



his nature. Not only did he never forget them, but they affected him in a remarkable manner throughout his career. They caused at the time a depression of spirits akin to mental aberration, and the tendency to that depression never left him, even when in the height of his renown. On one occasion during his earlier days at Madras this depression impelled him to attempt his life. The pistol which was to have slain him missed fire. Again he pointed the muzzle at his head and pulled the trigger. Again did the pistol snap. Clive then examined it, and finding it was properly loaded, flung it away from him with the exclamation: "It appears I am destined for something; I will live."

The same haughty spirit which prevented Clive from courting the social acquaintance of his comrades asserted itself in his official life. The uncongenial work which, in common with other writers, he was set to perform, chafed him to such a degree that he was often unable to master his irritation. In one of these moods he so grossly insulted a superior functionary that the governor called upon him to apologise. Clive was forced to obey; but the humiliation, as he considered it, rankled in his breast. When, a few days later, the injured party, desirous to obliterate all recollection of the event, invited Clive to dine with him, he received a pointed refusal. "The governor," said Clive, "desired me to apologise, and I have done so; but he did not command me to dine with you."

Such were a few incidents of the earlier career of



1744.]

THE EARLY PROMISE.

25

Robert Clive. Time, however, which brings all things, gradually brought some amelioration even to his condition. The Governor of Madras, Mr. Morse, opened to him his well-stored library, and in the study of the books it contained Clive found a resource for his leisure hours. Gradually, too, he found some men possessing natures more akin to his own, with whom it was possible for him to feel sympathy, and with these he found it a pleasure to associate. In his after years he often used to allude to acts of kindness which had been rendered to him, and to the men to whom he felt himself indebted at this period. Of its more disagreeable incidents he never spoke. Still his life was not happy. If more resigned, he never became more contented; he never warmed to his work. He thought of it, spoke of it, and went to it with abhorrence. To him his career was a mistake, his youth a blunder—a mistake, too, and a blunder for which there was, apparently, no remedy! But a remedy did come, a remedy which, in its first workings, seemed worse than the disease.

In the month of March 1744 France had declared war against England. France, too, had possessions on the Koromandal Coast; of these the town of Pondichery, situated to the south-west of Madras, and distant from it eighty-six miles, was the seat of Government and the most important. The governor, Monsieur Dupleix, was a very remarkable man. To a vast and penetrating genius, to a talent for dealing with Asiatics which has never probably been surpassed, he added an ambition which, however great,



never passed the bounds of the possible attainment of its aims. But one thing was wanting to him, and it was the want of that one thing which prevented his ultimate success. He possessed the brain to devise, but not the arm to strike. He could plan a campaign, but he could not command an army. Forced, therefore, to depend upon others to carry out his projects, he had the mortification to see them crumble in the hands of incompetent instruments. Still, he was a great man and a far-seeing man. That he was the first of all the Europeans who served in India to recognise the means whereby that country might fall under the domination of one European power has been stated in a preceding page. Recognising the means, he used them unsparingly to gain the end for his own countrymen. In spite of many obstacles it is almost certain that, but for the existence of one man, he would have succeeded.

When the war between France and England broke out in 1744 the aggressive plans of Dupleix had not been conceived. It was that war, extended to India, which was to sow them, to nurture them, to bring them to complete maturity. When it broke out he was utterly unprepared for war, especially for war with England, and he dreaded it above all things. The English fleet was cruising off the coast. The nearest French ship of war was at the Isles of France and Bourbon, and although Dupleix was aware that La Bourdonnais was fitting out a squadron for the Indian seas at those islands, he had no information regarding its probable arrival. His great wish, for



the moment, then, was to induce the English authorities of Madras to agree to neutralise the Indian possessions of the two nations, to neutralise even the ships which carried on the commerce between the mother countries and their Indian dependencies.

The Governor of Madras, Mr. Morse, was unable to agree to this proposal. The East India Company had noticed with great jealousy the increasing prosperity of their French rivals in India, and they had transmitted to Mr. Morse categorical instructions to take advantage of the war, and of the squadron sent out under Commodore Barnet, to annihilate French commerce in the Indian seas. Mr. Morse was, therefore, helpless. To the pressing requests for neutrality of Dupleix he pleaded the orders he had received from England.

In those early days the European powers had never tried their strength with the forces of the native princes. The settlers on the coast were in reality the rent-paying tenants of the governors of the country in which they had been allowed to build their factories. They could not wag a finger in hostility on land without the permission of the landlord governor. In 1745 the lord, or Núwáb, of the Karnátak was A'nwaru'd-dín, appointed to that office the previous year. To Núwáb A'nwaru'd-dín, then, Dupleix, on receiving the reply of Mr. Morse, made appeal. The appeal was successful. A'nwaru'd-dín forbade his European tenants to make war by land upon each other.

For the moment Dupleix was saved. But when



the tide turned; when, in July 1746, La Bourdonnais coming from the islands had chased the English squadron from the Indian seas; when Pondichery possessed a fleet and Madras was defenceless, then Dupleix changed his tactics. Throwing to the winds the injunction of Núwáb Anwār'u'd-dín, he summoned La Bourdonnais to attack Madras. He supplied him with men, munitions, and money, and used every effort to inspire him with the ideas of French predominance in Southern India which were then, for the first time, taking root in his own mind.

La Bourdonnais was himself a man above the common herd. A great and successful administrator, he possessed to a considerable degree the power which was wanting to Dupleix—the power of action in the field. His mental vision, however, lacked the extent, the comprehensiveness of that of the Governor of Pondichery, and his great qualities were tarnished by the petty feeling of jealousy, by an unworthy desire to keep for himself the chief renown of all the achievements of his fleet—the chief credit for the plans which, though formed by others, it had been his to accomplish. This jealousy manifested itself very strongly before he had been many days at Pondichery. Finding that the capture of Madras and the expulsion of the English from Southern India were the ruling ideas which had possession of the mind of Dupleix, and that to him would belong the ultimate credit of their accomplishment, La Bourdonnais, although he had at first favoured the plan, began to make every possible excuse to avoid



carrying it into execution, and when forced, after long delays, by a citation of the Pondichery Council to attempt it, he set sail with a mental determination so to act as to thwart the great plans of the governor, whom he had begun to regard, far more than the English, as his enemy.

La Bourdonnais left Pondichery for Madras on the 12th September. He landed a portion of his troops, some six hundred in number, with two guns, twelve miles south of that place, on the 14th. On the following day, at noon, he arrived within cannon-shot of the town. He then landed a thousand Europeans, four hundred sepoy, and three hundred Africans, and summoned Madras to surrender.

Madras was in no condition to offer any effectual resistance. The fort which then protected the factories was a defensive position of the roughest character. It was simply an oblong, four hundred yards by one hundred, surrounded by a slender wall, defended by four bastions and four batteries, very slight and defective in their construction, and with no outworks to defend them. The English inhabitants did not exceed three hundred, and of these two hundred were soldiers. Their officers were three lieutenants, two of whom were foreigners, and seven ensigns who had risen from the ranks.

Under such circumstances successful defence was impossible. Governor Morse, indeed, endeavoured to obtain from Núwáb A'nwaru'd-dín the same protection which that prince had accorded to Dupleix. But he approached him unskillfully. His ambassador,



arriving empty-handed, was treated unceremoniously and dismissed with an unsatisfactory reply. Reduced, then, to his own resources, which were slight, Governor Morse agreed on the 21st September to surrender the fort and town of Madras and its dependencies. The garrison and all the English in the place, not in the service of the Company, were to become prisoners of war. All the covenanted servants of the Company were to be free to come and go as they wished, even to Europe, provided only that they engaged not to carry arms against France until they had been exchanged.

The English functionaries had given their parole to La Bourdonnais. That officer had, however, in addition to the public engagement with Governor Morse, entered into a private agreement for the ransom of the place.* This private agreement Dupleix had refused to ratify. Many of the English functionaries considered themselves as thereby released from their parole. Amongst these was Clive. Disguising himself as a Muhammadan, he fled to Fort

* I have stated the official conditions; but, by a secret agreement, signed five days later, with Governor Morse, La Bourdonnais bound himself to restore Madras on the payment of four lakhs and forty thousand rupees. There can be no doubt that La Bourdonnais was promised a bribe of forty thousand pounds as an inducement to agree to these terms. He was stimulated likewise by his jealousy of Dupleix. The whole of these transactions, culled from original documents, were first exposed by the author in his *History of the French in India* (1868). They throw an entirely new light on the, till then, received opinions regarding the conduct of Dupleix in refusing to confirm La Bourdonnais's unauthorised engagements.



1746.]

THE EARLY PROMISE.

31

St. David, an English settlement twelve miles south of Pondichery. This place now became the seat of the English administration in Southern India.

The change to Fort St. David seemed at first likely to exercise a deleterious influence on the fortunes of Clive. The place was overstocked with the officials of the Company, and there was but little occupation for him and for many others similarly situated. Reduced to idleness, and yet obliged to employ his time, Clive took to card-playing. Stories have been handed down of the coolness and resolution he displayed at this pastime, alike in unmasking a cheat, in putting down a bully, and in meeting good and bad fortune. Though to the end of his life fond of cards, especially of whist, Clive never would have become a gambler. He played for distraction in a place where he had no occupation, where books were scarce, and where at certain seasons of the year outdoor exercise to any considerable extent was impossible. Yet from the evil possibilities of such distraction he was saved by an event which, threatening in the outset to completely annihilate English interests in Southern India, changed the course of his life.

Dupleix had conquered Madras. Núwáb A'nwaru'd-dín, awaking too late to the consequences of his reply to Governor Morse's request, had ordered Dupleix to restore it. Dupleix had refused. Núwáb A'nwaru'd-dín had then despatched a force, commanded by his eldest son Máphuz Khán, to invest Madras. Upon learning this Dupleix had despatched a detachment, consisting of two hundred and thirty Europeans and



seven hundred sepoy, commanded by his most capable officer, an engineer named Paradis, from Pondichery to relieve Madras. Then occurred two events which affected in a most decisive manner the fate of the inhabitants of Hindústan. For the first time the northern warrior came in contact with the soldiers of the east. The result was premonitory of the consequences that contact was to produce. On the 2nd November the garrison of Madras, sallying, drove away the cavalry of Máphuz Khán. On the 4th, the small force of Paradis, numbering less than one thousand men, of whom only two hundred and thirty were Europeans, completely defeated the army of Máphuz Khán, ten thousand strong, on the Adyar.

This victory confirmed the ambitious views of Dupleix. Secure now of Madras, utterly despising the native soldiers as opponents, he resolved to make a great effort to complete the policy inaugurated at Madras by expelling the English from Fort St. David. Accordingly, on the 19th December he despatched a formidable army, consisting of nine hundred Europeans, six hundred sepoy, and one hundred Africans, with six guns and six mortars, against that place.

The garrison at Fort St. David numbered only two hundred English soldiers and about one hundred natives. The danger, then, was great, the emergency pressing. The most necessary want was that of human material, especially human material of European manufacture. Fort St. David was, we have seen, overstocked with civilians—of men who, for want of professional occupation, were devoting their leisure



hours to the card-table. To such men an opportunity now came, the opportunity of changing the toga for the sword, the fever of the card-table for the joys of strife—the *certaminis gaudia* of Attila—the hours of idleness for the passionate excitement of the man who feels welling up within him the proud confidence that he can lead his fellows. Foremost to clutch at that opportunity was Robert Clive. He applied for and obtained permission to transfer his services temporarily to the army; and it was in that capacity that he assisted in the defence of Fort St. David against the French.

The attack of the latter, though renewed four times, failed. In 1748, Dupleix in his turn was besieged in Pondichery. The arrival of Admiral Boscawen, with a fleet and army, had made possible this change of fortune. The besieging army invested Pondichery, and pressed it hard. With that army served Clive. There is still extant in print the journal of an English officer who was present at the siege, and in that journal is to be found the only contemporary allusion to the part taken by Clive.* Vague as it is, it proves that in the subordinate positions which alone he could have held, he showed alike courage and conduct.

* I except Orme, who used this journal as the basis for his history of the siege. It was reprinted in the *Asiatic Annual Register* for 1802. The author of it thus refers to Clive:—"The celebrated Lord Clive, then an ensign, 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 and elevation of mind which were his characteristic endowments."



Dupleix repulsed the English attack. On the 17th October the army, which had begun the siege on the 19th August preceding, six thousand strong, of whom three thousand seven hundred and twenty were Europeans, aided by the most powerful fleet seen till then on the Indian seas, was forced to retire baffled and humiliated, leaving behind it a thousand and sixty-five of its numbers who had perished from the fire of the enemy, or from sickness. On the side of the defenders, Paradis, the engineer of whom I have already spoken, and Law of Lauriston, then a captain, to whom I have referred in the first chapter, had greatly distinguished themselves. But Paradis had been killed early in a sortie. After his death, Dupleix himself had been the life of the defence.

The attack had been conducted by the admiral of the fleet, Admiral Boscawen. Serving under him, in command of the company's forces, was Major Stringer Lawrence. Lawrence had arrived from England in January 1748, commissioned to command all the forces of the East India Company. He was a man of indomitable resolution, a brave and skilful soldier, capable of daring conceptions, and always ready to recognise and advance merit amongst his subordinates. He it was who had, in June 1748, repulsed the fourth and last attack made by the French on Fort St. David. At the siege of Pondichery he had not been fortunate. In the earlier days of it he had been taken prisoner in a sortie made by Law. He was released shortly afterwards in consequence of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, the conditions of which did not reach India



till the autumn of 1749. In many subsequent operations we shall find the name of Lawrence constantly associated with that of Clive, whose military capacity Lawrence was the first to discover.

The conditions of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle forced Dupleix to restore Madras to the English. With a bitter pang he restored it improved in every way, its fortifications greatly strengthened, the town enlarged and cleared of obstructions, the germ laid of the important place it has since become. The English, however, still, and for some time subsequently, continued to use the till then unconquered Fort St. David as the principal seat of administration. Whether they believed that the peace which had been made in Europe would be extended in all its reality to India, may, judging from their subsequent conduct, perhaps be doubted. It was not in human nature that the bitterness of feeling which had been so strongly excited should all at once subside. The five years' contest between the rival trading communities on the Koromandal coast had aroused fears, had excited jealousies, and had stimulated ambitions which, at the bid of authorities some ten thousand miles distant, could not at once give place to confidence and friendship. The peace, then, which had been made in Europe extended to India only so far as to compel in that country the restitution of mutual conquests, and to prevent the rival companies from making overt war upon each other. Events were almost immediately to prove that in all other respects it was nominal. The active rivalry of native principals soon afforded a



pretext for the renewal of hostilities. In this active rivalry the two European nations appeared as auxiliaries, always on opposite sides. Under this flimsy pretext the French and English continued, in spite of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, to wage, as bitterly as though they had been actually at war, their contest for predominance in Southern India.

After that treaty, but before its conditions had been carried out in India, the English had (April 1749) despatched a force of four hundred and thirty Europeans and a thousand sepoy, under the command of Captain Cope, as auxiliaries to aid Sáhuji, ex-Rájá of Tanjúr, dethroned and expelled for his misconduct, to recover his throne, then occupied by Pratáp Singh, an able and popular Sovereign. Such at least was its nominal object. Its real purpose was, whilst assisting Sáhuji, to secure for the English possession of Devikóta, a town on the south bank of the river Kolrún, at the point where that river empties itself into the sea. The cession of this place was the prize offered by Sáhuji. Olive volunteered for, and was allowed to accompany, this expedition.

It failed. The ships which conveyed the guns and the heavy baggage were dispersed by a storm. Some of them—amongst them Admiral Boscawen's flag-ship, the "Namur," of seventy-four guns; the "Pembroke," of sixty guns; and the "Apollo," hospital ship—were totally lost. The same storm swept with terrible fury the camp occupied by Cope, on the bank of the river Valáru, near Portonovo, and caused considerable damage.



Cope, however, after a halt of two days, resumed his march and entered the Tanjúr territory only to find that the prince whose cause he had come to support did not possess there a single partisan. He marched, therefore, not on Tanjúr, but upon the bait which had drawn him from Fort St. David, the important port of Devikóta, hoping to find in the Kolrún, which forms there a natural harbour, the *matériel* necessary to undertake its conquest.

In this he was disappointed. The storm had done effectually the work of the defenders. Not a ship was to be seen. Without heavy guns, without supplies, Cope was powerless to undertake the conquest of a place too strong to be escaladed. He, therefore, returned to Madras.

The debates which ensued in Fort St. David on his return demonstrated very clearly that it was not regard for Sáhuji, expelled for misrule by his own subjects, but the covetous desire to possess Devikóta, which had originally prompted the expedition. Cope faithfully reported that the ex-Rájá did not possess a single partisan in the country. To interfere on his behalf, then, was out of the question. But Cope further insisted upon the enormous advantages which must accrue to his countrymen from the conquest of a strong place on the coast, possessing a natural harbour capable of receiving ships of the largest tonnage. The temptation was too great to be withstood. A second expedition was decided upon; and, that there might be no mistake this time, Major Lawrence, just released from Pondichery, was directed to command it.



The whole body of the Company's European troops, amounting, inclusive of artillerymen, to eight hundred men, together with fifteen hundred sepoy, was ordered on this expedition. Clive accompanied it, holding the temporary rank of lieutenant. In consequence of the representations made by Cope as to the difficulties presented by a march by land, it was decided to proceed by sea. Six ships, three of which were ships of war, conveyed the Europeans, whilst the sepoy accompanied them in large native boats. They arrived in safety at the mouth of the Kolrún. The troops and stores then proceeded in boats up the arm of the river which led to Devikóta, and were landed on the bank opposite the fort. Lawrence had resolved to batter the fort thence, because the other side was marshy, and he had descried the army of the Rájá of Tanjúr encamped under its walls.

The fort of Devikóta was about a mile in circumference, having six unequal sides. The brick walls, eighteen feet high, were in most parts broad enough to form a rampart without any addition of earth. They were flanked at unequal distances by towers, some circular, others square. From his position on the opposite bank of the river, Lawrence opened fire on the easternmost wall from four 24-pounders. In three days he had made a practicable breach. The enemy neither returned the fire, nor attempted to repair the breach. They employed themselves simply in carrying on an intrenchment from the bank of the river across the side of the fort which the English were cannonading.



By means of a raft contrived with great ingenuity, the English force then crossed the river. The match-lock fire of the enemy was, however, so heavy and so continued that the passage cost the lives of thirty Europeans and fifty sepoys. Lawrence found the intrenchment unfinished. Fifty yards in front of it, however, ran a deep and miry rivulet extending across the island on which the fort stands. Lawrence resolved then to cross the rivulet and to storm the breach without delay.

For the dangerous honour of leading the assault Clive volunteered. Lawrence accepted his offer and placed at his disposal a body of thirty-three Europeans and seven hundred sepoys, to be supported by the whole army so soon as the intrenchment should be carried. Clive, forming his Europeans in front, with the sepoys as a close support, crossed the rivulet with a loss of four of his advanced party. He waited a few minutes on the western bank till he should be sure that the sepoys were following, but no sooner had he seen them climbing its steep slope than he pushed on obliquely with his Europeans towards the unfinished end of the intrenchment. The sepoys, however, having clambered up the bank, far from obeying the orders they had received to follow their European comrades, remained standing, waiting for the main body. The enemy, perceiving that Clive was advancing unsupported, remained motionless till the distance had become more considerable, then, suddenly, with an evolution as rapid as it was unexpected, their cavalry, which had been concealed



behind the projections of the fort, charged the rear of his party with so much impetuosity that the men had no time to defend themselves. In less than a minute twenty-six of the twenty-nine men who still remained with him were cut to pieces. Clive himself narrowly escaped the same fate. Followed by three of his men he managed, however, to rejoin, uninjured, the sepoys who still remained drawn up, but immovable, on the western bank of the rivulet.

It was, perhaps, fortunate that the Tanjûr horsemen were content with their first success, and made no attempt to drive back the sepoys.

Meanwhile Lawrence, advancing with the main body, had reached, at the head of his men, the eastern bank of the rivulet; he crossed this, and, joined by Clive and his three followers, placed his Europeans in the front, and resumed the movement which had been so fatal to his lieutenant. He reached the unfinished part of the intrenchment molested only by an irregular fire from the enemy's matchlockmen. As he pushed on thence towards the breach, however, the Tanjûr cavalry again attempted a brilliant charge on his flanks and rear. But, forewarned, Lawrence was forearmed. Halting his men and facing them outwards, he allowed the cavalry to approach within a few yards before he gave the order to fire. The single discharge which followed that order gained the day. Fourteen horsemen were laid low; the remainder fled panic-stricken, and Lawrence, pushing eagerly forwards, found the breach abandoned by the garri-



son, who were endeavouring to escape by the opposite gateway. Devikóta was gained.

The capture, a few days later, of the fortified pagoda of Uchipúram, and its subsequent successful defence by a hundred men against a force of five thousand Tanjúrians, who tried to retake it, completed the military events of this short campaign. Causes were at work in the Karnátak which rendered the Rájá of Tanjúr anxious to conclude peace with the European invaders. They, too, were by no means unwilling to come to terms; they had gained the real object for which they had invaded the country; they had gained Devikóta. To plant upon the throne the puppet Sáhují had served all along only as a pretence to mask the real design. They were far, then, from opposing the desire of the Rájá to come to a peaceful arrangement. The wishes of the two principals in the contest thus pointing in one direction, it was easy to come to terms. A treaty was accordingly negotiated on the basis that Devikóta, with as much land adjoining it as would yield an annual income of thirty-six thousand rupees, should be ceded to the East India Company; that the Rájá of Tanjúr should pay the expenses of the war; that he should allow Sáhují a pension of four thousand rupees per annum, on condition that the English should be answerable for his person.

An analysis of the result of this little campaign cannot fail to suggest curious reflections. The English were the main gainers. They not only obtained a very important position on the coast, but they were



paid for taking and keeping it. The Rájá of Tanjúr lost that important position, but he rid himself of a rival who had been at large, and who might at any moment, in the days when force alone ruled, have become dangerous. The third high contracting party was the prince to restore whom to the throne of his ancestors the war had been nominally undertaken. Though the allies of this prince were victorious, he himself suffered, and suffered without compensation. Not only did he not regain his throne, but he lost his liberty. Under the terms of the treaty he was placed under *surveillance* at Fort St. David. The bestowal of a pittance of four thousand rupees per annum on an Indian prince, supporting even in captivity a crowd of retainers, was scarcely more advantageous to him than would be ensuring of a life-provision of bread and water to an English convict!

The treaty concluded, the English force returned to Fort St. David. Admiral Boscawen and his fleet were still at that place. The admiral was in favour of further military action. During the absence of Lawrence in Tanjúr a revolution had taken place in the Karnátak. Núwáb A'nwaru'd-dín had been slain in battle, his eldest son, Máphuz Khán, had been taken prisoner, and his second son, Muhammad Ali, had fled for refuge to Trichinápalli; Chanda Sáhib, an avowed supporter of the French, had assumed the dignity of Núwáb, and had been generally recognised. Boscawen then strongly urged action. He would have opposed an English pretender to a French pretender, have accorded strong support to Muhammad Ali, and have sent a force to



Trichinápalli to aid him. The policy advocated by Boscawen was the policy which was afterwards adopted. That admiral saw clearly enough into the future, and, detecting the aims of Dupleix, divined the only means by which it would be possible to baffle them. But the Governor of Fort St. David, Mr. Floyer, did not possess the clear vision of Boscawen. Although the latter offered to remain on the coast to support him, Floyer declined to commit the Company to the support of a pretender apparently *in extremis*. He therefore allowed Boscawen to sail (November 1, 1749), taking from him three hundred men as an addition to his garrison.

Peace then—that is, apparent peace—reigned at Fort St. David. Clive, of whose conduct during the Tanjūr campaign Major Lawrence at a later period recorded : “ His early genius surprised and engaged my attention as well before as at the siege of Devikóta, where he behaved in courage and judgment much beyond what could have been expected from his years,” was relegated to his civil duties. To mark the sense entertained of his services by the authorities, however, not only was he granted the rank to which he would have attained had he not been withdrawn from military duty, but he was appointed to an office which bore a certain amount of affinity to that duty. This was the office of Commissary to the troops ; an easy office in times of peace, especially onerous during a campaign. Before, however, he had settled down to his new work, Clive was attacked by a fever which completely prostrated him. The air of Fort St. David



not possessing the recuperative power necessary to restore him, he was forced to take a cruise during the winter of 1749-50 in the Bay of Bengal. During his absence, I propose to relate the occurrences which gradually led to that sudden appearance at, and as sudden departure from, Trichinápalli, with which I closed the first chapter.

CHAPTER III.

THE DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN.

A REVOLUTION, I have said, had taken place in the Karnátak during the absence of Major Lawrence in the Tanjúr country. Núwáb A'nwáru'd-dín had been slain in battle; his eldest son, Máphuz Khán, had been taken prisoner; his younger son, Muhammad Ali, had fled for refuge to Trichinápalli; and Chanda Sáhib, an avowed supporter of the French, had assumed the dignity of Núwáb of the Karnátak. I propose to show now the manner in which this revolution affected the fortunes of the rival European settlers on the Koro-mandal coast; how it fired the genius and stimulated the ambition of Dupleix; how it compelled the English to join in a struggle which was for them, in the first instance, a struggle for existence, until the military genius of Clive inverted the *rôle* played by the European rivals, and, whilst forcing the French to measures purely defensive, enabled the English to appropriate the plans for supremacy in



Southern India which had been conceived and nurtured in the brain of the illustrious French governor.

Southern India was, under the Mughuls, governed by a viceroy appointed by the Court of Dihlí. This viceroy was called Súbahdár of the Dakhan. The word Dakhan was intended to comprise, as it literally meant, the whole of Southern India; in reality it comprised only the territory now known as the dominions of the Nizám, the Karnátak, and the eastern, south-eastern, and southern portions of the coast. The western portions of the peninsula, such as Maisúr, Kuchhí (Kochin), and Travanker, though nominally comprised in the overlordship of the ruler of India, were practically independent of his rule. At the time of which I have been writing in the preceding chapter, the Viceroy of the Dakhan was Nizám-ul-Múlk. This nobleman died at the close of 1748. The Court of Dihlí appointed his grandson Muzaffar Jang, the son of a daughter, to succeed him. But Nizám-ul-Múlk had left five sons. The eldest was content to push his fortunes at the court of Dihlí; the second, Názir Jang, was an ambitious man whose life had been a succession of plots and rebellions; the third, Salábat Jang, the fourth, Basálat Jang, and the fifth, Nizám Ali, were held in little consideration. They had been content to live lives of pleasure at the court of Aurangábád.

The nomination of Muzaffar Jang, known to be a man of ability and to have been the selection of the late viceroy, was popular throughout the Dakhan. One man alone resented it. This was his uncle, Názir



Jang, whose life had been, I have said, a series of rebellions. Názir Jang would not have been true to his nature had he remained quiescent when the succession to a splendid inheritance was in question. Accordingly he rebelled.

Názir Jang had one enormous advantage; he was on the spot. Muzaffar Jang was at Bījápúr. Názir Jang, then, seized alike the coffers of the State and the reins of government, and scoffed at the claims of his nephew.

Without money, hopeless of aid from the court of Dihlí, then in the anarchy which preceded its downfall, Muzaffar Jang bethought him of the Maráthás. He proceeded, then, to Satárah. There he met Chanda Sáhib. Chanda Sáhib was the nephew of the nobleman, Dost Ali, who had preceded A'nwaru'd-dín in the office of Núwáb of the Karnátak. Dost Ali had been slain in a battle with the Maráthás in 1739. One of the consequences of this defeat had been the siege of Trichinápalli, held by Chanda Sáhib, by those warriors. Chanda Sáhib, hardly pressed, had been forced to surrender that place in 1740. Subsequently to that time he had lived a prisoner at Satárah. In the meanwhile the Karnátak had passed out of the hands of the family to which he was allied. The only son of Dost Ali, and his successor, had been murdered. Chanda Sáhib, upon whom, had he been free, the Núwábship would certainly have devolved, was, we have seen, in confinement at Satárah. The government of the Karnátak had been bestowed upon the representative of another family, the Núwáb A'n-

waru'd-dín. It remains alone to add that Chanda Sáhib possessed considerable ability and boundless ambition. His ability, however, was rendered useless, and his ambition was thwarted, by a waywardness, an indecision of character, a fear to strike less the blow should fail, sufficient to spoil the best laid plans.

The claims put forward by Chanda Sáhib as the heir of Dost Ali rendered him the very man to suit Muzaffar Jang. This prince was captivated alike by his ability and by his ambition. He could not see, then, that though skilful to devise plans, Chanda Sáhib would be weak in carrying them through. The two men agreed to work together for a common aim. The aim was to secure the viceroyalty of the Dakhan for Muzaffar Jang, the lesser office of Núwáb of the Karnátak for Chanda Sáhib.

Muzaffar Jang hoped to carry out this aim by means of the Maráthás. Indeed, it was with that sole object that he had proceeded to Satárah. But Chanda Sáhib knew the position too well to think for a moment that either of them could procure a permanent rule over a Muhammadan province by means of warriors who brought destruction and desolation in their path. His device was less grandiloquent, but more sure. He had had great experience of the French; he had at a very early period detected the physical superiority of the western race. His plan, then, was personal liberty and an alliance with the French. With this object he entered into a correspondence with Dupleix, and obtained both.

This was in 1749. On the 3rd August of that



year, whilst the English were still in the Tanjúr country, Muzaffar Jang, who had raised thirty thousand men, allied with Chanda Sáhib who had six thousand, and who was aided by four hundred Frenchmen commanded by d'Auteuil, under whom served Bussy, attacked the army of Núwáb A'nwaru'd-dín at Ambúr. The battle was decisive. A'nwaru'd-dín, in the act of singling out Chanda Sáhib for a hand-to-hand encounter, was shot through the head; one of his sons, Máphuz Khán, was taken prisoner; the other, Muhammad Ali, saved himself by an early flight; the entire army dispersed in confusion. The victory had really been won, not by the levies of the two Indian leaders, but by the French led by Bussy, for d'Auteuil was wounded early in the day.

It was, I have said, decisive. Arkát surrendered the next day. In that capital Muzaffar Jang proclaimed himself Súbahdár of the Dakhan, Chanda Sáhib Núwáb of the Karnátak. The two governors then proceeded to Pondichery to cement the alliance with Dupleix. Muzaffar Jang stayed there eight days. During that time he conferred upon Dupleix the sovereignty of eighty-one villages immediately adjoining the French territory. At the expiration of ten days he rejoined his camp twenty miles from Pondichery. Chanda Sáhib continued his stay in that city.

The battle of Ambúr had produced the revolution which more than anything else had induced the Rájá of Tanjúr to come to terms with the English, and



which had impelled Admiral Boscawen to offer to stay longer on the coast. In the first moments of that victory the Governor of Fort St. David, Mr. Floyer, had despatched an accredited agent to Chanda Sáhib to acknowledge him as Núwáb and to congratulate him on his accession. But when he saw that Chanda Sáhib prolonged his stay from day to day, from week to week, at Pondichery; when not only every week but every day brought him a despatch from Muhammad Ali assuring him of his ability to hold Trichinápalli, and from thence to reconquer the Karnátak, if only he would send a few English to aid him, even Mr. Floyer began to ask himself if he had not acted too hastily in acknowledging a prince so devoted to the enemies of his country. Admiral Boscawen strongly urged him to declare for Muhammad Ali and to aid him with soldiers. But Floyer was cautious. The chances of Muhammad Ali seemed too slender to rest upon. He determined, then, to wait the course of events. That course was precipitated by the consequent departure of Boscawen and the English fleet.

It was for that departure that Chanda Sáhib and Dupleix had been waiting; they dared not move whilst Boscawen remained. No sooner had he left than Chanda Sáhib, furnished by Dupleix with funds and troops, left Pondichery with the avowed intention of marching with Muzaffar Jang upon Trichinápalli.

Had he carried out that intention nothing could have saved Muhammad Ali, nothing could have prevented the unquestioned supremacy of the devoted



friend of the French over the Karnátak. But Chanda Sáhib did not carry out that intention. In consultation with Muzaffar Jang, and without even communicating with Dupleix, he resolved to attempt, in the first instance, the conquest of Tanjúr. The proverbial riches of that place were the fatal snare which diverted him from the true point of his game. That game was dominion. He had the winning card in his hand, and he threw it away !

The allied army of Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sáhib, accompanied by the French auxiliaries commanded by Duquesne, arrived before Tanjúr the 9th November (1749), and summoned it to surrender. The Rájá not only refused, but sent messengers to Názir Jang and to the English imploring their aid.

Both the parties appealed to saw at once the advantage which the deviation from sound principles of war had thrown into their hands. The resistance which Tanjúr, strong in its fortifications, strong likewise in the resolution of its Rájá, could undoubtedly offer, would give the English time to send a detachment to join Muhammad Ali in the defence of Trichinápalli; would enable Názir Jang to march upon his enemy's communications. Both the parties seized eagerly the opportunity. The English, on the first intimation that Chanda Sáhib and his allies had taken the road to Tanjúr, had despatched Captain Cope at the head of a hundred and twenty men to Trichinápalli. Of these Cope could not spare more than twenty for Tanjúr. But he judged, and judged rightly, that twenty brave soldiers might inspire to a



stern resistance men fighting behind stone walls. He sent those twenty, therefore, to Tanjūr, and they, taking advantage of a dark night and the carelessness of the besiegers, entered the place. The English at Fort-St. David and Názir Jang did more. They came at once to an understanding by virtue of which the former bound themselves to assist Názir Jang with six hundred European troops in maintaining his own pretensions to the viceroyalty of Southern India, and in asserting the claims of Muhammad Ali to the Núwábship of the Karnátak.

The resolution and diplomatic skill displayed by the Rájá of Tanjūr, combined with the characteristic indecision of Chanda Sáhib—who directed the military operations of the besieging force—to favour in a remarkable manner the views of the English. By the display of those qualities the Rájá for some weeks amused Chanda Sáhib with promises of surrender. When these ceased to have their effect, when after a siege of fifty-two days Chanda Sáhib had carried one of the gates of the town and the place lay apparently at his mercy, the Rájá again amused him by affixing his seal to a treaty which he had no intention of carrying out. He promised to pay to Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sáhib seven hundred thousand rupees; to the French two hundred thousand rupees; to remit the ground-rent paid by the latter for their factory at Kárikál, and to add eighty-one villages to that factory. But by delaying the payment on the plea of making a detailed valuation and assessment of the plate, the jewels, and the precious stones which



were to take the place of the money he had agreed to pay, he gained time for Názir Jang to enter the Karnátak. The intelligence that that prince was marching on Tanjúr encouraged the Rájá to throw off the mask. He boldly tore up the treaty, and bade the besiegers be content with the small amount he had doled out to them. Dupleix all this time had been unremitting in his recommendations to Chanda Sáhib not to content himself with promises, but to march into Tanjúr. The faithless conduct of the Rájá led him to insist the more earnestly upon this course. But by this time Chanda Sáhib's game had been played out. Alarmed by the report that Názir Jang was marching on their rear, his soldiers refused to engage themselves in narrow streets, every house in which would be a fortress. The French contingent was equally demoralised. Their leader, Duquesne, had died; his successor, Goupil, was a cypher; the men had been short of supplies and had received no pay, for the French, too, had trusted to the treasures of Tanjúr. Divided counsels and their offspring, confusion, reigned rampant everywhere. Suddenly, without orders, without preconcerted action, the sections of the besieging army broke up, and fell back upon Pondichery.

Meanwhile six thousand native horsemen and Cope's detachment of a hundred men had escorted Muhammad Ali to join Názir Jang at Valdáur, fifteen miles from Pondichery. Lawrence, who had been sent to Madras to receive that place from the French, had returned to Fort St. David, and had been engaged in organising there a force which should act in concert



with the native allies of the English. Up to the time of the French retreat from Tanjūr he had not stirred from that place. Prevented by the peace existing between the two nations from acting on his own account, he was waiting the next move of Názir Jang.

Názir Jang, for his part, was awaiting at Valdáur the next move of his rival. He had not long to wait. The force which had fallen back dispirited and humiliated on Pondichery, found at that place the invigorating influence which the genius of a great man is always able to inspire. Dupleix saw that for his friends to be successful they must strike boldly, fiercely, and immediately. He advanced money from his own coffers, he increased the French contingent to two thousand men, replaced Goupil by d'Auteuil, and pointing in the direction of Valdáur, bade the two native chiefs seek there the accomplishment of their wishes.

On learning that the enemy was marching on Valdáur, Lawrence set out from Fort St. David and joined Názir Jang with six hundred men. The next day the enemy came in sight and began a cannonade. A decisive battle was apparently imminent. The morrow came, and with it a decisive result, not the consequence, however, of a battle worthy of the name. The French contingent mutinied and refused to fight. Panic-stricken, the followers of the two native princes fell back on Pondichery. One of these princes, Chanda Sáhib, accompanied his followers; the other, Muzaffar Jang, threw himself on the tender mercies of his uncle. The next day some detachments of the army



of Názir Jang pursued the French and their allies to the walls of Pondichery itself.

This misfortune, apparently overwhelming, was only a prelude to a greater success. In three or four days the discipline of the French army was restored. On the 13th of April a detachment of it surprised and dispersed an outlying force of Názir Jang's army greatly inferior in numbers. A few days later it captured the strong pagoda of Tiruvadi, only sixteen miles from Fort St. David and almost within sight of the army of Muhammad Ali. On September 1st Chanda Sáhib and d'Auteuil attacked and completely defeated the army of that prince, twenty thousand strong, on the Ponnár. In this battle the French did not lose a single man. It was decisive in its results. It virtually gave to Chanda Sáhib the Karnátak; it actually restored to the French the ascendancy they had lost by their retreat from Valdáur. Muhammad Ali, followed by two attendants, fled for refuge to Arkát.

This victory was improved by the storming, a few days later, by a small French force under Bussy, of the fortress of Jinji, till then considered impregnable. This event enabled the French to strike a decisive blow at Názir Jang himself. Muzaffar Jang, a prisoner with his uncle, and loaded with irons, had managed, nevertheless, to win over to his own cause some of the leading chieftains in the army. With them, and in correspondence with De la Touche, the French commander at Jinji, it was arranged that the appearance of a French force marching to



attack the main army should be a signal for the release of Muzaffar Jang and the deposition of his uncle. The arrangement was literally carried out. On the night of the 15th December the French commander, M. de la Touche, set out from Jinji at the head of eight hundred Europeans, three thousand sepoy, and ten guns in the direction of the Súbahdár's camp. After a march of sixteen miles he found himself, at 4 o'clock in the morning, in front of twenty-five thousand men bent on opposing him. These, according to the preconcerted plan, he attacked. Meanwhile, the conspirators had shot Názir Jang through the heart. Muzaffar Jang, whose death had been ordered for that very day, was released and saluted as Súbahdár. De la Touche had but just broken the twenty-five thousand men opposed to him when the new ruler, displaying the French standard, appeared on the field. That same evening Muzaffar Jang commissioned the French commander to inform Dupleix that he would act in all things in conformity with his advice.

The turn of fortune in favour of the French did not stop there. The Governor of Fort St. David, Mr. Floyer, had been ordered to return at once to Europe. Pending the arrival of his successor, Mr. Saunders, the office had devolved upon Major Lawrence. That capable soldier was then forced to withdraw from the army, leaving the force in the field under the command of Cope, a man of very moderate ability. That was not all. Major Lawrence's health had suffered very much from the trials and exposure to which he had been



subjected. Instead, then, of resuming his place at the head of the army on the arrival of Mr. Saunders, he was forced to proceed on leave to Europe. The new governor, Mr. Saunders, possessed common sense and good abilities, but he had no military experience. Clive, too, all this time was endeavouring to recover his health in the Bay of Bengal. In the presence of the sudden aggrandisement of their rivals the fortunes of the English traders seemed at a low ebb indeed.

But the drama which was to be acted ere the curtain should rise for the re-appearance on the stage of Robert Clive had not yet been played out. There was to be another tragic scene. After his triumph near Jinji, Muzaffar Jang proceeded to Pondichery, where he was received with great honours. There, in full durbar, he nominated Dupleix Núwáb of the country from the south of the river Krishna to Cape Kumárin (Comorin), with Chanda Sáhib as his deputy; he conferred upon Dupleix the greatest dignity of the Mughul empire, that of a mansab or commander of seven thousand horse; he granted to him likewise lands bringing in an annual income of one hundred thousand rupees, and he confirmed the French in possession of all the lands and forts they had held and conquered, returning an annual revenue of four hundred thousand rupees. He then concerted with Dupleix a plan for united action, a prominent feature of which was that a body of French troops, commanded by a French officer of rank, should accompany him to his capital, and should permanently remain there.



After a short stay at Pondichery, Muzaffar Jang set out for Haidarábád, accompanied by a French contingent under Bussy. But the turbulence and avarice of the vassal chieftains who had murdered Názir Jang had not yet been satiated. Those chieftains now expressed discontent with Muzaffar Jang, because he had not placed at their disposal a larger portion of the contents of his uncle's treasury. They conspired, therefore, against him, and incited a tumult on the march, in the quelling of which they hoped to slay their intended victim. When the mutiny broke out Muzaffar Jang showed more courage and resolution than prudence. Calling on the French infantry to follow him, he charged the rebels with his cavalry. One of the chief conspirators was killed, a second was mortally wounded. Pursuing the third, Muzaffar Jang himself was slain (6th February).

This event, which might have proved fatal to the views of the French, was at once turned by Bussy to their advantage. The third son of the uncle of Muzaffar Jang was on the spot, though in confinement. Bussy at once, with the concurrence of all the chiefs of the army, proclaimed him Súbahdár of the Dakhan, released him from confinement, escorted him to Haidarábád, and received from him not only a public confirmation of all the grants of territory made to the French, but the cession, in the vicinity of Machhlípatanam (Masulipatam), of others, which formed the first stepping-stone to the acquisition of the province subsequently known as the Northern Sirkárs.

Such was the position of affairs in Southern India,



when there occurred those events which I have related in the first chapter. French interests were everywhere in the ascendant. Represented by Dupleix and his agent, Chanda Sáhib, they reigned supreme in the Karnátak; represented by Bussy and the prince whom he had raised from a prison to a throne, they reigned supreme throughout the Dakhan. The pretender—for such only could he be regarded at the time—whom the English supported, Muhammad Ali, fleeing to Arkát after his defeat on the Ponnár, had escaped thence, without a single follower, to Trichinápalli, where he had still a few adherents.

The English, deprived of the skilful leadership of Lawrence, had, as we have seen, first (early in 1751) despatched a small European force under Cope, to aid in the defence of Trichinápalli; and, a few months later, a larger one, five hundred strong, under Gingen, to frustrate the intentions of Chanda Sáhib and d'Auteuil. How Gingen was baffled; how, defeated at Valkonda, he had been pressed back on the Kolrún; how, forced to retreat from the Kolrún to Trichinápalli, he had allowed that place to be invested by Chanda Sáhib and the French; how depression had taken possession of the spirits of the English garrison; how, when everything seemed dark and desperate, there had suddenly appeared upon the scene an Englishman, who, taking in at once all the points of the situation, conceived in his own brain the plan whereby the designs of the enemy might be baffled, success substituted for defeat, and confidence for despair; how that Englishman had at once started to Fort



St. David to lay his plans before the governor, Mr. Saunders, has been told in the first chapter. It is time, then, that we should return to Robert Clive.



CHAPTER IV.

THE DAWN OF GENIUS.

CLIVE returned from his search for health in the Bay of Bengal invigorated by the sea-breezes and completely restored to energy. He at once resumed his office of Commissary to the troops. It was the cold season of 1751. His duties had become more active. In the early part of the year he had superintended the equipment of Cope's force of two hundred and eighty Europeans and three hundred sepoy, destined for Trichinápalli, and at the end of March he accompanied, as Commissary, the force of five hundred Europeans, a hundred Africans, a thousand sepoy, and eight guns, directed to march under Gingen upon Valkonda, and, co-operating with Muhammad Ali, to endeavour to thwart the operations of Chanda Sáhib and of d'Auteuil.

Clive was with Gingen's force when it was beaten at Valkonda. As Commissary, he was precluded from taking an active share in the operations, and as no credit would have accrued to him from Gingen's



success, so he can in no way be held responsible for his failure. It may be assumed, indeed, that he disapproved very strongly of the manner in which Gingen conducted the campaign. On no other hypothesis is the decided course he adopted after the defeat at Valkonda to be accounted for. Instead of accompanying Gingen in his retreat towards Trichinápalli, he resigned his office, and returned to Fort St. David.

That the germ of the actual plan, which his subsequent visit to Trichinápalli fully developed, was already in his mind may well be surmised. Certain it is that in his intercourse with the governor he dwelt repeatedly on the ease with which the enemy might be made to tremble for his possessions in the north if troops only were available to attempt a diversion. But troops were not yet available, and Mr. Saunders knew that those who might be expected to arrive from England would be required for other purposes. Besides, he had not at his disposal a single officer of experience. Clive was but a civilian; his genius for command had not been recognised. Above all, there devolved upon Mr. Saunders the imperative necessity of sending the first troops that might arrive to escort a convoy of provisions urgently required at Trichinápalli.

The fortunate arrival of the Company's ships from Europe enabled him to carry out this resolve. A force of eighty Europeans and three hundred sepoys was despatched at the end of July with a large convoy of stores for the purpose. In the absence of



experienced military officers, Mr. Pigot, a Member of Council, was deputed to proceed with the force until it should be beyond the risk of hostile attack. He was then to return to head-quarters. Clive volunteered to accompany Pigot.

From Fort St. David to the fortified town of Verdachelam, a distance of between thirty and forty miles, the road traversed the territory of a petty chief, or poligár, known to be hostile to the English. For the remainder of the journey little was to be apprehended, the Rájá of Tanjúr being inclined to favour the English.

The detachment reached Verdachelam unmolested. Having accompanied it so far, Pigot and Clive set out to return under a slender escort of twelve sepoys. But the poligár, who had shrunk from attacking a convoy escorted by Europeans, did not hesitate to make a dash at this small guard of sepoys. Surrounding them with his matchlockmen, he harassed their march for miles, keeping upon them a continuous fire and killing seven men of the escort. The efforts which produced this result had, however, exhausted the ammunition of the assailants, and the two English gentlemen were able to reach their destination in safety. The detachment they had escorted to Verdachelam reached Trichinápalli in due course.

The arrival of more troops from England enabled Mr. Saunders a little later to detach another small body of men to reinforce the army under Gingen. This time the status of Clive was definitely decided. He renounced for ever the Civil Service of the Com-



pany, received the commission of captain in its army, and was directed to proceed, with the small detachment at the disposal of Mr. Saunders, to Devikóta, there to place himself under the orders of the officer commanding that post, Captain Clarke, and to accompany him to Trichinápalli. The force, when augmented by Captain Clarke's detachment, would consist only of a hundred Europeans, fifty sepoy, and one small field-piece. Clive set out in the middle of July, reached Devikóta, was joined there by Clarke, who then led the force to Trichinápalli, baffling an attempt made by a detachment of thirty Frenchmen and a crowd of native levies, sent out from Koiládi, to bar the road.

Clive found affairs at Trichinápalli as bad as they could be. It was not only that the place was invested by a very large native force, aided by nine hundred Europeans flushed with success; it was rather the condition of the garrison that alarmed him. He found Muhammad Ali in despair, his treasury exhausted, and no source open to him whence to supply it; his soldiers demoralised. He found the European soldiers in scarcely a better position. They had, as I have said, lost all confidence in their officers, and, with the exception of two or three, the officers had lost all confidence in themselves. Clive undoubtedly felt that it would still be possible for a daring leader to re-awaken the enthusiasm of the men. But where was such a leader to be found? Not, certainly, in the unenterprising Gingen, or in the plodding but mediocre Cope, the two seniors in the army. Even



supposing that he himself, untried, could have roused such a feeling, the way to attempt it was barred. Could the two leaders have been put aside, there were others who would have refused to take presumed ability upon trust to the detriment of their own pretensions. A civilian lecturing soldiers upon tactics! Such, in the eyes of officers, would have been the position of Clive! We all know how, in the present day, such an assumption of superior knowledge would be received. And men's natures, especially the natures of soldiers, were not very different then.

To remain at Trichinápalli, a powerless witness of the gradual process which would cause the power of his countrymen to wither, and ensure the supremacy of his country's rivals, would, for a man with the pent-up genius and ardent nature of Clive, have been under any circumstances impossible. It was the more impossible, under the actual circumstances, inasmuch as he felt that if English interests in Southern India were to be saved at all, the salvation must come from outside. It could be brought from outside, moreover, only by a man possessing the genius which could conceive, could initiate, and could carry out the one plan which alone could assure success. That man must possess many qualities. He must be one who should combine brain-power with a daring and active nature; who should possess a mind which could envisage every possibility, and yet would shrink from no danger; a spirit whose resolution should be steady, firm, immovable; a nerve to be daunted neither by actual peril, nor by that which to many is still



more appalling—by possible peril; and finally, by a physique which could stand fatigue and climate, which could forego sleep and defy privation. A man so constituted would command the one influence still wanting to ensure success—the enthusiasm of his men.

Strongly impressed with the conviction that all was yet possible, and determined to use every effort to be allowed to work out himself the idea which could yet save British interests, Clive, after a few days stay at Trichinápalli, returned to Fort St. David. On his arrival he hastened to press upon Mr. Saunders those convictions the germ of which had been conceived when Gingen had been beaten at Valkonda, and which had now taken absolute possession of his mind. Many circumstances had combined to render his task of persuasion easier than it had been on the previous occasion. He had, in the interval, acquired the confidence of at least two members of the Council; he had shown that he could act, that in danger his spirit never faltered; that he possessed at least some of the qualities of a leader of men. Mr. Saunders, too, though not a man of brilliant parts, possessed the rare virtue of being able to appreciate great qualities in others. It had probably occurred to him more than once, subsequently to the return of Clive from Valkonda, that in despatching two small detachments to reinforce the garrison at Trichinápalli he had increased the difficulty of provisioning that garrison, at the same time that he had deprived himself of resources in men who might be more usefully em-



ployed. Thoughts such as these must have prepared him to consider favourably the plan which Clive on his return from Trichinápalli, now invested and suffering, boldly laid before him.

That plan was to surprise and capture the capital of North Arkát whilst the ruler of that territory should be encamped with all his available soldiers before Trichinápalli. Such a diversion could not fail to alarm, possibly to paralyse, men who had shown themselves feeble and hesitating, too timid to dare, even when victory was in their grasp. It was a plan which required prompt execution and daring leading.

The credit due to Mr. Saunders and his Council in acceding to it can scarcely be over-rated. The garrisons of Madras and Fort St. David had been raised by recent reinforcements to three hundred and fifty Europeans. These constituted the last resource of the English in the event of a mishap at Trichinápalli. Could Mr. Saunders then, with prudence, lessen by one-half the garrisons of the two main possessions of the British in Southern India, and despatch the larger moiety on an expedition against the capital of the prince of whom he was legally nothing more than the vassal—an expedition which, if it were to fail badly, must entail the ruin of the interests which he had been sent from England to guard? To whose command, too, was the expeditionary force to be entrusted? To the command of a man who but yesterday was a civilian, and who, though he had served with troops, had never held a military command in the field!



Many a man placed in the position of Mr. Saunders would have hesitated. Many more would have rejected the idea with scorn. But Mr. Saunders did neither. The idea was not new to him. He had had time for reflection. He had witnessed the failure of the ordinary modes of procedure. He had come to believe in Clive. He agreed, then, to his plan, massed all his available troops, except a hundred men reserved for Fort St. David, at Madras, and sending Clive thither, bade him leave fifty behind as a garrison, then, taking all that remained, put into execution the promptings of his genius !

CHAPTER V.

ARKÁT.

ON the 26th August 1751 Clive set out from Madras at the head of a force composed of two hundred European troops, three hundred sepoy, and three small field-pieces. These troops were led by eight European officers, six of whom had never been in action; indeed, four of the six were young men in the Civil Service, who, inflamed by Clive's example, had volunteered to follow him. Marching at no extraordinary rate, Clive reached, on the morning of the 29th, the considerable town of Káncchipuram (Conjeveram), forty-two miles from Madras. Here he obtained the first trustworthy intelligence regarding the garrison and defences of Arkát. He learned that the garrison outnumbered his own troops by more than two to one; that the defences, though incapable of withstanding an attack made with heavy guns, might be maintained by a resolute enemy against an army unprovided with such material. To be ready for every emergency Clive at once despatched a



messenger to Madras to request that two 18-pounders might be sent after him. But he did not wait for them. He had still twenty-seven miles to accomplish. Despite of a terrific storm accompanied by thunder and lightning, not uncommon in India in the rainy season, he marched those twenty-seven miles in the two following days, and arrived on the 31st in front of Arkát, the capital of the province to the northern division of which it gave its own name. Fortune greatly favoured him, as she so often favours those who are daring and self-reliant. The garrison, which, at the very least, might have opposed to him a resistance long enough to enable Chanda Sáhib to send a force to relieve it, shamefully abandoned the fort in a panic. The fort abandoned, the city was incapable of offering resistance. Clive then took possession of both without firing a shot or striking a blow. In the fort he found large quantities of lead and gunpowder and eight pieces of cannon.

Great as was this success, Clive was not content with it. He reasoned, and reasoned correctly, that to maintain the impression of superiority which he had already produced, it was necessary to do something more than occupy the capital; it was necessary that his presence should make itself felt in the surrounding country; that he should strike such a blow as would permit the retreating garrison to justify to their own consciences their retrograde movement. Always careful to provide against any possible emergency, Clive first stored up provisions within the fort, in the event, the possibility of which loomed before



1751.]

ARKÁT.

71

him, of his having to stand a siege. He then marched (4th September) with the greater part of his forces against the enemy. He found them the same afternoon, to the number of six hundred horse, five hundred foot, and one field-piece, near the mud fort of Tímari, six miles south of Arkát. The appearance of Clive seriously alarmed them; and having ascertained that a few discharges at a long distance from their field-piece would not stop him, they fell back in disorder to the hills behind Tímari, covered by their cavalry.

Clive had no care to follow them; but learning, two days later, that they had returned in greater numbers to Tímari, he determined to dislodge them from a place whence they could not fail to menace his communications. On the 6th, then, he marched again against the fort. He found the enemy, to the number of about two thousand, with two field-pieces, drawn up in a grove within gunshot of the fort. This grove was not only enclosed by a bank and ditch; some fifty yards in front of it was a large tank likewise enclosed by a bank much higher than that of the grove. It must be understood that to the advancing English the tank was behind the grove, and that it formed a sort of *enceinte* into which the defenders could retire when driven out of the latter. The tank was dry.

It was Clive's first command in the field against an enemy who resisted him. The enemy's position was strong, and they outnumbered the attacking party by about five to one. They soon showed, too, that they



meant resistance. Clive, in the fashion which he knew must always succeed when adopted by Europeans against Asiatics, moved straight on towards the grove. As he advanced a discharge from the enemy's two field-pieces killed three of his men. This untoward event, far from checking their progress, only made it more rapid. The result was that which ever has been, which always will be, under similar circumstances. The enemy evacuated the grove and took refuge in the tank, the high banks of which effectually screened them against the English fire. Seeing this, Clive resolved to carry the tank by a double attack, made simultaneously from opposite sides. The attack succeeded. The two parties despatched on this mission gained the opposite banks and delivered their fire on the crowded numbers within at the same moment. Their action was decisive. The enemy fled in disorder.

Clive then occupied the village and summoned the fort. But the commandant, hesitating to gain time, soon discovered that Clive had no battering-train, and refused to surrender. Clive, unable to attempt the place till his 18-pounders should arrive, returned then to Arkát.

There he remained for ten days engaged in throwing up defences and in strengthening and victualling the fortress. The enemy, seeing him no more in the open field, gathered heart and, to the number of three thousand, encamped within three miles of Arkát, giving out that they intended to besiege it. Clive allowed them to indulge in vapourings of this character till they began to take for a settled belief



that which had been originally but a vain and empty boast. When they became so confident of success as to be careless of guarding their camp, Clive sallied out at midnight (14th September), surprised and dispersed them.

Meanwhile the two 18-pounders for which Clive had sent to Madras had been despatched under a small sepoy escort, and were approaching Kánchipuram. To intercept these the enemy sent a strong detachment to take possession of the strongly fortified pagoda in the vicinity of that town, and this detachment they gradually but largely reinforced. Clive, who had at first contented himself with sending a small body of Europeans to strengthen the escort of the heavy guns, felt it now necessary to support it with his whole available force. Retaining, then, only thirty Europeans and fifty sepoy within the fort, he detached the rest of his troops to meet the convoy. The enemy, learning this, changed their plans, and, massing all their troops, made a desperate attack upon Arkát during the night. Though made and repeated with great resolution, the attack failed. Early next morning the convoy arrived: the enemy at once dispersed.

It may here be noted that if, when Clive first appeared before Arkát, the enemy had displayed an energy and activity at all corresponding to that which they subsequently manifested, Clive would have been baffled. A little resolution would have saved that important place; the want of it changed the face of the campaign. Modern warfare supplies many



instances of similar consequences, proceeding from similar causes. The result of the campaign of 1814 would have been entirely changed had the commandant of Craon maintained that place for forty-eight hours instead of allowing himself to be intimidated into immediate surrender.

To return now to Chanda Sábib.

The news of the capture of Arkát produced all the effects which Clive had anticipated upon the besiegers and the besieged of Trichinápalli. It alarmed and irritated the former; it brought hope and friends, and with hope and friends confidence and exultation, to the latter. Muhammad Ali had been previously engaged in endeavouring to persuade Murári Ráo, the famous Maráthá chief of Gutti, and the Rájá of Maisúr (Mysore), to declare in his favour. These had made preparations to take the field, but it was certain that upon the success of Clive's romantic march it depended whether they would draw their swords for, or against, Muhammad Ali. The capture of Arkát decided them. The same successful achievement influenced, also, the Rájá of Tanjúr, and a personage scarcely less important, the Poligár of the territory known as Pudukóta, south of Tanjúr, between that kingdom and Madura, to declare in his favour. The importance of these adhesions, especially of the two last, can scarcely be over-estimated. They secured the English communications with the coast, and enlisted on their side men able to afford them active co-operation alike in the procuring of supplies and in service in the field.

Nor was the effect less visible on the besiegers.



1751.]

ARKÁT.

75

CSL

Chanda Sáhib was the first to recognise the extent to which their *morale* would be weakened and their prospects endangered. With all his faults of laziness and hesitation the Núwáb whom Dupleix delighted to honour was a man of considerable natural ability. He immediately set himself to put in action the only means at his disposal for repairing the evil. At all costs, Arkát must be recovered. Continuing to prosecute the siege of Trichinápalli, he would despatch a sufficiently strong force to retake the fortress which Clive had seized. He had such a force at his disposal. Its success would more than dissipate the existing discouragement. The retaking of Arkát would place his affairs on a vantage ground higher than ever, for it would dispose of the last resources of the English. As for the native allies of Muhammad Ali, they would, he knew, always take care to be on the side of the victor. Full of these thoughts, and sustained by these hopes, Chanda Sáhib delayed not a moment, but despatched at once three thousand of his best troops to join in the vicinity of Arkát the forces which his son and heir, Ríza Sáhib, disposed of in its neighbourhood. Reinforced by a hundred and fifty Frenchmen, this besieging army would number, without counting the rabble, about five thousand regular troops. To watch its operations the eyes of the contending parties bent now with an anxiety not to be described. The fate of Southern India seemed to depend upon the result of the siege, now about to be undertaken, of Arkát.

The fort of Arkát was not very capable of offering a prolonged defence to an efficient besieging army. Somewhat more than a mile in circumference, its walls were, in many places, in a very bad state of repair; the rampart was narrow, the parapet low, the ditch was in some places fordable, in others dry, in others choked up. Between the ditch and the foot of the wall was a space about ten feet wide, intended for a *fausse-braye*, but it had no parapet at the scarp of the ditch. The bastions, or, more properly, the towers which served for bastions, were, for the most part, in bad repair, and not capable of mounting more than one piece. The fort had two gates, one to the north-west, the other to the east. These gates were formed of huge piles of masonry, projecting forty feet beyond the walls of the fort, and they were connected with the interior by a causeway crossing the ditch. The fort was, so to speak, connected with the town by houses in its immediate vicinity—a manifest inconvenience to its defenders, as they formed *points d'appui* to the besieger. During the three weeks he had occupied Arkát, Clive had endeavoured to repair and strengthen the place; but time had been wanting, other duties had devolved upon him, and he had only been very partially successful. His force had during that time suffered considerably, and, when Ríza Sáhib appeared before the walls, it was reduced to a hundred and twenty Europeans and two hundred sepoys. His eight officers had been diminished by one-half. He had stored up provisions for sixty days. Of water there was a sufficient supply in the reservoir



1751.] °

ARKÁT.

77

within the fort. It was in the power, however, of the besiegers, at the outset, to deprive him of this supply. The reservoir communicated, by an aqueduct laid underground, with a tank outside the fort. The existence of this aqueduct was known to very few; but, amongst those few, to a mason employed for years within the fort. This man gave timely intimation to Clive, and thus enabled him to take measures to render the communication inoperative.

On the 23rd September 1751, Ríza Sáhib and his allies took up a position before Arkát. Their battering train had not, however, arrived, and for the first twenty-one days they were forced to content themselves with pouring from the covered roofs and upper rooms of the houses they had at once occupied, near the fort, a continuous fire of musketry, aided by a constant discharge from four mortars. Clive, whose men had suffered greatly in a sortie, made on the 23rd, from the musketry-fire from the houses overlooking the streets they had to traverse, and who, on the night of the 24th, had had the mortification to witness the failure of an attempt he had directed to blow up the houses nearest to the fort, was forced, during this period, to husband the lives of his soldiers with the greatest care. To guard them as much as possible from the effects of a musketry-fire from commanding positions so close to his own, he had directed that, with the exception of the few men necessary to keep watch and ward and to prevent surprise, no one should appear on the ramparts. But, notwithstanding this precaution, his men suffered



severely. The enemy, feeling themselves secure from injury, displayed a remarkable coolness and self-possession. They soon acquired so great a perfection in matchlock-firing, that the appearance of a head above the parapet was an almost certain prelude to the death of the man to whom it belonged. Exposures of this sort, often inevitable, caused considerable losses to the defenders. Clive himself, however, seemed to bear a charmed life. He exposed himself necessarily more than any other individual of the garrison. With but four officers at his disposal, he was forced not only to think but to see for himself. But even in the first three weeks of the siege Clive had many narrow escapes. On one occasion a sepoy, aiming at him point blank from a window close to which he was standing, was induced to divert his aim from Clive to an officer who, divining his intention, had endeavoured to pull his leader on one side. The officer was killed. On three other different occasions sergeants who had accompanied him on his visits to the works were shot dead at his side. He alone remained untouched.

The siege had continued three weeks, and Clive was weaker by the loss of several of the garrison, and by the consumption of one-third of his supplies, when, on the 14th October, the French troops serving with Ríza Sáhib received from Pondichery two 18-pounders and seven pieces of smaller calibre. The exultation of the besiegers was now extreme. Up to that moment they had carefully abstained from any attempt against the fort, contenting themselves with endeavouring to



kill or disable as many as possible of its defenders. Now, for the first time, they possessed weapons of offence against its ramparts, weapons which should open to them a way of which their superior numbers could not fail to take advantage. At once, then, they placed in position their new acquisitions, and, establishing a battery to the north-west, opened fire. The French gunner had laid his piece so well, that the very first shot dismounted one of the 18-pounders in the fort; the second entirely disabled it. The defenders at once mounted their second 18-pounder to reply to and, if possible, to silence the French battery. But this met with a fate nearly similar to the first. It, too, was dismounted, and thenceforward it was used only on those parts of the defences which were not exposed to the enemy's guns.

Flushed with success the besiegers continued their fire, and with so much effect that in six days they had demolished the entire wall between the two towers on the face opposite to their battery, making a practicable breach of fifty feet. Olive was not insensible to the extreme gravity of the position—a position which, in a military sense, rendered Arkát untenable. But, far from losing confidence, he took upon the spot measures which, commanding as he was men whom, though few in numbers, he had himself trained to war, and who had acquired the most absolute confidence in his leading, he deemed would yet prove effective. He threw up works to defend the breach; he caused two trenches to be dug—one immediately under the rampart, the other at some short distance behind it.



These trenches he filled with sharp iron three-pointed spikes, called crows' feet, connected both their ends by means of palisadoes up the rampart with the parapet, then pulling down to the height of a breast-work the wall of a house still further in the rear, he made of this a defensive position, whence the defenders could fire on the assailants when they should be entangled with the spikes in the ditches.

Of the three field-pieces which he had brought with him, he planted one on a tower which flanked the breach without, two he kept in reserve, whilst he placed two small guns, which he had found within the place on its capture, on the roof of a house within the fort commanding the breach.

It was fortunate for Clive that the besiegers gave him ample time to complete all these preparations. An enemy alike prudent and daring—for in war the terms are almost always synonymous—would have attempted the breach as soon as it had been made. Ríza Sáhib, however, appeared satisfied with having made it. The fact is that whispers of the defensive measures, which had been commenced the very day his batteries had opened, had reached that leader. Reports always gain in transmission, and Ríza Sáhib did not like the outlook. Then, again, he believed that time was with him. He knew pretty well the state of the supply department within the fort. Instead, then, of risking a repulse before defences which he believed to be even stronger than they were, he resolved to make a second breach on the opposite side of the fort. He could thus utilise his vastly superior numbers, and



make two assaults at the same moment. With this view he caused a battery to be erected to the south-west, and removed to it his now sole remaining 18-pounder, the other having burst, and a 9-pounder.

Meanwhile, Clive had not been remiss in endeavouring to communicate with the outer world. His native emissaries, who served him well, as such ever have served, and will ever serve, a master to whom they pledge their faith, had penetrated to Fort St. David, to Madras, even to Trichinápalli. Preparations to relieve him were being made in the vicinity of the last-named place by those allies of Muhammad Ali whom Clive's own action had roused from lethargy. From Madras reinforcements had actually set out. Mr. Saunders had received more troops from Europe, and, deeply imbued now with the spirit which Clive had aroused within him, this able and resolute man had ordered their prompt despatch to Arkát.

The detachment formed of these troops, consisting of a hundred Europeans and a hundred sepoys, set out from Madras about the 20th October, under the command of Lieutenant Innis. Three days later it reached Trivatúr, twenty-two miles to the south-east of Arkát. Here Innis was attacked by a large body of troops, with two guns, detached by Ríza Sáhib to intercept him. If Innis had had any guns, he might still have held his own, and even more than his own. As it was, the contest was too unequal; and though the English leader and his men displayed great courage, and even succeeded for a moment in driving the enemy from their guns, they



were forced to retreat on Punamallí, thirteen miles from Madras, with a loss of twenty Europeans and two officers killed, and many more wounded.

Thus was this attempt frustrated. An overture made by Clive to an independent chieftain who had declared for Muhammad Ali seemed, however, to promise more favourable results. This chieftain was Murári Ráo, the famous Maráthá chief of Gutti referred to in a previous page. A warrior and freebooter by profession, Murári Ráo had made himself famous not less for his own daring courage and audacity than for his appreciation of those qualities in others. He cared nothing for the cause for which he fought. He had originally allied himself with Muhammad Ali because it suited his plundering instincts that disorder should reign outside his own small territory in the Karnátak. Having no intention, however, of provoking the vengeance of Chanda Sáhib, he had performed the duties of an ally in an extremely perfunctory manner. But the march of Clive on Arkát, his success at Arkát, had roused his more generous instincts. The stern defence of Arkát pleased him still more. He felt then—he himself recorded—for the first time convinced that the English could fight.

Murári Ráo was under this conviction when the messenger of Clive reached him. He lay then, at the head of some six thousand men, at the foot of the mountain-plateau some thirty miles to the west of Arkát. The messenger found him in the humour to grant everything to a man who had displayed such



daring and courage as had Clive, and brought back a promise of immediate aid.

It was impossible that the dispositions of such a man as Murári Ráo should remain long a secret. Probably, indeed, the same day which saw the message conveyed to Clive witnessed the receipt of a report of it by Ríza Sáhib. That leader had meanwhile been pushing for six days his attack on the south-west face of the fort. The wall was crumbling before his guns, and the breach was daily widening. That, at such a time, Murári Ráo, the most daring of partisans, should attempt a diversion in favour of the besieged, was a possibility the very thought of which filled Ríza Sáhib with anxiety. He resolved, then, to attempt to try the effect of negotiation. With this view he, on the 30th October, sent to Clive, under a flag of truce, a proposal that he should yield Arkát.

He offered the garrison honourable terms, and to Clive himself a large sum of money. In case of refusal, he threatened to storm the fort and put its defenders to the sword. To this proposal Clive returned an answer so full of defiance that Ríza Sáhib felt that, regard being specially had also to the activity likely to be displayed by Murári Ráo, his only hope of gaining Arkát lay in the carrying out of the alternative he had proposed.

The Maráthás, indeed, had begun (9th November) to show themselves in the vicinity of the place. Innis's party, too, reinforced to a strength of a hundred and fifty Europeans, with four field-pieces, and commanded by Captain Kilpatrick, was advancing from



Punamallí. Ríza Sáhib employed, then, every effort to increase the dimensions of the second breach.

On the fourth day that breach had attained a width of thirty yards. But the difficulties in the way of a storming-party were greater here than at the other breach. Whilst this face had been equally provided with defences, the ditch in front of it was full of water and unfordable.

But the breaches were practicable, and delays were dangerous. It happened, too, that a religious festival, which never fails to excite the followers of the Prophet Muhammad to enthusiasm and even frenzy, fell that year on the following day. The omen, the day, the pressing danger from without, combined to determine Ríza Sáhib to attempt the place early in the morning. He prepared his measures accordingly. He caused four storming-parties to be told off, two to advance against the gates, two to enter by the breaches. The movement was to take place at 8 o'clock in the morning, and the signal was to be the firing of three bombs.

Clive, throughout the siege, had been well served by spies. They did not fail him on this occasion. On the 13th he learned that the storming was to be attempted; at midnight he was informed of the dispositions made by the enemy, of the hour of the attack, of the signal for its commencement. Reduced as was his garrison now by sickness, wounds, and other causes to eighty Europeans and a hundred and twenty sepoy, he was ready. Visiting the posts, and giving his final instructions, he lay down to



catch a little sleep before the curtain should rise on the last scene of the drama of the siege.

At 3 o'clock in the morning he was roused by the signal. Jumping up, he visited the posts, found his men on the alert, listening with calmness to the noise made by the excited stormers as they advanced. These first attempted the gates. To force them the enemy had placed in front of their advance elephants with large plates of iron attached to their foreheads. They had believed that the weight of these huge animals would crush down the barriers to their entrance. The defenders, however, poured upon this forlorn hope a musketry-fire so continuous and so well-directed that the elephants turned and fled, trampling upon their human supports. Meanwhile, another division of the enemy had marched with great resolution towards the north-west breach, the ditch before which was fordable. They crossed the first trench, filled with iron crows' feet, before the defenders pulled a trigger. But no sooner had they completed the passage than the defenders poured in a volley, and, not waiting to load, repeated it from spare muskets lying beside them, whilst the guns opened a continuous fire upon the crowded multitude before them. The effect was electric. The first attack was at once repulsed. The same fate befel a second and a third. The enemy then fell back, their enthusiasm evaporated, their confidence changed into utter despair.

A scene not very dissimilar was at the same time occurring on the south-west face. There the ditch in front of the breach was not fordable. The stormers,



therefore, carried with them a raft, upon which, when launched, some seventy of them embarked. The raft had almost gained the *fausse-braye*, when Clive, who happened to be directing the defence at this point, observing that the aim of the gunners who manned the two field-pieces placed for the defence was bad, took upon himself the management of one of them. So accurate was the lay of his piece, that three or four discharges produced a confusion on board the raft great enough to upset it. This misfortune baffled the attack on that side.

One hour had now elapsed. The enemy's losses had been considerable. Amongst those who had fallen was the commander of the storming-party, a man whose conspicuous valour had been remarked by the defenders. The loss of the rank and file was computed at four hundred, almost all natives, as the French had entirely held aloof from the attack. Of the defenders four Europeans had been killed and two sepoys wounded.

No army in the world suffers more from the effects of a repulse than a purely Indian army. The military history of India is a history of lost opportunities, of opportunities thrown away because either one particular combination had been baffled, or the success obtained had not equalled expectations. The siege of Arkát is one example out of many of the truth of this axiom. Taking no account of the fact that he still counted twenty men to the defenders' one, that in the number of European troops alone he doubled them, Ríza Sáhib lost heart from his first repulse, and resolved to raise the siege. He covered his inten-