

OUT OF THEIR OWN MOUTHS

I will prove their culpability. On 1st February, 1882—mark you, this engagement took place on 5th May, 1885—on 1st February, 1882, Commissioner Irvine, of the Mounted Police, sent a report to the Minister in these words:—

“The carriages and limbers for the 7-pounder guns are fast becoming unserviceable. These carriages were constructed at Fort Walsh some years ago, under the direction of Inspector Neale. Considering the material at that officer's command, the carriages and limbers have proved most successful. I would, however, recommend that new ones be purchased, of the pattern lately approved by the Imperial authorities.”

So that, you see, the minister *knew then* that the carriages and limbers were fast becoming unserviceable, and that they should be renewed. The Indian population was discontented. No one knew when they might rise; the matter pressed, but nothing was done; the new material was not supplied, and the guns were left in their deplorable condition. A year elapsed. On 1st January, 1883, Commissioner Irvine reports again:—

“I would remind you that the carriages and limbers of the 7-pounder mountain guns are fast becoming unserviceable. I recommend that new ones be purchased, of the pattern lately approved by the Imperial authorities.”

The reminder was ineffectual. Some inquiry seems to have been made about cost, but nothing was done. Another year of risk was run.

On the 1st January, 1884, the Commissioner reported for the third time, as follows:—

“I have previously reported that the carriages and limbers of the 7-pounder guns are virtually unserviceable—”

So that it is stated now that they are virtually unserviceable, as indeed one would infer from the previous language used in the mild sense customary in speaking of a condition of a military force.

“—are virtually unserviceable, and last year I recommended that carriages and limbers of the Imperial pattern be purchased. On close inquiry it was ascertained that such purchase would have entailed a very considerable expense. Carriages and limbers suitable for our purposes can be manufactured in this country at much smaller cost than would ensue were a purchase made from England. The supply officer at headquarters has now the required material for manufacture, and I trust that next summer may find us in possession of sufficient skilled labour to make carriages and limbers in this country.”