

# THE DISTURBANCES AT PORTSMOUTH NAVAL BARRACKS.

## FURTHER SENTENCES.

The Courts-martial upon the stokers charged with having taken part in the disturbances at Portsmouth Naval Barracks were continued yesterday. The first prisoner tried was Joseph Scragg Leigh, second-class stoker, who was charged with having on November 4 incited the stokers to join in a mutinous assembly. The Court was constituted as follows:—REAR-ADMIRAL A. L. WINSLOE, C.M.G. (president), COMMODORE F. T. HAMILTON, A.D.C. (H.M.S. Excellent), CAPTAIN M. H. SMYTH (H.M.S. Research), CAPTAIN R. G. FRASER (H.M.S. Majestic), CAPTAIN H. L. TOTTENHAM (H.M.S. Mars), CAPTAIN E. C. T. TROUBRIDGE, C.M.G. (H.M.S. Glory), CAPTAIN H. H. TORLESSE (H.M.S. Aboakir), CAPTAIN W. B. FAWCKNER (H.M.S. Crossy), and CAPTAIN R. A. ALLENBY (H.M.S. Centurion). PAYMASTER-IN-CHIEF (retired) C. E. GIFFORD, C.B., was Deputy Judge Advocate, assisted by FLEET PAYMASTER W. LE GEYT PULLEN (by Admiralty order). Commodore C. J. Briggs (H.M.S. Vernon) was the prosecutor; Engineer Sub-Lieutenant Charles S. Bell appeared as prisoner's friend.

The circumstantial letter stated that on Sunday night, November 4, the Commodore, while addressing the stokers, was much interrupted by some of the men, among whom was Leigh, who was in the front rank of the rioters shouting and making a noise. Leigh incited the men not to obey the orders of the Commodore to return to their blocks.

Chief Petty Officer Patrick Brady, of H.M.S. Dreadnought, stated that he was in the barracks on Sunday night, November 4. During the disturbance he saw the prisoner in the centre of a group of stokers. When the Commodore ordered the men to turn in the prisoner shouted, "Stand fast, men, stand fast; don't go until you get satisfaction."

Petty Officer Carr gave evidence to the same effect, and in reply to the prisoner said he did not particularly notice that any one of the men around the Commodore was worse than others. He recognized the prisoner as one of them, and, while there was a great deal of noise, he knew that Leigh was interrupting by the movement of his lips and waving of his hands.

By the COURT.—He considered that the cries of the prisoner were calculated to incite the men to acts of insubordination.

The prisoner, in his written defence, stated that he was in the canteen until 9.30, when he went to his room. When the bugle sounded to mobilize he went to the parade ground and fell in quietly in the usual place on the left of the front rank, and not in the centre. He was about 20 yards from the Commodore, and nowhere near Lieutenant Cowan and Chief Petty Officer Carr. He never made any noise at any time. There was considerable disturbance while the Commodore was speaking, and Chief Petty Officer Brady approached him and asked what the bother was. The prisoner told him it was about going down on the knee, and the officer then went away without further remark. One or more men were arrested, while parties were being marched off to the blocks, and that still further excited the men, who began to hoot. He saw that if he remained there he would stand a chance of being implicated in the disturbance, so he made the best of his way to his room. He did not use the words attributed to him.

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The prisoner also gave evidence on oath. When they went to evening quarters, he said, the seamen and signalmen were dismissed to carry on in the drill-hall. It was pouring at the time, and Lieutenant Collard brought them to attention and gave the order "Left wheel, double," to the gymnasium to unrig church. They did so, and then went into their blocks, but the stokers were ordered to fall in again, and as they did so the seamen and signalmen were dismissed. The stokers were then brought to attention by Lieutenant Collard and ordered to go "on the knee." The first time the stokers would not obey, and Lieutenant Collard said if they did not go on the knee he would put all the stokers in the cells. He gave the order, "Will you go down on the knee?" Chief stokers and petty officers were advising them to go down on the knee, so they went down. They were then dismissed.

In cross-examination the prisoner said he had not heard much discussion about this order "On the knee," and he had not heard any exception taken to it.

The PRESIDENT.—Did not you object to the order "On the knee" when you were in the gymnasium?—Yes, Sir, the first time. I could not see why I should do it. I was "booted" at for going down. The witness entered his name to see the Commodore on the Sunday night on a paper brought to him by a man, and he did not know who the man was. The man, in asking them to sign, said, "Come on, messmates, don't be hard, don't let us be put on."

The Prosecutor.—Before this man spoke to you did you think you had a grievance about the order?—No, Sir; I never had any cause of complaint against any one in the barracks, as I have always been treated all right.

Stoker John Smith gave corroborative evidence, and in cross-examination said he did not object to the order or to the way it was given. He had not heard the men discussing the matter as an order which should not be given.

Stoker Sidney Rufus, in cross-examination, said the order "On the knee" was not given on the Sunday in the tone orders generally were. He did not feel aggrieved about it, and he had had no cause of complaint.

By the COURT.—The stokers in class were given the order on the previous Thursday by the same lieutenant as on the Sunday in the gymnasium. Because they were restless two ranks were ordered on the knee while the others were dismissed. The class afterwards discussed it, and said it was not right that they should have to go on the knee in the square.

Charles Booker also gave evidence as to the order "On the knee" given on the Thursday before Sunday, November 4. No complaint was made. He had heard one or two stokers discussing the order before this occasion and saying that they did not like it. He did not think it had been brought before the notice of the authorities. He did not think there would be any difficulty in seeing the Commodore.

The prisoner's character was stated to be "very good," with no entry on the defaulters' sheet. He was adjudged to be imprisoned for nine months with hard labour.

At the fifth Court-martial, constituted as above, Bernard Colclough, stoker, second class, pleaded "Guilty" to an act to the prejudice of good order and naval discipline in behaving in a disorderly and riotous manner at the barracks, and to an act prejudicial to good order and naval discipline in behaving in a disorderly and riotous manner in the Edinburgh-road, Portsea, outside

the barracks. The prisoner's friend, Mr. Webb, solicitor, read a statement in mitigation of punishment, in which he pleaded his ignorance of naval discipline. The prisoner had entered in February, 1906, for 12 years. His defaulters' sheet was clear and had "very good conduct, recommended for advancement." He was sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

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