

Narrative of Events

ATTENDING THE OUTBREAK OF DISTURBANCES

AND THE

RESTORATION OF AUTHORITY IN THE DISTRICT

OF

K U M A O N,

IN 1857-58.

No. 258.

FROM

MAJOR H. RAMSAY,

Commissioner of Kumaon,

TO

WILLIAM MUIR, Esq.,

Secretary to Government,

North Western Provinces.

DATED NYNEE TAL, THE 22ND JULY 1858.

SIR,

I HAVE now the honor to submit the report required by your Circular No. 212, dated 30th April.

Mr. Colvin's letter is enclosed.

2. The news of the Meerut mutiny reached me, then in the Snowy Ranges of Gurhwal, on 22nd May. I hastened back to Almorah, made what arrangements appeared advisable with Colonel McCausland, and then proceeded to Nynee Tal to do what was possible for the preservation of order at the foot of the Hills, to get funds and procure supplies.

3. My applications to Bareilly and Moradabad for money were too late, the sepoys having determined upon protecting the Treasuries for themselves, and no larger sums could be taken out of them. The Buheree Tehseel officers had helped themselves, and I got no money;—the Bunjarahs, collected in large numbers, had closed the roads in Rooderpore, and all trade was at a stand-still. I secured as much grain as I could in the Bhabur, and awaited the course of events.

4. On the 1st June the Bareilly refugees reached Huldwanee, and those of Moradabad who came to Nynee Tal, arrived at Kala Doongee on the 4th June. All who started, except Sergeant Staples from Bareilly, reached the Hills in safety, and from the 6th June we were, for nearly a month, cut off from all communication with the plains. Early in July a dâk line was established across the Hills through Mussooree.

5. Soon after the 10th June, the most complete disorder prevailed in the plains, and large hordes of dacoits from Rampore and the Moradabad district filled the Bhabur villages of lower Kota; they stole the cattle, removed thousands of maunds of grain, and did as much damage as possible. Our strength at that time was not sufficient to protect the whole of the Bhabur; I therefore confined my efforts to the Chukhata district in the vicinity of Huldwanee. The Hill cultivators of the Bhabur returned to the Hills after a few attempts at resistance, in which about 20 rebels were killed. I could not offer any efficient resistance, and the rebels having in a few days plundered the villages, the country was left a desert.

6. On 27th June, the rebels again collected below upper Kota. I sent a party under Dhun Sing to defend the place, but Mustoo Khan of the Rampore Territory came with an overwhelming force of horse and foot. Dhun Sing and some others were killed, the Tehseel was plundered of the few rupees (about 400) in deposit, and the rebels at once retired without destroying the villages.

7. About the middle of June the evil-disposed of the Hill people, especially on the borders of the plains, began to show that they were sensible of our weakness, and as I had no district Police, I felt the necessity of resorting to extreme measures to preserve order; for I foresaw that if any part of the Province became disorganized, our position at Nynee Tal would be most critical, and if one Pergunnah got into disorder, the probability was others would soon have followed the example.

8. As soon as I saw the danger alluded to above, I proclaimed Martial Law in Kumaon. In the first few cases of dacoity, I sentenced to long terms of imprisonment: this was not sufficient, and I gave longer sentences, but without success, and at last I sentenced some dacoits to capital punishment. This was made known throughout the Province; the bad characters were frightened, the good men felt safe, and the country remained as peaceable as in former years.

9. It soon became evident after the arrival of the Rohilcund refugees, that there was no prospect of immediate relief. Our funds were alarmingly small, and we had then no prospect of assistance. Mr. Colvin and I drew up a scale of allowances, by which we paid every European monthly. Advances were made on receipts, and nearly all have been adjusted.

10. The Rampore Nawab did all in his power to preserve order in his own Territories, and assist us; but from the information we received, it appeared quite possible, and even probable, that at the "Bukr Eed," in the end of July, a disturbance might take place at Rampore, and if the Nawab had been killed the victorious party would at once have attacked us. The presence of many ladies and children would have hampered us a good deal in the event of being attacked, and though that was only a chance, contingent on other events, I preferred a timely, though it might be an unnecessary, retreat to the chance of a discreditable flight. I accordingly sent over the ladies and children, about 200, to Almorah, and when the Eed festival passed over they all returned to Nynee Tal: this was the only occasion on which any body had to leave Nynee Tal from first to last.

11. The Police Sowars and Burkundazes (belonging to the Plains), ran away on 9th September, and only Hill Burkundazes remained, but the Police stations at and near Huldwanee were maintained till 17th September, when a party of rebels, mustering about 1,000 horse and foot, took possession of the place. On the 18th, Captain Maxwell with a party of Goorkhas, and about 40 Cavalry, composed of Officers, and 8 Irregulars, defeated the rebels, killing about 150 of them. Up to the beginning of September the 66th Goorkhas and 8th Irregular Cavalry had protected Huldwanee; but the climate became so dangerous after the rains ceased, I thought it imprudent to risk the lives of such valuable men, and recalled them.

12. The Police after this retired to the entrance to the Hills, and kept parties moving about the lower part of the Huldwanee district. On the 6th October the rebels, in number about 5,000, again took possession of the place; it was not deemed advisable to attack them, and an attempt was made to entrap the Cavalry portion of the force. Although we failed in securing the Cavalry, we created such an alarm that the rebels fearing an attack, were seized with a panic during the night, cut their heel-ropes, and went off helter-skelter, leaving their grain and some other property behind them. One Sowar was caught next morning and hanged.

13. The unhealthy season had passed away, and as we expected to hear of a force entering Rohilcund, I urged on Colonel McCausland the necessity of taking up a position at Huldwanee, to protect that part of the district, and be ready to assist in the destruction of the rebels, or at any rate to create a diversion. The arrival of the Nepal Contingent, and advanced state of the Kumaon Levies, enabled us to occupy Huldwanee, and leave at Nynee Tal a party strong enough to protect the passes on the Rampore side; while Lieutenant McIntyre's young Regiment was available to take some of the Almorah duties, and, if necessary, guard the Eastern passes.

14. On the 1st January the rebels hearing of a supply of grain coming for our Camp, made a night march from Rooderpore and appeared before Huldwanee about 9 A. M. The force under Captain Baugh defeated them, killing about 50.

15. The impossibility of procuring more supplies of grain, and my store having become exhausted, most of Captain Crossman's Cavalry had been ordered to Kasheepore. In the end of January they returned, and Colonel McCausland came down with the Head Quarters of the 66th Goorkhas, and on 1st February we had about 1,000 Infantry, 250 Cavalry, two 6-pounders, and two mountain train guns.

16. Fuzl Huq's Army of 4,500 with four guns moved up from the East, Kala Khan with 4,000 men and four guns advanced from Buheree. Fuzl Huq's Army encamped at Sunda, 13 miles East, and Kala Khan's took up a position 16 miles South of Huldwanee. They first intended attacking us in front and flank, and the ground was so much in our favor we remained quiet. They then determined upon uniting forces and attacking us in front; this was not desirable, and on 10th February, Colonel McCausland attacked Kala Khan's force at Churpoora. The result has been noticed at length in Colonel McCausland's despatch. After the Churpoora fight the rebels lost heart, and never again settled down in the Terrai Pergunnahs.

17. A party once came to collect Revenue in Kilpooree, and put up at the Setargunge Tehsæl. Captain Baugh was sent immediately out with 250 Infantry and Cavalry. Mr. Carmichael, who had formerly charge of these Pergunnahs, accompanied the detachment as Civil Officer, and by judicious management the rebels were surrounded and destroyed.

18. In January, it became known that a few of the Kali Kumaon people had joined the Rebel camp, and I deputed Mr. Colvin to that part of the district. Mr. Colvin prevented the contagion spreading—if it had any tendency to become more general, and kept the passes so well guarded that the rebels never attempted to approach the hills in the direction of Burmdeo.

19. When the Artillery Company at Almorah showed symptoms of disaffection in June, so many of them were sent to jail that there was no room. At the same time there was such a panic among the Natives at Nynee Tal, that coolies were very scarce. I took 40 hill prisoners from the jail, knocked off their irons and used them as coolies, without guards, on the promise that if they behaved well they should be released at the end of the year. They worked on the roads; carried loads; on one occasion attacked

a body of dacoits near Kala Doongee, killing several of them, and throughout behaved admirably. I therefore released them at the end of the year. I considered it desirable that Mr. Colvin should be present at Almorah, and sent him there in June; his presence maintained confidence among the people of the town, and he was ready to proceed in any direction where an Officer's presence might be required.

20. Mr. Beckett kept the passes into the Hills from Bijnore well guarded, and at once proceeded in any direction where attack was threatened. In consequence of some evil-disposed plain's men attempting to create a disturbance at Sreenuggur, a company of Goorkhas was sent over for a short time from Almorah, but with the exception of some dacoitees in the early part of the mutiny, Mr. Beckett's district, * like Kumaon, remained perfectly well-conducted and loyal. In fact, with the few individual exceptions, the people of Kumaon and Gurhwal have behaved very well. They supplied coolies, grain and men, to protect the bye-passes; and the best evidence I can offer of their loyalty and honesty is the fact of Remittances of 10 to 50,000 Rs. having passed through the Hills from Mussooree to Almorah in charge of a few Chuprassees.

* Gurhwal.

21. Mr. Batten was detained by me at Nynee Tal, as it was uncertain where I might go to, and the presence of one Civil Officer at the Station was absolutely necessary to keep order, and carefully dispose of the numerous applications from all sides without delay.

22. Mr. Alexander by applying to the Nawab of Rampore received 64,000 Rs. in Gold Mohurs; he also received about a Lac of Rs. in the payment of Revenue, and by granting Bills on Moradabad. The Rajah of Gurhwal lent a Lac of Rupees, and we managed to pay our way on a limited scale, until better times admitted of treasure being sent us through Deyra.

23. I consider it proper to mention that I felt it incumbent on me to cancel an order given by the late Lieutenant Governor, requiring all villagers to keep cattle out of their houses. This created great disgust, and was so offensive to the Hill people that I took upon myself to cancel it. I wrote to the late Mr. Colvin explaining the circumstances, and he approved of my proceeding. I got no official approval, but it was conveyed (by Kossid) in a small note from Mr. Thornhill, then Secretary to Government, and I think subsequently in a letter written in Mr. Muir's hand-writing, signed by the late Mr. Colvin. I have noticed this matter in order that I may not appear to have acted disrespectfully in having interfered with the late Lieutenant Governor's orders.

24. In conclusion I would observe, that the facts specified for report in the Circular under acknowledgment had no place in this Province, which happily has no history to record; but I have in the absence of such facts given a brief account of what has occurred from the sad tidings of the mutiny first reaching Kumaon, to the defeat of the rebels by the Huldwanee force at Churpoora, from which date we were never molested by any one.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

H. RAMSAY,

Commissioner.

KUMAON COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE, } .

NYNEE TAL :

The 22nd July 1858.