time, silenced for a few minutes the fire of the bastion. But de Vigne, who fought with a courage and coolness worthy of all admiration, was not to be baffled. Pointing all his guns to one particular spot, he concentrated on that spot a fire so heavy that the English ship ignited. The ignition spread, and being attributed by the crew to other causes, produced so great a panic amongst them, that seventy or eighty men jumped from the port-holes into the boats alongside. The officers, however, and the cooler heads amongst the men, exerted themselves so manfully that the fire was quickly extinguished; the others then at once returned on board.

After a tremendous cannonade, lasting two hours, victory began to declare for the English. One after the other the guns on the fort were dismounted, and the fire began necessarily to slacken. Renault, who had long known that his case was hopeless, prepared to meet it with the same courage and resolution which had characterised all his movements. Of his hundred and forty-six soldiers, about thirty had been killed and double that number wounded. There remained, then, some fifty. Collecting these and their officers, he directed them to quit Chandranagar immediately, and, making a *détour* to avoid the English, to march upon Kásimbázár, to join M. Law of Lauriston, of Trichinápalli notoriety, who commanded there. To these French soldiers he joined some twenty drilled sipáhís. Having thus reduced his garrison to clerks, women, of whom there were nearly fifty, and wounded, he hoisted (9 A.M.) a flag of truce. The fire of the

ships at once ceased. Conferences ensued, which, at 3 P.M., led to the conclusion of terms. These were very simple. Chandranagar was surrendered to Admiral Watson as the senior officer; the Chief of the settlement, his councillors and civil officers, and the non-combatants generally, were allowed to go where they pleased, taking with them their clothes and their linen; the European combatants, all wounded men, were to remain prisoners of war; the native combatants were granted entire freedom of action; the Jesuits were permitted to take away their church ornaments.

The capture of Chandranagar cost the English very dearly. Whilst the French losses, including those I have referred to, amounted in killed and wounded to about a hundred and fifty, that of the besiegers did not fall short of two hundred and six. But the English loss is not to be counted merely by numbers. The captain of the "Kent," Captain Speke, was very severely wounded; his son, a midshipman, and the first and third lieutenants, were killed. Ten other officers were likewise wounded. The capture was due to the ships, and these, naturally, suffered the most.

Was Chandranagar worth this expenditure of blood? Did its importance justify the ungenerous behaviour to a people who in the hour of the need of the English had pressed their neutrality upon the representatives of that nation, who had been played with till the distress had disappeared, and who had then been attacked and driven from their homes? These are questions which cannot fail to present themselves to a fair and impartial mind. How are they to be answered?

There is but one ground upon which the course adopted by Clive can be justified, and that is the ground upon which Admiral Watson rested his refusal to sign the treaty of neutrality. It was true, as he contended, that no treaty with Chandranagar would have been binding until it had been confirmed from Pondichery. At that moment Pondichery was expecting the most powerful fleet and army France had ever despatched to India, commanded by a man whose Irish birth and the forced exile of whose family had infused into his blood a bitter hatred of the English name. It was certain that if Pondichery were to confirm the treaty she would confirm it only to break it when she had secured predominance in Southern India. It was known, moreover, that the Núwáb was in correspondence with Bussy, then conducting French affairs at the Court of the Súbahdár of the Dakhan, and who had but recently acquired for France the territory known as the Northern Sirkárs, and rumour had it that that able officer was even then meditating a descent on the plains of Bengal. It is true that, looking at the conduct of the French towards the English in their distress, there is an appearance of want of generosity, almost even of perfidy, in the proceedings of Clive; but it must be remembered that war knows, or ought to know, no sentimental feeling; that the two nations were fighting in Europe, and that—utterly distrusting the Núwáb, feeling that it was always possible he might ally himself with the French, aware, moreover, that great danger was to be apprehended from the strengthening

of the French in Bengal by reinforcements from Southern India—Clive felt bound, in the interests of his country, to discard all secondary considerations, and to strike a blow which would absolutely crush the rising power of his most formidable European rival in Bengal. That is the justification of the course pursued by Clive, and it is, I believe, a very real justification. It seems very hard upon Renault and his fellow defenders of Chandranagar, but in war it is often necessary that the innocent should suffer.

The immediate result of the capture of Chandranagar was to increase the force of the French commander at Kásimbázár by fifty men animated by the most deadly hatred to England. On the Núwáb the news produced, as might have been expected, an outburst of ungovernable fury. In the first burst of anger he threatened the English with his severest vengeance. But again the Afghán scare came to smother his discontent and to change the current of his feelings. Almost at the same moment there reached him from Patná intelligence which, though wearing the appearance of positive truth, was absolutely false, that the army of Ahmad Sháh, in alliance with the Maráthás, was advancing to invade Bengal. This information so terrified him that he changed his curses against the English into blessings; he wrote letters to Clive and Watson congratulating them on their success, expressing his earnest desire to continue on terms of friendship with them, and offering them the territory of Chandranagar on the terms on which it had been held by the French. As a further proof

of his sincerity, he promised to comply without delay with the conditions upon which Watson had insisted in the letters which, some days earlier, had terrified him into giving a quasi-consent to the attack upon the French; that is, to restore, or to make compensation in money for, the property which had been destroyed at the capture of Calcutta in 1756.

But these smooth words covered very bitter feelings. Too late the Núwáb began to feel that he had been duped; and when, a day or two later, he discovered that the news regarding a combined movement from the north-west against Bahár and Bengal had no foundation in fact, he could not help showing by deeds how much he mistrusted the foreigners, to whom, nevertheless, he continued to write letters full of professions of amity. He then directed Rájá Dúlab Rám—who, the reader will recollect, commanded the army which had been sent to assist the French, but which, on the persuasions of Nandkumár, had halted some twenty miles to the north of Huglí, and who had subsequently marched northwards—to halt and encamp at Palási, a large village on the left bank of the river Bhágirathí, twenty-two miles south of Murshidábád. There was nothing in this order necessarily hostile to the English, for Palási was thirty-nine miles to the north of the position which Dúlab Rám had occupied when Chandranagar was being attacked, and the Núwáb possessed the undoubted right to locate his troops in any part of his own territory he might select, but, following as it did so soon upon the removal of the fears regard-

ing an invasion from the north-west, Clive viewed the selection of the halting-place with the gravest suspicion. In fact, not Clive alone, but all the English in Bengal utterly mistrusted the Núwáb. They could not forget the cruel manner in which he had allowed their countrymen to be treated only a year before; they knew that what he had yielded since he had yielded to fear; that he still hated them; and they believed that he would seize the very first opportunity that might offer to avenge himself for the many humiliations they had caused him. When, therefore, Clive heard that the army of the Rájá had halted and was to remain halted at Palási, he, not to be beaten in the game of brag, sent to the Núwáb a haughty demand that he should order the surrender to him of the other French settlements and subjects within his territories. At the time that he transmitted this demand, Clive, though sorely pressed by the Madras Government to return to that Presidency with the troops lent for the recovery of Calcutta, had fully made up his mind to remain in Bengal till the following September. His knowledge of the character of the Núwáb had satisfied him that compliance with the orders of the Madras Government would invite a second attack from a prince who had been irritated to a point which would render his vengeance insatiable, should he ever gain the opportunity. His purpose fully settled, and his resolution fixed still further to intimidate the Núwáb, Clive, whose army, by the arrival of the "Cumberland," had been increased to eleven hundred Europeans,

inclusive of artillery, and two thousand sipáhís, marched to Huglí and took up a position on the plain to the north of that town.

Never was the subjugation of a weak character by a stronger—the utter effacement of the moral force of a man's nature—displayed to a greater extent than on this occasion. Siráju'd daulah was at Murshidábád, virtual sovereign of the country, yet receiving imperious orders from the leader of a foreign race which he hated; commanded to abandon the few Frenchmen who yet remained in his province, and, whilst clinging to them, not daring to keep them; now loading the English envoy with reproaches, now imploring his support, never daring to act with decision, swayed one day by the rumours of an invasion from the north-west, another by some fresh demand on the part of the English; fearing to act, yet forced to do something. There can scarcely be imagined a position more pitiable. Little is it to be wondered that a man possessing a character so feeble, exposed to a position so critical, should have sought refuge, sometimes in uncontrollable bursts of anger, sometimes in debauchery; that he should have alienated his friends and encouraged the secret hopes of his enemies; that this conduct, joined to the growing mistrust he evinced of everyone around him, should have generated the conviction, amongst those who were brought most closely in connection with him, that the country which possessed such a ruler was doomed!

There were two men within his inner circle who at this period influenced greatly the action of the

Núwáb, and one of whom a little later proved the arbiter of his destiny. These were the English agent, Mr. Watts, and the commander-in-chief of his army, Mír J'afar Khán.

Mr. Watts had joined the Núwáb's camp after the retreat of that prince from Calcutta in the preceding February. He was a man possessing pleasant manners, great firmness of character, and a considerable acquaintance with the native character. Throughout the proceedings which led to the capture of Chandranagar he had kept Clive well acquainted with the changing moods of the Núwáb. Often threatened with incarceration, even with death, by the prince to whom he was accredited, he had opposed to the threats he received a composure which, combined with the fear of the English which ever haunted the Núwáb, always brought that prince to reason. Subsequently to the capture of Chandranagar Mr. Watts's task had become more difficult, for, as the fear of the Núwáb increased, his suspicion made strides still more rapid. It is impossible not to feel compassion for him. He really believed that the English were bent on his destruction. What is more, he felt within his heart of hearts the dread that they might succeed. Can we, without a touch of sympathy, picture to ourselves this unhappy prince on the morrow almost of the capture of Chandranagar, ordered, virtually ordered, to sacrifice the remainder of his French allies? We can almost see the English agent, Mr. Watts, offering him, in respectful language, the dagger or the bowl—the dagger of compliance or the bowl of vengeance. We

can see him rising to the height of his former dignity as in reply he told Mr. Watts that he, too, presented to him two alternatives—instant return to Calcutta, or an assurance under his hand that the English would cease to molest the French. We can comprehend the piteous condition to which this once absolute ruler was reduced when, on Mr. Watts's refusal to comply with either condition, the Núwáb ceased to insist further; more clearly still when we, who are behind the scenes, read, in the orders sent upon the report of these events to Mr. Watts, the decree for the deposition of the Indian ruler. Mr. Watts was instructed to send to Calcutta all the treasure and valuables pertaining to the English factory at Kásimbázár, as opportunity might offer, without exciting suspicion. Could there be a doubt but that this instruction was for the Núwáb "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin"?

Mír J'afar was a type of the people who, invading India some three centuries earlier from the north, had, without losing the national characteristics of the race, accommodated themselves to the habits of the people of the country. It is impossible to read the history of the Mughuls without being struck by the fact of the absence of personal loyalty displayed even by the highest in rank amongst their nobles. To be able and ambitious, to command the services of a large following, only rendered a nobleman the more anxious to place himself in the position where he could command the highest price. In the internecine wars of the Mughuls, in the war

especially between Humáyun and Kámrán, instances abounded where nobles of the highest rank deserted from one prince to the other, and then deserted back again, according as his fortunes seemed to be on the rise or on the fall. Desertion, in fact, was scarcely considered a moral delinquency. Timed almost always so as to benefit the prince who, but for it, would have been beaten, it was under those circumstances invariably condoned. Only in the rare instances when the chieftain to whom the deserter went over was beaten in spite of the defection, did the latter meet the reward he deserved. In a word, the proverb that "nothing succeeds like success" was a canon in the moral code of the Mughul, and it was the existence of this canon which caused desertion from a falling to a winning cause to be looked upon as, if a fault at all, a fault that was venial.

Mír J'afar was, I have said, a fair specimen of the race of noble warriors who had fought for and against Humáyun, for and against Akbar, for and against Aurangzíb in his fratricidal wars. He was a man of considerable capacity, of high character at the court, and of considerable influence in the province. By his marriage with the daughter of the late Núwáb, Alí Vardí Khán, he was connected with the reigning prince, the nephew of his predecessor. This connection had procured him the title of Bakhshí, or commander-in-chief of the army of Bengal. As a feudal prince he was enabled, too, to bring into the field a large body of his own dependents, men whom he had carefully trained.

Mír J'afar, who had stood very high in the estimation of Alí Vardí Khán, had witnessed with feelings of disgust the altered system which his successor, the reigning Núwáb, had introduced. The substitution of laxity for firmness, of a policy always in extremes for a steady course of action, had brought to his experienced mind the conviction that the first real shock would bring the State edifice to the ground. He was not alone in this conviction. A native state has this in common with European states, that the surest barometer of its stability is the feeling displayed towards it by the moneyed classes. In his admirable history of the fall of the English monarchy, Mr. Gardner has shown how the repeated refusal of the City of London to lend even a small sum to Charles I. precipitated the measures which brought about the great rebellion. Siráju'd daulah had reigned in Bengal but a few months. That short period, however, had sufficed to alienate the bankers of the province, men whose wealth, connections, knowledge, and commercial influence rendered them all-powerful within its limits. Nor was this all. The most powerful men in his province were equally discontented. Mánakchand, the general whom Clive had, by his boldness, forced to abandon Calcutta at the beginning of the year, had been compelled to purchase his freedom from the prison into which he had been, in consequence, thrown, by a fine of ten lakhs of rupees; whilst Rájá Dúlab Rám, whom we have seen despatched towards Chandranagar to assist the French, and subsequently retiring to Palási, had been disgusted to find himself

superseded in influence, and all his measures controlled, by a youthful favourite of no character or ability, whom the Núwáb had adopted in his absence.

When in a native court the most influential parties become discontented, the next scene in the drama is sure to inaugurate a plot. So it was on this occasion. The first move in the matter was made by a nobleman of good position, though not of the highest, yet who by his character commanded the confidence of the moneyed classes and of Rájá Dúlab Rám. The nature of the proposal made by this man, Yár Lútf Khán, showed the enormous moral power which the achievements of Clive and Watson had already, in a short space of three months, given to the English; how they had already come to be regarded as arbiters of the position. At a secret conference agreed to by Mr. Watts—whose presence at Murshidábád greatly facilitated the communications of the conspirators—and at which that gentleman was represented by Amíchand, Yár Lútf stated that the Núwáb intended the destruction of the English; that he was only temporising with them until the danger of invasion from the north should have passed away; that he was about to proceed with his army to Patná; that in his absence the English could easily seize Murshidábád; and that he, supported by Rájá Dúlab Rám and the moneyed classes, would join them in the attempt on the condition that he, Yár Lútf, were made Núwáb; that he would then subscribe to all the terms the English might impose.

Mr. Watts transmitted these proposals to Clive,

and in reply was requested to give the project every encouragement. But this answer had scarcely been received when a proposal came to him from a more influential quarter. Through the medium of an Armenian merchant named Petros, who had already been employed by the English in their negotiations with the Núwáb, Mír J'afar offered to aid the English against his master on the condition that he should succeed him. Clive received this proposition with joy. In concert with the select committee of the Council, he instructed Mr. Watts to conclude the negotiation on the general condition that on Mír J'afar becoming Núwáb there should be a full pecuniary compensation for all losses, public or private, sustained by the English, and an ample reward to the Company and all concerned for present risks and contemplated services.

Whilst this conspiracy was hatching the Núwáb still remained, anxious, hesitating, and undecided, at Murshidábád. We, who are behind the scenes, know how full of danger was his position, how well-grounded was his anxiety. He, poor man, not very clear-sighted, allowed himself to be influenced to a great extent by rumours, the truth or falsehood of one series of which he had not been able to ascertain when another series came from a different quarter still further to distract him. Thus, about the time of the fall of Chandranagar, and, after an interval of recovery, a little later, he was so alarmed by the rumours regarding a combined Afghán and Maráthá invasion that he was inclined even to court the English. Scarcely had

that alarm been dissipated than his fear and hatred of that people began to revive with more than pristine force. These varying moods, fomented by that party amongst his councillors which had planned his ruin, greatly affected his policy. That, too, was vacillating from day to day, changing from extreme to extreme, never well-defined.

In no instance was the evil effect of this shifting system better evidenced than in the treatment by the Núwáb of the French. We have seen that early on the day of the surrender of Chandranagar fifty tried French soldiers had marched out of the place and taken the road to Kásimbázár. Their arrival at that place raised the garrison of the French factory there to seventy European and some sixty native soldiers. The chief there was Law of Lauriston. With all his incompetence as a general, Law was a man of intellectual parts, and possessed to a large extent the power of influencing others. He had used this power on the Núwáb, who not only liked him, but who leaned upon him with all the force of a feeble nature, dreading some undefined evil from outside: he felt, at all events, certain of these few Frenchmen. But just then came that haughty missive from Clive, commanding, rather than demanding, permission to attack the remaining French settlements in Bengal. This message threw the Núwáb into a paroxysm of fury. Not only did he refuse to comply, but he threatened to put Mr. Watts to death unless the scheme were abandoned. But the letter of refusal had scarcely been despatched when something occurred which

entirely changed his mood. As unwisely timorous as he had been unwisely bold, he now besought Law to depart, to relieve Murshidábád of his presence, hoping by this sacrifice to pacify the English leader. It was in vain that Law pointed out that, far from saving him, this sacrifice would remove from his person the one body of men who, under all circumstances, would be true to him, whose presence in the vicinity of his capital still imposed some restraint on the traitors by whom he was surrounded, and would force even Clive to be circumspect; the Núwáb, much as he clung to Law, was as much dominated by the paroxysm of fear as he had been swayed a few short hours before by the paroxysm of rage. His treacherous councillors, seeing in the departure of Law the removal of one great impediment to their designs, fanned and encouraged the new feeling. The Núwáb, still, as I said, clinging to Law, besought him to depart. He gave him all the money, arms, ammunition, and supplies he might require, begged him not to go very far, certainly not further than Bhágalpúr, only a hundred and forty-four miles distant—but to go. At that place, he would be at hand, he said, to aid him in case of need. Law, finding all his arguments overruled, and at last positively ordered to depart, had no resource but to obey. With a heart heavy with the worst anticipations, he bade farewell to the Núwáb. When that prince, in the agony of the last adieu, told the French leader that he would soon see him again, Law, well aware of the net which was slowly but surely enveloping him, replied that it was nearly

impossible, that they would never meet again, and implored him to remember his words. He had, indeed, truly forecasted the future.

The departure of the French, far from mollifying Clive, encouraged him to proceed further. He prepared to send a party in pursuit of them. Meanwhile, he despatched a small detachment of troops, English and sepoys, to protect the English factory at Kásimbázár, and—assured now in his own mind of the necessity of coming to an open rupture with the Núwáb—he pressed urgently upon Mr. Watts the policy of cultivating relations with the discontented parties at the court, especially with Mír J'afar.

The space between the two hostile camps began from this moment to lessen. Every hour the tension became stronger. A few days after the departure of Law the mood of the Núwáb again changed. He had become convinced that the Afghán invasion was a myth. Information, this time sure and certain, reached him that the French general, Bussy, had expelled the English from their factories at Vishákpatanam and on the three arms of the Godávarí, and upon this information he based the hope, which also at an earlier period had fluttered before him, that that general would march to his aid. With the Núwáb hope and certainty were almost convertible terms. Because he hoped a result he felt certain that that result would be accomplished. Accordingly, as sanguine as he had been previously desponding, he despatched a messenger to Law to beg him to halt where he was ; he directed Mír J'afar to proceed with

fifteen thousand men to reinforce Rájá Dúlab Rám at Palási; he caused the English factory at Kásimbázár to be thoroughly examined; and to prevent the progress of the English ships of war, which he dreaded more than their soldiers, he sunk large piles across the river twenty miles below his capital; in fact, he made every preparation for war.

The English were no less bent upon it. The concealed hostility of the Núwáb chained Clive and his troops to Bengal. His departure for Madras would, he well knew, invite attack from the Núwáb. It was necessary, in the interests of peace itself, to precipitate hostilities. Clive, then, prepared to act. On learning of the advances made by Mír J'afar, he had stopped the preparations for the pursuit of Law, and had ordered the detachment intended for Kásimbázár to halt at Katwá. When, however, he and his colleagues received information of the aggressive action of the Núwáb, and that Mír J'afar had been ordered to Palási, he felt that the crisis was at hand. The mask so long worn was at length to be cast aside, and pretensions, alike hidden and asserted, were to be subjected to the arbitrament of the sword. But before this could happen it was necessary to make double sure of the traitors who had offered their services to the foreign invader. How this was accomplished I shall now proceed to relate.

CHAPTER IX.

The Conspiracy.

When Mr. Watts was informed that the Núwáb had ordered Mír J'afar to march on Palási, and that Mír J'afar, leaving behind him an agent to carry on the secret negotiation, had marched on that point, he despatched his colleague, Mr. Scafton, to Calcutta, to receive final instructions. At the same time, to lull the Núwáb into security, he ordered the detachment which had halted at Katwá to return to Calcutta.

The terms originally formulated by the select committee of the English Council* comprehended the substitution of Mír J'afar Khán for the Núwáb Siráju'd daulah as Súbahdár of Bengal; on the attainment of this result the payment by him of sums equivalent to a million two hundred thousand pounds sterling to the English Company; to six hundred thousand to the English inhabitants of Calcutta; to two hundred

* This committee consisted of Mr. Drake, Colonel Clive, Mr. Watts, Colonel Kilpatrick, Mr. Becher, and Mr. Manningham.

and forty thousand pounds to the natives, and to eighty-four thousand pounds to the Armenians. Further, they assured to the English all the lands within the Maráthá ditch; an extent of six hundred yards beyond the ditch, and a perpetual lease of the land south of Calcutta as far as Kálpí. Mír J'afar was to engage, likewise, not to erect any new fortifications near the river below Huglí, and to be at the charge of the maintenance of English troops whenever he should require their assistance. On the 6th May a document containing these terms was received by Mr. Watts, and was at once handed by that gentleman to Mír J'afar's agent. On the 12th, the agent proceeded to Palási to show it to his principal, and returned on the 14th with the assurance that Mír J'afar entirely consented to all the articles, but that he stipulated that they should not be communicated to Amíchand, as he distrusted the intriguing character of that Bengáli, and had no faith in his honesty.

It is probable that Mír J'afar, knowing the intimate relations existing between Amíchand and the English, and the enormous value of the services rendered by the former to that people, dreaded lest, in addition to the payments already stipulated, he should be called upon to provide very handsomely for the Bengáli agent. Most certainly this would have been the case. Yet it had been far better for him, far better for English honour, had he at once faced that necessary payment. By evading it in the manner in which I am about to show it was evaded, Mír J'afar had to pay an additional

sum about three times greater than the sum stipulated for by Amíchand; whilst on the consenting English the manner of evasion cast two slurs which no time can remove—the slur of ingratitude to a man who had served them truly, and who had in the previous February even saved them—the slur of dishonour which must ever rest on forgery with intent to deceive.

It was difficult for Mr. Watts to comply with Mír J'afar's wish regarding Amíchand. He had been trusted too much. He had, in fact, been Mr. Watts's confidant in his negotiations with the discontented nobles and merchants of the court and the city. He was thoroughly aware that a movement of some kind was projected by Mír J'afar. Judging from the confidence bestowed in him in the past, he had no doubt but that the nature of this movement would be communicated to him at the proper time. But when, on the return of Mír J'afar's agent, Amíchand discovered an unaccustomed reticence on the part of Mr. Watts, he became suspicious. Suspicion sharpened his powers of penetration, and he soon forced Mr. Watts to disclose to him the whole arrangement. Perceiving at once that his interests were to be sacrificed, he formulated demands which, though somewhat vague as to their money value, were deemed by the Englishman to be more than extravagant. Mr. Orme states that "it is said he threatened to reveal the conspiracy to the Núwáb if his demands were not complied with." Other writers have gone further. Sir John Malcolm writes: "Amíchand waited on Mr. Watts, when all

was prepared for action, and threatened instant discovery of the whole plot unless it were settled that he should receive thirty lakhs," &c. &c. Lord Macaulay, following Malcolm, states that Amíchand "demanded three hundred thousand pounds sterling as the price of his secrecy and of his assistance." Mr. Gleig's account of the transaction is more circumstantial still. He writes: "He (Amíchand) now waited upon Mr. Watts and told him that unless he were assured of receiving three hundred thousand pounds sterling, as the recompense of his agency, over and above the enormous sum already promised, he should inform Siráju'd daulah of all that was in progress, and cause the conspirators, English as well as native, to be arrested on the spot."

Now, all these positive assertions rest upon rumour, and upon rumour only. There is not a particle of proof to support them. Those of Malcolm, of Macaulay, and of Gleig have no other foundation than the historian Orme's "it is said." We are bound to bear in mind that every version of the story with which we are acquainted has proceeded from men whose interest it was to paint the conduct of Amíchand in the blackest colours; that Amíchand left no account of the transaction. Yet, even in the English version, no proof whatever is offered that Amíchand threatened to disclose the plot. Macaulay and Gleig have simply followed Malcolm. Malcolm, writing in the spirit of a partisan, of a man determined to see no fault in his hero, has simply improved upon Orme. He has dropped the all-important words, "it is said." But

even Malcolm is forced to admit that he has no written foundation for his categorical assertion, for he states: "The account of this transaction was probably communicated through Khwája Wazid, or some other confidential person, as we find no details of what passed with Amíchand in any of Mr. Watts's letters." This statement is in direct contradiction to the evidence given by Clive himself on the subject some years later. Clive then affirmed that he was made acquainted with Amíchand's threats of disclosure unless his demands were complied with, in a letter from Mr. Watts. That Clive received a letter from Mr. Watts is certain, for his reply to it, quoted by Mr. Gleig, is extant; and it is true that in that reply he calls Amíchand the greatest villain on earth. But what the historian would care to know is not merely whether there was a letter, but what were the contents of that letter. It is curious that Sir John Malcolm, with all his bias and all his investigation, should have found the other letters written by Mr. Watts at this conjuncture, but that this particular letter should have eluded his search; more curious still, that Clive himself should not have jealously guarded it.

The truth I believe to be that Amíchand made no threat whatever to Mr. Watts. Long association with men of the same class in India has convinced me that the very last measure they would have recourse to would be to utter anything approaching to a threat to the English gentlemen with whom they were brought in official contact. Threats are reserved for the inmost recesses of their dwellings, for their private

confidants: they are never spoken to their English chiefs. The difficulty an Englishman finds in dealing with the native officials of native courts, arises from the fact that they never show their feelings of injury. Though he may be conscious he has thwarted them, he cannot detect from their manner that they feel themselves aggrieved. Coupling my experience of the class with the guarded statement of Mr. Orme, "it is said," with the absence of this one letter from among the many written by Mr. Watts to the secret committee, with the admission of Sir John Malcolm that the account of the transaction was probably communicated by a native, who, I may add, would most certainly have embellished it, and having regard to the fact that the only positive evidence on the other side is the evidence given, many years later, before the Committee of the House of Commons by the one man whose interest it was to prove that his behaviour to Amíchand had been forced upon him by the threats made by that agent, I am forced to the conclusion that Amíchand did not threaten to betray the conspiracy, but that Mr. Watts, aghast at his demands, was firmly convinced that, unless they were complied with, Amíchand would betray him, and that in writing to this effect to Clive the fear which beset him coloured his expressions. I will go further, and affirm my conviction that considering the enormous advantages their connection with Amíchand had procured for the English, and the care, as I shall have to show, they took of their own individual interests, they were guilty of want of generosity, of ingratitude, and of

impolicy in not stipulating for him a special reward. That their conduct in this respect made his "heart turn round"—to use an expression familiar to his countrymen—I can well believe; that he would have revenged himself had his remonstrances not been attended to, I am certain; but that he should have spoken to Mr. Watts the threat to avenge himself—never! No Hindú of the class and caste of Amíchand would do it.

I do not think that any Englishman can read without a blush the story of the conduct of the secret committee when the treaty was sent back to Calcutta to be drawn up in form. To the clauses I have already mentioned they added others assuring a donation of two millions and a half of rupees for the squadron; of the same amount for the army, and presents of very nearly six millions of rupees* for themselves,

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* This sum was to be distributed thus:

Mr. Drake, Governor	Rs. 280,000
Colonel Clive, as 2nd in committee	280,000
Mr. Watts	240,000
Major Kilpatrick	240,000
Mr. Manningham	240,000
Mr. Becher	240,000
	Rs. 1,520,000

I may add that there was an understanding for a further distribution of private donations, and this, though apparently not placed upon official paper, was acted upon. According to this separate agreement—

Colonel Clive was to receive	Rs. 1,600,000
Mr. Watts	800,000
Major Kilpatrick	300,000
The six Members of Council, Rs. 100,000 each	600,000

and this whilst they refused Amíchand the sum to which his demands were now reduced—less than one-third of this total.

But their cupidity and their baseness did not stop there. The letter despatched by Mr. Watts to Calcutta, carried, as it doubtless was carried, by a confidential agent full of the importance of his mission and prepared to exaggerate all its details, completely scared the secret committee. In acknowledging the receipt of it Clive informed Mr. Watts that "at a committee held both the Admiral and gentlemen agree that Amíchand is the greatest villain upon earth, and that now he appears in the strongest light, what he was always suspected to be, a villain in grain." Clive then announced the plan which the Council had resolved upon "to counterplot this scoundrel." He proposed that a fictitious agreement should be drawn up, the counterpart of the real agreement, with this solitary exception, that the fictitious agreement should contain a clause, not inserted in the real agreement, securing to Amíchand the sum of twenty lakhs of rupees, in the event

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Mr. Walsh, Secretary to Colonel Clive	Rs. 500,000
Mr. Scrafton	200,000
Mr. Lushington	50,000
Major A. Grant, commanding detachment 39th Foot	100,000

All the military officers mentioned above received, in addition, their share of the donation to the army, of which Colonel Clive's portion amounted to Rs. 200,000.

Clive's plunder on this occasion amounted, it will be seen, to not less than Rs. 2,080,000. In those days a rupee was equal to two shillings and six pence.

of the success of the plot. It was arranged that both agreements should be signed by Mír J'afar, by the Admiral, as the senior officer, by Clive, and by the other members of the secret committee; that the false one should then be shown to Amíchand, the other retained. An unexpected obstacle to the successful carrying out of this nefarious scheme arose from the refusal of Admiral Watson to take part or share in it. From the first he had opposed the scheme: he absolutely refused to countenance it by attaching his signature to the false document. The real agreement, containing the added conditions in favour of the army, the navy, and the secret committee he signed readily enough; the other he spurned. This was, indeed, a dilemma. Amíchand had had too many transactions with the English not to know well that the concurrence of the senior officer in Bengal was necessary to the validity of any document. He had been a witness of the delay in the carrying out of the measures against Chandranagar, caused solely by the obstinacy of the Admiral. Were the treaty to be presented to him signed by all the other members of the committee but unsigned by Admiral Watson, his suspicions, already aroused, would amount to certainty. His present anger would become bitter hatred. Certainly the treaty must be withheld unless it could bear the signature of Admiral Watson. Granted that the danger was real, one course only lay before the committee; that was to add, in the genuine document, the name and the claim of Amíchand to the additional list, amounting to more than four millions

of rupees, in addition to the stipulations in favour of the army and navy. But they would not adopt this course. Ready enough to enrich themselves at the expense of the native nobleman whom they were tempting to treason, they refused to despoil him further for the advantage of a native agent who had shared their evil fortunes and had then rendered them priceless services. In reflecting upon their conduct the reader will do well to recollect that in the additional list, besides gratuities to the members of the committee, a sum of two million five hundred thousand rupees had been asked for the navy and an equal sum for the army; that of these sums Watson representing the navy, and Clive representing the army, would obtain a very large share. And yet, taking all this for themselves, they grudged the native his portion. Was it greed, was it the fear that the admission of the claim of Amíchand would lessen their own quota, or was it really a resolution to punish Amíchand for possessing the power to betray them, which influenced them to refuse to follow the one straight course leading out of the dark road they were pursuing?

Clive himself has stated that his sole object was "to disappoint the expectations of a rapacious man." But the additional list proves that there were many rapacious men. Clive made no attempt to disappoint their expectations. I have no doubt whatever but that Clive, Watts, and all the other members of the committee really believed that unless Amíchand were satisfied he would betray them. I come, then, reluc-

tantly to the conclusion that they would not agree to his terms, partly because independently of the possession of their secret he had no power; partly because they wished to punish him for having, as they believed, threatened to betray them; partly because the amount to which his pretensions were reduced, two millions of rupees, was excessive; but mainly because, having by their additional list squeezed Mír J'afar to an extent which would cripple him, they feared that the claim of Amíchand could only be defrayed at the expense of that list. Certain it is that, urged by Clive, they rejected the one straight course open to them.

They were thus reduced to the necessity of seeking a road out of the difficulty in that dark and slippery country which men of honour never traverse. In this search Clive was still their leader, their *ignis fatuus*. The fictitious agreement was the first product of his deviation from the path of truth and honour. When Admiral Watson refused to sign that agreement, Clive did not hesitate to make a greater divergence still, to plunge head foremost into the bottomless waters of crime. He forged Admiral Watson's signature!*

* It is due to the memory of Lord Clive to state that he always insisted that circumstances justified his conduct on this occasion; that Mr. Watts had informed him that Amíchand had made a large claim on Mír J'afar, and had threatened to betray him unless it were complied with; that on receiving this advice he thought act and policy warrantable in defeating the purposes of such a villain; that he himself formed the plan of the fictitious treaty; that he signed Admiral Watson's name; that he thought it warrantable under the circumstances, and would do it again; that he had no interested motives; and his only design was to

The fictitious document and the real treaty, the former transcribed on red, the latter on white paper, were then despatched by special messenger to Mr. Watts who had received instructions how to use them.

But very soon after the departure of the messenger there occurred an event which put to a decisive test the sincerity of the rival parties—the Núwáb and the English. It must be recollected that the latter had based their complaints against the Núwáb on the ground that he still maintained a large army encamped at Palási, and that *he could have no other object in maintaining such an army* but one hostile to themselves. The Núwáb had denied the justice of the conclusion, but had not recalled his army. He, on his side, mistrusted the English.

But, on the 3rd of May, there suddenly appeared in Calcutta a man, calling himself Govind Rái, and bearing a letter from Bálájí Ráo, the Maráthá Chief of Bírár. In this letter the writer proposed to co-operate with the English against the Núwáb, and offered, so soon as he should receive a summons from the English governor, to march into Bengal at the head of a hundred thousand men.

This letter, laid before the Council, was warmly

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disappoint the expectations of a rapacious man. Lord Clive also stated, many years later, that, to the best of his remembrance, Admiral Watson, though he refused to sign the treaty, gave the gentleman who carried it leave to sign it. But this belief is not borne out by evidence. Indeed, none of the contemporary records even mention it.

debated. The members, their hands yet red with the manufacture of a fictitious treaty, could not resist the conviction that this document belonged to the same category. They gradually came to the conclusion, indeed, that it was a device of the Núwáb's to lure them into an admission under their own hands of the hostile feeling which really animated them. Penetrated by this conviction, they resolved, again at the instigation of Clive, to meet craft with craft, and at once to baffle the designs and gain the confidence of the Núwáb by sending him the letter as a proof of their desire to take no advantage of his position, but to live at peace with him. Clive, therefore, despatched the letter to the Núwáb by the hands of Mr. Scrafton, accompanied by another from himself. In this he intimated that the communication of a secret offer from a foreign power was a last proof of his desire to live at peace with the Núwáb; asked that prince why he still kept his army in the field, thus destroying the English trade; why he, by his actions, led the English to suspect that it was his object to destroy them whenever an opportunity should offer. The letter reached the Núwáb when he was more than ever embittered against the English, for Amíchand had persuaded him that they had just entered into a secret treaty with Bussy to attack him, and he had given that wily Brahman an order for four hundred and fifty thousand rupees on the Rájá of Bardhwán as a reward for the information.

In point of fact the letter was genuine. The Núwáb had had no hand in the matter. He was

utterly ignorant of it. On an impulsive nature such as his was, the communication of such an offer as that forwarded to him by Clive acted just as the recovery of sight would act on a blind man. He saw now, or thought he saw, everything most clearly. It was a new light. He had been wrong, utterly wrong before. He had wronged the English, had suspected them unjustly, had injured them most gratuitously. But there was yet time to amend his conduct. Always in extremes, he resolved to be as friendly and confiding as he had been before hostile and suspicious. He at once proceeded to comply with the wishes expressed by Clive. He proposed at first to recall only Mír J'afar and his army from Palási, leaving there Rájá Dúlab Rám to co-operate with the English against the Maráthás; and he sent an order to Mír J'afar to that effect; but, on the persuasions of Messrs. Watts and Scrafton, who perceived that this arrangement would mar their scheme, the Núwáb, after some hesitation, consented to withdraw his whole army. In consequence, Mír J'afar returned to Murshidábád on the 30th May, Rájá Dúlab Rám four days later.

On the Núwáb, then, the transmission of the Maráthá letter had produced a marvellous effect. It had disarmed his resentment against the English. It had convinced him that he had nothing to fear from that people. It had produced that effect at a moment when in reality he had more to fear from them than on any previous occasion, when their plans were already formed, and their arrangements made, to dethrone him; when ambition and avarice

combined to deter them from making any terms with a man who stood in the way of the realisation of their sordid dreams.

The letter produced, likewise, on the Núwáb other results all favouring the English designs. I have already alluded to the fickleness and instability which marked the character of this unhappy prince. Relieved, by the communication of this letter, of all fear from the English, he thought he could indulge with impunity in the gratification of his private rancour. Unfortunately for himself he selected Mír J'afar to be the first recipient of his tyrannical humours. He had always hated that nobleman; but up to the time of the recall from Palási the hatred had been hidden by fear. But, believing, now, that the pacific feelings of the English rendered it unnecessary for him any longer to conceal that fear, he received him on his return from Palási in a manner so insulting as to induce in the mind of the general the belief that his life was in danger. Mír J'afar, accordingly, retired to his palace, situated at the southern extremity of the city, summoned all his own troops, sent notices to his friends to hold themselves ready to move at a moment's notice, and re-opened communications with Mr. Watts.

Such were the momentous results of one letter—a letter scarcely seriously intended. It had given encouragement to the English to proceed in their designs, had caused the suspicions of the Núwáb to disappear, had made his best general a bitter personal enemy!

Meanwhile, Mír J'afar had received from a trusty messenger, sent by Mr. Watts, the two treaties, the real and the fictitious. As eager for revenge as he was thirsting for power, he declined, however, to sign them until he should have consulted the Díwán Rájá Dúlab Rám, whom he had won over when they were encamped together at Palási. The Rájá, I have stated, reached Murshidábád on the 3rd June. On the following day he saw Mír J'afar, who showed him the treaty. But when he read the clauses stipulating for the enormous pecuniary rewards which Clive and his colleagues had demanded, even he, prepared as he was to pay heavily, was aghast. He knew well that to make such payments would more than exhaust the treasury and necessitate new and tyrannical imposts—a bad beginning for a new reign. He drew up, then, and submitted to Mr. Watts a counter-plan under the operation of which all the moneys that might be found available on the deposition of the Núwáb should be divided equally between Mír J'afar and the English. But Mr. Watts was not inclined to change a fixed for an uncertain amount; he absolutely refused to abate one iota of his demands. But, to win over this new formidable opponent, he offered the Rájá a bribe which few natives so circumstanced would have refused: he offered him the management of the Treasury with a commission of five per cent. on all sums that might be realised. The bait was eagerly swallowed; the Rájá withdrew his objections, and Mír J'afar, on the 4th June, signed the treaty. On the very same day, the Núwáb, all unconscious of his

intrigues, but wishing to indulge in his own personal rancour, removed that nobleman from the command of the army, and bestowed that trust upon a man devoted to his person, one Kwájah Háddi.

This change in the command greatly affected the power of Mír J'afar to render efficient service to the cause. At an interview held the day following with Mr. Watts—who, unable to hold open communication with one over whom the Núwáb exercised rigid surveillance, had caused himself to be conveyed, in a covered palanquin such as that used for women, into the zanána of the disgraced general—Mír J'afar admitted that he could now only actually dispose of three thousand men. He felt sure, however, he could exercise a very decisive influence upon other chiefs whom he knew to be discontented. The change, however Mr. Watts might regret it, could not affect the plans of the conspirators. They had gone too far to recede. Mír J'afar, then, in the most solemn manner, swore to observe the engagement he had entered into; he begged Mr. Watts to urge upon his government to act immediately and with decision; he explained the part he proposed to take in the decisive action which would follow the advance of the English; and he arranged to send the two treaties at once to Calcutta by the hands of a confidential officer. Mr. Watts then left him, returning in the same disguise.

But one task, then, remained for that gentleman to carry out, before, under some well-arranged pretext, he should himself depart for Calcutta. This task was the disposal of Amíchand. It would not do to leave

him at Murshidábád. The existence of the two treaties was known to more than one person, and in a city full of intriguers, many of them dependants of the rich merchant, the secret might at any moment be discovered. It was known that already his suspicions had been excited. He had come, if not to the conviction, at least to a very strong belief, that some web was being woven to which he had not the clue. It was necessary, therefore, that he, too, should proceed to Calcutta. Mr. Watts, then, pretending great care for his safety, suggested to him that, in the uncertainty of the contest which was about to ensue, his life would scarcely be safe at Murshidábád; that at any rate, at his age, the exertions which he would be called upon to make would be full of danger; that it was, therefore, advisable that he should proceed with Mr. Scrafton, about to set out at once, to Calcutta. These arguments had their effect. Amíchand delayed one day to endeavour to obtain certain sums from the treasury. When these were denied him, unable to obtain or unwilling to apply for the Núwáb's permission to depart —a most necessary passport—the wily Hindú behaved in such a manner as to call from the prince an order to leave his capital. Amíchand then started and reached Calcutta on the 8th June. Two days later the emissary sent by Mír J'afar arrived, with the two treaties, at that place. The committee had arranged means whereby the purport of the fictitious treaty should be at once made known, in an indirect manner, to Amíchand. The knowledge that his full claims were recognised in the fullest manner in a treaty

bearing the signature of all the contracting parties, silenced for the moment the doubts which had agitated his mind.

It was now time for the English either to act or to abandon their plans, for the air was full of rumours, and already an expedition against the Núwáb was the talk of the bazaars alike at Calcutta and Chandranagar. Clive saw very clearly that the opportune moment had arrived; that to miss it would be to slide once more into a morass of doubt and uncertainty. That he realised the vastness of the stake for which he was about to throw may be doubted. Even his vision, broad and keen as it was, was limited. But what he certainly did see was an assured position for the English; a preponderating influence in Bengal and Orísá, perhaps even in Bihár; wealth and honours for himself; a great name in history. It was impossible, then, that a man of his ambitious nature, with such a future dangling on the horizon, should allow the opportune moment to pass unheeded. He boldly seized it. Concentrating on the 12th June all his troops at Chandranagar, and despatching a ship of war to menace Huglí, the governor of which, Nandkumár, had threatened to oppose the passage of his boats, he dismissed the two agents of the Núwáb who were with him, and on the following day set out on the march which was to sever from the tottering empire of the Mughul its richest and its fairest province. The English troops proceeded in two hundred boats, towed by natives against the stream; the sipáhís marched along the right bank of the river on

the high road, made by the Mughuls, from Huglí to Patná. By the hands of the two agents or messengers of the Núwáb he despatched to that prince a letter in which he justified his action. In this he boldly accused the ruler of Bengal of having used every subterfuge to evade the accomplishment of the treaty of February; of having failed to restore, during the four months which had followed, more than one-fifth of the effects he had previously plundered; of having, subsequently to that treaty, invited Monsieur Bussy to assist him; of maintaining at that moment, within a hundred miles of his capital, a body of French troops under M. Law; of having in various ways, which were enumerated, insulted English honour. Clive added, that in the presence of this want of faith, of this concealed hostility, of these insults, the English had displayed exemplary patience, and had even taken the field to assist him when the action of the Afgháns in the north-west had alarmed him; but that they were tired of subterfuges, and now, seeing no other remedy, were marching on Murshidábád, where they intended to refer their complaints to the decision of the principal officers of his government, viz. Mír J'afar Khán, Rájá Dúlab Rám, the Séths, or principal bankers, and Mohan Lall. Clive then expressed a hope that the Núwáb would acquiesce in this arbitration and so spare the effusion of his blood, and concluding by telling him that "the rains being so near, and it requiring many days to receive an answer, he found it necessary to wait upon him immediately."

A more specious letter was probably never penned. Certainly a more insolent defiance from a settler in a foreign country to one who was, in everything but in name, the sovereign prince of that country, was never despatched. Its assertions will not bear the test of examination. From the day, the 4th February, when Clive had frightened him from Calcutta, the English had persistently bullied the Núwáb. They had taken Chandranagar in spite of him; had forced him to dismiss the French contingent under Law; had intrigued with and corrupted his officers; and had now the effrontery to propose to submit his conduct to the decision of the very men whom they had suborned! It was a serio-comic farce, the serious part of which was intended to work upon the nerves of a weak-minded man and to paralyse his action. It certainly produced that result.

Meanwhile, the fact that a vast conspiracy had been organised was known to a considerable number of persons was working its natural result at Murshidábád. Its chiefs, Mír J'afar, Rájá Dúlab Rám, the great family of the Séths, Yár Lútf Khán, Mohan Lall, and others, all had their confidants, more or less discreet; and these, too, whispered the plot to others. In this way it came about that the Núwáb, to whom there still remained many devoted friends, received hints that an intrigue was on foot in which Mír J'afar was a principal agent. Irritated as he was against Mír J'afar he now resolved to destroy him. Unfortunately for himself, he gave utterance to his threats before he acted. It thus

happened that Mír J'afar, well served by his spies, was forewarned, and was able to make preparations to resist a sudden attack. Still, between the 8th and 14th June, the situation was full of danger, and, uncertain of the result, he begged Mr. Watts to secure his own safety by a timely flight. Mr. Watts thought it prudent to comply. On the 13th he proceeded to the factory at Kásimbázár as if on an ordinary visit, was joined there by the three other English gentlemen belonging to the mission, who then, ordering supper to be ready for their return, rode out with him, accompanied by dogs and dog-keepers, as if for an evening exercise. After proceeding some miles they sent back the dogs and their keepers, and accompanied by one mounted servant, a Patán, rode for their lives. About midnight they reached Agardíp, a military station for the Núwáb's troops. Fortunately the sentries were asleep, and the fugitives were able to procure a couple of boats. Leaving their horses with the Patán they rowed down the river in these, were met at the junction of the Bhágirathí and Jalinghí rivers by a detachment of boats sent to meet them, and on the following day joined the army at Kalná, about a hundred miles north-west of Calcutta. Thence Watts despatched a messenger, with the news of his safety, to Mír J'afar. The Patán with the horses arrived the day following.

The intelligence of the flight of Mr. Watts and his companions reached the Núwáb just as he was about to attack the palace of Mír J'afar. It overwhelmed

him with terror, for it proved to him beyond a doubt that the English, of whose advance vague rumours had already reached Murshidábád, were in the confederacy against him.

It is interesting to mark how different natures are affected by sudden news foreboding immediate danger. The strong are braced up to meet the crisis with firmness and decision: the weak call to their councils that bastard prudence which paralyses action and is the surest ally of the threatening evil. Had the Núwáb belonged to the first category he had yet time not only to save himself but to baffle the English. Had he overwhelmed and crushed Mír J'afar, of whose treason he had sufficient proof, he might have met the foreign invader at the head of a united army bound to him by his recent success. But, belonging to the second, he deemed it more prudent to attempt to gain over the powerful relative who had defied and betrayed him. He, therefore, made overtures of reconciliation to Mír J'afar, which that nobleman naturally encouraged. An interview followed, which led to an agreement, in virtue of which, whilst Mír J'afar promised neither to join nor to give assistance to the English in the impending contest, the Núwáb engaged to allow him to retire unmolested from the province with his family and treasures as soon as peace should be restored.

Elated now, as he had been terror-stricken before the conclusion of a treaty which a man possessing the smallest intelligence would have recognised as hollow, the Núwáb, though he had not then received the

manifesto despatched to him by Clive, wrote to that officer in terms of defiance. He reproached him with the flight of Mr. Watts; informed him that it was suspicion of his tricky conduct which had induced him to keep his army so long at Palási; and concluded, in the manner still prevailing in Europe, by invoking the aid of the God of battles to defeat his plans. Whilst he despatched this cartel, he gave directions that his whole army, including the troops of Mír J'afar, should march at once to their former encampment at Palási, and sent pressing orders to M. Law, who was still at Bhágalpúr, to march with the utmost expedition to his assistance.

But, in spite of this new departure, the affairs of the Núwáb did not travel well. The march to Palási, upon the prompt execution of which so much depended, was delayed. The troops who were to fight for him had not received their pay for a long time, and they refused to stir a step until all their arrears should be discharged. Owing to mismanagement, or worse, a tumult which might have been suppressed on the spot was allowed to extend over three days; and it was only on the 19th June that the soldiers of the Núwáb, appeased by a full compliance with their demands, set out for their destination.

Meanwhile, the English were advancing. On the 16th they had reached Paltí, a small town on the western bank of the Bhágirathí, six miles above the point where Mr. Watts and his fellow fugitives had been met by the boats. From this place, on the 17th, Clive despatched a force composed of two

hundred Europeans and five hundred native troops, with a gun and small howitzer, under Major Eyre Coote, to summon Katwá, a mud fort twelve miles further up the same river, likewise on its western bank, commanding its passage. The officer who commanded here for the Núwáb, infected with the generally prevailing malady of treachery, had promised to retire without fighting. Coote reached the town of Katwá, about three hundred yards south of the fort and separated from it by a small river, at midnight. He found it abandoned. But when at daybreak he summoned the fort the commandant only answered him by defiance. He made no real attempt, however, to defend the place. As soon as he saw that Coote's intentions were serious he set fire to a shed of mats which had been raised to protect the walls of the fort from the sun and rain, and, under cover of the smoke, made his escape northwards. Coote at once occupied the fort, within which and the granaries it protected he found as much rice as would sustain ten thousand men for a year. The main body of the army joined him there that evening, and encamped on the plain; but the next day the periodical rains set in with such violence that the men were forced to strike their tents and take shelter in the huts and houses of the town.

That very day Clive received from Mír J'afar a letter—the only one which had reached him since his march from Chandranagar, though he himself had written every day—giving an account of his reconciliation with the Núwáb, of the oath he had taken

not to assist the English against him, but concluding with a phrase to the effect that, nevertheless, the purport of his engagement must be carried into execution. In dealing with traitors a man of sense must feel that he himself is always liable to be betrayed. Certainly the tenor of this letter impressed Clive with the conviction that it was possible that Mír J'afar intended to make him play the part of a dupe. To foil him, and to be quite sure of his ground, he determined, then, not to cross into the island, the key to which he possessed at Katwá, until the political position should be more clearly defined. His doubts were not dissipated either by a report brought by a messenger on the 20th, or by another letter from Mír J'afar dated the 19th and received the day following. The former stated that Mír J'afar and his son Míran had accorded him an interview in the private part of the palace, but that the sudden entrance of the emissaries of the Núwáb had changed their tone of friendliness into a tone of menace, and he had been threatened with the fate of a spy. The letter, which followed the messenger, breathed a sound which Clive still considered uncertain; for, although in it Mír J'afar stated that he was about on that very day to march for Palási, that he would occupy a position on the right of the army whence he would send more explicit intelligence, and explained that fear of detection had alone caused his previous reserve, he neither gave a hint as to his own plans or to the plans of the Núwáb's army, nor suggested any mode by which the English army should co-operate with him.

Although these communications greatly dissipated the suspicions that had arisen in the mind of Clive as to the sincerity of Mír J'afar, they proved to him that the assistance to be rendered by that nobleman would be rather of a passive than an active character. This conviction caused him great embarrassment. Could he, dare he, with the small force under his orders, consisting, all told, of about three thousand men, of whom one-third only were Europeans, cross the Bhágirathí to confront an army of some fifty thousand, relying on the promise of one of their leaders that he would betray them? On the other hand, could he, dare he, after having announced to all Bengal his intention to attack and depose the leader of that host, risk the loss of prestige, the discredit, perhaps even the destruction, which a retreat on the very eve of the combat he had challenged would entail? Aware how appearances weighed with the people of the country, how much depended upon the show, at least, of the support of some leading natives, he wrote, that evening, a pressing letter to the Rájá of Bardhwán to come to his aid, if only with a thousand horsemen. The despatch of this letter did little, however, to relieve his mind. Every hour the pressure grew stronger, the tension less endurable. Unable, at last, to support himself the sole responsibility of a decision which involved the fate of the English in Bengal, the fate of Bengal, and more remotely, though not less certainly, the fate of India, he resolved to summon to a council of war all the officers present above the rank of subaltern. There came at once

to that council Major Eyre Coote of the 39th, so often mentioned in these pages; Major Kilpatrick, commanding the Company's troops; Major Archibald Grant, Captain Waggoner, and Captain John Corneille, 39th Foot; Captains Gaupp, Rumbold, and Robert Campbell, of the Madras service; Captains John Cudmore, Peter Carstairs, Alexander Grant, George Muir, Fischer, and Le Beaune, of the Bengal service; Captains Palmer, Andrew Armstrong, and Molitore, of the Bombay service; Captain Jennings, commanding the artillery, and Captain Parshaw, whose service I have been unable to ascertain. Including Clive, who had summoned it, the council numbered twenty members.

The question on which Clive asked the opinion of his assembled officers was the following: "Whether the army should at once cross into the island of Kásimbázár and at all risks attack the Núwáb; or whether, availing themselves of the large supplies of rice they had taken at Katwá, they should maintain themselves there during the rainy season, and, in the meanwhile, invite the co-operation of the Maráthás." Contrary to all custom, Clive gave his own opinion first. It was to remain at Katwá. He was supported by Majors Kilpatrick and Grant. Major Eyre Coote warmly espoused the opposite view. He argued that the soldiers were elated with the success they had already achieved, and were confident of victory; that to check them now, so near to the enemy, would be to damp their ardour, which it would be difficult to restore; that delay would give time to M. Law to join

the Núwáb; that, with the vigour which this arrival would infuse into the councils of that prince, it would be possible for him to cut off their communications with Calcutta, and cause them the greatest distress. He dwelt likewise on the fact that the European ranks had been strengthened by the enlistment of Frenchmen set free by the capture of Chandranagar, and that, under the circumstances to be anticipated, these would inevitably desert. To halt at Katwá, then, he declared to be a half-measure, unworthy of adoption. He was in favour of immediate attack; the only alternative was, in his opinion, an immediate retreat on Calcutta. Such a retreat would, however, he contended, involve disgrace to the English name, and injury to the Company's interests. In this view Major Eyre Coote was supported by Captains Alexander Grant, John Cudmore, Andrew Armstrong, George Muir, Robert Campbell, and Peter Carstairs. The other twelve sided with Clive. In this council of twenty, then, there was a majority of as nearly as possible two to one against immediate action, and in favour of remaining at Katwá.

But the decision of the council of war did not relieve the anxiety which had been pressing on the brain of Clive. Strolling, unattended, to a short distance from the camp, he passed in review, under the shade of a clump of trees, the arguments which had been used in support of the two views. A thorough soldier himself, a man who had proved in more than one field that boldness was prudence, he could not very long resist the conviction that the

reasons urged by the party of action were sound. Of the three suggested courses both the halt at Katwá and the retreat to Calcutta were fraught with danger of the worst kind, because a danger to be met with dispirited troops and a lost prestige. The attack, doubtless, was also dangerous. But it had this recommendation, that out of the nettle "danger" it was possible to pluck the flower "safety." For nearly an hour, in calmness and solitude, he passed in mental review the courses which had been suggested. Then he came to a decision, and returned towards camp. On his way thither he met Major Eyre Coote. Simply informing him that he had changed his mind, Clive entered his hut and dictated orders for the passage of the river the following morning.

CHAPTER X.

Plassey.

Deducting the sick and a small guard left at Katwá, the army detailed to march against the Núwáb consisted of nine hundred and fifty European infantry* and a hundred European artillerymen; fifty English sailors, a small detail of native lascars, and two thousand one hundred sipáhís. The artillery train was composed of eight six-pounders and two small howitzers. Obeying the orders issued the night before, this little force marched down the banks of the Bhágirathí at daybreak of the 22nd June, and began the crossing in the boats which had accompanied it from Chandranagar. It encountered no opposition, and by 4 o'clock the same afternoon it was securely planted on the left bank. Here Clive received another letter from Mír J'afar informing him that the Núwáb had halted at Mankárah, a village six miles from

* In these were included two hundred men of mixed blood.

Kásimbázár, and there intended to intrench himself. The Mír suggested that the English should march round the inland part of the island and surprise him.

Such an operation would have cut off Clive from his base—which was now the river Bhágirathí—and have entailed a march round the arc of a circle, whilst his enemy, traversing the chord, could sever him from all his communications. It was not very hopeful to receive such advice from a confederate, himself a soldier who had commanded in many a campaign. Clive met it in the direct and straightforward way calculated to force a decision. He sent back the messenger with the answer that he would march towards Palási without delay; that the next day he would march six miles further to Dáúdpúr; but that if, on reaching that village, Mír J'afar should not join him, he would make peace with the Núwáb.

The distance to Palási from the camp on the Bhágirathí, whence this message was despatched, was fifteen miles. To accomplish those fifteen miles the little army marched at sunset the same day, the 22nd, following the windings of the Bhágirathí, up the stream of which their boats, containing their supplies and military stores, were towed. After eight hours of extreme fatigue, the overflow of recent inundations causing the water to rise often up to their waists, whilst the rain descended in torrents upon their heads, the men reached, weary and worn out, at 1 o'clock in the morning of the 23rd, the village of Palási. Traversing this village they halted and bivouacked in a large

mango grove a short distance beyond it. There, to their surprise, the sound of martial music reached their ears, plainly signifying that the Núwáb was within striking distance of them. The mango-grove which formed the bivouac of the English force was in fact little more than a mile from the Núwáb's encampment. It was eight hundred yards in length and three hundred in breadth, and was surrounded by an earth-bank and a ditch. In its length it was diagonal to the river, for whilst the Bhágirathí flowed about fifty yards from its north-west angle, four times that distance intervened between it and the south-western corner. The trees in it were, as is usual in India, planted in regular rows.* Just beyond the grove stood a hunting-box belonging to the Núwáb, surrounded by a masonry wall. Of this grove, Clive, as soon as the sounds of martial music to which I have adverted reached his ears, detached a small force to take possession. It is now time that I should explain how it was that such music came to be in his close vicinity.

The reader will recollect that in consequence of the mutiny of his troops at Murshidábád the Núwáb had been forced to delay his march from that place till the 19th June. On the 19th they set out, but on that same day the Núwáb heard of the arrival of the English army at Katwá. Judging, from his know-

* The last of these trees, Mr. Eastwick informs us, fell some years ago, and has been eaten by white ants.—*Murray's Handbook, Bengal.*

ledge of the character of their leader, that they would cross the Bhágirathí and march on Palási without delay, he came to the conclusion that he had been forestalled at that place, and that it would be better for him to halt at Mankárah and watch thence the course of events. But when, on the 21st, he learned that Clive was still halting at Katwá, his resolution revived, and he marched at once to his old encampment at Palási, about one mile to the north of the grove of which I have spoken. He took his post here twelve hours before the English reached the grove.

His army was strong in numbers. It consisted of thirty-five thousand infantry of all sorts, men not trained in the European fashion, but of the stamp of those who may be seen in the present day in and about the chief towns of the territories of native princes of the second or third rank. They were, in fact, men imperfectly trained and imperfectly armed, and, in the rigid sense of the word, undisciplined. His cavalry, said to have amounted to about fifteen thousand, were better. They were mostly Patáns from the north, of the race of which the Indian irregular horse of the present day is formed, excellent light cavalry, well mounted, armed with swords or long spears. His artillery was better still. It consisted of fifty-three pieces, mostly of heavy calibres, 32, 24, and 18-pounders. But what constituted its greatest strength was the presence with that arm, to support the native gunners and to work and direct their own field-pieces, of forty to fifty Frenchmen—who had

been called in from other parts of the province after Law and his troops had been dismissed—commanded by M. St. Frais, formerly one of the Council of Chandranagar. These men were animated by a very bitter feeling against the Englishman who had despoiled their flourishing settlement.

This army, thus strong in numbers, occupied likewise a strong position. The intrenched works which covered it rested on the river, extended inland in a line perpendicular to it for about two hundred yards, and then swept round to the north-east at an obtuse angle for about three miles. At this angle was a redoubt mounted with cannon. Three hundred yards east of this and in front of the line of intrenchments, was a hillock covered with jungle, and about eight hundred yards to the south, nearer the grove occupied by the English, was a tank, and a hundred yards still nearer a larger tank. Both of them were surrounded by large mounds of earth at some distance from their margins. It is important to keep the mind fixed on these points when following the movements of the two armies.

At daybreak on the 23rd June the Núwáb's army marched out of its intrenchments and took up the following positions. The French, with four field-pieces, took post at the larger tank, nearest the English position—nearly half a mile from it. Between them and the river, and in a line with them, were placed two heavy guns under a native officer; behind these again and supporting them were the Núwáb's best troops, a body of five thousand horse and seven

thousand foot, commanded by his one faithful general, Mír Múdín Khán, by the side of whom served the prince's Hindú favourite, Mohan Lál. From the rearmost position of Mír Múdín the rest of the army formed a curve in the direction of the village of Palási, the right resting on the hillock covered with jungle, of which I have spoken, the left on a point covering the south-eastern angle of Clive's grove, at a distance from it of about eight hundred yards. The intervals were crammed with dense masses of horse and foot, artillery being interspersed between the masses or columns. The troops forming this curve, numbering about thirty-eight thousand, were commanded by the traitor confederates Rájá Dúlab Rám, Yár Lútf Khán, and Mír J'afar. The first was on the right, the second in the centre, Mír J'afar on the left nearest the English. The position was a strong one, for the English could not attack the point which barred their progress—that occupied by the French and Mír Múdín Khán—without exposing their right to a flank attack. In fact, they were almost surrounded, and unless treason had played her part they had been doomed.

From the roof of the hunting-box Clive watched the movements, as they gradually developed themselves, of the army of Siráju'd daulah. As Mír Múdín took up his position; as the corps of Mír J'afar, Yár Lútf, and Dúlab Rám poured out their myriads until the mango-grove his men occupied was not only flanked, but its furthermost end became almost overlapped by the extreme end of the arc formed by those myriads;

BATTLE OF PLASSEY

June 23rd 1757.

Scale 1½ inches = 1 mile

Mangora

Jung Malpur

Senardanga

Balchera

Nuwáb's intrenched camp.

Rámnagar

French Mr Madder

Rajah Dulab Ram

Kirtah

Bhagirathi RIVER

Grove of mango trees.

Mir Jafar

Mir Lutf Khan

VILLAGE OF PALASI.

Baskeri

REFERENCE.

A. Position of the British army at 8 in the morning.

B. Guns advanced to check the fire of the French.

C. Nuwáb's army in three divisions.

D. The tank occupied upto 3 pm by the French supported in their rear by Mir din Khán.

E F. The redoubt and mound taken at ½ past 4 O(.

G. The Nuwáb's hunting-box.

he could not conceal his astonishment at the numbers against whom he was about to hurl his tiny band. "What if they should all be true to their master!" was a thought which must more than once have traversed his brain as he witnessed that long defiling. It was too late to think of that, however, and Clive, true to his military instinct, which in the time of danger was always sound, resolved to meet this bold display by a corresponding demonstration. Accordingly he ordered his men to advance from the grove, and drew them up in line in front of it, their left resting on the hunting-box, which was immediately on the river. In the centre of the line he placed his Europeans, flanked on both sides by three 6-pounders; on their right and left he posted the native troops in two equal divisions. He detached at the same time a small party with two 6-pounders and two howitzers to occupy some brick-kilns about two hundred yards in front of the left (the native) division of his little army.

By 8 o'clock in the morning of this memorable day the preparations on both sides were completed. The French, under St. Frais, opened the battle by firing one of their guns which, well-directed, took effect on the British line. The discharge of this single gun was the signal for the opening of a heavy and continuous fire from the enemy's whole line, from the guns in front as well as from those in the curve. The English guns returned the fire with considerable effect. Still, however true might have been the aim of the English gunners, the disparity in numbers, in

the weight of metal, and in guns, was too great to allow the game to be continued long by the weaker party. Though ten of the enemy's men might fall to one of the English, the advantage would still be with the enemy. Clive was made to feel this when at the end of the first half-hour thirty of his men had been placed *hors de combat*. He accordingly determined to give his troops the shelter which the grove and its bank would afford. Leaving still an advanced party at the brick-kilns, and another at the hunting-box, he effected this withdrawal in perfect order, though under the shouts and fire of the enemy. These were so elated that they advanced their guns much nearer, and began to fire with greater vivacity. Clive, however, had now found the shelter he desired, and whilst the shot from the enemy's guns, cutting the air at too high a level, did great damage to the trees in the grove, he made the bulk of his men sit down under the bank whilst small parties should bore holes to serve as embrasures for his field-pieces. From this new position his guns soon opened fire, and maintained it with so much vigour and in so true a direction that several of the enemy's gunners were killed or wounded, and every now and again explosions of their ammunition were heard. Protected by the bank, the proportion of the casualties of the English now lessened considerably, whilst there was no abatement of those of the masses opposed to them. Still, at the end of three hours no great or decisive effect had been produced; the enemy's fire had shown no signs of diminishing, nor had their position varied. No

symptoms of co-operation on the part of Mír J'afar were visible, nor, in the face of such enormous masses, who had it in their power, if true to their prince, to surround and overwhelm any party which should attempt the key of the position, held by Mír Múdín Khán, did any mode of bettering the condition of affairs seem to offer. This was certainly the opinion of Clive when, at 11 o'clock, he summoned his principal officers to his side. Nor could he, after consultation with them, arrive at any better conclusion than this: that it was advisable to maintain the position in the grove till after nightfall, and at midnight try the effect of an attack on the enemy's camp.

The decision was, under the circumstances, sound, especially as it was subordinate to any incident which might, in the long interval of twelve hours, occur to alter it. Such an incident did occur very soon after the conference. There fell then, and continued for an hour, one of those heavy pelting showers so common during the rainy season. The English had their tarpaulins ready to cover their ammunition, which in consequence sustained but little injury from the rain. The enemy took no such precautions, and their powder suffered accordingly. The result was soon shown by a general slackening of their fire. Believing that the English were in a similar plight, Mír Múdín Khán advanced with a body of horsemen towards the grove to take advantage of it. The English, however, received him with a heavy grape-fire, which not only drove back his men but mortally wounded their leader.

This was the crisis of the day. As long as Mír Múdín lived the chances of Sirájuʼd daulah, surrounded though he was by traitors, were not quite desperate. The fidelity of that true and capable soldier might under any circumstances save him. But his death was a loss which could not be repaired. It is probable that some such conviction penetrated the heart of the unfortunate young prince when the news of the calamity reached him. He at once sent for Mír J'afar, and besought him in the most abject terms to be true to him and to defend him. He reminded him of the loyalty he had always displayed towards his grandfather, Alí Vardí Khán, of his relationship to himself; then, taking off his turban, and casting it on the ground before him, he exclaimed: "J'afar, that turban thou must defend." Those who are acquainted with the manners of Eastern nations will realise that no more pathetic, no more heartrending, appeal could be made by a prince to a subject!

Mír J'afar Khán responded to it with apparent sincerity. Placing, in the respectful manner which indicates devotion, his crossed hands on his breast, and bowing over them, he promised to exert himself to the utmost. When he made that gesture and when he uttered those words he was lying. Never was he more firmly resolved than at that moment to betray his master. Quitting the presence of the Núwáb he galloped back to his troops, and despatched a letter to Clive, informing him of what had happened, and urging him to push on immediately, in no case to defer the attack beyond the night. That the messenger

did not reach his destination till too late for Clive to profit by the letter detracts not one single whit from the baseness of the man who, fresh from such an interview, wrote and sent it!

But Mír J'afar was not the only traitor. The loss of his best officer, coinciding with the unfortunate damping of the ammunition, had completely unnerved Siráju'd daulah. Scarcely had Mír J'afar left him than he turned to the commander of his right wing, Rájá Dúlab Rám, for support and consolation. The counsel which this man—likewise one of the conspirators—gave him was of a most insidious character. Playing upon his fears, he continually urged him to issue orders to the army to retire behind the intrenchment; this order issued, he should quit the field and leave the result in confidence to his generals. In an evil hour the wretched youth, incapable at such a moment of thinking soundly or clearly, followed the insidious advice, issued the order, and, mounting a camel, rode, followed by two thousand horsemen, to Murshidábád.

The three traitorous generals were now masters of the position. Their object being to entice the English to come on, they began the retiring movement which the Núwáb had sanctioned. They had reckoned, however, without St. Frais and his Frenchmen. These gallant men remained true to their master in this hour of supreme peril, and declined to quit a position which, supported by the troops of Mír Múdín, they had maintained against the whole British force. But Mír Múdín had been killed, his troops were following the rest of the army, and St. Frais stood

there almost without support. To understand what followed I must ask the reader to accompany me to the grove.

I left Clive and his gallant soldiers repulsing the attack which cost the Núwáb his one faithful commander. The vital consequences of this repulse did not present themselves for a moment to the imagination of the English leader. He never for a moment thought that it would lead to the flight of the Núwáb and to the retirement of his army from a position which he had held successfully, and from which he still threatened the grove. There can be no doubt but that, at this period of the action, Clive had made up his mind to hold the grove at all hazards till nightfall, and then, relying upon the co-operation of Mír J'afar and his friends, to make his supreme effort. Satisfied that this was the only course to be followed, he entered the hunting-box and lay down to take some rest, giving orders that he should be roused if the enemy should make any change in their position. He had not been long absent when Major Kilpatrick noticed the retiring movement I have already described. He did not know, and probably did not care, to what cause to attribute it; he only saw that the French were being deserted, and that a splendid opportunity offered to carry the position at the tank, and cannonade thence the retiring enemy. Quick as the thought, he moved rapidly from the grove towards the tank with about two hundred and fifty Europeans and two field-pieces, sending an officer to Clive to explain his intentions and their reason.

It is said that the officer found Clive asleep. The message, however, completely roused him, and, angry that any officer should have dared to make an important movement without his orders, he ran to the detachment and severely reprimanded Kilpatrick. A glance at the situation, however, satisfied him that Kilpatrick had only done that which he himself would have ordered him to do had he been on the spot. He realised that the moment for decisive action had arrived. He sent back Kilpatrick, then, with orders to bring on the rest of the army, and continued the movement which that officer had initiated.

St. Frais, on his side, had recognised that the retreat of the Núwáb's army had compromised him, and that he was quite unable, with his handful, to resist the whole British force, which, a few minutes later, he saw issuing from the grove in his direction. Resolved, however, to dispute every inch of the ground, he fired a parting shot, then, limbering up, fell back in perfect order to the redoubt at the corner of the intrenchment. Here he planted his field-pieces ready to act again.

Meanwhile, two of the three divisions of the enemy's army were marching towards the intrenchment. It was observed, however, that the third division, that on the left, nearest to the grove, commanded by Mír J'afar, lingered behind the rest, and that when its rearmost file had reached a point in a line with the northern end of the grove, the whole division wheeled to the left and marched in that direction. Clive had no means of recognising that these were the troops of

his confederate, but, believing that they had a design upon his baggage, he detached a party of Europeans with a field-piece to check them. The fire of the field-piece had its effect in so far that it prevented a further advance in that direction. But the division continued to remain separated from the rest of the Núwáb's army.

Clive, meanwhile, had reached the tank from which St. Frais had retreated, and had begun thence a vigorous cannonade of the enemy's position behind the intrenchment. What followed can be well understood if it be borne in mind that whilst the leaders of the Núwáb's army had been gained over, the rank and file and the vast majority of the officers were faithful to their master. They had not been entrusted with the secret of the intended treason, and being soldiers, and superior in numbers to the attacking party, they were in no mood to permit that party to cannonade them with impunity. No sooner, then, did the shot from the British cannon begin to take effect in their ranks than they issued from their intrenchments, cavalry, infantry, and artillery, and opened a heavy fire upon the British force.

The real battle now began. Clive, seriously incommoded by this new move on the part of the enemy, quitted his position and advanced nearer to the intrenchment. Posting, then, half his infantry and half his artillery on the mound of the lesser tank, the greater part of the remaining moiety on a rising ground two hundred yards to the left of it, and detaching nine hundred and sixty men, picked natives and Euro-

peans, to lodge themselves behind the tank close to the intrenchment, he opened from the first and second positions a very heavy artillery-fire, whilst from the third the musketry-fire should be well sustained and well aimed. This masterly movement, well carried into execution, caused the enemy great loss, and threw the cattle attached to their guns into great confusion. In vain did St. Frais ply his guns from the redoubt, the matchlockmen pour in volley after volley from the hillock to the east of it and from the intrenchments. In vain did their swarthy troopers make charge after charge. Masses without a leader were fighting against a man whose clearness of vision was never so marked, whose judgment was never so infallible, whose execution was never so decisive, as when he was on the battle-field. What chance had they, brave as they were, in a battle which their leaders had sold? As they still fought, Clive noticed that the division of their troops which he had at first believed had designs upon his baggage still remained isolated from the rest and took no part in the battle. Suddenly it dawned upon him that those halted troops must form the division of Mír J'afar. Immensely relieved by this discovery, inasmuch as it freed him from all apprehension of an attack on his flank or rear, he resolved to make a supreme effort to carry the redoubt held by St. Frais and the hill to the east of it. With this object he formed two strong detachments and sent them simultaneously against the two points indicated, supporting them from the rear by the main body in the centre. The hill was