

his cherished purpose. No wonder that a cloud passed for a moment over that brave spirit. *Things are in a most perilous state*, he wrote to his wife. *We can only succeed by the especial mercy of God. I write as one who may see you no more.* He knew well the impression which retrograde movement would produce on the minds of Sepoys, and that it would be construed into a confession of weakness. To neutralize that effect as much as possible, he sought out the rebels once more, struck a decisive blow, and made them feel that in military prowess they were no match for British troops.

Even at Cawnpore, to which Havelock led back his little army, he had to fight for existence. With the hope of the recapture of that city, Nana Sahib had amassed large forces at Bithor in its vicinity. They were the flower of the mutinous soldiery. They occupied one of the strongest positions in India. Havelock's men were weak and wasted by disease—dying at a rate, which in six weeks would not have left a single man—but, without time for repose, he threw them against the rebel forces at Bithor. The Sepoys fought with obstinate fury. They stood their ground in the presence of artillery and musketry fire; but when the bayonets charged they speedily gave way. With the exhausted condition of the British, and the strong position they occupied, the rebels, if determined, might have made a successful stand; but their hearts failed and they fled. “There is something in the sight of Europeans advancing at a run, with stern visage, bayonets fixed, determination marked in every movement of the body, which appals them; they cannot stand it—they never have stood it yet.”*

That day Nana Sahib's power received its most fatal blow. In his strength he had been no match for Havelock's weakness. Henceforth no one could doubt the result. The spectacle of that little band of soldiers; isolated in the midst of revolted provinces; surrounded by hostile population; press-

* The Indian Mutiny.