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lay to the south of the cantonment, and between what may be called the European and Native quarters, there was an intervening space covered with shops and houses, surrounded by gardens and trees. Still further to the southward lay the city. The officers of the European regiments and Artillery occupied bungalows along the northern line, whilst the Sepoy officers dwelt chiefly near their own men. The Brigadier's house was on the right, not far from the Artillery Barracks and Mess-House. The General's residence was nearer to the Native Lines. The most noticeable features of the whole, and those which it is most important to bear in mind in the perusal of what follows, are the division of the great cantonment into two parts, the distance of the European barracks from the Native Lines, and the probability, therefore of much that was passing in the latter being wholly unknown to the occupants of the former.

Sunday,
May 10.

The fierce May sun rose on the Sabbath morning, and the English residents prepared themselves to attend the ministrations of their religion in the station church. There was, indeed, a lull; but the signs of it, afterwards noted, clearly presaged that there was something in the air. In the European barracks it appeared that there was a general desertion of the Native servants, whose business it was to administer to the wants of the white soldiery, and in the bungalows of the officers there was a disposition on the part of their domestics, especially of those who had been hired at Meerut, to absent themselves from their masters' houses. But these things were observable at the time only as accidental circumstances of little significance, and the morning service was performed and the mid-day heats were lounged through, as in times of ordinary security. Severed from the

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great mass of the people, the English could see nothing of an unwonted character on that Sunday afternoon; but in the Lines of the Native soldiery, in the populous Bazaars, and even in the surrounding villages there were signs of a great commotion. The very children could see that something was about to happen. Men of all kinds were arming themselves. The dangerous classes were in a state of unwonted excitement and activity. Many people of bad character had come in from the adjacent hamlets, and even from more remote places, as though they discerned the prospect of a great harvest. Among the mixed population of the Lines and the Bazaars were men agitated by emotions of the most varied character. Hatred of the English, desire for revenge, religious enthusiasm, thirst for plunder, were all at work within them; but paramount over all was a nameless fear; for, ever as the day advanced, the report gained strength that the English soldiery, armed to the teeth, would soon be let loose amongst them; that every Sepoy before nightfall would have fetters on his wrists; that the People would be given up to massacre, and the Bazaars to plunder.

The sun went down and the time came for evening service, and the English chaplains prepared themselves for their ministrations. One has narrated how, when he was about to start with his wife for the station church, the Native nurse warned them that there was danger, and besought her mistress to remain at home. The woman said that there would be a fight with the Sepoys, but the Chaplain listened incredulously to the statement, and taking his wife and children with him, entered his carriage, and was driven to church.* In the church-compound he met

* See the Chaplain's (Mr. Rot-ton's) Narrative. He left his wife and children in a place of safety on the way to church.



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his colleague and other Christian people with a look of anxious inquiry on their pale, scared faces. It was plain that the warning by which it was endeavoured to stay his progress was something more than an utterance of vague suspicion or senseless fear. Sounds and sights had greeted the church-goers on their way which could not be misinterpreted. The unwonted rattling of musketry on that Sabbath evening, the assembly-call of the buglers, the hurrying to and fro of armed men on the road, the panic-struck looks of the unarmed, the columns of smoke that were rising against the fast-darkening sky, all told the same story. The Native troops at Meerut had revolted.

Outbreak of
the Sepoys.

It will never be known with certainty whence arose the first promptings to that open and outrageous rebellion of which these sounds and sights were the signs. What meetings and conspiracies there may have been in the Lines—whether there was any organised scheme for the release of the prisoners, the burning of cantonments, and the murder of all the Christian officers, can be only dimly conjectured. The probabilities are at variance with the assumption that the Native troops at Meerut deliberately launched themselves into an enterprise of so apparently desperate a character. With a large body of English troops—Horse, Foot, and Artillery—to confront them in the hour of mutiny, what reasonable hopes could there be of escape from swift and crushing retribution? They knew the temper and the power of English soldiers too well to trust to a contingency of inaction of which the Past afforded no example. There was not a station in India at which an outbreak of Native troops could appear to be so hopeless an experiment as in that great military cantonment which had become the Head-Quarters of the finest

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Artillery Regiment in the world. But this very feeling of our overpowering strength at Meerut may have driven the Sepoys into the great panic of despair, out of which came the spasm of madness which produced such unexpected results on that Sabbath night. There had been for some days an ominous report, of which I have already spoken, to the effect that the Europeans were about to fall suddenly on the Sepoy regiments, to disarm them, and to put every man of them in chains. In fear and trembling they were looking for a confirmation of this rumour in every movement of the English troops. When, therefore, the Sixtieth Rifles were assembling for church parade, the Sepoys believed that the dreaded hour had arrived. The Third Cavalry were naturally the most excited of all. Eighty-five of their fellow-soldiers were groaning in prison. Sorrow, shame, and indignation were strong within them for their comrades' sake, and terror for their own. They had been taunted by the courtesans of the Bazaar, who asked if they were men to suffer their comrades to wear such anklets of iron;* and they believed that what they had seen on the day before was but a foreshadowing of a greater cruelty to come. So, whilst the European soldiers were preparing themselves for church parade, the Native troopers were mounting their horses and pricking forward towards the great gaol.

Then it became miserably apparent that a fatal error had been committed. There were no European Rescue of the
prisoners.

* This is stated very distinctly by Mr. T. C. Wilson (an excellent authority) in his interesting Moradabad Report. "And now," he writes, "the frail ones' taunts were heard far and wide, and the rest of the regiment was assailed with words like these: 'Your brethren have

been ornamented with these anklets and incarcerated; and for what? Because they would not swerve from their creed; and you, cowards as you are, sit still indifferent to your fate. If you have an atom of manhood in you, go and release them.'"

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soldiers posted to protect the prison-house in which were the condemned malefactors of the Sepoy Army. The prisoners had been given over to the "civil power," and an additional guard, drawn from the Twentieth Sepoy Regiment, had been placed over the gaol. The troopers knew what was the temper of that regiment. They had no fear for the result, so they pushed on, some in uniform, man and horse fully accoutred, some in their stable dresses with only watering rein and horse-cloth on their chargers, but all armed with sabre and with pistol. Soon under the walls of the gaol—soon busy at their work—they met with, as they expected, no opposition. The rescue began at once. Loosening the masonry around the gratings of the cells in which their comrades were confined, they wrenched out the iron bars and helped the prisoners through the apertures. A Native smith struck off their chains, and once again free men, the Eighty-five mounted behind their deliverers, and rode back to the Lines. The troopers of the Third Cavalry at that time had no other work in hand but the rescue of their comrades. The other prisoners in the gaol were not released, the buildings were not fired, and the European gaoler and his family were left unmolested.*

* There are conflicting statements on the subject of the release of the prisoners in the new gaol. Dr. O'Callaghan ("Scattered Chapters on the Indian Mutiny") asserts, that not only the eighty-five, but all the other prisoners had been released by the infantry guard before the cavalry arrived. When the troopers arrived, he says, "After their rapid and furious gallop at the gaol, they found their comrades already released and emerging from incarceration, and the general crowd of felons also rushing rapidly forth to join in

the fire, pillage, and slaughter." But Mr. Commissioner Williams, in his very circumstantial official report, says that the troopers "dug out of the wall the gratings of some of the windows of the ward in which the eighty-five mutineers were confined, and took their comrades away, the guard of the Twentieth accompanying, and the armed guard of the gaol soon followed. None of the other convicts, in number about eight hundred, were released by the cavalry troopers, nor was any injury done by them to the buildings." But he adds,



Meanwhile, the Infantry regiments had broken into open revolt. The Sepoys of the Eleventh and the Twentieth were in a state of wild excitement. Maddened by their fears—expecting every moment that the Europeans would be upon them—believing that there was one great design in our hearts to manacle the whole of them, and, perhaps, to send them as convicts across the black water, they thought that the time had come for them to strike for their liberties, for their lives, for their religions. So it happened that when the excitement in the Lines was made known to some of our English officers, and they went down, as duty bade them, to endeavour to allay it, they found that the men whom they had once regarded as docile children had been suddenly turned into furious assailants. Among those who, on that Sunday evening, rode down to the Sepoys' Lines was Colonel Finnis, who commanded the Eleventh. A good soldier, beloved by officers and by men, he had the old traditionary faith in the Sepoys which it became those, who had served with them and knew their good qualities, to cherish. Strong in the belief of the loyalty of his regiment, Finnis, with other officers of his corps, went into the midst of them to remonstrate and to dissuade. He was speaking to his men, when a soldier of the Twentieth discharged his musket and wounded the Colonel's horse. Presently another musket was discharged into his body. The ball entered at his back; he fell from his horse, and a volley was fired into him. He died, "riddled with bullets." Thus the Sepoys of the Twentieth had slain the Colonel of the Eleventh Regiment, and the

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Revolt of the
Infantry.Death of
Colonel
Finnis.

"About three hundred or four hundred Sepoys released the convicts from the old gaol, which is between the city and the Native lines, and

which contained about seven hundred and twenty prisoners altogether."



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Progress of
the Revolt.

bullets of the former had been scattered in the ranks of the latter. For a little space the two regiments looked at each other; but there was no doubt of the issue. The Eleventh broke into open revolt, and fraternised with their comrades of the Twentieth.

The whole of the Native Regiments at Meerut had now revolted. The Sepoys of the Infantry and the troopers of the Cavalry had made common cause against us. Hindoos and Mahomedans were stirred by one impulse to slaughter the Feringhees, man, woman, and child. So as the sun went down the massacre went on, and our people, who were returning from the unaccomplished evening service, or, ignorant of the excitement and the danger, were starting for the wonted evening ride or drive, were fiercely assailed by the infuriated soldiery, and shot down or sabred as they sate their horses or leaned back in their carriages to enjoy the coolness of the air. Wheresoever a stray English soldier was to be found, he was murdered without remorse. The Bazaars and the neighbouring villages were pouring forth their gangs of plunderers and incendiaries. From every street and alley, and from the noisome suburbs, they streamed forth, like wild beasts from their lairs, scenting the prey.* The prisoners in the gaols were

* "Cities, like forests, have their dens, in which everything that is most wicked and formidable conceals itself. The only difference is that what hides itself thus in cities is ferocious, unclean, and little—that is to say, ugly; what conceals itself in the forests is ferocious, savage, and grand—that is to say, beautiful. Den for den, those of the beasts are preferable to those of men, and caverns are better than hiding-places."—*Victor Hugo*. Mr. Commissioner Williams, in his official report above quoted, says that the towns-people had armed them-

selves and were ready for the onslaught before the Sepoys had commenced the carnage. "Before a shot had been fired, the inhabitants of the Sudder Bazaar went out armed with swords, spears, and clubs, any weapon they could lay hands on, collected in crowds in every lane and alley, and at every outlet of the Bazaars; and the residents of the wretched hamlets, which had been allowed to spring up all round it and between it and the city, were to be seen similarly armed, pouring out to share in what they evidently knew was going to happen."



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let loose, and the police became their comrades in crime. But so little concert and arrangement was there, that some detachments on guard-duty, posted in the European quarter of the great straggling cantonment, appear to have remained faithful to their English masters after their fellow-soldiers had broken out into open revolt. Indeed, whilst in one part of the cantonment the Sepoys were butchering their officers, in another they were saluting them as they passed, as though nothing had happened.* Even at the Treasury, with all its manifest temptations, the Guard stood staunchly to its duty, and at a later hour made over the charge in all its integrity to the Europeans sent to defend it. Not a rupee had been touched by the Sepoys. And when the rabble from the city swarmed upon it, they found it covered by a guard of Riflemen.

But, in the midst of all this great tribulation, there was, in the hearts of our Christian people, a strength of confidence which calmed and comforted them; for they said to each other, or they said to themselves, "The Europeans will soon be upon them." There were two regiments of Sepoy Infantry at Meerut, and a regiment of Sepoy Cavalry. But the English mustered a battalion of Riflemen, a regiment of Dragoons armed with carbines, and a large force of European Artillery, with all the accessories of Head-Quarters.†

* I do not mean to signify that the Sepoys in the European quarter of the cantonment were uniformly quiescent at this time; for I am informed that the Guard at Brigadier Wilson's house fired at some officers who were passing, before they broke away. But there was obviously no general concert.

† History, however, must not exaggerate the actual strength of this European force. There were some

deteriorating circumstances, of which account must be taken. A considerable number of the Carabineers could not ride, and there were no horses for them, if they could. Not more than half of the regiment (five hundred strong) were mounted. Many of the European gunners, too, were young recruits, imperfectly acquainted with artillery drill. There were only two field-batteries fully equipped.



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There was not an Englishwoman in the cantonment—the model cantonment of India—who, remembering the presence of this splendid body of White soldiers, had any other thought, at the first semblance of open mutiny, than that there must be a sad massacre of the Native troops. With a regiment of British Dragoons and a few Galloper guns, Gillespie, half a century before, had crushed the mutiny of Vellore, and saved the Southern Peninsula from universal revolt and rebellion.* He struck decisively because he struck at once. And no one now doubted that a blow struck with promptitude and vigour on this Sabbath evening would save Meerut, and check the nascent activities of revolt in the adjacent country. But by God's providence, for whatsoever purpose designed, this first great revolt of the Sepoys was suffered, unchecked, unpunished, to make headway in a clear field, and to carry everything before it. The great confidence of the Christian people was miserably misplaced. They looked for a deliverance that never came. In some parts of the great cantonment they were abandoned to fire and slaughter as hopelessly as though there had not been a single English soldier in that great Head-Quarters of the Meerut Division.

Inaction of
the Euro-
peans.

The story of this great failure is not easily told, and the attempt to tell it cannot be made without sadness. Many narratives of the events of that night have been written; and each writer has told, with graphic distinctness of detail, what he himself saw and heard; but the confusion of those few critical hours is fully represented by the confusedness of the entire story; and it is difficult to impart unity and consistency to

* See *ante*, vol. i. pages 230—232.

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a scene, made up of scattered effects, bewildering and distracting. What was wanted in that conjuncture was the one man to impart to our British manhood the promptitude and unity of action which would have crushed the mutiny and saved the place—perhaps the country: and that one man did not arise in the hour of our tribulation.

There were three officers at Meerut whose bearing in that critical hour the historian is especially bound to investigate. They were, the officer commanding the Third Cavalry, the Brigadier commanding the Station, and the General commanding the Division. All three were resident in Meerut. It is not to be questioned that when a regiment breaks into mutiny, the place of the commanding officer, for life or for death, is in the midst of it. Not until all hope has gone can there be any excuse for his departure. As the captain of a blazing vessel at sea is ever the last to leave the quarter-deck and to let himself down the side of his ship, so the commandant of a regiment in the fire of revolt should cling to it as long as the semblance of a regiment remains, and the safety of others can be aided by his presence. When, therefore, intelligence reached Colonel Smyth that the troopers of his regiment had broken into mutiny, it was his duty to proceed at once to the Cavalry Lines. But he did not go near the Lines.* He went to the

Conduct
of Colonel
Smyth.

* "Most of the officers of the Third Light Cavalry at once proceeded to the lines of their regiment, arming hastily, and ordering their horses to follow; but I have never been able to discover that the officer commanding the corps repaired to his post, or was seen in the lines amongst the men, during the whole of that eventful evening and night; and it would appear that Colonel Smyth was so fortunate as to make

an early escape into the protection of the European military quarter."—*O'Callaghan. Scattered Chapters on the Indian Mutiny.* It should be stated, however, that Colonel Smyth was Field-Officer of the week—a fact upon which he himself has laid considerable stress, as though, in his estimation, it exempted him from all special regard for his own particular regiment.



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Captain
Craigie.

Commissioner's house. He went to the General's; and he went to the Brigadier's. He went everywhere but to his Regiment. From the moment that the troopers broke out into revolt they saw no more of their Colonel. He spent the night with the Headquarters of the Division, where the Rifles and the Carbines and the Field-guns were collected, and never had the least conception all the time of what had become of his men.* But they were not all past hope. That something might have been done to save at least a portion of the regiment we know. Captain Craigie, at the first sound of the tumult, mustered his troop, ordered them to accoutre themselves as for a parade, and when they had mounted, galloped down to the gaol, accompanied by his subaltern, Melville Clarke. They were too late to prevent the rescue of the prisoners; but not to set a grand example. Craigie and Clarke kept their men together, and brought them back, with unbroken discipline, to the parade-ground of the regiment. And during that night many acts of heroic fidelity were written down to the honour of Craigie's troop. They had faith in their Captain. And it has been truly recorded of Craigie and Clarke, that "these gallant Englishmen handled the troop as if mutiny were a crime unknown to their men."†

* Colonel Smyth has published his own account of his proceedings on the evening of the 10th of May: "I went," he says, "first to Mr. Greathed's, gave information to the servants, as Mr. G. was out. . . . I then went on to the General's, and heard that he had just left the house in his carriage; so I galloped on to the Brigadier's. . . . I went on to the Artillery parade, and found the Brigadier already on the ground; and I accompanied him with the troops to the other end of the cantonments, and remained with him all

night, and accompanied him again the next morning with Cavalry, Infantry, and Artillery through the cantonments, and went with the Artillery and Cavalry on the right of the Delhi road," &c. &c.

† Official Report of Mr. Commissioner Williams. The writer states that "Lieutenant Clarke rode out from the head of the troop, and ran his sword through a trooper of the regiment who was insulting an European lady, and Captain Craigie gave the wretch his finishing stroke."



The station was commanded by Colonel Archdale Wilson, Brigadier of Artillery. He was a man of a spare and wiry frame, of active athletic habits, who had ever borne a good character in the splendid regiment to the command of which he had then risen. For some years, when the Head-Quarters of the Artillery had been at Dum-Dum, in the vicinity of Calcutta, he had been Adjutant-General of the regiment, and was thoroughly acquainted with all its details. But he had not seen much active service since his youth, and had never had any grave responsibilities cast upon him. His training had been too purely of a professional character to generate any great capacity for taking in a situation of such magnitude as that which he was now suddenly called upon to confront. But he was not a man, in such a crisis as had then arisen, to look idly on, or to shrink from a forward movement. What he did at the outset was what it became him to do. It was about half-past six when Brigade-Major Whish drove into the Brigadier's compound, and told him that the Native troops had broken into mutiny. Instantly Wilson ordered his horse to be saddled and brought round, and having sent orders to the Artillery and Carabineers to join him there, he galloped to the parade-ground of the Rifles, and finding them on the point of marching for Church, directed their Colonel to dismiss the parade, and to reassemble them as quickly as possible with their arms. This was promptly effected; but there was some delay in supplying the regiment with ball cartridge. The Dragoons had not yet come up. With a strange incapacity to understand the situation, the Commanding Officer had suffered the regiment to be mustered as for an ordinary parade; and the slow process of roll-call had been going on

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Brigadier
Wilson.



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whilst the last hour of daylight was passing away, and the enemy were slaughtering our people with impunity.

Meanwhile, General Hewitt had appeared on parade, and the Artillery had been brought up to the ground. When Colonel Jones reported that the Rifles were ready for action, Wilson, with the General's sanction, detached one company to the Collector's catcherry to protect the treasure, and another for the protection of the barracks. Taking the other companies, with the Artillery, he marched down upon the Native Infantry Lines, where he expected to find the main body of the mutineers assembled. On or near the parade-ground he was joined by the Carabineers, who had lost their way.* There was now a force ready for action which might have destroyed all the Sepoys in Meerut, if they could have been brought into action with the white soldiers—if, indeed, our people could only have seen the enemy for a little space of time. But the shades of night had now fallen upon the scene. And when, near the Native Infantry huts, the English troops were deployed into line and swept the whole space where it was expected that the mutineers would have been found, not a man was to be seen, either in the Infantry Lines or on the parade-ground; and none knew whither they were gone. But near the Cavalry Lines a few troopers were seen, and the Rifles opened fire upon them. The mutineers fled into a wood or copse at the rear of their huts, and the guns were then unlimbered, and a few harmless rounds of grape fired into the obscurity of the night.

It was plain now that the mutineers were dispersed. The question was, What were they doing?

* Brigadier Wilson did not see of troops were returning to the the Carabineers until the whole body European Lines.



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May 10—11.

To Wilson it seemed that the mutineers had moved round to the European quarter of the Cantonment; and he therefore recommended the General to move back the brigade for its protection. To this Hewitt, glad to be advised, assented; and the troops set their faces homewards. By this time the moon had risen, and the blazing bungalows of the English officers lit up the scene with a lurid glare. But our troops met only a few unarmed plunderers. The mutineers were not to be seen. What, then, was to be done? It has been often stated that one officer at least answered the question as it ought to have been answered. Captain Rosser, of the Carabineers (so the story runs), offered to lead a squadron of his regiment and a few Horse Artillery guns in pursuit of the enemy along the Delhi road. But the anecdote is one of doubtful authenticity.* It is only certain that the enemy escaped; and that, with the exception of some pickets which were planted on the bridges across the nullah which ran between the European Cantonment and the Native Lines and Sudder Bazaar, the whole of Hewitt's force bivouacked for the night on the European parade-ground.

And the night was a night of horror such as History has rarely recorded. The brief twilight of the Indian summer had soon passed; and the darkness which fell upon the scene brought out, with terrible distinctness, the blazing work of the incendiary. Everywhere, from the European quarters, from the bungalows of the English officers, from the mess-houses and other public buildings, from the residences of the unofficial Christian community, the flames were seen to rise, many-shaped and many-coloured,

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Terrors of the
night.

* See Appendix for an inquiry into the truth of this story.



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lighting up the heavy columns of smoke which were suspended in the still sultry air. And, ever, as the conflagration spread, and the sight became more portentous, the sounds of the great fiery destruction, the crackling and the crashing of the burning and falling timbers, the roar of the flames, and the shrieks of the horses scorched to death in their stables, mingled with the shouts and yells of the mutineers and the rattling of the musketry which proclaimed the great Christian carnage. The scared inhabitants of the burning buildings—the women and children and non-combatants—sought safety in the gardens and out-houses, whither they were often tracked by the insurgents, and shot down or cut to pieces. Some fled in the darkness, and found asylums in such places as had escaped the fury of the incendiaries. Some were rescued by native servants or soldiers, faithful among the faithless, who, in memory of past kindnesses, strove to save the lives of their white masters at the peril of their own.

Escape of
the Com-
missioner.

Among those who were thus saved were Hervey Greathed, the Commissioner, and his wife. Warned of the approaching danger, first by an officer of the Third Cavalry, and then by a pensioned Afghan chief, he had taken his wife, and some other English-women who had sought safety with him, to the terraced roof of his house; but the insurgents, after driving off his guard, applied the firebrand to the lower part of the building, plundered the rooms, and then surrounded the place. With the flames raging beneath him, and the enemy raging around him, his position was one of deadly peril. And Greathed and his companions must have perished miserably but for the fidelity of one of those Native servants upon whom so much depended in the crisis which



was then threatening our people. With rare presence of mind and fertility of resource he simulated intense sympathy with the rebels. He told them that it was bootless to search the house, as his master had escaped from it, but that, if they would follow him to a little distance, they would find the Feringhiees hiding themselves behind a haystack. Fully confiding in the truth of his story, they suffered themselves to be led away from the house; and its inmates descended safely into an empty garden just as the upper rooms were about to "fall in with a tremendous crash."*

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There were others far less happy on that disastrous Sunday evening. Wives, left without protection whilst their husbands were striving to do their duty in the Lines, were savagely cut to pieces in their burning homes; and little children were massacred beneath the eyes of their mothers. Then delicate English ladies, girt about with fiery danger, death on every side, turned, with a large-hearted sympathy, their thoughts towards their suffering fellow-countrywomen, and tried to rescue them from the threatened doom. In adjacent bungalows were two ladies, wives of officers of the Brigade. One was under special protection, for her husband had endeared himself to the men of his troop by his unfailing kindness and consideration for them. The other, wife of the Adjutant of the Eleventh Regiment, had but recently come from England, and was strange to all the environments of her situation. The more experienced Englishwoman, seeing the danger of her position, and hearing the shrieks which issued from her house, was moved with a great compassion, and sent her servants

Incidents of the night.

Mrs. Craigie.

Mrs. Chambers.

* Mrs. Greathed's Narrative. See also note in Appendix for some account of the gallant and devoted conduct of Syud Meer Khan, an Afghan Pensioner resident at Meerut.



1857. May 10—11. to rescue the affrighted creature from the fury of her assailants. But when, after some delay, they entered her house, they found her covered with wounds, lying dead upon the floor. Then the insurgents, having done their bloody work, raged furiously against the adjacent bungalow, and were only driven from their purpose by the fidelity of some of Craigie's troopers, who were ready to save the wife of their Captain at the risk of their own lives. In the course of the night, after doing good service, Craigie returned, in fear and trembling, to his household gods, thinking to find them shattered and desecrated; but, by the exceeding mercy of God, safe himself, he found them safe, and soon had matured measures for their escape. Wrapping up the ladies in dark-coloured horse-cloths to conceal their white garments in the glare of the burning station, he led them from the house, and hiding under trees, or in a ruined temple, they passed the night in sleepless horror. Often the voices of bands of mutineers or plunderers in the compound smote upon their ears; but there were help and protection in the presence of a few of Craigie's troopers, who hovered about the place, and in some of his own body-servants, who were equally true to their master. In the early morning the enemy had cleared off, and there was a prospect of escape. So they returned sadly to their dearly-loved home, collected a few cherished articles and some necessary clothing, and went forth from their Paradise with the flaming sword behind them, never again to return. And the leave-takings of that sorrow-laden night were the first of many cruel divulsions, which tore happy families from their homes and sent them forth into the wide world, houseless wanderers and fugitives, with a savage and remorseless enemy yelling behind them in their track.

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Many other episodes of pathetic interest might here be related illustrative of the horrors of that night, if historical necessity did not forbid such amplitude of detailed recital. The sweepings of the gaols and the scum of the Bazaars—all the rogues and ruffians of Meerut, convicted and unconvicted, and the robber-tribes of the neighbouring villages—were loose in the Cantonment, plundering and destroying wherever an English bungalow was to be gutted and burnt. The Sepoys had left the work, which they had commenced, to men who found it truly a congenial task. Day dawned; and those who survived the night saw how thoroughly the work had been done. As they crept from their hiding-places and sought safety in the public buildings protected by the Europeans, they saw, in the mangled corpses which lay by the wayside, in the blackened ruins of the houses which skirted the roads, and in the masses of unmovable property, thrown out of the dwelling-places of the English, and smashed into fragments apparently by blows from heavy clubs, ghastly evidences of the fury of their enemies.* But with the morning light a great quietude had fallen upon the scene. The Sepoys had departed. The ruffians of the gaols and the Bazaars and the Goojur villages had slunk back into their homes. There was little more to be done—nothing more that could be done in the face of the broad day—by these despicable marauders. So our people gathered new heart; and as the sun rose, they thought that our time had come.

* "The inveterate animosity with which the work of destruction was carried out may be judged of by the fact that houses built entirely of masonry, with nothing inflammable except the doors and the beams, which for a considerable height from the ground supported the roofs, formed

of cement, resting on kiln-burnt bricks, were as effectually destroyed as the thatched bungalows. Property which the miscreants could not carry off was thrown out and smashed into fragments, evidently pounded with heavy clubs."—*Report of Commissioner Williams.*



May 11.
The day after.

But the Meerut Brigade did nothing more in the clear morning light than it had done in the shadow of the darkness. The English troops, with the English leaders, rose from the bivouac; and it dawned upon them that more than two thousand mutineers had made their way to Delhi. Even then, if the Carabineers and the Horse Artillery had been let loose, they might, before noon, have reached the imperial city and held mutiny in check. But cotemporary annals record only that the European troops, Horse, Foot, and Artillery, went out for a reconnaissance "on the right of the Delhi road." Not a man was despatched to the place which was the great centre of political intrigue and political danger—which was the great palatial home of the last representative of the House of Timour, and which held a large body of Native troops, and the great magazine of Upper India, unprotected by even a detachment of Europeans. Nor less surprising was it, that, with all these shameful proofs of the great crimes which had been committed, the rising indignation in the breasts of our English leaders did not impel them to inflict terrible retribution upon other criminals. The Bazaars on that Monday morning must have been full of the plundered property of our people, and of many dreadful proofs and signs of complicity in the great crime of the preceding night. Retribution might have fallen on many of the murderers red-handed; but not a regiment was let loose upon the guilty quarter. The murdered bodies were collected and laid out in the Theatre, where a mimic tragedy was to have been performed that evening; and the slayers of women and children, and the desecrators of our homesteads, were suffered to enjoy unmolested the fruits of their work;*

* "It is a marvellous thing that, work in every direction, though with the dreadful proof of the night's groups of savages were actually



whilst the Meerut Brigade, Horse, Foot, and Artillery, marched about Cantonments, and looked at the Delhi road along which the mutineers had made good their escape.*

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What might have been done by our people to overtake the guilty actors in the tragedy of that Sunday night, and to strike awe into the hearts of all who were minded to follow in the same track, may be gathered from an individual example, the record of which lies before me. It has been narrated how Mrs. Chambers, wife of the Adjutant of the Eleventh, was foully murdered in her bungalow. One of her husband's friends, Lieutenant Möller of the same regiment, obtained soon afterwards what appeared to be good evidence that a certain butcher of the Great Bazaar was the assassin. On this he started in his buggy for the Bazaar, tracked out the guilty man, seized him, and carried him back to cantonments with a loaded pistol at his head. A drum-head court-martial was assembled, and whilst Chambers lay in convulsions in an adjoining room, the wretch was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged. And in a little while his lifeless body was swinging from the branch of a mango-tree.† There may, at this time, have been other examples of individual courage and resolution of the same stern character, as there were afterwards in all parts of the disturbed country; but the arm of authority was not uplifted to strike, and the multitude of criminals escaped.

seen gloating over the mangled and mutilated remains of the victims, the column did not take immediate vengeance on the Sadder Bazaar and its environs, crowded as the whole place was with wretches hardly concealing their fiendish satisfaction, and when there were probably few houses from which plundered property might not have been recovered. But the men

were restrained; the bodies were collected and placed in the theatre, in which a Dramatic Tragedy would have been enacted, but for the real and awful one which occurred the night before.—*Report of Commissioner Williams.*

* See statement of Colonel Smyth, quoted *ante*, page 64, note.

† This was on the 14th of May.



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Indeed, wheresoever a number of Englishmen are gathered together there will surely be deeds of gallantry, many and great, though they may be obliterated by the hand of death or lost in the confusion of the hour. And Meerut saw many acts of personal bravery done by our people which will never perhaps find sufficient record.* Nor should it be forgotten that many noble instances of gratitude and generosity, or it might perhaps have been only of common humanity, were apparent in the conduct of the Natives, who, whilst their brethren were striking, put forth their hands to save, and risked their own lives to protect those of the people whose only crime it was that they had white faces.†

* "The firm bearing of the Deputy-Assistant Commissary-General, who stood by his office till his house was in flames, and a young officer rushed in with his lower jaw shattered by a musket-ball, and it was evident that the mutinous guard would abstain no longer; the gallant resistance of the Executive Engineer, Grand Trunk Road; the courage with which at least one woman attacked and wounded her assailants—these and many other instances of the fortitude with which our countrymen and countrywomen met the unexpected onslaught, deserve notice, but cannot be detailed in such a narrative."—*Report of Mr.*

Commissioner Williams. Unpublished Correspondence.

† "Two Sepoys of the Eleventh Native Infantry most carefully escorted two ladies, with children, to the Dragoon Barracks. A Mahomedan in the city sheltered two Christian families, when the act was not only a singular deviation from the general conduct of his sect, but one full of danger to himself. A female servant and washerman succeeded in saving the young children of a lady, whom also they were attempting to save veiled in Native clothes, when a ruffian drew open the veil, saw the pale face, and cut the poor mother to pieces."—*Ibid.*



CHAPTER III.

THE MEERUT MUTINEERS AT DELHI—EVENTS AT THE PALACE—PROGRESS OF INSURRECTION—STATE OF THE BRITISH CANTONMENT—MUTINY OF THE DELHI REGIMENTS—THE EXPLOSION OF THE MAGAZINE—ESCAPE OF THE BRITISH OFFICERS—MASSACRE OF THE PRISONERS.

WHILST the Meerut Brigade were bivouacking on the great parade-ground, the troopers of the Third Cavalry, scarcely drawing rein on the way, were pricking on, in hot haste, all through the moonlit night for Delhi. And the foot regiments were toiling on laboriously behind them, making rapid progress under the impulse of a great fear. It is hard to believe that on that Sabbath evening a single Native soldier had discharged his piece without a belief, in his inmost heart, that he was going straight to martyrdom. A paroxysm of suicidal insanity was upon them. They were in a great passion of the Present, and were reckless of the Future. But the sound of the carbines and the rifles and the roar of the guns, with their deadly showers of grape and canister, must have been ringing in their ears, and they must have felt that they were lost hopelessly. And now, as they speeded onwards in the broad moonlight, they must have listened for the noise of the pursuing Dragoons, and must have felt, in their panic flight, that the Europeans would soon be upon them. But hour after hour passed, and there was no sound of pursuit; and soon after break of day they saw the waters of the

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The ride to
Delhi.



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Jumna glittering in the morning sun, and the great City of Refuge rose encouragingly before them. Before eight o'clock, the foremost troopers had crossed the river by the bridge of boats, had cut down the toll-keeper, had fired the toll-house, had slain a solitary Englishman who was returning to Delhi across the bridge; and under the windows of the King's Palace they were now clamouring for admittance, calling upon his Majesty for help, and declaring that they had killed the English at Meerut and had come to fight for the Faith.

At the
Palace.

Hearing their cry, the King summoned to his presence Captain Douglas, the Commandant of the Palace Guards. In the Hall of Audience, supporting his tottering limbs with a staff, the aged monarch met the English Captain. Douglas said that he would descend and speak to the troopers; but the King implored him not to go, lest his life should be sacrificed, and laying hold of one of his hands, whilst Ahsan-oollah, the King's physician, took the other, imperatively forbade him to go down to the gate. Then Douglas went out on a balcony and told the troopers to depart, as their presence was an annoyance to the King. He might as well have spoken to the winds. Baffled at one point, they made good their entrance at another. It was in vain to tell them to close the gates, there were so many; and the Guards were not to be trusted. It happened that the Thirty-eighth Sepoy Regiment was then on duty in the city—that regiment which had successfully defied the Government when it had been designed to send it across the Black Water.* Already were they prepared to cast in their lot with the mutineers. The Calcutta Gate was the nearest to the bridge of boats; but when this was closed, the

* See *ante*, vol. i. pages 461, 462.



troopers made their way along the road that runs between the palace walls and the river to the Rajghat Gate, which was opened to them by the Mahomedans of the Thauba-Bazaar, and they clattered into the town.

Then ensued a scene of confusion which it is difficult to describe. Cutting down every European they could find, and setting fire to their houses, they doubled back towards the Calcutta Gate, where they learnt that Commissioner Fraser, Douglas of the Palace Guards, and other leading Englishmen would be found. As they rode on, with the cry of "Deen-Deen!" they were followed by an excited Mahomedan rabble. The citizens closed their shops in amazement and terror, and from one end of Delhi to the other, as the news ran along the streets, there was sore bewilderment and perplexity, and everybody looked for the coming of the pursuing Englishmen, and feared that they would inflict a terrible retribution upon the city that had harboured the guilty fugitives. But no English regiments were coming to the rescue. And these maddened Native troopers, with such vile followers as they could gather up in the streets of Delhi, were now masters of the city. They knew that throughout all the Sepoy regiments in cantonments there was not a man who would pull a trigger, or draw a sword, or light a port-fire in defence of his English officer. Without a fear, therefore, they rushed on, scenting the English blood, eager for the larger game, and ever proclaiming as they went glory to the Padishah and death to the Feringhees.

Whilst the Meerut mutineers were coming up from the farther end of the long line of palace buildings, Commissioner Fraser at the other end was vainly endeavouring to secure the loyalty of the Sepoy Guards.

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Progress of
the Insurrec-
tion.



Captain Douglas also had gone forth on the same vain errand. But it was soon clear that they were powerless. The troopers came upon them, and the Thirty-eighth, heedless of Fraser's appeals, fraternised with the new comers. Words now were nothing; authority was nothing. In the face of that surging multitude, increasing in numbers and in fury every moment, the English gentlemen felt that they carried their lives in their hands. When the leading troopers galloped up, Fraser and Douglas were in a buggy together; but seeing the danger that beset them, they descended and made for the gate of the civil guard-house, or police-station, where other Englishmen joined them. Taking a musket from one of the Guards, Fraser shot the foremost of the troopers dead, and those who followed, seeing their comrade drop, fell back a little space; but the multitude behind pressed on, and it was soon apparent that safety was to be found only in flight. Fraser then re-entered his buggy and drove for the Lahore Gate of the Palace, whilst Douglas flung himself into the ditch of the Fort, and though severely injured by the fall, thus sheltered from the fire of the enemy, crept towards the Palace Gate. Some Chuprassies of the Palace Guard, who had followed him, lifted him up, almost powerless from the injuries he had received, and one of them took the Captain on his shoulders and carried him into the Palace. Presently Fraser and Hutchinson, the Collector, who had been wounded at the commencement of the affray, arrived also at the Palace.*

* All this is necessarily given upon native evidence, adduced at the trials of the King of Delhi and Moghul Beg. In some respects the statements are contradictory. One witness says that Mr. Hutchinson accompanied Captain Douglas; an-

other, that he arrived with Mr. Fraser. A third says, that as soon as Captain Douglas was able to speak, he ordered his Chuprassies to search for Mr. Hutchinson and bring him into the Palace.



In the apartments occupied by Captain Douglas, there were then residing, as his guests, Mr. Jennings, the English Chaplain, Miss Jennings, his daughter, and a young lady named Clifford, a friend of the latter. Mr. Jennings had from an early hour of the morning been watching through a telescope the advance of the Meerut mutineers, and he knew that there was mischief in the wind. Hearing a noise, he went below, and found that Captain Douglas had just been brought in and placed on a stone-seat in a lower Court. Under his directions, Douglas and Hutchinson were carried by some of the Palace Guards up the staircase to the apartments over the gateway,* whilst Fraser remained below, endeavouring to allay the excitement. Standing at the foot of the stairs, with a sword in his hand, the last-named was addressing a noisy crowd, when a man named Moghul Beg, an orderly of the Palace Guards, rushed upon him and clove his cheek to the bone.† The others followed up the attack, cutting at him with their swords, and presently Simon Fraser, Commissioner, lay a corpse at the foot of the stairs.

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Murder of
Mr. Fraser.

Meanwhile, in the upper rooms, Douglas and Hutchinson were lying in grievous pain, and the Jennings family were ministering to them. The excited crowd, having murdered the Commissioner, now rushed up the staircase, eager for the blood of the other English gentlemen. An attempt was made to

Murder of the
Jenningses.

* Some statements are to the effect that Mr. Jennings and Mr. Hutchinson carried Douglas up-stairs.

† Here, again, there is discordant evidence. On the trial of the King, it was more than once stated that the first blow was struck by one Hadjee, a lapidary or seal-engraver, who (according to one witness) "inflicted a deep and mortal wound on

the right side of his neck." But at the trial of Moghul Beg, five years afterwards (1862), it was stated by one Buktawuss Sing that he "saw the prisoner inflict the first wound which was on Mr. Fraser's face." Another witness, Kishun Singh, also stated, "I saw the prisoner strike the first blow." See further statements in the Appendix.



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close the doors at the head of the staircases, but the murderous gang forced their way upwards, streamed into the rooms where Douglas, Hutchinson, Jennings, and the innocent young Englishwomen were listening with dismay to the tumult below, and, before a prayer could be lifted up, had massacred them with exultant ferocity. It was quickly done. A brief and bloody murder, terrible to contemplate, then stained the Delhi Palace; but no circumstances of shameful outrage aggravated the horror of the deed.*

There was then a scene of fearful uproar and confusion, which filled the old King with bewilderment and terror. The murderers, with their blood-stained swords in their hands, went about boasting of their crimes, and calling upon others to follow their example. The court-yards and the corridors of the Palace were swarming with the mutineers of the Third Cavalry and of the Thirty-eighth, and soon the Meerut Infantry Regiments† began to swell the dangerous crowd, whilst an excited Mahomedan rabble mingled with the Sepoys and the Palace Guards. The troopers stabled their horses in the Courts of the Palace. The foot-men, weary with the long night march, turned the Hall of Audience into a barrack, and littered down on the floor. Guards were posted all about the Palace. And the wretched, helpless King found that his royal dwelling-house was in military occupation.

* It was stated, and for some time believed, that the English ladies had been dragged before the King, and either murdered in his presence or by his orders, and some highly dramatic incidents have been published illustrative of this complicity of the Mogul in the first murders. But there is not the least foundation for these stories. On the other hand,

it is on evidence that Captain Douglas, shortly before his death, sent a message to the King, requesting him to send palanquins to remove the ladies to the Queen's apartments, and that he did so—but too late.

† There is considerable diversity of statement relating to the hour at which the Meerut Infantry Regiments arrived.

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Whilst these events were passing within the precincts of the Palace, in the quarter of the city most inhabited by the English residents, the work of carnage and destruction was proceeding apace. It is not easy to fix the precise hour at which each particular incident in the dreadful catalogue of crime and suffering occurred. But it seems to have been under the meridian sun that the principal unofficial Englishmen in Delhi fell victims to the fury of the enemy. About noon the Delhi Bank was attacked and plundered, and all its chief servants, after a brave resistance, massacred. Mr. Beresford, the manager of the Bank, took refuge with his wife and family on the roof of one of the outbuildings. And there, for some time, they stood at bay, he with a sword in his hand, ready to strike, whilst his courageous help-mate was armed with a spear. Thus, with resolute bravery, they defended the gorge of the staircase, until the assailants, seeing no hope of clearing the passage, retired to scale the walls in the rear of the house. The attack was then renewed, but still the little party on the roof made gallant resistance. It is related by an eye-witness that one man fell dead beneath the lady's spear. But to resist was but to protract the pains of death. They were overpowered and killed, and the Bank was gutted from floor to roof. The Delhi Press establishment shared the same fate. The Christian compositors had gathered there, in pursuance of their craft; and never, perhaps, since the first dawn of printing, had work been done, sadder and grimmer than this—for it was theirs to record in type that the hand of death was upon them. The telegraph had brought in the early morning tidings that the Meerut mutineers were hastening to Delhi, and would soon be at the city gates. Some

The Delhi
BankThe Delhi
Press.



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must have felt then that they were composing their own death-warrants. The little slips of printed paper—Delhi Gazette “Extras”—went forth, and the printers remained to meet the crisis, which they had just announced. About mid-day a crowd of Insurgents rushed into the office, killed all the Christian compositors, who could not effect their escape, and with clubs and poles destroyed the house and its contents, taking away all the type that they could carry, to turn to another and a deadlier use. Everywhere the Christian people were butchered, their property was plundered or destroyed, and then their houses were fired.* The Church was an especial object of the fury of the insurgents. They gloated over the desecration of all that was held in reverence by our Christian people. They tore down and shattered the monumental slabs on the walls; they seized the sacramental plate; then they ascended to the belfry, rang a peal in derision, and, loosening or cutting the ropes, let the bells fall with a crash on the stones below.

Events in
Cantonments.

Meanwhile, there was great excitement in the British Cantonments, where the Sepoy regiments of the Company were posted. Our military force was cantoned on a Ridge overlooking the great city, at a distance of about two miles from it. There had during the preceding week been no symptoms of inquietude

* “Private houses were entered by troopers (their horses being held at the gates of the gardens), who said they did not come for *loot* but *life*; and when they were disappointed in their greed for European life, they let in the badmashes of the city, who, in the space of half an hour, cleared out the best-regulated houses from punkah to floor-cloth. They then either set fire to the house, or, if it were not of an inflammable nature, they pulled out the doors and window-frames, &c., in some cases the beams from the roofs.”—*Mr. Wagentreiber's Narrative.*



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among them. Some Native officers from the Delhi regiments had been sitting on the great Meerut Court-Martial; but how far they sympathised with the prisoners cannot be confidently declared. It would have been strange, however, if what had happened at Barrackpore and Berhampore had not been discussed at Meerut, and if the Native officers had not carried back with them that uneasy feeling of the something coming which was rapidly spreading from station to station. It is certain, however, that on the afternoon of the Christian Sabbath, which saw at Meerut the first great baptism of blood, a carriage arrived in the Delhi cantonments full of Natives, who, though not in regimental uniform, were known to be Sepoys from Meerut.* What was said or done in the Lines on that evening and during the ensuing night can only be conjectured. But the following morning found every regiment ripe for revolt.

At the early sunrise parade of that day all the troops in the Delhi Cantonments—the Thirty-eighth, the Fifty-fourth, and Seventy-fourth Regiments, with the Native Artillery—were assembled to hear the proceedings of the Court-Martial on Issuree Pandey, the Barrackpore Jemadar† read aloud; and as they were read, there arose from the assembled Sepoys a murmur of disapprobation. There was nothing beyond this; but some officers in Cantonments, who had been eagerly watching the signs of the times, felt that a crisis was approaching. At the early breakfast, however, where our officers met each other, after morning parade, at mess-houses or private bungalows, there was the wonted amount of light-hearted conversation and careless laughter. And when they separated, and

* See evidence of Captain Tytler at the trial of the King of Delhi.

† Issuree Pandey had been hanged on April 22nd.—*Ibid.* vol. i., p. 584.



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each man went to his home to bathe and dress, and prepare for the larger breakfast and the business or the pleasure of the morning, it was not thought that the day would differ from other days. But before the work of the toilet was at an end, our people were startled by the tidings that the Native Cavalry from Meerut were forcing their way into the city. Native servants and Sepoy orderlies carried the news to their officers, and every man hurried on his clothes, feeling that there was work before him. But even then the prevailing idea was that there had been an escape from gaol; no more. No one thought that there was danger to an Empire. If, it was said, the troops at Meerut had mutinied, the strong body of Europeans there—the Rifles, the Carabineers, and the white Artillery—would surely have been upon their track. It was not possible that more than a few fugitives could ever reach Delhi.

Colonel Rip-
ley and the
Fifty-fourth.

So argued our officers on the Delhi Ridge, as they listened to the bugle-call and buckled on their swords. The Fifty-fourth were ordered out for service, and two of De Tessier's guns were to accompany them to the city. It was necessarily a work of time to get the field-pieces ready for action; so Ripley, leaving two companies to escort the Artillery, marched down to the nearest gate. This was the Cashmere Gate. A little way on the other side of it was the Main-guard, at which some men of the Thirty-eighth were posted. They had already in their hearts cast in their lot with the mutineers, and when Ripley appeared with the Fifty-fourth, the time for action had come, and they threw off then the last remnant of disguise. The troopers of the Third Cavalry, with the insurgent rabble from the town, were surging onwards towards the gate. The Fifty-fourth, who had brought down

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their pieces unloaded, now received the order to load; and meanwhile, Captain Wallace, acting as field-officer of the day, who had taken command of the Main-guard, ordered the Thirty-eighth to fire upon the mutineers. To this they responded only with insulting sneers. Not a man brought his musket to the "present."

This was the turning-point of the great disaster. The Fifty-fourth were scarcely less faithless than their comrades. They fired in the air, and some, perhaps, fired upon their officers.* After shooting two of the insurgents, Ripley was cut down, and near him fell also the lifeless bodies of Smith and Burrowes, Edwards and Waterfield. When the two companies in the rear approached the Cashmere Gate with the guns, they met Captain Wallace riding in hot haste towards them; he begged them, for mercy's sake, to hurry on, as the troopers were shooting down our officers. Soon they had ghastly evidence of this dismal truth, for the mangled body of their Colonel was being brought out, "literally hacked to pieces." Paterson then ordered his men to load, and pushed on with all speed to the gate. But the report of the approach of the guns had already awed the mutineers, and when they passed the gate, our officers found no trace of the enemy whom they had come to attack, except in the receding figures of a few troopers, who were scampering towards the city. But they found most miserable traces of the preceding conflict, in the dead bodies of their comrades, which were scattered about the place. These were now brought in to the Main-guard, before which the guns had been planted,

* There seems to be some doubt about the conduct of the Fifty-fourth in this first collision. It is stated, however, that Colonel Ripley declared that his own men had bayoneted him.



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and the two companies of the Fifty-fourth posted as a garrison. And there they remained hour after hour, gaining no assured intelligence of the movements of the rebels, and ever cheerful in the thought that aid from Meerut, with its strong European force, must certainly be close at hand.

Major Abbott
and the
Seventy-
fourth.

Meanwhile, Captain Wallace had been directed by Major Paterson to bring up the Seventy-fourth Regiment, with two more guns. Major Abbott, on gaining intelligence of the defection of the Thirty-eighth, and the doubtful conduct of the Fifty-fourth, mounted his horse, hastened to the Lines of his regiment, and addressed his men. He told them that the time had come for them to prove that they were true and loyal soldiers; and he called for volunteers to accompany him down to the Cashmere Gate. There was not a man there who did not come to the front; and when the order was given to load, they obeyed it with befitting alacrity. Then they marched down, with two more guns, under Lieutenant Aislabie, and about mid-day were welcomed by Paterson and his party at the Main-guard. The force at this post had now been strengthened by the return of some Sepoys of the Fifty-fourth, who had gone off in the confusion, and, having roamed about for some time in a state of bewilderment and panic, had at last turned back to the point from which they had started, hanging on to the skirts of circumstance, wondering what would be the result, and waiting to see whether a retributive force from Meerut was sweeping into the City of the Mogul.

At the Main-
guard.

Time passed, and the slant shadows thrown by the descending sun were falling upon the Main-guard. Yet still no authentic intelligence of what was passing in the city reached our expectant officers, except that which was conveyed to them by European

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fugitives who sought safety there from other parts of the city. Scared and bewildered they had come in, each with some story of an escape from death, providential—almost miraculous. But there was little room for rejoicing, as it seemed to them that they had been saved from old dangers only to encounter new. At the Main-guard they were surrounded by Sepoys, waiting only a fitting opportunity to disencumber themselves of the last remnant of their outward fidelity. At any moment they might break out into open revolt, and shoot down the Europeans of both sexes congregated in the enclosure. It was a time of intense anxiety. It was evident that the insurrection was raging in the city. There was a confused roar, presaging a great tumult, and smoke and fire were seen ascending from the European quarter.

Then there was, at intervals, a sound of Artillery, the meaning of which was not correctly known, and then a tremendous explosion, which shook the Main-guard to its very foundation. Looking to the quarter whence the noise proceeded, they saw a heavy column of smoke obscuring the sky; and there was no doubt in men's minds that the great Magazine had exploded—whether by accident or design could only be conjectured. But whilst the party in the guard-house were speculating on the event, two European officers joined them, one of whom was so blackened with smoke that it was difficult to discern his features. They were Artillery subalterns, who had just escaped from the great explosion. The story which it was theirs to tell is one which will never be forgotten.

The great Delhi Magazine, with all its vast supplies of munitions of war, was in the city at no great

Explosion of
the Magazine.



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distance from the Palace. It was in charge of Lieutenant George Willoughby, of the Ordnance Commissariat Department, with whom were associated Lieutenants Forrest and Raynor, also officers of the Bengal Artillery, and six European Conductors and Commissariat Sergeants. All the rest of the establishment was Native. Early morning work is a condition of Anglo-Indian life, and Willoughby was at the Magazine superintending the accustomed duties of his department, and little dreaming what the day would bring forth, when Forrest came in accompanied by the magistrate, Sir Thomas Metcalfe, and informed him that the Meerut mutineers were streaming across the river. It was Metcalfe's object to obtain from the Magazine a couple of guns wherewith to defend the Bridge. But it was soon apparent that the time for such defence had passed. The troopers had crossed the river, and had found ingress at the Palace Gate. A brave and resolute man, who, ever in the midst of danger, seemed almost to bear a charmed life, Metcalfe then went about other work, and Willoughby braced himself up for the defence of the Magazine. He knew how much depended on its safety. He knew that not only the mutinous soldiery, but the dangerous classes of Delhi, would pour down upon the Magazine, some eager to seize its accumulated munitions of war, others greedy only for plunder. If, he thought, he could hold out but a little while, the white regiments at Meerut would soon come to his aid, and a strong guard of English Riflemen with guns manned by European artillerymen, would make the Magazine secure against all comers. It was soon plain that the Native establishment of the Magazine was not to be trusted. But there were nine resolute Englishmen who calmly prepared themselves to face the tremen-

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dous odds which threatened them, and, if the sacrifice were required, to die beneath the ruins of the Magazine. Cheered by the thought of the approaching succour from Meerut, these brave men began their work. The outer gates were closed and barricaded. Guns were then brought out, loaded with double charges of grape, and posted within the gates. One of the Nine, with port-fire in hand, stood ready to discharge the contents of the six-pounders full upon the advancing enemy if they should find their way into the enclosure. These arrangements completed, a train was laid from the powder-magazine, and, on a given signal from Willoughby, if further defence should be hopeless, a match was to be applied to it, and the Magazine blown into the air.

Whilst in this attitude of defence, a summons to surrender came to them in the name of the King. It was treated with contemptuous silence. Again and again messengers came from the Palace saying that his Majesty had ordered the gates to be opened, and the stores given up to the Army. If not, ladders would be sent, and the Magazine would be carried by escalade. Unmoved by these menaces, Willoughby and Forrest answered nothing, but looked to their defences; and presently it was plain that the scaling-ladders had arrived. The enemy were swarming over the walls. At this point all the natives in the Magazine, the gun-lascars, the artificers and others whose defection had been expected, threw off their disguise, and, ascending some sloping sheds, joined the enemy on the other side.

The time for vigorous action had now arrived. As the enemy streamed over the walls, round after round of murderous grape-shot from our guns, delivered with all the coolness and steadiness of a practice-



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parade, riddled the advancing multitudes; but still they poured on, keeping up a heavy fire of musketry from the walls.* Yet hoping almost against hope to hear the longed-for sound of the coming help from Meerut, the devoted Englishmen held their ground until their available ammunition was expended. Then further defence was impossible; they could not leave the guns to bring up shot from the Magazine, and there were none to help them. Meanwhile, the mutineers were forcing their way at other unprotected points into the great enclosure, and it was plain that the Nine—two among them wounded, though not disabled, for the strong will kept them at their posts—could no longer hold the great storehouse from the grasp of the enemy. So the signal was given. Conductor Scully fired the train. In a few seconds there was a tremendous explosion. The Magazine had been blown into the air.

Not one of that gallant band expected to escape with his life. But four of the Nine, in the confusion which ensued, though at first stunned and bewildered, shattered and bruised, made good their retreat from the ruins. Willoughby and Forrest, it has been seen, escaped to the Main-guard. Raynor and Buckley took a different direction, and eventually reached Meerut. Scully and his gallant comrades were never seen alive again. But the lives thus nobly sacrificed were dearly paid for by the enemy. Hundreds perished in that great explosion; and others at a distance were struck down by the fragments of the building, or by bullets flung from the cartridges ignited in store. But it was not possible that by any such explosion as this the immense material resources

* The assailants appear to have Eleventh and Twentieth Regiments been principally Sepoys of the from Meerut.

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of the great Delhi Magazine should be so destroyed as to be unserviceable to the enemy. The effect of the heroic deed, which has given to those devoted Nine a cherished place in History, can never be exactly computed. But the grandeur of the conception is not to be measured by its results. From one end of India to another it filled men's minds with enthusiastic admiration; and when news reached England that a young Artillery officer named Willoughby had blown up the Delhi Magazine, there was a burst of applause that came from the deep heart of the nation. It was the first of many intrepid acts which have made us proud of our countrymen in India; but its brilliancy has never been eclipsed.

In the British Cantonment on the Ridge a column of white smoke was seen to arise from the city, and presently the sound of the explosion was heard. It was then four o'clock. Brigadier Graves and the officers under him had been exerting themselves to keep together such of the troops as had not marched down to the Delhi City, ever hoping that the Europeans from Meerut would soon come to their relief, and wondering why they were so long in making their appearance. It seemed strange, but it was possible, that the extent of the danger was not appreciated by General Hewitt; strange that it should be necessary to send for succours to Meerut, and yet, as the day advanced and no help came, it clearly had become necessary to appeal for the aid which ought to have been freely and promptly sent. Then one brave man stepped forward and offered to carry a letter to the General at Meerut. This was Doctor Batson, the Surgeon of the Seventy-fourth Regiment. The gallant

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mutiny in
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offer was accepted. The letter was written, and placed in Batson's hands. He took leave of his wife and children, whom he might never see again, disguised himself as a Fakcer, and set forth on his perilous journey. But well as he played his part, and able as he was to speak the language of the country as fluently as his own, he had not proceeded far before his disguise was penetrated; the colour of his eyes had betrayed him. He was fired upon by the Sepoys, robbed and stripped by the villagers, and finally cast adrift, to wander about naked and hungry, weary and footsore, passing through every kind of peril, and enduring every kind of pain.

All day long the Sepoys in the Cantonment had been hovering upon the brink of open mutiny. They had committed no acts of violence against their officers, but, like their comrades at the Main-guard, though held back by the fear of the white regiments that were expected from Meerut, they were festering with the bitterness of national hatred, and eager to strike. The ladies and children had been gathered up and sheltered in a place known as the Flag-staff Tower.* There two of De Tessier's guns were posted; but the Native gunners were not to be trusted, and besides the officers, there were only nineteen Euro-

* This Flagstaff tower became afterwards very celebrated in the history of the siege of Delhi. On that 11th of May it was little better than a "Black Hole." The scene within the tower is thus described by an eye-witness:—"Here we found a large number of ladies and children collected in a round room some eighteen feet in diameter. Servants, male and female, were buddled together with them; many ladies were in a fainting condition from extreme heat and nervous excitement, and all wore

that expression of anxiety so near akin to despair. Here were widows mourning their husbands' murder, sisters weeping over the report of a brother's death, and some there were whose husbands were still on duty in the midst of the disaffected Sepoys, of whose fate they were as yet ignorant. It was a black hole in miniature, with all but the last horrible features of that dreadful prison, and I was glad even to stand in the sun to catch a breath of fresh air."
—*Mr. Wagentreiber's Narrative.*



peans, or Christians, in the Cantonment. It was felt that at any moment a crisis might arrive, when nothing but a sudden flight could save the lives of this little handful of our people. The explosion of the Magazine seems to have brought on the inevitable moment, when the last links that bound the Native soldiery to their European officers were to be broken.

At the Main-guard in the City, as in the Cantonment on the Ridge, the same process was going on in the light of the setting sun. The disaffection of the Delhi regiments had ripened into general mutiny. The last restraints were flung aside under an assumed conviction that the Europeans from Meerut were not coming to avenge their slaughtered brethren. The great national cause was swelling into portentous external dimensions under the inflations of the King and Princes, and others of stronger lungs than their own. Everywhere it had been noised about from early morning that the King was on the side of the mutineers, and that to fight against the English was to fight for the King—to fight for the restoration of the Mogul throne—to fight for the religion of the Prophet. And as the day advanced, there were more unmistakable signs that this was neither an invention nor a delusion. The inmates of the Palace, timid, feeble, effete as they were, had plainly risen against the dominant Christian power. The yoke of the Feringhees was to be cast off. The time had come when all the great offices of State would again be filled by the people of the East—by Mahomedans and Hindoos, under the restored dynasty of the Moguls. And whilst many were inspired by these sentiments, many also were moved by a great lust of plunder; and as the sun neared the horizon, and still there

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Events at the
Main-guard.



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were no signs of the avenging Englishmen on the road from Meerut, massacre and spoliation were safe and easy, and all the scum of Delhi, therefore, was seen upon the surface of the rebellion.

To hold out any longer against such overwhelming odds was now wholly impossible. At the Main-guard the massacre of our people was commenced by a volley from the Thirty-eighth, delivered with terrible effect into the midst of them. Gordon, the field-officer of the day, fell from his horse with a musket-ball in his body, and died without a groan. Smith and Reveley of the Seventy-fourth, were shot dead.* That any Christian person escaped amidst the shower of musketry that was poured upon them seemed to be a miraculous deliverance. There was now nothing left to the survivors but to seek safety in flight. There was but one means of escape, and that a perilous, almost a hopeless, one. There was an embrasure in the bastion skirting the court-yard of the Main-guard, through which egress might be obtained, and by dropping down into the ditch—a fall of some thirty feet—and ascending the opposite scarp, the slope of the glacis might be gained, beyond which there was some jungle, which might afford cover to the fugitives till nightfall. Young and active officers, not crippled by wounds, might accomplish this; but the despairing cries of some Englishwomen from the inner rooms of the Guard-house, reminded them that they could not think wholly of themselves. To remain in the Guard was to court death. The mutineers were not only firing upon our people with their muskets, but pointing their guns at us. The only hope left was a

* "The latter (Reveley) had a loaded gun in his hand; he quietly raised himself up with a dying effort, and discharging both barrels into a knot of Sepoys below, the next moment expired."—*Lieutenant Vibert's Narrative.*

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descent into the ditch, but even that was more like despair. So the women were brought to the embrasure, and whilst in terror and confusion they were discussing the possibility of the descent, a round-shot passed over their heads, and they felt that there was not a moment to be lost. The officers then fastened their belts together, and thus aided, whilst some dropped into the ditch to receive the women, others helped them from above to descend. At last, not without much difficulty, aggravated by the terror of the poor creatures who were being rescued, the whole were lowered into the ditch; and then came the still more difficult task of ascending the opposite bank. The steepness of the ascent and the instability of the soil made their footing so insecure, that again and again they were foiled in the attempt to reach the summit. The earth gave way beneath them, and helping men and helpless women rolled back to the bottom of the ditch amidst a shower of crumbling earth. Despair, however, gave them superhuman energy, and at last the whole of our little party had surmounted the outer slope of the ditch, and were safe upon the crest of the glacis. Then they made their way into the jungle which skirted it, and pushed on, some in the direction of the Cantonments, and some in the direction of Metcalfe House.

Meanwhile, in the British Cantonment on the Ridge our people had been reduced to the same extremity of despair. The Sepoys had turned upon them and now held possession of the guns. It was no longer possible to defend the place or to keep together even the few Native soldiers who were inclined to remain faithful, under the influence of old

Escape from
Cantonments.



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habits and personal attachments. Two circumstances, however, were in favour of the English in Cantonments. One was, that the Sepoys at a distance from the Palace and the City were less acquainted with the extent to which the Royal Family and the Mahomedan citizens of Delhi were aiding and supporting the mutineers. The other was, that our officers, being at their homes, had facilities of conveyance—horses, and carriages, and carts—wherewith to carry off their families to Meerut or Kurnaul, with some provisions for the journey, and perhaps some of the remnant of their household gods. When first they moved off, there was a slight show or pretence of the Sepoys going with them. They fell in to the word of command, and, for a little space, accompanied the departing Englishmen; but soon the columns were broken up, the Sepoys streamed into the Bazaars, and all semblance of discipline was abandoned. Three or four officers, who had remained with them, tried to rally their men in vain. The Sepoys implored them to escape before the rabble from the city burst upon the Cantonment. Already, indeed, the English carriages had been lighted upon their way by the blaze of our burning bungalows. If the officers who were the last to quit the Cantonment could rescue the regimental colours, it was the most that they could hope to accomplish.*

The flight
from Delhi.

So, forth from the Cantonment and forth from the City went our fugitive people. Many narratives of deep and painful interest have been written, descriptive of the sufferings which they endured, and the dangers which they encountered. It has been nar-

* The last to quit the Cantonment were, apparently, Colonel Knivett of the Thirty-eighth, Lieutenant Gambier, Captain Peile, and Captain Holland.



rated how they hid themselves now in the jungle, now in the ruins of uninhabited buildings; how they tore off their epaulettes or other bright appendages of their uniform lest they should attract notice by glittering in the moonlight or the sunshine; how they crouched like hares in form, or hid themselves in gaps and hollows; how they were tracked and despoiled by robbers; how they were lured into seemingly friendly villages and then foully maltreated; how they waded through or swam rivers, carrying the women and children across as best they could; how they were beaten and stripped, and sent on their way under the fierce unclouded sun of the Indian summer, without clothing and without food; how they often laid themselves down at night weary, exhausted, and in sore pain, crouching close to each other for warmth, expecting, almost hoping that death would come at once to relieve them from their sufferings; how delicate women and young children struggled on, sometimes separated from their husbands or fathers, but ever finding consolation and support in the kindly and chivalrous ministrations of English gentlemen.* Some made good their way to Meerut, some to Kurnaul, some to Umballah. Others perished miserably on the road, and a few, unable to proceed, were left behind by their companions. This was the sorest trial of all that befel the fugitives. It went to the hearts of these brave men to abandon any of their fellow-sufferers who could not longer share their flight. But there was no help for it. So, once or twice, after vain endeavours to carry the helpless one to a place of safety, it was found that,

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* And nobly the women played their parts, and not always as the weaker vessels. One published narrative relates how two ladies—Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Peile—saved a wounded officer, the husband of the former, who could not have moved onward without their support.



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May 11—12.

with the enemy on their track, death to the Many must follow further efforts to save the One, and so the wretched creature was left behind to die.*

But truth would not be satisfied if it were not narrated here that many compassionate and kindly acts on the part of the Natives of the country relieved the darkness of the great picture of national crime. Many of the fugitives were succoured by people in the rural districts through which they passed, and sent on their way in safety. In this good work men of all classes, from great landholders to humble sweepers took part, and endangered their own lives by saving those of the hapless Christians.†

May 11—16.
Massacre of
Prisoners.

Whilst these remnants of our British officers, with their wives and children, were thus miserably escaping from Delhi, there were others of our countrypeople, or co-religionists, who were in pitiable captivity there, awaiting death in a stifling dungeon. These were, for the most part, European or Eurasian inhabitants of the Darao-gunj, or English quarter of Delhi, engaged in commerce or trade. On the morning of the 11th of May, many of these people, hearing that the mutineers were crossing the bridge, gathered themselves in one of the "largest and strongest houses" occupied by our Christian people, and there barricaded themselves. These, however, and others, burnt or dragged out of their houses, escaped death only to

* See Lieutenant Vibart's Narrative.

† Mr. Williams, in his official report, gives a list—but not a complete one—of the Natives who succoured the Delhi fugitives. See also narrative of the escape of Captain T. W. Holland: "There being no milk in

the village, one Paltoo sweeper, or others of his family, used daily to take the trouble to go to procure some from adjacent villages." Again: "I remained with Jumnadass (a Brahmin) six days. He gave me the best part of his house to live in, and the best food he could," &c. &c.



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May 11--16.

be carried prisoners to the Palace, where they were confined in an underground apartment, without windows, and only one door, so that little either of air or light ever entered the dreary dwelling. There nearly fifty Christian people—men, women, and children—were huddled together, scantily fed, constantly threatened and insulted by the Sepoys and Palace-guards, but bearing up bravely beneath the burden of their sorrows. After four or five days of this suffering, a servant of the King asked one of the ladies in the dungeon how, if they were restored to power, the English would treat the Natives; and the answer was, "Just as you have treated our husbands and children." On the following day they were led forth to die. The Palace-guards came to the prison-door and told them to come forth, as they were to be taken to a better residence. Sorely mistrusting their guards, they crowded out of the dungeon. A rope was thrown round them, encircling the party so that none could escape. Then they were taken to a courtyard—the appointed shambles—where great crowds of people were gathered together to witness the massacre of the Christians. As they stood there cursing the Feringhees and throwing up their jubilant cries, the work of slaughter commenced. It is not easy to tell the story with an assured belief in its truth. It seems, however, that the Nemesis of the Third Cavalry was there; that some of the troopers fired with carbine or pistol at the prisoners, but by mischance struck one of the King's retainers. Then there began a carnage at the sabre's edge. It is hard to say how it was done. Whether many or whether few swordsmen fell upon the Christians is uncertain.* But, in

* One statement is to the effect fifty men fell upon them with their that a hundred or a hundred and swords; and another is, that two



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a brief space of time, fifty Christian people—men, women, and children—were remorselessly slain.* A sweeper, who had helped to dispose of the corpses, bore witness that there were only five or six men among them. The bodies were heaped up on a cart, borne to the banks of the Jumna, and thrown into the river.

So there was not, after that 16th of May, a single European left in Delhi, either in the Cantonment or in the City. The British had no longer any footing in the capital of the Mogul. We had been swept out by the great besom of destruction, and Behaudur Shah reigned in our place. Since the days of Suraf-ood-dowlah and the Black Hole, no such calamity had ever overtaken our people, and never since we first set foot on Indian soil any such dire disgrace. That a number of Christian people should be thus foully massacred was a great sorrow, but that nothing should be done to avenge the blood of our slaughtered countrymen was a far greater shame. The sorrow was at Delhi; the shame was at Meerut. The little band of Englishmen suddenly brought face to face with mutiny in the Lines, insurrection in the city, and revolution in the great teeming Palace of Delhi; who found, as their enemies on that May morning, six mutinous Sepoy Regiments, a hostile Mahomedan population, and the retainers of the old Mogul dynasty, with the King's name as the watchword, and the Princes as the leaders of the many-sided revolt, could not have done much more than they did to stem the tide that was rushing upon them. It was not possible that they should hold out for more

swordsmen did the entire butchery three children, escaped by feigning by themselves. Mahomedanism.

* A woman (Mrs. Aldwell) with

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than one dreadful day with such a power arrayed against them. Their doom had been sealed in the early morning. When the hoofs of the foremost troop-horse rung upon the bridge across the Jumna, the death-knell of the British was sounded. From morn to noon, from noon to sunset, still our people were sustained by a strong faith in the manhood of their countrymen, who, at a little distance, had Horse, and Foot, and a great strength of Artillery to bring to their succour. But when the sun went down, and there was no sign at Delhi of the approach of the Dragoons or the Galloper guns, they saw that they were deserted, and what could they do but fly?

But did the responsibility of this grievous inaction rest with General Hewitt or with Brigadier Wilson? The General has asserted that, as the command of the station was in the hands of the Brigadier, the movement of the troops depended upon him. But when a General Officer, commanding a division of the Army, thus shifts the responsibility on to the shoulders of a subordinate, he virtually seals his own condemnation. When, at a later period, Wilson was called upon by the supreme military authorities for a full explanation of the causes of the inaction of the European troops on the night of the 10th of May, and reference was made to what Hewitt had stated, the former wrote in reply, "I would beg to refer to the Regulations of the Bengal Army, Section XVII., which will show what little authority over the troops is given to the Brigadier commanding a station which is the Head-Quarters of a Division, and that I could not have exercised any distinct command, the Major-General being present on the occasion. As Brigadier,

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responsibility.



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I only exercised the executive command of the troops under the orders of the Major-General." "I may or may not," he added, "have been wrong in offering the opinion I did to the Major-General. I acted to the best of my judgment at the time, and from the uncertainty regarding the direction taken by the fugitives, I still believe I was right. Had the Brigade blindly followed in the hope of finding the fugitives, and the remaining portion of the Cantonment been thereby sacrificed, with all our sick, women and children, and valuable stores, the outcry against those in command at Meerut would have been still greater than it has been."

Causes of
Failure.

This, in part, is the explanation of that first great failure, which so perplexed and astounded all who heard of it, and which led to great and disastrous results hereafter to be recorded. The military commanders at Meerut believed that it was their first duty to protect life and property in the Cantonment. The mutinous Sepoys, aided by the escaped convicts, and by ruffians and robbers from the bazaars and villages, had butchered men, women, and children, had burned and gutted the houses of the white people in the Native quarter of the Cantonment, and it was believed that, if due precautions were not taken, the other great half of military Meerut would share the same fate, that the Treasury would be plundered, and that the magazines would fall into the enemy's hands. To Wilson it was natural that the safety of the Cantonment should be his first care; but Hewitt commanded the whole Meerut division, including the great station of Delhi, with its immense magazine, and not a single European soldier to guard its profusion of military stores. It needed no breadth of vision, no forecaste to discern the tremendous danger which lay at the



distance only of a night's march from Meerut—danger not local, but national; danger no less portentous in its political than in its military aspects. But not an effort was made to intercept the fatal flood of mutiny that was streaming into Delhi. General Hewitt ignored the fact that the whole of the Meerut Division was under his military charge, and thinking only of the safety of the place in which he himself resided, he stood upon the defensive for many days, whilst the rebels of the Lines, of the Gaols, and the Bazaars, were rejoicing in the work that they had done with impunity equal to their success.

But the judgment of the historian would be but a partial—an imperfect—judgment, if it were to stop here. There is something more to be said. Beneath these personal errors, there lay the errors of a vicious system and a false policy. To bring this great charge against one Commander of a Division or another Commander of a Division, against one Commander-in-Chief or another Commander-in-Chief, against one Governor-General or another Governor-General, against this Department or against that Department, would be a mistake and an injustice. It was not this or that man that wanted wisdom. The evil lay broad and deep in the national character. The arrogance of the Englishman, which covered him ever with a great delusion, forbidding him to see danger when danger was surrounding him, and rendering it impossible in his eyes that any disaster should overtake so great and powerful a country, was the principal source of this great failure at Meerut. We were ever lapping and lulling ourselves in a false security. We had warnings, many and significant; but we brushed them away with a movement of impatience and contempt. There is a cant phrase, which, be-



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cause it is cant, it may be beneath the dignity of History to cite; but no other words in the English language, counted by scores or by hundreds, can so express the prevailing faith of the Englishman at that time, as those two well-known words "*All serene.*" Whatever clouds might lower—whatever tempests might threaten—still it was "*All serene.*" It was held to be unbecoming an Englishman to be prepared for a storm. To speak of ugly signs or portents—to hint that there might be coming perils which it would be well to arm ourselves to encounter—was to be scouted as a feeble and dangerous alarmist. What had happened at Barrackpore and Berhampore might well have roused our people to cautious action. We had before seen storms burst suddenly upon us to our utter discomfiture and destruction; but we were not to be warned or instructed by them. When Henry Lawrence wrote, "How unmindful have we been that what occurred in the city of Caubul may some day occur at Delhi, Meerut, or Bareilly,"* no one heeded the prophetic saying any more than if he had prophesied the immediate coming of the day of judgment. Everything, therefore, at Meerut, in spite of plain and patent symptoms of an approaching outbreak, was in a state of utter unpreparedness for action. There were troopers without horses, troopers that could not ride—artillerymen without guns, and artillerymen who did not know a mortar from a howitzer, or the difference between round-shot and grape. This was not the fault of General Hewitt or Brigadier Wilson; it was the fault of the system—the policy. The prevailing idea, and one for which there was good war-

* See *ante*, vol. i. p. 453.



rant, was, that the Government desired that things should be kept quiet. Even to have a battery of artillery equipped for immediate service was held to be a dangerous movement, that might excite alarm, and, perhaps, precipitate a crisis, which otherwise might be indefinitely delayed. When an officer of Artillery commanding one of the Meerut batteries sought permission, a few days before the outbreak, to load his ammunition-waggons, that he might be ready, in case of accident, for prompt service, he was told that such a step would excite suspicion among the natives, and that therefore it could not be sanctioned. And this may have been right. The wrong consisted in having allowed things to drift into such a state, that what ought to have been the rule was regarded as something altogether abnormal and exceptional, and as such, a cause of special alarm. The policy was to believe, or to pretend to believe, that our lines had been cast in pleasant places; and the system, therefore, was never to be prepared for an emergency—never to be ready to move, and never to know what to do. In pursuance of this system the Commander-in-Chief was in the great play-ground of Simlah, and the Chiefs of Departments were encouraging him in the belief that the cloud “would soon blow over.” So officers of all ranks in the great Divisions of the Army in the North-West—in the Sirhind, in the Meerut, in the Cawnpore Divisions—did, according to the pattern of Head-Quarters, and according to their instincts as Englishmen; and, therefore, when the storm burst, we were all naked, defenceless, and forlorn, and knew not how to encounter its fury.

It has been contended that a prompt movement in pursuit of the mutineers might not have been suc-



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Question of
pursuit con-
sidered.

cessful. And it is right that all circumstances of difficulty should be fully taken into account. Rebellion developed itself under the cover of the night. The mutineers dispersed themselves here and there, and our people knew not whither to follow them. The Cavalry, however, must have taken to the road, and where the native troopers could go, our Dragoons might have pursued them; but the former had a long start, and it is said that, as they would have been the first to enter Delhi, they would have destroyed the bridge across the Jumna; and that even if our Cavalry and Horse-Artillery had made their way into the City, they would have found themselves entangled in streets swarming with an armed rabble, stimulating and aiding the hostile Sepoy Regiments who had been prepared to welcome, and to cast in their lot with their comrades from Meerut. But it is to be observed, upon the other hand, that if the troopers of the Third Cavalry, who were the first to enter Delhi, had cut off the communication with Meerut, by destroying the bridge, they would have shut out large numbers of their own people, who were pouring, or rather dribbling, into Delhi all through the day. If the Meerut troops had arrived on the banks of the Jumna in a serried mass, under a capable commander, they would, when the whole had passed over, have destroyed the bridge, to cut off the pursuit of the enemy from Meerut. But straggling in at intervals, under no recognised chiefs, this was not to be expected; and if it had been done, a great part of the Meerut Infantry Regiments must have fallen into the hands of the pursuing Englishmen, and been destroyed by their grape shot or sabres within sight of the palace windows.

But the mere military argument in such a case



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does not dispose of the historical question ; for it was from the moral no less than from the material effects of the pursuit that advantage was to be derived. The sight of a single white face above the crest of a parapet has ere now put a garrison to flight. And it may not unreasonably be assumed that, if on that Monday morning a few English Dragoons had been seen approaching the Jumna, it would have been believed that a large body of white troops were behind them, and rebellion, which was precipitated by our inactivity, would then have been suspended by the fear of the coming retribution. Unless the Dragoons and Horse-Artillery had headed the Sepoys, which was not indeed to be expected, the first sudden rush into Delhi must have occasioned wild confusion, and many lives must have been sacrificed to the fury of the troopers and the rabble of abettors. But the disaster would have been but limited—the defeat but temporary. It is doubtful whether, if the avenging Englishmen had, that morning, appeared under the walls of Delhi, the Sepoy Regiments stationed there would have broken into rebellion ; and it is well nigh certain, that in the presence of the British troops the Royal Family of Delhi would not have dared to proclaim themselves on the side of the mutineers. All through the hours of the morning there was doubt and hesitation both in the Cantonments and in the Palace ; and it was not until the sun was going down that it became manifest that Delhi was in the throes of a great revolution. Emboldened and encouraged by what seemed to be the sudden prostration of the English, our enemies saw that their time had come, whilst our friends lost confidence in our power and our fortune, and feared to declare themselves on our side. Better in that case for the English soldiers to



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come to Delhi to be beaten than not to come at all. It was the want of effort at such a moment that did us such grievous harm. For from one station to another the news spread that the Sepoys had conquered the English at Meerut, and proclaimed the Mogul Emperor at Delhi. The first great blow had been struck at the Feringhees, and ever from place to place the rumour ran that they had been paralysed by it.*

Alleged conspiracy for a general rising.

There is another question to which, fitly here, a few sentences may be devoted. It has been said that, in looking at this great history of the Sepoy War as a whole, we shall not take just account of it, unless we consider that, inasmuch as there had been a conspiracy throughout the Bengal Native Army for a general rising of the Sepoys all over the country on a given day, the sudden outbreak at Meerut, which caused a premature development of the plot, and put the English on their guard before the appointed hour, was the salvation of the British Empire in India. Colonel Carmichael Smyth was ever assured in his own mind that, by evolving the crisis in the Third Cavalry Regiment, he had saved the Empire. It was his boast, and he desired that it should be made known to all men, that he might have the full credit of the act. And I am bound to say that there is high testimony in support of the belief thus confidently expressed. Mr. Cracroft Wilson, who was selected by the Supreme Government to fill the post of Special Commissioner, after the suppression of rebellion, with a view to the punishment of the guilty and the reward of the deserving, has placed

* There is an expressive Hindostanee word in very common currency among both Europeans and Natives on the Bengal side of India

—“*lachar*,” or helpless. It was currently said that the English were *lachar*.

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upon record his full belief in this story of a general conspiracy for a simultaneous rising. "Carefully collating," he has written, "oral information with facts as they occurred, I am convinced that Sunday, 31st of May, 1857, was the day fixed for mutiny to commence throughout the Bengal Army; that there were committees of about three members in each regiment which conducted the duties, if I may so speak, of the mutiny; that the Sepoys, as a body, knew nothing of the plans arranged; and that the only compact entered into by regiments, as a body, was, that their particular regiments would do as the other regiments did. The committee conducted the correspondence and arranged the plan of operations, viz., that on the 31st of May parties should be told off to murder all European functionaries, most of whom would be engaged at church; seize the treasure, which would then be augmented by the first instalment of the rubbie harvest; and release the prisoners, of which an army existed in the North-Western Provinces alone of upwards of twenty-five thousand men. The regiments in Delhi and its immediate vicinity were instructed to seize the magazine and fortifications. . . . From this combined, and simultaneous massacre on the 31st of May, 1857, we were, humanly speaking, saved by Lieutenant-Colonel Smyth commanding the Third Regiment of Bengal Light Cavalry, and the frail ones of the Bazaar.*

. . . . The mine had been prepared and the train had been laid, but it was not intended to light the slow match for another three weeks. The spark, which fell from female lips, ignited it at once, and the night of the 10th of May, 1857, saw the com-

* *Ante*, Chapter II.



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mencement of a tragedy never before witnessed since India passed under British sway."*

This is strong testimony, and from a strong man—one not prone to violent assumptions or strange conjectures, who had unusual opportunities of investigating the truth, and much discernment and discrimination to turn those opportunities to account. But the proofs of this general combination for a simultaneous rising of the Native troops are not so numerous or so convincing as to warrant the acceptance of the story as a demonstrated fact. It is certain, however, that if this sudden rising in all parts of the country had found the English unprepared, but few of our people would have escaped the swift destruction. It would then have been the hard task of the British nation to reconquer India, or else to suffer our Eastern Empire to pass into an ignominious tradition. But whether designed or not designed by man, God's mercy forbade its accomplishment; and in a few hours after this first great explosion, the Electric Telegraph was carrying the evil tidings to all parts of the country. The note of warning was sounded across the whole length and breadth of the land; and wherever an Englishman was stationed there was the stern preparation of defence.

* Mr. J. C. Wilson's Moradabad Narrative (Official), Dec. 24, 1858.



CHAPTER IV.

EFFORTS OF LORD CANNING—STATE OF PUBLIC FEELING IN CALCUTTA—
APPREHENSIONS AND ALARMS—BEARING OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL
—CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF—THE FIRST
MOVEMENT TOWARDS DELHI—DEATH OF GENERAL ANSON—FIRST AR-
RIVAL OF SUCCOURS—APPEARANCE OF COLONEL NEILL.

WHILST little by little the details recited in the preceding chapter were making themselves known to Lord Canning in Calcutta, the Governor-General, calmly confronting the dangers and difficulties before him, was straining every nerve to repair the first great disaster, and to protect those defenceless tracts of country in which new rebellions were most likely to assert themselves. "The part of the country," he wrote to the President of the India Board, "which gives me most anxiety is the line which stretches through the length of Bengal from Barrackpore close by to Agra in the North-Western Provinces. In that length of seven hundred and fifty miles, there is one European Regiment at Dinapore, and that is all. Benares has a Sikh Regiment, but no Europeans; Allahabad the same; not reckoning a hundred European invalids, who were sent there a few days ago. At one of these places the Native Regiment is a suspected one, and at either the temptation to seize the Fort or the Trea-

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surey will be very great, if they hear that Delhi continues in the hands of mutinous regiments. Therefore, the two points to which I am straining are the hastening of the expulsion of the rebels from Delhi, and the collection of the Europeans here to be pushed up the country." What he did, in the early part of May, for the gathering of troops from a distance, has been told in the first volume of this History. The results of those initial efforts rapidly developed themselves; but what seems to be swift despatch, in tranquil times, is weary waiting, when the issues of life or death may depend upon the loss or gain of an hour.

Calcutta in
the month of
May.

Meanwhile, in the great vice-regal capital of India there was much tribulation. For there were gathered together large numbers of Christian people, men, women, and children. But numbers did not seem to impart to them either strength or courage. A vast majority of those Christian inhabitants were men who had been habituated, through long years, to peace and security. There was not in the whole world, perhaps, a more tranquil, self-possessed City, than Calcutta had ever been during a period of nearly a century. Even the local tumults, to which all great towns are more or less periodically subject, had been absent from the "City of Palaces." The worst disturbances had resulted from the excitability of stray sailors from the merchant-ships overmuch refreshed in the punch-houses of the Dhurru-m-tollah or the Chitpore Bazaar. And the natives of the country generally had been regarded as a harmless, servile, obsequious race of men, to be reviled, perhaps beaten at discretion, by the haughty and

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official
Englishman.

intolerant Englishman. That Englishman, as seen in Calcutta, was, for the most part, of the non-official type; experienced in the ways of commerce, active, enterprising, intelligent, but with little knowledge of the Native character save in its trading aspects, and little given to concern himself about intricate questions of Indian policy. The name of "Ditcher" had been given to him, as one who seldom or never passed beyond the boundary of the Mahratta ditch. The railway had done something to diminish this inclusiveness; but still many of the European residents of Calcutta knew little of the great world beyond, and were prone, therefore, to attach undue importance to the busy commercial capital in which they were buying and selling, and were holding their household gods. Their idea of India much resembled the Chinese map-maker's idea of the world. The City of Palaces, like the Celestial Empire, covered in their minds, nearly the whole of the sheet.

It was not strange that men of this class, unaccustomed to great excitements, little used to strenuous action of any kind, and in many instances, perhaps, wholly unskilled in the use of offensive weapons, should have been stunned and bewildered by the tidings from the North-West, and what seemed to them the probabilities of a recurrence of similar tragedies in Bengal. Nor was it strange that they should have looked eagerly to the Government to put forth all its available resources to protect them against the dangers which their excited imaginations beheld rapidly approaching. The very confidence which they had before felt in their security, and their general contempt for the subject races, now rendered the reaction which had set in all the more exaggerated and overwhelming. The panic in May has, perhaps, been



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overstated in the recital. But stories are still current of Christian families betaking themselves for safety to the ships in the river, or securing themselves within the ramparts of the Fort, and of men staining their manhood by hiding themselves in dark places. But these manifestations of unmanly fear were principally among the Eurasians and Portuguese, or what are described as the "lower order of European shopkeepers." That some people left their homes in the suburbs, that some took their passages to England, that many bought guns and revolvers, and lay down to rest full-dressed and full-armed, is not to be questioned.* And it is certain that the prevailing feeling was that the Governor-General failed to appreciate the magnitude of the danger—that nothing could rouse him from the lethargy indicated by his still face of marble and his tranquil demeanour—and that, in a word, he was not equal to the occasion.

It would be unjust to say that the apprehensions of the Calcutta community were altogether unreasoning and unreasonable, for there were many sources of alarm at this time. Foremost of all there was the great dread of the Sepoys, who, a little while before trusted guardians of our lives and properties, had suddenly grown into murderers and despoilers. There was but little space between Barrackpore and Calcutta. A night's march might have brought the

* I wish it to be borne in mind that this refers entirely to the state of things in May. A far more unmistakable panic, of which some account will hereafter be given, arose in the middle of June. But even of the former month a contemporary journalist wrote: "Men went about with revolvers in their carriages, and trained their bearers to

load quickly and fire low. The ships and steamers in the rivers have been crowded with families seeking refuge from the attack, which was nightly expected, and everywhere a sense of insecurity prevailed, which was natural enough when the character of the danger apprehended is taken into consideration."—*Friend of India*, May 23.



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whole brigade into the capital, to overpower the European guards, to seize the Fort, and to massacre the Christian inhabitants. Then there was in the immediate suburbs of Calcutta, along the river-bank, the great, reeking, overflowing sewer of the Oude household—the exiled King, his astute Prime Minister, and his multitude of dependants, all restless in intrigue, and eager to inflict measureless retribution upon the nation that had degraded and despoiled them. And then again there was a vague fear, dominant over all, that the vast and varied populations of the Native suburbs and bazaars would rise against the white people, release the prisoners in the gaols, and gorge themselves with the plunder of the great commercial capital of India. All these were at least possibilities. What had been done at Meerut and Delhi might be acted over again at Calcutta on a larger scale and with more terrible effect.

After a lapse of years we may speak lightly of these dangers, and say that Lord Canning discerned the true state of things, whilst others saw them darkly through the glass of their fears. But the difference, perhaps, was rather that of outward bearing than of inward appreciation of the position of affairs. It is hard to say how much depends, in such a crisis, upon the calm and confident demeanour of the head of the Government. Day after day passed, and the Governor-General sat there, firm as a rock, waiting for fresh tidings of disaster, and doing all that human agency could do to succour our distressed people and to tread down the insolence of the enemy. The great English community of Calcutta thought that he did not see the magnitude of the danger, because he did not tremble for the fate of the capital. He did not know what it was to tremble,

Bearing of
Lord Canning



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and some said that he did not know what it was to feel. But though he wore a calm face, in no man's mind was there a clearer sense of the magnitude of the crisis,* and in no man's heart was there a deeper pity. He pitied those at a distance, who were really girt about with peril, and whose despairing cries for help, in the shape of English troops, nearly broke his heart. But he pitied most of all, with a contemptuous pity, those who exaggerated the dangers around them, who could not conceal their fears, and who would fain have induced him to treat Calcutta as though it were the whole Indian Empire. If there were any impassiveness, any obduracy in him, it was simply that he could not bring himself to think much about the place in which he was living, whilst there were other places begirt with more imminent peril. He forgot himself, with the self-negation of a noble nature, and, forgetting himself, he may for a while have forgotten those immediately around him. And so it happened that the fears of many Englishmen in Calcutta were mixed with strong resentments, and they began to hate the Governor-General who could not bring himself to think that the Indian Empire was included within the circuit of the Marhatta ditch.

As the month of May advanced, the panic increased. It has been shown, in measured terms, what the Go-

* Lord Canning's correspondence abounds with proofs of this. Take the following from a characteristic letter to Bishop Wilson, which clearly shows that he did not under-rate the danger, although he was confident of the national ability to surmount it: "The sky is very black, and as yet the signs of a clearing are faint. But reason and common sense are on our side from the very beginning.

The course of the Government has been guided by justice and temper. I do not know that any one measure of precaution and strength, which human foresight can indicate, has been neglected. There are stout hearts and clear heads at the chief posts of danger—Agra, Lucknow, and Benares. For the rest, the issue is in higher hands than ours. I am very confident of complete success."



vernor-General thought of these manifestations of a great terror.* In later letters he spoke out in more emphatic language, and cotemporary records of a less exalted character seem to support his assertions. Perhaps his eagerness to encourage others, by showing that he had no fear for the Presidency, carried him into an excess of outward indifference. Certainly, he did not seem to appreciate, in the first instance, an offer made by the British inhabitants to enrol themselves into a volunteer corps for the protection of the great City of Palaces. Many public bodies came forward at this time with protestations of unswerving loyalty and free offers of service. The Trades Association, the Masonic Lodges, the Native Christian Community, and side by side with our own compatriots and fellow-subjects, the representatives of the great French and American nations, sympathising with us in our distress. Such offers were worthy and honourable, and entitled to all gratitude from our rulers. Those communities desired to be armed and disciplined and organised after the manner of soldiers. Lord Canning told them in reply that they might enrol themselves as special constables. And it was thought that there was a touch of contempt in the very nature of the answer.

But, although Lord Canning believed that there was a "groundless panic," he had no design to reject contemptuously those offers of assistance. His desire was to display no outward symptom of alarm or mistrust. He was supreme ruler, not of a class or of a community, but of all classes and communities. He saw clearly that the great fear had possessed every quarter of the city and its suburbs, and was agitating

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Volunteer
offers.

* *Ante*, vol. i. pp. 610, 611.



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the breasts of all the varied populations inhabiting them, and he knew that what might tranquillise and subdue in one direction might alarm and irritate in another. At no period of our history were the Natives of India in so great a paroxysm of fear. They shuddered to think that they might lose their caste—shuddered to think that they might lose their lives. All sorts of strange reports were afloat among the people, and the English were eager that Lord Canning should contradict them by public proclamation. “One of the last reports rife in the Bazaar,” he wrote on the 20th of May, “is, that I have ordered beef to be thrown into the tanks, to pollute the caste of all Hindoos who bathe there, and that on the Queen’s birthday all the grain-shops are to be closed, in order to drive the people to eat unclean food. Men, who ought to have heads on their shoulders, are gravely asking that each fable should be contradicted by proclamation as it arises, and are arming themselves with revolvers because this is not done. I have already taken the only step that I consider advisable, in the sense of a refutation of these and like rumours, and patience, firmness, and I hope a speedy return of the deluded to common sense, will do the rest.” And clearly recognising all these conflicting fears and suspicions, he walked steadily but warily between them, assailed on all sides by cries for special help, but knowing well that the safety of all depended upon the strength and constancy of his resistance.

Celebration
of the Queen’s
Birthday.
May 25.

The Queen’s birthday was celebrated in Calcutta after the wonted fashion. A grand ball was given at Government House.* It was the desire of Lord Canning, above all things, that nothing should be done to betray any want of confidence in the general

* The 24th of May fell on Sunday. The celebration was, therefore, on the 25th.



loyalty of the people. He had been besought to exchange his own personal guard of Natives for one composed of Europeans, but this he had refused to do. And the sweet face of Lady Canning was to be seen, evening after evening, calm and smiling, as she took her wonted drive on the Course or in the open suburbs of Calcutta. And now that it was represented that it might be expedient to omit the usual feu-de-joie fired in the Queen's honour, the suggestion was rejected; but in order that there might be no misapprehension as to the ammunition used on the occasion, a guard of Sepoys was sent to bring some of the old unsuspected cartridges out of the regimental stores at Barrackpore. The ball in the evening was well attended; but some absented themselves, believing that the congregation under one roof of all the leading members of the English community would suggest a fitting occasion for an attack on Government House.* There was not, indeed, a ruffle even upon the surface; although the day was likely to be one of more than usual excitement, for it was the great Mahomedan festival of the Eed, and it was thought in many places besides Calcutta that a Musulman rising might be anticipated. After this there was some little return of confidence. But any accidental circumstance, such as the explosion of a few festal fireworks, was sufficient to throw many into a paroxysm of alarm.†

* "Two young ladies refused to go at the last moment, and sat up with a small bag prepared for flight, till their father returned from the ball and reassured them."
"Miss — has hired two sailors to sit up in her house of a night; but they got tipsy, and frightened her more than imaginary enemies."—*Journal of a Lady, MS.*

† "A few nights ago woke up at

two o'clock by what sounded like guns firing. Many thought the Alipore jail had been broken open. Many gentlemen armed themselves, and got carriages ready for the ladies to fly to the Fort. On going into the verandah I was thankful to see a great display of fireworks going up, which was the cause of all the noise. It was the marriage of one of the Mysore princes."—*Ibid.*



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The first
movement on
Delhi.

All this time, Lord Canning, aided by those immediately around him, was doing all that could be done for the successful attainment of the great ends to which he had addressed himself from the commencement—the recovery of Delhi and the protection of the Gangetic provinces. But it was not easy in the existing dearth of troops to accomplish both of these objects with the desired despatch; and it is not strange, therefore, that some difference of opinion prevailed among the advisers of Lord Canning as to the policy which, in these straitened circumstances, it was more expedient to adopt. It is believed that the Civil members of the Supreme Council, seeing how large a portion of our available military strength would be locked up under the walls of Delhi, and how, in the meanwhile, large breadths of country would be exposed to the fury of the enemy, advised that the attack on the great city of the Mogul should be delayed for a while, in order to employ the European troops in Upper India upon the general defence of the country. Sir John Low was of a different opinion; and he drew up a minute on the subject, full of sound arguments in favour of an immediate effort to recover the lost position. But the Governor-General had already come to that conclusion. Indeed, he had never doubted, for a day, that let what might happen elsewhere, it was his first duty to wrest the imperial city from the hands of the Insurgents. He saw plainly that the fall of Delhi had imparted a political, a national significance to a movement, which otherwise might have been regarded as little more than a local outbreak. It had, indeed, converted for a while a mutiny into a revolution; and the Governor-General felt, therefore, that to strike at Delhi, was to strike at the very heart of the danger—that to deliver a deadly blow at that



point would be to cause an immediate collapse of the vital powers of rebellion from one end of the country to the other.

So he at once issued his orders for the striking of that blow; and day after day the telegraph wires carried to the Commander-in-Chief briefly emphatic orders to make short work of Delhi. Though the Lower Provinces were all but bare of European troops there was some wealth of English regiments upon the slopes of the Northern Hills, where the Head-Quarters of the Army were then planted; and Lord Canning, with something of the impetuosity of the civilian, which is prone to overlook military difficulties, believed that those regiments might be gathered up at once and poured down with resistless force upon Delhi. Severed by nearly a thousand miles from the point of attack, he felt that he himself could do but little. But he had faith in the Commander-in-Chief—faith in the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces—faith in the great Commissioner of the Punjab; and in the first letter which he wrote to England, after the outbreak at Meerut, he said: "As to expediting the crushing of the Delhi rebels, I work at some disadvantage at a distance of nine hundred miles; but the forces are converging upon the point as rapidly as the season will admit, and I am confident that with Colvin's aid and example, every man will be inspirited to do his utmost. I have made the Commander-in-Chief aware of the vast importance to the Lower Provinces that an end should be made of the work quickly. Time is everything. Delhi once crushed, and a terrible example made, we shall have no more difficulties." To what extent the realised facts fulfilled his sanguine anticipations, will presently be made apparent.

Meanwhile, the Governor-General was anxiously

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Movement of
troops from
below.

turning to good account the first-fruits of his initial measures for the collection of European troops, and trying to succour those defenceless posts at which the enemy were most likely to strike. The difficulties and perplexities which beset him were great. He had only two European regiments in the neighbourhood of the capital—the Fifty-third Foot, whose Head-Quarters were in Fort William, and the Eighty-fourth, who had been brought round from Rangoon in March, and who had since been stationed at Chinsurah, on the banks of the Hooghly, above Barrackpore. He would fain have sent upwards a part of the little strength thus gathered at the Presidency; but those two regiments were all that belonged to him for the defence of Lower Bengal. There was not another English regiment nearer than Dinapore, four hundred miles distant from Calcutta. And there, in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital, were many points which it was of extreme importance to defend. There was Fort William, with its great Arsenal; there was the Gun-manufactory at Cossipore, a few miles higher up the river; there was the Powder-manufactory at Ishapore, some twelve miles beyond, and there was the Artillery School of Instruction at Dum-Dum, with all its varied appliances for the manufacture of ordnance stores. A little way beyond Chowringhee, the fashionable suburb of the City of Palaces, lay the great gaol of Alipore, crowded with malefactors, many of the worst class; and hard by were the Government clothing godowns, or stores, from which the uniforms and accoutrements of the army were drawn. Then in different parts of the city were the Calcutta Mint and the Treasury and the Banks, all groaning with coin—so that there was nothing wanting that could have supplied an



insurgent army with all the munitions and equipments of war, and enabled them to take the field against us with the unfailing cement of high pay to keep them together.

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Wise after the event, public writers have said that if Lord Canning, in the third week of the month of May, had accepted the first offer of the European inhabitants to enroll themselves into a volunteer corps—that if he had disbanded the Sepoy Regiments at Barrackpore, and ordered the disbandment of those at Dinapore—events which were subsequently rendered necessary—a large portion of the European force in Bengal might have been set free and pushed up by rail and road to the points which were most beset with danger, and that great disasters which subsequently befel us might thus have been averted.* There are, doubtless, many things which, in that month of May, would have been done differently, and might have been done better, if the future had been clearly revealed to those who had the conduct of affairs. But we must judge men according

Conduct of
Government
considered.

* The two ablest of the early writers, the author of the "Red Pamphlet," and Mr. Meade, in his "Sepoy Revolt," dwell very emphatically on this point. The former says: "An enrolment on a large scale at this time would have enabled the Governor-General to dispense with the services of one European regiment at least; but so bent was he on ignoring the danger, that he not only declined the offers of the Trades' Association, the Masonic Fraternity, the Native converts, the Americans, and the French inhabitants and others, but he declined them in terms calculated to deaden rather than to excite a feeling of loyalty." Mr. Meade says: "A thousand English volunteer infantry, four hundred cavalry, and fifteen

hundred sailors were at the disposal of the Government a week after the revolt became known. . . . Whilst the volunteers were learning how to load and fire, and the merchant seamen were being instructed in the use of artillery, Government might have placed from the terminus (at Raneegunge) to Cawnpore a line of stations for horses and bullocks, guarded, if necessary, by posts of armed men. . . . Had Government only consented to do just a fortnight beforehand what they were coerced to do on the 14th of June, they might have had on the first day of that month a force of two thousand Europeans at Raneegunge, fully equipped with guns and stores."