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RULERS OF INDIA

Edited by

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RULERS OF INDIA

LORD CLIVE

by

COLONEL G. B. MALLESON, C.S.I.

Oxford

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{5}

PREFACE

The following list represents the works of the last century which I

have consulted to write this \_Life of Lord Clive\_:

Orme's \_History of Indostan\_ (original edition); \_The Siyaru-l

Muta-akherin\_ of Ghulám Husain Khán (Review of Modern Times),

translated copy; Cambridge's \_War in India\_ (containing the Journal

of Stringer Lawrence); \_The Memoir of Dupleix\_ (in French); Grose's

\_Voyage to the East Indies\_; Ive's \_Voyage and Historical Narrative\_;

\_Transactions in India from the commencement of the French War in

1756\_ (published in 1786); Caraccioli's \_Life of Lord Clive\_;

Vansittart's \_Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal\_; Ironside's

\_Narrative of the Military Transactions in Bengal in 1760-1\_;

Verelst's \_English Government in Bengal\_; some numbers of the

\_Asiatic Annual Register\_; Kindersley's \_Letters\_; and Scrafton's

\_Letters\_; and, for the earlier period--that displaying the period

immediately preceding and following the dawn of genius--the recently

written extracts from the Madras records by Mr. G. W. Forrest.

Of works of scarcely less value published during the present century,

I have consulted the admirable volumes by Colonel Mark Wilks, which

bring the \_History of Southern India\_ down to the storming of

Seringapatam in 1799; \_The Journal of Captain Dalton\_, {6}one of the

heroes of Trichinopoli, written at the period of Clive's early

victories, but only given to the world, with a memoir of his career,

in 1886; Lord Stanhope's \_History of England\_; Malcolm's \_Life of

Clive\_; and above all, that mine of wealth to a searcher into the

details of Clive's services in Bengal, Colonel Broome's \_History of

the Bengal Army\_. Colonel Broome was my intimate and valued friend.

He knew more about the history of the rise of the English in India

than any man I ever met. He had made the subject a life-study. He had

read every tract, however old, every letter, however difficult to

decipher, every record of the period up to and beyond the time of Job

Charnock, and he was a past-master of his subject. He had collected

an enormous mass of materials, the more bulky of which were dispersed

at his untimely death. But I have seen and handled them, and I can

state most positively, from my own knowledge, that every item of

importance culled from them is contained in the admirable volume to

which I have referred, and which was published in 1850. There is,

alas, only that volume. Colonel Broome had set apart a vast mass of

materials for his second, and had resolved to complete the work at

Simla, to which place he was proceeding for the summer of, I think,

1870. But, in the course of transit, the box containing the materials

was mysteriously spirited away, and I have not heard that it was ever

found. From the nature of the documents collected I cannot but regard

the loss as irreparable.

G. B. MALLESON.

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\_NOTE\_

The orthography of proper names follows the system adopted by the

Indian Government for the \_Imperial Gazetteer of India\_. That system,

while adhering to the popular spelling of very well-known places,

such as Punjab, Poona, Deccan, &c., employs in all other cases the

vowels with the following uniform sounds:--

\_a\_, as in wom\_a\_n: \_á\_, as in f\_a\_ther: \_i\_, as in k\_i\_n: \_í\_, as in

intr\_i\_gue: \_o\_, as in c\_o\_ld: \_u\_, as in b\_u\_ll: \_ú\_, as in r\_u\_ral.

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LORD CLIVE

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

Towards the close of the year 1744 there landed at Madras, as writer

in the service of the East India Company, a young Englishman just

entering the twentieth year of his existence, named Robert Clive.

The earlier years of the life of this young man had not been

promising. Born at Styche, near Market Drayton, in Shropshire, he had

been sent, when three years old, to be cared for and educated at

Manchester, by a gentleman who had married his mother's sister, Mr.

Bayley of Hope Hall. The reason for this arrangement, at an age so

tender, is not known. One seeks for it in vain in the conduct and

character of his parents; for although his father is described as

irascible and violent, his mother was remarkable for her good sense

and sweet temper. To her, Clive was wont to say, he owed more than to

all his schools. But he could have seen but little of her in those

early days, for his home was always with the Bayleys, even after the

death of Mr. Bayley, and he was ever treated {10}there with kindness

and consideration. After one or two severe illnesses, which, it is

said, affected his constitution in after life, the young Robert,

still of tender years, was sent to Dr. Eaton's private school at

Lostocke in Cheshire: thence, at eleven, he was removed to Mr.

Burslem's at Market Drayton. With this gentleman he remained a few

years, and was then sent to have a brief experience of a public

school at Merchant Taylors'. Finally, he went to study at a private

school kept by Mr. Sterling in Hertfordshire. There he remained

until, in 1743, he was nominated to be a writer in the service of the

East India Company.

The chief characteristics of Robert Clive at his several schools had

been boldness and insubordination. He would not learn; he belonged to

a 'fighting caste'; he was the leader in all the broils and escapades

of schoolboy life; the terror of the masters; the spoiled darling of

his schoolmates. He learned, at all events, how to lead: for he was

daring even to recklessness; never lost his head; was calmest when

the danger was greatest; and displayed in a hundred ways his

predilection for a career of action.

It is not surprising, then, that he showed the strongest aversion to

devote himself to the study which would have qualified him to follow

his father's profession. A seat at an attorney's desk, and the

drudgery of an attorney's life, were to him as distasteful as they

proved to be, at a later period, to the eldest son of Isaac Disraeli.

He would have a career which promised action. If such were not open

to him {11}in his native land, he would seek for it in other parts of

the world. When, then, his father, who had some interest, and who had

but small belief in his eldest son, procured for him the appointment

of writer in the service of the East India Company, Robert Clive

accepted it with avidity.

Probably if he had had the smallest idea of the nature of the duties

which were associated with that office, he would have refused it with

scorn. He panted, I have said, for a life of action: he accepted a

career which was drudgery under a tropical sun, in its most

uninteresting form. The Company in whose service he entered was

simply a trading corporation. Its territory in India consisted of but

a few square miles round the factories its agents had established,

and for which they paid an annual rental to the native governments.

They had but a small force, composed principally of the children of

the soil, insufficiently armed, whose chief duties were escort duties

and the manning of the ill-constructed forts which protected the

Company's warehouses. The idea of aggressive warfare had never

entered the heads even of the boldest of the English agents. They

recognized the native ruler of the province in which lay their

factories as their overlord, and they were content to hold their

lands from him on the condition of protection on his part, and of

good behaviour and punctual payment of rent on their own. For the

combative energies of a young man such as Robert Clive there was

absolutely no field on Indian soil. The duties devolving on a writer

were {12}the duties of a clerk; to keep accounts; to take stock; to

make advances; to ship cargoes; to see that no infringement of the

Company's monopoly should occur. He was poorly paid; his life was a

life of dull routine; and, although after many years of toil the

senior clerks were sometimes permitted to trade on their own account

and thus to make large fortunes, the opportunity rarely came until

after many years of continuous suffering, and then generally when the

climate had exhausted the man's energies.

To a young man of the nature of Robert Clive such a life could not be

congenial. And, in fact, he hated it from the outset. He had left

England early in 1743; his voyage had been long and tiring: the ship

on which he sailed had put in at Rio, and was detained there nine

months; it remained anchored for a shorter period in St. Simon's Bay;

and finally reached Madras only at the close of 1744. The delays thus

occurring completely exhausted the funds of the young writer: he was

forced to borrow at heavy interest from the captain: the friend at

Madras, to whom he had letters of introduction, had quitted that

place. The solitary compensating advantage was this, that his stay at

Rio had enabled him to pick up a smattering of Portuguese.

We see him, at length arrived, entering upon those hard and

uninteresting duties to undertake which he had refused a life of far

less drudgery in England in a congenial climate and under a sun more

to be desired than dreaded. Cast loose in the profession he had

{13}selected, separated from relatives and friends, he had no choice

but to enter upon the work allotted to him. This he did sullenly and

with no enthusiasm. How painful was even this perfunctory

performance; how keenly he felt the degradation--for such he deemed

it--may be judged from the fact recorded by his contemporaries and

accepted by the world, that for a long time he held aloof from his

companions and his superiors. These in their turn ceased after a time

to notice a young man so resolute to shun them. And although with

time came an approach to intercourse, there never was cordiality. It

is doubtful, however, whether in this description there has not

mingled more than a grain of exaggeration. We have been told of his

wayward nature: we have read how he insulted a superior functionary,

and when ordered by the Governor to apologize, complied with the

worst possible grace: how, when the pacified superior, wishing to

heal the breach, asked him to dinner, he refused with the words that

although the Governor had ordered him to apologize, he did not

command him to dine with him: how, one day, weary of his monotonous

existence, and suffering from impecuniosity, he twice snapped a

loaded pistol at his head; how, on both occasions, there was a

misfire; how, shortly afterwards, a companion, entering the room, at

Clive's request pointed the pistol outside the window and pulled the

trigger; how the powder ignited, and how then Clive, jumping to his

feet, exclaimed, 'I feel I am reserved for better things.'

{14}These stories have been told with an iteration which would seem

to stamp them as beyond contradiction. But the publication of Mr.

Forrest's records of the Madras Presidency (1890) presents a view

altogether different. The reader must understand that the Board at

Fort St. David--at that time the ruling Board in the Madras

Presidency--is reporting, for transmission to Europe, an account of a

complaint of assault made by the Rev. Mr. Fordyce against Clive.

It would appear from this that Mr. Fordyce was a coward and a bully,

besides being in many other respects an utterly unfit member of

society. It had come to Clive's ears that this man had said of him,

in the presence of others, that he, Clive, was a coward and a

scoundrel; that the reverend gentleman had shaken his cane over him

in the presence of Mr. Levy Moses; and had told Captain Cope that he

would break every bone in his (Clive's) skin. In his deposition Clive

stated that these repeated abuses so irritated him, 'that he could

not forbear, on meeting Mr. Fordyce at Cuddalore, to reproach him

with his behaviour, which, he told him, was so injurious he could

bear it no longer, and thereupon struck him two or three times with

his cane, which, at last Mr. Fordyce returned and then closed in with

him, but that they were presently parted by Captain Lucas.'

The Board, in giving its judgement on the case, recapitulated the

many offences committed by Mr. Fordyce, the great provocation he had

given to Clive, and suspended him. With regard to Clive they

{15}recorded: 'lest the same,' the attack on Fordyce, 'should be to

Mr. Clive's prejudice, we think it not improper to assure you that he

is generally esteemed a very quiet person and no ways guilty of

disturbances.' It is to be inferred from this account that, far from

deserving the character popularly assigned to him, Clive, in the

third year of his residence in India, was regarded by his superiors

as a very quiet member of society.

Still, neither the climate nor the profession suited him. 'I have not

enjoyed,' he wrote to one of his cousins, 'a happy day since I left

my native country.' In other letters he showed how he repented

bitterly of having chosen a career so uncongenial. Gradually,

however, he realized the folly of kicking against the pricks. He

associated more freely with his colleagues, and when the Governor,

Mr. Morse, sympathizing with the young man eating out his heart from

ennui, opened to him the door of his considerable library, he found

some relief to his sufferings. These, at last, had reached their

term. Before Clive had exhausted all the books thus placed at his

disposal, events occurred which speedily opened to him the career for

which he had panted.

{16}

CHAPTER II

SOUTHERN INDIA IN 1744

It will contribute to the better understanding of the narrative of

the events which plunged the English into war in 1745, if we take a

bird's-eye view of the peninsula generally, particularly of the

southern portion, as it appeared in the year preceding.

Of India generally it is sufficient to say that from the year 1707,

when the Emperor Aurangzeb died, authority had been relaxing to an

extent which was rapidly bringing about the disruption of the bonds

that held society together. The invasion of Nadír Sháh followed by

the sack of Delhi in 1739 had given the Mughal dynasty a blow from

which it never rallied. Thenceforward until 1761, when the third

battle of Pánípat completed the catastrophe, the anarchy was almost

universal. Authority was to the strongest. The Sallustian motto,

'Alieni appetens sui profusus,' was the rule of almost every noble;

the agriculturists had everywhere abundant reason to realize 'that

the buffalo was to the man who held the bludgeon.'[1]

[Footnote 1: The late Lord Lawrence used to tell me that when he was

Acting Magistrate and Collector of Pánípat in 1836, the natives were

in the habit of describing the lawlessness of the period which ceased

in 1818 by using the expressive phrase I have quoted.]

{17}The disorder had extended to the part of India south of the

Vindhyan range which was then known under the comprehensive term of

the Deccan. When Aurangzeb had conquered many Súbahs, or provinces,

of Southern India, he had placed them under one officer, to be

nominated by the Court of Delhi, and to be called Súbahdár, or chief

of the province. As disorder spread after his death the Súbahdárs and

inferior chiefs generally began to secure themselves in the provinces

they administered. The invasion of Nadír Sháh made the task generally

easy. In the Deccan especially, Chin Kílich Khán, the chief of a

family which had served with consideration under Akbar and his

successors, whose father had been a favourite of Aurangzeb, who had

himself served under that sovereign, and who had obtained from the

successors of Aurangzeb the titles of Nizám-ul-Múlk and Asaf Jáh,

took steps to make the Súbahdárship of Southern India hereditary in

his family. The territories comprehended under the term 'Deccan' did

not, it must be understood, include the whole of Southern India.

Mysore, Travancore, Cochin were independent. But they comprehended

the whole of the territories known now as appertaining to the Nizám,

with some additions; the country known as the 'Northern Circárs'; and

the Karnátik.

But the Karnátik was not immediately under the government of the

Súbahdár. It was a subordinate territory, entrusted to a Nawáb,

bounded to the north by the river Gundlakamma; on the west by the

chain {18}of mountains which separate it from Mysore; to the south by

the possessions of the same kingdom (as it then was) and by Tanjore;

to the east by the sea. I have not mentioned the kingdom of

Trichinopoli to the south, for the Nawábs of the Karnátik claimed

that as their own, and, as we shall see, had occupied the fortress of

that name during the period, prior to 1744, of which I am writing.

It will be seen then, that, at this period, whilst the nominal ruler

of the Deccan was Chin Kílich Khán, better known as Nizám-ul-Múlk, as

I shall hereafter style him, the Nawáb of the Karnátik, who ruled the

lands bordering on the sea, including the English settlement of

Madras and the French settlement of Pondicherry, was a very powerful

subordinate. The office he held had likewise come to be regarded as

hereditary. And it was through the failure of the hereditary line,

that the troubles came, which gave to Robert Clive the opportunity to

develop the qualities which lay dormant within him.

Before I proceed to describe those events, it seems advisable to say

a few words regarding the two settlements to which I have just

referred; of the principles which actuated their chiefs; and of the

causes which brought them into collision.

The English had made a first settlement on the Coromandel coast in

the year 1625 at a small place, some thirty-six miles to the south of

Madras, known now as Armagon. Seven years later they obtained from

the Rájá of Bisnagar a small grant of land, called {19}by the natives

Chennapatanam from the village contained thereon. They re-named the

place Madras, and built there a fort round their storehouses which

they named Fort St. George. In 1653 the Company in London raised the

agency at Madras to the position and rank of a Presidency. Towards

the end of the seventeenth century the establishment there counted a

population of 300,000 souls. In 1744 the town consisted of three

divisions: that to the south (the White Town) extending about four

hundred yards in length from north to south, and about one hundred

yards in breadth. There resided the Europeans, mainly English. They

had there about fifty houses, two churches, one of them Catholic;

likewise the residence of the chief of the factory. All these were

within the enclosure called Fort St. George. That somewhat pompous

title represented merely a slender wall, defended by four bastions

and as many batteries, very slight and defective in their

construction, and with no outworks to defend them. This division was

generally known as the 'White Town.' To the north of it, and

contiguous, was another division, much larger and worse fortified,

principally tenanted by Armenian and Indian merchants, called the

Black Town. Beyond this, again to the north, was a suburb, where the

poorer natives resided. These three divisions formed Madras. There

were likewise to the south, about a mile distant from the White Town,

two other large villages, inhabited solely by natives; but these were

not included within that term. The English at this period did not

exceed {20}three hundred in number, and of these two-thirds were

soldiers, but few of whom had seen a shot fired.[2]

[Footnote 2: Vide Orme's \_History of Indostan\_ (Edition 1773), vol.

i. p. 65.]

The English colony in Madras was a trading colony. Not one of its

members, up to this period, had the smallest thought of embroiling

their presidency in the disputes which were frequent amongst the

native chieftains. They wished to be let alone; to remain at peace;

to conciliate friendship and goodwill. They were content to

acknowledge the lords of the soil as their masters; to pay for the

protection they enjoyed at their hands by a willing obedience; to

ward off their anger by apologies and presents.

But there was a French colony also on the same coast, and in that a

different policy had begun to prevail. In the year 1672 the King of

Bíjapur had sold to some French traders, led by a very remarkable

man, Francis Martin, a tract of land on the Coromandel coast,

eighty-six miles to the south-south-west of Madras. On this tract,

close to the sea, was a little village called by the natives

Puducheri. This the French settlers enlarged and beautified, and made

their chief place of residence and trade. By degrees the name was

corrupted to Pondicherry, a title under which it became famous, and

under which it is still known.

So long as M. Martin lived, the policy of the French settlers was

similar to that of the English at Madras. Nor did it immediately

change when Martin died (December 30, 1706). Up to 1735, when M.

Benoit {21}Dumas was appointed Governor-General of the French

possessions in India (for they had besides possessions on the Malabar

coast and at Chandranagar, on the Húglí, in Bengal) it was in no way

departed from. M. Dumas, however, almost immediately after his

assumption of office, adopted the policy of allying himself closely

with native princes; of taking part in their wars; with the view of

reaping therefrom territorial and pecuniary advantage. This policy,

of which he was the inventor, was, we shall see, carried to the most

extreme length by his successor, M. Dupleix.

It will clear the ground for the reader if we add that the prosperity

of the rival settlements was greatly affected by the action of their

respective principals in Europe. On this point all the advantages lay

with the English. For, whilst the Company of the Indies at Paris,

and, it must be added, the French Government likewise, starved their

dependency in India, and supplied them with inefficient and often

ill-timed assistance, the East India Company, and the Government of

the King of England, made a far better provision for the necessities

of Madras.

It must, however, in candour be admitted that at the outset the

French were better supplied with men and money than the English.

Until the importance of the quarrel was recognized in Europe it

became then a contest between the natural qualities of the men on the

spot--a test of the capabilities of the races they represented.

{22}I turn now, after this brief explanation of the position in

Southern India in 1744, to describe the causes which led to the

catastrophe which supervened very shortly after the arrival in India

of the hero of this history.

{23}

CHAPTER III

HOW THE WAR IN THE KARNÁTIK AFFECTED THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH

SETTLEMENTS

The trouble came from the Karnátik. The family of the chief who had

held the position of Nawáb at the time of the death of Aurangzeb had

adopted the new fashion, then becoming universal, of making the post

hereditary in his family. Saádat-ullá Khán, the Nawáb in question,

had himself been regularly appointed in 1710 by the court of Delhi.

After a peaceful rule of twenty-two years he had died (1732) without

issue, after having appointed his nephew, Dost Alí, to succeed him as

Nawáb, the younger brother of Dost Alí, Bakar Alí, to be governor of

the fort and district of Vellore; and Ghulám Husén, the nephew of his

favourite wife, better known as Chánda Sáhib, to be Diwán, or prime

minister, to his successor.

These dispositions were carried out. But they were by no means

pleasing to the Súbahdár of the Deccan, the Nizám-ul-Múlk to whom the

reader has been introduced. That eminent nobleman was not content

that his subordinates should act as he was prepared to act himself.

His sanction had not been {24}obtained to the transaction. He used

then his influence at Delhi to prevent the confirmation which, even

in those disturbed times, every chieftain sought to obtain for every

act of spoliation. For the moment he proceeded no further. He was

content to leave Dost Alí in the position of a nobleman ruling

without the authority of his liege lord, himself, or of the master of

both, the court of Delhi.

Nizám-ul-Múlk had justly thought that time would avenge him. Four

years after his accession, the death of the ruler of Trichinopoli

induced Dost Alí to send an army under his son Safdar Alí and his

Diwán Chánda Sáhib, to capture that fortress. Under the pretence of

collecting revenue these two princes visited Madras and Pondicherry

in their progress southwards, and at the latter place Chánda Sáhib

entered into those intimate relations with the French which were to

influence greatly the events which were to follow. They proceeded

thence to Trichinopoli and took possession of the fortress, the

widowed queen having, it is said, fallen in love with Chánda Sáhib.

The latter remained there as governor, whilst Safdar Alí returned to

his father at Arcot.

The new Diwán appointed in the place of Chánda Sáhib, Mír Ásad, began

at once to insinuate charges of ambition against his predecessor, and

expressed his opinion that Chánda Sáhib, once ruler of Trichinopoli,

would not easily let go his hold. In this opinion he was supported by

the Nawáb's eldest son, Safdar Jang. Doubtless they were right, but

their {25}utterances, freely expressed, served only to put Chánda

Sáhib on his guard; and he commenced to store the fortress with

provisions.

The acquisition of Trichinopoli by the Nawáb of the Karnátik had

served only to inflame the mind of his liege lord, Nizám-ul-Múlk,

against him. For a time, however, the disorders in Northern India,

the threatened invasion of Nadír Sháh, and, finally, that invasion,

held his hand. At last, however, his wrath over-mastered his

judgement, and, in 1739, at the very time when the invasion of Nadír

Sháh was in full swing, he gave permission to the Maráthás to attack

Trichinopoli. In May of the following year, 1740, consequently, a

Maráthá army of 10,000 men, led by Raghují Bhonsla, entered the

Karnátik, met the hurriedly raised force of Dost Alí at the

Damalcherri Pass, defeated it with great slaughter, and took prisoner

the Diwán, Mír Ásad. Dost Alí was among the slain. The victors, then,

listening to the persuasions of their prisoner, the Diwán, agreed to

quit the province on receiving a payment, at stated intervals, of a

total sum of ten million of rupees. Safdar Alí was then proclaimed

Nawáb at Arcot, and Chánda Sáhib proceeded thither to do him homage.

During the preceding two years the French governor of Pondicherry, M.

Dumas, had so strengthened the fortifications of that town, that it

had come to be regarded by the natives as impregnable. During the

Maráthá invasion, then, Chánda Sáhib {26}had sent thither his family,

and his example had been followed by Safdar Alí. After the

installation of the latter at Arcot, the two princes proceeded to

visit the French governor, who gave them a magnificent reception. On

leaving, Safdar Alí took with him his family, whilst Chánda Sáhib,

still suspecting danger, directed his own wives to remain at

Pondicherry until events should more clearly develop themselves.

He had not to wait long. Safdar Alí, jealous of his prosperity, had

induced the Maráthás, never unwilling, to make a fresh incursion into

the Karnátik, and to dispose of Chánda Sáhib. In December of the same

year then, just four years before Clive landed in India, those

warriors entered the province, so deceived Chánda Sáhib as to induce

him to sell them the ample stores of grain he had collected, and, as

soon as they had received them, laid siege to Trichinopoli. Chánda

Sáhib sustained a siege of nearly three months with great resolution,

but then, his remaining stores of grain having been exhausted, was

forced to surrender (March 26, 1741). The Maráthás, having plundered

the town, departed for Sátára, taking with them Chánda Sáhib in close

custody, and leaving one of their most famous leaders, of whom we

shall hear further, Morári Ráo, with 14,000 of their best troops, to

guard the place, and to act as discretion or greed might suggest.

The events I have recorded had encouraged among the nobles of the

province a spirit of disorder in {27}sympathy with the times. No man

felt quite safe. Safdar Alí himself, but half reassured, sent for

safety his family to the custody of the English at Madras, whilst,

quitting the comparatively defenceless Arcot, he took up his abode in

the strong fortress of Vellore. There his treasures had been stored,

and there Murtizá Alí, who had married his sister, was governor. This

man was treacherous, cowardly, and very ambitious. No sooner had he

understood that his relationship by marriage did not shield him from

the payment of money due to the Nawáb, than he proceeded to debauch

the army, and to enlist on his side the neighbouring nobles. He then

poisoned his brother-in-law. The poison not taking immediate effect,

he persuaded a Patán to stab the Nawáb to the heart. He then declared

himself Nawáb.

He was proclaimed alike at Vellore and Arcot. But his usurpation did

not last long. Even in those days there was a public conscience, and

the murder he had committed had been too brutal not to arouse

indignation. The army rose against him. Fearing for his life, he

disguised himself in woman's clothes, and escaped to Vellore.

On the flight of Murtizá Alí becoming known the army proclaimed

Saiyud Muhammad Khán, the son of Safdar Alí, then residing at Madras

under the protection of the English, to be Nawáb. The young prince

and his mother were at once removed to the fort of Wandiwash, the

ruler of which had married his father's sister.

{28}It was this moment that Nizám-ul-Múlk chose as the time to

intervene. Entering Arcot at the head of a large army (March, 1743)

he completely pacified the province; then, marching on Trichinopoli,

compelled the Maráthás to yield it and to evacuate the Karnátik.

Possessing himself of the person of the newly proclaimed Nawáb, whom

he declined to recognize, he proclaimed his own commander-in-chief,

Khojá Abdullah, to be Nawáb of the Karnátik, and then returned to

Golconda.

Unfortunately for the peace of the province Khojá Abdullah, a strong

man, never took up the government of the Karnátik. He had returned

with his master to Golconda, and had made there his preparations to

set out. On the very morning which he had chosen for that purpose he

was found dead in his bed. It was clear that he had been poisoned.

Suspicion fell at once upon the nobleman who had originally been an

urgent candidate for the office, and who now obtained it. He was an

experienced soldier of good family, whose name was Anwar-ud-dín.

Nizám-ul-Múlk knew that the appointment would not be popular in the

province so long as there should remain alive any member of the

family of Saádat-ullá. He had therefore announced that the

appointment of Anwar-ud-dín was provisional, and that the young

prince, Saiyud Muhammad, already proclaimed Nawáb, should succeed to

that post on his arriving at the age of manhood, remaining during the

interval under the guardianship of Anwar-ud-dín, {29}to be by him

instructed in the art of governing. Anwar-ud-dín promised to carry

out the will of his liege lord, and on his arrival in the Karnátik,

assigned to the young prince the fort of Arcot, with a sufficient

retinue of Patán soldiers. There the boy remained, treated with the

deference due to his position.

But he was doomed. A few weeks after his arrival at Arcot it devolved

upon him to preside at the wedding of one of his near relations.

Amongst those who came to the ceremony was the murderer of his

father, Murtizá Alí, laden with presents for the bridegroom. Strange

as it may seem, the murderer was courteously received. But shortly

after his entrance within the fort an unseemly disturbance was

created by the disorderly entrance into the presence of thirteen

Patán soldiers, who insolently demanded payment of the arrears they

alleged to be due to them. With some difficulty they were forcibly

ejected. But in the evening, as Anwar-ud-dín approached, attended by

his courtiers and preceded by his guards, these thirteen Patáns

managed to mingle with the latter, and one of them, rushing towards

the daïs on which was the chair occupied by the young prince,

ascended the steps leading to it, and, in a supplicatory attitude,

made as though he would throw himself at his feet and demand pardon

for the offence of the morning. But instead of this he plunged his

dagger, which he had concealed on his person, into the prince's

heart. He was almost instantly cut down by the attendants. The

confusion was extreme. Suddenly it was {30}discovered that Murtizá

Alí had quitted the fort, had mounted his horse, and, accompanied by

his armed followers, had galloped towards Vellore. Suspicion

naturally fell upon this proved murderer, and the nobles generally

endeavoured to exculpate themselves at his expense.

But suspicion fell likewise upon Anwar-ud-dín. Who, so much as he,

would benefit by the death of Saiyud Muhammad? He was practically

only guardian to the young prince, bound to resign his office as soon

as the latter should attain his majority. Nor were these suspicions

lessened when it was found that Nizám-ul-Múlk at once transmitted to

Anwar-ud-dín a complete commission as Nawáb of Arcot. Vainly did the

Nawáb deny all complicity in the bloody deed. Murtizá Alí was silent.

'It was supposed,' wrote Mr. Orme, 'that the only proofs he could

have brought against Anwar-ud-dín would at the same time have

condemned himself.' And this probably was true.

Such then was the political position in Southern India when Clive

landed at Madras in 1744. The titular Emperor of Delhi was Muhammad

Sháh, still reeling under the consequences of the invasion of Nadír

Sháh and the sack of Delhi but five short years previously. The

Súbahdár of the Deccan was still Nizám-ul-Múlk, possessing sufficient

influence to have secured the succession in Southern India for his

second son, Nasír Jang.[1] The Nawáb of the Karnátik, {31}styled

officially, of Arcot, was a stranger to the province, the unpopular

and suspected Anwar-ud-dín. His authority there was not very secure.

There were many pretenders waiting for the first mishap: amongst them

his confederate in the murder of Saiyud Muhammad; Chánda Sáhib, still

in confinement at Sátára; and many others. The elements of danger

abounded everywhere. There were few petty chiefs who did not dub

themselves 'Nawábs,' and aspire to positions higher than those held

by them at the moment. The match alone was wanting to produce a

general flame.

[Footnote 1: Elliot's \_History of India as told by its own

Historians\_, vol. viii. p. 113.]

Under ordinary circumstances this state of affairs would not

necessarily have affected the European settlers on the coast. But for

them, too, the crisis was approaching. In 1740 the death of the

Emperor, Charles VI, had thrown the greater part of Europe into a

blaze. Three years later England had entered the field as an upholder

of the Pragmatic Sanction. The news of this intervention, which

necessitated war with France, reached India towards the close of

1744, and immediately affected the relations towards one another of

the rival settlements on the Coromandel coast.

{32}

CHAPTER IV

HOW THE FORTUNES OF ROBERT CLIVE WERE AFFECTED BY THE HOSTILITIES

BETWEEN THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH IN SOUTHERN INDIA

The events narrated in the second and third chapters must be studied

by the reader who wishes to understand the India of 1744-65--the

India which was to be the field for the exercise of the energies of

the hero of this biography. It was an India, he will see, differing

in all respects from the India of the present day: an India which may

not improperly be termed an Alsatia, in which, as we have seen,

murder was rampant, and every man fought for his own hand. What it

then was it would be again were the English to leave the people to

their own devices.

In the autumn of 1744 the Governor of Pondicherry, M. Dupleix, who

had succeeded Dumas in October, 1741, received a despatch from his

Directors notifying that a war with England was impending; requiring

him to diminish his expenditure; to cease to continue to fortify

Pondicherry; and to act with the greatest caution. A little later

they wrote to say that war had actually been declared, that they had

instructed {33}the Governor of the Isle of France to proceed to the

Indian Seas with a squadron he was preparing; and that they required

him to second that officer, M. de la Bourdonnais, in his enterprise.

Fearing, however, that La Bourdonnais might arrive off the coast only

after some mischief had been done, they specially urged Dupleix to

endeavour to arrange with the Governor of Madras that the war in

Europe should not extend to the two settlements in India.

Similarly, the Governor of Madras, Mr. Morse, had received

information and instructions from his masters. They were, however, of

a nature differing in some respects from those received by the French

authorities. They were to the effect that war had been declared; that

he might at any moment expect the arrival of Commodore Barnett with a

strong squadron off Madras, and that that squadron would be employed

for the annihilation of the French commerce and the destruction of

their possessions. It is easy to see, then, that when Morse received

from the French Governor a proposal that the two settlements should

preserve neutrality, he was compelled to decline it.

Thus threatened, for the reply of Mr. Morse led him to believe that

the English would use their advantage to the utmost, Dupleix appealed

to the common suzerain of the two settlements, to the Nawáb

Anwar-ud-dín. He reminded him of the long-standing friendship between

the rulers of the French settlement and his predecessors; how the

French, in times of danger and difficulty, had ever extended their

hospitality to the {34}Nawábs and their friends; and represented in a

striking manner the disadvantage which must accrue to the rulers of

the Karnátik if the foreign settlements were to be permitted to wage

war upon one another, for the reason that their respective nations

had quarrelled in Europe. The mind of the Nawáb was much impressed by

this cogent reasoning. He had no idea of the fighting qualities of

the settlers. They had up to that time behaved as peaceful traders,

deferential to the lords of the soil. He would that they should

remain so. He therefore informed Mr. Morse that he would not permit

an infraction of the peace between the two nations on the soil of the

Karnátik.

For the moment the plague was stayed. Commodore Barnett's squadron

arrived, intercepted and captured the French merchantmen, but could

not attempt anything against Pondicherry. In April, 1746, Barnett

died, and the command devolved upon Commodore Peyton. In June of the

same year Peyton heard that some French vessels had been seen off

Ceylon. They must be, he thought, the squadron of La Bourdonnais. He

proceeded, then, to cruise off Negapatam to intercept it. On July 6,

the two squadrons came in contact. They fought that afternoon and the

next morning. After an indecisive combat on the 7th, the English

commodore, finding that one of his best ships had sprung a leak,

sheered off, and made sail for Trincomalee, leaving to the Frenchmen

all the honours and advantage of the day. On the evening of the 8th

of July the French squadron anchored off Pondicherry.

{35}The result of the conference between the Admiral of the fleet and

the Governor of Pondicherry was a resolution that the former should

attack Madras, aided by the soldiers supplied by the latter. On the

evening of the 12th of September, 1745, the French fleet sailed for

Madras, arrived within cannon-shot of the English fort on the 15th at

mid-day; La Bourdonnais then landed 1,100 European soldiers, some

sipáhís, and a few Africans, and summoned the place to surrender.

Madras was in no position to resist him. The only chance possessed by

Mr. Morse of saving the fort had lain in his obtaining from the Nawáb

the protection which the latter had afforded to Pondicherry when he

himself had threatened that town. He had applied for that protection,

but in such a manner as to ensure the rejection of his prayer. He had

sent his messenger empty-handed into the presence of Anwar-ud-dín, to

demand as a right the protection which that nobleman had granted to

Dupleix as a favour. The Nawáb, probably waiting for the presents

which, as an Indian prince, he expected from the petitioner, had

given no reply when the fleet of La Bourdonnais appeared before

Madras on the 15th of September.

On the evening of the 19th the Governor sent a messenger to La

Bourdonnais to treat. After much negotiation it was agreed that at

noon of the day at which they had arrived, September 21, Fort St.

George and the town of Madras should be surrendered to the French;

that the English garrison and all the English {36}in the town should

become prisoners of war; that the civil functionaries should be set

free on their parole that they should not carry arms against France

until they should be regularly exchanged. There were other secret

conditions, but it is unnecessary to the narrative to refer to

these.[1]

[Footnote 1: For a correct account of these see the author's \_History

of the French in India\_, a new edition of which is about to appear.]

The capture of Madras by the French took completely by surprise the

Nawáb Anwar-ud-dín. On learning the movements of the French against

that place he had despatched a special messenger ordering them to

desist. The letter he conveyed reached Dupleix after Madras had been

conquered, but whilst it remained still in the hands of La

Bourdonnais. For a time he temporized with the Nawáb, whilst he

endeavoured to bring La Bourdonnais, with whom he had difficulties as

to the disposal of the place, to reason. A terrific storm heralding

the north-east monsoon settled the second question by compelling the

French admiral to sail for the islands with the remnant of the fleet

it had scattered. On the 29th of October, Dupleix was sole director

of French interests in India and on the Indian seas. His negotiations

with the Nawáb were of a more complicated character. I lay particular

stress upon them here because it was his action with reference to

that potentate which inverted the position theretofore held between

the native of India and the European; which called into the field the

brilliant military qualities of Clive; {37}which necessitated the

long struggle for predominance in Southern India between France and

England.

When day succeeded day and the Nawáb gradually came to the conviction

that the audacious ruler of the French settlement had no real

intention of transferring to him the conquest La Bourdonnais had

made, he resolved to take it by force. He sent, therefore, his eldest

son, Ma'afuz Khán, with a force of about 10,000 men, mostly cavalry,

to enforce his demand. But, in face of the small French garrison

occupying the place, these men soon discovered that they were

powerless. When, with a great display of vigour, they had mastered

the positions which secured a supply of water to the town, the

garrison made a sortie and retook them. That was the first awakening.

The second was more startling, more pregnant with consequences. A

small force of 230 Europeans and 700 natives, sent by Dupleix under

the command of a trusted officer named Paradis to relieve Madras,

encountered the entire army of Ma'afuz Khán on the banks of the river

Adyar, close to the village of Maliapur, then and to the present day

known as St. Thomé,[2] defeated it with great slaughter, the

Frenchmen wading breast-high through the water to attack the soldiers

of the Nawáb. This victory, few in numbers as were the victors, must

ever be regarded as pre-eminently a decisive battle. It brought into

view, {38}silently but surely, the possibility of the conquest of

India by one or other of the two European powers on the Coromandel

coast.

[Footnote 2: From the fact identified by Bishop Heber and Professor

H. H. Wilson, that it is the place where the Apostle St. Thomas is

said to have been martyred on December 5, A.D. 58.]

In a narrower sense it confirmed the possession of Madras to Dupleix.

Thenceforth, as far as his eye could see, he had nought to fear in

India. On the 9th of November Paradis entered Madras; he made there

new provisions for the conquered English, confiscating all the

merchandize that had been found within the town by La Bourdonnais. He

then ordered all the English who should decline to take an oath of

allegiance to the French governor within four days to quit the town;

the English officials he permitted to dispose of their property; then

to remove to Pondicherry as prisoners on parole. There were some

amongst them who, possibly prescient of the future, declined to

subscribe to terms which would tie their hands. These escaped to Fort

St. David, a small fort purchased by the English in 1691, close to

the important town of Gúdalúr, sixteen miles to the south of

Pondicherry. Amongst these was the young writer who had had but

two years' experience of India, and who was called Robert Clive.

Hardly had that young writer reached Fort St. David than he was

called upon to share in its defence. It very soon became evident that

the policy of Dupleix was a root-and-branch policy; that he was

resolved to expel the English from all their settlements. With

respect to Fort St. David, however, he was foiled partly by the

stupidity of his generals, partly by the {39}island stubbornness of

the defenders. Four times did the French endeavour to take that small

fort; four times, owing to circumstances upon which it is not

necessary to enter, did they fail. Meanwhile there arrived an English

squadron under Admiral Griffin, and later, to reinforce him, a fleet

and army under Admiral Boscawen (August 11, 1748). By this arrival

the positions of the rivals on the coast became inverted. From being

besiegers the French became the besieged. For Boscawen at once laid

siege to Pondicherry.

Then began (August 19, 1748) the first siege of Pondicherry by the

English troops, assisted to a certain extent by those of the Nawáb.

Many gallant deeds were performed on both sides. For a time Paradis

was the soul of the defence. When he was killed, which happened

whilst making a sortie on the 11th of September, the entire labour of

directing the necessary measures fell upon Dupleix. In the attack

were many good men and true. Boscawen himself gave an example of

daring which was universally followed. Amongst those who were

specially remarked was the hero of this book. A contemporary writer,

whose journal[3] of the siege is before me, remarks regarding that

young writer, that he 'served in the trenches on this occasion, and

by his gallant conduct gave the first prognostic of that high

military spirit, which was the spring of his future actions, and the

principal source of the decisive intrepidity {40}and elevation of

mind, which were his characteristic endowments.' The efforts of the

besiegers shattered, however, before the sturdy defence of the

French. On the 17th of October the English were forced to raise the

siege, leaving dead from the fire of the enemy or from sickness 1065

men. The English fleet remained for a year off the coast, and then

sailed for England: the garrison, formerly the garrison of Madras and

of Fort St. David, retired to the latter place, carrying with it

Robert Clive, soon to be joined there by one of the most

distinguished men whose careers have illustrated the history of the

English in India, Major Stringer Lawrence.[4]

[Footnote 3: See \_Asiatic Annual Register\_ for 1802.]

[Footnote 4: Major Lawrence had arrived from England on the 13th of

January 1747, commissioned to command all the Company's troops in

India. From Mr. Forrest's Madras Records we find that his salary as

Major was 300 pounds per annum, and 50 pagodas per month for other

allowances, besides 70 pounds per annum as third in Council. It was

he who had repulsed the fourth attack made by the French on Fort St.

David in the spring of that year. In the early days of the siege of

Pondicherry he had had the misfortune to be taken prisoner. Released

by the conditions of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, he then resumed

command at Fort St. David.]

It is probable that, after the raising of the siege of Pondicherry,

the French would have resumed their operations against Fort St.

David, for, early in 1749, reinforcements in men and money had

reached them. But before they could move, information reached them

that, on the 7th of October, 1748, peace had been signed between the

two nations at Aix-la-Chapelle. By the terms of this treaty the

conquests made by the two countries were to be restored. The French,

{41}therefore, instead of renewing their attack on Fort St. David,

were compelled to restore Madras, its fortifications undermined, and

its storehouses empty.[5] This restoration was the more distasteful

to them, when they found, as they very soon found, that from the

force of events, the hostilities which had ceased in Europe were, by

virtue of a legal fiction, to be continued in India. They were still

to fight the battle for supremacy, not as principals, but as allies

of the native princes who, in the disorder accompanying the

catastrophe of the Mughal empire, fought for their own hand, against

the native allies of the English.

[Footnote 5: Forrest, page 4. The report which he gives \_in extenso\_,

minuted by the Council of the Madras Presidency, runs as follows:

'The condition we have received it (Madras) in is indeed very

indifferent, the French having undermined the fortifications, and

rifled it of all useful and valuable stores.'

The official statement is quite opposed to the private accounts

hitherto accepted as true.]

{42}

CHAPTER V

CLIVE DECIDES FOR THE CAREER OF A SOLDIER

Before the conditions of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle had become

known in India, the English governor of Fort St. David had despatched

thence a small force of 430 Englishmen and 1000 sipáhís to assist the

ex-Rájá of Tanjore, who had been dethroned for gross misconduct, to

recover his kingdom. That, at least, was the nominal reason. The

ambition to obtain for the English possession of Devikota, a fort on

the river Coleroon, at the point where that river runs into the sea,

was the true cause of the action. The force was commanded by Captain

Cope, an officer of inferior merit. Clive accompanied it as a

volunteer. The expedition failed from causes which it was impossible

to combat. The ex-Rájá had no partisans, and the season was that of

the monsoon-storms.

Still the idea was too popular to be abandoned. After the treaty

between the two nations had reached India the expedition was

therefore resumed. This time Major Lawrence, released by the action

of that treaty, assumed the command. He took with him the entire

available European force of the Company, leaving only a few to man

the defences, and giving Clive a commission for the time only, to

accompany {43}him as lieutenant, proceeded to Devikota by sea, landed

his troops, and commenced to batter the place. On the morning of the

fourth day a practicable breach was pronounced, and a storming party

was ordered. By his conduct Clive had already won the esteem of

Lawrence,[1] and it was to him that he gave command of the party.

[Footnote 1: The partiality which induced Lawrence to entrust Clive

with so important a duty is to be found under his own hand. 'A man of

undaunted resolution,' he writes in his memoirs, 'of a cool temper,

and a presence of mind which never left him in the greatest danger.

Born a soldier, for, without a military education of any sort or much

conversing with any of the profession, from his judgement and good

sense, he led an army like an experienced officer and a brave

soldier, with a prudence that certainly warranted success. This young

man's early genius surprised and engaged my attention, as well before

as at the siege of Devikota, where he behaved in courage and

judgement much beyond what could have been expected from his years,

and his success afterwards confirmed what I had said to so many

people concerning him.' Cambridge's \_War in India\_, pp. 18-19.]

To lead a storming party is an honour full of danger. So found Clive

on this occasion. Of the twenty-nine Europeans who composed it,

twenty-six were swept away by the enemy's horsemen, the sipáhís

halting and witnessing the deed. Clive with the three survivors

managed to join the main body which was advancing under Lawrence, and

this body, repulsing a charge of cavalry which endeavoured to thwart

it, pushed vigorously on, and stormed Devikota. Abandoning the cause

of the ex-Rájá, Lawrence then made a treaty with the powers that

were, in virtue of which Devikota was ceded to the East India

Company, and the Rájá paid all the expenses of the {44}war. The force

returned to Fort St. David to find the fleet of Admiral Boscawen

still off the coast.

But, during the absence of the English troops, there had occurred in

the Karnátik one of those revolutions which were not uncommon in the

days of the dissolution of the Mughal empire.

On the 17th of April, 1748, the titular King of Delhi, Muhammad Sháh,

had died. His son, Ahmad Sháh, had succeeded him. Rather less than a

month later, the Súbahdár of the Deccan, the famous Nizám-ul-Múlk,

also died. He had in his lifetime arranged that the succession to the

inheritance of the Deccan should devolve upon his second son, Nasír

Jang, and Ahmad Sháh at once confirmed the nomination.[2] But those

were not the days when a succession to vast power and great

territories went unopposed. A claimant to the sovereignty of the

Deccan soon appeared in the person of Muzaffar Jang, grandson of the

late Súbahdár, and at the moment holding the government of Bíjapur.

Not sufficiently powerful to press his claim without assistance

Muzaffar Jang proceeded at once to Sátára, enlisted the Maráthás in

his cause, persuaded them to release Chánda Sáhib, and to supply him

with troops. The arrangement between the two princes was that, in

case of success, Muzaffar Jang should become Súbahdár of the Deccan,

Chánda Sáhib Nawáb of the Karnátik. It is necessary to state these

facts clearly, because the war, thus initiated, formed the basis of

the continued hostilities {45}between the French and English after

peace had been proclaimed in Europe.

[Footnote 2: Elliott's \_History of India\_, pp. 112-3, vol. viii.]

The reader may recollect that in the earlier part of this book[3] I

have shown how Chánda Sáhib had formed a very high opinion of the

French and how he had cultivated their friendship. Resolving now to

avail himself of former favours, he made overtures to Dupleix, and

obtained from him promise of substantial assistance. These promises

were kept, and, towards the end of July, 1749, a detachment of French

soldiers joined the armies of the two conspirators at the Damalcherri

Pass. A few days later (August 3) they met at Ambúr the army of

Anwar-ud-dín, completely defeated it, slew Anwar-ud-dín himself, took

prisoner his eldest son, the Ma'afuz Khán who had been defeated by

Paradis at St. Thomé, and forced the second son, Muhammad Alí, to

save himself by flight to Trichinopoli. Marching straight to Arcot,

Muzaffar Jang proclaimed himself Súbahdár of the Deccan, and Chánda

Sáhib to be Nawáb of Arcot. As the French had espoused the cause of

Chánda Sáhib it was natural that the English should sustain the

claims of the rival. This rival was Muhammad Alí, the son of the late

Nawáb, just escaped from the field of Ambúr. The two pretenders,

whose cause had been adopted by the French, then proceeded to

Pondicherry. There Dupleix, whose vision on political matters was

remarkably clear, insisted that before committing themselves

{46}further, they should rid themselves of the only possible rival

then at large, and should march against Trichinopoli. This they

hesitated to do so long as the English fleet should remain off the

coast.

[Footnote 3: Chapter III.]

This was the situation when Lawrence and Clive returned from the

storming of Devikota. The chief of the English settlement was then

Mr. Floyer, a gentleman who had a great dread of responsibility. The

fighting party in the Council of Fort St. David urged that Muhammad

Alí should be supported, that the English fleet should remain off the

coast, and that Trichinopoli should be defended. The admiral declared

his willingness to remain if Mr. Floyer would only ask him. But

Floyer shrank from the responsibility. Consequently the fleet sailed

on the 1st of November, leaving behind 300 men as an addition to the

garrison.

The very day after the disappearance of the English fleet had become

known (November 2), Muzaffar Jang and Chánda Sáhib, with their French

allies, marched towards Trichinopoli. But the two Indian princes had

been most improvident. They had spent all their funds. To obtain more

they assailed the strong fortress of Tanjore, captured one of the

gates of the fortress, and forced the Rájá to agree to pay them very

large sums. But the wily prince, learning that Nasír Jang was

marching to his aid, managed to delay the chief payment until he had

ascertained that the Súbahdár was within striking distance of the

place. He then point-blank refused to hand over {47}the money. The

news of the approach of Nasír Jang spread disorder in the ranks of

the armies of Muzaffar Jang and Chánda Sáhib, and they hurriedly

retreated on Pondicherry.

Scenes of indescribable turmoil followed. In one of the skirmishes

that ensued there occurred an event which, unpromising as it appeared

at the outset, proved the means of the temporary accomplishment of

the plans of the two conspirators. In a skirmish Muzaffar Jang was

taken prisoner and placed in irons by the Súbahdár. When in that

position, however, he managed to corrupt three of the principal

chiefs who followed the banner of that prince. Their schemes were

communicated to Chánda Sáhib and to his French allies. The result was

that when the two rival armies joined battle at a place sixteen miles

from the strong fortress of Gingi, which, meanwhile, the French under

Bussy had captured, Nasír Jang's own levies turned against him and

slew him; released Muzaffar Jang, and acknowledged him Súbahdár of

the Deccan.

This event occurred on the 16th of December, 1750. Chánda Sáhib

himself carried the news of the accomplished revolution from the

battlefield to Pondicherry. The new Súbahdár followed him, and, for a

while, French interests seemed predominant in the Karnátik. Then, for

a moment, the tide seemed to ebb. On his way to Aurangábád Muzaffar

Jang was slain by the very three conspirators who had compassed the

death of his predecessor. The French {48}troops with the force,

commanded by the energetic Bussy, speedily avenged his death, and

caused Salábat Jang, the third son of the late Nizám-ul-Múlk, to be

proclaimed his successor. As Bussy with a force of French troops was

to remain with him as his protector, it seemed as though French

influence was destined to remain predominant in Southern India.

And so but for one man it would have remained, increasing its

strength until its roots had spread far and wide below the surface.

This, we believe, is the true lesson of the early part of this

biography. It was one man's genius which, meeting the French on the

ground of their own selection, seized their idea, made it his own,

and worked it to their destruction. It was Clive who hoisted Dupleix

with his own petard. We shall now see how.

After the return of the troops from the conquest of Devikota, the

Government of Fort St. David had appointed Clive to be Commissary of

the forces. Before, however, he could assume the duties of the office

he had fallen sick, and had been sent by the doctors for a cruise in

the Bay of Bengal. On his return thence in the early days of 1751 he

found great demands on his activity. It devolved on him to equip a

force of 280 English and 300 sipáhís, ordered, under Cope, to proceed

to Trichinopoli, still threatened by the French and their allies.

This accomplished, Clive was directed to accompany, as Commissary, a

larger force of 500 English, 1000 sipáhís, and 100 Africans, ordered,

under Captain Gingens, for Volkonda, 38 miles {49}to the

north-north-east of Trichinopoli, there to intercept a French force

marching in that direction.

Gingens was not a strong officer, and by gross mismanagement he

allowed the French to get the better of him. Clive, whose soldier's

eye and martial instincts disapproved entirely of the evils he could

not, from his position, prevent,[4] then and there quitted the force

and returned to Fort St. David.

[Footnote 4: Captain Dalton, who served under Captain Gingens, writes

of him in his journal as 'a man of unfortunately jealous temper which

made him mistrust the goodwill of any who offered to give him

advice.' Vide \_Memoir of Captain Dalton\_, 1886, pp. 93-4.]

The return of Clive was opportune. The new Governor, Mr. Saunders, a

man of a large and comprehensive intellect, was waiting the arrival

of troops from England to fit out a new expedition of 80 Englishmen

and 300 sipáhís to convoy provisions to Trichinopoli. He had no

officer, however, to whom he dared entrust the command. A civilian of

his Council, Mr. Pigot, was then deputed to lead the force the first

forty miles, when it would be beyond the reach of hostile attack, and

Clive volunteered to go with him. The force set out in July, 1751,

and on the third day reached Verdachelam, the point indicated. Thence

the two English civilians turned back as had been arranged, and,

though attacked on the way by a swarm of native horsemen, reached

Fort St. David in safety. The detachment then marched through a safe

country to Trichinopoli.

A few days later fresh troops arrived from England. Mr. Saunders was

anxious to despatch these to {50}reinforce the troops under Gingens,

but again the same difficulty presented itself. Meanwhile Clive had

deliberately considered his position. As a civilian, he had had a

career which did not satisfy him. As Commissary, it had been his fate

to witness the inefficient leading of others, without any authority

to interfere. He felt within him the power to command. His transfer

to the military service would, he saw, relieve the Governing Council

from a great difficulty, and give him, possibly, a command which he

could exercise for the benefit of his country. Very soon did he

decide. Mr. Saunders, whose appreciation of him was not inferior to

that of Major Lawrence, sanctioned the transfer of his name to the

military list, bestowed upon him the commission of captain,[5] and

directed him to proceed at once, with a detachment of the few troops

available, to Devikota, to place himself there under the orders of

Captain Clarke, whose total force would thus be augmented to 100

English, 50 sipáhís, and one field-piece. The two officers were then

to march with this detachment to Trichinopoli. There Clive was to

take stock of the position and report to Mr. Saunders.

[Footnote 5: The order of appointing Clive ran as follows:--'Mr.

Robert Clive, who has lately been very serviceable in conducting

several parties to camp, offering to go, without any consideration of

pay, provided we will give him a Brevet to entitle him to the rank of

a Captain, as he was an Officer at the Siege of Pondichery, and

almost the whole time of the War, and distinguished himself on many

occasions, it is conceived that this Officer may be of some service,

and, therefore, now ordered that a Brevet be drawn out, and given

him.' Forrest.]

This happened towards the end of July, 1751.

{51}

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST YEAR OF SOLDIERING AT TRICHINOPOLI AND ARCOT

The state of affairs in Trichinopoli was sufficient to cause

considerable alarm as to the result of the war. Chánda Sáhib was

besieging that fortress with a very large native force, aided by 900

Frenchmen. His rival, Muhammad Alí, depended solely on the 600

English who were assisting him, for of his own troops there were but

5000, and of these 2000 were horsemen.

But that which most impressed Clive when he arrived there with

Captain Clarke early in August was the depression which filled the

minds of the native prince and the English soldiers. The treasury of

Muhammad Alí was exhausted, and he despaired of success. The English

soldiers had no confidence in their leaders, and, with a few

exceptions,[1] the leaders had no confidence in themselves. To rouse

leaders and men from their apathy Clive felt that something startling

must be attempted. Not indeed at Trichinopoli, for Captain Gingens,

who commanded there, though a brave man, was scarcely equal to taking

{52}a bold initiative in face of the preponderating troops of the

enemy. Alike at school, and in his researches in the Governor's

library at Madras, Clive had read of the achievements of great

commanders who, pressed hard by enemies at home, had changed the fate

of the campaign by carrying the war into the enemy's country. What an

opportunity for such a strategy where he was! To take Trichinopoli

Chánda Sáhib had massed all, or nearly all, his available troops

before that place, leaving the capital of the Karnátik, Arcot,

absolutely denuded of trustworthy fighting men. The true method of

relieving the former place was to seize and hold the latter.

Impressed with this idea, Clive returned to Fort St. David and

communicated it to Mr. Saunders. This large-minded man embraced the

plan with fervour, and although at the two principal places held by

the English, Madras and Fort St. David, he had but 350 English

soldiers, he resolved to risk 200 of them on the expedition.[2] The

command of it he gave to Clive, but one month before a simple

civilian, and despatched him forthwith to Madras, to march thence

with his raw levies, most of them recently arrived from England.

[Footnote 1: One of these exceptions was Captain John Dalton, whose

journal, published in 1886 (Messrs. W. H. Allen & Co.), adds much to

our knowledge of the individuals engaged in the campaign.]

[Footnote 2: Forrest, page 10. The Board unanimously concurred with

Mr. Saunders.]

It was on the 26th of August, 1751, that Clive set forth from Madras

on the march which was to bring to him immortal fame, and to secure

for his countrymen the first footing on the ladder which was to

conduct them to empire. He had with him 200 English {53}soldiers, 300

sipáhís, and three small field-pieces. Of his eight officers, four

were volunteers from the civil service who, with two of the others,

had never been under fire. On the 29th the little force reached

Kanchípuram, 42 miles from Madras and 27 from Arcot. There he learned

that that place was garrisoned by about 1200 native soldiers, that

the discipline was lax, and that a surprise was quite feasible; but

that the place itself was capable of a good defence. He did not wait

longer. Setting out in a terrible storm, he reached the vicinity of

Arcot on the 31st, surprised the fort, and compelled the town to

surrender, without losing a single man. Having taken measures to

store provisions, he marched on the 4th September to the mud fort of

Tímerí, frightened the 600 native soldiers encamped there into

retreating, and returned. Two days later, having been informed that

the enemy had again gathered there to the number of 2000, he marched

again against them, attacked and completely defeated them. From want

of heavy guns he did not take the fort.

Relieved from the chances of immediate attack, Clive returned to

improve, as far as he could, the defences of the place he had

captured. One of his first acts had been to write to Madras for some

18-pounder guns. These were at once despatched. But the enemy, now

fully awake, attempted to intercept them at Kanchípuram. To save his

guns Clive marched thither with all his force except 80 men. He did

save the guns, but the enemy, profiting by his {54}absence, attacked

Arcot with all their available numbers. The garrison, however, small

as it was (30 Englishmen and 50 sipáhís), had become imbued with

their leader's spirit. They repulsed the attack, Clive brought the

guns into the fort, and the enemy dispersed.

Meanwhile the news of the brilliant enterprise had spread far and

wide; had brought hope to the defenders of Trichinopoli, and alarm

and irritation to Chánda Sáhib and his French allies. More even than

that. The important kingdom of Mysore, the ruler of which had been

long pressed by the rival combatants, declared now in favour of

Muhammad Alí, and sent an army under its Dalwai (Prime Minister) to

assist him. The native chiefs who ruled the territories which

connected the beleaguered town with the eastern coast followed the

example of Mysore;--an enormous gain, for it ensured the safety of

the English convoys from the coast. Greatly impressed with these

defections, Chánda Sáhib at once despatched 3000 of his best troops

to join the forces which his son, Rájá Sáhib, was commanding in North

Arcot. There they would be joined by 150 Frenchmen. One of Clive's

objects had thus been already attained. The capture of Arcot had

enormously weakened the enemy's attack: had more than proportionately

increased the strength of the defence of Trichinopoli.

The eyes of India south of the great Vindhyan range were now turned

upon Arcot. Upon its successful or unsuccessful defence depended the

future in India of the two European nations which, though

{55}nominally at peace, were warring desperately against each other.

The siege began on the 23rd of September. It was characterized by

extraordinary tenacity, great daring, infinite powers of resource, on

the part of Clive and the defenders. The sipáhís vied with the

English alike in courage and in capacity to withstand fatigue,

hunger, and thirst. Their self-denial, displayed when they insisted

that the water which was brought to them under much difficulty should

be offered first to their European comrades, went the round of the

world. It gave evidence of the cordiality which was to exist for a

century, and to be renewed in 1861-2 under conditions more favourable

than ever. At length, after more than seven weeks of continuous

pounding, the breach became practicable. The rumour that the great

Maráthá soldier, Morári Ráo, was approaching the place to lend a hand

to Clive, determined Rájá Sáhib to utilize his advantage without

delay. On the 14th of November he sent every available man to the

breach. The garrison, enfeebled though they were by privations, few

in number from their losses, separated by the necessities of the

defence, met their assailants with a courage as stern, a resolution

as dogged, as that which, in difficult circumstances, English

soldiers have always displayed. After an hour's fierce fighting, in

which the French took no part, the besiegers fell back, beaten,

baffled, and humiliated. At two o'clock that afternoon they begged to

be allowed to bury their dead. At two o'clock the following morning

they disappeared in the direction of Vellore.

{56}Thus ended the siege of Arcot. It had lasted fifty days. The

manner in which it ended gave the English, and especially the English

leader, a prestige which had an enormous effect on the campaigns that

followed. What a great thing this much-abused 'prestige' is in India

was illustrated by the fact that the minds of the native princes and

peoples all over the southern part of the peninsula turned to Clive

as to a master whom they would follow to the death. He inverted the

positions of the two nations, confounded by his brilliant action the

schemes of Dupleix, and, very soon afterwards, was able to impose his

will, representing the will of the English nation, upon all the

native princes who ruled or reigned in the territories of Haidarábád

and the Karnátik.

For--another great feature in the character of this man--Clive never

left a work half-finished. The blow, he felt, was weak and paltry

unless it were driven home. So he felt, so he acted, on this

occasion. On the 19th he took Timerí, the fort which had before

baffled him. Joined then by Morári Ráo with 1000 Maráthá horsemen, he

marched on Arni, seventeen miles south of Arcot, to attack Rájá

Sáhib, who had taken post there with the army which had lately

besieged him, reinforced by French troops just arrived from

Pondicherry. The superiority in numbers of the force of Rájá Sáhib

was so great that, when he noted the approach of Clive, he turned to

meet him. Clive halted where he was. He had recognized that his

position was excellent for defence, covered in front {57}by

rice-fields impracticable for guns, on the right by a village, and on

the left by a grove of palm-trees. There he ranged his troops to meet

the threatened attack.

It came very quickly, for the space between the two forces was but

300 yards. The enemy had discovered a narrow causeway leading across

the marshy ground to the village on Clive's right. Heralding their

approach with an advance of cavalry, they directed a portion of their

horsemen to assail the village on the right; another portion to drive

Morári Ráo from the grove; whilst the main body of the infantry

should cross the causeway. The last-named was a dangerous operation

in the face of a man like Clive, for whilst the narrowness of the

causeway rendered the advance slow, it gave time to Clive to

concentrate upon it the fire of his guns. And this he did. For a time

the French, who led the attack, marched boldly. At length they came

under the full fire of the guns. It was the story of the bridge of

Arcola, but there was no Bonaparte to lead them on. They hesitated,

halted, then fell back with precipitation; and, quitting the

causeway, formed on the rice-fields, almost touching the cavalry on

their left, who were fighting fiercely to gain an entrance into the

village. This was the supreme moment, and Clive's genius utilized it

to the utmost. Whilst the enemy were busily engaged on the right and

left, their centre still reeling under the losses sustained on the

causeway, he detached a body of English soldiers into the

{58}village, directing them to seize the head of the causeway, and,

traversing it rapidly with a portion of the sipáhís, to dash on the

enemy's centre, and seize their guns. Well was he served. No sooner

did the enemy perceive the English on the causeway than a panic

struck their centre, and they hastened to fall back. The panic

communicated itself to the two wings, already severely handled; they

too let go their hold, and turned to follow their comrades. True to

the principle referred to in a preceding page, Clive pressed them

hardly, not staying pursuit until darkness rendered it fruitless. The

record of this, his first real battle, fought against more than

double his numbers, was a splendid one. Whilst his own losses were

but eight sipáhís of his own force, and some fifty horsemen of his

Maráthá allies, there were killed or wounded fifty Frenchmen and

about three times that number of the natives. Whilst the English had

fought mostly under cover, the enemy had had the disadvantage of

being exposed, especially on the causeway.

Fit sequel to the defence of Arcot was this fight at Arni. It

dispersed the army of Rájá Sáhib, caused many of his soldiers, always

in the East inclined to side with the strongest, to desert to the

victors; it induced the ruler of the fort of Arni to declare for

Muhammad Alí; and it deprived the enemy of their military chest. From

its field Clive marched rapidly on Kanchípuram, took possession,

after a short siege, of the strong pagoda which, meanwhile, had been

{59}seized by the enemy; then, having placed in Arcot a sufficient

garrison, returned to Madras, thence to Fort St. David, having

carried out to the letter the programme he had submitted at the

latter place to Governor Saunders.

Well had he done it. The army of Chánda Sáhib, doubled up by the

terrible blow struck in the very centre of his possessions, still

indeed held the position before Trichinopoli, but, from an enemy

confident, boastful, certain of ultimate success, he had become an

enemy timid, irresolute, doubtful of the issue, shrinking from his

own shadow. The prestige gained by the young Englishman paralyzed his

vitality. It required apparently but one more blow to complete his

demoralization. The one condition of that blow was that it must be

struck quickly, suddenly, before the enemy should have time to

recover. Considerations such as these, we may be sure, formed the

staple of the conversations at Fort St. David between the young

captain and the Governor after the return of the former from Arcot.

{60}

CHAPTER VII

'THE SWELL AND DASH OF A MIGHTY WAVE'[1]

[Footnote 1: 'The battle of Napoleon was the swell and dash of a

mighty wave before which the barrier yielded, and the roaring flood

poured onwards, covering all things.' Sir W. Napier's \_Peninsular

War\_.]

But there was one distinguished actor in the events I have recorded

who was by no means inclined to sit passively under the severe blow

which had but just upset all his calculations. This man was Dupleix,

the Governor of Pondicherry. The plan of taking Trichinopoli had been

his plan. To take that place he had used all the resources open to

him: he had, in fact, for that purpose pawned the resources of

Pondicherry. But one thing he had not done. He had not removed from

the court of the Súbahdár the one competent general, Bussy-Castelnau,

generally known as Bussy, to carry out his ideas. He had bent all his

hopes on Law of Lauriston, nephew of the famous Scotch financier, and

who commanded the French troops before Trichinopoli. He leant,

however, on a reed, on which, when a man leaneth, it pierces

his hand. As a soldier under command Law was excellent. As a

Commander-in-chief he was pitiable, dreading responsibility,

timid, nervous, wanting in {61}every quality of a general. At the

moment Dupleix did not know this. He had seen Law fight well and

gallantly at the siege of Pondicherry: he had known him full of

self-confidence, and he had believed him capable of great things.

When, then, Clive struck that blow at the middlepiece of the Karnátik

dominion, which paralyzed the army before Trichinopoli, Dupleix,

whose brain had not been paralyzed, sent the most pressing orders to

Law not to care for events passing at Arcot, but to redouble his

efforts against the fortress he was besieging; to use every effort to

take the place before Clive's unexpected blow should produce its

natural consequences. To accomplish this end he despatched to him a

battering-train and all the Frenchmen he had available.

Dupleix could transmit his orders, but he could not send with them

the daring spirit which inspired them. Law had before Trichinopoli

900 French soldiers, of excellent quality, 2000 sipáhís trained in

the French fashion, and the army of Chánda Sáhib. It was a force to

attempt anything with in India. If a superior officer on the spot had

said to Law 'Attack!' he would have attacked with conspicuous

courage. But it was the weakness of his nature that, being in

command, he could not say the word himself. Therefore he did nothing.

But to Clive, recognizing all that was possible, ignorant only of the

character of the French commander, the situation seemed full of

danger. He {62}must strike again, and strike immediately. The

successful blow at the middlepiece must be followed up by a blow at

the head. That head was Trichinopoli. He prepared therefore, as soon

as the recruits expected from England should arrive, to march to that

place, and compel the raising of the siege.

Dupleix had divined all this. Once again was this young Englishman to

baffle him. As Law would not act he must devise some other means to

defeat him. Why, he said to himself, should I not take a leaf from

the Englishman's book, reconquer Arcot, possibly attack Madras, and

make it evident to the native princes that Pondicherry is still the

stronger? The idea pleased him, and he proceeded, in the most secret

manner, to act upon it.

Incited by the urgent requests and promises of Dupleix, Rájá Sáhib,

the beaten of Arni, quietly levied troops, and joined by a body of

400 Frenchmen, appeared suddenly before Punamallu on the 17th of

January. Punamallu is a town and fort in the Chengalpat district,

thirteen miles west-south-west from Madras. The town, but not the

fort, fell at once into the hands of the enemy. Had the allies then

marched on Madras they might have taken it, for it had but a garrison

of 100 men. They preferred, however, to march on Kanchípuram. There

they repaired the damages the English had done to the defences of the

great pagoda, and, leaving 300 sipáhís to defend it, marched to

Vendalúr, twenty-five miles to the south of Madras, and established

there a {63}fortified camp, whence they levied contributions on the

surrounding country. Their plan was so to coerce northern Arcot as to

compel the English to quit Trichinopoli, to save it.

They had succeeded in thoroughly alarming alike the English and the

petty chieftains in alliance with them when information of their

action reached Fort St. David. There Clive and Saunders were busily

engaged in preparing for the new expedition which the former was to

lead, as soon as the drafts from England should arrive, to the relief

of Trichinopoli. The information changed all their plans. Saunders at

once sent a pressing message to Bengal to despatch all available

English soldiers to Madras. Thither Clive proceeded; took command of

the 100 Englishmen forming its garrison; and ordered from Arcot

four-fifths of the troops stationed there. On the 20th of February

the troops from Bengal arrived: on the 21st the Arcot garrison was

within a march of Madras. On the following morning Clive quitted that

fort, and, joined as he marched forth by the men from Arcot, took the

direction of Vendalúr, having, all told, 380 Englishmen, 1300

sipáhís, and six field-pieces. His movements, however, had become

known to the enemy. These, therefore, had quitted Vendalúr on the

night of the 21st; had marched by various routes to Kanchípuram; and,

re-uniting there, had pushed with all speed towards Arcot. There they

had made arrangements to be received, but their plot had been

discovered, and {64}finding their signals unanswered, they had

marched to Káveripák, a town ten miles to the east of Arcot. There,

in front of the town, they encamped, in a position previously

carefully chosen as the one most likely to invite surprise, for which

they proceeded to thoroughly prepare themselves.

Clive, meanwhile, had been marching on Vendalúr. He had made some way

thither when scouts reached him with the news that the birds had

flown, and in different directions. To gain further information he

continued his march and reached Vendalúr. After staying there five

hours certain information reached him that he would find the enemy at

Kanchípuram. Thither he proceeded, and there he arrived at four

o'clock on the morning of the 23rd, having made a forced march, with

a rest of five hours, of forty-five miles. It was then nine o'clock

in the morning, and he resolved to rest for the day.

But, after his men had slept a few hours, the anxiety of Clive

regarding Arcot impelled him to break their slumbers, and order them

forward. They set out accordingly about one o'clock, and about sunset

came in sight of Káveripák, but not of the French hidden in front of

it. The French leader, in fact, had laid his plans with the greatest

skill. A thick mango-grove, covered along two sides by a ditch and

bank, forming almost a redoubt, roughly fortified along the faces by

which the English must advance, covered the ground about 250 yards to

the left of the road looking eastwards. There the French {65}had

placed, concealed from view, their battery of nine guns and a portion

of their best men. About a hundred yards to the right of the road,

also looking eastwards, was a dry watercourse, along the bed of which

troops could march, sheltered, to a great extent, from hostile fire.

In this were massed the rest of the infantry, native and European.

The cavalry was in the rear, hidden by the grove, ready to be

launched on the enemy when they should reach the ground between the

watercourse and the grove. The men were on the alert, expecting

Clive.

The space at my disposal will not permit me to give the details of

the remarkable battle[2] which followed. It must suffice to say that

no battle that was ever fought brought into greater prominence the

character of its commander. In the fight before Káveripák we see

Clive at his best. He had marched straight into the trap, and,

humanly speaking, was lost. It was his cool courage, his calmness in

danger, his clearness of mind in circumstances of extraordinary

difficulty, his wonderful accuracy of vision, the power he possessed

of taking in every point of a position, and of at once utilizing his

knowledge, that saved him. He was, I repeat, lost. He had entered the

trap, and its doors were fast closing upon him. Bravely did his men

fight to extricate him from the danger. Their efforts were

unavailing. Soon it came about that the necessity to retreat

{66}entered almost every mind but his own. Even the great historian

of the period, Mr. Orme, wrote that 'prudence counselled retreat.'

But to the word prudence Clive applied a different meaning. To him

prudence was boldness. What was to become of the British prestige, of

the British position in Southern India, if he, without cavalry, were

to abandon the field to an enemy largely provided with that arm, and

who would be urged to extraordinary energy by the fact that the

unconquered hero of Arcot had fled before them?

[Footnote 2: The reader who would care to read such a detailed

account will find it in the writer's \_Decisive Battles of India\_, ch.

ii.]

No: he would think only of conquering; and he conquered. After four

hours of fighting, all to his disadvantage, he resolved to act, \_in

petto\_, on the principle he had put into action when he first seized

Arcot. He would carry the war into the enemy's position. By a very

daring experiment he discovered that the rear of the wooded redoubt

occupied by the French had been left unguarded. With what men were

available he stormed it; took the enemy by surprise, the darkness

wonderfully helping him; and threw them into a panic. Of this panic

he promptly took advantage; forced the Frenchmen to surrender; then

occupied their strong position, and halted, waiting for the day. With

the early morn he pushed on and occupied Káveripák. The enemy had

disappeared. The corpses of fifty Frenchmen and the bodies of 300

wounded showed how fierce had been the fight. He had, too, many

prisoners. His own losses were heavy: forty English and thirty

sipáhís. {67}But he had saved Southern India. He had completely

baffled the cunningly devised scheme of Dupleix.

The consequences of the battle were immediately apparent. Northern

Arcot having been freed from enemies, Clive returned to Fort St.

David, reached that place the 11th of March, halted there for three

days, and was about to march to strike a blow at the other extremity,

Trichinopoli, when there arrived from England his old and venerated

chief, Stringer Lawrence. The latter naturally took command, and two

days later the force Clive had raised, and of which he was now second

in command, started with a convoy for Trichinopoli. On the 26th it

was met eighteen miles from that fortress by an officer sent thence

to inform Lawrence that the French had despatched a force to

intercept him at Koiládí, close to and commanding his line of

advance. By great daring, Lawrence made his way until he had passed

beyond the reach of the guns of the badly-commanded enemy and the

fort, and before daybreak of the following morning was joined by a

small detachment of the garrison: another, of greater force, met him

a little later. He had, in fact, practically effected a junction with

the beleaguered force at the outpost of Elmiseram when he learned

that the French were marching against him. They contented themselves,

however, with a fierce cannonade: for, as Clive advanced to

cover the movement of the rest of the force, they drew back, and

Lawrence, with his troops, and the convoy he was escorting, entered

{68}Trichinopoli. The French commander was so impressed by this feat

of arms, which gave the defenders, now assisted by Morári Ráo and the

Dalwai of Mysore, a strength quite equal to his own, that he fell

back into the island of Seringham. There he was faced on one side by

Lawrence. To cut off his communications with the country on the

further side of the river Kolrun, Lawrence despatched Clive[3] with

400 English and some 700 sipáhís, accompanied by some Maráthá and

Tanjore cavalry, to occupy the village of Samiáveram, a village

commanding with three others the exit from the island on the only

practicable route. Clive set out on the 7th of April, occupied

Samiáveram the same day, and, two days later, made his position

stronger by storming and occupying the pagoda of Mansurpet, and the

mud fort of Lalgudi. There still remained Paichanda. The occupation

of this would complete the investment of the island on that side.

[Footnote 3: It is a striking testimony to the prestige Clive had

already acquired with the native princes that when Muhammad Alí, the

Dalwai, and Morári Ráo were consulted by Lawrence as to co-operating

in the expedition, they consented only on the condition that Clive

should command.]

Meanwhile Dupleix, thoroughly disgusted with Law had despatched M.

d'Auteuil with a small force to take command in his place. Whilst

Clive was engaged in occupying the two places he had stormed, and was

preparing to attack the third, d'Auteuil was approaching the town of

Utátur, fifteen miles beyond Samiáveram, the headquarters of Clive.

He arrived {69}there on the 13th of April, and although his force--

120 Frenchmen, 500 sipáhís, and four field-pieces--was far inferior

to that of Clive, he resolved to make a flank-march to the river and

open communications with Law. He sent messengers to warn that officer

of his intention, and to beg him to despatch troops to meet him. But

Clive captured one of these messengers, and resolved to foil his

plans.

D'Auteuil had set out on the morning of the 14th, but had not

proceeded far when he noticed the English force barring the way, and

returned promptly to Utátur. Clive then fell back on Samiáveram.

There was a strongly fortified pagoda, named Paichanda, on the north

bank of the Kolrun, forming the principal gateway into the island of

Seringham, which Clive had intended to take, but which, owing to the

movements of d'Auteuil, he had not yet attempted. On receiving the

message from d'Auteuil of which I have spoken, Law had resolved to

debouch by this gateway, and fall on Clive whilst he should be

engaged with d'Auteuil. But, when the time for action came, unable to

brace himself to an effort which might have succeeded, but which

possessed some element of danger, he despatched only eighty

Europeans, of whom one-half were English deserters, and 700 sipáhís,

to march by the portal named, advance in the dark of the night to

Samiáveram, and seize that place whilst Clive should be occupied

elsewhere. The knowledge of English possessed by {70}the deserters

would, he thought, greatly facilitate the task.

His plan very nearly succeeded to an extent he had never

contemplated. Clive had returned from his demonstration against

d'Auteuil, and, worn out and weary, had laid himself down to sleep in

a caravanserai behind the smaller of the two pagodas occupied as

barracks by his men. They also slept. This was the position within

the village when a spy, sent forward by the leader of the surprising

party, returned with the information that Clive and his men were

there, and were sleeping. This news decided the commander to press on

and to seize the great Englishman where he lay. By means of his

deserters he deceived the sentries. One of the former, an Irishman,

informed the tired watchmen that he had been sent by Lawrence to

strengthen Clive. The party was admitted, and one of the garrison was

directed to lead its members to their quarters. They marched quietly

through the lines of sleeping Maráthás and sipáhís till they reached

the lesser pagoda. There they were again challenged. Their reply was

a volley through its open doors on the prostrate forms within it.

They went on then to the caravanserai and repeated their action

there.

Again was Clive surprised. Once more were the coolness, the clearness

of intellect, the self-reliance, of one man pitted against the craft

and wiles of his enemies. Once again did the one man triumph. He was,

I repeat, as much surprised as the least of his {71}followers. Let

the reader picture to himself the situation. To wake up in darkness

and find an enemy, whose numbers were unknown, practically in

possession of the centre of the town, in the native inn of which he

had gone peacefully to sleep but two hours before; his followers

being shot down; some of them scared; all just awakening; none of

them cognizant of the cause of the uproar; many of the intruders of

the same nation, speaking the same language as himself; all this

occurring in the sandy plains of India: surely such a situation was

sufficient to test the greatest, the most self-reliant, of warriors.

It did not scare Clive. In one second his faculties were as clear as

they had ever been in the peaceful council chamber. He recognized, on

the instant, that the attackers had missed their mark. They had

indeed fired a volley into the caravanserai in which he had lain with

his officers, and had shattered the box which lay at his feet and

killed the sentry beside him, but they had not stopped to finish

their work. Instantly Clive ran into one of the pagodas, ordered the

men there, some two hundred, to follow him, and formed them alongside

of a large body of sipáhís who were firing volleys in every

direction, whom he believed to be his own men. To them he went,

upbraided them for their purposeless firing, and ordered them to

cease. But the men were not his men, but French sipáhís. Before he

had recognized the fact, one of them made a cut at him with his

talwar, and wounded him. Still thinking they were {72}his own men,

Clive again urged them to cease fire. At the moment there came up six

Frenchmen, who summoned him to surrender. Instantly he recognized the

situation. Instantly his clear brain asserted itself. Drawing himself

up he told the Frenchmen that it was for them and not for him to talk

of surrender; bade them look round and they would see how they were

surrounded. The men, scared by his bearing, ran off to communicate

the information to their commander. Clive then proceeded to the other

pagoda to rally the men posted there. The French sipáhís took

advantage of his absence to evacuate the town. The Frenchmen and the

European deserters meanwhile had occupied the lesser pagoda. They had

become by this time more scared than the surprised English. Their

leader had recognized that he was in a trap. His mental resources

brought to him no consolation in his trouble. He waited quietly till

the day broke, and then led his men into the open. But Clive had

waited too; and when the Frenchmen emerged, he received them with a

volley which shot down twelve of them. They hurried back to their

place of shelter, when Clive, wishing to stop the effusion of blood,

me to the front, pointed out to them their hopeless position, and

offered them terms. One of them, an Irishman, levelled his musket at

Clive, and fired point-blank at him. The ball missed Clive, but

traversed the bodies of two sergeants behind him. The French

commander showed his disapproval of the act by surrendering with his

whole force. Clive had {73}sent the Maráthás and the cavalry to

pursue the French sipáhís. These caught them, and cut them up, it is

said, to a man.

Thus ended the affair at Samiáveram. I have been particular in giving

the details which illustrate the action of Clive, because they bring

home to the reader the man as he was: a man not to be daunted, clear

and cool-headed under the greatest difficulties; a born leader;

resolute in action; merciful as soon as the difficulties had been

overcome: a man, as Carlyle wrote of another, not less distinguished

in his way, 'who will glare fiercely on an object, and see through

it, and conquer it; for he has intellect, he has will, force beyond

other men.'

The end was now approaching. On the 15th of May, Clive captured

Paichanda. He then marched on Utátur, forced d'Auteuil to retreat on

Volkonda, and, following him thither, compelled him (May 29) to

surrender. Three days later Law followed his example. The entire

French force before Trichinopoli gave itself up to Major Lawrence.

Its native allies did the same. The one regrettable circumstance in

the transaction was the murder of Chánda Sáhib at the instance of his

rival.

After this, Clive returned to Fort St. David; was employed during the

fall of the year in reducing places which still held out against the

Nawáb. This campaign tried his constitution, already somewhat

impaired, very severely, and on its conclusion, in the beginning of

October, he proceeded to Madras to rest {74}from his labours. There

he married Miss Maskeleyne, the sister of a fellow-writer, with whom,

in the earlier days of his Indian life, he had contracted a

friendship. But his health continued to deteriorate, and he was

forced to apply for leave to visit Europe. This having been granted,

he quitted Madras in February, 1753, full of glory. His character had

created his career. But for his daring, his prescience, his genius,

and his great qualities as a soldier, it is more than probable that

Dupleix would have succeeded in establishing the basis of a French

empire in Southern India.

{75}

CHAPTER VIII

CLIVE IN ENGLAND; AND IN BENGAL

The visit of Clive to England was scarcely the success hoped for. His

fame had preceded him, and the Court of Directors had assured him,

through the Governor of Madras, that they had 'a just sense of his

services.' Perhaps the person who had been the most astonished at his

brilliant success was his own father. He had remarked, when he first

heard of his victories, that 'the booby had some sense after all.'

But then it must be recollected that the father had seen but little

of the boy during his childhood and growing years, and that his

unfavourable impression had been derived probably from the aversion

shown by the lad to enter his own profession. But even he, now, was

prepared to follow the stream, and give a hearty reception to the

defender of Arcot. So, at first, Clive was fêted and toasted in a

manner which must have convinced him that his services were

appreciated. The Court of Directors carried out the promise I have

referred to by giving a great banquet in his honour, and by voting

him a diamond-hilted sword as a token {76}of their esteem. This

honour, however, Clive declined unless a similar decoration were also

bestowed upon the chief under whom he had first served, Major

Stringer Lawrence.

Clive had earned sufficient money to live with great comfort in

England. He did not look forward then to return to India as an

absolute certainty. Rather he desired to enter Parliament, and await

his opportunity. It happened that the year following his arrival the

dissolution of the existing Parliament gave him an opportunity of

contesting the borough of St. Michael in Cornwall. He was returned as

a supporter of Mr. Fox, but the return was petitioned against, and

although the Committee reported in his favour, the House decided,

from a purely party motive, to unseat him. This disappointment

decided Clive. He had spent much money, and with this one result--to

be thwarted in his ambition. He resolved then to return to the seat

of his early triumphs, and applied to the Court for permission to

that effect.

The Court not only granted his request, but obtained for him the

commission of lieutenant-colonel in the royal army, and named him

Governor and Commander of Fort St. David, with succession to the

Governorship of Madras.

Clive took with him to India three companies of artillery and 300

infantry. He was instructed to convey them to Bombay, and, joined by

all the available troops of the Company and their Maráthá allies, to

endeavour to wrest the Deccan from French {77}influence. But, just as

he was sailing, he discovered that, through royal influence, Colonel

Scott of the Engineers, then on the spot, had been nominated to the

command, with himself as his second. Not caring to take part in an

expedition in which his own voice would not be the decisive voice,

Clive was anxious to proceed to take up his government at Fort St.

David, when, on his arrival, he learned the death of Colonel Scott.

This event recalled him to the original plan. But another

complication ensued. Very shortly before he had arranged to march

there came the information that the French and English on the

Coromandel coast had entered into a treaty, binding on the two

nations in India, not to interfere in the warlike operations of

native princes. The Deccan project, therefore, had to be abandoned.

Another promptly took its place. A small fort built by the great

Sivají on a small island in the harbour of Viziadrug, called by the

Muhammadans Gheriá, had for many years past been made the

headquarters of a hereditary pirate-chief, known to the world as

Angria. This man had perpetrated much evil, seizing territories,

plundering towns, committing murders, robbing peaceful vessels, and

had made his name feared and detested along the entire length of the

Malabar coast. The necessity to punish him had long been admitted

alike by the Maráthás and the English. The year preceding the Bombay

Government had despatched Commodore Jones with a squadron to attack

Angria's possessions. Jones accomplished {78}something, but on

arriving before Dábhol he was recalled on the ground that the season

was too late for naval operations on that coast.

In the autumn of the following year Admiral Watson came out to assume

command of the squadron. It had by this time become more than ever

necessary to bring the affair to a definite conclusion, and, as Clive

and his troops were on the spot, the Bombay Government, acting with

the Maráthás, resolved to despatch the fleet and army to destroy the

piratical stronghold. Of the expedition, which reached its

destination in February, it is sufficient to state that in two days

it destroyed Gheriá. Thence Clive pursued his voyage to the

Coromandel coast, and arrived at Fort St. David on the 20th of June.

On that very day there occurred in Calcutta the terrible tragedy of

the Black Hole. The Súbahdár of Bengal, Bihár, and Orissa, the Nawáb

Siráj-ud-daulá, had, for some fancied grievance, prompted probably by

the hope of plunder, seized the English factory at Kásimbázár, near

his capital of Murshidábád, plundered it, imprisoned the garrison,

and had thence marched against Calcutta. He attacked that settlement

on the 15th of June, and after a siege of four days, conducted with

great want of leading on the part of the English, obtained possession

of it. The English Governor, Mr. Drake, the senior military officer,

and many others, had fled for refuge on board the ships in the river

Húglí, which immediately had weighed anchor and stood downwards,

leaving about 145 men, some of {79}them high in office, and one lady,

Mrs. Carey, a prey to the enemy. These were seized and taken before

the Nawáb and his commander of the forces, Mír Jafar by name. The

Nawáb spoke kindly to them, and ordered that they should be guarded

for the night, having no intention whatever, there is the strongest

reason to believe, that any harm should befall them. But, owing to

the natural cruelty or indifference of their guards, they were

thrust, after the departure of the Nawáb, into a small room, about

eighteen feet square, ill ventilated, and just capable of receiving

them when packed together so closely as to render death certain to

the majority. Vainly did they remonstrate; vainly did they send a

message to the Nawáb: he was asleep, and no one dared to awaken him.

Into that hole they were locked, and in it they remained until the

light of day showed that the pestiferous atmosphere had been fatal to

all of them except twenty-three. These were then released and taken

before the Nawáb. Far from expressing regret for the sufferings of

which he had been the involuntary cause, the Nawáb questioned them

only about the place in which their treasure had been hidden. For, so

far, he had been greatly disappointed at the result of his raid.

The story of the capture of Kásimbázár reached Madras on the 15th of

July. The Governor immediately despatched a detachment of 230

European troops for the Húglí, under command of Major Kilpatrick, and

this detachment reached its position off {80}the village of Falta on

the 2nd of August. For the moment we must leave it there.

It was not until three days after the arrival of Kilpatrick at Falta

that information of the Black Hole outrage reached Madras. The

position there was critical. The Governor was in daily expectation of

hearing that war had been declared with France, and he had already

parted with a large detachment of his best troops. The question was

whether, in the presence of the possible danger likely to arise from

France, he should still further denude the Presidency he

administered. The discussion was long. Happily it was finally

resolved to despatch to the Húglí every available ship and man. The

discussion as to the choice of the commander was still more

prolonged; but, after others had insisted on their rights, it was

finally determined to commit the command of the land-forces to

Clive--who had been summoned from Fort St. George to the

consultation--in subordination, however, to Admiral Watson,

commanding the squadron. It was not until the second week of October

that every detail was settled, nor until the 16th of that month that

the fleet sailed for the Húglí. The first ship reached the river, off

Falta, the 11th of December. But with the exception of two, one laden

with stores, the other grounding off Cape Palmyras, but both of which

joined at a later period, the others reached their destination at

periods between the 17th and 27th of that month.

The land-forces at the disposal of Clive consisted, {81}including the

few remnants of Kilpatrick's detachment,[1] which had suffered

greatly from disease, of 830 Europeans, 1200 sipáhís, and a detail of

artillery. One ship, containing over 200, had not arrived, and many

were on the sick-list.

[Footnote 1: Orme states that one-half of them had died and that only

thirty were fit for duty.]

On the 17th of December Watson had written to the Nawáb to demand

redress for the losses suffered by the Company, but no answer had

been vouchsafed. As soon then as all the ships, the two spoken of

excepted, had assembled off Falta, Watson wrote again to inform him

that they should take the law into their own hands. On the 27th the

fleet weighed anchor, and stood upwards. On the 29th it anchored off

Maiápur, a village ten miles below the fort of Baj-baj. It was

obvious to both commanders that that fort must be taken; but a

difference of opinion occurred as to the mode in which it should be

assailed, Clive advocating the proceeding by water, and landing

within easy distance of the place, Watson insisting that the troops

should land near Maiápur, and march thence. Clive, much against his

own opinion, followed this order. Landing, he covered the ten miles,

and posted his troops in two villages whence it would be easy to

attack the fort on the morrow. The troops, tired with the march, and

fearing no enemy, then lay down to sleep. But the Governor of

Calcutta, Manikchand, had reached Baj-baj that very morning with a

force of 2000 foot and 1500 horse. He had noted, unseen, all {82}the

dispositions of Clive, and at nightfall he sallied forth to surprise

him. The surprise took effect, in the sense that it placed the

English force in very great danger. But it was just one of those

situations in which Clive was at his very best. He recognized on the

moment that if he were to cause his troops to fall back beyond reach

of the enemy's fire, there would be a great danger of a panic. He

ordered therefore the line to stand firm where it was, whilst he

detached two platoons, from different points, to assail the enemy.

One of these suffered greatly from the enemy's fire, but the

undaunted conduct of the English in pressing on against superior

numbers so impressed the native troops that they fell back, despite

the very gallant efforts of their officers to rally them. Clive was

then able to form his main line in an advantageous position, and a

shot from one of his field-pieces grazing the turban of Manikchand,

that chief gave the signal to retire. That night the fort of Baj-baj

was taken by a drunken sailor, who, scrambling over the parapet,

hailed to his comrades to join him. They found the place abandoned.

On the 2nd of January Calcutta surrendered to Clive. A great

altercation took place between that officer and Watson as to the

appointment of Governor of that town. Watson had actually nominated

Major Eyre Coote, but Clive protested so strongly that, eventually,

Watson himself took possession, and then handed the keys to Mr.

Drake, the same Drake who had so shamefully abandoned the place at

the time of {83}Siráj-ud-daulá's attack. Three days later Clive

stormed the important town of Húglí, once a Portuguese settlement,

afterwards held by the English, but at the time occupied for the

Nawáb.

Meanwhile that prince, collecting his army, numbering about 40,000

men of sorts, was marching to recover his lost conquest. To observe

him Clive took a position at Kásipur, a suburb of Calcutta, now the

seat of a gun-factory. As the Nawáb approached, the English leader

made as though he would attack him, but finding him prepared, he drew

back to await a better opportunity. By the 3rd of February the entire

army of the Nawáb had encamped just beyond the regular line of the

Maráthá ditch. Thither Clive despatched two envoys to negotiate with

the Nawáb, but finding that they were received with contumely and

insult, he borrowed some sailors from the Admiral, and, obtaining his

assent to the proposal, resolved to attack him before dawn of the

next day. Accordingly at three o'clock on the morning of the 4th of

February, Clive broke up, and, under cover of one of those dense fogs

so common in Bengal about Christmastime, penetrated within the

Nawáb's camp. Again was he in imminent danger. For when, at six

o'clock, the fog lifted for a few seconds, he found the enemy's

cavalry massed along his flank. They were as surprised at the

proximity as was Clive himself, and a sharp volley sent them

scampering away. The fog again descended: Clive knew not exactly

where he was; his men were becoming confused; and Clive {84}knew that

the step from confusion to panic was but a short one. But he never

lost his presence of mind. He kept his men together; and when, at

eight o'clock, there was a second lifting of the fog, and he

recognized that he was in the very centre of the enemy's camp, he

marched boldly forward, and not only extricated his troops, but so

impressed the Nawáb that he drew off his army, and on the 9th signed

a treaty, by which he covenanted to grant to the English more than

their former privileges, and promised the restoration of the property

he had seized at the capture of Calcutta. This accident of the fog

and its consequences form, indeed, the keynote to the events that

followed. The circumstances connected with it completely dominated

the mind of the Nawáb; instilled into his mind so great a fear of the

English leader that he came entirely under his influence, and, though

often kicking against it, remained under it to the end. This feeling

was increased when, some weeks later, Clive, learning that war had

been declared between France and England, attacked and conquered the

French settlement of Chandranagar (March 23), in spite of the Nawáb's

prohibition. He displayed it to the world a little later, by

dismissing from his court and exiling to a place a hundred miles

distant from it a small detachment of French troops which he had

there in his pay, commanded by the Law who had so misconducted the

siege of Trichinopoli, and by recalling his army from Plassey, where

he had posted it, to a point nearer to his capital.

{85}Of Siráj-ud-daulá something must be said. The province which he

ruled from his then capital of Murshidábád had been one of the great

fiefs which the dissolution of the Mughal Empire had affected. The

family which had ruled it in 1739 had had the stamp of approval from

Delhi. But when the invasion of Nadír Sháh in that year overthrew for

the time the authority of the Mughal, an officer named Alí Vardi

Khán, who had risen from the position of a menial servant to be

Governor of Bihár, rose in revolt, defeated and slew the

representative of the family nominated by the Mughals in a battle at

Gheriá, in January, 1741, and proclaimed himself Súbahdár. Alí Vardi

Khán was a very able man. Having bribed the shadow sitting on the

throne of Akbar and Aurangzeb to recognize him as Súbahdár of Bengal,

Bihár, and Orissa, he ruled wisely and well. On his death in 1756 he

had been succeeded by his youthful grandson, the Siráj-ud-daulá, who,

as we have seen, had come, so fatally for himself, under the

influence of Clive.

For all the actions of Clive at this period prove that he was

resolved to place matters in Bengal on such a footing as would render

impossible atrocities akin to that of the Black Hole. Were he to quit

Bengal, he felt, after accomplishing the mission on which he had been

sent, and that mission only, what security was there that the

Súbahdár would not return to wreak a vengeance the more bitter from

the mortifications he had had to endure? No, there {86}was but one

course he could safely pursue. He must place the Company's affairs on

a solid and secure footing. Already he had begun to feel that such a

footing was impossible so long as Siráj-ud-daulá remained ruler of

the three provinces. As time went on the idea gathered strength,

receiving daily, as it did, fresh vitality from the discovery that

among the many noblemen and wealthy merchants who surrounded the

Súbahdár there were many ready to betray him, to play into his own

hand, to combine with himself as against a common foe.

Soon his difficulty was to choose the man with whom he should ally

himself. Yár Lutf Khán, a considerable noble, and a divisional

commander of the Siráj-ud-daulá's army, made, through Mr. Watts, the

English agent at Kásimbázár, the first offer of co-operation, on the

sole condition that he should become Súbahdár. It was followed by

another from a man occupying a still higher position, from the

Bakhshí, or Commander-in-chief, Mír Jafar Khán. This Clive accepted,

receiving at the same time offers of adhesion from Rájá Duláb Ráo;

from other leading nobles, and from the influential bankers and

merchants of Murshidábád.

Then began those negotiations one detail of which has done so much to

stain the name of the great soldier. The contracting parties employed

in their negotiations one Aminchand, a Calcutta merchant of

considerable wealth, great address, unbounded cunning, and absolutely

without a conscience. When {87}the plot was at its thickest, this

man--who was likewise betraying the confidence which Siráj-ud-daulá

bestowed upon him, when the least word would have rendered it

abortive--informed the Calcutta Select Committee, through Mr. Watts,

that unless twenty lakhs of rupees were secured to him in the

instrument which formed the bond of the confederates, he would at

once disclose to the Súbahdár the plans of the conspirators. The

inevitable result of this disclosure would have been ruin to all the

conspirators; death to many of them. To baffle the greed of this

blackmailer, Clive caused two copies of the document to be drawn up,

from one of which the name of Aminchand was omitted. To disarm his

suspicions, the false document was shown him. This latter all the

contracting parties had signed, with the exception of Admiral Watson,

who demurred, but who, according to the best recollection of Clive in

his evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons, did not

object to have his name attached thereto by another.[2]

[Footnote 2: These are the facts of the transaction: they will be

commented upon in a future page. Vide comment near the end of Chapter

X.]

Space would fail were I to detail the various modes employed by the

confederates to produce on the mind of Siráj-ud-daulá the conviction

that his only safety lay in battle with the English. He had tried

many methods to escape the dilemma, to rid himself of the heavy hand

of Clive. He had made overtures to Bussy at Haidarábád; to the

Maráthás; to the Court {88}of Delhi; to the Nawáb-Wazir of Oudh. But

every proposed combination had fallen through. He had quarrelled with

Mír Jafar, with his chief nobles, with the bankers. He had suspected

treachery, but had never been quite certain. At last, on the

thirteenth of June, information was brought to him that the English

agent, Mr. Watts, and his subordinates, had fled from Kásimbázár,

after an interview with Mír Jafar, at the time in his disfavour. Then

he gave way: then he realized that, without the aid of his nobles, he

was helpless: then he guessed the whole plot; the schemes of Clive;

the treason of his own people: then he turned to Mír Jafar for

reconciliation, imploring him not to abandon him in his distress. Mír

Jafar and the other nobles, most of whom were in the plot, all swore

fealty and obedience, Mír Jafar leading the way. They would risk

everything for the Súbahdár. They would drive back the cursed

English, and free Bengal from their influence. Recovering his

equanimity from these assurances, Siráj-ud-daulá ordered his army to

march to an intrenched camp he had prepared near the village of

Plassey, in the island of Kásimbázár,[3] twenty-two miles distant.

There was some difficulty regarding the arrears of pay of his men,

failing the settlement of which they refused to march. But, with

friendly assistance {89}this difficulty was overcome; the army set

out three days later for its destination, and arrived in the

intrenched camp on the 21st of June.

[Footnote 3: Kásimbázár is called an island because whilst the base

of the triangle which composes it is watered by the Ganges, the

western side, on which lies Plassey, is watered by the Bhágirathí;

the eastern by the Jalangí.]

I propose now briefly to record the movements of Clive: then to

describe the decisive battle which followed his arrival on the

island.

{90}

CHAPTER IX

THE BATTLE OF PLASSEY

Meanwhile Clive had made every preparation for the advance of his

army. A considerable portion of it had been stationed at

Chandranagar. To that place he despatched on the 12th of June all the

soldiers available, and 150 sailors lent him by the Admiral, leaving

Calcutta guarded by a few sick Europeans, some sipáhís to look after

the French prisoners, and a few gunners to man the guns on the

ramparts. On the 13th he quitted Chandranagar, the Europeans, with

the guns, munitions, and stores, proceeding by water in 200 boats,

towed by natives against the stream, the sipáhís marching along the

right bank of the river, on the highroad made by the Mughal

Government from Húglí to Patna.[1] The force consisted, all told, of

about 900 Europeans, 200 men of mixed native and Portuguese blood who

served with the Europeans, a small detail of lascars, and 2100

sipáhís. The artillery consisted of eight six-pounders and two small

howitzers.

[Footnote 1: Vide Broome's \_History of the Bengal Army\_, p. 137.]

{91}The day after the force had set out Clive despatched to the

Súbahdár a communication tantamount to a declaration of war; and he

proceeded, as he approached the enemy's camp, to act as though such a

declaration had been accepted. On the 16th he reached Paltí, a town

on the western bank of the Kásimbázár river about six miles above its

junction with the Jalangí. Twelve miles higher up he came within

striking distance of Katwá, the Governor of which was supposed to be

one of the conspirators. Clive, expecting that the opposition would

not be serious, despatched to occupy it, on the 17th, 200 Europeans

and 500 sipáhís, under Major Eyre Coote. But either the Governor had

changed his mind or he had only feigned compliance, for he prepared

to resist Coote's attack. Coote at once made preparations for an

assault, and took such dispositions, that the garrison, recognizing

the futility of resistance, and fearing to be cut off, evacuated the

place, leaving large supplies in the hands of the victors.

The next day, the 18th, a terrific storm raging, the force halted.

The day following, Clive, who had committed himself to the enterprise

mainly on the conviction that Mír Jafar would support him, received a

letter from that nobleman, informing him that he had feigned

reconciliation with the Súbahdár and had taken an oath not to assist

the English, but adding that 'the purport of his convention with them

must be carried into execution.' This strange letter from the man

upon whose co-operation he particularly {92}depended led Clive to

doubt whether, after all, Mír Jafar might not betray him. Under this

possibility, the sense of the extreme danger of the enterprise in

which he was engaged revealed itself to him more clearly than it had

ever presented itself before. To cross an unfordable river in the

face of a vastly superior enemy, at a distance of 150 miles from all

support, would, he felt, be a most hazardous undertaking. Should Mír

Jafar be faithless to him, as he had appeared to be to his master,

and should the English force be defeated, there would scarcely

survive a man to tell the tale. Again would Calcutta be in

jeopardy--this time probably beyond redemption. Under the influence

of such thoughts he resolved not to cross the river until he should

receive from Mír Jafar more definite assurances.

The next day, the 20th, a messenger arrived from his agent, Mr.

Watts, who was then at Kalná, carrying a letter to the effect that

before he quitted Murshidábád he had been engaged in an interview

with Mír Jafar and his son, when there entered some emissaries of the

Súbahdár; that, in the presence of these, Mír Jafar had denounced Mr.

Watts as a spy, and had threatened to destroy the English if they

should attempt to cross the Bhágírathí. This letter decided Clive. He

resolved to summon a Council of War.

There came to that Council, about noon of the 21st of June, the

following officers: Colonel Clive, Majors Kilpatrick and Grant,

Captains Gaupp, {93}Rumbold, Fischer, Palmer, Le Beaume, Waggonner,

Corneille, and Jennings, Captain-Lieutenants Parshaw and

Molitore;--Major Eyre Coote, Captains Alexander Grant, Cudmore,

Armstrong, Muir, Campbell, and Captain-Lieutenant Carstairs. The

question submitted to them was: 'whether under existing

circumstances, and without other assistance, it would be prudent to

cross the river and come to action at once with the Nawáb, or whether

they should fortify themselves at Katwá, and wait till the monsoon

was over, when the Maráthás or some other country power might be

induced to join them.' Contrary to the usual custom, Clive spoke

first, the others following according to seniority. Clive spoke and

voted against immediate action. He was supported by the twelve

officers whose names immediately follow his own name in the list I

have given, and opposed by the owners of the seven last names, Major

Eyre Coote speaking very emphatically in favour of action; the

majority of the Council, we thus see, siding with Clive.

The subsequent career of Eyre Coote, especially in Southern India,

proved very clearly that as a commander in the field he fell far

short of Robert Clive, but on this occasion he was the wiser of the

two. Some years later Clive, giving his evidence before a Select

Committee of the House of Commons, emphatically stated that had he

abided by the decision of the Council it would have caused the ruin

of the East India Company. As it was, he reconsidered his vote the

moment the Council was over. It is said that he {94}sat down under a

clump of trees, and began to turn over in his mind the arguments on

both sides. He was still sitting when a despatch from Mír Jafar[2]

reached him, containing favourable assurances. Clive then resolved to

fight. All doubt had disappeared from his mind. He was again firm,

self-reliant, confident. Meeting Eyre Coote as he returned to his

quarters, he simply informed him that he had changed his mind and

intended to fight, and then proceeded to dictate in his own tent the

orders for the advance.

[Footnote 2: Vide Ives's \_Voyage and Historical Narrative\_, p. 150.

Mr. Ives was surgeon of the \_Kent\_ during the expedition to Bengal,

and was a great friend of Admiral Watson.]

At sunrise on the 22nd the force commenced the passage of the river.

By four o'clock it was safe on the other side. Here a letter was

received from Mír Jafar, informing Clive of the contemplated

movements of the Nawáb. Clive replied that he 'would march to Plassey

without delay, and would the next morning advance six miles further

to the village of Dáudpur, but if Mír Jafar did not join him there,

he would make peace with the Nawáb.' Two hours later, about sunset,

he commenced his march amid a storm of heavy rain which wetted the

men to the skin. In all respects, indeed, the march was particularly

trying, for the recent rains had inundated the country, and for eight

hours the troops had to follow the line of the river, the water

constantly reaching their waists. They reached Plassey, a distance of

fifteen miles, at one o'clock on the morning of the 23rd of June, and

lay {95}down to sleep in a mango-grove, the sound of drums and other

music in the camp of the Nawáb solacing rather than disturbing them.

The Súbahdár had reached his headquarters twelve hours before them.

The mango-tope in which the English were resting was but a mile

distant from the intrenched position occupied by Siráj-ud-daulá's

army. It was about 800 yards in length and 300 in breadth, the trees

planted in regular rows. All round it was a bank of earth, forming a

good breastwork. Beyond this was a ditch choked with weeds and

brambles. The length of the grove was nearly diagonal to the river,

the north-west angle being little more than 50 yards from the bank,

whilst at the south-west corner it was more than 200 yards distant. A

little in advance, on the bank of the river, stood a hunting-box

belonging to the Nawáb, encompassed by a wall of masonry. In this,

during the night, Clive placed 200 Europeans and 300 natives, with

two field-pieces. But in the morning he withdrew the greater part of

them.[3] He had with him 950 European infantry and artillery, 200

topasses, men of mixed race, armed and equipped as Europeans, 50

sailors with seven midshipmen attached, 2100 sipáhís, a detail of

lascars, and the field-pieces already mentioned.

[Footnote 3: Vide Orme's \_History of India\_, and Broome's \_History of

the Bengal Army\_.]

On the spot which the Nawáb had selected for his intrenched camp the

river makes a bend in the form of a horseshoe, with the points much

contracted, {96}forming a peninsula of about three miles in

circumference, the neck of which was less than a quarter of a mile in

breadth. The intrenchment commenced a little below the southern point

of this gorge, resting on the river, and extending inland for about

200 yards, and sweeping thence round to the north for about three

miles. At this angle was a redoubt, on which the enemy had mounted

several pieces of cannon. About 300 yards to the eastward of this

redoubt was a hillock covered with jungle, and about 800 yards to the

south, nearer Clive's grove, was a tank, and 100 yards further south

was a second and larger one. Both of these were surrounded by large

mounds of earth, and, with the hillock, formed important positions

for either army to occupy. The Súbahdár's army was encamped partly in

this peninsula, partly in rear of the intrenchment. He had 50,000

infantry of sorts, 18,000 horse of a better quality, and 53 guns,

mostly 32, 24, and 18-pounders. The infantry was armed chiefly with

matchlocks, swords, pikes, bows and arrows, and possessed little or

no discipline; the cavalry was well-trained and well-mounted; the

guns were mounted on large platforms, furnished with wheels, and

drawn by forty or fifty yoke of powerful oxen, assisted by elephants.

But the most efficient portion of his force was a small party of

forty to fifty Frenchmen, commanded by M. St. Frais, formerly one of

the Council of Chandranagar. This party had attached to it four light

field-pieces.[4]

[Footnote 4: For these details see Orme, Broome, Clive's \_Evidence

before the Committee of the House of Commons\_, Clive's \_Report to the

Court of Directors\_, Sir Eyre Coote's \_Narrative\_, and Ives's \_Voyage

and Historical Narrative\_. The account which follows is based

entirely on these authorities.]

{97}At daybreak on the 23rd of June the Nawáb moved his entire army

out of the intrenchment and advanced towards the position occupied by

Clive, the several corps marching in compact order. In front was St.

Frais, who took post at the larger tank, that nearest Clive's grove.

On a line to his right, near the river, were a couple of heavy guns,

under the orders of a native officer. Behind these two advanced

parties, and within supporting distance, was a chosen body of 5000

horse and 7000 foot, under the immediate command of the Nawáb's most

faithful general, Mír Madan.[5] The rest of the Nawáb's army extended

in a curve, its right resting on the hillock near the camp; thence

sweeping round in dense columns of horse and foot to the eastward of

the south-east angle of the grove. Here, nearest to the English, were

placed the troops of Mír Jafar, then those of Yár Lutf Khán, beyond

these Rájá Duláb Rám. The English within the grove were thus almost

surrounded by the river and the enemy; but in view of the promised

treachery of Mír Jafar, the greatest danger was to be apprehended

from their immediate front, viz. from St. Frais, with his little body

of Frenchmen, and from Mír Madan.

[Footnote 5: See Elliot's \_History of India\_, vol. viii. p. 428.]

From the roof of the hunting-house Clive watched his enemy take up

the positions which would hold {98}him, if their generals were true

to their master, in a vice. 'They approached apace,' he wrote in a

letter of July 26 to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors,

'and by six began to attack us with a number of heavy cannon,

supported by the whole army, and continued to play on us very briskly

for several hours, during which our situation was of the utmost

service to us, being lodged in a large grove, with good mud banks. To

succeed in an attempt on their cannon was next to impossible, as they

were planted in a manner round us, and at considerable distances from

each other. We therefore remained quiet in our post, in expectation

of a successful attack upon their camp at night. About noon the enemy

drew off their artillery and returned to their camp.'

So far, up to mid-day, we have the outline of the fight as narrated

by Clive; it is, however, but an outline. It would seem that the

action commenced by a discharge of one of the four guns of St. Frais.

This discharge killed one and wounded another of the men of the

European battalion. Immediately afterwards the whole of the enemy's

guns opened fire, but their shots flew high, and did but little

mischief. Clive meanwhile had drawn up his troops in line in front of

the grove, their left resting on the hunting-box, with the exception

of two guns and two howitzers which he had posted at some brick-kilns

some 200 yards in front of the hunting-box spoken of. These, as soon

as the enemy opened, replied promptly and effectively. The remaining

six guns, placed three on {99}each flank of the European battalion

which formed the centre of his line, answered the heavy batteries of

the enemy, but, from their small calibre, made but little impression.

After a cannonade of half an hour, the English having lost ten

Europeans and twenty sipáhís in killed and wounded, Clive withdrew

them under shelter of the grove, leaving one detachment at the

brick-kilns, another at the hunting-box. This retrograde movement

greatly encouraged the enemy. They brought their guns much nearer,

and their fire became more vigorous and sustained. But its effect was

less fatal, for the English troops were protected by the trees and

the mud bank, and, sitting down, were but little exposed. This

warfare continued till about eleven o'clock, the casualties being far

greater on the side of the Nawáb's army than among the English. Then

Clive summoned his principal officers to a conference, and it was

resolved that the troops should occupy their existing positions until

midnight, and should then attack the Nawáb's camp. We may regard the

close of the conference as occurring about the same time as the

withdrawal of the enemy's artillery indicated by Clive in the above

extract from his despatch.

For, scarcely was the conference over, than the skies poured down a

fierce shower, such as occurs often during the rainy season, which

lasted an hour. Then it was that the enemy's artillery fire slackened

by degrees almost to the point of ceasing, for the rain had damaged

their ammunition, left almost completely {100}without cover. Clive

had been more careful of his powder, so that when the enemy's horse,

believing the English guns as powerless as their own, advanced

towards the grove to charge, they were received with a fire which

emptied many a saddle, and sent them reeling back. In this charge Mír

Madan, previously referred to, was killed.[6]

[Footnote 6: Elliot states, on the authority of the J'ami'ut

Taw'ari'kh, that he was accidentally struck by a cannon-ball.

\_History of India\_, vol. viii. p. 427.]

The death of this brave and faithful soldier greatly disheartened the

Súbahdár. He sent for Mír Jafar, and implored him to remain faithful

to his oath. Taking off his turban and casting it at the feet of his

uncle,[7] he exclaimed in humble tones, 'Jafar, that turban thou must

defend.' Mír Jafar promised, but instead of performing, the

degenerate Muhammadan returned to his confederates and sent a

despatch to Clive, informing him of all that had passed, and begging

him to push on immediately, or, if that were impossible, not to fail

to attack during the night. His letter did not reach Clive till late

in the evening. Meanwhile other influences had been at work to bring

about a similar result.

[Footnote 7: Mír Jafar had married the sister of Alí Vardi Khán, the

Nawáb's father.]

It is impossible not to feel sympathy for the youthful prince,

surrounded by traitors, his one true adherent killed. Scarcely had

Mír Jafar quitted him when there came to him another traitor, Rájá

Duláb Rám, who commanded the army corps nearest to the position

{101}he had taken. The Rájá found his master in a state of great

agitation. The English were showing themselves in the open; his own

men were giving way; hope was vanishing quickly. Instead of

encouraging the Súbahdár to fight it out, the treacherous Rájá gave

fuel to his fears, told him the day was lost, and urged him to flee

to Murshidábád. In an evil hour for his dynasty and for himself,

Siráj-ud-daulá yielded to his persuasions, and, ordering his troops

to retire within the intrenchment, mounted a swift dromedary, and

fled, accompanied by 2000 horsemen, to his capital.

It was then two o'clock. The first hour since Clive's conference had

been marked by the heavy rain; the second by the repulse of the

Súbahdár's horsemen; the following up of the repulsed attack; the

conversations of the Súbahdár with his two treacherous generals. By

two o'clock the enemy's attack had completely ceased, and they were

observed yoking their oxen preparatory to withdrawing within the

intrenchment as the Súbahdár had ordered. There remained only on the

ground that body of forty gallant Frenchmen under St. Frais, whom I

have described as occupying the ground about the larger tank, that

nearest to the grove. The post was an important one, for from it the

English could have taken the retreating enemy in flank, and have

inflicted heavy loss upon them. St. Frais was nearly isolated, but

he, too, had seen the advantage the English would derive from

occupying the position, and, faithful amid the faithless, he, with

the gallantry of his nation, {102}resolved to defend it until it

should be no longer defensible.

There was with the army a very gallant officer, Major James

Kilpatrick, who had greatly distinguished himself in Southern India,

and who, on this occasion, commanded the Company's troops. Kilpatrick

had noted the firm front displayed by St. Frais, the great advantage

to be derived from occupying the position he held, the disadvantage

of leaving him to hold it whilst the English force should advance. He

resolved, then, to expel him: so sending word to Clive of his

intentions, and of the reason which prompted his action, he marched

with two companies towards St. Frais.

Clive, meanwhile, seeing the enemy's attack broken, yet deeming it

better, not having received Mír Jafar's letter, to wait till the sun

should have descended before making the decisive attack, had

proceeded to the hunting-box to rest after so many hours of fatigue

and excitement, to be followed, he believed, by many more, having

first given orders that he should be informed of any change that

might occur in the enemy's position. He was there when the message of

Kilpatrick reached him. Rising, he hurried to the spot, met

Kilpatrick as he was advancing to the assault, reprimanded him for

having taken such a step without orders, but seeing him so far

forward, he took himself the command of the detachment, sending back

Kilpatrick to the grove to bring the remainder of the troops. When

St. Frais recognized {103}the earnestness of the English, and that he

was entirely without support, he evacuated the post, and retreated to

the redoubt at the corner of the intrenchment. There he placed his

guns ready for action.[8]

[Footnote 8: This episode is not specially mentioned by Clive, but it

rests on irrefragable evidence. Vide Orme, vol. ii. p. 176: see also

Sir Eyre Coote's \_Narrative\_; also Malcolm's \_Life of Lord Clive\_,

vol. i. p. 260.]

Meanwhile, whilst the English force was thus advancing, the army

corps commanded by Mír Jafar was observed to linger behind the rest

of the retreating enemy. It was noticed, further, that when it had

advanced almost abreast of the northern line of the grove, it faced

to its left and advanced in that direction. For a time it seemed to

the English officers as though the troops composing it were about to

make a raid on their baggage, and a party with a field-piece was sent

forward to check them. The corps then halted, remained so for a time,

then slowly retired, taking, however, a direction which led it apart

from the other corps of the enemy. We shall return to them in a few

moments.

Whilst this corps was executing the manoeuvre I have described, Clive

had advanced to a position whence he could cannonade the enemy's

camp. The effect of this fire was to cause great loss and confusion

amongst the troops of the Súbahdár, at the same time that the

English, giving, by their advance, their flank to the French in the

redoubt, suffered also. To put {104}an end to this cross-fire Clive

saw that the one remedy was to storm the redoubt. He was unwilling,

however, to risk his troops in a severe contest with the French so

long as the army corps, the movements of which I have described in

the preceding paragraph, should continue to occupy its apparently

threatening position. That corps might be the corps of Mír Jafar, but

there was no certainty that it was so, for Clive had not then

received Mír Jafar's letter, nor was he aware of the flight of the

Nawáb. It was just at this critical moment that he observed the corps

in question making the retrograde movement I have referred to. Then

all doubt was over in his mind. It must, he was convinced, be the

corps of his adherent. Certain now that he would not be molested, he

hurled his troops against the redoubt and the hillock to the east of

it. St. Frais displayed a bold front, but, abandoned almost

immediately by his native allies, and deeming it wiser to preserve

his handful of Europeans for another occasion, he evacuated the

redoubt, leaving his field-pieces behind him. His resistance was the

last opposition offered to the English. The clocks struck five as he

fell back, thus tolling the memorable hour which gave to England the

richest province in India; which imposed upon her the necessity to

advance upwards from its basis until she should reach the rocky

region called with some show of reason the 'Glacis of the Fortress of

Hindustán.'

Just as the beaten and betrayed army was moving {105}off with its

impedimenta, its elephants, its camels, leaving to be scrambled for

an enormous mass of baggage, stores, cattle, and camp equipage, Clive

received messengers from Mír Jafar requesting an interview. Clive

replied by appointing a meeting for the morrow at Dáudpur, a village

twenty miles to the south of Murshidábád. Thither the bulk of the

troops, their spirits cheered by the promise made them that they

would receive a liberal donation in money, marched that evening;

whilst a detachment under Eyre Coote went forward in pursuit, to

prevent the enemy from rallying. After a short halt, to enable the

commissariat to exchange their small and worn-out bullocks for the

splendid oxen of the Súbahdár, the troops pressed on, and at eight

o'clock the entire force was united at Dáudpur.

Such was the battle of Plassey. The loss of the English force was

extremely small, amounting to seven Europeans and sixteen sipáhís

killed, and thirteen Europeans and thirty-six sipáhís wounded. No

officer was killed: two were wounded, but their names are not

recorded. A midshipman of the \_Kent\_, Shoreditch by name, was shot in

the thigh, whilst doing duty with the artillery. The enemy's

casualties were far greater. It was calculated to be, in killed and

wounded, about a thousand, including many officers. They had been far

more exposed than the English. Writing, in the letter already

referred to, of the phases of the action between two and five

o'clock, Clive states that their horse exposed {106}themselves a

great deal; that 'many of them were killed, amongst the rest four or

five officers of the first distinction.'

Clive had gained his victory. We have now to record the use that he

made of it.

{107}

CHAPTER X

HOW CLIVE DEALT WITH THE SPOILS OF PLASSEY: HIS DEALINGS WITH MÍR

JAFAR; WITH THE PRINCES OF SOUTHERN INDIA; WITH THE DUTCH

The following morning Clive despatched Mr. Scrafton and Omar Beg[1]

to escort Mír Jafar to his camp. The time had arrived when one at

least of the spoils of Plassey was to be distributed.

[Footnote 1: Omar Beg was a confidential agent of Mír Jafar, attached

to Clive's person.]

Long previous to the battle Clive had received various proposals from

the three general officers who had commanded the three principal army

corps at Plassey. First, Yár Lutf Khán had made him a bid, his main

condition being that he should be proclaimed Súbahdár.[2] Then Mír

Jafar outbad him, bringing with him Rájá Duláb Rám, who would be

content with the office of Finance Minister under the Mír. It had

been arranged that whilst Mír Jafar should be proclaimed Súbahdár of

the three provinces, he should confirm to the English all the

advantages ceded by Siráj-ud-daulá in the preceding February; should

grant to the Company all the lands lying to the south of Calcutta,

together with a slip of ground, {108}600 yards wide, all round the

outside of the Maráthá Ditch;[3] should cede all the French factories

and establishments in the province; should pledge himself that

neither he nor his successors in the office of Súbahdár should erect

fortifications below the town of Húglí; whilst he and they should

give to, and require from, the English, support in case of

hostilities from any quarter. Mír Jafar covenanted likewise to make

very large payments to the Company and others under the name of

restitution for the damages they had suffered since the first attack

on Calcutta; others also under the title of gratification for

services to be rendered in placing him on the \_masnad\_.[4] In the

former category were reckoned one karor, or ten millions, of rupees

to be paid to the Company; ten lakhs to the native inhabitants of

Calcutta, seven lakhs to the Armenians. Under the second head

payments were to be made to the army, the squadron, and the members

of the Special Committee of Calcutta, to the extent noted below.[5]

[Footnote 2: Súbahdár was the correct official title of the governor,

or, as he is popularly styled, the Nawáb, of Bengal.]

[Footnote 3: It must be recollected that in those days the Maráthás

were regarded as serious and formidable enemies. It was against their

depredations that the ditch round Calcutta, known as the 'Maráthá

Ditch,' had been dug.]

[Footnote 4: \_Masnad\_, a cushion, signifying the seat of supreme

authority.]

[Footnote 5: The Squadron was to receive 2,500,000 rupees; the Army,

the same; Mr. Drake, Governor of Calcutta (the same who had quitted

Calcutta and his companions to take shelter on board ship at the time

of Siráj-ud-daulá's attack), 280,000; Colonel Clive, as second in the

Select Committee (appointed before the war to negotiate with Mír

Jafar), 280,000; Major Kilpatrick, Mr. Watts, and Mr. Becher, as

members of the said Committee, 240,000 each. I may here state in

anticipation that, in addition to these sums, the following private

donations were subsequently given, viz.: to Clive, 1,600,000 rupees;

to Watts, 300,000; to the six members of Council, 100,000 each; to

Walsh, Clive's secretary and paymaster to the Madras troops, 500,000;

to Scrafton, 200,000; to Lushington, 50,000; to Major A. Grant,

commanding the detachment of H.M.'s 39th regiment, 100,000.]

{109}The first of these contracts, now become binding, was to be

carried out on the morning of the 24th of June, at the interview

between the two principal parties, Clive and Mír Jafar. It has

occurred to me that the reader may possibly care to know something

more, little though it be, of the antecedents of this general, who,

to his own subsequent unhappiness, betrayed his master for his own

gain.

Mír Muhammad Jafar was a nobleman whose family had settled in Bihár.

He had taken service under, had become a trusted officer of, Alí

Vardi Khán, the father of Siráj-ud-daulá, and had married his sister.

On his death, he had been made Bakhshí, or Commander-in-chief, of the

army, and, in that capacity, had commanded it when it took Calcutta

in June, 1756.[6] Between himself and his wife's nephew,

Siráj-ud-daulá, there had never been any cordiality. The latter, with

the insolence of untamed and uneducated youth, had kicked against the

authority of his uncle; had frequently insulted him; and had even

removed him from his office. Mír Jafar had felt these slights

bitterly. {110}Living, as he was, in an age of revolution, dynasties

falling about him, the very throne of Delhi the appanage of the

strongest, he felt no compunction in allying himself with the

foreigner to remove from the throne--for it was virtually a

throne--of Murshidábád the man who alternately insulted and fawned

upon him. Little did he know, little even did he reck, the price he

would have to pay. Fortunately for his peace of mind at the moment

the future was mercifully hidden from him. But those who are familiar

with the history of Bengal after the first departure thence of Clive

for England will admit that never did treason so surely find its own

punishment as did the treason of Mír Jafar.

[Footnote 6: There can be no doubt about this. 'About five o'clock

the Nawáb entered the fort, carried in an open litter, attended by

Mír Jafar Khán, his Bakhshí or General-in-chief, and the rest of his

principal officers.' He was present when the English were brought

before the Nawáb: vide Broome, p. 66. Orme, vol. ii. p. 73, makes a

similar statement.]

But he is approaching now, with doubt and anxiety as to his

reception, the camp in which he is to receive from his confederate

the reward of treason, or reproaches for his want of efficient

co-operation on the day preceding. On reaching the camp, writes the

contemporaneous historian of the period,[7] 'he alighted from his

elephant, and the guard drew out and rested their arms, to receive

him with the highest honours. Not knowing the meaning of this

compliment, he drew back, as if he thought it a preparation to his

destruction; but Colonel Clive, advancing hastily, embraced him, and

saluted him Súbahdár of Bengal, Bihár, and Orissa, which removed his

fears.' They discoursed then for about an hour. Clive pressed upon

him the great necessity of proceeding at once to {111}Murshidábád to

look after Siráj-ud-daulá, and to prevent the plunder of the

treasury. The new Súbahdár assented, and, returning to his army, set

out and arrived at the capital the same evening. Clive, having sent

friendly letters to the other chief conspirators, made a short march

of six miles to the village of Baptá, and encamped there for the

evening. At noon the day following he proceeded to Madhupur, whence

he despatched Messrs. Watts and Walsh, with an escort of 100 sipáhís,

to arrange for the payments noted in a preceding page. These soon

found that the treasury was not at the moment equal to the demand.

They arranged accordingly that one moiety should be paid down: of

this moiety two-thirds in hard coin, one-third in jewels and plate;

that the second moiety should be discharged by three equal payments,

extending over three years.

[Footnote 7: Orme, vol. ii. p. 178.]

Whilst these negotiations were progressing, Clive, having ascertained

that the other chief conspirators had accepted the terms offered to

them, entered the city of Murshidábád (July 29), attended by 200

Europeans and 300 sipáhís, and took up his quarters in the palace of

Murádbágh, his followers encamping in the garden attached to it. Here

he was waited upon by Míran, the eldest son of Mír Jafar, and with

him he proceeded to the Súbahdár's palace, where Mír Jafar and his

principal officers were waiting to receive him. Clive, after saluting

Mír Jafar, led him to the \_masnad\_, and, despite some affected

unwillingness on the part of the Mír, seated him upon it, hailed him

with the usual {112}forms as Súbahdár, offering at the same time a

nazar of 100 \_ashrafís\_.[8] He then, through an interpreter,

addressed the assembled nobles, congratulated them on the change of

masters, and urged them to be faithful to Mír Jafar. The usual

ceremonies followed, and the new ruler was publicly proclaimed

throughout the city.

[Footnote 8: The value of an \_ashrafía\_, at a later period called by

the English 'Gold Muhr,' was about 1\_l\_. 11\_s\_. 8\_d\_. A 'nazar' is a

gift offered and received when people of rank pay their respects to a

prince. It is more properly called 'Nazráná.']

It is impossible to quit this subject without recording, as briefly

as possible, the fate of the relative Mír Jafar had betrayed and

supplanted. Siráj-ud-daulá, fleeing, as we have seen, from the field

of Plassey, had reached Murshidábád the same night. The next morning

the news of the total rout of his army reached him. He remained in

his palace till dusk, then, accompanied by his favourite wife, he

embarked on a boat, hoping to find refuge in the camp of M. Law, who

was advancing from Bhágalpur. But at Rájmahál the strength of the

rowers gave out, and the young prince rested for the night in the

buildings of a deserted garden. There he was discovered, and, taken

back, was made over to Mír Jafar. The interview which followed will

recall to the English historical student the scene between James II

and the Duke of Monmouth. There was the same vain imploring for life

on the one side, the same inexorable refusal on the other. That same

night Siráj-ud-daulá was stabbed to death in his cell.

{113}Another scene, scarcely less revolting in its details, had

occurred the preceding day. I have mentioned the two treaties made by

the conspirators, the one the real treaty, the other a counterpart,

drawn up to deceive Aminchand. In the distribution of the plunder it

had become necessary to disclose the truth to the wily Bengal

speculator. For him there need be but little pity. Entrusted with the

secrets of the conspirators, he had threatened to betray them unless

twenty lakhs of rupees should be secured to him in the general

agreement. He was, in a word--to use an expression much in use at the

present day--a 'blackmailer.' Clive and the officers with whom he was

acting thought it justifiable to deceive such a man. The hour of his

awakening had now arrived. The two treaties were produced, and

Aminchand was somewhat brutally informed by Mr. Scrafton that the

treaty in which his name appeared was a sham; that he was to have

nothing. The sudden shock is said to have alienated his reason. But

if so, the alienation was only temporary. He proceeded on a

pilgrimage to Malda, and for a time abstained from business. But the

old records of Calcutta show that he soon returned to his trade, for

his name appears in many of the transactions in which the English

were interested after the departure of Clive.

Nor was the dealing with Aminchand the only matter connected with the

distribution of the spoil which caused ill-feeling. There had been

much bitterness stirred up in the army by the fact that the

{114}sailors who had fought at Plassey should receive their share of

the amount promised to the navy in addition to that which would

accrue to them as fighting men. A mixed Committee, composed of

representatives of each branch of the military service, had decided

against the claims of the sailors to draw from both sources, and

Clive was appealed to to confirm it. But Clive, who, in matters of

discipline, was unbending, overruled the decision of the Committee,

placed its leader, Captain Armstrong, under arrest, and dissolved the

Committee. In a dignified letter Clive pointed out to the Committee

their error, and drew from them an apology. But the feeling rankled.

It displayed itself a little later in the acquittal of Captain

Armstrong by a court-martial. In other respects the distribution of

the money was harmful, for it led to excesses among officers and men,

and, consequently, to a large increase of mortality.

Meanwhile the new Súbahdár began to find that the State-cushion was

not altogether a bed of roses. The enormous sums demanded by his

English allies, and by other adherents, had forced him, as soon as

Clive had left for Calcutta, to apply the screw to the wealthier of

his new subjects. Even his fellow-conspirators felt the burden. Rájá

Duláb Rám, whom he had made Finance Minister, with the right to

appropriate to himself five per cent. on all payments made by the

Treasury, retired in dudgeon to his own palace, summoned his friends,

and refused all intercourse with Mír Jafar. The Rájá of Purniah and

the Governor of {115}Bihár went into rebellion. The disaffection

reached even the distant city of Dháká, where the son of Sarfaráz,

the representative of the ancient family ruling in Bengal, lived in

retirement and hope. Under these circumstances Mír Jafar, though he

well knew what it would cost him, made an application for assistance

to Clive.

The English leader had expected the application. He had recognized

long before that, in the East, power depends mainly on the length of

the purse, and that, from having exhausted his treasury, Mír Jafar

would be forced to sue to him \_in forma pauperis\_. Clive had studied

the situation in all its aspects. The blow he had given to native

rule by the striking down of the late Súbahdár had rendered absolute

government, such as that exercised by Siráj-ud-daulá, impossible.

Thenceforth it had become indispensable that the English should

supervise the native rule, leaving to the Súbahdár the initiative and

the semblance. Clive had reason to believe that whilst Mír Jafar

would be unwilling to play such a rôle, he would yet, under pressure,

play it. He had seen that the new ruler was so enamoured of the

paraphernalia of power that, rather than renounce it, he would agree

to whatever terms he might impose which would secure for him nominal

authority. There was but one point regarding which he had doubts, and

that was whether the proud Muhammadan nobles to whom, in the days of

the glories of the Mughal empire, great estates had been granted in

Bengal, would tamely submit to a system {116}which would give to the

Western invaders all the actual power, and to the chief of their own

class and religion only the outer show.

The application from Mír Jafar, then, found Clive in the mood to test

this question. Mír Jafar had thrown himself into his hands; he would

use the chance to make it clear that he himself intended to be the

real master, whilst prepared to render to the Súbahdár the respect

and homage due to his position. Accordingly he started at once

(November 17) for Murshidábád with all his available troops, now

reduced at Calcutta to 400 English and 1300 sipáhís, and reached that

place on the 25th, bringing with him the disaffected Rájá of Purniah.

His peace he made with the Mír Jafar; then, joined by the 250

Europeans he had left at Kásimbázár, he proceeded to Rájmahál, and

encamped there close to the army of the Súbahdár, who had marched it

thither with the object of coercing Bihár.

This was Clive's opportunity. Bihár was very restive, and the

Súbahdár could not coerce its nobles without the aid of the English.

Clive declined to render that aid unless the Súbahdár should, before

one of his soldiers marched, pay up all the arrears due to the

English, and should execute every article of the treaty he had

recently signed. For Mír Jafar the dilemma was terrible. He had not

the money; he had made enemies by his endeavours to raise it. In this

trouble he bethought him of Rájá Duláb Rám, recently his Finance

Minister, but whom {117}he had subsequently alienated. Through

Clive's mediation a reconciliation was patched up with the Rájá. Then

the matter was arranged in the manner Clive had intended it should

be, by giving the English a further hold on the territories of the

Súbahdár.

It was agreed that Clive should receive orders on the treasury of

Murshidábád for twelve and a half lakhs of rupees; assignments on the

revenues of Bardwán, Kishangarh, and Húglí for ten and a half: for

the payments becoming due in the following April, assignments on the

same districts for nineteen lakhs: then the cession of the lands

south of Calcutta, so long deferred, was actually made--the annual

rental being the sum of 222,958 rupees. These arrangements having

been completed, Clive accompanied the Súbahdár to the capital of

Bihár, the famous city of Patná. There they both remained, the

Súbahdár awaiting the receipt of the imperial patents confirming him

in his office; Clive resolved, whatever were the personal

inconvenience to himself, not to quit Patná so long as the Súbahdár

should remain there. They stayed there three months, a period which

Clive utilized to the best advantage, as it seemed to him at the

moment, of his countrymen. The province of Bihár was the seat of the

saltpetre manufacture. It was a monopoly[9] farmed to agents, who

re-sold the saltpetre on terms bringing very large profits. Clive

proposed to the {118}Súbahdár that the East India Company should

become the farmers, and offered a higher sum than any at which the

monopoly had been previously rated. Mír Jafar was too shrewd a man

not to recognize the enormous advantages which must accrue to his

foreign protectors by his acquiescence in a scheme which would place

in their hands the most important trade in the country. But he felt

the impossibility of resistance. He was a bird in the hands of the

fowler, and he agreed.

[Footnote 9: The possession of this monopoly became the cause of the

troubles which followed the departure of Clive, and led to the

life-and-death struggle with Mír Kásim.]

At length (April 14) the looked-for patents arrived. Accompanying

that which gave to the usurpation of Mír Jafar the imperial sanction

was a patent for Clive, creating him a noble of the Mughal empire,

with the rank and title of a Mansabdar[10] of 6000 horse. The

investiture took place the day following. Then, after marching to

Bárh, the two armies separated, the Súbahdár proceeding to

Murshidábád; Clive, after a short stay at that place, to Calcutta.

[Footnote 10: For the nature of Mansab, and the functions of the

holder of a Mansab (or Mansabdar) the reader is referred to

Blochmann's \_Ain-í-Akbarí\_. By the original regulations of Akbar, who

founded the order, the Mansabdars ranked from the Dahbashi, often

Commander-in-Chief, to the Doh Hazári, Commander of 10,000 horse, to

the Mansabdars of 6000 downwards. Vide \_Ain-í-Akbarí\_ (Blochmann's),

p. 237 and onwards.]

Clive had returned to Calcutta, May 24, absolute master of the

situation. He had probed to the bottom the character of the Súbahdár,

and had realized that so long as he himself should remain in India,

and Mír Jafar on the \_masnad\_, the English need fear no attack. But,

in the East, one man's life, especially {119}life of a usurper, is

never secure. In those days the risks he incurred were infinitely

greater than they are now. Clive had noted the ill-disguised

impatience of several of the powerful nobles, more especially that of

Míran, the son, and of Mír Kásim, the son-in-law, of the Súbahdár. He

had left, then, the greater part of his English soldiers at

Kásimbázár, close to the native capital, to watch events, whilst he

returned to Calcutta to trace there the plan of a fortress which

would secure the English against attack. The fort so traced, received

the name of its predecessor, built by Job Charnock in the reign of

King William III, and called after him, Fort William.

Nearly one month later, June 20, there arrived from England

despatches, penned after learning the recapture of Calcutta, but

before any knowledge of the events which had followed that recapture,

ordering a new constitution for the administering of the Company's

possessions in Bengal. The text of the constitution, ridiculous under

any circumstances, was utterly unadapted to the turn events had

taken. It nominated ten men, not one of whom was competent for the

task, to administer the affairs of Bengal. The name of Clive was not

included amongst the ten names. It was not even mentioned.

Fortunately for the Company, the ten men nominated had a clearer idea

of their own fitness than had their honourable masters. With one

consent, they represented the true situation to the Court of

Directors, and then, with the same unanimity, requested Clive {120}to

accept the office of President, and to exercise its functions, until

the pleasure of the Court should be known. Clive could not but accede

to their request.

For, indeed, it was no time for weak administration and divided

counsels. Again had the French attempted to recover the position in

Southern India which Clive had wrested from them. Count Lally, one of

the brilliant victors of Fontenoy, had been sent to Pondicherry with

a considerable force, and the news had just arrived that he was

marching on Tanjore, having recalled Bussy and his troops from the

court of the Súbahdár of the Deccan. With the news there had come

also a request that the Government of Bengal would return to the

sister Presidency the troops lent to her by the latter in the hour of

the former's need to recover Calcutta.

Clive felt all the urgency of the request; the possible danger of

refusing to comply with it; the full gravity of the situation at

Madras. He also was one of those who had been lent. If the troops

were to return, it was he who should lead them back. But he felt

strongly that his place, and their place also, was in Bengal.

Especially was it so in the presence of the rumours, already

circulating, of great successes achieved by Lally, and by the French

fleet. Such rumours, followed by his departure, would certainly

incite the nobles of Bengal and Bihár, with or without Mír Jafar, to

strike for the independence which they felt, one and all, he had

wrested from them.

Matters, indeed, in the provinces of Bengal and {121}Bihár had come

to bear a very threatening aspect. The treasury of Mír Jafar was

exhausted by his payments; his nobles were disaffected; the moneyed

classes bitterly hostile. Threatened on his northern frontier by a

rebellious son of the King of Delhi and by the Nawáb-Wazír of Oudh,

Mír Jafar was in the state of mind which compels men of his stamp to

have recourse to desperate remedies. For a moment he thought

seriously of calling the Maráthás to his assistance. Then the

conviction forced itself upon him that the remedy would be worse than

the disease, and he renounced the idea. At last, when the army of the

rebel prince had penetrated within Bihár, and was approaching Patná,

he resigned himself to the inevitable, and besought abjectly the

assistance of Clive.

Clive had resolved to help him when affairs in Southern India reached

a point which required his immediate attention. A letter from the

Rájá of Vizianagram reached him, informing him that the effect of the

recall by Lally from Aurangábád of the troops under Bussy had been to

leave the Northern Sirkárs[11] without sufficient protection; that he

and other Rájás had risen in revolt, and urgently demanded the

despatch thither of some English troops, by whose aid they could

expel the few Frenchmen left there. It was characteristic of Clive to

seize the points of a difficult situation. Few men who had to meet on

their front a dangerous invasion, would have dared to despatch, to a

distant point, the troops he {122}had raised to repel that invasion,

remaining himself to meet it from resources he would improvise. But,

without a moment's hesitation or a solitary misgiving, Clive

recognized that the opportunity had come to him to complete the work

he had begun, six years before, in Southern India; that a chance

presented itself to transfer the great influence exercised by Bussy

at the court of the Súbahdár of the Deccan to his own nation. Leaving

to himself then the care of Bengal and Bihár he directed a trusted

officer, Colonel Forde, to proceed (October 12) with 500 Europeans,

2000 sipáhís, and some guns to Vizagapatam, to unite there with the

Rájá's troops, to take command; and to expel the French from the

Northern Sirkárs: then, if it were possible, to assume at the court

of the Súbahdár the influence which the French had till then

exercised. It is only necessary here to say that Forde, who was one

of the great Indian soldiers of the century, carried both points with

skill and discretion. He beat the French in detail, and compelled

them to yield their fortresses; and, when the Súbahdár marched to

their aid, he succeeded, with rare tact, in inducing him to cede to

the English the whole of the territories he had conquered, and to

transfer the paramount influence at his court to the English. The

victories of Forde laid the foundation of a predominance which,

placed some forty years later on a definite basis by the great

Marquess Wellesley, exists to the present day. It is not too much to

assert that this splendid result was due to {123}the unerring

sagacity, the daring under difficult circumstances, of Robert Clive.

[Footnote 11: The districts of Ganjám, Vizagapatam, Godávari, and

Krishna.]

Meanwhile the solicitations of Mír Jafar increased in importunity.

Even the Great Mughal called upon Clive, as a Mansabdar, to assist

him to repress the rebellion of his son. Clive did not refuse. As

soon as his preparation had been completed, he set out, February,

1759, for Murshidábád with 450 Europeans and 2500 sipáhís, leaving

the care of Calcutta to a few sick and invalids. He reached

Murshidábád the 8th of March, and, accompanied by the Mír Jafar's

army, entered Patná on the 8th of April. But the rumour of his march

had been sufficient. Four days before the date mentioned the

rebellious prince evacuated his positions before the city, and,

eventually, sought refuge in Bundelkhand. Clive entered Patná in

triumph; put down with a strong hand the disturbances in its

vicinity; and then returned to Calcutta, in time enough to hear of

the victorious course of Forde, although not of its more solid

result.

Before he had quitted Patná, Mír Jafar had conferred upon him, as a

personal jágír,[12] the Zamíndárí {124}of the entire districts south

of Calcutta then rented by the East India Company.

[Footnote 12: A jágír is, literally, land given by a government as a

reward for services rendered. A Zamíndárí, under the Mughal

government, meant a tract, or tracts of land held immediately of the

government on condition of paying the rent of it. By the deed given

to Clive, the East India Company, which had agreed to pay the rents

of those lands to the Súbahdár, would pay them to Clive to whom the

Súbahdár had, by this deed, transferred his rights. It may here be

added that the Company denied the right of Clive to the rents which

amounted to 30,000 pounds per annum, and great bitterness ensued. The

matter was ultimately compromised.]

Clive had scarcely returned to Calcutta when there ensued

complications with the Dutch.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Holland had posed in

the East as a rival, often a successful rival, of the three nations

which had attempted to found settlements in those regions. She had

established a monopoly of trade with the Moluccas, had possessed

herself of several islands in the vicinity of the Straits, had

expelled Portugal from Malacca (1641), from Ceylon (1658), from the

Celebes (1663), and from the most important of her conquests on the

coasts of Southern India (1665). In the beginning of the eighteenth

century the Dutch-Indian Company possessed in the east seven

administrations; four directorial posts; four military commands; and

four factories. The Company was rich, and had but few debts.

Amongst the minor settlements it had made was the town of Chinsurah,

on the Húglí, twenty miles above Calcutta. Chinsurah was a

subordinate station, but, until the contests between the Nawáb and

the English, it had been a profitable possession. We have seen how,

under the pressure of Clive, Mír Jafar had made to the English some

important trade-concessions. It was certain that sooner or later,

these would affect the trade, the profits, and the self-respect, of

the European rivals of Great Britain. Prominent as traders amongst

these were the Dutch. Amongst {125}the changes which they felt most

bitterly were (1) the monopoly, granted to the English, of the

saltpetre trade; (2) the right to search all vessels coming up the

Húglí; (3) the employment of no other than English pilots. These

injuries, as they considered them, rankled in their breasts, and they

resolved to put a stop to them. To effect that purpose they entered

into secret negotiations with Mír Jafar. These, after a time, ended

in the entering into an agreement in virtue of which, whilst the

Dutch covenanted to despatch to the Húglí a fleet and army

sufficiently strong to expel the English from Bengal, the Súbahdár

pledged himself to prepare with the greatest secrecy an army to

co-operate with them. This agreement was signed in November, 1758,

just after Clive had despatched Forde, with all the troops then

available, to the Northern Sirkárs, but before his march to Patná,

recorded, with its consequences, in the preceding pages. The secret

had been well kept, for Clive had no suspicion of the plot. He knew

he had the Súbahdár in the hollow of his hand, so far as related to

the princes of the soil; he knew the French were powerless to aid the

Súbahdár: and he never thought of the little settlement of Chinsurah.

In the month of June, 1759, just following the return of Clive to

Calcutta, the Mír Jafar received from the Dutch a secret intimation

that their plans were approaching maturity. He stayed then but a

short time at the English seat of government, but returned

{126}thither in October, to be at hand when the expected crisis

should occur. Meanwhile rumours had got about that a considerable

Dutch fleet was approaching the Húglí, and, in fact, a large Dutch

vessel, with Malayan soldiers, did arrive at Diamond Harbour. Clive

had at once demanded from the Dutch authorities an explanation, at

the same time that he innocently apprised Mír Jafar of the

circumstance, and of the rumour. The Dutch authorities explained that

the ship had been bound for Nágapatnam, but had been forced by stress

of weather to seek refuge in the Húglí.

In October, whilst Mír Jafar was actually in Calcutta, the Dutch made

their spring. It was a very serious attack, for the Dutch had four

ships, carrying each thirty-six guns; two, each carrying twenty-six;

one, carrying sixteen, and had on board these 700 European soldiers

and 800 Malays: at Chinsurah they had 150 Europeans, and a fair

number of native levies: behind them they had the Súbahdár. To meet

them Clive had but three Indiamen, each carrying thirty guns, and a

small despatch-boat. Of soldiers, he had, actually in Calcutta and

the vicinity, 330 Europeans, and 1200 sipáhís. The nearest of the

detachments in the country was too distant to reach the scene of

action in time to take part in the impending struggle. There was aid,

however, approaching, that he knew not of.

Clive revelled in danger. In its presence his splendid qualities

shone forth with a brilliancy which {127}has never been surpassed.

His was the soul that animated the material figures around him. His

the daring with which he could inspire his subordinates; imbue them

with his own high courage; and make them, likewise, 'conquer the

impossible.'

His conduct on the occasion I am describing is pre-eminently worthy

of study. A short interview with Mír Jafar filled his mind with grave

suspicions. He did not show them. He even permitted Mír Jafar to

proceed to Húglí to have an interview with the Dutch authorities. But

when the Súbahdár despatched to him from that place a letter in which

he stated that he had simply granted to the Dutch some indulgences

with respect to their trade, he drew the correct conclusion, and

prepared to meet the double danger.

In his summary of the several courses he would have to adopt he

dismissed altogether the Súbahdár from his mind. Him he feared not.

With the Dutch he would deal and deal summarily. He had already

despatched special messengers to summon every available man from the

outposts. He now called out the militia, 300 men, five-sixths of whom

were Europeans, to defend the town and fort; he formed half a troop

of volunteer horsemen, and enlisted as volunteer infantry all the men

who could not ride; he ordered the despatch-boat to sail with all

speed to the Arakan coast, where she would find a squadron under

Admiral Cornish ready to send him aid; he ordered up, to lie just

below the fort, the three Indiamen of {128}which I have spoken: he

strengthened the two batteries commanding the most important passages

of the river near Calcutta, and mounted guns on the nascent Fort

William. Then, when he had completed all that 'Prudentia' could

suggest, the rival goddess, 'Fortuna'[13] smiled upon him. Just as he

was completing his preparations, Colonel Forde and Captain Knox,

fresh from the conquest of the Northern Sirkárs, arrived to

strengthen his hand. To the former Clive assigned the command of the

whole of his available force in the field: to the latter, the charge

of the two batteries.

[Footnote 13: 'Nullum numen abest si sit Prudentia; nos te, Nos

facimus Fortuna, deam.' \_Juvenal\_.]

Up to that period the Dutch had endeavoured to pose as peaceful

traders. But no sooner had their negotiations with Mír Jafar been

completed, and they had received his permission to ascend to

Chinsurah, than they threw off the mask, and sent an ultimatum to

Clive threatening vengeance unless the English should renounce their

claim of the right of search, and redress the other grievances they

enumerated. Clive replied that in all his actions he had been guided

by the authority vested in him by the Súbahdár, the representative of

the Great Mughal; that he was powerless in the matter; but that if

they would refer their complaints to the Súbahdár, he would gladly

act the part of mediator. The Dutch commander, however, paid no heed

to this somewhat vague reply, but acted as though it were a

{129}declaration of war. For, on receipt of Clive's letter he

attacked and captured seven small vessels lying off Falta, among them

the despatch-boat above referred to, tore down the English colours,

and transferred the guns and material to their own ships. Then,

having plundered the few houses on the riverbanks, he continued his

upward course, with his ships, although, from the want of pilots,

their progress was necessarily slow.

Clive, on hearing of these demonstrations, prepared to act on the

instant. First, he sent a despatch to the Súbahdár, telling him that

the quarrel between the two European nations must be fought out

alone, adding, however, to test Mír Jafar, a paragraph to the effect

that the Súbahdár would convince him of his sincerity and attachment

if he would directly surround their (the Dutch) subordinates, and

distress them in 'the country to the utmost.' Then he ordered Forde

to occupy Bárnagar on the left bank of the Húglí, five miles from

Calcutta; to cross thence with his troops and four field-pieces to

Shirirámpur, nine miles distant; to be ready, either there or beyond

it, to intercept the Dutch troops, in the event of their trying to

reach Chinsurah by land. Then, learning that the Dutch ships had

progressed as far as the Sankrál reach, just below the fire of the

English batteries, and were landing their troops with directions to

march directly on Chinsurah, he issued orders for immediate action.

Recognizing on the instant that, by landing, the {130}enemy's troops

had severed themselves from their base--the ships--he despatched Knox

to join Forde, and sent information to the latter of the probable

route the enemy's troops would take, leaving it to him to deal with

them as he might consider advisable. Then he sent orders to Commodore

Wilson, the senior of the captains of the Indiamen, to demand from

the Commander of the Dutch squadron a full apology for the insults he

and his subordinates had been guilty of, the return of the

individuals and of the plunder he and they had taken, and their

immediate departure from the Húglí. Failing prompt compliance with

all these demands, Wilson was to attack the enemy's squadron.

The scene that followed deserves to rank with the most glorious

achievements of English sailors. The three captains were all built in

the heroic mould. Not one of them felt a doubt of victory when they

were ordered to attack a squadron in all respects more than double in

numbers and weight of metal to their own. It must suffice here to

say[14] that, the proposal of the English Commodore having been

refused by the Dutch, the English captains bore down upon the enemy;

after a contest of little more than two hours, captured or sank six

of their ships; the seventh, hurrying out to sea, fell into the hands

of two ships of war, then entering the river. Well {131}might the

victors exclaim, in the language of our great national poet:--

'O, such a day,

So fought, so followed, and so fairly won,

Came not till now to dignify the times,

Since Caesar's fortunes.'

[Footnote 14: For a detailed account of this action see the author's

\_Decisive Battles of India\_.]

This success left the Dutch soldiers, then on their way to Chinsurah,

absolutely without a base. They could only find safety in success,

and success was denied them. They were first repulsed by Forde in an

attack they made on a position he had taken at Chandranagar, and the

next day almost destroyed by the same gallant officer, joined by

Knox, in a battle at the village of Biderra, nearly midway between

Chandranagar and Chinsurah. Few victories have been more decisive. Of

the 700 Europeans and 800 Malays landed from the ships, 120 of the

former and 200 of the latter were left dead on the field; 300, in

about equal proportions, were wounded; and the remainder, with the

exception of 60 Dutch and 250 Malays, were taken prisoners. Forde had

under his command on this eventful day (November 25) 320 Europeans,

800 sipáhís, and 50 European volunteer cavalry. The previous day,

reckoning that he would have to fight the enemy with his inferior

numbers, he had sent a note to Clive asking for implicit

instructions. Clive, who was playing whist when the note reached him,

knowing with whom he was dealing, wrote across it, in pencil: 'Dear

Forde, Fight them immediately: I will send you the order {132}in

Council to-morrow,' and sent back the messenger with it.

The two victories were in all respects decisive. Never again did the

Dutch trouble the tranquillity of India. Mír Jafar was cowed. Three

days after the victory of Biderra, his son, Míran, arrived from

Murshidábád with 6,000 horse, for the purpose, he explained, of

exterminating the Dutch. Clive, always merciful in victory, gave to

these, against their baffled confederate, the protection which he

considered due to a foe no longer to be dreaded.

Clive now regarded the British position in Bengal so secure that he

might return to England to enjoy there the repose and the position he

had acquired. He had compressed into three years achievements the

most momentous, the most marvellous, the most enduring, recorded in

the history of his country. Landing with a small force below Calcutta

in the last days of 1756, he had compelled the Súbahdár, who had been

responsible for the Black Hole tragedy, though guiltless of designing

it,[15] to evacuate Calcutta, to witness without interfering his

capture of Chandranagar. Determined, then, in the interests of his

country, to place matters in Bengal on such a footing that a

repetition of the tragedy of 1756 should be impossible, he resolved

to replace Siráj-ud-daulá, himself the son of a usurper, by a native

chieftain {133}who should owe everything to the English, and who

would probably allow himself to be guided by them in his policy. To

this end he formed a conspiracy among his nobles, fomented discontent

among his people, and finally forced him to appeal to arms. At

Plassey Clive risked everything on the fidelity to himself of the

conspirators with whom he had allied himself. They were faithful. He

gained the battle, not gloriously but decisively, and became from the

morrow of the victory the lord paramount of the noble whom he placed

then on the \_masnad\_. Possibly it was partly policy which impelled

him to give his nominee no chance from the beginning. Certain it is,

that Mír Jafar was, from the moment of his accession, so handicapped

by the compulsion to make to his allies enormous payments, that his

life, from that moment to the hour of his deposition, presently to be

related, was not worth living. The commercial concessions which Clive

had forced from him gave the English an \_imperium in imperio\_. But

the Súbahdár was in the toils. When invasion came from the north he

tried his utmost to avoid asking for the aid of Clive. But Clive,

who had sent his best soldiers to conquer the Northern Sirkárs,

and to establish permanent relations with the Súbahdár of the

Deccan--relations which secured to England a permanent predominance

in the most important districts of southern India--was indispensable.

His assistance, given in a manner which could not fail to impress the

natives of India--for the enemy fled at his approach--riveted the

{134}chains on the Súbahdár. Then came the invasion of the Dutch. For

the first time a superior hostile force of Europeans landed on the

shores of British India. The Súbahdár, anxious above all things to

recover his freedom of action, promised them his assistance. Clive

shone out here, more magnificently than he had shone before, as the

undaunted hero. Disdaining to notice the action of the Súbahdár, he

gave all his attention to the European invaders; with far inferior

means he baffled their schemes; and crushed them in a manner such as

would make them, and did make them, remember and repent the audacity

which had allowed them to imagine that they could impose their will

on the victor of Káveripák and Plassey. He had made the provinces he

had conquered secure, if only the rule which was to follow his own

should be based on justice, against the native rulers; secure for

ever against European rivals assailing it from the sea.

[Footnote 15: Siráj-ud-daulá had given instructions that the

prisoners should be safely cared for, and had then gone to sleep. It

was the brutality of his subordinate officers which caused the

catastrophe.]

That, during this period, he had committed faults, is only to say

that he was human. But, unfortunately, some of his faults were so

grave as to cast a lasting stain on a career in many respects worthy

of the highest admiration. The forging of the name of Admiral Watson,

although the name was attached to the deed with, it is believed, his

approval,[16] was a crime light in comparison with the purpose for

which it {135}was done--the deceiving of the Bengálí, Aminchand. It

is true that Aminchand was a scoundrel, a blackmailer, a man who had

said: 'Pay me well, or I will betray your secrets.' But that was no

reason why Clive should fight him with his own weapons: should

descend to the arena of deceit in which the countrymen of Aminchand

were past-masters. Possibly the atmosphere he breathed in such

society was answerable, to a great extent, for this deviation from

the path of honour. But the stain remains. No washing will remove it.

It affected him whilst he still lived, and will never disappear.

[Footnote 16: In his evidence before the Committee of the House of

Commons Clive said regarding the fictitious treaty: 'It was sent to

Admiral Watson, who objected to the signing of it; but, to the best

of his remembrance, gave the gentleman who carried it (Mr.

Lushington) leave to sign his name upon it.']

Then again, as to his dealings with Siráj-ud-daulá and Mír Jafar. The

whole proceedings of Clive after his capture of Calcutta prove that

he intended to direct all his policy to the removal of that young

prince from the \_masnad\_. Some have thought that the Black Hole

tragedy was the cause of this resolve. But this can hardly be so, for

Mír Jafar, the commander-in-chief of the army which seized Calcutta

in 1756, was equally implicated in that transaction. The suggestion

that Siráj-ud-daulá was intriguing with the French at Haidarábád is

equally untenable, for Clive knew he had little cause to fear their

hostility. Clive not only expelled that prince, but, by his policy,

his extortions, his insistance to obtain control of the saltpetre

traffic, rendered it impossible for his successor to govern. Success

attended his policy so long as he remained on the spot to control his

subordinates, but it was inevitable that, sooner or later, there

would come {136}a revulsion. The warlike natives of Bihár had not

been conquered, and they knew it. They had helped Clive, not that

they should become subject to the foreigner from the sea, but that

they might have a native ruler whom they trusted, in place of one

whom they disliked. When they realized that the result of this change

was not only subjection to the islanders, but impoverishment to

themselves, they broke into what was called rebellion, and showed on

many a bloody field that it was not they, only Siráj-ud-daulá, who

had been conquered at Plassey.

This was the most dangerous legacy of the policy and action of Clive.

He recognized its shadowy existence. He wrote to his successor, Mr.

Vansittart, when he transferred to him his own office, that the only

danger he had to dread in Bengal was that which might arise from

venality and corruption. He might have added that the spoils of

Plassey had created a state of society in which those vices were

prominent; that the saltpetre monopoly, with the duties and

exemptions which had followed its acquisition, had confirmed them.

The Súbahdár himself recognized the new danger which would follow the

departure of Clive. In his mind he was the moderator who, satisfied

himself, would have stayed the hands of others. To quiet the

newcomers there would be fresh rapacity, more stringent despoilings.

He felt, to use the expression of the period when Clive quitted

Bengal, that 'the soul was departing from the body.'

Clive made over charge to Mr. Holwell, of Black {137}Hole notoriety,

pending the arrival of Mr. Vansittart, the 15th of February, 1760.

With the sanction of the Court he had nominated Major Calliaud to be

Commander of the Forces. Four members of his Council retired about

the same time as himself.

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CHAPTER XI

THE SECOND VISIT OF CLIVE TO ENGLAND

During his administration of four years in Bengal Clive had been

greatly hampered by the contradictory orders he had received from the

Court of Directors. In that Court there were four parties: the party

of alarmists at the aggrandizement of the Company's possessions in

India; the party of progressists; the middle party, composed of men

who would retain all that had been conquered, but who, not

understanding the necessity which often compels a conqueror to

advance that he may retain, would on no account sanction the

proceeding of a step further; a fourth party bent only on acquiring

plunder. As one or other of these parties obtained preponderance in

the Court, so did the orders transmitted to India take their colour.

In those days, it must be remembered, there was no Board of Control

to regulate and, if necessary, to modify, even entirely to alter, the

rulings of the General Court. Thus it was that the agent on the spot,

finding the orders from England constantly changing, was driven to

rely upon his own judgement, and to act on his own responsibility.

This did not signify so much so long as there was, on the spot,

{139}holding supreme authority, a Clive or a Warren Hastings. But

when the local chief authority was in the hands of men wanting alike

in intellect, in high principle, and in nerve, the situation was

likely to become dangerous in the extreme.

For the moment, when Clive quitted India, the situation was tranquil.

But it might become at any moment the reverse. Therefore it was that

Clive had recommended as his successor a man whom he believed he had

sounded to the core, and in whom he had found one after his own

heart. But there is no proverb more true than that contained in the

criticism passed by Tacitus on Galba, 'Omnium consensu capax imperii,

nisi imperasset.' We shall see presently how the conduct of

Vansittart corresponded to this aphorism.

A little more than a year before quitting the shores of Bengal, Clive

had addressed to Mr. Pitt, afterwards Lord Chatham, then Secretary of

State, a letter (January 7, 1759) in which he had represented the

difficulties of the actual situation, and had suggested a mode of

dealing with them. He had described the actual Súbahdár as a man

attached to the English, and as likely to continue that attachment

'while he has no other support,' but totally uninfluenced by feelings

of gratitude, feelings not common to his race. On the other hand, he

was advanced in years; his son, Míran, was utterly unworthy, so

unworthy 'that it will be almost unsafe trusting him with the

succession.' He added immediately, as though prescient of the events

{140}which were to follow, 'In case of their,' the native princes,

'daring to be troublesome,' they--a body of 2000 English soldiers--

would 'enable the Company to take the sovereignty upon themselves.'

After detailing how the transfer would be easy, and palatable, rather

than otherwise, to the natives generally, Clive proceeded to

represent that so large a sovereignty might possibly be an object too

extensive for a mercantile company, and to suggest that it might be

worthy of consideration whether the Crown should not take the matter

in hand. The points he urged were the following: First, the ease with

which the English 'could take absolute possession of these rich

kingdoms, and that with the Mughal's own consent, on condition of

paying him less than a fifth of the revenues thereof.' There would

remain a surplus of two millions, besides most valuable productions

of nature and art. He dwelt, secondly, on the influence in Europe

which would thereby accrue to England, and the enormous increase of

prestige and of the advantages which prestige conveys, on the spot.

He added that a small force of European troops would be sufficient,

as he could enlist any number of sipáhís, who 'will very readily

enter our service.' This letter he transmitted by the hands of Mr.

Walsh, his secretary during the campaign of Plassey and the year

following, and whom he describes as 'a thorough master of the

subject,' 'able to explain to you the whole design and the facility

with which it may be executed.'

Mr. Pitt received the letter, but was deterred from {141}acting upon

it by difficulties which arose in his mind from his want of knowledge

of India and of matters connected with that country. To the son of a

man whose father had been Governor of Madras in the days when the

English were the humble lessees of the lords of the soil, the

proposition to become masters of territories far larger and richer

than their island home, seemed beset with difficulties which, if it

may be said without disrespect to his illustrious memory, existed

solely in his own imagination--for they have since been very easily

overcome.

The letter served to make Clive personally known to the great

statesman when he landed in England in September or October, 1760. He

had returned a very rich man; he was full of ambition; his fame as a

soldier had spread all over the kingdom. Pitt, shortly before his

arrival (1758), had spoken of him in the House of Commons as a

'Heaven-born General,' as the only officer, by land or sea, who had

sustained the reputation of the country and added to its glory. The

King himself, George II, when the Commander-in-chief had proposed to

him to send the young Lord Dunmore to learn the art of war under

Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, had replied, 'What can he get by

attending the Duke of Brunswick? If he want to learn the art of war,

let him go to Clive.' These expressions show at least the temper of

the times, the feelings which would inspire the welcome which England

would give to her latest hero. And yet the welcome itself fell far

short of that which Clive had {142}anticipated. From the Crown there

was no immediate recognition; from the Court of Directors, a hostile

section of which held the supremacy, he received worse than neglect.

Almost their first act was to dispute his right to the jágír which

Mír Jafar had bestowed upon him.[1] From the general public there was

no demonstration. Clive felt that in England as in India he would

have to fight his way upwards.

[Footnote 1: See Chapter X, footnote 12.]

His health was not very good. He suffered from rheumatism, which had

assailed him in Bengal, and which bore a strong resemblance to

rheumatic gout. Scarcely had he recovered from this malady when he

was assailed by the insidious disease which, afterwards, but rarely

left him. This caused a depression of spirits which gradually wore

out his body. As a boy he had suffered at intervals from similar

attacks. They increased now in intensity, baffling the physicians who

attended him. He bore up bravely, however, and pushed forward with

his wonted energy the ambitious plans he had formed in the intervals

of quiet and repose.

At the age of thirty-five, with an enormous fortune, great ambition,

and sanguine hopes for the future, Clive trusted that the illness he

suffered from would eventually yield to treatment, and he entered on

his campaign in England with the confidence in himself which had been

one secret of his success in India. He had hoped, on his arrival, to

have been at once raised to the House of Peers. But the honours of

the {143}Crown, long delayed, took the shape only of an Irish

peerage. With this he was forced to be content, and, being debarred

from the Upper House, made all his arrangements to become a member of

the Lower. He speedily obtained a seat in that House.

Possibly he marred his prospects by the line which he took in

politics. In October, 1760, George II had died. The new King, whose

proudest boast was that he had been born an Englishman, made Lord

Bute Secretary of State. Soon after Pitt resigned, because the rest

of the Ministry refused to support him in his policy of going to war

with Spain, the Duke of Newcastle still remaining nominal head of the

Cabinet. In 1762 the Duke resigned, and Lord Bute became Prime

Minister. Sir John Malcolm states that Lord Clive was offered his own

terms if he would support the Bute Ministry. But Clive had given his

mental adhesion in another quarter, and therefore refused his

support, and was, it is stated, treated coldly in consequence.[2]

[Footnote 2: Vide Malcolm's \_Clive\_, vol. ii. p. 203: also Gleig, p.

134. There would seem to be some mistake as to the reason given by

Mr. Gleig for his statement that Clive refused his support to the

Bute Administration because of his devotion to George Grenville; for

George Grenville held the post of one of the principal Secretaries of

State in Lord Bute's Ministry.]

Though not a supporter of the Bute Administration, Clive did not

refrain from volunteering to it his advice when the preliminaries of

peace between France and England were under discussion. Both Powers

were resolved that the peace should extend to their possessions in

India. Clive wrote therefore to {144}Lord Bute suggesting the terms

upon which, in his opinion, it was absolutely necessary for the

safety of the East India Company he should insist. Prominent among

these were (1) the absolute limitation of the number of troops the

French might retain in Southern India, and (2) a prohibition to admit

into Bengal Frenchmen other than those engaged in commercial

enterprises. Lord Bute so far followed the advice as to induce the

French to agree not to maintain troops either in Bengal or the

Northern Sirkárs. But when he would go further, and, on the

suggestion of Mr. Lawrence Sulivan, Chairman of the Court of

Directors, make the recognition of certain native princes a clause in

the projected treaty between the two Powers, Clive, with his habitual

prescience, denounced the clause as fraught with consequences most

disastrous to the position of England in India, and persuaded the

Minister to withdraw it.

The gentleman above referred to, Mr. Lawrence Sulivan, had become,

from pure motives of jealousy, one of the bitterest enemies of Clive.

Sulivan had served in India without distinction, but had succeeded in

amassing there a handsome fortune, and being a man of bold address

and pushing manners, had become a Director of the Company. Whilst

Clive was still in India Sulivan had professed the most unbounded

admiration for him and his achievements, and, by thus professing, had

obtained the support of the followers of Clive when he made a bid for

the Chairmanship of the Court. This he secured, and, being a man

{145}of considerable self-assertion and determination, succeeded in

becoming the dictator of the Council. Up to that time he had given

his support to Clive, but no sooner did he hear of the departure of

his hero for England, than, dreading the effect of his arrival upon

his own influence, he had become his most bitter opponent. He it was

who stimulated his colleagues to object to the donation of the jágír

to Clive, mentioned in a previous page. The grounds to the objection

were rather hinted at than expressed, for in those days the Court

could not deny the right of the Súbahdár to bestow, or of Clive to

accept, so handsome a gift. The real motive was to exclude Clive from

a seat in the India House, and for a time Sulivan succeeded.

The hostility of Sulivan found an outcome in the progress of

political affairs. Clive had voted against the Peace of Paris

(February 10, 1763). Lord Bute, indignant at the opposition his

measure encountered, had made his power felt by dismissing three

dukes from their lord-lieutenancies, and he was very angry with

Clive. He then sought and obtained the alliance of Sulivan to crush

him. Up to that point Clive had remained quiescent; but at this new

outrage he turned. Very shortly afterwards Sulivan came before the

Court of Proprietors for re-election. To defeat him Clive had

purchased a large amount of India Stock and divided it amongst his

friends. At the show of hands there was a large majority against

Sulivan, but when the ballot-box was appealed to the position was

reversed, and Sulivan and his majority were returned. {146}For the

moment Clive's defeat was crushing, and he prepared to meet the

consequences of it. His opponents did not delay to show their hands.

Again was the question of the jágír mooted. The eminent counsel

employed by Clive gave an opinion that the Court had no case.

However, the Sulivan party persevered. Just on the eve of the trial,

however, there came news from India which produced a revolution of

opinion in the Court. The reports from Calcutta showed that the

combined avarice, greed, misgovernment, and tyranny of the civil

authorities left by Clive in Calcutta had produced a general

uprising; had almost undone the great work Clive had accomplished;

that there was no one on the spot who could be trusted to restore

order; but that unless such a task were committed to a competent man,

the possessions of the Company in Bengal would be in the greatest

danger. This intelligence caused a panic in the India House.

Instinctively the name of Clive came uppermost to every lip. The

Proprietors were summoned to meet in full Court. Panic-stricken, they

forced upon Clive the office, not merely of President, but of

Governor-General, with very full powers. That their conduct regarding

the jágír might not be pleaded by him as an objection to accept

office, the Proprietors passed a resolution that the proceedings

regarding the jágír should be stopped, and that the right of Clive to

it should be officially recognized.

This was indeed a triumph. The policy, \_reculer pour mieux sauter\_,

had been eminently justified. {147}But Clive was as generous in

victory as he had been great in defeat. He declined to profit by the

enthusiasm of the Proprietors. Declaring that he had a proposal to

make regarding the jágír, which he was confident the Court would

accept, he proceeded to declare that it would be impossible for him

to proceed to India leaving behind him a hostile Court and a hostile

chairman; that at least the existing chairman must be changed. He

carried the Proprietors with him, and measures were taken for a fresh

election.

This election took place on the 25th of April, 1764. At it one-half

of the candidates proposed by Sulivan were defeated, he himself being

returned by a majority of one only. The chairman and deputy-chairman

elected were both supporters of Clive. In the interval (March, 1764)

Clive had been nominated Governor-General and Commander-in-chief of

Bengal. To draw the fangs of the Council in Calcutta, four gentlemen

were nominated to form with him a Select Committee authorized to act

on their own authority, without reference to the Council.

One word, before the great man returns to the scenes of his triumphs,

clothed with the fullest authority, regarding the instrument used by

Mr. Sulivan and his friends to torture him. No sooner had the new

Court been elected than Clive made to it his suggestion regarding the

jágír. He proposed, and the Court agreed, that for a period of ten

years, the company should pay to him the full amount of the jágír

rents, unless he should die before, when the {148}payments would

cease; the ultimate disposal of the jágír to be made when the

occasion should arise.

These matters having been settled, the officers to serve under him

having been selected by himself, Clive, attended by two of the four

members who had been appointed by the Court to accompany him, Messrs.

Sumner and Sykes, embarked for Calcutta the 4th of June, 1764. Lady

Clive did not go with him. She had to remain in England to

superintend the education of her children.

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CHAPTER XII

THE REIGN OF MISRULE IN BENGAL

Clive had chosen Mr. Vansittart to succeed him as President of the

Council in Bengal because he believed he had recognized in him a man

who would do all in his power to put down the growing system of

venality and corruption. I have already shown how he had written to

him before he quitted India. The words he had used were: 'The

expected reinforcements will, in my opinion, put Bengal out of all

danger but that of venality and corruption.' But Clive had not

sufficiently considered that the very fact that the new President had

been selected from Madras instead of from amongst the men who had

served under his immediate orders was likely to cause jealousy among

the latter; that Vansittart, notwithstanding his estimated lofty

moral nature,[1] had no strength of character; {150}no such

persuasive powers as could win men to his side; no pre-eminent

abilities; no force of will, such as Clive himself would have

displayed, to dominate or, in case of great emergency, to suspend a

refractory colleague. He was but one of the herd, well-meaning,

opposed in principle to the venality and corruption then in vogue,

but, in every sense of the term, ordinary. Even with respect to the

two vices he denounced, he was an untried and untempted man.

[Footnote 1: One anecdote will demonstrate the extent of the 'lofty

moral nature' attributed by Clive to Mr. Vansittart. After Clive had

been a year or so in England he wrote to Vansittart requesting him to

select for him and despatch to him an elephant, as he wished to

present one to the King. Vansittart chose and despatched the elephant

for presentation to his Majesty, not as a gift from Clive, but as

from himself.]

His capacity for rule was put to the test very soon after he had

assumed the reins of office. Those reins had not, as I have said,

been handed to him by Clive. He had taken them from Mr. Holwell at

the very end of July (1760). In the interval an event had occurred

which had changed the general position in Bengal. Five months after

Clive had quitted Calcutta (July 2, 1760) Míran, the only son of the

Súbahdár, Mír Jafar, was struck dead by lightning. The reader may

recollect the passage in his letter to Mr. Pitt, wherein Clive

referred to this young man. He had described him as 'so cruel,

worthless a young fellow, and so apparently an enemy to the English,

that it will be almost unsafe trusting him with the succession.' If

another successor, with an unquestionable title, had been immediately

available, the death of Míran would have been no calamity. But there

was no such successor. The next son in order of succession had seen

but thirteen summers. Outside of that boy and his younger brothers

were many claimants, not one of them with an indefeasible title. Mír

Jafar himself {151}was older even than his years. It devolved then,

with the tacit consent of the nobles, on the Council at Calcutta, to

nominate the successor to Míran. Such was the state of affairs when

Mr. Vansittart arrived, and took his seat as President of the

Council.

It happened that there were in Bengal at this time two officers who

had rendered conspicuous service to the State, Majors Calliaud and

Knox. During the very month in which Clive had quitted Calcutta,

these officers had marched with such English troops and sipáhís as

were available, to assist in the repelling of an invasion made by the

titular King of Delhi, prompted, it was believed, by Míran, and had

repulsed, with great loss to the enemy, an attempt made to storm the

city of Patná. Vansittart, who knew Calliaud well alike as a friend

and as a man trusted by Clive, summoned him to attend the Council

upon the deliberations of which the future of Bengal depended. The

discussions were long and somewhat heated. The party in the Council

which represented most accurately the opinions of Clive, as rendered

in his letter to Mr. Pitt, already referred to,[2] was of opinion

that whilst Mír Jafar should be allowed to reign during the remainder

of his life, opportunity should be taken of his death to transfer the

direct {152}administration to the English. If this opportunity had

been taken to carry out some such policy it is probable that the

evils which followed would have been avoided.

[Footnote 2: Clive's letter had been written during the life of

Míran. After detailing his character and the growing infirmities of

Mír Jafar, he had added: 'so small a body as 2000 Europeans will

secure us against any apprehensions from either the one or the other;

and, in case of their daring to be troublesome, enable the Company to

take the sovereignty upon themselves.']

The discussions were still proceeding when there arrived an envoy

from the Súbahdár, his son-in-law, Mír Muhammad Kásim, a man of

ability, tact, great persuasive powers, no scruple, and, in a certain

sense, a patriot. Mír Kásim had coveted the succession vacant by the

death of Míran. He had divined the plans of the English; he hated

them as the enemies of the race of conquerors who had ruled Bengal

and its people for centuries. He despised them as venal: and he had

resolved to use them for his own advantage. He had brought with him a

bag full of promises, and, though nominally the representative of Mír

Jafar, had come resolved to work for his own interests.

Admitted into the secret deliberations of the Council, Mír Kásim soon

realized that, with the single exception of Major Calliaud, he could

buy them all. Even the scrupulousness of Mr. Vansittart vanished

before his golden arguments. He bought them. For certain specified

sums of money to be paid by him to each member of Council,[3] these

official Englishmen covenanted to dethrone their ally of Plassey, Mír

Jafar, and to seat on the \_masnad\_ his son-in-law, Mír Kásim. Three

days after the signature of the treaty Mír {153}Kásim set out to make

his preparations for the coming event, and two days afterwards Mr.

Vansittart started for Murshidábád to break the news to Mír Jafar.

His very first official act had been a violation of the principle

prescribed to him by Clive as the one the non-indulgence in which

would secure the English from all danger.

[Footnote 3: He included even Major Calliaud, but without the

consent, and after the departure from India, of that officer.]

The events which followed must be stated very briefly. Vansittart

obtained from Mír Jafar his resignation. The one condition stipulated

by the old man was that thenceforth he should reside, under the

protection of the English, at Calcutta, or in its immediate vicinity.

For that city he started the following morning (September 19). Mír

Kásim proceeded to Patná to complete the arrangements which had

followed the repulse of the invasion of Bihár by the troops of Sháh

Alím, and was there formally installed by Sháh Alím himself as

Súbahdár of Bengal, Bihár, and Orissa.

Mír Kásim possessed all the capacities of a ruler. He knew thoroughly

the evils under which the three provinces were groaning, and he

proceeded with all the energy of a nature which never tired to reform

them. He moved his capital to Mungír, a town with a fortress, on the

right bank of the Ganges, commanding Northern and Eastern Bihár, and

nearly midway between Calcutta and Benares. He then proceeded to

reform his infantry on the English system, enlisting in his service

two well-known soldiers of mixed or Armenian descent, Samru and

{154}Markar, to command brigades of their own, and to aid in the

training of the other soldiers. So far he achieved success. But when

he proceeded to alleviate the misery of his people, he found that the

fatal gift of the salt monopoly enabled the English to thwart all his

efforts. For not only did the English use the authority they

possessed to the great impoverishment of the soil, but they gave to

their friends and dependents licences exempting from the payment of

duty in such profusion, that the people of Bengal and Bihár suffered

to an extent such as, in the present day, can with difficulty be

credited. Never, on the one side, was there so insatiable a

determination to become rich, no matter what misery might be thereby

caused to others; never, on the other, a more honest endeavour, by

sacrifices of any kind, to escape the ruin caused by such cruel

exactions.

At last, when he had exhausted appeal after appeal to the Calcutta

authorities, Mír Kásim recognized that his only chance of escape from

the pressure too hard to be borne, was to appeal to the God of

Battles. He was ready; the English, he believed, were not. He had

excellent fighting material; generals who would not betray him. On

the other hand, he knew that Clive and Calliaud had quitted India,

and he did not believe that either had his equal amongst the men on

the spot. Accordingly, just after he had received a demand from

Calcutta, compliance with which would have completed the ruin then

{155}impending, he took the bold step of abolishing all transit

duties, and of establishing free-trade throughout his territories.

Anticipating the consequences of this bold act, he notified to his

generals to be prepared for any movement the English might make.

Here, in the space allotted,[4] it must suffice to state that the

English, amazed that such a worm as the Súbahdár of the three

provinces should dare to question their commands, sent two of their

number to remonstrate with him. But, whilst they were negotiating,

another Englishman, one of their own clique, a civil officer named

Ellis, furious at the idea of stooping to negotiate, made

preparations to seize the important city of Patná. At the head of a

small force he did surprise (June 25, 1763) that city during the

hours before daybreak, but the garrison of the citadel and of a large

stone building refused to admit him. Little caring for this, he

permitted his men to disperse to plunder. Meanwhile the commander of

the Súbahdár's troops, Mír Mehdí Khán, had started for Mungír to

represent to his master the turn events had taken. On his way

thither, a few miles from the city, he encountered the troops in his

master's service commanded by Markar, the Armenian. Markar, as in

duty bound, at once marched on Patná, found the English still

plundering, drove them out of the city, and forced them to take

refuge in a factory outside of it. {156}There he besieged them, and

thence he forced them to retreat (June 29). Meanwhile the Súbahdár

had despatched his other brigade, under Samru, to Baksar, to cut off

the retreat of the English, whilst he urged Markar to follow them up.

Markar followed, caught, and attacked them between the two

places--the 1st of July--and completely defeated them. The English,

of whom there were 300, aided by 2,500 natives, fought with their

usual courage; but they were badly led, were discouraged, and were

completely beaten. Those who did not fall on the field were taken

prisoners, re-conveyed to Patná, and were there eventually put to

death.

[Footnote 4: For a detailed account of the events preceding and

following this action on the part of Mír Kásim, the reader is

referred to the author's \_Decisive Battles of India\_, New Edition,

pp. 133-174.]

Such was the mode in which the war began. Had not the English

possessed, though they knew it not until experience had taught them,

a commander not inferior to any of the men who had done so much for

the glory of their country in the East, it is probable that Mír

Kásim, who, according to a contemporary writer,[5] 'was trained to

arms,' and who 'united the gallantry of the soldier with the sagacity

of the statesman,' would have driven them to their ships.

[Footnote 5: The author of an admirable book, written at the time,

entitled, \_Transactions in India from 1756 to 1783\_.]

From such a fate they were saved by the skill, the devotion, the

supreme military talents of Major John Adams. This officer, placed in

command, defeated Mír Kásim's army, after a very bloody battle, at

Kátwá (July 19); again, a few days later, after a most stubborn

resistance, at Gheriá. But neither {157}of these battles was decisive

of the war. When, however, the month following, Adams stormed the

immensely strong position of Undwá Nala, defended by 40,000 men, and

captured 100 pieces of cannon, Mír Kásim recognized that the war was

over. He made no attempt to defend either Rájmahál, Mungír, or Patná.

On the fall of the latter city (November 6) he fled to Oudh to take

refuge there with the Nawáb-Wazír, and to instigate him to espouse

his cause.

It is only necessary to add that he succeeded in persuading that

prince to attempt the venture. He attempted it, however, only to

repent his audacity, for, after much manoeuvring, the English, led by

Munro, afterwards Sir Hector--who, after an interval of the incapable

Carnac, had succeeded Adams, killed by the climate and the fatigues

of the campaign--inflicted a crushing defeat upon him on the plains

of Baksar (October 23, 1764); then Munro, pursuing his victorious

course, occupied successively Benares, Chanár, and Allahábád. In

March, 1765, the English overran Oudh, occupying Lucknow and

Faizábád; then went on to beat the enemy at Karra, and again at Kálpi

on the Jumna. Then the Nawáb-Wazír, 'a hopeless wanderer,' threw

himself on the mercy of the conquerors. These behaved to him with

conspicuous generosity, repaid by his successors in late years. The

English frontier was, however, not the less advanced, practically, as

far as Allahábád. Such was the military position when Clive returned

to Calcutta as Governor in May, 1765.

{158}Meanwhile the English, on the outbreak of the war with Mír

Kásim, had restored Mír Jafar, receiving the usual gratuities for

themselves and stipulating for exemptions from all duties except two

and a half per cent. on salt. As for Mír Kásim, it is only necessary

to add that he died some years later at Delhi in extreme poverty.

With all his faults he was a patriot.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE PURIFYING OF BENGAL

When Clive quitted England for Bengal (June 4, 1764) he knew only

that the war with Mír Kásim was raging, and that Mír Jafar had been

reinstated in his position. It was not until he reached Madras, the

10th of April following, that he learned that Mír Kásim had been

finally defeated, that his followers had submitted, that Mír Jafar

was dead, and that the Nawáb-Wazír of Oudh had thrown himself on the

clemency of the English. In the interval of twenty-three days which

elapsed before his arrival in Calcutta (May 3), he had time, in

consultation with the two members of the Select Committee who

accompanied him, Messrs. Sykes and Sumner, to deliberate regarding

the course of action which it would behove him to adopt on his

arrival there.[1]

[Footnote 1: The other two were General Carnac and Mr. Verelst.]

One of his first acts on arrival was to remodel the army. He placed

General Carnac at its head, divided the European infantry into three

battalions, gave regimental commands to two officers who had

accompanied him from England, and regulated all the {160}superior

appointments in a manner the best adapted, in his opinion, to secure

efficiency.

He dealt likewise with the Civil Service. Nothing had impressed Clive

more than the evil effects of the predominance of venality and

corruption during the rule which had followed his first departure,

and he was resolved to put them down with a strong hand. He found, on

his landing, a subject which gave him the opportunity he desired for

showing publicly the bent of the line of conduct he intended to

pursue.

Four months before his return, Mír Jafar, worn out by anxiety and

trouble, had passed away. His position had become degraded, even in

his own eyes. From having been, as he was on the morrow of Plassey,

the lord of three rich provinces, he had become, to use the words of

a contemporary Englishman,[2] 'a banker for the Company's servants,

who could draw upon him as often and to as great an amount as they

pleased.'

[Footnote 2: Mr. Scrafton. See Scrafton's \_Letters\_.]

We have seen how the members of Council had benefited pecuniarily by

the elevation of Mír Jafar to the \_masnad\_ in 1757; by that of his

successor in 1763; by Mír Jafar's re-elevation the same year. The

opportunity of again selecting a successor was not to be passed over

without their once again plunging their hands in the treasury of

Murshidábád. They found that there were two candidates for the vacant

office, the son of Míran, and therefore grandson of Mír Jafar, and

the eldest surviving son of that {161}Nawáb. The decision arrived at

by the Council, then reduced by vacancies to eight members, was to

sell the succession to the candidate who should bid the highest price

for it. They decided in favour of the son of Mír Jafar, for, although

illegitimate, he was of an age at which he could act on his own

authority; the other was a minor, whose revenues would have to be

accounted for. In return for their complaisance, it was agreed that

they should receive a sum of money, to be divided as they might

arrange, close upon ten lakhs of rupees; in addition, there was to be

paid another sum, just over ten lakhs, for secret services rendered

by one of their number, Mr. Gideon Johnstone, and by a Muhammadan,

Muhammad Ríza Khán, who also, in pursuance of the arrangement, was

nominated Deputy-Nawáb. This shameful bargain was signed, sealed, and

delivered on the 25th of February, little more than two months before

Lord Clive landed.

An order from the India Office, which reached Calcutta just thirteen

days before the death of Mír Jafar, and which prohibited--by a new

covenant, to be signed by all the Civil Servants in India--the

acceptance by such servants of presents of any kind from the natives

of India, greatly strengthened the hands of Clive in dealing with

this transaction. Finding that in the Council itself he would be

subjected to much cavilling, he at once superseded its action by

declaring (May 7) that the Select Committee[3] had been constituted.

He then, with that Committee, {162}assumed the whole powers of the

Government, took an oath of secrecy, and had a similar oath

administered to the only two of his colleagues who were present. He

then set himself to examine all the matters connected with the

succession to the office of Súbahdár of the three provinces.

[Footnote 3: See Chapter XI.]

He had to deal with men whom a long course of corruption had rendered

absolutely shameless. Charged by Clive with having violated the

orders of their masters in accepting presents after such acceptance

had been prohibited, they replied that they had taken Clive himself

as their model, and referred to his dealings with Mír Jafar in 1757,

and afterwards at Patná, when he accepted the famous jágír. The reply

naturally was that such presents were then permitted, whereas now

they were forbidden. Clive added, among other reasoning, that then

there was a terrible crisis; that for the English and Mír Jafar it

was then victory or destruction, whereas now there was no crisis; the

times were peaceful, the succession required no interference. He

again charged the members of Council with having put up the Súbahdár

for sale to the highest bidder, in order that they might put the

price of it into their own pockets, and with having used indecent

haste to complete the transaction before his arrival.

Clive could at the moment do no more than expose these men, now

practically powerless. He forced them, however, to sign the new

covenants. But his treatment of them rankled in their minds. They

{163}became his bitterest enemies, and from that time forward used

all the means at their disposal to harass, annoy, and thwart him.

When, finally, he drove them from the seats they had disgraced, in

the manner presently to be related, they carried their bitterness,

their reckless audacity, and their slanderous tongues to England,

there to vent their spleen on the great founder of British India.

Having silenced these corrupt men, Clive turned his attention to the

best means of regulating, on fair terms, commercial interests between

the native and the foreigner. He soon recognized that the task of

Hercules when he was set to cleanse the stables of King Augeas was

light in comparison with the task he had undertaken. In the first

place he was greatly hampered by the permission which the Court of

Directors had granted to their Civil Servants to engage in private

trade. So poorly paid were they, indeed, that private trade, or a

compensation for it, had become necessary to them to enable them to

live decently. The proposed compensation was afterwards adopted of

fixing their salaries on a scale which would take away all temptation

to indulge in other methods of obtaining money. Vainly did Clive

press upon the Court the adoption of this alternative. Amongst our

countrymen there is one class whose business it is to rule; but there

are often other classes which aspire to that privilege, and which

seize the opportunity afforded them to exercise power, but whose

members possess neither the education, the enlightenment, nor the

turn {164}of mind to do so with success. Of this latter class were

the men who had become the Directors of the East India Company. These

men possessed no prescience; they were quite unable to make a correct

forecast; they could consider only the present, and that dimly. They

could not realize that the world was not standing still, and they

would have denounced that man as a madman who should have told them

that the splendid daring of Clive had made them the inheritors of the

Mughal empire. Seeing only as far as the tips of their noses, these

men declined to increase the salaries of their servants or to

prohibit private trade.

Hercules could bend to his process of cleansing the stables of the

King of Elis, the rivers Alpheus and Peneus. Clive could not bend the

Court of Directors. The consequence was that his labour was great,

his success incomplete. The utmost he could do, and did do, was to

issue an order abrogating the privilege, used by the Civil Servants

to the ruin of the children of the soil, to grant passes for the

transit of merchandize free of duty; restricting such privilege to

certain authorities named and defined. Upon the private trade of the

civilians he imposed restrictions which minimized as far as was

possible, short of its abolition, the evils resulting from permission

to trade, bringing it in fact to a great extent under the control of

the Government. In both these respects his reforms were wider, and

went deeper, than those which Mír Kásim had vainly asked from Mr.

Vansittart and his Council.

With regard to the salt monopoly, Clive had made {165}investigations

which proved that the trade in that commodity had been conducted in a

manner which, whilst securing enormous profits for the few, had

pressed very hardly on the many. He endeavoured to reduce this evil

by placing the trade on a settled basis which, whilst it would secure

to the natives a supply of the article at a rate not in excess of

that which the poor man could afford, would secure to the servants of

the Company fixed incomes on a graduated scale. His scheme, he knew,

was far from being perfect, but it was the best he could devise in

the face of the refusal of the India Office to increase salaries, and

certainly it was a vast improvement on the system it superseded.

Whilst it secured to the Company's servants in all departments an

adequate, even a handsome, income, it reduced the price of salt to

the natives to an amount from ten to fifteen per cent. below the

average price to them of the preceding twenty years.

This accomplished, Clive proceeded to reconstitute the Calcutta

Council. According to the latest orders then in existence this

Council was composed of a president and sixteen members: but the fact

of a man being a member of Council did not prevent him from accepting

an agency in other parts of the Company's territories. The result was

that many of the members held at the same time executive and

supervising offices. They controlled, as councillors, the actions

which they had performed as agents. There had been in consequence

great laxity, much wrongdoing, complete failure of justice. Clive

remedied {166}this evil by ruling that a member of Council should be

that and nothing more. He encountered great opposition, even amongst

the members of the Select Committee, but he carried through his

scheme.

Of this Select Committee it may here be stated that Clive used its

members solely as a consultative committee. Those members had their

duties, not always in Calcutta. Thus, whilst Carnac was with the

army, Sykes acted at Murshidábád as the Governor's agent; Verelst

supervised the districts of Burdwán and Mednípur: Mr. Sumner alone

remained with Clive. This gentleman had been nominated to succeed

Clive in case of his death or resignation. But it had become evident

to Clive long before the period at which we have arrived that he was

in every way unfitted for such an office. Infirm of purpose,

sympathizing to a great extent with the corrupt party, wanting in

energy, Sumner had given Clive but a slack support. This was the case

especially in the matter of the reform of the Council just narrated.

Pursuing his inquiries Clive soon discovered that the administration

of the civil districts and divisions by the Company's officers had

been as faulty and corrupt as it well could be. The case, after

examination and report, was tersely put by the Court of Directors in

their summary of the state of Bengal on his arrival there. They

described the three provinces, Bengal, Bihár, and Orissa, as 'a

\_súbah\_'[4] disarmed, with {167}a revenue of almost two millions

sterling, at the mercy of our servants, who had adopted an unheard-of

ruinous principle, of an interest distinct from that of the Company.

This principle showed itself in laying their hands upon everything

they did not deem the Company's property. To reform the abuses so

described Clive invoked the assistance of those who ought to have

been immediately concerned in the introduction of juster

administration. He invited the young Nawáb and his councillors to

Calcutta, and held with them long conferences. The disclosures which

followed more than confirmed the worst fears he had entertained

regarding the all but universal corruption of the members of the

Civil Service. It was in consequence of these disclosures that he

compelled the retirement from the Council, as he had found it

composed on his arrival, of five of its members, and suspended the

remaining three. He filled up the vacancies thus caused by indenting

on Madras for a sufficient number of civilians to raise the total

number of councillors to twelve.

[Footnote 4: The word 'Súbah' is used here to mean one of the large

divisions of the Mughal empire.]

These sweeping reforms produced their natural effect. Clive became

hated. The civilians and their friends and accomplices acted

according as their natures were dominated by fear or by love of

revenge. Of the former, one, greatly inculpated, the chief agent of

Patná, committed suicide. Of the latter, many formed amongst

themselves an association, of which the following were some of the

principal articles:--'all visits to the Governor were forbidden; no

{168}invitations from him or from the members of the Select Committee

were to be accepted; the gentlemen coming from Madras were to be

treated with neglect and contempt; every member who should deviate

from these rules would be denounced and avoided.' At a later period

their hostility indicated itself in a more serious manner.

Of the young Súbahdár Clive formed but a poor opinion. He seemed to

him a nullity. The one man of ability about him, the minister

Muhammad Ríza Khán, the chief of those who had been bribed to raise

him to the \_masnad\_, was absolutely without scruple. Clive was most

unwilling to trust the political education of the Súbahdár to such a

man, or to others about him who possessed his unscrupulousness but

did not share his ability. But it was difficult to discover a better

man; and Clive had ultimately to be content with the endeavour to

lessen his influence by associating with him Rájá Duláb Rám--the

general who had conspired with Mír Jafar before Plassey--and with the

head of the great banking-house of the Sét family. But the influence

of Ríza was too deeply founded to be lightly shaken.

The introduction of the reforms I have noted caused a great strain on

the constitution of the illustrious man whose iron will carried them

through. He had to fight against a faction of interested men,

assailed by abuse, thwarted by opposition, and opposed secretly by at

least one of the colleagues sent to support him. He was absolutely

alone in the contest. {169}But his brave heart and his resolute will

carried him through. It was far more trying than fighting a battle,

or planning and carrying through a campaign. In those cases there is

always the excitement of constant action; the daily, often hourly,

survey of the positions; the \_certaminis gaudia\_ so eloquently

described by Attila; 'the holiday,' as that great conqueror called

it, 'of the battle-field.' In the daily examinations of deeds which

call a blush to the cheek, and of devising measures to repress them

in the future, Clive found none of these excitements. But though the

work was dreary and heartrending, though, by reason of the opposition

he encountered, it called into action all his mental vigour, all his

intelligence, all his determination, it was terribly exhausting. It

wore him out. Well might Sir John Malcolm write that it may be

questioned 'whether any of Clive's many and great achievements called

forth more of that active energy and calm firmness for which he was

distinguished than was evinced in effecting the reform of the Civil

Service of Bengal.'

There accompanied, moreover, in all his civil contests, another

mental trial. From causes which have been stated none of the reforms,

he constantly felt, could be stamped as 'thorough.' They were none of

them complete. He did much; he broke down corruption; he laid the

foundation for a permanent and perfect reform; he checked an enormous

evil; he infused a healthier tone into the younger members of the

service; he aided largely towards {170}the rehabilitation of the

British name, then sunk deep in the mire. But the want of intuition,

of foresight, of the Court of Directors rendered it impossible for

him to do more. That ultimate aim was to come after him; his

principles were to triumph; his harassing work had not been done in

vain. It was by adopting in their entirety the principles of Lord

Clive that the Civil Service of India became one of the noblest

services the world has ever seen; pure in its honour; devoted in the

performance of its duties; conspicuous for its integrity and ability.

It has produced men whose names would have given lustre to any

administration in the world, and it continues to produce them still.

The work of a great man lives after him. There is not a member of the

Civil Service of India who does not realize that for them Clive did

not live in vain.

Our admiration for him at this epoch of his career will be the

greater when we realize that the administrative reforms I have

mentioned were only a part of the duties which devolved upon him.

Simultaneously with the dealing with them he had to devote his time

and attention to other matters of the first importance. To the

consideration of these I shall ask the reader's attention in the next

chapter.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE POLITICAL AND FOREIGN POLICY OF LORD CLIVE: HIS

ARMY-ADMINISTRATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

On the 25th of June Clive started on his tour northward. His presence

was urgently needed on the frontier, for he had to deal with two

humiliated princes, the Nawáb-Wazír of Oudh, and the actual inheritor

of the empire of the Mughal, Sháh Alím, now a houseless fugitive, his

capital occupied by the Afgháns, possessing no resources but such as

might accrue from the title which he bore.

At Murshidábád, which he took on his way upwards, Clive had to settle

with the young Súbahdár the system which it would be incumbent upon

him to introduce into the three provinces, as governor under the

over-lordship of the English. The positions of the native ruler and

the western foreigner had become completely inverted since the

period, only nine years distant, when Siráj-ud-daulá marched against

Calcutta to expel thence those who were his vassals. The system to be

imposed now on the Súbahdár provided that he should become a

{172}Nawáb-Názim, responsible for the peace and for the maintenance

of public order in the three provinces, for the administration of

justice, and for the enforcing of obedience to the law; that there

should be a Diwán, or chief minister, empowered to collect the yearly

revenue of the provinces, responsible for all disbursements, and for

the payment of the surplus into the Imperial treasury. This system

had prevailed in the time of the Emperor Aurangzeb. But there was

this important difference. In Clive's scheme, whilst Nujm-ud-daulá

would be Nawáb-Názim, the East India Company would occupy, from that

time forth and for ever, the position of Diwán; and the Imperial

treasury would be the treasury of the Company. The scheme was agreed

to by the young Nawáb and his surroundings. But in working it, one

part was found to place a power that would be abused in the hands of

the Nawáb-Názim. Accordingly, a few months later, that prince was

relieved of the responsibility for the maintenance of the public

peace, for the administration of justice, and for the enforcing of

obedience to the law. In a word, the Company became the rulers of the

three provinces, the Nawáb-Názim a cypher. Nay, more, the sum of

money which the Nawáb-Názim was to have at his disposal was limited

to fifty-three lakhs of rupees; from this he was to defray the entire

expenses of his court. Was it for such a result, might the shade of

Mír Jafar inquire, that the nobles of the three provinces combined to

betray Siráj-ud-daulá?

{173}After having thus settled the affairs of the Company at

Murshidábád, Clive proceeded by way of Patná to Benares, to meet

there his friend General Carnac and the suppliant Nawáb-Wazír of

Oudh. This interview was, in the eyes of Clive, likely to be fraught

with the most important consequences, for he was bent on the securing

of a frontier for the English possessions such as would offer the

best points of defence against invasion; for, in his view, it was to

be permanent.

It ought not to be attributed as a great political fault to Clive

that his mind had not realized the fact that to maintain it is often

necessary to advance. In a word, it would be most unfair to judge the

action of 1765-6 by the lights of the experience of the century which

followed. Up to the year 1757 the unwarlike inhabitants of Bengal had

been the prey of the Mughal or the Maráthá. But in 1765, so far as

could be judged, neither was to be feared. The Maráthá power had

suffered in 1761, on the field of Pánípat, near Delhi, one of the

most crushing defeats ever inflicted on a people, and Clive had no

power of divining that the genius of a young member of one of their

ruling families, who escaped wounded from the field, would, in a few

years, raise the Maráthá power to more than its pristine greatness.

As for the Mughal, his power was gone for ever; the representative

prince was at the very moment a fugitive at Allahábád, not possessed

of a stiver. What was there to be feared from him or from his family?

In the {174}three provinces the English possessed the richest parts

of India. It was surely good policy, he argued, if he could by treaty

with his neighbours, and by occupying the salient points which

covered them, render them unassailable.

After some preliminary conversation with the Nawáb-Wazír, Clive found

that it would be necessary to proceed to Allahábád to confer there

with the titular emperor, Sháh Alím. He found that prince full of

ideas as to the possibility of recovering with the aid of Clive his

lost possessions in the north-west. Nothing was further from Clive's

mind than an enterprise of that character, and, with his accustomed

tact he soon convinced the two princes that it was necessary first to

settle the English frontier before discussing any other subject. He

then proceeded to develop his plan. He demanded the cession of the

fortress of Chanár to the English; the provinces of Karra and

Allahábád to the Emperor, to be held, on his behalf, by the English;

the payment by the Nawáb-Wazír of fifty lakhs, for the expenses of

the war just concluded; an engagement from him never to employ or

give protection to Mír Kásim or to Samru; permission to the East

India Company to trade throughout his dominions, and to establish

factories within them. The Nawáb-Wazír agreed to every clause except

to that regarding the factories. He had observed, he stated, that

whenever the English established a footing in a country, even though

it were only by means of a commercial {175}factory, they never budged

from it; their countrymen followed them; and in the end they became

masters of the place. He then pointed out how, in nine years, the

small factory of Calcutta had absorbed the three provinces, and was

now engaged in swallowing up places beyond their border. He would

not, he finally declared, submit his dominions to the same chance.

Recognizing his earnestness, and having really no desire to plant

factories in Oudh, Clive wisely gave way on that one point. He

carried, however, all the other points. It was further arranged that

the Zamíndár of Benares, who had befriended the English during the

war, should retain his possessions in subordination to the

Nawáb-Wazír; that a treaty of mutual support should be signed between

the English, the Nawáb-Wazír, and the Súbahdár of the three

provinces; and that should English troops be required to fight for

the defence of the Nawáb-Wazír's country, he should defray all their

expenses.

Subsequently at Chaprá, in Bihár, Clive met the Nawáb-Wazír, the

representative of Sháh Alím, agents from the Ját chiefs of Agra, and

others from the Rohillá chiefs of Rohilkhand. The avowed purpose of

the meeting was to form a league against Maráthá aggression, it

having been recently discovered that that people had entered into

communications with Sháh Alím for the purpose of restoring him to his

throne. Then it was that the question of the English frontier was

discussed. It was eventually agreed that one {176}entire brigade

should occupy Allahábád, to protect that place and the adjoining

district of Karra;[1] that a strong detachment of the second brigade

should occupy Chanár; two battalions Benares; and one Lucknow. On his

side the Emperor granted firmans bestowing the three provinces upon

the East India Company 'as a free gift without the association of any

other person,' subject to an annual payment to himself and successors

of twenty-six lakhs of rupees, and to the condition that the Company

should maintain an army for their defence.

[Footnote 1: Karra was a very important division and city in the time

of the Mughals, and is repeatedly referred to by the native

historians whose records appear in Sir H. Elliot's history. See vols.

ii, iii, iv, v and viii. The city is now in ruins.]

On the 19th of May following the Súbahdár of the three provinces

died. The arrangements made by Clive had deprived the position of all

political importance. The individuality of the person holding that

once important office was therefore of little importance. The next

heir, a brother, naturally succeeded. The only change made on the

occasion was the reduction of the allowance for all the expenses of

the office from fifty-three to forty-one lakhs of rupees.

On one point Clive continued firm. Although, practically, the English

had now become the masters of the three provinces, the Súbahdár only

the show-figure, he insisted that the former should still remain in

the background. The revenue was still to be collected in {177}the

name, and nominally on behalf of the native prince. The utmost he

would permit in a contrary direction was to appoint English

supervisors, to see that the native collectors did their duty. Beyond

that he would not go. In the eyes of the world of India the three

provinces were to continue a \_Súbah\_, administered by a Súbahdár. The

control of the English was to remain a matter for arrangement with

the actual ruler, their real power only to be prominently used when

occasion might require, and then, likewise, in the name of the

Súbahdár.

We have fortunately from his own hand the principles which guided

him, and which he hoped would guide his successors, in their

relations to the other powers of India. In a State paper[2] written

before his departure, he thus expressed his views: 'Our possessions

should be bounded by the provinces.' 'We should studiously maintain

peace; it is the groundwork of our prosperity. Never consent to act

offensively against any Powers except in defence of our own, the

King's, or the Nawáb-Wazír's dominions, as stipulated by treaty; and,

above all things, be assured that a march to Delhi would be not only

a vain and fruitless project, but attended with destruction to your

own army, and perhaps put a period to the very being of the Company

in Bengal.' In a word, to borrow the criticism of the author from

whose work I have quoted, 'the English were to lie snugly

{178}ensconced in the three provinces of Bengal, Bihár, and Orissa.

The frontier of Oudh was to form a permanent barrier against all

further progress.' Such a policy might commend itself to the

theorist, but it was not fitted for the rough throes of an empire in

dissolution, its several parts disputed by adventurers. Within a

single decade it was blown to the winds.[3]

[Footnote 2: \_Early Records of British India\_, by Talboys Wheeler. In

this interesting work the paper quoted from is given \_in extenso\_.]

[Footnote 3: Wheeler.]

There is one subject upon which it becomes me to touch slightly

before considering the army administration. During one of his visits

to Murshidábád it was discovered that, in his will, the late

Súbahdár, Mír Jafar, had bequeathed five lakhs of rupees to Clive.

The discovery was made after Clive, in common with the other servants

of the Company, had bound himself not to accept any presents from

natives of India. He could not therefore take the legacy himself. But

the money was there--practically to be disposed of as he might

direct. He resolved, with the approval of his Council, to constitute

with it a fund for the relief of the officers and men of the

Company's army who might be disabled by wounds or by the climate.

Thus was formed the institution which, under the title of 'Lord

Clive's Fund,' served to bring help and consolation to many poor and

deserving servants of the Company for nearly a century. By a strange

freak of fortune this fund reverted, in 1858, on the transfer of

India to the Crown, to the descendants of the very man who could not,

or believed he could not, accept it, when bequeathed to him, for

himself.

{179}Whilst dealing with the internal administration of the country,

and arranging for the protection of its frontier, Clive had not been

unmindful of the other duty strongly impressed upon him by the Court

of Directors, that of examining the pay and allowances of their

military officers, with special reference to an allowance known as

Batta. Batta, in a military sense, represented the extra sum or

allowance granted to soldiers when on field duty. Practically it had

been granted on the following principle. Officers had been allowed a

fixed monthly pay and allowances, not including batta, when they were

serving in garrison. When they took the field they drew an extra sum

as batta, known as full batta; but when they were detached to an

out-station, not being actually in the field, they drew only half

that amount, which was called half-batta. After the battle of

Plassey, Mír Jafar, in the profusion of his gratitude, had bestowed

upon the officers an additional sum equal to full batta. This was

called 'double batta,' and as long as the army was in the field,

fighting for the interests of that chief, he continued, with the

sanction of the Council of Calcutta, to disburse that allowance. Mír

Kásim, on his succession, had expressed his intention to continue

this payment, and had assigned to the Company, for that purpose

amongst others, the revenues of three districts. But the Court of

Directors, not fully realizing that the transaction with Mír Kásim

was one eminently advantageous to themselves, and forgetting that the

receipt of the revenues of the three provinces {180}was accompanied

by an obligation, chose to forget the latter point, and accepting the

revenues, issued peremptory orders to discontinue the disbursement of

double batta. This order seemed so unjust that the then Council of

Calcutta (1762), on receiving it, went thoroughly into the question,

and, in a despatch to the Court, submitted the case for the officers

in the strongest terms. The reply of the Court adds one proof to many

of the unfitness of men not belonging to the ruling class to exercise

supreme authority. The Directors refused the prayer of their servants

on grounds which, by no artifice of despatch-writing, could be made

to apply to the circumstances of the case.

That reply was dated the 9th of March, 1763. Just one month earlier

the Calcutta Council had appointed a Special Committee on the spot to

examine and report upon the question. But before the Committee could

complete its inquiries there broke out that war with Mír Kásim, which

called for the extraordinary exertions of the class whose claims were

under examination. The services of Majors Adams and Carnac, two of

the members of the Committee, were required in the field, and it was

by the splendid exertions of the former and his officers that the

Company was rescued from imminent peril. The inquiry dropped during

the war.

But although the splendid exertions of the officers saved British

interests in 1763, the Court of Directors did not the less persist in

resolving to curtail their {181}allowances. On the 1st of June, 1764,

whilst the army, having conquered Mír Kásim, stood opposed to the

forces of the Nawáb-Wazír of Oudh, they despatched the most precise

orders that the allowance of double batta should be discontinued from

the date of the receipt of their order. Probably the Court of

Directors was the only ruling body in the world which would have

dared to issue an order greatly curtailing allowances to an army in

the field, opposed to greatly superior forces whose triumph would

mean destruction to the Company. But this is but one instance of the

dogged incapacity to rule with which the history of the Court of

Directors abounds.

When the despatch reached India the army had but just gained the

bloody and decisive battle of Baksar. The Calcutta Council dared not,

at such a moment, carry out the orders of the Court. There were other

reasons for delay. Lord Clive was on his way from England, and to

him, probably, special instructions had been given.

We have seen the course which Lord Clive pursued with reference to

the other branches of the administration. It was the end of the year

1765 before he touched the army. Then he issued instructions that

from the 1st of January, 1766, the double batta should be withdrawn,

except as regarded the second brigade, then stationed at Allahábád.

This brigade, on account of the high prices of provisions at the

station, and the expense of procuring the necessary supplies from

Europe, was to be allowed double batta in the field, {182}and the old

original single batta in cantonments or in garrison, until it should

be recalled within the provinces. This rule was to be applied to all

troops beyond the Karmnásá. Clive directed further that the rest of

the army should receive single batta when marching or in the field,

and half single batta when in cantonment or in garrison, as at Mungír

or Patná; but when at Calcutta or within the Presidency division the

officers would receive no batta at all, but free quarters in lieu of

it.

The order was badly received by the officers. They had enjoyed the

privilege of double batta and its accessories so long that they had

come to regard such allowances as their right by prescription. They

at once memorialized the Government with a view to obtain a

modification. But the reply Clive invariably gave them was to the

effect that the orders of the Court had left him no option in the

matter. Driven into a corner, their regard for their interests got

the better of their sense of discipline. The officers of the several

brigades and regiments entered into a correspondence with one

another, formed committees, and decided to wrench by force the

rights, as they deemed them, of which the order of the Court had

deprived them. In a word, the European army of India, officers and

men--for the men were prepared to follow the lead of the

officers--combined against the Government.

Space will not permit me, nor is it requisite, that I should detail

the measures they adopted to bend the {183}Government to their will.

It must suffice to state that the mutiny was of a most formidable

character. So complete was the organization of the conspiring

officers, so well laid were their plans, so secret had been their

measures, that, during the period of four months the organization was

in progress, not a single whisper of it had reached the Government.

Clive received the first intimation of it when he was officially

informed of it by the commander of the first brigade--a man who

sympathized with the movement and desired its success. At the moment

the conspirators were ready for action. That they possessed the

sympathy of the members of the Civil Service was shown by the fact

that the latter subscribed 140,000 rupees to aid the movement, and

supplied the conspirators with copies of the proceedings of the

Government.

Formidable as was the situation no living man was so well qualified

to deal with it as was Clive. In the hour of danger he soared above

his fellows. The danger here was greater than the danger of Arcot;

than at the surprises of Káveripák and of Samiáveram; than during the

hour of doubt at Plassey. His opponents were his own men--men whom he

had led to victory. They possessed all the fortified places, the

guns, the material of war. From the frontier came rumours of the

advance of a Maráthá army, 60,000 strong, to wrest Allahábád and

Karra from his hand. But there he was, the same cool, patient,

defiant man he had been when confronted by the bayonets of the

{184}French at Káveripák and Samiáveram. He knew that the Government

he represented was in the most imminent danger, that if the mutineers

should move forward, he had not the means to oppose them.

The manner in which Clive met this danger is a lesson for all time.

Not for an instant did he quail. Never was he more resolved to carry

out the orders he had issued regarding batta than when he was told,

that, in the presence of the enemy on the frontier, the officers

would resign their commissions if the order were not withdrawn.

For the moment, fortunately, the conspirators had resolved to await

his action. He, then, would take the initiative. On the very day when

he received the report of the existence of the conspiracy he formed a

committee, composed of himself, General Carnac, and Mr. Sykes, to

carry out the plan of action he had formed. First, he and they

resolved to send immediately to Madras for officers. Then they passed

a resolution declaring that any officer resigning his commission

should be debarred from serving the Company in any capacity, and sent

copies of it to the several brigades for distribution to all

concerned. Clive then hurried to Murshidábád; he addressed the

recalcitrant officers stationed there; spoke to them in terms firm,

yet conciliatory; told them they were acting very wrongly and very

foolishly; that they were infringing the very discipline which they

knew to be the mainstay of an army; that although immediate success

might be theirs, they must be beaten {185}in the long run; that such

conduct could only be pardoned on condition of immediate submission.

Touched by the language of the man who had been to them an object of

veneration, all the officers, two young lieutenants excepted,

hesitated--then submitted absolutely. This success was followed by

similar results at the other stations in the Presidency division,

visited by Carnac and Sykes. In that division only two captains and a

lieutenant continued recalcitrant.

There remained then only the important centres of Mungír, Bánkípur

(Patná), and Allahábád, the officers stationed there being bound to

each other by the most solemn engagements. At the first-named of

these places the Commandant was Sir Robert Fletcher, himself a

well-wisher to the plot. When the officers there simultaneously

tendered their resignation, agreeing to serve for fifteen days longer

without pay, Fletcher received them with sympathy, and told them he

would forward their letter to headquarters. At Bánkípur, then the

military cantonment of Patná, the commandant, Sir R. Barker, one of

the superior officers who had accompanied Clive from England, acted

far differently. Before replying, he communicated with Lord Clive,

then at Murshidábád, and received from him instructions to place

under arrest every officer whose conduct should seem to him to come

under the construction of mutiny, and to detain such at Bánkípur

until it might be possible to convene a general court-martial to try

them. To render {186}complete the necessary numbers of field-officers

Clive promoted on the spot two officers known to be loyal. The

Bánkípur officers followed, nevertheless, the conduct of their

comrades at Mungír, and resigned in a body. Barker not only declined

to accept those resignations, but arrested four of the ringleaders,

and despatched them by water to Calcutta. This bold action paralyzed

the recalcitrants, and followed up as it was by the journey of Clive

to Mungír, accompanied by some officers who had come round from

Madras, it dealt a blow to the mutineers from which they never

completely rallied.

But at Allahábád the danger was still more menacing. There and at the

station of Surájpur, only two officers, Colonel Smith, and a Major of

the same name, were absolutely untainted: four were but slightly so,

and could be depended upon to act with the Smiths in an emergency;

all the others had pledged themselves to 'the cause.' Those of the

latter stationed at Allahábád displayed their disaffection in the

usual manner, whereupon Major Smith, commanding there, calling on the

sipáhís to support him, placed under arrest every officer in the

place, the four slightly tainted officers excepted. He then informed

the mutinous officers that he would shoot down without mercy any and

every officer who should break his arrest. This action was most

effective. All the officers but six submitted and were allowed to

return to duty. The six were deported to Patná, to be tried there. A

similar course was followed by Colonel Smith at {187}Surájpur, with

the result, however, that nearly one half of the officers remained

recalcitrant, and were despatched under arrest to Calcutta.

Meanwhile, at Mungír, the officers continued in a thorough state of

disorganization, the commander, Sir Robert Fletcher, encouraging

them. The day before Clive's arrival, an officer whom he had sent in

advance, Colonel Champion, surprising the officers in full conclave,

learned from them that they desired to recount their grievances to

Clive in person. On learning this Clive directed them to parade with

their men the following morning, giving directions simultaneously to

Champion, to bring to the ground two battalions of sipáhís, under the

command of Captain F. Smith, an officer known to be loyal. Then a

very curious circumstance happened. Smith had but just entered the

fort with his sipáhís when he noticed that the Europeans, infantry

and artillery, were turning out to mutiny. Without a moment's

hesitation he marched towards them with his sipáhís; seized, by a

bold strategic movement, a mound which was the key of the position,

completely dominating the ground on which the Europeans were drawn

up. The latter, who were on the point of quitting the fort, noting

the commanding position occupied by the sipáhís, halted and

hesitated. Smith took advantage of the pause thus caused to tell them

that unless they should retire instantly to their barracks he would

fire upon them. At the moment Sir R. Fletcher came up, began to

encourage the revolters, and to distribute {188}money amongst them;

suddenly, however, taking in the exact position, he changed his tone,

ordered the recalcitrant officers to leave the fort within two hours,

and reported the whole circumstance to Lord Clive. The officers left

at once, and the incident closed for the day; but when, the following

morning, Clive entered the fort, and addressed the assembled soldiers

on the wickedness of their conduct, praised and rewarded the sipáhís

for their behaviour, the men gave way. The mutiny, as far as Mungír

was concerned, was over. Meanwhile the officers expelled by Fletcher

had encamped within a short distance of Mungír, resolved to wait

there the arrival of their comrades from other stations. But they had

to deal with a man who would stand no trifling. Clive despatched to

them an order to set out forthwith for Calcutta; and to quicken their

movements he sent a detachment of sipáhís to see that his order was

obeyed. After that there was no more mutiny at Mungír, or in the

stations dependent upon it.

At Bánkípur the officers, notwithstanding the action of Sir R.

Barker, previously noted, had sent their commissions \_en bloc\_ to

Lord Clive. But the news of the occurrences at Mungír startled and

frightened them. When, then, Lord Clive arrived at Patná, he found

the officers penitent and humble, and that his only task was to

pardon. There, too, he learned with pleasure the successful action of

the two Smiths at Allahábád and Surájpur. He remained then at Patná,

to crush the last embers of the mutiny, and to arrange {189}for the

bringing to justice of the ringleaders. This last task he performed

in a manner which tempered justice with mercy. Fletcher, who had

played a double part, and whose actions were prompted by personal

greed, was brought to a court-martial and cashiered. Five other

officers were deported, but of these, one, John Neville Parker, was

reinstated in 1769, and survived to render glorious service to the

Company, giving his life for his masters in 1781.

The comparative ease with which Clive suppressed this formidable

conspiracy was due to one cause alone. No sooner did Clive hear of

the combination than, instead of waiting to be attacked, he seized

the initiative: the mutineers allowed him to strike the first blow;

standing on the defensive in their isolated positions, they gave the

opportunity to Clive to destroy them in detail. It was the action

which Napoleon employed against the Austrians in 1796, 1805, and in

1809. It is useless to speculate what might have been the result if

Clive had stood, as the majority of men would have stood, on the

defensive. By the opposite course he not only saved the situation,

but achieving a very decisive victory, struck a blow at

insubordination which gave an altered tone to the officers of the

army, then as much hankering after ungodly pelf as were their

brethren in the Civil Service. Never, throughout his glorious career

as a soldier, did Clive's character and his conduct stand higher than

when, in dealing out punishment for the {190}mutiny which he, and he

alone, had suppressed, he remembered the former services of the

soldiers who had been led away, and gave them all, a few

incorrigibles excepted, the opportunity to retrieve their characters

on future fields of battle.

The task of Clive in India had now been accomplished. Thoroughly had

he carried through the mission entrusted to him. He had cleansed, as

far as was possible, the Augean stable. He had given himself no

recreation: he was completely worn out. He had announced to the Court

of Directors so far back as 1765 his intention to resign as soon as

he could do so without inconvenience to the public interests. The

Court, in reply, whilst most handsomely acknowledging his services,

had begged him to devote yet one year to India. When that letter

reached him, December 1766, he had already accomplished all that,

with the means and powers at his disposal, it was possible to carry

through. He felt then that, broken in health, he might retire with

honour from the country he had won for England. Having penned a

valuable minute, laying down the principles which should guide the

policy of his successor, based upon his own action during the

preceding three years, he made over to one of his colleagues of the

Select Committee, Mr. Verelst,[4] the office of Governor, and

nominating Colonel Richard Smith, then on the frontier, to {191}be

Commander-in-chief, Mr. Sykes, Mr. Carter, and Mr. Beecher, to form,

with the Governor, the Select Committee, he bade farewell to his

friends, and, on the 29th of January, 1767, embarked on board the

good ship \_Britannia\_ for England.

[Footnote 4: Mr. Sumner, whose weak character I have described, and

who had been designated Lord Clive's successor, had been forced to

resign his seat on the Select Committee.]

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CHAPTER XV

THE RETURN OF THE CONQUEROR-STATESMAN, AND THE RECEPTION ACCORDED TO

HIM BY HIS COUNTRYMEN: HIS STRUGGLES; AND HIS DEATH

One of the ablest and most impartial of English historians, the fifth

Earl Stanhope, has thus summed up his appreciation of the results of

the second administration of Clive in India: 'On the whole it may be

said that his second command was not less important for reform than

his first had been for conquest. By this the foundations, at least,

of good government were securely laid. And the results would have

been greater still could Clive have remained longer at his post.' It

was impossible he could remain. In December, 1766, his weakness was

so great as to disable him from writing. He required rest, and as we

have seen he embarked for England at the close of the month

following, to find there, alas! no rest, but, on the contrary, the

bitterest, the most persistent, the most unscrupulous enemies; their

attacks prompted by the corrupt officials whom he had driven from the

posts they had abused, and who were able, nevertheless, to enlist in

their vile {193}persecution statesmen of great renown holding high

office under the Crown.

It is a pitiful tale, this persecution of a man who had rendered the

most magnificent services to his country. The one blot minute

investigation had been able to find in his career was the treatment

of Aminchand. But Aminchand was a blackmailer who had threatened to

betray a state-secret of enormous importance unless he were paid a

sum out of all proportion to the services he rendered. Such a man

deserves no commiseration. His treachery, if Clive had refused to

subscribe to his terms, would have involved the death of thousands,

and might have driven the English out of Bengal. Clive fought him

with the same Asiatic weapon Aminchand had levelled against himself,

and beat him. That his action was wrong in morals, unworthy of his

lofty nature, is unquestionable. But it is not so certain that, under

similar pressure, in circumstances so critical, those who most

bitterly denounced him would have acted otherwise. Some writers have

averred, and until recently it has been accepted, that the deceit

drove Aminchand to madness. But inquiry has dissipated this fiction.

He was, it is true, startled into insensibility by the discovery of

the fact that he had been imposed upon, but, after visiting the

shrine of a famous saint in Málwá, he returned to his business in

Calcutta and prospered till his death. As to the other part of the

same transaction, the signing of the name of Admiral Watson, Clive

stated on oath, in his evidence {194}before the House of Commons,

that although the admiral had refused to sign the document, he had,

to the best of his belief, permitted Mr. Lushington to affix his

name; and certainly amongst those who benefited by the transaction

was Admiral Watson himself, who, after the triumph of the

conspirators, claimed even more than he received. But it was on these

two points that the miscreants whom Clive, in his second

administration, had driven from the posts they had sullied, and their

allies, based a persecution which tortured the enfeebled frame of the

conqueror.

Clive's real fault in the eyes of the leaders of the persecution was

that he had become rich himself, and had prevented them from

fattening on the plunder of the country he had conquered. To most

men, in fact to all but a very few men, in England and in France,

India was a \_terra incognita\_ whither a certain few repaired young,

and whence they returned, in the prime of their manhood, rich, and

often with a great reputation. Why was it that such men were at once

subjected to the vilest persecution? The fact that they were so is

incontestable. Clive himself and Warren Hastings, whose reputation

has recently been splendidly vindicated by two great Englishmen,[1]

are cases in point in England; Dupleix and La Bourdonnais and Lally,

in France. It is the saddest of sad stories; the men who had rendered

the most brilliant {195}services to their respective countries

finding their bitterest enemies often amongst the Ministers of the

Crown. There is little to discriminate between the conduct of

parliamentary England and despotic France except in the degree of

misery and punishment to which they alike subjected the most

illustrious of their countrymen who had served in India.

[Footnote 1: Sir Fitzjames Stephen in the case of Nanda-Kumár: Sir

John Strachey in reference to the charges respecting Oudh and

Rohilkhand.]

To return. It will be remembered that in his second administration

Clive had purified the Civil Service of Bengal. The corrupt men whom

he had ejected had returned to England whilst he was still in India,

the charges made against them accompanying or preceding them in the

despatches transmitted to the Court of Directors. On receiving these

despatches the Court, having taken the opinions of their own lawyers

and of those of the Crown, resolved to bring the culprits to trial

for having accepted presents from the natives after they had received

the order from the Court making such acceptance penal. But the

inculpated men were rich and they resolved to appeal from the

Directors to the Proprietors. There had been a difference between

these two bodies as to whether the annual dividends should be

increased from ten, the amount recommended by the Court, to twelve

and a half per cent. At the annual meeting the votes of the men

dismissed by Clive enabled the Proprietors to carry their point. The

corrupt clique utilized this victory by proposing and carrying a

resolution that the prosecutions instituted against them should be

dismissed. This was accordingly done.

{196}Two months later, July 14, Clive landed in England. He was well

received. The King and Queen admitted him to private audiences. The

Court of Directors received him in full conclave, immediately after

his reception by their Majesties, thanked him for his splendid

achievements, and immediately convened a general Court to confirm the

proposal that the jágír, granted him by Mír Jafar, should be

confirmed to him for an additional ten years. This resolution was

unanimously passed.

So far there was no sign of the coming storm. Not a sound of the

distant hurricane had been wafted to the ears of Clive. He had

returned as ambitious as he ever had been, resolved to devote to the

service of his country the energies he had displayed in the East.

Already he had made arrangements to secure seats for himself and for

six of his relatives, when, to rest before the elections should take

place, he started for Paris (January, 1768) with Lady Clive and a

small party. He was very confident in the future. He had received

personally the King's commands to lay before his Majesty his ideas of

the Company's affairs both at home and abroad, with a promise of his

Majesty's countenance and protection in anything he might attempt for

the good of the nation and the Company. He had seen so much of what

he called 'the ignorance and obstinacy' of the Court of Directors,

who, he stated in a letter to his successor, Mr. Verelst, 'are

universally despised and hated,' that he felt sure his would be the

hand, in the coming meeting of the Court {197}of Proprietors, to stay

their fall or to renew their vitality. In a word, his confidence was

never greater, never did he feel more assured regarding the future.

Yet, during this confidence of the soul, this longing for political

warfare, his nearest friends could easily detect that he had not

sufficiently recovered from the strain of his last three years in

India. His body did not respond to the call of the ever active brain.

His friends and his physicians urged him then to take a complete rest

and holiday of fourteen to fifteen months in France. With difficulty

they induced him to stay eight months. Then he returned to find that

he and his six relatives had, in his absence, been elected Members of

Parliament.

His return produced a renewal of the activity of his enemies. They

filled London with stories of his rapacity. Sir Robert Fletcher,

whose shameful conduct during the mutiny of the officers I have

recorded, wrote against him a pamphlet which irritated him greatly.

He was hardly to be prevented from answering it. There were other

considerations which, at this time, affected his career. When the

general election at which he and his friends were returned had taken

place, the Ministry was presided over by the Duke of Grafton, Lord

Chatham being Lord Privy Seal and Lord North Chancellor of the

Exchequer. At the end of 1769 Chatham was forced by the state of his

health, which had long been bad, to resign; and in the January of the

year following, the Duke of Grafton resigned and was succeeded as

First Lord of the Treasury {198}by Lord North. Clive had not posed as

a supporter of either of these administrations. He had declared

himself to be a supporter of George Grenville, the head of the

Grenville Whigs, who were then in opposition. It has been claimed[2]

for him that Clive declined to commit himself to any party of the

Indian policy of which he was ignorant. But none of the members of

Lord North's Cabinet knew anything of India, and if Clive, commanding

seven votes, had been asked to join it, he might have educated his

colleagues on the subject. An opportunity of following such a course

seemed to occur when Mr. Wedderburn, an able lawyer and a personal

ally of Clive, joined the North Ministry, but Clive remained staunch

to the Grenville connexion, exercising but little influence, and

exposed all the time to the bitter shafts of his enemies, which

increased every day in intensity and venom. To make the situation

still less endurable George Grenville died (November, 1770).

[Footnote 2: Malcolm's \_Clive\_.]

Meanwhile affairs in India were not progressing satisfactorily. In

Bengal, indeed, Mr. Verelst, acting on the lines laid down by Clive,

had with the support of his colleagues succeeded in maintaining peace

and prosperity. But in Madras, the incursions of Haidar Alí, an

adventurer who by sheer ability and daring had climbed to the highest

place in the kingdom of Mysore, had caused the English in that

Presidency severe losses, and forced them to incur an expenditure

which deprived the Proprietors of Indian {199}Stock of all chance of

dividends for some time to come. To meet this financial embarrassment

the Crown and the Company could dream of no other device than the

futile one of sending to India three commissioners, who, under the

name of Supervisors, should have full power over all the other

servants of the Company. They nominated accordingly Mr. Vansittart,

who, from having been the warmest friend of Clive, had become his

bitterest opponent; and who, but for the successful opposition of

Clive and his friends, would have been appointed Governor in

succession to Mr. Verelst. With him they associated Mr. Scrafton, an

old and valued servant of the Company; and Colonel Forde, the

conqueror of the Northern Sirkárs and of Biderra--both intimate

friends and adherents of Clive. These gentlemen sailed in the

\_Aurora\_ frigate in the autumn of 1769. The \_Aurora\_ reached the Cape

in safety, but was never heard of after she had quitted Simon's Bay.

It was supposed that she foundered at sea.

Some considerable time elapsed before it had been realized in England

that the Supervisors had failed them, and that it would be necessary

to take other measures to remedy existing evils. Meanwhile events had

happened which increased the necessity for immediate and effective

action. In 1770 the three provinces were visited by a famine

exceeding in intensity all the famines of preceding ages. There had

been, in years gone by, no beneficent strangers from the West to

make, as in later years, provision for the {200}occurrence of so

great a calamity. The rains had failed; the water in the tanks had

dried up; the rice-fields had become parched and dry. There were but

few stores handy to enable the foreigner to disburse the necessary

grain. It was the first famine-experience of the English, and they

too had made no provision for it. The misery was terrible. The large

centres of industry, the only places where there was a chance of

obtaining food, became thronged with the dying and the dead. The

rivers floating corpses to the sea became so tainted that the very

fish ceased to be wholesome food. In summing up, two years later, the

effects of the famine on the population, the Governor-General in

Council declared that in some places one-half, and, on the whole,

one-third of the inhabitants had been destroyed. It need scarcely be

added that this terrible calamity affected the Proprietors of East

India Stock in a manner, to them the most vital:--it destroyed their

prospects of large dividends.

To remedy this evil the brains of the Court of Directors could devise

no other scheme than that which the foundering of the \_Aurora\_ had

previously baffled: they would send out other Supervisors. But Lord

North had taken the matter in hand. He brought in a bill providing

for the constitution in Calcutta of a Supreme Court, to consist of a

Chief Justice and three Puisné judges, appointed by the Crown; giving

to the Governor of Bengal authority over the two other Presidencies,

with the title of {201}Governor-General, to be assisted and

controlled by a Council of five members. The great blot of this bill

was the clause which gave a controlling power to the Council. The

Governor-General had in it but one vote, and in case of equality, a

casting-vote. Mr. Warren Hastings who, twelve months before, had

succeeded Mr. John Cartier[3] as Governor, was appointed first

Governor-General of India.

[Footnote 3: Mr. Cartier had succeeded Mr. Verelst in 1769.]

The war with Haidar Alí and the famine in Bengal had brought India

and Indian matters very prominently into the parliamentary

discussions of 1771, 1772 and 1773, and during these the name of Lord

Clive had not been spared. The attacks against him were led

principally by General Burgoyne, a natural son of Lord Bingley, best

known in history as the commander who surrendered a British army,

5,791 strong, to the American colonists.[4] In April, 1772, this

officer had become Chairman of a Select Committee composed of

thirty-one members, to inquire and report on Indian affairs. Another

Committee, called Secret, and composed of thirteen members nominated

by ballot, was appointed, on the motion of Lord North, in November of

the same year, to take into consideration the whole state of the

Company's affairs. Into the other proceedings of these committees

this volume has no cause to enter; but they had scarcely been

constituted when they began to let fly their arrows at Lord Clive.

The chief cause of these attacks {202}is so well stated by the

sober-minded historian,[5] that I cannot refrain from quoting his

remarks. 'Besides the public wrongs of which he (Lord Clive) stood

accused, there was also, it may be feared, a feeling of personal envy

at work against him. His vast wealth became a more striking mark for

calumny when contrasted with the financial embarrassments of the

Directors in whose service he had gained it. And his profusion, as

ever happens, offended far more persons than it pleased. He had

bought the noble seat of Claremont from the Duchess Dowager of

Newcastle, and was improving it at lavish cost. He had so far

invested money in the smaller boroughs that he could reckon on

bringing into Parliament a retinue of six or seven friends or

kinsmen. Under such circumstances the Select Committee, over which

Burgoyne presided, made Clive their more especial object of attack.

They drew forth into the light of day several transactions certainly

not well formed to bear it, as the forgery of Admiral Watson's

signature, and the fraud practised on Aminchand. But at the same time

they could not shut out the lustre of the great deeds he had

performed. Clive himself was unsparingly questioned, and treated with

slight regard. As he complains, in one of his speeches: "I their

humble servant, the Baron of Plassey, have been examined by the

Select Committee more like a sheep-stealer than a member of this

House." And he adds, with perfect truth: "I am sure, Sir, if I had

any sore {203}places about me, they would have been found: they have

probed me to the bottom; no lenient plasters have been applied to

heal; no, Sir, they were all of the blister kind, prepared with

Spanish flies and other provocatives."'

[Footnote 4: At Saratoga, October 17, 1777.]

[Footnote 5: Lord Stanhope's \_History of England\_, vol. vii. pp.

353-4.]

Throughout these attacks Clive never lost his calmness or his

presence of mind. Never once did his lofty spirit quail. He stood

there still the unconquered hero, ready to meet every charge,

sometimes retorting, but always nobly, on his adversaries. His

friends rallied gallantly round him. His particular friend, Mr.

Wedderburn, then Solicitor-General, gave him a support as valuable as

it was unstinted. When his administration in Bengal was spoken of by

his old enemy, Mr. Sulivan, in the House in a manner which, whilst

not directly attacking it, conveyed the impression that there was a

great deal more in the background, Clive went through every phase of

his career in Bengal, defending his own action in a style which

gained for him admiration. It was not, however, until the month of

May, 1773, that General Burgoyne defined the vague charges which had

theretofore supplied the place of argument, and brought them forward,

as a vote of censure, in three resolutions. These resolutions ran as

follows: (1) 'that all acquisitions made under the influence of a

military force, or by treaty with foreign princes, did of right

belong to the State'; (2) 'that to appropriate acquisitions so made

to the private emoluments of persons entrusted with any civil or

military power {204}of the State is illegal'; (3) 'that very great

sums of money, and other valuable property, had been acquired in

Bengal from princes and others of that country by persons entrusted

with the civil and military powers of the State by means of such

powers; which sums of money and valuable property have been

appropriated to the private use of such persons.'

These resolutions named nobody. But in the speech in which they were

introduced Burgoyne took care that there should be no doubt as to the

person against whom they were directed. He dwelt, with a bitterness

not to be surpassed, on all the delinquencies, real and imaginary, of

the conqueror of Bengal. He traced all the misfortunes which had

subsequently happened to the Company to the treasonable compact which

had dethroned Siráj-ud-daulá and placed Mír Jafar on his seat, and

denounced the conduct of the authors of that transaction as 'black

perfidy.' He denounced, also, in terms equally severe, the treatment

of Aminchand; the forging of the name of Admiral Watson; the

agreement, which, he said, had extorted from Mír Jafar enormous sums,

under the guise of presents, to the leading servants of the Company

in Bengal. On the second administration of Clive, which was really a

long struggle against the corruption by which he was surrounded,

Burgoyne railed as bitterly and as unsparingly. Nor was he content

with merely railing. Before he sat down he declared that if the House

should pass his resolutions he would not stop there, but would

proceed to follow them up with others, his {205}object being to

compel those who had acquired large sums of money in the manner he

had denounced to make a full and complete restitution.

The Solicitor-General, Wedderburn, conducted the defence for Clive,

and it was noticeable that the party styled 'the King's Friends,'

amongst many others, gave him their support. The Attorney-General,

Thurlow, supported Burgoyne, and the Prime Minister, Lord North,

voted with him. The voting on these resolutions did not, however,

indicate the real sense of the House, for many of those who supported

them thought it would be better for the cause of Clive that the

further resolutions threatened by Burgoyne should be proceeded with

in order that a decisive vote should be taken on a motion implicating

Clive by name rather than on resolutions of a vague and general

character. The resolutions, then, were carried.

Burgoyne then proceeded, as he had promised, to follow up his

victory. On the 17th of May he brought forward the following

resolution: 'That it appears to this House that the Right Honourable

Robert, Lord Clive, Baron of Plassey, in the kingdom of Ireland,

about the time of the deposition of Siráj-ud-daulá, and the

establishment of Mír Jafar on the \_masnad\_, through the influence of

the powers with which he was entrusted as member of the Select

Committee and Commander-in-chief of the British forces, did obtain

and possess himself of two lakhs of rupees as Commander-in-chief, a

further sum of two lakhs and eighty thousand rupees as member of the

Select {206}Committee, and a further sum of sixteen lakhs or more,

under the denomination of a private donation, which sums, amounting

together to twenty lakhs and eighty thousand rupees, were of value,

in English money, of two hundred and thirty-four thousand pounds; and

that in so doing the said Robert Clive abused the power with which he

was entrusted, to the evil example of the servants of the public, and

to the dishonour and detriment of the State.'

No one could say that these charges were not sufficiently pointed.

Clive met them with his accustomed resolution. He rejoiced that the

real issue had come at last; that the great jury of the nation, the

House of Commons, was, after so long an interval devoted to calumny,

to abuse, to vague and shadowy charges, to record its vote on the

real question. On their decision on this resolution he would stand or

fall. The alternative which his fiercest fights had presented to him,

the necessity to conquer or to be disgraced, was presented to him

here. He had won those fights by the exercise rather of his lofty

moral qualities than by his skill as a soldier, and by the exercise

of the same qualities he would win this one also. And he did win it.

After Burgoyne, introducing his resolution, had traversed the same

ground he had followed in the preceding resolutions, and had

concluded by calling upon the House, like the old Roman heroes, 'to

strike when the justice of the State requires it,' Clive rose to

defend himself. Recapitulating the services he had rendered, he

reminded the {207}House that the transactions in Bengal, upon which

Burgoyne relied for a conviction, had been known in their general

tenour to the Company and the Crown when they had thanked him, not

once but repeatedly, for his services. He proceeded then to expose

the interested and revengeful motives of the clique which had

instigated the attack, not sparing even those in high places who,

from various causes, had allowed themselves to sanction it. Turning

from that point, he asked prominent attention to the fact that the

India Office, now his accuser, had almost forced him to proceed for

the second time to Bengal, and had expressed a deep regret that his

health had not allowed him to stay there longer. 'After certificates

such as these,' he added, 'am I to be brought here like a criminal,

and the very best parts of my conduct construed into crimes against

the State?' Stating then that the resolution, if carried, would

reduce him to depend on his paternal inheritance of 500 pounds per

annum, he continued: 'But on this I am content to live; and perhaps I

shall find more real content of mind and happiness than in the

trembling affluence of an unsettled fortune. But, Sir, I must make

one more observation. If the definition of the hon. gentleman

(Colonel Burgoyne) and of this House, that the State, as expressed in

these resolutions, is, \_quoad hoc\_, the Company, then, Sir, every

farthing I enjoy is granted to me. But to be called upon, after

sixteen years have elapsed, to account for my conduct in this manner,

and after an uninterrupted enjoyment of my {208}property, to be

questioned, and considered as obtaining it unwarrantably, is hard

indeed; it is a treatment I should not think the British Senate

capable of. But if such should be the case, I have a conscious

innocence within me that tells me my conduct is irreproachable.

\_Frangas non flectes.\_[6] My enemies may take from me what I have;

they may, as they think, make me poor, but I shall be happy. I mean

not this as my defence, though I have done for the present. My

defence will be heard at that bar, but before I sit down I have one

request to make to this House: that when they come to decide upon my

honour, they will not forget their own.'

[Footnote 6: 'You may break, but you shall not bend, me.']

The debate was adjourned, and in the few days following some

witnesses gave evidence at the bar of the House. Lord Clive's

evidence, given before the Select Committee, was also read there. In

the debate that followed, Mr. Stanley proposed to omit the words

inculpating the honour of Clive. Mr. Fuller seconded this amendment,

going even further, and striking out the sentence referring to the

exercise of undue influence. His suggestion was accepted, and the

House proceeded to discuss the amendment as so altered. After a

protracted debate the division was called for, when it was found that

155 members had voted for the amendment and 95 against it. This

victory stripped Burgoyne's resolutions of all their sting. Vainly

did a member of his party attempt to restore the battle by moving

that Clive had abused the {209}powers intrusted to him in acting as

he avowedly had acted. The House refused to re-open that question.

Finally, at five o'clock in the morning, the House passed the

following resolution, which consummated the defeat of Burgoyne: 'That

Robert, Lord Clive, did, at the same time, render great and

meritorious services to his country.' On this conclusion to the

violent attacks on Clive, Lord Stanhope, well versed in Parliamentary

procedure, thus wrote: 'Such a vote might be deemed almost a verdict

of acquittal. Certainly, at least, it showed a wise reluctance to

condemn. It closed the whole case, and Clive had no further

Parliamentary attack to fear.'

But though the victory was gained, the struggle affecting the

personal honour and fortune of a proud and sensitive man had made

deep inroads upon the constitution of one who had been long suffering

from the acute agony caused by the malady contracted in India. Freed

from the attack of his enemies, he might, had his health been only

tolerable, have looked forward to a high command in the war just

about to break out with the colonists of North America. There he

would have been in his place; there, under the influence of constant

action, he would have forgotten his troubles; even his oft-recurring

spasms might have disappeared. But, after the Parliamentary contest

was over, with the waning of the ever-present excitement, his health

became worse. In vain did he repair to Bath to try the effect of its

waters. In vain, finding that for him the virtues of the Bath waters

had {210}departed, did he proceed to the Continent for travel. Rest

came not. A complication of disorders prevented sleep, and travel

failed to remedy the evil. His mind had no longer the sustaining

power which in former days had enabled him to meet with tranquillity

the frowns of Fortune. He returned to England in 1774, and shortly

afterwards, in November of that year, when apparently thoroughly

conscious,[7] fell by his own hand. 'To the last,' wrote Lord

Stanhope, 'he appears to have retained his serene demeanour and stern

dominion of his will.' It is difficult for us who have followed his

career to realise the terrible upsetting of the balance of the great

brain which had brought such an act within the bounds of possibility.

[Footnote 7: Lord Stanhope relates a story regarding the manner of

Clive's death, told by the Earl of Shelburne, afterwards the first

Marquis of Lansdowne, to the person from whom he (Lord Stanhope)

received it. 'It so chanced, that a young lady, an attached friend of

his (Clive's) family, was then upon a visit at his house in Berkeley

Square, and sat writing a letter, in one of its apartments. Seeing

Lord Clive walk through, she called him to come and mend her pen.

Lord Clive obeyed her summons, and taking out his penknife fulfilled

her request; after which, passing on to another chamber, he turned

the same knife against himself.']

'Such was the end,' says a French writer, 'of one of the men who did

the most for the greatness of England.' That foreign verdict is at

least incontestable. Caesar conquered Gaul for his country; Hannibal

caused unrest to Rome for nearly a quarter of a century; Wellington

drove the French from Portugal and Spain. The achievement of Clive

was more splendid than any one of these. He founded for this little

island in the {211}Atlantic a magnificent empire; an empire famous in

antiquity, renowned since the time of Alexander, whose greatest

sovereign had been the contemporary of Queen Elizabeth, more

enlightened than any of her predecessors, more tolerant, a more

far-sighted statesman even than she. He was, according to Lord

Stanhope, emphatically 'a great man.' But he was more than a great

man. Like Caius Julius, he united two personalities; he was a great

statesman and a great soldier. He was a man of thought as well as a

man of action. No administration surpasses, in the strength of will

of the administrator, in excellence of design, in thoroughness of

purpose, and, as far as his masters would permit, in thoroughness of

action, his second administration of Bengal. No general who ever

fought displayed greater calmness in danger, more coolness of brain,

than did Clive at Káveripák, at Samiáveram, at Calcutta, when, on the

fog rising, he found himself enveloped by the Súbahdár's army, 40,000

strong. Nothing daunted him; nothing clouded his judgement; his

decision, the decision of the moment, was always right. In a word, he

was a born master of men.

But, says the moralist, he committed faults, and at once the false

treaty made with Aminchand is thrown into the face of the historian.

Yes, he did do it; and not only that, he stated in his evidence

before the House of Commons that if he were again under the same

circumstances he would do it again. None of his detractors had had

the opportunity of judging of {212}the terrible issues which the

threatened treachery of Aminchand had opened to his vision. Upon the

decision of Clive rested the lives of thousands. To save those lives

there appeared to him but one sure method available, and that was to

deceive the deceiver. I think his decision was a wrong one, but it

should always be remembered that, as Clive stated before the

Committee, he had no interested motive in doing what he did do; he

did it with the design of disappointing a rapacious man and of

preventing the consequences of his treachery. He was in a position of

terrible responsibility, and he acted to save others. Let the stern

moralist stand in the same position as that in which Clive stood, and

it is just possible he might think as Clive thought. At all events,

this one fault, for fault it was, cannot or ought not to be set up as

a counterweight against services which have given this island the

highest position amongst all the nations of the earth. The House of

Commons, after a long debate, condoned it. Might not Posterity, the

Posterity which has profited by that very fault, be content to follow

the lead of the House of Commons? With all his faults, Clive was 'one

of the men who did the most for the greatness of England.' That fact

is before us every day. His one fault hastened his death, from the

handle it gave to the envious and the revengeful, and took from him

the chance of gaining fresh laurels in America. May not the

ever-living fact of his services induce us to overlook, to blot out

from the memory, that one mistake, which he so bitterly expiated in

his lifetime?

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