

APPENDIX N

SEVERE IMPRISONMENT

Once Col. Hogge took Jawan Bakht, a youth of 17, for airing against the Prison Rules. He was called to account. A letter from Saunders to Edmonstone, Secretary to the Government of India, dated 20th. January 1858, explains the circumstances in which he allowed Hogge to do so.

Extracts from the said letter

Says Saunders, 'I remembered that the Sikh chieftains, Chutter Singh and Sher Singh the leaders in the last Sikh campaign who were sent down in strict confinement as State Prisoners to Calcutta were allowed by the Governor-General to go out daily for an airing in carriage attended by a European, and I was of opinion that a similar practice in the present instance would not have been forbidden. . . .

'The chief and in fact the only reason why Jawan Bakht was allowed to go out for an airing upon the elephant was to elicit information from him regarding the war. In a demi-official letter which I received from Sir John Lawrence, dated the 24th September 1857, four days after the surrender of the king occurred the following passage, 'Try and get out of the king now that he is alarmed all that you can. Tell him that much will depend upon his making a clean breast'. In compliance with these instructions I endeavoured to elicit from the king and his more loquacious consort Begum Zinat Mahal the information I could obtain from them, but I found it very difficult to gather anything of any value from their conversation, their chief object

evidently being to avoid incriminating themselves and at the same time to endeavour as little as possible to inculcate others. With Jawan Bakht the case was different. In the presence of his parents he was perfectly taciturn on all subjects on which we desired to obtain information. He, however, gave us to understand that if he were allowed to go out for an airing he could tell us anything we wished to know. He kept his word and a great deal of useful and important information¹ was elicited from him on subjects bearing upon the Mutiny, the conduct of the War and the complicity of the native chiefs in the Rebellion.

No honours were shown to him or to any other member of his family. It certainly never occurred to me when Col. Hogge obtained my permission to take Jawan Bakht out for an airing that any distinction was likely to be conferred upon him thereby in the eyes of the natives while perambulating the desolate streets of Delhi deserted by almost every living being except a few stray cats in a state of starvation, the dead bodies of our enemies and here and there a guard of our victorious troops'.²

Commissioner's Office, Delhi. Sd. C. B. Saunders,
The 26th January 1858. Offg. Commissioner.

¹ No trace of this information could be had even after a careful study that I made of the whole file.

² Secret Cons. No. 68 of 31st December, 1858.