

command, and an adjutant, for the most part picked men. These latter appointments were generally coveted by the service as situations both of honour and emolument; and if (for interest will have its way) they did not always find the officers nominated to them men of mark and livelihood, they seldom failed to make them so in the course of a year.

A regiment of Native Infantry consisted of ten companies. Each company, at its full strength, contained two commissioned native officers (known as the Soubahdar and Jemadar—Captain and Lieutenant), six havildars (sergeants), six naiks (corporals), and a hundred sepoy. In these regiments Hindoos and Mussulmans were indiscriminately enlisted. The proportions varied in different corps; the Hindoos necessarily preponderating, but not in a rate corresponding with the general population. (1) The lower provinces of the Bengal Presidency contributed few or no soldiers to the state. The Bengalees are feeble, indolent, timid, not hesitating to brand themselves as cowards, if thereby they can escape danger. But in the provinces of Upper India men of a very different stamp, physical and moral, freely enlisted into our armies. Oude alone is said to have furnished to the Company's army, besides some thousands of troopers, no less than three-fourths of the Bengal Infantry. (2)

The monthly pay of the Bengal Infantry sepoy was seven rupees (or fourteen shillings), with an additional rupee after sixteen year's service, and two after twenty year's service. A havildar received fourteen rupees; a jemadar twenty-four; and a soubahdar sixty-seven rupees. Estimated with reference to the price of the necessaries of life and the ordinary rate of wages, the scale of pay was liberal, and it was disbursed with the utmost punctuality. The pay of the youngest sepoy greatly exceeded the rate of agricultural wages, with the additional advantage that after a certain number of year's service he received a pension, to the end of his life, which was as secure to him as his pay had been in the days of his effective service. With this pension he returned to his native village, and sent his son to serve in his stead. He had, therefore, a direct interest in the stability of our rule. He knew that as long as the British Government should survive, the pension paymaster would disburse to him this reward of his past services, and that, on the contrary, a revolution would consign him to beggary to the end of his days.

From whatever part of the country he might come, the Bengal sepoy left his family at home, but he never deserted them. A large part of his pay was every month remitted to his village through the pay-establishment. Having once fixed the amount of the "family chit," he knew that their wants were provided for as certainly as though he had placed the silver in their hands. Every second or third year he obtained permission to proceed to his home, and was absent from his regiment during all that part of the year which included the seasons of the hot winds and the rains. If he did not return at the appointed time, it was a certainty that he had died on the road—probably that he had been thugged on his way home, or made away with by a professional poisoner, for the sake of the savings, his own and his comrades, which he was carrying with him concealed on his person. In a service, one of the most remarkable features of which is that simple dismissal is a grave military punishment, desertion can be little more than a name.

These frequent sojourns in the native village, and the sustaining hope of an ultimate retirement to it, imparted to the sepoy much more of the tone and character of civil life than is to be found, perhaps, in any other service in the world. Let him go where he would, he had still his cherished home associations: he had still the thought before him of the mango tree under which he would, next year, sit with his venerable father, who had served the Company before him, and who was garrulous about Lake, Malcolm and Ochterlony; or where, after a few more years of service, he would talk in turn, to his soldier-sons, of Napier or Pollock, Nott or Wheeler, proud of his pension, his medal, and his scars.

When with his regiment, the sepoy lived in what are called "lines". These are long rows of matted huts, in a convenient part of the military cantonment. In this primitive abode he slept, sometimes perhaps cooked; but spent the greater part of his time in the open air, sitting on the ground, smoking and conversing with his comrades, or perhaps lying on a charpoy, or rude native bed, at the door of his hut. His military duties, in time of peace, were performed principally at early morning, or under the refreshing influ-

ences of the cool evening breeze. During the rest of the day, except when on guard or on sentry, he idled in the lines or lounged about the bazars.

M. de Valbezen, in his graphic and impartial papers on the English in India, which have just been republished in a single volume, describes with great fidelity and acuteness, the sepoy of Hindostan:—

"En somme, la tenue extérieure du cipaye laisse bien peu de chose à désirer; mais il lui manque, on le devine au premier coup d'œil, le sentiment de dignité de l'habit qu'il porte. Rien dans sa contenance ne rappelle l'air martial de nos pantalons rouges, ou la tournure d'homme carrée par la base, du soldat anglais. C'est qu'en effet le cipaye n'a rien perdu de ses habitudes natives, et pour démontrer cette vérité, que le lecteur veuille bien nous accompagner aux tentes d'une compagnie d'infanterie venue récemment de l'intérieur avec un convoi d'argent, et campée sur le glacis du Fort William à Calcutta.

"Le camp est formé de trois grandes tentes; un seul homme en habit rouge, une baguette de fusil à la main, en garde l'approche; quant aux soldats ils ont dépoilé l'uniforme et revêtu le costume indien dans toute sa simplicité: les plus couverts en chemise! Et quelles fantaisies de coiffures! celui-ci la tête complètement rasée, celui-là avec des nattes de six pieds, cet autre à front monumental fait a coups de rasoir: ce soldat Sikh enfin, ses cheveux relevés et noués en chignon comme une denoiselle chinoise. Les officiers natifs se distinguent par un collier de boules de bois doré. Du reste, une tranquillité parfaite, un ordre profond. Chaque homme fait sa petite cuisine, à son petit feu, s'occupe de soins de propreté. C'est que la main des siècles, l'influence civilisatrice de la discipline militaire, ont glissé sur la nature immuable de l'Indien comme l'huile sur le marbre. Trois coups de baguette, deux mots, et ces sauvages à demi-nus, le fusil à piston à la main, l'habit rouge sur le dos, offriront des spécimens très remarquables des soldats de l'honorable compagnie des Indes; toutefois rien n'est changé dans leurs instincts, leurs habitudes; ce sont les hommes, les mêmes hommes, qui sous les drapeaux du roi Porus, combattaient il y a deux mille ans, les guerriers d'Alexandre." (Les Anglais et l'Inde, p. 97).

We do not remember to have met with a more striking or characteristic description of the Indian soldier than that which is contained in these few lines; and it seems to us to explain much that is otherwise incomprehensible. The sepoy viewed from our own point of view,—in the long lines of European drill, in the British uniform, or in face of the enemy,—presented to the eye a force not unworthy to be ranked with British soldiers, whose triumphs, they had so often shared: but this tincture of military discipline, this disguise of civilisation, was altogether superficial; the natural Asiatic remained quite unchanged; even his manner of life was scarcely altered; his character was still overshadowed by low animal propensities, by the bestial superstitions of the worst form of heathenism, and by the impenetrable cunning of a feeble race. It was not, therefore, either impossible or astonishing that some fanatical delusion, some maddening impulse, or even some untoward accident, should suddenly inflame this creature of ignorance and passion; and that, once excited, all restraint should be thrown off, and he should surpass the wild animals of the Indian jungle in blood-thirstiness and treachery.

But these savage propensities lay concealed beneath an exterior which had, in ordinary times, much of the simplicity and the sportiveness of childhood. Coming suddenly upon a group of sepoy, you would generally find the greater number of them with a broad grin on their comely faces; perhaps the "loud laugh which speaks the vacant mind" would salute you as you approached. Little encumbered with business of any kind, they were remarkably accessible to every description of excitement that would come to them unsought. A loquacious stranger in the lines or in the bazaar, a wandering faqueer, or a traveller from a distant province, with some marvellous story to tell, was always welcome to Jack Sepoy. With open eyes and open ears he stared and listened, and devoured lies as greedily as sweetmeats. The marvellous was always a delight to him, and his credulity eagerly swallowed the most monstrous improbabilities.

It would be difficult to conceive a class of men more easily to be deluded and led astray by designing persons, or a mode of life better calculated to facilitate their designs. The European officer lived apart from his men in a different quarter of the cantonment. He knew little or nothing of what was going on in the lines. He seldom conversed with the sepoy; he had no confidential intercourse with them. All sorts of leprous distillments might poison the sepoy's mind, before his European officer would know anything about it. Time was when there were some links of fellowship and friendship between them—when the sepoy really looked up to his officer with child-like confidence, as "his father and his mother," and the officer regarded his regiment as his home. But all this is now gone. A thousand co-operating causes have broken the link of brotherhood. The improved moral tone of society; the presence of many European

(1) The general proportion of Mahomedans to Hindoos is stated to be one to fifteen—in the army one to five.

(2) Colonel Sherman says, "three-fourths of the recruits for our Bengal native infantry are drawn from the Rajpoot peasantry of the kingdom of Oude, on the left bank of the Ganges, where their affections have been linked to the soil for a long series of generations."