



1857.

June 7.

Reinforce-
ments from
below.

June 9.

But this state of things was not to be suffered much longer to endure. The man, who, by his timely energy, had saved Benares, was now pushing on for the rescue of Allahabad. The one true soldier that was needed to put forth a strong hand to smite down the growing rebellion in the Gangetic Provinces was hurrying upwards, with a little band of English fighting men, to show that the national manhood of the country had lost nothing of the might that had enabled it to establish the empire of the Few in the vast territories of the Many. Having sent forward an advanced party of the Fusiliers, under Lieutenant Arnold, and made over the command of Benares to Colonel Gordon, Neill left that place with another party of his regiment, and pressed on by horse-dawk to Allahabad. Arnold had reached the Bridge of Boats on the 7th, but he had been unable at once to cross, as the passage was held by the mutineers, and there had been some delay in sending a steamer to bring them across the river to the Fort. Their arrival did something to establish confidence in the garrison, but the news that Neill was coming did still more. The old high spirit of self-reliance had never waned; and it was still felt that a handful of European soldiers under a commander, with a clear head and a stout heart, might hold Allahabad against the whole world of mutiny and rebellion.

the man, I can learn only that "he was not known in the district before the mutiny," and was "said to be an emissary from Lucknow." The best account that I can find is that given by Mr. Willock in his official report. "At this time," he says, "the city and suburbs were held by a body of rebels under the now well-known Moulavee Lykut Ali. This man, a weaver by caste, and by trade

a schoolmaster, had gained some respect in his village by his excessive sanctity; and on the first spread of the rebellion, the Mahomedan Zemindars of Pergunnah Chail, ready to follow any leader, placed this man at their head, and marched to the city, proclaiming him Governor of the district in the name of the King of Delhi."



1857.

June 11.

Arrival of
Neill.

On the 11th of June Neill arrived. As he entered the gates of the Fort, the Sentry exclaimed, "Thank God, sir, you'll save us yet!" Lord Canning, who saw clearly that he had now at his disposal one of the men most wanted in such a crisis, had commissioned the electric wires to instruct the Colonel of the Madras Fusiliers to take command at Allahabad; and Neill had hastened upwards, under the burning heats of June, with a disregard for self, which well nigh cost him his life.* He had obtained entrance into the Fort, not without great personal risk; and only the indomitable will within him kept him from succumbing to the fierce rays of the noon-day sun. For some time after his arrival he could sustain himself only by continually lying down and drinking large quantities of champagne and water. But he never for a moment doubted his capacity to grapple successfully with the difficulties before him; whatsoever might be his physical prostration, he had no mental shortcomings, no deterring sense of responsibility to enervate and arrest him. "I had always the greatest confidence in myself," he wrote at this time to the partner of his life; "and although I felt almost dying from complete exhaustion, yet I kept up my heart." Whatever the conjuncture might be, it was the nature of the man to rise to the height of the occasion—"to scorn the consequence and to do the thing." He had long been looking for an opportunity, and, now that it had come, he was not one to succumb to the assaults of bodily weakness, and to

* "I was quite done up by my dash from Benares, and getting into the Fort in that noonday heat. I was so exhausted for days, that I was obliged to lie down constantly. I could only sit up for a few minutes at a time, and when our attacks were

going on, I was obliged to sit down in the batteries and give my orders and directions. . . . For several days I drank champagne and water to keep me up."—*Letter from Colonel Neill to his Wife. MS. Correspondence.*



1857.
June 11.

halt with the goal before him. He was not a "Sepoy officer," and he had neither any credulity nor any tenderness to deter him from striking root-and-branch at the black soldiery who had betrayed us, and the people who were rising into rebellion on the ruins of the Native Army.

He took in the position of affairs at a glance. On his way from Benares, he had seen that the whole country on the banks of the Ganges was in a state of anarchy and confusion, and he knew that already the rising had become something more than a military mutiny.* At Allahabad, his first thought was, that it was a wonderful interposition of Providence that the Fortress was still in our hands. "How the place has not fallen," he wrote, "that is, not been taken by the Sikhs, is a wonder. They appear to be petted and made much of. The enemy are all around us; we are kept within the Fort. I shall settle that part of it ere long." And he did settle it. The Fort had been invested and menaced by the enemy. Neill's first impulse was to prove that the English could do more than defend themselves. On the morning after his arrival, he opened fire from the Fort guns on the village of Darao-gunj, which was held by a large body of insurgent rabble, and then sent forward to the attack detachments of Fusiliers and Sikhs, who cleared the village, burnt it, and regained possession of the bridge, which Neill afterwards repaired. A further detachment of a hundred men of the Fusiliers came up on that day, under the command of Major

June 12.
Offensive
operations.

* "June 10. The tone and bearing of the Native officials bad—evidently a good deal of plundering—villages burning in all directions—the country almost deserted—plundered by the Zemindars about. The revenues just about to be collected —the toll-house on road to Sydabad plundered—nearly destroyed—the body of the murdered man, an European, in the house; his daughter said to be taken off by a neighbouring Zemindar." — *Neill's Journal*. MS.



Stephenson, and passed over without interruption to the Fort.

1857.

June 12—14.

Neill now felt himself strong enough for any emergency. The first suggestion of this increased strength was the removal of the Sikhs from the Fort. In truth, they were fast demoralising our own people in the garrison. They had been going in and out revelling in the pillage, and the Volunteers had been by no means behind them in predatory activity, especially in the direction of the "six dozen cases" of strong drink. The stores of the European merchants and the go-downs of the river steam-companies, with all their undelivered consignments, had been plundered; and beer, wines, and spirits were as plentiful as water in the Fort. The Sikhs brought in large supplies of liquor of all kinds, drank what they could, and sold the rest to the Europeans. The finest champagnes of Clicquot and Perrier-Jouet, and the best brandies of Martel and Hennessy, were selling for sixpence a bottle. So a reign of intoxication commenced which, for a while, subverted all military authority, and made us as helpless as children. This was an enemy for which Neill was not prepared; but his clear brain soon discerned the means of meeting and subduing it. He directed the Commissariat Officers to purchase, at the prices asked by the Sikhs, all the liquor remaining in their hands, and to lodge it securely in the Government stores. This done, the removal of the Sikhs to quarters outside the Fort was comparatively easy; but it was not to be done by force. He had taken counsel with Brasyer and with the energetic Magistrate Court, and it had been determined that the characteristic greed of the Sikhs should still be stimulated by thoughts of the plunder of some of the rebel zemindarrees. So they were

Removal of
the Sikhs
from the
Fort.



1857.

June 15.

Attack on the
Insurgents.

persuaded to take up a position in some old Government buildings outside the Fort, commanded by the guns on its ramparts.

Having thus overcome the difficulties which lay in his path, Neill addressed himself earnestly to the work before him—the dispersal of the rebels and the restoration of order. On the 15th of June, having sent off the Christian women and children in a river steamer to Calcutta, he turned his available resources to the best account, and made an impression on the enemy, which greatly disheartened and enfeebled them. Having directed the guns of the Fort to open upon the villages or suburbs of Kydgunj and Moolegunj, he sent Harward, with a howitzer and a party of volunteer riflemen on board a steamer, to operate from the river, and marched a detachment of Fusiliers, Sikhs, and Irregular Cavalry upon the villages, with orders to scour them thoroughly and penetrate into the country beyond. The land party met with stalwart opposition, but the rush of the Sikhs was irresistible. They swept through the villages, and such was the terror that our demonstration on that day inspired, that when night fell, the Insurgent leaders sought safety in flight, and deserted the guns, which they had taken from us, and the prisoners whom they had captured at the commencement of the outbreak; and among them was young Cheek, of whose fate I have already spoken, and who was rescued only to die.*

The aspect of affairs now began rapidly to im-

* The Allahabad volunteers showed great spirit and pluck, erring, however, on the side of exuberance. Neill complained bitterly that upon this occasion they had impeded his operations by "firing upon a herd of bullocks, and other madness"—bul-

locks at that time being as valuable as European soldiers. "These gentlemen volunteers," he characteristically added, "behave so lawlessly and insubordinately, that I have threatened to shoot or hang a few if they do not improve."

1857.
June 17.

prove. "On the 17th the Magistrate proceeded to the Cotwallee, and there restored his own authority and installed his own officers." "No resistance," it is added, "was offered, and the whole place seemed deserted."* A terrible rumour had been running through the streets of Allahabad. It had been reported that the English in the Fort were about to bombard the city. What was the origin of the story it is hard to say. It may have grown up, as other rumours grew up, in the hotbed of a people's fears; or it may have been propagated by those whose interest it was to sweep out the insurgents.† But from whatsoever source it sprung, it was almost magical in its effects. Nothing that the Moulavee and his lieutenants could do to reassure the minds of the people had availed to allay the panic and restrain the flight, and before nightfall, on the day of Neill's victory, according to the Moulavee's own story, "not a house was tenanted, and not a light was to be seen in the city." Lyakut Ali himself had escaped towards Cawnpore.

On the 18th, Neill marched out again with his whole force. Sending one detachment to attack the Pathan village of Derryabad and the Mehwattee villages of Syderbad and Russelpore, he led the main

* Report of Mr. Fendall Thompson.

† The following is the Moulavee's account of the evacuation. "Some evil-minded men," he said, "who had sided with 'the accursed ones,' urged that for a time the Fort would be a safe retreat, and that if they would remain in it a few days longer, they (the evil-minded Natives) would contrive to spread abroad in the city fearful reports that the English were preparing the Artillery of the Fort to destroy the city, and that before dawn they would begin bombarding

it with shot and shell. To show the sincerity of their advice, these men, with their followers, set off, giving out to all that they had left their houses and property to God's protection, and were going to save themselves by flight. On hearing this fearful report, the people, notwithstanding my repeated injunctions, commenced a precipitate flight, with their families and goods."—*Perwannah addressed by the Moulavee Lyakut Ali, apparently to the King of Delhi.*—*Supplement to Allahabad Official Narrative.*



1857.
June 18.

body into the city, which he found deserted, and afterwards halted them in the now-desolated cantonment on the old parade-ground of the Sixth. The fighting was now over. The work had been done. The English were masters, not merely of the Fort, but of the recovered city, and the European station from which they had been driven scarcely two weeks before. And now there lay before them the great question—the most difficult, perhaps, which soldiers and statesmen ever have the responsibility of solving—whether, after such convulsions as have been illustrated in these pages, true righteousness and true wisdom consisted in extending the hand of mercy and aiming at conciliation, or in dealing out a stern and terrible retribution. Our soldiers and statesmen in June, 1857, at Allahabad, solved the question in practice by adopting the latter course.

Retribution.

Over the whole history of the Sepoy War—over the whole length and breadth of the country which witnessed its manifold horrors—there is no darker cloud than that which gathered over Allahabad in this terrible summer. It is an early chapter of the chronicle of the great conflict of races which I am now writing; and though foul crimes had even then been committed by our enemies, they were light in comparison with what were to come, and the retribution also was light.* Perhaps, however, the English-

* It is to be observed, that at this time an impression was abroad that acts of barbarity had been committed, which were afterwards doubted, if not wholly disproved. I find the following in Neill's Journal, under date June 17, MS.: "A Sowar of Mr. Court's, named Syed Esau

Ally, brought in for having joined the Moulavee and insurgents. Three witnesses saw him. He had served about twenty years. Direct his immediate execution by hanging. This is the sixth unfortunate wretch I have ordered for immediate death, a duty I never contemplated having



man had at this time a keener sense than afterwards possessed him of the humiliation which had been put upon his conquering race. Much of the anguish was in the novelty of the thing. The sting, though it struck deeper, was afterwards less severely felt, because the flesh had become indurated, and the nerves were more tensely strung. So it happened that whilst the first bitterness of our degradation—the degradation of fearing those whom we had taught to fear us—was still fresh upon our people, there came a sudden accession of stout English hearts and strong English hands, ready at once to punish and to awe. Martial Law had been proclaimed; those terrible Acts passed by the Legislative Council in May and June were in full operation; and soldiers and civilians alike were holding Bloody Assize, or slaying Natives without any assize at all, regardless of sex or age. Afterwards, the thirst for blood grew stronger still. It is on the records of our British Parliament, in papers sent home by the Governor-General of India in Council, that “the aged, women, and children, are sacrificed,

to perform. God grant I may have acted with justice. I know I have with severity, but under all the circumstances I trust for forgiveness. I have done all for the good of my country, to re-establish its prestige and power, and to put down this most barbarous, inhuman insurrection. The instances of refined cruelty, treachery, and the most brutal barbarity, are too numerous. One poor lady, Mrs. Macdonald, at Meerut, near her confinement, is brutally treated; has her nose, ears, hands, and breasts cut off, and at last has the child cut out of her. Mrs. Chambers, a beautiful young girl, only just come out married from home, at the same place, has her throat cut by a butcher. Miss Jen-

nings and her father, a clergyman at Delhi, are both brutally murdered in the palace before the king, she, poor creature, subjected to the most unheard-of indignities and torture beforehand.” I have already stated that Miss Jennings was murdered, not in the presence of the king, and that she was not outraged (*ante*, page 80). Mrs. Chambers was murdered, as is stated, by a butcher, and her murderer was hung (*ante*, page 69). I can find no evidence of the mutilations said to have been inflicted on Mrs. Macdonald. I have quoted this passage from Neill's Journal mainly to show that he had a strong religious sense of his responsibility, and that his executions were not as numerous as has been asserted.



as well as those guilty of rebellion.* They were not deliberately hanged, but burnt to death in their villages—perhaps now and then accidentally shot. Englishmen did not hesitate to boast, or to record their boastings in writing, that they had “spared no one,” and that “peppering away at niggers” was very pleasant pastime, “enjoyed amazingly.”† And it has been stated, in a book patronised by high official authorities, that “for three months eight dead-carts daily went their rounds from sunrise to sunset to take down the corpses which hung at the cross-roads and market-places,” and that “six thousand beings” had been thus “summarily disposed of and launched into eternity.”‡

I merely state these things. There are some questions so stupendous that human weakness may well leave it to the Almighty Wisdom to decide them. There is a dreadful story to be told in another chapter. God only knows whether what has been told in this contributed to the results to be presently recorded. But there is one great lesson to be learnt from the tragedies of Benares and Allahabad. It is the great lesson of Universal Toleration. An Englishman is almost suffocated with indignation when he reads that Mrs. Chambers or Miss Jennings was hacked to death by a dusky ruffian; but in Native histories, or, history being wanting, in Native legends and traditions, it may be recorded against our people, that mothers and wives and children, with less familiar names, fell miserable victims to the first swoop of English

* Papers presented to Parliament, February 4, 1858, moved for by Mr. Vernon Smith, formerly President of the Board of Control, and signed H. D. Seynour.

† Ibid.

‡ “Travels of a Hindoo” (Bholo-

nauth Chunder), edited by Mr. Talboys Wheeler. See note in the Appendix. I believe the statement in the text to be an exaggeration, but such exaggerations are very significant.



vengeance; and these stories may have as deep a pathos as any that rend our own hearts. It may be, too, that the plea of provocation, which invests the most sanguinary acts of the white man in this deadly struggle with the attributes of righteous retribution, is not wholly to be rejected when urged in extenuation of the worst deeds of those who have never known Christian teaching.

1857.

June 18—30.

Whilst Neill was thus re-establishing British authority at Allahabad, he was depressed by the thought of the danger surrounding his countrymen at Cawnpore and Lucknow, and eager to equip a force with the utmost possible despatch for the relief of those important posts. Men were available for the purpose, but means were wanting. The scarcity of provisions suitable to the English soldier, concerning which Mr. Tucker had written to Lord Canning, and which the Governor-General was taking prompt measures to rectify, was one great impediment to the desired movement. There was, too, a want of carriage. Large numbers of Commissariat bullocks had been collected for the service of the Army, but, on the first burst of the rebellion, the insurgents had swept them away, and of all the losses we sustained this was, perhaps, the most grievous. Then, too, there was a want of tents. There was a want of well nigh everything required by British troops in the worst part of the Indian summer, when the intolerable heat might any day be followed by deluging rains, which would quickly turn the baked earth into a great morass.

Preparations
for an
advance.

It was no fault of the Commissariat at this time that the arrangements progressed so slowly. Captain



1857. Davidson, who was at the head of the department,
June 18—30. did all that could be done to collect supplies and carriage; but the convulsions of the preceding fortnight had dispersed the people upon whom he would have relied for aid, and well nigh destroyed the resources of the place. Those who would have come forward as contractors at such a time, had fled in dismay—some from the violence of the insurgents, and some, in ignorant terror, from the anticipated retribution of the English—and many had returned to find themselves ruined. Property was destroyed. Industry was paralysed. The great incubus of fear pressed universally upon the trading classes. Whether more might have been done, at the commencement of the outbreak, to save the supplies then in hand—both the property of the Government and of private individuals—was not now the question. Davidson had to deal with things as they were, and it was not his fault that in the last week of June they did not wear a different complexion. Eager as Neill was to push forwards, he could not discern in this delayed departmental action any just ground of complaint. It was clear to him that the evil lay in the circumstances of his position, not in the incapacity of his agents.*

* It is right that Neill's opinion on this subject should be stated in his own words. Great blame was cast on the Commissariat by contemporary journalists, especially by the editor of the *Friend of India*, who published an article with the stinging title, "How Cawnpore was lost." Upon this Neill very generously wrote to Captain Davidson, saying: "The editor has certainly made a mistake in stating that your stores were outside. I understood that all we had was inside the Fort; and when I joined, and until the insurgents were cleared out of the place,

the Commissariat were confined to the Fort entirely. The steamer Godowns had been gutted, the bazaar up to the walls of the Fort plundered, in the occupation of the enemy, your contractors driven away, and their property either plundered or not available for the service for some days after these insurgents had been driven away. It was no fault whatever of the Commissariat that it should have been reduced to the condition yours was, from being cut off from outside, and the dispersion of your people; but you had done all you could before the outbreak in



And soon a greater evil befel him; for whilst he was waiting for means to equip the relieving force, Cholera swept down upon his troops and struck them with terrific suddenness. The intense heat of the weather, the constant exposure, the want of wholesome food, and the abundance of stimulating liquors, combined to facilitate its pestilential approaches. On the 23rd of June the services of seventy men had been lost to the British Commander. "We buried twenty, three nights ago, at one funeral," wrote an officer of the Fusiliers, "and the shrieks of the dying were something awful. Two poor ladies who were living over the hospital died, I believe from fright." Then other very grievous wants afflicted our people. Whilst in this miserable condition, it was discovered that nearly everything that could diminish the miseries of the sick who were to be left behind, or enable the convalescent to move forward, was wanting to the British Commander. The reign of terror had done its sure work. Camp-followers of all kinds were "almost unprocurable." Whilst our invalids lay gasping in the stifling atmosphere of the improvised hospital, there were few or none to pull the punkah-ropes or to water the tatties. There were few dhoolies, and, as workmen were not to be obtained, none could be made; and if they had been made, there would have been no bearers to carry

1857.

June 18—30.

The outbreak
of Cholera.

storing inside the Fort sufficient to make us independent for some time, had the insurgents kept hold of the city. In consequence of your being cut off from most of your people and resources outside, you were, in my opinion, at the time I arrived, disorganised, in so far as unable to equip a force or detachment to move. The exertions of yourself and officers, from my arrival until my departure from Allahabad, could not have been

surpassed, and it surprised me you were so soon able to regain possession of the resources of the place, and enable me to move Renaud's detachment on the 30th." This was written on the 22nd of August. It may be added, that, two months before, Neill had written in his journal that great efforts were made to get in supplies, and he had added, "Captain Davidson seems to be a most energetic man."—*MS. Corr.*



1857. them.* For everywhere the terror-stricken Natives stood aloof from the chastising Englishmen. It was as though we had dried up the wells and destroyed the crops, from which we were to obtain our sustenance. Without the aid of the Natives we could do nothing; and yet we were doing our best to drive them far beyond the glimmer of our tents.

Renaud's
advance.

And so the last day of June found Neill still at Allahabad. Not a single European soldier had been sent to succour Cawnpore. But on the afternoon of that day a detachment was to start under Major Renaud of the Madras Fusiliers. It consisted of four hundred European soldiers, three hundred Sikhs, one hundred troopers of Irregular Cavalry, and two guns. Renaud, a fine soldier, with his heart in his work, had received written instructions from Neill as to his course of action; and he had become the not unwilling recipient of orders to inflict a terrible retribution upon all suspected of guilty complicity in the foul designs of the enemy. But indiscriminate slaughter was no part of the commission. "Attack and destroy," wrote Neill, "all places en route close to the road occupied by the enemy, but touch no others; encourage the inhabitants to return, and instil confidence into all of the restoration of British authority." Certain guilty villages were marked out for destruction, and all the men inhabiting them were to be slaughtered. All Sepoys of mutinous regiments not giving a good account of themselves were to be hanged. The town of Futtehpoore, which had re-

* Colonel Neill reported that "followers of all kinds are almost unprocureable; there are but few punkahs and no tatties; the men have, therefore, not the proper advantages of barrack accommodation for this hot season." It was dis-

covered, too, that "there were but sixteen dhoolies available (although a considerable number of these was a primary requisite for the projected expedition), and all materials for making others were wanting, as well as workmen."

1857.
June 30.

volted, was to be attacked, and the Pathan quarters destroyed, with all their inhabitants. "All heads of insurgents, particularly at Futtehpore, to be hanged. If the Deputy-Collector is taken, hang him, and have his head cut off and stuck up on one of the principal (Mahomedan) buildings of the town."* And whilst Renaud's column, with these terrible instructions, was to advance along the straight road to Cawnpore, Captain Spurgin, with another detachment, was to take a steamer up the Ganges to the same point, to co-operate with Renaud on his march, to anchor as near as possible to Wheeler's entrenchments, and to place the vessel at Sir Hugh's disposal for the rescue of the women and children, the sick and the wounded, of his distressed garrison.

* The significance of these instructions will be made more apparent in a future chapter, wherein the story of Futtehpore will be told.

** It should have been observed, at page 259, with reference to the statement that "those terrible Acts passed by the Legislative Council in May and July were in full operation," that, in addition to the Act of May 30 (already recited), another was passed on June 6, extending the powers given in the former: "By Act No. XIV. of 1857, passed on the 6th of June, provision was made for the punishment of persons convicted of exciting mutiny or sedition in the army, the offender was rendered liable to the punishment of death and the forfeiture of all his property; and persons guilty of harbouring such offenders were made liable to heavy punishment. Power was also given to general courts-martial to try all persons, whether amenable to the Articles of War or not, charged with any offence punishable by this or the preceding Act; and the Supreme and Local executive governments were authorised to issue commissions in any district, for the trial by single commissioners, without the assistance of law officers or assessors, and with absolute and final power of judgment and execution, of any crime against the State, or any 'heinous offence' whatever; the term 'heinous offence' being declared to include every crime attended with great personal violence, or committed with the intention of forwarding the designs of those who are waging war against the State."—*Despatch of Government of India to Court of Directors, December 11, 1857.*



CHAPTER II.

ARRIVAL OF HAVELOCK AT ALLAHABAD—MEETING WITH NEILL—ADVANCE OF RENAUD—HAVELOCK'S BRIGADE—CAWNPORE—THE CITY—THE CANTONMENT—SIR HUGH WHEELER—DANGERS OF HIS POSITION—THE ENTRENCHMENTS—REVOLT OF THE NATIVE REGIMENTS—DOONDOO PUNT, "NANA SAHIB"—THE SIEGE—THE CAPITULATION—MASSACRE AT THE GHAUT—ESCAPE OF A SOLITARY BOAT—ITS ADVENTURES ON THE RIVER—HEROIC DEEDS OF THOMSON AND DELAFOSSE.

1857.
June.

ON that 30th of June—a day rendered memorable in the history of the revolt by a great event to be hereafter narrated—a new actor appeared on the scene at Allahabad. On that morning a soldier of high rank and high reputation arrived from Calcutta. His arrival would have been welcomed by all men, for good soldiers were sorely needed, but there was one adverse circumstance, which detracted from the general delight. The officer who had come up by dawkh, with a special commission from Government to take command of the troops advancing to the relief of Cawnpore and Lucknow, thereby, in virtue of seniority, superseded Colonel Neill, in whom all men had a steadfast faith. Three days before the arrival of the officer who was to supersede him, he had written to the Governor-General, saying, "We are getting on well here, laying in grain and collecting carriage for Brigadier Havelock's Brigade." There



277

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might seem to be some taint of bitterness in these words. But Neill did not slacken in his exertions because the brigade, which he had hoped himself to command, was to be commanded by another. He had learnt some days before that it would not devolve upon him to rescue Sir Hugh Wheeler and his comrades, if already destruction had not descended upon them; but he had pushed forward his preparations for the advance with the utmost possible despatch, as though there had been no one coming, after he had borne so long the burden and heat of the day, to gather up the fruits of his toil, and to snatch from him the glory which he coveted. But recognising the chances of the service, to which every soldier must submit, he neither complained nor repined, but waited for his own time, feeling sure that it would come.

He was no common man who had now arrived to Havelock, command the brigade. Colonel Henry Havelock was a veteran officer of the Queen's Army; but during his forty years of service he had done as much good Indian work, in camp and cantonment, as if he had been attached to one of the regiments of the Company in the old days, when officers did not live on furlough. He had fought in Burmah and in Afghanistan, and was familiar with nearly every great military station lying between those two extreme points. He had tested the temper of Mahratta armies in Central India, and of the old Sikh battalions in the zenith of their warlike pride. He was every inch a soldier. Military glory was the passion of his life. But he was a man of the middle classes, without powerful interest or wealthy connexions, having only his own merit to recommend him; and he had



1857.

June.

risen slowly from subaltern to captain, from captain to field-officer, and now, at the age of sixty-two, he had never held an independent command; he had never been permitted to realise that great dream of his youth, that great ambition of his manhood—to head an army in the battle-field. For nearly half a century he had been sedulously studying his profession, reading every military memoir that he could obtain, English or Continental, and turning his matured knowledge to account by contributing from the wealth of his own personal experiences to the military history of his country. In a thorough, artistic knowledge of the principles of European warfare, no soldier in the country surpassed him. There was no disinclination anywhere to acknowledge this; but some thought that he was a theorist and a pedant, and doubted whether all his book-learning would profit him much amidst the stern realities of active service.

This mistrust was, perhaps, in some measure engendered by the fact that Henry Havelock was what in the light language of the camp was called a "saint." A man of strong religious convictions, he had married a daughter of the great Baptist Apostle, Dr. Marshman of Serampore. This alliance, which was one of unmingled happiness to him, was followed by his public acceptance of the tenets and formularies of the great and enlightened sect of Protestant Christianity in which his wife had been nurtured and reared. There was laughter and ridicule from the profane, but, perhaps, little surprise anywhere; for Havelock had ever been a God-fearing, self-denying man; somewhat rigid and austere; and having only Christian people to deal with, he had not hesitated to teach them to be good men as well as good soldiers. Even



1857.

June.

in his first campaign, thirty years before the period to which this History relates, the company which he commanded was known as "Havelock's saints"—men who were never drunk and always ready for service. But the Christian zeal of Henry Havelock never overlaid his martial instincts. He was thoroughly persuaded in his own mind that war was righteous and carnage beautiful. And ever as years went on, and his hair grew white, and his features sharpened, and his small spare figure lost the elasticity, though never the erectness of his prime, he cherished the same strong desire to command an army in the field. He has often been likened to one of the Puritan warriors of the Great Rebellion, and it has been said that "a more simple-minded, upright, God-fearing soldier was not among Cromwell's Ironsides."*

He was Adjutant-General of Queen's troops in India, when, in the cold weather of 1856-57, he was selected by Sir James Outram to command a division of the Army then embarking for Persia; and, with the permission of the Commander-in-Chief, he proceeded to Bombay to join the force with the rank of Brigadier-General. Small opportunity of gaining distinction was permitted to him, for the war speedily collapsed, and the sword was returned to the scabbard. On the 5th of April, when Havelock was mustering his division for church service, Outram announced to him that a treaty of peace had been signed. Of all the bountiful illustrations of God's providence working in our behalf, which that eventful year witnessed, this was perhaps the most signal. It was a merciful deliverance beyond the power of words fully to express. Havelock did not then know its full significance; but in a little while he acknow-

* *Westminster Review*, quoted by Mr. Montgomery Martin.



1857.
June.

ledged with thanksgiving the abundant goodness of God in thus setting free so many European regiments. Quitting Mohamrah on the 15th of May, he was at Bombay on the 29th. It had been his first thought to rejoin the Head-Quarters of the Army by a landward march, but, after consulting Lord Elphinstone and his Military Secretary, it appeared to him that the journey was not practicable; so he took ship for Galle, hoping there to catch a steamer for Calcutta. Off Caltura, in Ceylon, the vessel went aground at night, and was in infinite danger of going to pieces before assistance could come from shore. Mercifully delivered from the waves, he made his way to Galle, found a steamer there, which had been despatched for European troops, and embarked for Madras. There he found that Sir Patrick Grant, the Commander-in-Chief of that Presidency, had been summoned to Calcutta, and was waiting for the *Fire Queen* to convey him to the Hooghly.

Sir Patrick
Grant.

It was of no small importance that Lord Canning should receive the advice and assistance of an experienced officer of the Bengal Army, acquainted with the character and the temper of the Native soldiery and versed in all military details. Sir Patrick Grant had been Adjutant-General of the Army of the chief Presidency; he had seen hard service in the field; and he was held in esteem both as a good soldier and as a ripe military administrator. When, therefore, tidings of General Anson's death reached Lord Canning,* he placed himself at once in commu-

* This was on the 3rd of June. The first intelligence came from Sir John Lawrence at Rawul Pindie. Writing to England on the following day, Lord Canning said: "It comes upon me as a sad and dispiriting

blow in the midst of present troubles. But this is not a time to be depressed by any calamity, when every effort must be made to keep up the hearts of those around us. I assure you that they need it, though I am glad

1857.
June.

nication with Grant. Having previously telegraphed to Madras, on the 6th of June the Governor-General wrote to him, saying, "My first impulse was to send for you to fill the place of acting Commander-in-Chief, and every day's deliberate consideration has confirmed it. I am satisfied that there is no man who can so well serve the State at this crisis as yourself, and I earnestly beg you to come to Calcutta as soon as you can. Should this not reach you in time to allow of your coming by the next packet, perhaps a sailing vessel could be taken up, by which time would be saved. But you will judge of this. I would have sent a steamer for you two days ago, but I have none here but the *Assaye*, and she must go to Rangoon for the Twenty-ninth as soon as she is coaled. The storm has not begun to clear yet, nor will it till Delhi falls." So Grant and Havelock, embarking together, steamed up the Bay to Calcutta, and arrived there on the 17th of June. It was a source of great personal happiness to the latter that he was accompanied by his son, then a subaltern of the Tenth Foot, in whom already were discernible all the instincts and capacities which combine to make a good soldier.

For a man eager for military service on an extended field of action, no time could be more propitious. Welcome, indeed, to Lord Canning was the advent of so tried and capable a soldier as Havelock; and Patrick Grant, who well knew his worth, was forward to recommend him for immediate employment. News had come that Benares had been saved; but the fate of Allahabad was still doubtful, and

to say that the panic which had seized the Calcutta world when the last mail left is, in a measure, suppressed. . . . I have telegraphed to Sir Patrick Grant to come to Calcutta immediately to assume the office of acting Commander-in-Chief."—*MS. Correspondence.*



1857.
June.

Cawnpore and Lucknow were girt around by deadly peril. It was the work of Government at this time, not only to push forward every available European soldier, but to take steps to turn those reinforcements to the best account by wise and skilful organisation. Havelock had already mapped out a plan of operations, the formation of a movable column, acting upwards from the Lower Provinces, being a part of it; and this column he was commissioned to command, with the rank of Brigadier-General. He was directed, "after quelling all disturbances at Allahabad, not to lose a moment in supporting Sir Henry Lawrence at Lucknow and Sir Hugh Wheeler at Cawnpore," and to "take prompt measures for dispersing and utterly destroying all mutineers and insurgents." The sovereign importance of swift action was earnestly impressed upon him, and it was added that the Commander-in-Chief, having "entire confidence in his well-known and often-proved high ability, vigour, and judgment," refrained from giving more definite instructions, and left him to shape his movements according to the circumstances that might develop themselves.*

The ambitious hopes of a life were now on the point of absolute fulfilment. He had an independent command; no one to control his movements in the field; no one to hamper his individual judgment. But with all his self-reliance, he rested, in his human weakness, more on the mighty arm of the God of Battles. "May God," he said, "give me wisdom to fulfil the expectations of Government, and to restore tranquillity in the disturbed districts." There were some circumstances against him. It was the worst season of the year for military operations. The alter-

* Marshman's Life of Havelock.

1857.
June.

nations of scorching heat and drenching rain, which are the atmospherical necessities of an Indian July, were trying in the extreme to the European soldier. His force was to consist of four regiments of Infantry, with Cavalry and Artillery. Two of these regiments, the Sixty-fourth and the Eighty-seventh Highlanders, had belonged to his old Persian division; and this was a source of satisfaction to him. But he was sorely distressed when he thought of the want of horse, the want of guns, and the want of gunners, and the certain scarcity of carriage which would perplex him at Allahabad, where his force was to be formed, owing to the heavy loss of Commissariat cattle which had been sustained by us during the disorders of that place. Still, full of heart and hope, he took his leave of the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief, and turned his back on Calcutta, proceeding upwards by dawk, on the 25th of June.

And now, on the morning of the last day of the month, he was breakfasting with Neill at Allahabad. Much had these two fine soldiers to say to each other. Neill had to report what had been recently done at Allahabad. His instructions to Renaud and Spurgin were brought under review, and were cordially approved by Havelock. Nothing could have been better than the arrangements which had been made for the despatch of this vanguard of the relieving army, or more carefully considered than all the instructions which had been issued.* It was agreed

Havelock and
Neill.

* These instructions, the substance of which is given in the preceding chapters (and which were published verbatim in the Memoir of General Neill, in the "Lives of Indian Officers"), were highly commended by Sir Patrick Grant, who wrote: "Your instructions to Renaud and Spurgin are admirable, and provide for every possible present



1857.
June.

Advance of
Renaud's
Column.

that Renaud should advance that evening, but that the steamer which was to carry Spurgin and his detachment should not steam out at once, as its progress would be more rapid than that of the marching column, whose advance it was intended to cover.

So Renaud, leading the van of the relieving force, that after long delay was sent on to save our imperilled people at Cawnpore, pressed on, proud of his commission, and eager to do the bidding of his chief. It was a grand movement in advance—but, like many of our grand movements, the heart-breaking words "Too Late" were written in characters of darkest night across it. On they marched for three days, leaving everywhere behind them as they went traces of the retributory power of the English in desolated villages and corpses dangling from the branches of trees.* But on the 2nd or 3rd of July,† a Native spy, sent by Sir Henry Lawrence from Lucknow,

circumstances as well as all eventualities, and by them, and them only, Renaud should have been guided. I hope you were in time to prevent the withdrawing Spurgin's detachment from the steamer, and that the vessel has proceeded up the river according to your original intention. Sending her was an excellent measure, and I anticipate most favourable results from it, and she will be of incalculable value in collecting boats and assisting in making the passage of the river after the work to be done at Cawnpore is finished."

—*MS. Correspondence.*

* I should be untrue to history if I did not record my belief that these retributory measures were distinguished by undue severity. William Russell, among whose many high qualities as a public writer truthfulness is conspicuous, records the following in his "Diary in India": "In the course of a conversation to-day, an officer, who was attached to Re-

naud's column when it moved out in advance of Havelock's force, told me that the executions of Natives were indiscriminate to the last degree. . . In two days forty-two men were hanged on the roadside, and a batch of twelve men were executed because their faces were 'turned the wrong way' when they were met on the march. All the villages in his front were burnt when he halted. These 'severities' could not have been justified by the Cawnpore massacre, because they took place before that diabolical act. The officer in question remonstrated with Renaud, on the ground that, if he persisted in this course, he would empty the villages, and render it impossible to supply the army with provisions." This is confirmed by the account of the signs of retribution apparent to those who followed in the wake of Renaud's march.

† On the 3rd, Lieut. Chalmers rode into Allahabad with the news.

1857.
July 4.

came into Renaud's camp, and announced that nothing could now be done for the relief of Cawnpore. Wheeler had capitulated, and all his people had been mercilessly destroyed.

This miserable intelligence was received with different emotions by Neill and Havelock. The former was long unwilling to believe that Cawnpore had fallen. He looked upon the story as an invention of the enemy intended to arrest the forward movement of the Force which the English were equipping for its relief. His wish was father to the thought; for, although he could not reproach himself for the delay that had occurred in the despatch of reinforcements to Wheeler's help—delays, which had the full sanction of the highest military authority in the country*—he could not, without reluctance, accept the fact that those delays had shattered all his hopes of succouring our distressed people, and had turned the relieving force into an army of retribution. But Havelock had full faith in the disastrous story. Two spies came into Allahabad. They spoke of what they had seen. Examined separately, they recited the same details; there were no contradictions or discrepancies in their evidence. They amply confirmed the reports which had reached Renaud's Camp, and had been sent in by him to Allahabad. Taking these

* Sir Patrick Grant had written to him more than once to urge him to be cautious, and not to strip Allahabad of troops or to send an insufficient force to Cawnpore. "You talk of an early advance towards Cawnpore, and I shall be right glad that you made a move in that direction; but I pray you to bear in mind that Allahabad is a point of the very greatest importance, the perfect security of which ought not to be neglected on any account." And

again, on the following day: "Far be it from me to hamper you in any way—your energy, decision, and activity are admirable; but I must warn you to be cautious not to commit too small a force of Europeans towards Cawnpore. If Delhi has fallen, as we believe it has, the fugitives from it will all make for Cawnpore and Lucknow, and there will certainly be an immense gathering of scum of all sorts at those points."—*MS. Correspondence.*



1857.
June.

different views of the actual position of affairs in advance, the two soldiers differed with respect to the course to be pursued. Havelock despatched orders to Renaud to stand fast. But Neill was eager for him to push forward, and telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief remonstrances against delay. Havelock argued that if Cawnpore had fallen, the troops that had besieged it would be released for action elsewhere, and would assuredly move down in immense numbers to intercept the advance of the column from Allahabad, and utterly to overwhelm it. But Neill, still thinking the report a *rusé* of the enemy, eagerly contended that all would be lost if we faltered at such a moment. Both were right in their several deductions. Time proved that Havelock was right as to the facts. Cawnpore had fallen, and the garrison had been destroyed almost to a man. How it happened—how for more than three weeks the little band of heroic Englishmen had stood their ground against the teeming multitude of the enemy, and how at last treachery had accomplished what could not be done by honest fighting, is now to be told. It is the saddest chapter in the whole history of the war—but, perhaps, the brightest. However feeble the recital, no Englishman can ever read it without the profoundest emotions both of pity and of pride.

The City of
Cawnpore.

The city or town of Cawnpore had nothing in or about it to make it famous in story. It had no venerable traditions, no ancient historical remains, no architectural attractions, to enable it to rank with Benares or Agra. Commercially it shone only as the city of the workers-in-leather. It was a great emporium for harness of all kinds, and for boots and

1857.
May.

shoes alike of the Asiatic and the European types of civilisation. If not better, these articles were cheaper than elsewhere, and few English officers passed through the place without supplying themselves with leather-ware. But life and motion were never wanting to the place, especially on the river-side, where many stirring signs of mercantile activity were ever to be seen. The broad waters of the Ganges, near the Great Ghaut, floated vessels of all sizes and all shapes, from the stately venetianed pinnacle to the rude open "dinghy," or wherry; and there clustering about the landing-steps, busy with or idly watching the debarkation of produce and goods of varied kinds, or waiting for the ferry-boats that crossed and re-crossed the Ganges, were to be seen a motley assemblage of people of different nations and different callings and different costumes; whilst a continual Babel of many voices rose from the excited crowd. In the streets of the town itself there was little to evoke remark. But, perhaps, among its sixty thousand inhabitants there may have been, owing to its contiguity to the borders of Oude, rather a greater strength than common of the "dangerous classes."

The station of Cawnpore was a large, straggling place, six or seven miles in extent. The British lines stretched along the southern bank of the Ganges, which about midway between the two extremities of the cantonment was spanned by a bridge of boats, leading from a point opposite the city to the Lucknow road on the other bank. There was nothing peculiar to Cawnpore in the fact that the private dwelling-houses and public offices of the English were scattered about in the most promiscuous manner, as though they had fallen from the skies or been projected by an earthquake. At the north-western extremity,

The Cantonment.

1857.

May.

lying between the road to Bithoor and the road to Delhi, were the principal houses of the civilians, the Treasury, the Gaol, and the Mission premises. These buildings lay beyond the lines of the military cantonment, in the extreme north-western corner of which was the Magazine. In the centre, between the city and the river, were the Church, the Assembly rooms, the Theatre, the Telegraph office, and other public edifices; whilst scattered about here and there, without any apparent system, were the principal military buildings, European and Native; the Native lines lying for the most part in the rear towards the south-eastern point of the cantonment. It was the essential condition of an English cantonment that it should straggle, and there was not one more straggling than Cawnpore. But, on the whole, it was not a disagreeable, nor, indeed, an inconvenient place, although the distances to be travelled were great and the heat of the summer months was excessive. Even to the dust, which, except during the rainy season, was prodigious, the residents became accustomed after a little while; or, if they did not, they reconciled themselves to it by thinking that the station had many great social advantages, that it was well provided with means of amusement upon the most approved principles of western civilisation, and that "Europe goods" of all kinds were almost as plentiful as in Calcutta.

For during a long series of years Cawnpore had been one of the most important military stations in India. There were few officers either of the Queen's or the Company's Army who, during the period of their Eastern service, had not, at some time or other, done duty in that vast cantonment. But the extension of our Empire towards the Afghan frontier had greatly



1857.

May.

diminished its importance as a military position; and although the subsequent annexation of Oude had done something to restore the faded pretensions of the Cawnpore division, the station itself only suffered further decline. It was still the Head Quarters of the Division, and the commanding General resided there with the Division Staff. But there were no longer European Regiments, or even an European Regiment, in its barracks. A great strength of Native soldiery garrisoned the place, with some sixty European Artillerymen, and afterwards sixty men of Her Majesty's Eighty-fourth Regiment and a few Madras Fusiliers, whom Tucker and Ponsonby had sent on from Benares.* The First, the Fifty-third, and the Fifty-sixth Sepoy Regiments of Infantry were there, and the Second Regiment of Sepoy Cavalry—in all, about three thousand men. And it was computed that the aggregate population of the Cantonment, with its vast assemblage of camp-followers, was nearly equal to that of the Town.

The Cawnpore Division was then commanded by General Sir Hugh Wheeler. He was an old and a distinguished officer of the Company's Army. He had seen much good service in Afghanistan and in the Punjab, and had won his spurs under Gough in the second Sikh War, in command of a division of his army. No man knew the Sepoys better, and no man was more respected by them. But he had known them a little too long. Looking back through more than half-a-century of good service, he could re-

Sir Hugh
Wheeler.

* *Ante*, p. 211. Mowbray Thomson says that "the European force consisted of the officers attached to the Sepoy regiments; sixty men of the Eighty-fourth Regiment; seventy-four men of the Thirty-second, who were invalided; sixty-five men of the

Madras Fusiliers, and fifty-nine men of the Company's Artillery—about three hundred combatants in all." Mr. Sherer, in his official narrative, computes the invalids of the Thirty-second at thirty.



1857.
May.

member how they fought in the good old days of Lake and Ouchterlony. There was nothing, indeed, to be said against him except that he bore the burden of more than seventy years. He bore it lightly, succumbing little to the pressure. Still it was there; and it was a necessity that he should have lost beneath it some measure at least of the vigour and energy of his prime. He was of short stature and of light weight; and to the last he was a good and active horseman. Accompanied by his daughters, he often went out in pursuit of a jackal, with a few imported hounds, which he kept for the purpose;* and there was still enough of the fire of the sportsman in the ashes of the veteran to suffer him, in the crisp air of the early morning, to enjoy the excitement of the chase.

But General Wheeler, though far advanced in years, had lost none of the clearness of his mental vision. He had not become blind to the failings of the Sepoy; he had not encased himself in that hard incredulity which forbade many to believe it possible that the Native soldier could ever be "untrue to his salt." Ever since the first symptoms of disquietude at Barrackpore and Berhampore had been manifested, he had watched narrowly the Sepoy regiments under his immediate command, looking for indications of a like temper among them.† And

* See Mowbray Thomson's narrative. The blood which ran in the veins of Wheeler's children was not that of the pure European race.

† "He had proved himself on so many occasions so fertile in resources, so ready to overcome difficulties, so prompt, active, and energetic, that he was thought the man of all others most competent to deal with an insurrection of this character—most fitted to unravel the web of mystery in which its origin was then

clouded, and to open the minds of the Sepoys to the insensate folly of their proceedings. And if this had been a mere military outbreak, as some have imagined; if the dispossessed princes and people of the land, farmers, villagers, ryots, had not made common cause with the Sepoys, there is every reason to believe that but a portion of the Force would have revolted."—*Red Pamphlet*.

1857.
May.

when news came of the revolt of the Native Regiments at Meerut and at Delhi, he saw clearly that it would demand the exercise of all his influence to prevent a similar explosion at Cawnpore. Then he lamented that hard necessity had stripped the station of European troops, in order that Oude and other newly-acquired territories might be defended. Annexation was doing its work. We had extended our Empire without increasing our Army; and so it happened that many of the most important stations between the new and the old capital of India were, saving a few English gunners, utterly without European troops. It would be difficult to conceive any position more dispiriting than Wheeler's in that fatal month of May. Lucknow had got the regiment, which might otherwise have been stationed at Cawnpore; and not only was the latter negatively, but positively, weakened by the arrangement, for all the human *impedimenta*, the women, the children, and the invalids of the Thirty-second Queen's, had been left at that place. And there were many besides these. Cawnpore abounded in excellent house accommodation, as well as in public buildings of all kinds; and not merely the wives and children of our civil and military functionaries, high and low, but the families also of European or Eurasian merchants and traders were gathered there in large numbers, and the grievous responsibility of protecting all these helpless ones then fell upon the aged General. His half-a-century of service had brought him no such work as this.

There was much then going on in the Lines of which, doubtless, the General knew nothing; but now and then, as the month of May advanced, unpleasant revelations were made to him through his officers. It did not appear that the Sepoys were disaffected or

State of the
Soldiery.



1857.

May.

even discontented, but, as in other places of which I have spoken, a great fear was settling down upon our Native soldiery. The most extravagant stories were current among them. The Hindoo and Mahomedan troops on a given day were to be assembled upon an undermined parade-ground, and the whole of them blown into the air. This and other fables equally monstrous were freely circulated among the Sepoys and readily believed. Nothing could be more alarming to one well acquainted with the character of the Native soldier than the free acceptance of stories of this kind, which showed that the old bonds of confidence were utterly broken; and Sir Hugh Wheeler, therefore, plainly saw that the danger was one which it would be most difficult to arrest, for nothing is so intractable as a panic. For some days after the news from Meerut and Delhi had reached Cawnpore, he had hope that the public mind might be reassured; but this soon passed away. It was plain to him, as time wore on, that the excitement rather increased than diminished. And the peril which stared him in the face was not merely the peril of mutinous soldiery; he was threatened also by an insurgent population, which might have overwhelmed him. And it seemed to him in this emergency that the best means of defending the lives of the Christian communities and maintaining, though only on a narrow space, the authority of the Christian Government, until succours should arrive to enable him to act on the offensive, was by throwing up some defensive works, within which the English might gather themselves together, and with the aid of their guns keep the enemy at a distance. Beyond this there was nothing that he could do; and it was not easy to determine how even this little was to be done.



1857.

May.

The Question
of Defence.

Of all the defensible points in the Cantonment, it was held, in the first instance, that the Magazine in the north-western corner of the military lines was that best adapted, in the exigency which had arisen, for a defensive position. It almost rested on the river, and it was surrounded by walls of substantial masonry. But instead of this, Sir Hugh Wheeler selected a spot about six miles lower down to the south-east, at some distance from the river, and not far from the Sepoys' huts. There were quarters of some kind for our people within two long hospital barracks (one wholly of masonry, the other with a thatched roof)—single-storied buildings with verandahs running round them, and with the usual out-houses attached. This spot he began to entrench, to fortify with artillery, and to provision with supplies of different kinds. Orders went forth to the Commissariat, and their efforts were supplemented by the managers of the regimental messes, who freely sent in their stores of beer and wine, hermetically-sealed dainties, and other creature-comforts that might serve to mitigate the evils of the brief detention which was believed to be the worst that could befall us. But the aggregate amount of food was lamentably ill-proportioned to the exigencies of the occasion. The Native contractors failed, as they often do fail at such times, and the stores which they sent in fell short of the figures in the paper-indents. All else was of the same kind—weak, scanty, and insufficient. As to the so-called fortifications, they were so paltry that an English subaltern could have ridden over them on a cast-horse from the Company's Stud. The earth-works were little more than four feet high, and were not even bullet-proof at the crest. The apertures for the artillery exposed both our guns and our



1857.

May.

gunners, whilst an enemy in adjacent buildings might find cover on all sides. Not, however, from ignorance or negligence did this insufficiency arise. The last weeks of the dry season were upon us, and the earth was so hard that it was difficult to dig it, and so friable when dug that the necessary cohesion was almost unattainable.

It has often been said that Wheeler ought to have chosen the Magazine as the centre of his lines of defence, and that all the subsequent evil arose from the absence of this obvious precaution. The considerations which suggested themselves to the military critics were not absent from his own mind. But there was one paramount thought which over-ruled them. The first step towards the occupation of the Magazine would have been the withdrawal of the Sepoy guard; and to have attempted this would certainly have given the signal for an immediate rising. With the small European force at his disposal it would have been manifestly unwise to provoke a collision. If the first blow were to be struck by our own people, it would, he believed, have immediate results of a far more disastrous character than those which were likely to arise from a spontaneous revolt against British authority, detached from those feelings of animosity and resentment which might have been engendered by a first offensive movement on our part. It must be admitted that the spot selected for our refuge was, indeed, but a miserable place for the protection of a large body of Christian people against the thousands and tens of thousands that might surge up to destroy them. But it was not believed, at that time, that Wheeler and his followers would be called upon to face more than the passing danger of a rising of the "budmashes" of



the city and the bazaars. All the information that reached him confirmed the belief that if the regiments should mutiny they would march off at once to Delhi. And he was in almost daily expectation of being recruited from below by reinforcements sent upwards from Calcutta. All that was needed, it then appeared to the General and to others, was a place of refuge, for a little space, during the confusion that would arise on the first outbreak of the military revolt, when, doubtless, there would be plunder and devastation. It was felt that the Sepoys had at that time no craving after European blood, and that their departure would enable Wheeler and his Europeans to march to Allahabad, taking all the Christian people with him.*

Whilst these precautions were being taken, the General sent an express to Lucknow, requesting Sir Henry Lawrence to lend him, for a while, a company or two of the Thirty-second Regiment, as he had reason to expect an immediate rising at Cawn-

1857.

May.

Help from
Lucknow.

* However sound these reasons may have been, it is not to be questioned that the selection was a great misfortune. The Magazine position is thus described by General Neill, after visiting the place, on his first arrival at Cawnpore: "It is a walled defence, walled enclosure, proof against musketry, covering an area of three acres—ample room in it for all the garrison—close, to the bank of the river; the houses close to it are all defensible, and they, with the Magazine, could have been held against any Native force, as having the large and [obscure] guns, with abundance of ammunition, neither the Nana nor the Natives would have come near them. They could have moved out and attacked them with the guns, and would have not only saved themselves but the city, to say nothing of a large arsenal and

many thousand stand of arms, artillery tents, harness, &c. &c. General Wheeler ought to have gone there at once; no one could have prevented him; they might have saved everything they had almost, if they had. There is something awful in the number of catastrophes, which could have been avoided by a common degree of caution."—*MS. Correspondence*. It was not, however, want of caution, but perhaps over-caution, that caused Wheeler not to resort to the Magazine buildings. The distance between the Lines and the Magazine is to be taken into account; and some military authorities may differ from Neill's opinion, that no one could have prevented Wheeler from betaking himself, with his women, children, and invalids, to the Magazine.



1857.
May.

pore.* Little could Lawrence spare a single man from the troublous capital of Oude; but those were days when Christian gentlemen rose to noble heights of generosity and self-sacrifice; and Henry Lawrence, who, at any time, would have divided his cloak with another, or snatched the helmet with the last drop of water from his own lips, was not one to hesitate when such a demand was made upon him. He sent all that he could send—eighty-four men of the Thirty-second, Queen's—packed closely in such wheeled carriages as could be mustered. He sent also two detachments of the Oude Horse to keep open the road between Cawnpore and Agra, and render such other assistance as Irregular Horse well commanded can render, if only they be true to their leaders. A party of Oude Artillery accompanied them with two field guns, under Lieutenant Ashe—a young officer of rare promise, which was soon to ripen into heroic performance.†

With these detachments went Captain Fletcher Hayes, Military Secretary to Sir Henry Lawrence—a man of great capacity and great courage; in the prime of his life and the height of his daring. He had graduated in one of our great English univer-

* It should be observed that Lucknow was within the Cawnpore Division of the Army, and therefore, in the normal state of affairs, Wheeler might have made any disposition of the troops under his command that seemed fit to him. But when the crisis arose, Sir Henry Lawrence had telegraphed to the Governor-General for "plenary military authority in Oude," and Lord Canning had gladly given him the powers he had sought (vol. i. page 616), writing to Wheeler at the

same time a kindly explanation of the circumstances, which had reconciled the General to the change.

† The number of Europeans sent by Sir Henry Lawrence to Cawnpore has been variously stated. His Military Secretary, in a letter to Mr. Edmonstone, sets it down at fifty men and two officers. The Cavalry detachments were sent on by Sir Hugh Wheeler, and the officers were murdered; but Ashe and the guns remained, or returned, to take good part in the defence.

Fletcher
Hayes.

1857.
May.

sities, and was an erudite scholar and an accomplished gentleman. He was now sent to Cawnpore to ascertain the real state of affairs there for the information of his Chief. So he mounted his horse and started with the Cavalry, giving up his carriage, in which he had at first intended to travel, to a party of European soldiers:—"For," he wrote, "as they represented three hundred rounds of balled ammunition ready at any moment for anybody, I thought that they were of far more importance than any number of military secretaries." All through the day, from dawn to some hours after sunset, they toiled on, suffering severely from the intense heat and the parching thirst. But they reached Cawnpore without disaster; and in a little while Hayes had taken in the situation and had flung himself into the work that lay before him, as if he had been one of the garrison himself.

And when English authority at Cawnpore appealed to Henry Lawrence for assistance, as though by some strange fatality it were doomed that aid should be sought, in the crisis which had arisen, from the two extremes of humanity, an appeal was made to our neighbour, the Rajah of Bithoor. The Nana Sahib.

Doondoo Punt, Nana Sahib, after the visit to Lucknow, recorded in my first volume,* had returned to his home at Bithoor. He had, doubtless, clearly discerned the feeling in the Oudh capital—nay, throughout the whole province. He knew well that there was a great excitement—it might be of danger, it might be of fear—alive among the Sepoys

* *Ante*, vol. i. pp. 575—6.



1857.
May.

all over Upper India. He felt that he hated the English, and that his time had come. But all that was passing in the mind of the disappointed Marhatta was as a sealed book to the English. Of course the whole story of the disappointment was on record. Had it not gone from Calcutta to London—from London back to Calcutta; and from Calcutta again to Cawnpore? And did it not cover many sheets of foolscap? Military men might know little of the story which has been told in this book,* and to civilians a rejected memorial was so common a thing, that even to the best-informed of them there could have appeared to be no earthly reason why Doondoo Punt should not accept his position quietly, submissively, resignedly, after the fashion of his kind, and be ever after loyal to the Government that had rejected his claims. So when danger threatened them, it appeared to the authorities at Cawnpore that assistance might be obtained from the Nana Sahib. For although Lord Dalhousie and the Company had refused to increase his store, he had abundance of money and all that money could purchase, including horses and elephants and a large body of retainers—almost, indeed, a little army of his own. He had been in friendly intercourse with our officers up to this very time, and no one doubted that as he had the power, so also he had the will to be of substantial use to us in the hour of our trouble. It was one of those strange revenges, with which the stream of Time is laden. The “arbiter of others’ fate” had suddenly become “a suppliant for his own;” and the representatives of the British Government were suing to one recently a suitor cast in our own high political courts. The madness of this was

* *Ante*, vol. i. pp. 98, *et seq.*



seen at Lucknow; but it was not seen at Cawnpore. So the alliance of the Nana Sahib was sought as an element of strength in our hour of trouble.*

1857.
May.

It was in this wise: To secure the safety of the Government treasure was necessarily at such a time one of the main objects of both the military and the civil authorities. If it could be lodged within the entrenchments it would be out of the grasp of the soldiery, who, as our officers well knew, on the first open manifestation of revolt, would assuredly make for the Treasury and gorge themselves with the spoil. But when there was mention made of an intention to remove the coin, the Sepoys, by whom it was guarded, were outwardly all loyalty and devotion, and declared that it was safe in their hands. The reason of this was manifest; and Wheeler, anxious above all things not to precipitate a collision, shrunk from insisting upon a measure which would in all probability have been violently resisted. To counteract any danger from this source, it was considered a good stroke of policy to avail ourselves of the assistance of a party of the armed followers of the Nana Sahib, who had been in frequent intercourse with Mr. Hillersdon, the Collector, and who had smilingly assured that officer of his sympathy and friendship. The Treasury stood at a little distance from the Bithoor road, some miles away from the military lines; and very soon some two hundred of the retainers of the Nana, with a couple of guns, were posted at Newab-gunj, which commanded both the Treasury and the Magazine.†

* Mr. Martin Gubbins states that the General was distinctly warned not to trust the Nana Sahib. "Sir H. Lawrence," he says, "concurred in my suspicions, and by his authority I addressed Sir Hugh Wheeler,

cautioning him against the Nana, and stating Sir Henry's belief that he was not to be depended upon."—*Mutinies in Oudh*, page 32.

† Some time afterwards, Tantia Topee gave the following account of



1857.
The Place of
Refuge.
May 22.

This was on the 22nd of May. On the preceding day the reinforcements from Lucknow had arrived; and about the same time, on the suggestion of the General, the women and children and non-combatants had betaken themselves to the place of refuge within the improvised entrenchments. There was then a scene of frightful confusion, which one, who had just arrived from Lucknow, thus graphically described. "The General," wrote Fletcher Hayes in a private letter to Secretary Edmonstone, "was delighted to hear of the arrival of the Europeans, and soon from all sides, I heard of reports of all sorts and kinds which people kept bringing to the General until nearly one A.M., on the 22nd, when we retired to rest. At six A.M. I went out to have a look at the various places, and since I have been in India never witnessed so frightful a scene of confusion, fright, and bad arrangement as the European barracks presented. Four guns were in position loaded, with European artillerymen in nightcaps and wide-awakes and side-arms on, hanging to the guns in groups—looking like melodramatic buccaneers. People of all kinds, of every colour, sect, and profession, were crowding into the barracks.

Mr. Hillersdon's negotiations with the Nana Sahib. I give it as the Native version of the transaction:—"In the month of May, 1857, the Collector of Cawnpore sent a note of the following purport to the Nana Sahib at Bithoor, viz. that he begged him (the Nana) to forward his wife and children to England. The Nana consented to do so, and four days afterwards the Collector wrote to him to bring his troops and guns with him from Bithoor to Cawnpore. I went with the Nana and about one hundred Sepoys and three hundred matchlock-men and two guns to the Collector's house at Cawnpore. The Collector was

then in the entrenchments, and not in his house. He sent us word to remain, and we stopped at his house during the night. The Collector came in the morning and told the Nana to occupy his own house, which was in Cawnpore. We accordingly did so. We remained there four days, and the gentleman said it was fortunate we had come to his aid, as the Sepoys had become disobedient; and that he would apply to the General in our behalf. He did so, and the General wrote to Agra, whence a reply came that arrangements would be made for the pay of our men."—*MS. Records.*



Whilst I was there, buggies, palki-gharrees, vehicles of all sorts, drove up and discharged cargoes of writers, tradesmen, and a miscellaneous mob of every complexion, from white to tawny—all in terror of the imaginary foe; ladies sitting down at the rough mess-tables in the barracks, women suckling infants, ayahs and children in all directions, and—officers too! In short, as I have written to Sir Henry, I saw quite enough to convince me that if any insurrection took or takes place, we shall have no one to thank but ourselves, because we have now shown to the Natives how very easily we can become frightened, and when frightened utterly helpless. During that day (the 22nd) the shops in all the bazaars were shut, four or five times, and all day the General was worried to death by people running up to report improbable stories, which in ten minutes more were contradicted by others still more monstrous. All yesterday (23rd) the same thing went on; and I wish that you could see the European barracks and the chapel close to it—and their occupants. I believe that if anything will keep the Sepoys quiet, it will be, next to Providence, the great respect which they all have for General Wheeler, and for him alone. He has all his doors and windows open all night, and has never thought of moving or of allowing his family to move. Brigadier Jack, Parker, the cantonment magistrate, and Wiggins, the Judge Advocate-General, are, I believe, the only people who sleep in their houses.”*

The chief source of immediate danger at this time was the temper of the Second Cavalry. The place in the Army List assigned to this regiment had, for some time, been a blank. It was the number of the regi-

1857.
May 22—23.

Temper of
the Second
Cavalry.

* MS. Correspondence.



1857.
May.

ment which had disgraced itself at Purwandurrah, and had been ignominiously disbanded; and it was not until 1850, that the number had been restored to the List of the Bengal Army.* That the troopers were ripe for revolt was certain, for already they were quietly making arrangements to send away their families and their property, and soon they had nothing in their huts but their drinking-vessels. They stood, as it were, with their loins girt about for action, and Wheeler had more than once credible information that they were about immediately to strike. It was believed that, differing from the infantry regiments at Cawnpore, these cavalry Sepoys included in their programme the murder of their officers. There were many Mahomedans in the corps, and Mahomedan feeling was then strong in the place. There had been great gatherings at the mosques, in which the Mussulman Sepoys had taken a forward part, for the full discussion of the crisis. And it was thought, as had before been thought, in other places, that the festival of the EED, on the 24th of May, would prove the appointed day for a great Mahomedan demonstration. But it passed over as quietly as any other day. There was the usual interchange of courtesies and compliments, as in quiet times, between the two races; and on one side, at least, there was much self-congratulation that the anniversary was well over.

Progress of
mistrust.

But all this time, as the arrangements were proceeding apace for the security of our place of refuge, the general feeling of mistrust was fixing itself in the hearts of the soldiery. The principle of "trusting

* Another regiment (the Eleventh Light Cavalry) had been raised in the place of the Second; and the officers of the latter had been transferred to it bodily. Only one trooper of the Second had been re-enlisted — the Havildar-Major, Bhowany Singh, of whom more hereafter. The Eleventh was renumbered the Second, for its gallantry at Mooltan.



all in all or not at all" was in those days the only one to be worked out in action with any prospect of success. There was strength in striking the first blow with a heavy mailed hand. There was strength also in perfect quietude and composure. But in any middle course there was weakness; and whether in doing or in suffering, "to be weak is to be miserable." When, therefore, Wheeler began to throw up defences which could not defend him, and to betray his mistrust of the Sepoys, without having it in his power effectually to arrest the danger, of which such action indicated the dread, there was nothing but misery before him. Indeed, when our people were seen wildly leaving their homes and seeking safety either within our so-called entrenchments or in some strongly-built edifices in the neighbourhood, and the Sepoys beheld the English artillerymen placing guns in position, the end was certain, and the beginning of the end had come. Some regarded the movement as an indication of fear; some looked upon it as a menace. All regarded it as a proof of mistrust. Confidence was at an end; there was a deadly breach between the officer and the soldier.

1857.
May.

But during that last week of May, whatever plots and perils might have been fermenting beneath the surface, outwardly everything was calm and reassuring. And the brave old General began to think that the worst was over, and that he would soon be able to assist Lawrence at Lucknow. On the 1st of June, he wrote to Lord Canning, saying, "I have this day sent eighty transport-train bullocks in relays at four stages for the purpose of bringing up Europeans from Allahabad; and in a few—a very few days, I shall consider Cawnpore safe—nay, that I may aid Lucknow, if need be." And he added, "I

May 24—31.

June 1.

1857.
June.

have left my house and am residing day and night in my tent, pitched within our entrenched position, and I purpose continuing to do so until tranquillity is restored. The heat is dreadful. I think that the fever has abated; but the excitement and distrust are such that every act, however simple or honestly intended, is open to misapprehension and misrepresentation. My difficulties have been as much from the necessity of making others act with circumspection and prudence as from any disaffection on the part of the troops. In their present state, a single injudicious step might set the whole in a blaze. It is my good fortune in the present crisis, that I am well known to the whole Native Army as one who, although strict, has ever been just and considerate to them to the best of his ability, and that in a service of fifty-two years I have ever respected their rights and their prejudices. Pardon, my Lord, this apparent egotism. I state the fact solely as accounting for my success in preserving tranquillity at a place like Cawnpore. Indeed, the men themselves have said that my name amongst them had alone been the cause of their not following the example so excitingly set them."*

Help to
Lucknow.

And, indeed, this pleasurable anticipation of reciprocating Henry Lawrence's chivalrous generosity was not so much empty talk. Part of the detachment of the Eighty-Fourth, which had been sent from Benares,† was now passed on to Lucknow. And

* MS. Correspondence.

† See *ante*, page 289. They appear to have reached Cawnpore on the night of the 26th, or morning of the 27th of May. They were sent to Lucknow on the 3rd of June.—See Wheeler's telegram to Government. "Sir H. Lawrence having expressed

some uneasiness, I have just sent him by post-carriages, out of my small force, two officers and fifty men of Her Majesty's Eighty-fourth Foot. Conveyance for more not available. This leaves me weak, but I trust to holding my own until more Europeans arrive."



as they crossed the Bridge of Boats and set their faces towards the Oudh capital, there was inward laughter and self-congratulation under many a dusky skin at the thought of what the English were doing. It was hard to say, in that conjuncture, at what particular point European manhood was most needed, but it is certain that in that entrenched position at Cawnpore it was weary work for those who kept watch and ward, day and night, with loaded guns, behind the low mud walls we had raised for our defence.* And bitter was the grief, a few days later, that a single white soldier had been suffered to leave Cawnpore.

For when the month of June came in, the revolt of the Native Brigade was merely a question of time—a question of precedence. It was to be; but it was not quite settled how it was to be—how it was to begin. There was not that perfect accord between the regiments out of which simultaneous action could arise. Some were eager to strike at once; some counselled delay.† The Cavalry troopers, always the most excitable and impetuous, were ready for the affray before their more slowly-moving comrades of

1857.

June.

Working of
the plot.

* "Last night I went the rounds of our positions with the General. The battery is divided in half, and placed east and west, commanding the principal approaches; we came upon one half battery without any challenge or the least exhibition of any alarm on the part of the gunners. I walked up and put my hand on one of the guns, and could have spiked all three with the greatest ease. . . . Some little time afterwards the officer in charge was found asleep, and was immediately put under arrest. . . . Dempster, the Adjutant of the Artillery, was so worn out with watching at night and performing other duties, that, seeing he was so done up and could not look after both batteries, I said I would take one,

and accordingly remained in charge till daybreak."—*Fletcher Hayes to Henry Lawrence. May 26. MS.*

† "The chief obstacle to a rise and insurrection of the Sepoys is, that they are undecided as to who should commence it. They have been wrangling among themselves for some days. An attempt was made by a Native officer to make the Cavalry seize their arms and turn out. He made a trumpeter take his trumpet and commence with the signal, but the trumpet was seized and snatched away by another Native officer. Last night there was an alarm, and the gunners stood to their guns, but everything passed over quietly."—*The Same to the Same. May 26.*



1857.
June.

the Infantry. But everywhere in the Lines and in the Bazaars the plot was working. And the plotters were not only in the Lines and the Bazaars. Out at Newab-gunj, where the retainers of the Bithoor Rajah were posted, and where the Rajah himself had fixed his quarters for a little while to do the bidding of his friends the Feringhees, were the germs of a cruel conspiracy. To Doondoo Punt and to the ministers, Hindoo and Mahomedan, who surrounded him, there could be no more grateful tidings than those which came from the Sepoy's quarters; and as they looked at the Treasury, the Magazine, and the Gaol, which lay so temptingly at hand, it seemed to them that the work was easy. Some of these retainers were in communication with the men of the Second Cavalry; and it is stated that arrangements were soon made for an interview between one of the Cavalry soubah-

Teeka Singh.

dars, an active agent of sedition, and the Nana Sahib of Bithoor. It is not easy to extract from the mass of Native evidence—often second-hand reports derived from interested or prejudiced sources—the true history of all the secret meetings which have been described, and to feel in such a case the confidence which should never be absent from historical assertion.* But it is stated that during the first days of June there were frequent interviews between the

* The depositions taken down by Colonel Williams, Commissioner of Police, North-West Provinces, are very full, and they are of a highly interesting, and, in some respects, valuable character; but Colonel Williams himself admits that much must be received with caution, as being only hearsay evidence. Take, for example, the following from the evidence of Sheo Churren Das: "Three or four days before the troops broke out, Teeka Singh, Soubahdar of the

Second Cavalry, began to have interviews with the Nana, and said to him on one occasion, 'You have come to take charge of the Magazine and Treasury of the English. We all, Hindoos and Mahomedans, have united for our religions, and the whole Bengal Army have become one in purpose. What do you say to it?' The Nana replied, 'I also am at the disposal of the Army.' *I heard this from the Sowcars themselves.*"

1857.
June.

chiefs of the rebellious Sepoys and the inmates of the Bithoor Palace; and that it was known to the soldiery before they broke into rebellion that the Nana was with them, and that all his resources would be thrown into the scale on the side of the nascent rebellion.

June 4.
Outbreak of
the Sépoys.

On the night of the 4th of June, the Second Cavalry and the First Infantry Regiment were ready for immediate action. The troopers had got to horse and the foot-men were equipping themselves. As ever, the former were the first to strike.* It was after the wonted fashion. There was a firing of pistols, with perhaps no definite object; then a conflagration which lit up the sky and told our people in the entrenchments that the game of destruction had commenced; and then a mad nocturnal ride to Newab-gunj, scenting the treasure and the stores in the Magazine. The First Regiment soon followed them. In vain their colonel, calling them his "baba-
logue," his children, had implored them, in affectionate, parental tones, not to stain themselves by such wickedness. It was too late. The Sepoys did not wish to harm their officers, but they were bent on rebellion. They hurried after the Cavalry, setting their faces towards the north-west, where lay the Treasury, the Gaol, and the Magazine, with Delhi in the distance. Thither as they went they burnt, and

Colonel
Ewart.

* A casual circumstance, of no great importance in itself, seems just at this time to have accelerated the crisis. It is thus summarised by Colonel Williams, in his synopsis of the evidence collected by him: "Again the unfortunate incident of a cashiered officer named Cox firing on a patrol of the Second Cavalry on the night of the 2nd of June, and his acquittal after trial on the following day, on the plea of being uncon-

scious at the time from intoxication, caused much dissatisfaction, the mutinously-inclined Cavalry declaring openly that perhaps their fire-arms might be discharged by accident some day. The violent and insubordinate conduct of the troops, particularly of the Cavalry, though they still ostensibly took duty, caused many to take refuge in the entrenchments."



1857.
June 4.

plundered, and spread devastation along their line of march, but left the Christian people behind them as though not lusting for their blood.

Arrived in the neighbourhood of Newab-gunj, the Sepoys of the two regiments fraternised with the retainers of the Nana. The Treasury was sacked, the gates of the Gaol were thrown open and the prisoners released. The public offices were fired and the records burnt. The Magazine, with all its supplies of ammunition, and the priceless wealth of heavy artillery, fell into the hands of the mutineers.* The spoil was heaped upon elephants and on carts, which the troopers had brought from their Lines; and the one thought of the soldiery was a hurried march to the great imperial centre of the rebellion. But where were the two other regiments? The Sepoys at Newab-gunj had begun to doubt

* It is stated, and on very high authority, that Sir Hugh Wheeler and his Staff were ignorant of the contents of the Cawnpore Magazine. I find the following in a letter from General Neill, in which he gives the results of his inquiry into the "Story of Cawnpore." He had, at that time, been in communication with the only two surviving officers of the siege. "General Wheeler was then under the delusion that the Nana would assist him. All the mutineers went one march to Delhi. The Nana got them to return, and General Wheeler found himself surrounded, and guns firing upon him in every direction from our own Arsenal, of the existence of which guns General Wheeler and his staff were until then ignorant. It appears that a committee of officers, some time before, were sent down to examine the Arsenal, and to report what was in it. They came down in the usual easy-going style—only thought of tents and

other trifles—happened not to be shown the gun-sheds, and did not enter the Magazine; in fact, forgot all about it, and reported that there was nothing in the 'Magazine,' as it was styled." The authority of such a man as General Neill must, in all cases, be respected, but it is hardly credible that the contents of the Magazine were unknown to the Artillery officers at Cawnpore, especially to the Ordnance Commissariat Department. Moreover, it is to be observed that the supposed ignorance is not consistent with the undoubted anxiety manifested by Wheeler and his chief officers to blow up the Magazine at the commencement of the outbreak. Arrangements had been made for this, but the feat could not be accomplished. Colonel Williams says: "The Assistant-Commissary, Mr. Riley, had been directed to blow up the Magazine, but was unfortunately prevented by the Sepoys on guard there."



whether their comrades were coming to join them.* All through the hours of darkness and of dawn the Fifty-third and the Fifty-sixth gave no sign of comradeship. Their officers had spent the night with them in their Lines, and from two in the morning till after sunrise the regiments had been on parade, every officer with his own company. Then they were dismissed; the men took off their uniforms, and prepared for their morning meal. The English officers went to the entrenchments or to their own bungalows. Then the latent fire of mutiny began to spread from man to man, from company to company. Some emissaries from the Second Cavalry had come in to tempt them. Their share of the spoil might be lost by delay. It might have been that no presence, no influence of English officers could then have kept the regiments true to their allegiance. The experiment was not tried, but another was substituted for it. Wheeler's entrenched position commanded the parade-ground, and a long far-reaching gun was brought to bear upon the Sepoys' Lines. They broke at the third discharge of the British cannon, and made their way in wild confusion to Newab-gunj. They broke, but not all; some, still true to their old masters, followed them into the entrenchments, and were faithful to the end of their lives.

It was still the game of the Cawnpore mutineers to make their way straight to Delhi, to join the regiments already assembled there, and to serve the cause of the King. And they gladly recognised the Nana Sahib as their leader. They had money and munitions of war and carriage for the march, and

1857.

June 5.

The first
march to
Delhi.

* It seems that the Cavalry had the work of appropriation before the broken into the Treasury and begun Infantry arrived.



1857.

June 5.

they expected great things from the restored sovereignty of the Mogul. But Doondoo Punt, stimulated by those about him, and chiefly, it is thought, by the wily Mahomedan, Azimoolah, looked askance at the proposed centralisation of rebellion, and urged upon the Sepoy leaders that something better might be done. They had made one march to the imperial city, but halted at Kullianpore, whither the Nana had accompanied them. Then they began to listen to the voice of the charmer, and to waver in their resolution. The Bithoor people might be right. It might be better to march back to Cawnpore.*

Wise in his generation, the Nana Sahib saw clearly the danger of an eclipse. To march to Delhi would be to place himself in a subordinate position—perhaps to deprive him of all substantive authority under the baneful influence of Mahomedan jealousy. The troops might desert him. The Emperor might repudiate him. In the neighbourhood of Cawnpore he would be supreme master of the situation. He knew well the weakness of the English. He knew

* This is the received version of what took place between the Bithoor people and the Sepoys. It is not, however, given with any certainty of its correctness. Tantia Topee afterwards endeavoured to make it appear that the Nana had acted under compulsion. The following is his evidence:—"Two days afterwards, the three regiments of Infantry and the Second Light Cavalry surrounded us, and imprisoned the Nana and myself in the Treasury, and plundered the Magazine and Treasury of everything they contained, leaving nothing in either. Of the treasure, the Sepoys made over two lacs and eleven thousand rupees to the Nana, keeping their own sentries over it. The Nana was also under charge of these sentries, and the Sepoys which were

with us also joined the rebels. After this the whole army marched from that place, and the rebels took the Nana Sahib and myself and all our attendants along with them, and said, 'Come along to Delhi.' Having gone three coss from Cawnpore, the Nana said that as the day was far spent it was far better to halt there then, and to march on the following day. They agreed to this, and halted. In the morning the whole army told him (the Nana) to go with them towards Delhi. The Nana refused, and the army then said, 'Come with us to Cawnpore and fight there.' The Nana objected to this, but they would not attend to him. And so, taking him with them as a prisoner, they went towards Cawnpore, and fighting commenced there."

Designs of
the Nana
Sahib.

1857.
June 5.

well that at Lucknow the danger which beset us was such that no assistance could be looked for from that quarter, and that from none of the large towns on the Ganges and the Jumna—as Benares, Allahabad, and Agra—had Wheeler any prospect of immediate relief. With four disciplined Native regiments and all his Bithoor retainers at his back—with guns and great stores of ammunition and treasure in abundance, what might he not do? If the range of his own imagination did not take in at once the grand idea of the restoration of the Peishwahship, there were those at his elbow to suggest the prospect of such a consummation. He had been told by Azimollah that the power of the English in Europe was declining. He knew that we were weak in India—that vast breadths of country, over which Rebellion was running riot, lay stripped of European troops. Now, he felt, was the time to strike. The game was in his own hands. The ambition and the malice of the Mahratta might be gratified at one blow.

At Kullianpore, therefore, the Nana arrested the march of the mutineers to Delhi. It is not very clearly known what arguments and persuasions were used by him or his ministers to induce the mutinous regiments to turn back to Cawnpore. It is probable that, infirm of purpose, ductile, unstable, and wanting leaders with force of character to shape their plans, they were induced by promises of larger gain, to turn back to the place which they had quitted, and which lay, still with much wealth, at their mercy. Cawnpore had not been half gutted. And, perhaps, there were ties, of a better, or at least a tenderer kind, which lured some of the Sepoys, who were still men, back to their old haunts. In all such cases, it



1857.
June 5.

may be assumed that the mass of the soldiery huddle confusedly to their doom—objectless, rudderless, perplexed, and bewildered, not knowing what is to come. The blind impulse of the moment, perhaps a sudden contagion of fear, not the strength of a steadfast conviction, or a settled purpose, swept them along, like a flock of scared sheep on a dusty road.*

But there was no such want of purpose among those who swept the flock back to Cawnpore. There were teeming brains and strong wills and resolute activities among the people of the Bithoor Palace. It commonly happens that we know but little about the individual manhood which shapes events in the camps of our Native enemies. The chief actor is not always of the highest rank—he, in whose name the deeds, which make History, are done. And perhaps, we shall never know what foul promptings and instigations were the prologue of the great tragedy then about to be enacted. But from this time Doondoo Punt, Nana Sahib, stood forth in the eyes of men as our arch enemy; and with him were Balla Rao and Baba Bhut, his brothers; the Rao Sahib, his nephew; and Tantia Topee, who had been his play-fellow in former days, and had grown into his counsellor and his guide. And ever by his side, linked to him by bonds of pitiless hatred for the English, the astute Mahomedan, Azimoollah, the sometime table-servant of an English master, who had pleaded the Nana's cause in England and made love to English ladies. He had played his game so well that no one had suspected him. Only a few days before the regiments had broken into rebellion, he had been in friendly and familiar intercourse with English officers,

* The Mutiny of the Bengal Army is still described by Natives of India as the "Sheeps' Mutiny."



veiling his hatred under the suavity of his manners and the levity of his speech.

1857.

But as day dawned on Saturday, the 6th of June,* Wheeler was startled by the receipt of a letter from the Nana Sahib, intimating that he was about to attack the entrenchments. The supposed departure of the Sepoys to Delhi had inspired the General and his companions with new hopes. It would be easy for them, they thought, in a little while, to drop down to Allahabad. But this pleasant dream was now rudely broken. The rebellious soldiery were returning to Cawnpore, strengthened in numbers by the retainers of the Nana, and still more invigorated by the identification with the rebel cause of men of influence and energy, able to keep together the scattered atoms of revolt, and to organise a great movement against the English. The blow fell heavily upon the brave old General; on soldiers and civilians; on officers and men; heavily upon all who clung to them for protection. There was not an hour to be lost. Forth went the mandate for all the English to concentrate themselves within the entrenchments. The women and children and non-combatants were already there—and those on duty in the garrison; but many of the Sepoy officers had slept or watched in the Sepoys' lines, and had gone thence to their own bungalows; and now they were summoned without a moment's pause or respite to the earthworks, with no time to snatch a hasty mouthful of food, to collect a change

June 6.
The attack threatened.

* Captain Mowbray Thomson ("Story of Cawnpore") says that it was on Sunday the 7th, but Colonel Williams, who collated all the evidence on record, says it is proved that the mutineers returned to Cawnpore on the 6th. The Red Pamphlet gives the 6th as the date of the re-

turn of the troops to Cawnpore, and the 7th as the date of the receipt of the Nana's letter. This might explain the discrepancy; but Captain Thomson speaks of the two incidents as synchronous, and Mr. Trevelyan adopts this view.



1857.

June 6.

of clothes for the morrow, and scarcely to apparel themselves for the work of the day. Leaving their household gods, which they had hoped still to preserve, they obeyed, promptly but regretfully, the orders of their chief, and hurried into the entrenchments. Soon every one was at his post. It was a miserable place for defensive purposes, but such as it was, the best dispositions were made for its defence. And every man braced himself up for the work before him, with clenched teeth and a stern resolution to show what English manhood could do to prevail against the fearful odds to which it was opposed.

Approach of
the Enemy.

And whilst our people were thus manning the several posts which had been marked out for the defence of our feeble earthworks, the enemy were surging onwards in confused numbers towards the entrenchments; but eager rather for plunder than for battle, they turned aside to gorge themselves with the spoil, in city and cantonment, which lay profusely at their mercy, and to murder all the defenceless Christian people who fell in their way.* The question of proprietorship disturbed them little. Not content with the pillage of the Feringhees, many enriched themselves at the expense of their own countrymen, and some at least straightway deserted the ranks of the rebel army and made their way to their own homes. But enough remained, after all defections, thoroughly to invest our position—and more, perhaps, than could be brought under effectual com-

* "An old gentleman, supposed to be a merchant, with his wife and two children, one a boy of sixteen, the other a little girl, on being found secreted in a house near the dawkbungalow, were shot in front of it. Four office-writers, living in a house on the bank of a canal . . . their

house being set on fire, were obliged to abandon it, and were murdered as they fled. Another European (unknown) was shot by the troopers, who were indefatigable in their search after Christians."—*Col. Williams's Synopsis.*



1857.

June 6.

mand and control. Organisation, however, was not wholly neglected. In the name of the Nana Sahib, promotions and appointments were made in the army of the Peishwah. The Soubahdar, Teeka Singh, who had been from the commencement the most active promoter of revolt, received the command of the cavalry, with the rank of General; whilst Jemadar Dulgunjun Singh and Soubahdar Gunga Deen were appointed to the command, as Colonels, of infantry regiments. The names of these dignitaries will suggest the fact that the chief commands were given to Hindoos. But whether, as has been supposed, this proceeded from the belief that "the boldest and most active of the mutineers were not Mussulmans, but Hindoos,"* or whether it were that the prejudices and predilections of the Mahratta Brahmin, who was recognised as the rebel leader, wrought strongly in favour of his co-religionists, can only be conjectured.

For some hours after the first alarm, the little garrison waited and waited; and there was no sound of the threatened attack. But about noon the booming of the cannon told that the enemy had commenced their operations. A round-shot from a nine-pounder came into our entrenchments, scaring and scattering a large party of ladies and children, who were gathered together outside the barracks. Then the bugle sounded; and our fighting men got to their posts, and prepared themselves for the unequal conflict. As the day advanced, shot after shot from the enemy's guns was poured in with increasing rapidity and deadliness of aim, and with the sound of every shot arose the screams of the women and the children. On that first day of the siege the

The Attack commenced.

* See Mr. Trevelyan's interesting volume, "Cawnpore." The suggestion is contained in Colonel Williams's Synopsis of Evidence.



1857.
June 6.

unaccustomed horror tore down all barriers of self-restraint. But soon this human weakness, which vented itself in the shrill utterances of fear, passed away from these helpless ones; and in its place there was an unnatural stillness, more pathetic than the wailings of grief and the clamorous outbursts of terror.

June 6—27.
The Siege.

Then commenced a siege, the miseries of which to the besieged have never been exceeded in the history of the world. All the wonted terrors of a multitudinous enemy without, of a feeble garrison and scant shelter within, of the burden of women, and children, and sick people, with little to appease their wants or to allay their sufferings, were aggravated by the burning heat of the climate. The June sky was little less than a great canopy of fire; the summer breeze was as the blast of a furnace. To touch the barrel of a gun was to recoil as from red-hot iron. It was the season when European strength and energy are ever at their lowest point of depression; when military duty in its mildest form taxes the powers of Englishmen to the utmost, and English women can do little more than sustain life in a state of languid repose, in shaded apartments, with all appliances at command to moderate the temperature and to mitigate the suffering. But now, even under the fierce meridian sun, this little band of English fighting men were ever straining to sustain the strenuous activity of constant battle against fearful odds; whilst delicate women and fragile children were suddenly called to endure discomforts and privations, with all the superadded miseries peculiar to the country and the climate, which it would have been hard to battle



with, in strong health, under their native skies. The morning and evening baths, the frequent changes of raiment, the constant ministrations of assiduous servants in the smallest things, which are the necessities of English life in India, were now suddenly lost to these helpless ones; and, to intensify the wretchedness, the privacy and seclusion so dear to them became only remembrances of the past. Even amidst the roar of the cannon and the rattle of the musketry, with death around them in many ghastly shapes, the loss of these privileges was amongst the heaviest of their trials, for it violated all the decencies and proprieties of life, and shocked the modesty of their womanly natures.

To the English soldier in India to be outmatched in numbers is scarcely a discouragement. Ever since, a century before, Clive had fought against heavy odds the great battle of Plassey, our English forces had ever been outnumbered in the field, and yet they had fought their way to empire. The overwhelming multitude of Sepoys which now encompassed our position at Cawnpore, were kept at bay by the little handful of English soldiers that now manned our feeble entrenchments. As men, all the mighty host of Hindoos and Mahomedans which the Nana Sahib sent against us were utterly contemptible in our eyes. Had the positions of the two nations been reversed, had the English been outside those paltry earthworks, one rush would have carried the place, and the whole garrison would have been put to the sword in an hour. There was nothing to keep the besiegers out of the entrenchments but the contrast between the indomitable pluck of the Few and the flaccid irresolution of the Many. The besiegers, who might have relieved each other every hour, who might have

1857.
June 6—27.



1857.

June 6—27.

bathed, and eaten, and smoked, and slept whilst their comrades were on duty, and sent any number of fresh troops to the assault, shrank from a close encounter with our weary people, overworked and underfed, ever labouring in the trenches, ever under fire, with the clothes rotting on their backs, and the grime from the guns caking on their hands and faces. But, poor and despicable as the enemy were, they were rich and royal in their possessions. They had an immense wealth of artillery. The Cawnpore Magazine had sent forth vast supplies of guns and ammunition.* And now the heavy ordnance of the Government was raking its servants with a destructiveness which soon diminished our numbers working in the trenches. The English artillerymen dropped at their guns, until one after another the places of our trained gunners were filled by volunteers and amateurs, with stout hearts but untutored eyes, and the lighter metal of their guns could make no adequate response to the heavy fire of their twenty-four-pounders. But, when the enemy neared our parapets, and sought further to molest us at close quarters, they met with such a reception as soon put them to panic flight.

Captain
Moore.

In these encounters there was one man ever conspicuous—ever in the front of the battle—inspiring and animating all who served under him by his lustrous example. This was Captain Moore, of the Thirty-second—a soldier of a commanding presence, light-haired and blue-eyed, whom no toil could weary, no danger could daunt. Wounded at the commencement of the siege, he went about with his

* And in addition to the guns at the Ghaut, which were about and stores taken from the Magazine, to be despatched to Roorkee, were other supplies of both found



1857.

June 6—27.

arm in a sling; but the strong spirit within him defied pain. Day and night he laboured on, now in the trenches, now heading desperate sorties against the enemy, but even when he ceased to hope, he neither fainted nor failed. There was no greater heroism than this English captain's in all the war from first to last—no name more worthy than his to be recorded in the rolls of our English chivalry.

But though ever in the heroic annals of the siege this fair-haired captain must hold the foremost place as the Agamemnon of the defence, there were other heroic deeds than his worthy of distinguished record—other brave men whose names should find fitting mention in the page of history. There was Vibart, Major of the Second Cavalry, who held the Redan, slackening not, day or night, in his exertions, and though ever under the merciless fire of the enemy, active and robust to the last. There was Whiting, Captain of the Bengal Engineers, who commanded at the north-west point of the entrenchments, a man of stout heart and clear brain. There was Jenkins, Captain of the Second Cavalry, described as "one of the bravest and best of our party," who held one of our outposts beyond the trenches with unflinching gallantry, till a bullet through the jaws, from the musket of a Sepoy who was feigning death, brought his services to an agonising end. There was Mowbray-Thomson, Subaltern of the Fifty-sixth, who "had the miserable satisfaction" of avenging, on the spot, the death of his friend—a soldier ever to be found where danger was hottest, of whose deeds the world would have known more if any other pen than his had chronicled the events of the siege; now holding, with a few followers, a perilous outpost, now heading a desperate sortie against merciless odds, he

1857.
June 6—27.

exposed himself to death in every shape, but he seemed to bear a charmed life.* And there was his friend and comrade to the last, Delafosse of the Fifty-third, a young hero, equal to any feat of heroic daring. One day a shot from the enemy's battery had blown up a tumbril and set fire to the woodwork of the carriage, in the place where our ammunition was stored. It was clearly seen, both by the insurgents and by our own people, that if the fire were not extinguished there would soon be a most disastrous explosion. So the Sepoy batteries poured in a deadly stream of eighteen and twenty-four pound shot. But unmoved by these messengers of death, Delafosse went forth, threw himself down beneath the blazing carriage, tore off the burning wood with his hand, and throwing dry earth upon the fire, stifled it before it could spread. Then there was Sterling, the dead shot, who, perched up in a sort of crow's-nest on the barrack-wall, which Delafosse had improvised for him, picked off single Sepoys with unerring aim, and became a scourge to our assailants; and Jervis of the Engineers, who, with indomitable pride of race, refused to run from a black fellow, and was shot through the heart whilst walking across the open in stern composure, with the pings of the hostile bullets, and the imploring cries of his comrades to save himself, sounding in his ears. There was Ashe, too, the stout gunner from Lucknow, who served his nine-pounders, to the admiration of the whole garrison and to the terror of the besiegers, with unflinching courage and constancy from day to day, pouring in round after round with astonishing rapidity,

* Mr. Trevelyan very felicitously says of him, "This officer did his best to lose a life which destiny seemed determined to preserve, in order that England might know how, in their exceeding distress, her sons had not been unmindful of their ancient honour."

1857.
June 6—27.

and after each discharge leaping on to the heel of his gun, and, regardless of the danger of exposure, taking a new sight, and dealing out new death in the direction most disastrous to the enemy. And there were many other soldiers so good and true in the hour of our great national need, that History deplores its insufficiency to do full justice to the individual heroism of all the mighty defenders of those miserable works.

Nor were these great and glorious manifestations of the consummate bravery of our people confined to those who were combatants by profession. There were many in the entrenchments, not bred to arms, who started suddenly into stalwart soldiers. Among them were some railway engineers, potent to do and strong to endure, who flung themselves into the work of the defence with unstinting self-devotion, and made manifest to their assailants that they were men of the warrior caste, although they wore no uniforms on their backs. Conspicuous among them was Mr. Heberden, who was riddled with grape-shot, and lay for many days, face downwards, in extreme agony, which he bore with uncomplaining fortitude until death came to his relief.* And not the least heroic of that little band of heroes was the station-chaplain, Mr. Moncrieff, who went about ministering to the sick and the wounded, offering the consolations of religion to all who were passing away from the scene, and with that "access of unexpected strength" derived from prayer sustaining the toilers in the entrenchments, who turned aside for a little while from their ghastly work to listen to the sweet promises of the Gospel.

* Not until the close of the siege. "He was carried on a mattress down to the boats, where he died."



1857.

June 6—27.
Womanly
endurance.

And never since war began, never “in the brave days of old,” of which poets delight to sing, when women turned their hair into bow-strings, has the world seen nobler patience and fortitude than clothed the lives and shone forth in the deaths of the wives and daughters of the fighting-men of Cawnpore. No bow-strings were used in this defence; our arrows were of another kind. They went forth from the roaring mouths of our guns in the shape of round-shot and grape and canister. But when these missiles fell short, or by reason of the damage done to our pieces by the heavy artillery of the enemy, could not be used in the form from which they were issued from the expense-magazine, the gentlewomen of Cawnpore gave up perhaps the most cherished components of their feminine attire to improvise the ordnance most needed.* It would take long to tell in detail all the stories of womanly self-devotion and patient endurance and calm courage waiting for the end. Among these heroines was Mrs. Moore, the true-hearted wife of the leader of the garrison. All the officers who fought under him had for her a tenderness equal to his own, and they “fitted up for her a little hut, made of bamboo and covered with canvas,” where “she would sit for hours, bravely bearing the absence of her husband while he was gone on some perilous enterprise.”† Many others, perhaps, suffered more. The pangs of child-birth came upon some in the midst of all this drear discomfort and painful publicity. Some saw their

* “In consequence of the irregularity of the bore of the guns, through the damage inflicted upon them by the enemy’s shot, the canister could not be driven home; the women gave us their stockings, and having

tapped the canisters, we charged them with the contents of the shot-cases—a species of cartridge probably never heard of before.”—*Mowbray-Thomson’s Narrative*.

† *Mowbray-Thomson’s Narrative*.



children slowly die in their arms; some had them swept away from their breasts by the desolating fire of the enemy. There was no misery which humanity could endure that did not fall heavily upon our English women. It was the lot of many only to suffer. But those who were not prostrate, or in close attendance upon their nearest and dearest, moved about as sisters of charity, and were active in their ministrations. Nor was there wanting altogether the stalwart courage of the Amazon. It is related that the wife of a private of the Thirty-second, named Bridget Widdowson, stood sentry, sword in hand, for some time over a batch of prisoners tied together by a rope; and that the captives did not escape until the feminine guard had been relieved by one of the other sex.

1857.
June 6—27.

After the siege had lasted about a week a great calamity befel the garrison. In the two barracks of which I have spoken were gathered together all the feeble and infirm, the old and the sick, the women and the children. One of the buildings, it has been said, had a thatched roof, and whilst all sorts of projectiles and combustibles were flying about, its ignition could be only a question of time. Every effort had been made to cover the thatch with loose tiles or bricks, but the protection thus afforded was insufficient, and one evening the whole building was in a blaze. The scene that ensued was one of the most terrible in the entire history of the siege; for the sick and wounded who lay there, too feeble and helpless to save themselves, were in peril of being burnt to death. To their comrades it was a work of danger and difficulty to rescue them; for the enemy, rejoicing in their success, poured shot and shell in a continuous stream upon the burning pile, which guided their fire through

The burning
of the Bar-
rack.



1857.
June 6—27.

the darkness of the night. Two artillerymen only perished in the flames. But the destruction of the barrack was a heavy blow to the besieged. It deprived numbers of women and children of all shelter, and sent them out houseless to lie day after day and night after night upon the bare ground, without more shelter than could be afforded by strips of canvas and scraps of wine-chests, feeble defences against the climate, which were soon destroyed by the unceasing fire of the enemy. And there was a worse result even than this. The conflagration destroyed all the resources upon which our people had relied for the mitigation of the sufferings of the sick and wounded. All our hospital stores and surgical instruments were lost to us; and from that time Death and Pain had their way without anything to arrest the one or to soften the other.

Bhowany
Singh.

There was another result of this conflagration, of which little or no notice has been taken by the chroniclers of the Siege. It has been narrated that a few faithful Sepoys cast in their lot with their white officers, and accompanied them within the entrenchments. It appears that they were told that they might find shelter in this barrack, and we may assume that they littered down in the verandahs. There was one old Native officer, the Soubahdar-Major of the Second Cavalry, who from the first had arrayed himself against the mutineers of his regiment, and had received the reward of his great loyalty to the English in the wounds which he carried off with him to the entrenchments. And this reward was soon supplemented by another. Death came to the brave old man whilst still clinging to his former masters. He was killed in the early part of the siege by a



shell.* The Fifty-third Regiment is stated to have sent ten Native officers, with Faithful Sepoys, into General Wheeler's camp. All the other regiments contributed their quota to the garrison, and there is evidence that during the first week of the siege they rendered some service to the English. But when the barrack was destroyed, there was no place for them. Provisions were already falling short, and although there was no reason to mistrust them, it was felt that they were rather an encumbrance than an assistance. So they were told that they might depart; and as, although there was danger beyond the entrenchments, there was greater danger within them, they not reluctantly perhaps turned their faces towards their homes. Some perished by the way; some succeeded in reaching their native villages; a few returned, after a time, to the British Camp, to detail their experiences of the early days of the siege.†

Day after day passed, and ever as our little garrison

1857.
June 6—27.
Mortality in the Garrison.

* This is the man of whom previous mention has been made (page 302) as the one Sepoy of the old disgraced Second Cavalry that had been re-enlisted. It is to be hoped that good provision has been made for the family of so brave a man and so faithful a servant.

† "The Major having gone to inquire of General Wheeler what we were to do, the latter came out and ordered us to occupy the hospital barracks; he said, 'In such a barrack we shall not manage to save our lives, as the round-shot will reach us from all sides.' . . . On the evening of the 9th or 10th, a hot round-shot fell on our barrack and set it on fire. On this we left it, and concealed ourselves for the night in a nullah not far distant." "We held the hospital barracks from the 5th to the 9th or 10th, we left because the

house caught fire from the enemy's shot. I believe the shot was wrapped in some inflammable material, which catching the thatched roof, soon became a blaze."—(*Deposition of Bhola Khan, Sepoy Fifty-third Native Infantry.*) "The barracks caught fire about four o'clock P.M., on the 9th or 10th. The Major then told us he could do nothing for us, there being an order of General Wheeler prohibiting any Native from entering the entrenchment. He therefore recommended us to provide for our own safety. . . . The whole party then left the hospital barrack."—(*Deposition of Ram Buksh, Pay-Havildar, Fifty-third Native Infantry.*) The number of these Sepoys is supposed to have been about eighty or a hundred, with a considerable proportion of Native officers.



1857.
June 6—27.

waned weaker and weaker, the fire of the enemy grew hotter and hotter. With what terrible effect it told upon our suffering people in the entrenchments, on brave fighting men, on patient women, and on poor little children, has been narrated by one of the survivors with a simplicity of pathos which goes straight to the heart. Incidents, which in ordinary times would have been described with graphic minuteness of detail, have been told in a few words as events of such common occurrence, as scarcely to have excited a sensation in the garrison. If the "burra sahib," or great lord of the district, to whom a few weeks before all Natives would have crouched, were shot dead in an instant, or the commandant of a regiment, whose word had been law to a thousand armed men, were disabled by agonising wounds, it was the talk of the entrenchments for a quarter of an hour, and then a new tragedy brushed it away. In truth it did not much matter at what moment death came. Happiest those, perhaps, to whom it came soonest. Hillersdon, the Collector, who had negotiated the alliance with the Nana Sahib, fell a corpse at the feet of his young wife, with his entrails torn out by a round shot. A few days afterwards she was relieved from the ghastly memories of her bereavement by a merciful fall of masonry, which killed her. The General's son and aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Wheeler, was lying wounded in one of the barrack-rooms, when, in the presence of his whole family, father, mother, and sisters, a round shot boomed into the apartment, and carried off the young soldier's head. Another round shot struck up splinters into Major Lindsay's face, gashing and blinding him. He lingered on in darkness and in agony for some days, attended by his wife, when Death took him, and she soon followed. Colonel Williams,



1857.

June 6—27.

of the Fifty-sixth, being disabled by a wound early in the siege, died of apoplexy from sunstroke, leaving his wife and daughters in the entrenchments. The former, shot in the face and frightfully disfigured, lay for some days, tended by her wounded daughter, until death came to the suffering widow's relief. Colonel Ewart, of the First, who would have taken an active part in the defence if he had been spared, was disabled at an early period, but lingered through the siege, attended by his admirable wife, only to be brutally murdered at the end of it. Captain Halliday was shot dead carrying from the barracks to the entrenchments a little horse-soup, which he had begged for his famishing wife. Thus many of Wheeler's chief officers were rendered powerless for good by the unceasing fire of the enemy, whilst the old General himself issued orders from the shelter of the barracks, but was seldom capable of taking part in the active duties of the defence. In bitterness of spirit he saw his garrison diminishing every day before his eyes. There was a well a little way outside the entrenchments, which served as the general cemetery of the Christian people; and night after night the carnage of the day was carried to this universal mausoleum. And there were some who died hopelessly, though not in the flesh; for the horrors of the siege were greater than they could bear, and madness fell upon them, perhaps as a merciful dispensation.

It is impossible to compute the aggregate of death which our people dealt back to the enemy in return for these visitations. It is known that in the space of three weeks the English consigned to the well two hundred and fifty of their party. The number of bodies buried by the insurgents, or devoured by the

Chastisement
of the enemy.



1857.
June 6—27.

vultures and jackals, must have been counted, if ever counted at all, at this amount many times told. If hands were scarce in the entrenchments, muskets were not; and every man stood to his work with some spare pieces ready-loaded, which he fired with such rapidity that the enemy marvelled when they thought of what was supposed to be the number of our garrison. But it was not only from the entrenchments that death went forth to greet our assailants. Incidental allusion has been made to our outposts. There was a row of unfinished barracks at one corner of our position, which it was of immense importance to us to possess, in whole or in part, lest the enemy should hold them against us, and make sad havoc within our miserable earthworks. There were in all eight of these buildings. Two the English contrived to occupy, and between these two was a third, with the well attached in which we buried our dead, and which we saved from the grasp of the enemy. From the shelter which we thus held, and which must have given good command over two sides of our entrenched position, our people poured in a deadly fire on the insurgents, whenever they approached our works. Conspicuous among the defenders of these outposts, as has already been told, were Jenkins and Mowbray-Thomson; and to these good names should be added that of Lieutenant Glanville, of the Second Bengal Europeans, who held with sixteen men "Number Two" barrack, described as the key of our position, until he was incapacitated by a dangerous wound.* From the barracks, or carcasses of barracks, thus gallantly held, such punishment was inflicted upon the enemy, as even after a lapse of years could not be remembered by any one living to look back upon it

* He was succeeded in the command by Mowbray-Thomson.



without a shudder. Here was the hardest work, and hence came the greatest carnage.* Any adventurous Sepoy coming within the reach of our rifles or muskets, paid the penalty of his audacity, and never troubled us or disported himself any more. Sometimes, if a favourable opportunity presented itself, our little garrisons made bold sallies into the open, spiking the enemy's guns and cutting off all who fell in their way. It was not of much use; for whether guns were spiked or men were killed, there were so many of both in the background, that the loss was scarcely felt for a moment. Indeed, the ranks of the besiegers were recruited from time to time, as the siege went on, amongst others by the Sepoys from Azimgurh,† and the new hands were often found to be better than the old. To us, on the other hand, the loss of every man was a grievous calamity, for we waited and waited for succours that never came; and though sometimes our people were stimulated by the belief that firing was to be heard in the distance, intimating the approach of reinforcements, they were soon driven back again upon disappointment and despair.

The incidents of one day much resembled those of another, both in what was done and what was suffered. Few landmarks broke the uniformity of that great expanse of glorious disaster. One day, however, at Cawnpore, as in other places where the great struggle for empire was going on, differed from the rest; for it was the centenary of the battle of Plassey. On

1857.
June 6—27.

June 23.
Centenary of
Plassey.

* "The orders given to us were not to surrender with our lives, and we did our best to obey them, though it was only by an amount of fatigue that in the retrospect now seems scarcely possible to have been a fact, and by the perpetration of such

wholesale carnage that nothing could have justified but the instinct of self-preservation, and, I trust, the equally strong determination to shelter the women and children to the last moment."—*Mosbray-Thomson*.

† The Seventeenth Native Infantry.

the previous night there had been signs of extraordinary activity in the enemy's ranks, and a meditated attack on our outposts had been thwarted by Moore's fertility of resource;* and as the morning of the 23rd dawned upon Cawnpore, the insurgents, stimulated to the utmost by the associations of the day, came out in full force of Horse, Foot, and Artillery, flushed with the thought of certain success, to attack both our outposts and our entrenchments. If the whole strength of the Nana's force was not brought forth to surround us on this memorable day, all its components were fully represented. And there was a stern resolution, in many cases strengthened by oaths on the Ganges-water or the Koran, to destroy the English or to die in the attempt. The excitement of all branches of the rebel-army was at its highest pitch. The impetuosity of the Cavalry far exceeded their discretion, for they galloped forward furiously within reach of our guns, and met with such a reception, that many horses were left riderless, and the troopers who escaped wheeled round and fled in fearful confusion. The Infantry, more cautious, improvised moving ramparts to shelter their skirmishers, by rolling before them as they advanced huge bales of cotton; but our guns were too well

* The following illustrative anecdote, told by Mowbray Thomson, claims insertion in this place: "We saw the Pandies gathering to this position from all parts, and fearing that my little band would be altogether overpowered by numbers, I sent to Captain Moore for more men. The answer was not altogether unexpected. 'Not one could be spared!' Shortly afterwards, however, the gallant captain came across to me in company with Lieutenant Delafosse, and he said to me, 'Thomson, I think I shall try a new dodge; we are

going out into the open, and I shall give the word of command as though our party were about to commence an attack.' Forthwith they sallied out, Moore with a sword, Delafosse with an empty musket. The captain vociferated the words, 'Number one to the front.' And hundreds of ammunition pouches rattled on the bayonet sheaths as our courageous foes vaulted out from the cover afforded by heaps of rubbish, and rushed into the safer quarters presented by the barrack walls."