

MUTINY OF NATIVE TROOPS IN INDIA.

The Bengal papers are filled with the particulars of the mutiny of the 19th Regiment Native Infantry, which has ended in the disbandment of that corps, and the spread of disaffection to the 34th Regiment Native Infantry. The original pretence of the mutineers was that they were supplied with cartridges in the manufacture of which some animal impurity was used that it would defile a Brahmin to touch. The fact turns out to be that it is the old story of a demand for an increase of pay.

A Calcutta correspondent gives the following graphic account of the disbandment of the disaffected regiment:—

The 19th Regiment Native Infantry has been disbanded. The Government ordered it to march to Barrackpore, the metropolitan cantonment, in order that the punishment might be inflicted in the presence of the disaffected. Meanwhile every precaution was adopted to prevent the possibility of resistance. It was known that the 34th were in league with the 19th. It was suspected that the 2nd Grenadiers, if not positively disaffected, were cognisant of the plans, and sympathised with the mutinous regiment. The two remaining native corps of the brigade were believed to be faithful, but it is never easy to predict what natives will do when a temptation is placed suddenly before them. It was, therefore, necessary to provide against an outbreak of five thousand armed men stationed only sixteen miles from a defenceless capital, in a country where two soldiers can disperse a mob. Her Majesty's 84th was hastily brought up from Burmah. A wing of her Majesty's 53rd was ordered to Barrackpore. The native body guard (cavalry), 500 strong, were dispatched in the night, and two troops of artillery, with twelve pieces of cannon, were brought from Dum dum into the cantonment. Private orders were issued to the magistrates to place large bodies of the police upon the bridges which lead into the town. Finally, orders were issued to Major-General Hearsey, authorising him to suppress resistance, even if it were necessary to employ the whole force at his disposal, and to destroy three regiments. The Europeans waited with a sort of anxious nonchalance for the result, such as Anglo-Indians can alone display, and amused themselves by circulating the most preposterous rumours. These measures were complete on March 30. Meanwhile a number of circumstances increased the prevailing uneasiness. The Colonel commanding at Dum dum received what appeared to be trustworthy intelligence that the 19th were marching on the station to seize the artillery. Dum dum is eight miles from Calcutta. He had only thirty men, but he called them together, prepared for defence, and ordered all officers' families to quit the station. They obeyed, and at two o'clock at night some dozen frightened women were besieging the houses of their friends in Calcutta for rest and shelter. The same afternoon Lieutenant Baugh, Adjutant of the 34th Native Infantry, was attacked by a drunken or drugged sepoy at Barrackpore. He was severely wounded, but the guard refused to arrest the assassin, and the man strutted up and down till he was seized by the Major-General himself. The transaction looked as if the regiment were resolved to die rather than yield. On the following morning the Europeans were landed, and marched to the parade. The two Queen's regiments, with the artillery and cavalry, occupied one side, the native regiments the other, and the 19th Native Infantry, which had been halted for the night outside the station, marched into the midst. The Major-General then read aloud the order.

Up to the last moment it was doubtful whether the men would submit, or whether a yell of defiance would compel General Hearsey to open fire. They asked permission to petition. The time, they were told, had passed, and they must lay down their arms. The preparations cowed the men. The old instinctive terror of the Europeans has not passed away, and they laid down their arms, the native officers actually weeping with grief and rage. No humiliation was offered them, and they were allowed to retain their uniforms, and were then escorted by the cavalry to Chinsurah. Thence they are gradually dispersing to their homes.

It was believed that this example would have had a profound effect. It has certainly confirmed the wavering, but the 34th are more mutinous than ever. The man who attempted to assassinate Lieutenant Baugh was condemned to death; but so dangerous was the temper of the men that General Hearsey could not venture to trust them, and the sentence was carried out under the protection of shotted guns and two European regiments. It may be necessary to mention that this General is a thoroughly able, gallant officer, one of the few Hindostanee scholars in his rank, and, generally speaking, beloved by the sepoys.

I fear the 34th also must be disbanded. Meanwhile the native regiment at Dinapore is only kept in check by the presence of her Majesty's 10th. The selected soldiers at the Umballa and Sealkott rifle-schools complain that they shall be outcasts if they use the cartridge; and the Commander-in-Chief's own escort have excommunicated their comrades for touching them. Almost all the regiments of the line sympathise more or less; but, strange to say, all the Irregulars, all the Sikhs, the Goorkas, and all the cavalry ridicule the movement. The Sikhs in the ranks of the 34th are actually leaving the regiment in utter disgust. The fact, if the affair become more serious, is very important. I think, as a matter of opinion, that it must end in blood somewhere, but I have no fear of a general revolt. One source of danger is the extreme exasperation of the Europeans. A mutiny doubles their duties, and it is not always quite easy to hold them in.