.

Once more we are treated to absorbing scenery and culture. This time, instead of grimy Victorian England and the cold, barren, bitter Crimea, it is the hot, rocky, lush, evocative lands of India that play host to Jack's new charade.

Masquerading as a captain who fell in the Crimea, Jack makes his way to the lands of the East India Company to take command of a small force of Redcoats only to quickly cross the paths of a number of venomous or supercilious Englishmen and the enigmatic, exotic and educated Maharajah of Sawadh. When a legitimate replacement turns up to take the same position as Jack, his life is thrown into utter chaos and the thing he has feared since leaving England seems inevitable: discovery and condemnation. The next weeks in which Jack's fortunes twist and swap back and forth force him to confront his own fears and loyalties and will place him in direct confrontation with both his own conscience and his motherland.

The story is tightly planned and written, the characters three-dimensional and appropriately sympathetic or hateful, and the language and turn of phrase thoroughly engrossing. The feel of the novel brings back moments of *The Man Who Would Be King*, of *55 Days at Peking*, of – yes – *Carry on up the Khyber*, and of *Zulu*. A great deal, indeed, of the latter.

Quite simply do yourself a favour and read these books. I'm pretty certain that if you read *The Scarlet Thief* you'll already have bought and probably read this too, but if not, get going. Don't miss this series.

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## **Andrew says**

The second Jack Lark book has the charlatan, who at the end of the Battle of Alma in the Crimea, stole the identity of a dead redcoat captain - after doing the same at the beginning of Fraser Collard's debut 'The Scarlet Thief' - and headed off to the wilds of India, where the East India Company still runs the country, and is constantly on the look-out for ways to rule larger portions.

His deception discovered, Lark flees to the army of the enemy maharajah with a beautiful reverend's daughter, but that's only the beginning of the story, especially when the British Army, who now have a price on Jack's head, prepare for battle to further their land-grab.

A great muskets-and-swords battle story with the added element of Lark being something of a charlatan, deftly setting the character apart from the Richard Sharpe's of the world. There's plenty going on, and a few

nice twists to keep things interesting.

A great story.

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### **Matthew Harffy says**

Paul Fraser Collard's brilliant lovable rogue, Jack Lark, returns in this sequel to *The Scarlet Thief*. This time Lark finds himself in India, just before the terrible events of the Mutiny. Collard paints a colourful picture of the life of the British military in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is a strange life where the colonial British live in denial of the fact that they are surrounded by millions of Indians who do not relish being lorded over by these pasty, supercilious Europeans. The officers of the station where Jack is posted are as out of place in the dusty swelter of the Indian climate as Jack the impostor is out of place in the Officers' Mess.

The story is fast and furious, with the same kind of blood-splattering action that you would expect if you have read of Jack's previous adventures in the Crimea. Collard doesn't pull any punches when it comes to the horrors of war, and the set-piece battles are brutal and intense.

But it is not all blood, guts and the stench of gun powder. The tale is filled with twists and memorable, larger than life characters, from a villainous political officer, an exotic princess, the eponymous noble and honourable Maharajah, a spiteful and jealous lieutenant, and a lovely English rose, who blooms in the sultry Indian heat and captures more than one heart.

The Maharajah's General is a ripping yarn, and a satisfyingly energetic romp through a fictional Indian kingdom where Jack Lark once again shows he may not have been born into the officer class, but he can lead men with panache and vigour and he will not stand by and watch wrongdoing, whoever the culprit.

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### **Fitz Buser says**

Having just read the first of this series, I wanted to get straight on with the second so dove straight in.

Just like the first the writing is excellent, the history woven into the story so lightly that you absorb the details without having them rammed in your face. I also liked that at the end the author gives a description of what liberties with history he took or where he deviated.

I started to get worried around a quarter of the way through as I wondered if this story was going to end up as a duplicate of the first, just with different names, locations and uniforms. I was pleasantly surprised then when the story took a completely different track. Again, not fantastical, well within reason but a nice twist on the theme.

If you've read the first then I would say this is a must read, you can't leave poor Jack Lark alone!

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### **Nick\_britten says**

The imposter, Jack Lark has survived his first battle. In facing the Russian guns he has discovered what it

meant to be a British Officer and found that he had a talent for war.

But Jack has a problem. His alter-ego is lying dead on the banks of the River Alma and he is back to just Private Jack Lark. Luckily for Jack in times of War, there are always opportunity's for a resourceful young man to better himself and when Captain Danbury expires of wounds in the same hospital as Jack, he seizes his chance.

So Captain Danbury travels to India to meet up with his new regiment but Jack soon discovers that fitting in isn't going to be that easy. In the harsh social hierarchy of British India, Jack soon makes enemies and when he is discovered to be a fraud, his enemies are only too happy to see him swing from the nearest tree.

Jack manages to escape with the help of chaplain's beautiful daughter and they have only one place they can go, to the very man, Jack thought he would be fighting.

The Maharajah of Sawadh is determined to keep the British from ruling his kingdom and he readily accepts the service of a man who understands the British Army and is obviously a fighter himself.

Can Jack really fight against his own side, will he send the Maharajah's army up against the British Redcoats, knowing what they are capable of?

What ever he does, he knows he will fight because he is the Maharajah's General.

The Maharajah's General is the second book from Paul Fraser Collard to feature Jack Lark.

The first book, *The Scarlett Thief* was published earlier this year and was a very promising debut novel (read my review [here](#)). The author was now facing that "tricky" second novel but I'm pleased to say that this book is not only as good as the first book but is even better.

The premise for these books is so simple yet so clever. By making Jack an imposter who assumes the identity of a dead officer, the author can take Jack to where ever he likes and put him in situations without worrying what regiment went where or if an Officer would transfer from that regiment to another.

This book picks up on that as Jack travels out to India as a Captain of the 24th Regiment of Foot (later famed for Rorke's Drift). I think the author really captures the essence of British India in the early 1850's.

The small isolated communities, cut off from and fearing the locals. The rivalry between the regular army officers and the Company officers and the preening ambition of local commanders determined to make their mark are all described in great detail.

The author also lovingly describes the Maharajah's court and palace and this gives you a real flavor of India. I also believe that the author handles the paradox of the British, essentially being the 'baddies' very well. He shows his admiration for the British army, while also showing the grasping nature of the British administration.

This book is quite a bit longer (by roughly 20k words) than the first book and this has allowed the author to use his undoubted skill to really bring to life Jack and the world he inhabits. You can get the impression of the authors love for this period and this extra word count fleshes a good book (*The Scarlett Thief*) out into a great book (*The Maharajah's General*).

This has to be one of the most entertaining books I have read this year, its fast paced with a clever plot and the battle scenes are exciting and well written. Jack is a really likeable character and I love the battle between his undoubted skill as a soldier and his terrible social skills.

This is a cracking book and I highly recommend it. I can't wait for book Three!

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