



first gained and carried without firing a shot. The movement against the redoubt was not less successful; for St. Fraix, abandoned, isolated, and threatened, had no resource but to retire. The possession of this position decided the day. Thenceforward all resistance ceased. By 5 o'clock the English were in the possession of the whole intrenchment and camp. The victory of Plassey* had been won! It had cost the victors seven European and sixteen native soldiers killed, thirteen European and thirty-six native, wounded.

The success, complete as it was, was rendered absolute by the arrival of the messengers, sent at an earlier period by Mír J'afar, but who had been not sufficiently nerved to risk their lives while the fighting was going on. Clive replied by requesting a meeting for the following morning at Dáúdpur, to which place, after despatching a detachment under Major Eyre Coote to pursue the enemy, and securing a sufficient number of the Núwáb's fresh oxen to replace those of his own attached to the guns and ammunition wagons, he pushed on. There the separated divisions met at 8 o'clock in the evening, and there they bivouacked for the night. Their loss has been already stated. That of the enemy was computed in killed

* Such was the title given by the English to the victory, and which it has borne to the present day. Such a title must be respected. But the correct name of the village is that which, up to this page, I have given it in the text, "Palási," so called from the Palás tree (*Butea frondosa*), which used to abound in the vicinity.



alone at five hundred, and at as many in wounded; but as the figure was never certainly ascertained it may, if we dare judge from the accuracy of computations made under similar circumstances in our own days, be set down as very much smaller. There can be no question, however, as to the fact that three elephants and a number of horses were left dead on the field, and that fifty-three pieces of cannon, and the whole of the enemy's baggage, camp-equipage, stores, and cattle fell into the hands of the victors.

The following morning Clive deputed Mr. Scrafton and an Indian gentleman of standing, Omar Beg, to wait upon Mír J'afar and conduct him to the English camp. Mír J'afar should have had no cause for disquietude; he had withdrawn his troops from action at a critical period the previous day, and had sent messengers to Clive urging a course of action similar to that which the English general actually adopted. But "conscience makes cowards of us all," and the failure of his messengers to arrive before the victory had been virtually decided, joined to the conviction which probably even then had begun to steal over him that he had changed one master for another, and that other a very ambitious one, had given birth in his mind to feelings of great anxiety and doubt. These doubts were for a moment, though only for a moment, increased when, accompanied by his son Míran, he entered the camp. The sudden clash of the muskets caused by the presenting of arms made him start, "as if," writes Mr. Orme, "he thought it a preparation to his destruction." The immediate approach of Clive, and the salutation



with which, as he alighted from his elephant, the conqueror greeted him—the salutation of himself as Súbahdár of Bengal, Bihár, and Orísá—removed his fears. At the conference which followed Clive urged upon the new ruler the advisability of marching upon Murshidábád at once, as well to anticipate any further resistance on the part of Siráju'd daulah as to prevent any attempt to plunder the treasury. Mír J'afar promised to follow the advice, returned to his camp, and set out at once for Murshidábád. He arrived there the same evening.

Having despatched Mír J'afar to Murshidábád, and sent friendly letters to the other chiefs of the army, Clive resumed his march. On reaching Maidápúr (25th June) he despatched Messrs. Watts and Walsh, with an escort of a hundred native troops, to wait upon Mír J'afar. These gentlemen were also commissioned to arrange for the payment of the donations stipulated in the treaty, to be granted, in case of the success of the confederates, to the East India Company, to the inhabitants of Calcutta, to the army, the navy, and the members of the Select Committee. They found, however, that whereas these united claims amounted, including those of Clive himself, to nearly twenty-two millions of rupees, the treasury contained, all told, rather less than two-thirds of that sum. Under these circumstances it was impossible to satisfy all at once the greed of the conquerors. In this difficulty Rájá Dúlab Rám and the wealthy Séths came to the aid of Mír J'afar. With their assistance it was arranged that one half of the amount stipulated



should be paid at once—two thirds in coin and one third in plate, jewels, and goods—and that the remaining moiety should be liquidated by three equal instalments in three years. Such was the just consequence to Bengal of alliance with the foreigner—the emptying of the treasury and a public debt!

These arrangements having been completed, Clive entered the city and took up his quarters at the palace of Murádbágh. The usual court ceremonies followed. Míran, his hand not yet red with the slaughter of his kinsman, waited upon Clive, who in his turn paid a ceremonial visit to Mír J'afar, and congratulated the assembled nobles on the replacement of a weak tyrant by an able and valiant prince. The new Núwáb was then officially proclaimed, under high-sounding titles, not necessary to produce, to be Súbahdár of Bengal, Bihár, and Orísá.

In the midst of the general congratulations which followed this event, there was one painful incident which cannot be left unrecorded. The time had now arrived when it was necessary to disabuse the mind of the unfortunate Amíchand, the intermediary through whose exertions the conspiracy against Siráju'd daulah had first been set on foot. On the 30th June, the day on which the new Núwáb gave a formal and official ratification to the agreement already alluded to for the payment of the stipulated negotiations, the real treaty was for the first time shown to the deceived victim.*

* Mr. Orme states that the disclosure was made in a manner which, if he is correct, no right-minded man can regard as other



The result was a terrible shock to the system, which in about a month's time caused the development of softening of the brain. Eighteen months later this disease terminated his existence.

The treatment of this unfortunate man displays the worst side of the character of Clive—the utter want of scruple which, in the pursuit of the aim he had

than brutal. “The conference being ended, Clive and Sraffton went towards Amíchand, who was waiting in full assurance to hear the glad tidings of his good fortune, when Clive said, ‘It is now time to undeceive Amíchand,’ on which Sraffton said to him, in the Hindústáni language, ‘Amíchand, the red paper is a trick; you are to have nothing.’ These words overpowered him like a blast of sulphur; he sank back fainting, and would have fallen to the ground had not one of his attendants caught him in his arms. They carried him to his palankin, in which they conveyed him to his house, where he remained many hours in stupid melancholy, and began to show symptoms of insanity. Some days after, he visited Colonel Clive, who advised him to make a pilgrimage to some pagoda, which he did soon after, to a famous one near Maulda. He went, and returned insane, his mind every day more and more approaching to idiotism; and, contrary to the usual manners of old age in Indostan, still more to the former excellence of his understanding, he delighted in being continually dressed in the richest garments, and ornamented with the most costly jewels. In this state of imbecility he died about a year and a half after the shock of his disappointment.”

The effects of the announcement made by Mr. Sraffton were not so immediate as is here described, for there exist records showing that Amíchand was still employed in subordinate duties one month after that date. It was about that period after the announcement—the beginning of August 1757—that his malady manifested itself, and Clive, hoping and believing that he would recover, recommended him to make the pilgrimage. In other respects there is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of Mr. Orme's narrative,



marked out, would allow him to forge the signature of a colleague, to be false to his plighted word. It is not by such acts, but rather by pursuing a policy directly opposed to such acts, that the countrymen of Clive gained in later years the confidence of the countrymen of Amíchand. Much as has been written in palliation of the transaction, the broad fact remains that it was a crime which no expediency could justify and no casuistry could explain. The fact that Clive himself did in his later years declare the deception "warrantable in such a case, and that he would do it again a hundred times" indicates either the obstinate man who having committed a fault will never allow that he could have been wrong, or the moral obliquity which, in the pursuit of an aim regarded to be essential, considers all means tending to attain it to be lawful.

The fate of the wretched boy whom Mír J'afar had supplanted demands now its record. Fleeing from Plassey on the evening of the 23rd, Siráju'd daulah reached his palace at Murshidábád at a late hour the same night. Before break of day he was joined there by many of his principal officers, likewise fugitives from the field. Some of these advised submission to the English; others urged him to make a stand in the city. The second plan was adopted, and Siráju'd daulah ordered the massing of the troops and the donation to each man of three months' pay. But when his officers had left him, all his old fears, his irresolution, his distrust, revived. Betrayed once, he could not feel sure he was not being betrayed again.



These fears were shared by all the inmates of his zenana, and their wailings greatly impressed him. He again, then, changed his plans, and before noon despatched elephants laden with women, jewels, and specie, towards Patná, he intending to follow as soon as the consequences of his defeat at Plassey should be more clearly manifested. The arrival of Mír J'afar that evening expedited his movements. He now resolved to escape at once, and join, if possible, the French under Law, who, he had reason to believe, was marching down from Bhágalpúr. Confiding his intentions to one man only, a eunuch upon whose fidelity he could rely, he disguised himself, left the palace that night unnoticed, accompanied only by his favourite wife, Lutf-ul-Nissa, and the eunuch, and taking a casket of his most valuable jewels, entered a boat which had been prepared, manned by stalwart rowers, at the wharf of the palace. Urged on day and night with great vigour the boat reached Rájmahal, nearly ninety miles distant, on the night of the fourth day following. Here the fatigue of the oarsmen necessitated a rest for the night. For this purpose the whole party took shelter in the buildings of a deserted garden close to the river. Here, however, in the early morn they were seen, and Siráju'd daulah was recognised, by a fakír named Dáná Sháh, whose ears, it is said, he had caused to be cut off thirteen months before, at the time that he took the fatal resolution of marching against Calcutta. The fakír at once acquainted Mír J'afar's brother, Mír Dáúd, who resided in the town, with his discovery,



and the latter sent at once a party of his retainers to secure the prize. The task was effected without any difficulty, and the Núwáb was at once despatched by boat to Murshidábád. Treated on his journey with every kind of insolence and indignity compatible with the preservation of his life, the unhappy Siráju'd daulah was carried, on the 2nd July, into the presence of the kinsman whose treason had caused his ruin. It was a touching scene. Mír J'afar owed his fortune, his honours, his position as a great noble of Bengal to the favour of Alí Vardí Khán, the grandfather of the wretched boy who was now brought, like a common felon, before him. It had been to the loyalty of Mír J'afar that Alí Vardí Khán had, on his death-bed, confided the fortunes of his favourite grandson. And now that grandson, brought into his presence, was prostrating himself before Mír J'afar, imploring life and only life. He would renounce all but that—to a boy not yet twenty of all boons the most precious. It is said that Mír J'afar seemed touched. He would, however, promise nothing. His son, Míran, a youth of a brutal nature, loudly insisted that no mercy should be shown to one, who, if he were spared, would not fail to be a thorn in their path. J'afar, apparently undecided, ordered the prisoner to be removed whilst he should consult with his officers regarding his fate.

If Mír J'afar Khán had been touched by the urgent appeals of his late master, the removal of that prince from his presence effectually hardened him. It was in vain that the better class of the high officials



whom he consulted, advised mercy, mild and secure imprisonment, but no bloodshed. The implacable Míran was there to raise the spectre of disputed tenure. At length, apparently wearied of the discussion, Mír J'afar yielded to the request preferred by his son that Širáju'd daulah should be confided to his care for the night. He knew well the certain consequences of his compliance, and he expressed neither anger nor compunction when he learned in the morning that the grandson of his benefactor had been murdered by the agents of his own son. The mangled remains of the unfortunate prince were placed on an elephant and exposed to the populace and soldiery, after which they were interred in the tomb of his grandfather, Alí Vardí Khán. Peace be to his ashes! He had undoubtedly committed great faults. Though he had not ordered the imprisonment in the Black Hole, he had, by condoning the conduct of those who perpetuated that outrage, become an accessory after the act. In other respects he had not sinned against the English. In the long intrigues and negotiations which followed his retreat from Calcutta on the 4th February, to the day of his death, he was the only one of the principal actors who had made no attempt to deceive. It was his misfortune to have been entrusted, when yet in his teens, with a power almost absolute, to have possessed a headstrong yet fickle disposition, to have had no education, to have been surrounded by traitors, and to have been confronted with a man who possessed a genius as daring as his moral nature was utterly



devoid of scruple. It will, I think, be conceded, that, great as were his faults, his punishment was greater still, and that having regard to the low morality of the country of which he was a native; to the terror inspired in his mind by the conduct of Clive before Calcutta and at Chandranagar; to the fact that he, the ruler of Bengal, was bound to resent the conduct of the foreigners from a land beyond the seas, who, from the status of settlers, were assuming a position not very far removed from that of dictators; he has been too cruelly judged by the descendants of the people who have so largely profited from his faults and from his misfortunes.



CHAPTER XI.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SPOIL.

THE painful incident which closed the last chapter had not yet been forgotten when the new Núwáb was made to feel that the pressure of the little finger of his English allies was less tolerable than the whole weight of the loins of Siráju'd daulah. It was hard indeed to begin a reign with an empty treasury, and with the incurring of obligations which would make him, to great extent, the slave of his own courtiers. However, there was no help for it. His finance-minister and erst fellow-conspirator, Rájá Dúláb Rám, who, for his share in the plot, now claimed and received five per cent. on all the sums in the public treasury, paid over to the English on the 6th July seven million two hundred and seventy-one thousand six hundred and sixty-six rupees; on the 9th August a further sum of one million six hundred and fifty-five thousand three hundred and fifty-eight rupees; and on the 30th of the same month a further amount of one million five hundred and ninety-nine thousand seven hundred and thirty-seven rupees, in gold orna-



ments and jewels. Of the first moiety of the promised stipulations there remained unpaid, two months after the change of dynasty, only five hundred and eighty-four thousand nine hundred and five rupees.

But if the disbursing of these enormous sums embarrassed the Murshidábád authorities, the distribution of those sums in Calcutta caused still greater perplexity. The payment of the amount awarded to the inhabitants of Calcutta for the losses sustained by them during the capture of the place the previous year was easily arranged,* but when the prominent individuals of the ruling class came to be dealt with difficulties rose at every turn. Admiral Watson, who had had no share in the proceedings which had produced such magnificent results, preferred a claim for a special allowance in addition to his share, by no means inconsiderable, of the amount reserved for the navy. The claim was resisted, and although Clive lent all the weight of his authority to support it, urging his colleagues to agree to a deduction of ten per cent. from their own specified proportions, it was finally rejected.† Then, again, it was urged that the sailors belonging to the squadron who had served in the field should participate in the prize-money sanctioned for the army. The officers of the army did not see the justice of this, and the discussion

* The great influx of money and trade led to the establishment the following year of the Calcutta Mint (19th August 1758).

† Admiral Watson died very soon after. His heirs unsuccessfully endeavoured to enforce his claims in a Court of Law in England.



between the two services led to a very serious ill-feeling.

To settle this and other disputed points Clive appointed a committee composed of two officers from each branch of the military service. This committee, decided against the claims of the sailors, and directed that the distribution of the awarded money should take place without the intervention of prize-agents. Clive over-ruled this decision and dissolved the committee. The committee wrote a protest against this action, and laid it before Clive. Clive at once placed the whole of its members under arrest, and sent their ringleader, Captain Armstrong—the army being still in the field—to Calcutta. The incident terminated by submission and apology on the part of the officers; it caused, however, an ill-feeling which required some time to allay. Indeed, it seriously affected the feeling of the officers towards Clive himself, and when, on his return to Calcutta, he brought Captain Armstrong to a court-martial, that officer was acquitted. The distribution of the money, when it did take place, produced a most injurious effect on the health of the men by the opportunities it gave for indulgence in every kind of debauchery. The mortality in consequence increased greatly.

Meanwhile the pressure placed upon all classes at Murshidábád to provide the funds which caused so many heart-burnings was beginning to display itself in a manner which was not calculated to increase the popularity of the new Núwáb. The enormous sums exacted by his European allies did not include the



entire demands made upon him on his accession. He had friends, dependants, confederates, some of whom had been won over to him, whilst still a conspirator, by promises of rewards in money in the event of success. He had now to provide for his dependants and to make good these promises. The situation was extremely critical. But for the sums paid to the English he could have satisfied the native claimants. With the English he could not break: he had been forced, with a smiling face and an aching heart, to satisfy them. But he had not been many weeks ruler of Bengal before he recognised the fact that he had aided in establishing a power behind the throne greater than the throne itself, and that, if he wished to maintain his position, he would be obliged to take an early opportunity to reckon with that power. Less imprudent than his predecessor, he kept for the moment these thoughts to himself, and turned his attention to the replenishing of his coffers by putting pressure upon the wealthier of his subjects. No sooner had Olive left Murshidábád than he attempted to apply the screw. He did this, however, in a manner so tactless that he only succeeded in alienating the most powerful of his supporters. Rájá Dúlab Rám, who had been his confederate, withdrew to his own palace, summoned his friends, and refused all intercourse with the Núwáb. Rám Rám Singh, Rájá of Parníah, Rámnarain, governor of Bihár, went into rebellion. The disaffection reached even the distant city of Dháka, where one of the sons of Sarfaráz Khán, the Núwáb



defeated and slain by Alí Vardí Khán, thought the moment opportune to strike for power.

These disaffections and these outbreaks threw the Núwáb once more entirely into the hands of Clive. In vain did he strive to avoid the appeal. Power in the East depends upon money, and Clive had rendered Mír J'afar powerless by extracting all the coin he possessed. In the demand for aid Clive saw an opportunity of placing the settlement he represented on a footing which would make it for ever independent of the caprices of núwábs and emperors. Again did his cool, calm, clear judgment enable him to meet the crisis. He had not many troops to spare, but those which were at his disposal he promptly used. On 6th July he had detached Major Eyre Coote at the head of a party consisting of two hundred and twenty-three Europeans, five hundred native troops, and two 6-pounder guns, in pursuit of M. Law, who, summoned from Bhágalpúr by Siráju'd daulah, had arrived within twenty miles of Rájmahal when he heard of the catastrophe of Plassey. Had he only pushed on, he would have saved Siráju'd daulah and possibly changed the face of the campaign. True, however, to his nature, he had halted for further intelligence. On learning the fate of Siráju'd daulah he had marched to Patná, the capital of the province of Bihár, the governor of which, Rámnarain, had never wavered in his fidelity to his master. Coote reached Bhágalpúr on the 18th, learned there that Law had passed through Patná and had taken the road to Audh, and immediately pushed after him. Coote reached Patná



on the 26th, and received there evidence of the hostile disposition of Rámnarain, and information that Law and his party were only one day's march beyond the limits of the Bihár province. His own extreme desire was to follow them up, but his Europeans, who had mutinied once, were still ill-disposed to proceed further, and the native portion of his force, mostly men from Southern India, already far from their homes, now displayed a similar disinclination. Forced, then, to renounce the immediate pursuit, Coote marched to Dánápúr. He subsequently proceeded as far as Chaprá, but, on receiving orders from Clive, returned thence to Patná, and reached that place on the 13th August. Though Coote himself was compelled to leave from ill-health, the little force remained at Patná till its services were required in the manner to be related.

It was whilst this force was there located, and subsequently to Clive's return to Calcutta on the 17th September, that the disturbances and disagreements between Mír J'afar and his governors and great officers came to a height. Appealed to by the Núwáb to aid him in repressing these, Clive embarked the whole of his available force, now reduced to four hundred European and thirteen hundred native troops, in boats at Chandranagar, on the 17th November, and reached Murshidábád on the 25th. He brought with him the Rájá of Parníah, and made his peace with Mír J'afar. On the 30th, joined by the detachment stationed at Kásimbázár, consisting of two hundred and fifty Europeans, he proceeded towards Rájmahal,



to which place Mír J'afar's army had preceded him, and arrived there on the 3rd December. The main object of the Núwáb at the moment was to pacify the province of Bihár. Compared to this the disaffection in the other portions of his government was of small importance. Indeed, the knowledge that the English had taken the field was of itself sufficient to allay it. But Bihár, powerful in wealth, in position, in the character of its population, was not to be trifled with. The authority of the Núwáb shaken there, his position at Murshidábád would become wholly insecure. Mír J'afar was, then, naturally urgent that no delay should occur in ensuring the pacification of this important dependency.

Again was he in the toils of Clive. The English leader was well aware of the urgency of his ally. He used it for his own purpose and the purpose of his countrymen. Encamped close to the Núwáb at Rájmahal, he refused to accompany him in his tour of pacification until all the arrears due to the Company should be paid up, and all the articles of the late treaty executed. This condition placed the Núwáb in a dilemma. He could not pacify Bihár without the assistance of the English, and he could not obtain that assistance unless he were to enter into a specific performance, impossible for him to carry out without the assistance of his powerful vassal, Rájá Dúlab Rám. Now he had insulted and made an enemy of that vassal. The question, then, narrowed itself to this: was it better to dispense with the services of the English or to seek a reconciliation with Rájá Dúlab Rám?



A wiser man would have avoided the necessity of the first alternative by maintaining the bonds of friendship with his vassals. But it was too late to think of that now. The English were there. Their dismissal without acceding to their terms could only mean destruction. The Núwáb, then, utterly helpless, made overtures to Dúláb Rám. The safety of this nobleman having been guaranteed by Clive, he came to Rájmahal on the 23rd, and, on the 30th, effected his reconciliation with the Núwáb.

There remained still the performance of the contract with the English. This was carried out in the following manner. Clive received orders on the treasury of Murshidábád for twelve and a half lakhs of rupees, and assignments on the revenues of Bardhwán, Krishnagar, and Huglí for ten and a half. This accounted for the amount due under the treaty. For the payment of the nineteen lakhs which would fall due in the following April, assignments on the same three districts were given; whilst, to complete the fulfilment of the other conditions, the Núwáb issued orders for the cession to the Company of the lands south of Calcutta noted in the treaty, on the payment of an annual rental of two hundred and twenty-two thousand nine hundred and fifty-eight rupees—at which sum they had been assessed.

The preliminaries having been executed, the combined armies set out—2nd January 1758*—on the tour

* The first anniversary of the recapture of Calcutta. What a history is comprised in those twelve months!



of pacification. Patná was the first city which was to receive the costly honour of the visit. The timely submission of Rámnarain, and more especially the representations of Clive on his behalf, ensured his re-appointment to the office of governor—under the nominal supremacy of Míran, the Núwáb's son—of Bihár. In acknowledgment of this exercise of patronage in his favour, Rámnarain paid seven lakhs of rupees into the Núwáb's treasury. Nor were English interests neglected on this auspicious occasion. Bihár was the home of the manufacture of saltpetre—a commodity which formed a large article of the trade of the foreign settlers. Its manufacture was a monopoly generally farmed to some agents who made his own terms for its sale. Clive, seeing the advantages which would accrue to his countrymen, proposed to the Núwáb that the Company should become the farmer, offering terms higher than any at which the monopoly had been previously rated. The Núwáb was very unwilling, however advantageous the terms, that so important a trade should fall into the hands of those in whose counsels he already heard the voice of a master. But—for that very reason, perhaps—he felt himself forced to accede. He simply stipulated that an annual supply of twenty thousand maunds* should be reserved for himself.

The Núwáb had resolved to remain at Patná till the patents confirming him in his new office, for which he had applied to Dihlí, should arrive. Clive, well

* A Bengal maund was equal to 76 lbs.



aware that his presence alone, by its influence on Mír J'afar, ensured the order which had been re-established, had resolved, whatever might be the personal inconvenience, not to quit Patná until the Núwáb should take his departure. The patents did not reach the camp till the 14th April. With those for the Núwáb came one also for Clive, nominating him a noble of the Mughul empire and a Mansab or Commander of six thousand horse, one of the highest honorary titles that could be given. The investiture took place with great ceremony the following day. The combined forces then proceeded to Bárrh, where they broke up, the Núwáb sending his army back to Murshidábád, remaining himself for a shooting excursion on the hills, Clive returning to Calcutta. As he passed through Murshidábád, it became the duty of Clive to send to the Núwáb a serious complaint regarding the conduct of his son, Míran, who, disappointed because the presence of Clive at Patná had frustrated the plan he had formed for the elevation of his brother-in-law, Mír Kásim, to the governorship of Bihár, had spread reports which caused the inhabitants of the city to regard the advent of the English leader with the greatest alarm. This alarm was soon dissipated, and Clive, having remained at Murshidábád long enough to receive assurances from Mír J'afar that Míran's conduct had no countenance from him, and the most contrite apologies from Míran himself, returned to Calcutta.

His journey had not been fruitless. Whilst healing the sores which are the inevitable consequence of



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LORD CLIVE.

[1757.]

violent revolution, he had received incontestable evidence that the result of the battle of Plassey had been to make the Núwáb of Bengal, Bihár, and Orísá virtually dependent on the foreign settlers who had won for him his throne. He had seen as clearly that time and circumstances would make this state of dependency more and more absolute.



CHAPTER XII.

THE DEGLUTITION OF BENGAL.

ON the 24th May, Clive returned to Calcutta. He had left at Kásimbázár all the European infantry who had taken part in the bloodless but important campaign just concluded, and a newly-raised battalion of sipáhís. He had left them there close to the capital of Mír J'afar, as much to be ready for any emergency as to remind the Núwáb of the presence and the power of those who had raised him to his semi-regal position. His first act on reaching Calcutta had for its object a purpose not dissimilar in character. He desired to place the capital of the British territories in a state of absolute security against attack. He had traced, before starting to accompany Mír J'afar, at Gobindpúr, the lines of a new Fort William—the Fort William which now exists—capable of defying any number of assailants. Finding that but little progress had been made in the work during his absence, he so stimulated the energy of those engaged in it that, four months



after his arrival, the *enceinte*, the ravelins, and the covered way, were completed, and the other parts were in a very forward state.

Before this, however, had been accomplished, Clive had to encounter a trial sufficient to disturb the equanimity of a man who was conscious of having rendered great services to his country. On the 20th June there arrived in Calcutta despatches from the India Office, penned after Clive had recaptured Calcutta but before he had achieved any of the successes which followed the recapture, imposing a new constitution for the government of the Company's possessions in Bengal. This constitution was ridiculously absurd. It provided that the Council should consist of ten members, and that the four senior of these should preside for three months at a time. The ten members were all nominated, and the list did not include the name of Clive. This omission was truly accounted for at the time by the belief that the home authorities were under the impression that Clive had simply carried out the programme allotted to him, and after the recapture of Calcutta had returned to Madras. But the features of the constitution were not the less ridiculous. Government by a rotation of five years has been often found to have many inconveniences, but government by a rotation of three months would, in India, even at the present day, be unworkable.

From the dilemma which was thus imposed upon the authorities in Calcutta the Bengal settlement was saved by the good sense of the ten gentlemen upon



whom power had been so unceremoniously thrust. They were perfectly conscious that any attempt they might make to perform the play of "Hamlet" without Hamlet would terminate in their unceremonious dismissal from the stage. They, therefore, unanimously requested Clive to accept the office of President of the Council, and perform its duties till the pleasure of the Court of Directors should be known. Clive, after some consideration, gracefully acceded to their request.

It was no time, indeed, for holding back. The long-threatened storm of French invasion had burst upon Southern India. A powerful French force, commanded by a brilliant general, Count Lally, escorted by an equally powerful French fleet, had arrived at Pondichery. Two encounters had taken place, both undecided, between the French and English ships. Lally, summoning Bussy from Haidar-ábád, had marched to Tanjúr, the conquest of which place would be, it was believed, a prelude to a march upon Madras. Under these circumstances an urgent request was transmitted to Clive, who had, it will be recollected, been only lent to Bengal, to return and save the territories which were the cradle of his renown.

Urgent as was the request, tempting to an ambitious man as was the offer, Clive was unable to accede to the one or to accept the other. His place, he felt, was still in Bengal. The services he had rendered to Mír J'afar had been so burdensome that revolt against the English yoke had been the secret thought



of his son, his kinsmen, his confederates, his courtiers—his own one cherished hope. Nor was the situation without danger. Rumours of the two encounters between the rival fleets, of the magnitude of the military armaments of the French, of their march against Tanjūr, of the terror and disquietude of the English, had reached Murshidábád in an exaggerated form. The party which disliked the English alliance seized the opportunity to urge Mír J'afar to break at once with those whom they regarded as his masters. By an intrigue, the minister devoted to English interests, Rájá Dúlab Rám, was dismissed. It is possible that, in spite of a visit paid to Calcutta by the Núwáb at the period of the disgrace of his minister, the Court party would have proceeded further, but that immediately after Mír J'afar's return the security of his quasi-throne was threatened by an invasion from the north.

The Mughul empire had not recovered, it never did recover, from the blows dealt it by the invasions of Nádir Sháh and Ahmad Sháh. Thenceforward chaos reigned supreme. Order, discipline, authority, disappeared, and the right was the right of the strongest. Such was the state of things when Sháh A'lam, heir to the throne, tired of the bondage in which he was held by the all-powerful minister of his father, the Emperor Alamghir Sáni, broke loose from restraint, entered Rohilkhand, raised there an army, and with the active support of the Núwáb of Alláhábád, of the Rájá of Banáras, and of the powerful zamíndárs of Northern Bihár, and the encouragement of the



Núwáb-Vazír of Awadh (Oudh), invaded Bihár and marched directly on Patná.

The intrigues, conspiracies, and underhand dealings against the English, which constituted at the time the statecraft of the Court of Murshidábád, gave way, on receipt of this news, to abject and degrading fear. The Núwáb and his friends mistrusted everyone, from Rámnarain, Governor of Patná, whom they hated and feared, down to the sentry at the palace gates. The treasury was empty; the provinces had been exhausted to meet the English demands; the Séths, more disgusted with the rule of Mír J'afar than they had been with that of the man against whom they had conspired to instal him, were engaged in making a pilgrimage to Jagannáth; the Núwáb had scarcely a resource left. In the frenzy of his despair he sent an urgent request to his old enemies, the Maráthás, to march to his aid; then, as the invader might come before the ally, scarcely less to be dreaded, should arrive, he debated with his confidants as to the mode in which it would be possible to raise sufficient money to buy off the invasion. When the empty treasury, the desolate condition of the provinces, the absence of the Séths, forced him to dismiss this idea, he turned then to the course, alike the most natural and the most hateful to him; he implored urgently, beseechingly, even abjectly, the assistance of the English.

Clive was not unprepared to employ the troops of the presidency to support the Núwáb of his own creation. Immediately after he had taken upon him-



self the duties of President of the Council he had set himself to work to reorganise the local army. The Bengal European Battalion, subsequently the 1st Fusiliers and till the abolition, within the last few months, of the regimental numbers, the 101st Regiment of the Line, had been raised to full strength by the volunteering into its ranks of almost all the men of the detachment of the 39th Foot, ordered home, and by the incorporation into it of the European detachments brought from Madras and Bombay. He had formed the artillery into two companies, and had increased the native army by the raising of a fourth battalion. Major Kilpatrick, the able coadjutor who had fought with him in Southern India and in Bengal, having died, Clive had selected as his successor Major Forde of the 39th Foot, then at Madras, an officer of very remarkable ability. Forde had in consequence come round to Calcutta, and, holding the rank of lieutenant-colonel, commanded all the Company's troops in Bengal. Clive had scarcely completed these arrangements when he received a message from the Rájá of Vijiyanagaram to the effect that by the withdrawal from Haidarábád of the French force under Bussy, the Northern Sirkárs had been left without sufficient protection, that he and his confederates had risen in revolt, and that the assistance of an English force would enable them to expel the few French troops who were there. Clutching at an opportunity which, if well employed, would consummate the work he had begun six years before, Clive, denuding himself, despatched Forde (12th October) at the head of



five hundred Europeans and two thousand native troops with some guns to Vishákpattanam (Vizagapatam) to conquer the Northern Sirkárs for the English, and to eradicate French influence at Haidarábád. The despatch of this expedition reduced the European force in Bengal to little more than three hundred men, including artillery, nor did the arrival of recruits during the four months that followed increase that number very considerably. The returns, dated the 6th February 1759, show that inclusive of non-commissioned officers and drummers the whole European infantry in Bengal consisted at that date of three hundred and ninety-five men—of whom a hundred and forty were recruits—and the artillery of ninety-three. During that month, however, the total was largely increased by arrivals from England, and, in view of coming contingencies, Clive at this period raised a fifth battalion of sipáhís.

Such was the military condition of the English zamíndarí when Clive received from Mír J'afar the urgent, beseeching, even abject requests for aid, of which I have spoken. Once again was he the master of the situation, the arbiter of the destinies of Bengal! For it was not only Mír J'afar who solicited his aid. Almost simultaneously there reached him letters from Sháh A'lam reminding him that he was a noble of the Mughul empire, a commander of six thousand horse, and summoning him to render lawful service to himself in his expedition. The letter was accompanied by many promises of personal advantages.

Clive was well aware that his title as a noble of the



empire bound him to act not with but against a rebel to its lord. He was well acquainted, too, with the ill-assorted nature of the confederation of which the Sháhzádah was the head. Moreover, Mír J'afar was his creation, and he never, throughout his service in India, lost sight of that fact. It did not require, then, the letters which he, nearly at the same time, received from the Emperor, soliciting his assistance against his "misguided and rebellious son" to decide him to march with all his available force to the assistance of Mír J'afar.

With this object in view, he set out from Calcutta on the 25th February (1759) at the head of his whole available effective force, consisting of four hundred and fifty Europeans and two thousand five hundred sipáhís. So important did he consider the crisis that he was content to leave Calcutta to be guarded by a few sick and newly-arrived recruits, a small detail of gunners, and a portion of the newly-raised fifth battalion of sipáhís. He reached Murshidábád on the 8th March, set out again with the Núwáb's army, commanded by his son Míran on the 13th, and marched into Patná on the 8th April. Before he arrived there, however, the rumour of the action he was taking had done its work. The army of the Sháhzádah had fallen back, baffled and disorganised.

It happened in this wise. The march of the rebel army towards Patná and its near approach to that city had produced in the mind of the governor, Rám-narain the greatest apprehensions. Rám-narain was bound to Mír J'afar neither by the ties of affection

nor by those of a similar faith. For the times in which he lived he was regarded as a man of a singularly loyal political character, and he had clung to Siráju'd daulah as long as that prince exercised the office of Núwáb of the three provinces. On the fall of Siráju'd daulah he had recognised his successor, but he was soon made aware that his previous loyalty had rankled in the mind of Mír J'afar, that but for Clive's personal exertions he would long since have been removed, and that even then he held the office of governor of Bihár by a very precarious tenure. He was now called upon to oppose, in the interests of a master who hated him, the army of a prince who in a few years would, in all probability, be master of the Mughul empire. Placed in this position he acted with remarkable discretion. Massing his forces, he took up a position outside the city, whence he could communicate easily alike with the Núwáb and the Sháhzádah. Then, writing to the former and to Clive that, not strong enough to give battle to the enemy, he held his position pending the arrival of reinforcements, he sent a message to the Sháhzádah to assure him of his good will. He had resolved, in fact, to follow the advice given him by Mr. Amyatt, the head of the English factory at Patná, and "act as he found most to his own advantage."

As the Sháhzádah approached nearer, Mr. Amyatt and the English embarked on board boats which had been prepared, and proceeded down the river. As soon as they were well out of sight, Rámnarain acted upon a resolution which had long been forming in his



mind—to pay a visit to the camp of the Sháhzádah and judge for himself of his prospects of success. He proceeded thither, was received with the greatest consideration, clothed with a dress of honour, and confirmed in the government of Bihár. But whilst these ceremonies were progressing Rámnarain had used well his own eyes and the eyes of his confidants. He had noticed the want of cohesion, the hollow fidelity and the interested motives of the hungry adventurers who followed the Sháhzádah, and he had made up his mind. Prolonging his stay as long as possible to retard the progress of the rebel army, he returned, when the march was again resumed, to Patná, nominally to prepare that city for the Sháhzádah's reception, really to arrange for its defence. He performed this latter task so effectually that when, on the 23rd March, the rebel army appeared before Patná its leaders found they had to undertake a siege. In the interval between that date and the 4th April Rámnarain repulsed several attacks, each one of which, however, rendered his position less and less secure. Help, however, was at hand; and the arrival of a detachment of English-trained sipáhís, commanded by an English officer, on the last-named date, so disheartened the besiegers that they raised the siege and retired.

The crisis was now over. The ill-assorted federations of which the Sháhzádah's army had been composed broke up and dispersed, and the Sháhzádah himself, joined by the French detachment under Law, took refuge in the territories of the Rájá of Bundelkhand.



Before his retreat he had written a humble letter to Clive imploring pecuniary aid to enable him to effect it, and had received for that purpose a donation of eight thousand rupees.

Such was the position when, on the 8th April, the united army of Clive and Míran reached Patná. Having repaired the defences of the city, Clive and his ally marched to the banks of the Karamnásá river to clear the country of the detached parties who still lingered there plundering. This task was soon accomplished. Clive then returned to Patná to receive there the expressions of boundless gratitude poured upon him by Mír J'afar, and the more substantial present, as a personal jaghír, of the zamíndarí of the whole of the districts south of Calcutta, then rented by the East India Company, and bringing in an income calculated at thirty thousand pounds a year. This was the famous jaghír the denial of his right to which in later years roused so much bitterness. Leaving a European garrison in Patná, Clive returned, accompanied by Mír J'afar and his son Míran, to Calcutta, and arrived there in June. He had been cheered, some time before his return, by intelligence of the complete victory obtained by Colonel Forde over the Marquis de Conflans at Kondúr, and of the subsequent storming of, and surrender of the French army at Machhlípatanam (Masulipatam), and he was awaiting with a calm certainty the information that not only the Northern Sirkárs, but paramount influence at the Court of Haidarábád, had been permanently transferred from the French to the East India Company.



But before this consummation was attained a difficulty with another power presented itself. The Dutch at Chinsurah had for some time past noticed with jealousy and alarm the growing importance of the English settlers. The special advantages with respect to trade, and the monopoly of saltpetre, had affected their revenues, whilst the right claimed and exercised by them to search all vessels coming up the Huglí, and the insistence on the employment only of English pilots, had touched their pride to the quick. All these evils had come upon them since the fall of Siráju'd daulah. They were the natural consequences of the elevation to the chief place in Bengal of a Núwáb entirely dependent upon the English. Chafing under these evils, the Dutch had watched with the keenest interest the gradual alienation of Mír J'afar from his English patrons. Before the invasion of the Sháhzádah had terrified the Núwáb into a renewal of his amicable relations with Clive, the negotiations between Chinsurah and Murshidábád had reached a very critical phase. It might almost be said that a secret alliance had been formed for the expulsion of the English. This much is certain, that, utterly unknown to the latter, the Núwáb had given his countenance, support, and approval to the Dutch scheme of introducing into Bengal a body of troops far exceeding in number those at the disposal of Clive.

The repulse of the invasion of the Sháhzádah, the consequent re-knitting of ties with the English, the gratitude at the result of Mír J'afar, came to cool



the passionate desire by which the latter had been animated, before those occurrences, to shake off the English yoke. But the Dutch preparations had proceeded too far to be suddenly stopped. Letters containing the terms of the alliance with Mír J'afar, accompanied by earnest requests for the means to execute the conditions agreed upon, had been despatched to, and received at, Batavia, and an armament was already on its way to the Huglí.

Rumour, how originated it is difficult certainly to affirm, but arising probably from the indiscretion of the Núwáb and his confidants, had spoken early in 1759 of the proximate arrival of a large Dutch force, and an incident occurred in the month of August, just six weeks after the return of Clive from the campaign against the Sháhzádah, which seemed to indicate that it was not altogether baseless. During that month a Dutch vessel, having on board a large number of Malayan soldiers, arrived at the mouth of the Huglí. Clive at once informed the Núwáb of the event, and took precautions to prevent alike the passage of the ship up the river and the march inland of the Malays. In vain did the Dutch authorities at Chinsurah declare that the ship was really for Nágapatanam (Negapatam), and had been driven to the Huglí by stress of weather; that as soon as she should receive water and provisions she would resume her voyage. A clandestine attempt made by the Dutch Master Attendant to convey eighteen of the Malayan soldiers in his official barque to Chinsurah—an attempt discovered and frustrated

—threw great doubt on this pacific declaration. Finally, however, the ship resumed her voyage. Unsupported, she had been powerless, in the face of the suspicions her presence had awakened, to effect anything against the English.

But in the October following, when Mír J'afar was actually in Calcutta, the guest of Clive, the more serious attempt, the result of his negotiations with Chinsurah, was actually made. In that month there arrived at the mouth of the Huglí seven Dutch ships full of troops, Europeans and Malays. The Núwáb affected to treat the matter lightly, and announced his intention of immediately proceeding to his own town of Huglí, to summon thither to his presence the Dutch authorities, and insist upon their at once dismissing their ships, or, in case of their refusal, of chastising them and driving them out of Bengal. Mír J'afar did proceed to Huglí; he did summon to his presence the Dutch authorities. What actually passed in secret conference cannot be known; but the historian has the authority of Clive himself for asserting that the Núwáb "received them in a most gracious manner, more like friends and allies than enemies to him and to his country." A few days later Mír J'afar wrote to Clive to inform him that he had granted the Dutch some indulgences with respect to their trade, and that they had engaged to leave the river with their ships and troops as soon as the season should permit.

The occasion was one of those which brought into the strongest light all the higher qualities of Clive.



In the presence of danger his intellect was always clear, his judgment unerring, his action prompt and resolute. Not for a moment was he taken in by the specious letter of the Núwáb. Reading between its lines, he saw, not only that the Dutch had no intention of sending away their ships, but that they had obtained the Núwáb's assent to bring them up to Chinsurah. He at once resolved, to use his own emphatic words, that they "should not" bring them up. The events of the few days immediately following came to justify his prescience. Certain information reached him that the Dutch ships had weighed anchor and were moving upwards, that Dutch agents were active at Chinsurah, at Kásimbázár, and at Patná, in raising troops, and that at these acts the Núwáb was conniving.

The position was such as would have driven an ordinary man to despair. On board the Dutch vessels in the river were seven hundred European and eight hundred Malay troops, well armed and equipped; at Chinsurah was a Dutch force of a hundred and fifty men, and native levies daily increasing in number; behind the Dutch was the Núwáb, as ready now to act as he had been at Plassey, the moment fortune should seem to declare in their favour. To meet this enemy Clive had, at Calcutta, three hundred and thirty Europeans and twelve hundred sipáhís. It is true that he had other detachments scattered over the province; but the nearest of them was too distant to be available at the crisis now impending. In this hour of



danger Clive was cool, calm, self-reliant, even confident. He took at once every possible precaution. He sent special messengers to summon all available men from the outposts: he called out, to defend the port and the town, the militia, amounting to three hundred men, five-sixths of whom were Europeans: he formed half a troop of horse of some twenty to thirty volunteers, and enlisted as infantry nearly a similar number of men who could not ride. Of the four English vessels then in the Hugli, he despatched one, the smallest, with an express to Admiral Cornish, then cruising on the Arakan coast, asking for immediate aid; the three others he ordered up to aid in the defence of the town. The batteries which commanded the most important passages of the river near the town, Tannah fort, and Charnock's battery,* were greatly strengthened. Heavy cannon were mounted at each, as well as on the face of the new fort, Fort William, commanding the river. Just at this moment Colonel Forde, fresh from the storming of Machhli-patanam, arrived, accompanied by Captain Knox, his coadjutor in that glorious event. To the first Clive assigned the command of the whole of the available force, to the latter that of the parties at Tannah fort and Charnock's battery.

These preparations were made not a moment too soon. In the second week of November the Dutch, finding further delay would not serve them, threw

* The fort of Tannah was five miles below Calcutta on the right bank of the river, Charnock's battery was nearly opposite to it.



off the mask, and forwarded to Calcutta a long remonstrance, recapitulating all their grievances, and threatening vengeance and reprisals, unless the English should renounce their claim to the right of search, and all opposition to the free progress of their ships and their vessels. Clive replied, with a specious audacity, that the English had offered no insult to the colours, attacked no property, and infringed no privileges, of the Dutch; that, if their boats had been stopped and searched, and the advance of their troops opposed, it had been by the express direction of the Núwáb, acting with the authority of the Emperor. He concluded by referring them to the Núwáb, and by offering his services as a mediator⁹ on the occasion. Notwithstanding the tone of this reply, Clive, as he records himself, was not a little embarrassed as to the course he should adopt in case the Dutch, continuing to advance, should pass the batteries below Calcutta. The responsibility of commencing hostilities against an ally of England was very great, and Clive and the Council felt grave doubts as to whether the Court of Directors would hold him justified in incurring it.

From further anxiety on this head he was saved by the conduct of the Dutch. The reply of Clive, containing as it did expressions which, though true in the letter, were the reverse of true in their plain signification,* exasperated them to a degree

* Though Clive had the authority of the Núwáb for the acts complained of by the Dutch, it was an authority which he had himself solicited for the protection of British interests; and the

beyond endurance. Without attempting further diplomatic intercourse, they attacked and captured seven small English vessels lying off Faltá, tore down the English colours, and transferred the guns and stores they carried to their own ships. Amongst the captured vessels was the despatch-boat carrying Clive's letter to Admiral Cornish, asking for assistance. At the same time, landing troops at Faltá and Riápúr, they burned the houses and effects of the English agents stationed there. Their ships then stood up the river. Having no pilots, however, their progress was necessarily slow.

This action on the part of the Dutch reassured Clive. He at once sent a despatch to the Núwáb, apprising him of the acts of violence which had been committed, and stating his wish that, as the quarrel lay only between the Dutch and the English, it might be fought out between those two nations alone. Whilst, however, asking no direct assistance, he added that the Núwáb would convince him of his sincerity and attachment if he would "directly surround their (the Dutch) subordinates, and distress them in the country to the utmost." Whilst thus writing to the Núwáb, Clive directed Forde to take possession of Bárnagar (Barnagore); to cross there the river, with his troops and four field-pieces, to Shrirámpúr (Serampore), and to march thence on Chandranagar, the object being not only to strike terror into Chinsurah, but to be

Núwáb, who had given him that authority, had encouraged and even implored the Dutch to pay no regard to it, as having been extracted from his necessities, and being therefore void.



ready to intercept the Dutch troops in case they should endeavour to gain that place by land. I shall describe in its proper place the manner in which these instructions were executed.

Meanwhile the Dutch ships were moving upwards. On the 21st they anchored in Sankrál reach, just below the point of the fire of the English batteries. The next day they landed their troops (seven hundred Europeans and eight hundred Malays) on the right bank of the river, with directions to march to Chinsurah, and then dropped down to Melancholy Point.

This action cleared the ground for Clive. He had now two distinct objects before him, each to be met on its own ground. The landing of the Dutch troops had severed them from their base—the ships which had conveyed them. To attack and overthrow these troops before they could gain a new base—that at Chinsurah being the only possible one—and, at the same time, to attack and destroy the old base, the Dutch ships—these were the clear and definite objects at which he aimed. Sending information to Forde of the landing and march of the Dutch troops, and directing Captain Knox with the parties at the batteries to join him with all possible expedition, he proceeded to deal with the Dutch ships.

I have stated in a previous page* that before the commencement of hostilities Clive had but three ships of any size at his disposal, and that he had directed

* Page 308.



these to come up close to Calcutta, so as to aid in the defences of the town. They were three Indiamen, the "Duke of Dorset," 544 tons, Captain Forrester; the "Calcutta," 761 tons, Captain Wilson; the "Hardwicke," 573 tons, Captain Sampson. They all carried guns. When the senior officer, Captain Wilson, who acted as commodore, received the order to bring his ships nearer to Calcutta, the Dutch squadron had already passed him. He had therefore followed it up steadily, anchoring some distance below it. But when, on the 23rd, the Dutch squadron, after having landed its troops, fell back to Melancholy Point, Wilson made as though he would go by them. But the Dutch commodore, noticing his intention, sent him a message to the effect that if he persisted in the attempt he would be fired upon. Wilson, having no orders to engage, at once desisted, but sent a report to Clive. Clive's answer was clear and precise. He directed Wilson to send at once a despatch to the Dutch commodore, demanding immediate restitution of the vessels, property, and British subjects he had seized, a full apology to the English flag, and his immediate departure from the river. If these terms were not complied with, Wilson was to attack the Dutch squadron.

To understand the nature of the task which Clive had imposed upon this brave sailor I may mention that whereas he had at his disposal only three vessels, each capable of carrying at the most thirty guns, the Dutch squadron was composed of four ships, the "Vlissengen," the "Bleiswyk," the "Welgeleegen,"



and the "Princess of Orange," each carrying thirty-six ; of two, the "Elizabeth Dorothea" and the "Waeseld," each carrying twenty-six ; and of one, the "Mossel," carrying sixteen guns. It was a force which exceeded his own by nearly two to one.

On the 24th, Wilson transmitted his demand. It was promptly refused. Upon this Wilson directed his squadron to weigh anchor and stand for the Dutch squadron. Captain Forrester, in the "Duke of Dorset," the best sailor of the three, took the lead and soon laid his ship along the "Vlissengen," which bore the flag of the Dutch commodore. He had scarcely taken up this position when the wind changed, and his consorts were unable for some time to come near him. With great gallantry, however, he attacked his antagonist, and though the mark himself for the first half-hour of other ships in the Dutch squadron, he stuck to her, and, after a combat which lasted two hours, forced her to strike. Meanwhile the "Hardwicke" and "Calcutta" had succeeded in approaching the other ships. So well were they managed and so hot was the fire they maintained that in a very short time two of their smaller adversaries cut their cables and fled, whilst a third was driven on shore. The other ships maintained the combat till the "Vlissengen" had struck, when, with one exception, they followed her example. The exception was the "Bleiswyk," the captain of which made his way to Kálpí, the English ships being too crippled to follow him. He was not, however, destined to escape. At Kálpí he met two English ships, the



“Oxford” and the “Royal George,” which had arrived at the mouth of the Huglí two days before, and were now hastening upwards. They made an easy capture of the last of the Dutchmen.

In this most brilliant action the loss of the English in killed was very slight. The “Duke of Dorset,” though riddled through and through, though ninety shots were in her hull, and her rigging was cut to pieces, and though many of her crew were wounded, did not lose a single man. The Dutch lost, in killed and wounded, upwards of a hundred men. On the “Vlissengen” alone thirty were killed, and more than double that number wounded. It was an action worthy to be compared with the best achievements of the British navy.

Thus successfully had been carried out one of the two clear and distinct objects which Clive had determined to accomplish. I turn now to record the manner in which he dealt with the other. The reader has seen that Clive had no sooner heard of the debarkation of the Dutch troops and of their march towards Chin-surah than he sent information to Forde and directed Captain Knox to join him with the troops manning the two river batteries. I proceed now to examine the manner in which those two officers improved their opportunities.

Obedying the first orders transmitted to him on the 19th November, Forde, at the head of a hundred Europeans, four hundred sipáhís, and four guns, had, the day following their reception, attacked and captured the Dutch factory of Bárnagar. Crossing the river to



Shrirámpúr he marched thence towards Chandranagar, and encamped on the night of the 23rd in the gardens south of the Fort. It had been his intention to march the next morning and take up a position nearer Chinsurah, which lies only three miles north of Chandranagar. But the Dutch had not noticed in vain the advantage which taking the initiative gives to fighting-men. They did not take into consideration the fact that about fourteen hundred of their own soldiers were marching on Forde's rear, and that if they could only hold their own in Chinsurah till their arrival Forde would be between two fires. They heedlessly resolved to anticipate them. They therefore sent from Chinsurah, on the evening of the 23rd, their whole available force, amounting to a hundred and twenty Europeans and three hundred native soldiers, and bade them take up a position in the ruins of Chandranagar and hinder the further progress of the English. In that position, supported by four field-pieces, Forde found and attacked them on the morning of the 24th. The numbers were about equal on both sides, but on that of the English the soldiers, native and European, had been inured to Indian warfare. The result was never doubtful. Forde drove the Dutch from their position up to the very walls of Chinsurah, and captured their guns. The arrival of Knox the same evening raised his numbers to three hundred and twenty Europeans, eight hundred native infantry, and fifty European volunteer cavalry. The Núwáb had also placed about a hundred horsemen at his disposal—not, indeed, to fight, but to spy.



From the prisoners he had taken, and from other sources, Forde learned that same evening that the Dutch force landed from the ships would certainly arrive the following day. He at once sent off an express to Clive, stating that he thought he had a fair prospect of destroying the enemy, and demanding explicit instructions as to the course he should pursue. Clive was engaged in playing whist when this note reached him. He read it; then, without quitting the table, he wrote on the back of the note in pencil: "Dear Forde, fight them immediately; I will send you the Order in Council to-morrow," and dismissed the messenger.

* Armed with this authority, Forde, early on the morning of the 25th, took up at Biderra, about midway between Chandranagar and Chinsurah, a position commanding the road to the latter place. His right rested on the village of Biderra, his left on a mango grove, both of which he occupied; his front was covered by a broad and deep ditch. Securely planted behind this, his guns commanded the treeless plain in front of it. It was the very best position that could have been taken, for whilst very defensive it commanded all the approaches. At about 10 o'clock in the morning the Dutch force, led by Colonel Roussel, a French soldier of fortune, was seen advancing across the plain. As soon as they arrived within range the four guns of the English opened fire; notwithstanding the gaps they made, the Dutch still pressed on. The ditch, however, of the existence of which they were ignorant, stopped them. The con-



fusion which this necessary halt caused to their rear-most files, and the exposure of their line at the same time to a concentrated fire of small-arms from their enemies, some posted in the village, some in the grove, were fatal to the Dutch. Unable to press on, and the greater number of them ignorant of the cause of the stoppage, they fairly turned. Forde used the first moment of wavering which they displayed to launch at them his English cavalry. The small number of these was not at the moment apparent to the enemy, and the charge, made at an opportune moment, forced their masses back in disorder. Seeing the effect produced, that the Dutch were fairly beaten, the cavalry of the Núwáb, which had not responded to the invitation to accompany their European comrades in the first charge, dashed forward and completed the defeat. The Dutch and Malays, fresh from the confinement of shipboard, the latter unused to fight cavalry, then fairly turned and fled. No victory was ever more decisive. Of the seven hundred Europeans and eight hundred Malays composing the Dutch force, a hundred and twenty of the former and two hundred of the latter were left dead on the field, three hundred, in about equal proportions of both, were wounded; whilst M. Roussel, fourteen of his officers, three hundred and fifty Dutch, and two hundred Malays were made prisoners.* Some sixty of the former and two hundred and fifty of the

* I have followed in the main the account of this contest given by the Dutch East India Company. Vide Grose's *Voyage to the East Indies*, vol. ii. p. 376.



latter escaped, and of these only fourteen eventually succeeded in finding their way to Chinsurah.*

In this brilliant manner did Forde carry out the second distinct object aimed at by Clive. The policy of the latter had been carried out to the letter. By vigour, decision, and daring a danger greater than any which, since January 1757, had threatened the British settlement in Bengal had been encountered and overthrown. Of the secret understanding between the Dutch and the Núwáb there can be no doubt whatever. Clive entertained none. The Núwáb, in fact, groaning under the restraints imposed upon him by the British connection, was anxious to substitute for a foreign master a foreign ally. His troops were ready for action. Had the Dutch squadron beaten the three English ships in the river, and had Forde been beaten at Biderra, these troops would have joined the Dutch in an attack upon Calcutta. If that attack had succeeded, the Núwáb, grown wise by experience, would have imposed upon the Dutch terms far less galling to himself than those which had made him little more than a pageant sovereign guided by English counsels.

This conspiracy had been defeated by the calm decision of Clive, by the gallantry, skill, and daring of Forde, and of the officers and men, sailors as well

* "Such," writes Colonel Broome, in his admirable history of the Bengal army, "was the brilliant victory of Biderra, marked by an extraordinary degree of skill and courage, and most important in its results—and yet the name of the action is scarcely ever mentioned, and in no way commemorated."



as soldiers, who were engaged. The victory on the Huglí and the victory at Biderra brought the Dutch, hitherto so threatening, to his feet, not only for mercy, but for protection. They sorely needed the latter. Three days after the battle, Míran, the son and heir of the Núwáb, arrived from Murshidábád with six thousand horse. Up to that moment the great opponent of the English alliance, the secret instigator of the intrigues with the Dutch, Míran had come down in the hope of dictating his own terms, if, as he hoped, the English had been checked. But finding them victorious on all points, the Dutch broken, almost annihilated, he, with characteristic versatility, at once changed his language. The yoke of the English must still be borne. His policy must be to ingratiate, not offend. In this view he spoke of nothing less than the extermination of the Dutch, of expelling the remnant of them from Bengal. To protect themselves from the consequences of these threats the Dutch implored the aid of the enemy whom they had so gratuitously provoked. Clive behaved with great generosity. After the victory of Biderra he had responded to the submission of the Dutch by ordering Forde to cease all hostilities. He now proceeded to Chinsurah and succeeded in effecting an accommodation between the Dutch and the Núwáb. The terms of it bore the impress of the practical mind of a man who was resolved that an opportunity should never again be afforded to the Dutch to wage war against the English in Bengal. For, whilst it confirmed all the trading privileges



previously accorded to the former, and gave them permission to maintain a hundred and twenty-five soldiers for the protection of their factories at Chinsurah, at Kásimbázár, at Patná, and at Baleshwar (Balasore); it compelled them to send away their squadron with those prisoners recently taken by the English who would not serve the conqueror, and with any remnants of the discomfited host; to discharge all the native soldiers whom they had raised; and to agree never to carry on hostilities, to enlist or introduce troops, or to erect fortifications in the three provinces.

The other terms of the accommodation with the same people were not less satisfactory. The Dutch agreed to disavow the conduct of their fleet, to acknowledge themselves the aggressors, and to pay ten lakhs of rupees to cover all losses sustained by the English and the expenses of the war.*

The defeat of the Dutch and their consequent erasure from the list of fighting powers in Bengal formed a fitting close to an administration which had been a series of material triumphs. Arriving in Bengal in December 1756, Clive had begun the year 1757 by

* The transactions recorded in the text became the subject of correspondence and investigation in Europe. After some preliminaries the English and Dutch Governments nominated special commissioners to inquire into the matter. The conclusion arrived at was that the Dutch local authorities had been the aggressors, and that the conduct of Clive had been marked by a prudence, a judgment, and a generosity which entitled him to unqualified commendation.



recapturing Calcutta. He had followed up this conquest by forcing the Núwáb to loosen his hold on the possessions of the Company in Bengal. Noting then that the declaration of war between France and England would give the Núwáb an opportunity, for which even then he was hoping, of joining with the French at Chandranagar to strike again at Calcutta, he, suddenly and with very little warning, dealt a blow at the French which paralysed for ever all possibility of action on their part in Bengal. Left, then, face to face with the irritated Núwáb, he played him as a skilful angler plays a well-hooked salmon. Now he gave him line, now he let him run with the stream, now he checked him; at last he gave him the butt, and thoroughly exhausted him. The boy, Siráju'd daulah, had never the smallest chance with the cool, calculating, unscrupulous craftsman who was bent on dethroning him. In due time Plassey came, and on the seat which Plassey vacated Clive placed one of his own instruments, a man whom he had thoroughly looked over and bought. This man soon felt that in consenting to act as an instrument in the hands of Clive he had in very deed bartered his independence. He kicked, to no purpose, against his position. Circumstances were too strong for him. In vain did he vow that never would he invoke the aid of the English. In every great crisis he was compelled to invoke that aid. To this man, weary, worn-out, disgusted with the mere pageantry—almost all that he possessed—of sovereignty, it at last occurred that a combination with another European power would rid him of his



Frankenstein. But one European power was available—the Dutch. A confidential exchange of ideas with that people soon made him aware that in them he would find willing co-operators. It was a last, but not a desperate chance. The Dutch, acting secretly, could concentrate on the scene of action more ships, more men, than the English had available, and the Núwáb would join them the moment fortune should favour them with her first smile. The bargain was made. The Dutch performed their part of the compact: the Núwáb prepared his army to carry out his part. But again all was vain. The numbers of the Dutch, the secret hatred of the Núwáb, were shattered before the qualities of the man who, conscious that he had his enemies in his grasp, could so command his feelings that, whilst they stormed and intrigued without, he could give his full attention to a game of whist within. The calm sleep of Napoleon before Austerlitz, whilst in spirit akin to, does not, in the self-command it betrays, surpass the rubber played by Clive before Biderra. After that victory Clive stood again face to face with the Núwáb, but it was with a Núwáb who had lost every outside chance of re-asserting his independence, and who was then and for ever afterwards his puppet.

It was when this seal had been set to his achievements in Bengal that Clive felt he might safely take the repose which he so much needed. Up to that time he had turned a deaf ear to the orders of the Madras Government—which had only lent him to Bengal—to the insinuations conveyed by half-hearted



support from the India Office, to the advice of candid friends. He had determined not to leave Bengal so long as there should remain any danger threatening the English settlement. With the destruction of the aggressive power of the last of its European rivals all danger had disappeared. Clive felt then that he might return to England to recruit the health which exposure and unremitting attention to business of a most absorbing character had impaired, and to enjoy a relaxation from the cares and anxieties which for three years had occupied him incessantly.

Before, however, he could leave Bengal, it was necessary that he should make efficient provision for the conduct of the civil and military affairs of the Presidency. With respect to the former, he was placed in a position of some embarrassment with respect to his own colleagues. Four of these, Messrs. Holwell, Playdell, Sumner, and McGuire, had announced their intention of retiring. Of the abilities of many of the others, especially of Messrs. Watts and Warren Hastings, Clive has recorded his opinion. They, the two mentioned especially, had served him with a zeal and an energy not to be surpassed. Mr. Watts in particular, had rendered very signal service. It is difficult to understand why these gentlemen were passed over, unless we are prepared to admit that the claims of private friendship weighed more with Clive in this instance than the demands of the public service. They were passed over, however, in favour of Mr. Vansittart, of the Madras Presidency, Clive's intimate and trusted friend. The comparative



youth of Watts and Warren Hastings was alleged as the reason of their non-selection. It cannot fail to strike every candid mind that such a reason was the very last which should have been advanced, with reference to two men who had already displayed very high qualities in Bengal, by a man who had made his own mark before he was twenty-seven. The result proved, moreover, that on no ground was the supersession justifiable. Mr. Vansittart was, I believe, a conscientious English gentleman. But he did not possess the force of character necessary to enable a man to enforce the policy which his inner conscience commended to him. The departure of Clive let loose a deluge of passions which a strong man only could control. Vansittart was not a strong man. Nevertheless, on the recommendation of Clive, he was nominated to be his successor.*

There remained yet the appointment of a successor in the command of the army. For this post Clive had recommended Colonel Forde. Forde had come out to India as a Major in the 39th Foot. His conversation, his knowledge, the qualities of firmness, of coolness and calmness in danger, the capacity for command which he displayed, had, at an earlier period, won the admiration of Clive. In the choice of officers for command Clive was ever above jealousy. He was too sensible that his own reputation depended on the quality of the officers who served him. He always, therefore, endeavoured to procure

* He afterwards became one of Clive's bitterest enemies.



the very best men. Although, therefore, Forde did not accompany the force which left Madras in the autumn of 1756 to recover Calcutta, Clive never lost sight of him. When, then, just a year later, Major Kilpatrick, commanding the Company's troops in Bengal, died, Clive had urged that the appointment should be bestowed upon Major Forde. The proposal, made to the local authorities in Madras, was acceded to; and Forde, leaving the 39th, then under orders for England, came round to Calcutta in April 1758, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. In the October following Forde was despatched with a force of five hundred Europeans and two thousand sipáhís to the Northern Sirkárs to expel the French from those important districts. The courage and conduct he displayed, how he defeated the Marquis de Conflans at the decisive battle of Kondúr, and forced him to surrender with his whole army, a superior force in Europeans, at Machhlípatanam, how he laid a firm foundation for the replacement of French influence by English influence at the Court of Haidarábád, has been already mentioned. His reward for these splendid services had been dismissal. The Court of Directors had not approved his nomination to the command of their troops in Bengal. Forde, thus unceremoniously treated, made over to the next senior officer, a captain, the command of the force with which he had conquered for the Company a most valuable and important province, and came round, accompanied by Captain Knox, to Bengal. How he arrived in the very nick of time, just at the moment when the Dutch were threatening



Calcutta; how he beat them; the skill, energy, and conduct he displayed; have been recorded in this chapter. This was the man to whom Clive would willingly have made over the command of his army. For some unaccountable reason, the Court of Directors refused to ratify his choice.*

Forced, then, to look elsewhere Clive cast his eyes on Colonel Eyre Coote, who had just then returned with increased rank to India. But Eyre Coote could not be spared from Madras. His selection then fell upon Major Caillaud, of the Madras service. Clive had known Caillaud personally, and had marked the high character and military ability he had displayed on several occasions. He wrote then to Madras requesting the transfer of his services. He insisted at the same time on the despatch to Bengal of the troops which, sent from England for that presidency, had been detained on the coast. The request was acceded to, and on the 27th November Caillaud came round bringing with him two hundred Europeans, chiefly foreigners and recruits. He and the officers who accompanied him were at once transferred to the Bengal establishment. That establishment was further strengthened the following month by the return of the troops who, under Forde, had expelled the French from the Northern Sirkárs, by the enlistment into its ranks of the greater number of the prisoners taken

* Many years after, 1769, Forde was appointed a coadjutor of Messrs. Vansittart and Sraffton to supervise the Government of Bengal. The ship which conveyed them to India was lost,



at Biderra, and by the arrival of further recruits. These augmentations and the raising of the strength of the native battalions to a thousand men,* increased the European force at the disposal of Clive to little more than a thousand; the native force to five thousand.

With this force, before he could leave Bengal, it was necessary that he should make a demonstration. The bold attempt of the Dutch, whilst it had engaged the secret sympathies of Mír J'afar, had roused likewise the cupidity of the Sháhzádah. This young prince, not reconciled to the Court of Dihlí, had, in the jungles of Bundelkhand, meditated a scheme whereby, in the general confusion which would be caused by the success of the Dutch, he might reap substantial advantage. Summoning, then, to his standard most of his old supporters, and attracting others from the districts about him, he advanced towards the Karamnásá. To check this advance and at the same time to introduce to Mír J'afar the officer upon whom, after his own departure, he could entirely depend, Clive ordered Caillaud to proceed with three hundred and fifty Europeans and a thousand sipáhís to Murshidábád. Caillaud arrived at that capital on the 26th December, Clive on the 6th January following. The ceremony of the introduction of the new commander was followed by arrangements for the march to Patná of his force and of the

* Each native battalion was officered thus: one captain, one lieutenant, one ensign, and four sergeants.



army of the Núwáb under his son Míran. Then ensued the leave-taking and the departure. The last scene between Clive and the Núwáb whom he had created must have been painful to both. It was because he was his creation that Clive liked Mír J'afar. He believed that his sentiments were reciprocated, and though this, in the sense felt by Clive, may be doubted, it was certainly a fact that Mír J'afar regarded Clive as a tower of strength upon which he could lean in any difficulty. He must have felt at this supreme moment that he was parting with the one Englishman upon whom he could absolutely rely, who would support him against all other rivals and opponents. Had it been given to him to glance into futurity he would have seen, indeed, that in losing the Englishman who had made him, he was indeed losing the support without which he could not stand. It was well observed by one of his contemporaries that when Clive left Bengal "it appeared as if the soul was departing from the body." It was more even than that. The spoils of Plassey had roused all the worst passions of Englishmen in India. When the victor of that battle and his friends were succeeded by men who had had no share in those spoils, but who longed to reap on the same field, not only did it become clear that the soul had departed from the government, but that its place was occupied by passions of the meanest and most sordid character. This was the danger to be apprehended by Mír J'afar. In parting with Clive he was parting with his truest supporter, he was preparing a welcome to men pre-



pared to despoil Bengal at his expense, just as he had despoiled it at the expense of Siráju'd daulah.

At last even this painful leave-taking was accomplished. On the 14th January, Clive returned to Calcutta. Staying there some six weeks to complete all the necessary arrangements, he made over the government to Mr. Holwell, pending the arrival in Madras of Mr. Vansittart, and sailed for England on the 25th February. Shortly before his departure he had stated to Vansittart, that with the arrival of the troops, then expected, and which had since landed, Bengal would be "out of all danger but that of venality and corruption." Words most true, prophetic even in their truth! It was venality and corruption, greed and lust for gold, which, in the few years following his departure, brought imminent danger on the great structure he had built up, which once again made the very existence of the English settlement dependent on the fate of one decisive battle!



CHAPTER XIII.

THE BREWING OF THE STORM.

CLIVE returned to England in the autumn of 1760 a very rich man. He had received in presents from the Núwáb and in prize-money about three hundred thousand pounds. The annual income of the jaghír bestowed upon him by Mír J'afar amounted, by his own admission, to twenty-seven thousand pounds; and he had still the comparatively small fortune acquired in Southern India. So circumstanced he was able to give free course to his ruling passions. Prominent amongst these was ambition. He had raised himself in India only to take a prominent position in England; and, in times of peace, this end could only be accomplished by entering Parliament.

That during the long course of a voyage round the Cape, Clive must have deeply meditated as to the course he should follow to attain his ambitious aims may be accepted as certain. It is as certain, too, that he expected that the way would be made smooth to him by the conferring upon him a title which would admit



him to the House of Lords. But though Clive's reception by his youthful sovereign was gratifying, though the ministers and the Court of Directors were loud in their professions to serve him, he did not immediately attain any honour. It is true that very soon after his arrival in England he was attacked by an illness which threatened to terminate his existence, and the recovery from which was long and painful, but the delay in according to him some mark of the approval of the Crown must be sought for on other grounds. There can be no doubt but that many of his despatches from India had given great offence at the India Office, and it is probable that the latent jealousy of the Court combined with the indifference of the Ministry to delay the conferring of any honour at all, and finally to cause it to take a shape which would not entitle its possessor to a seat in the House of Lords. After a long delay Clive was created an Irish peer.

Some time before Clive had left Bengal he had transmitted to the India Office a letter in which he had commented very freely upon their shortcomings. This despatch had roused the ire of the Court of Directors to such an extent that they had, after his departure, removed from office the members of Council who had joined him in signing it. But another letter, addressed by Clive, in January 1759, not to the Court but to Mr. Pitt, then Secretary of State, had whetted still further the animosity of the former. In that very remarkable letter Clive had foreshadowed the later results which would,



he contended, accrue from the collapse of native rule in Bengal—the acquisition by the English of three large and important provinces. He had proceeded to contend that so large a sovereignty would be too extensive for a mercantile company, and, moreover; that a mercantile company, unless assisted by the nation, would be unable to maintain it. He had, therefore, suggested that the Crown should take upon itself the responsibility of governing the new empire, certain to accrue, in the natural course of events, to British hands. Unfortunately, Mr. Pitt was not in a position then to put into execution a plan, which foreshadowed the far less complete measure which his gifted son subsequently carried out, and which received its full development exactly one hundred years subsequent to the date of Clive's proposal. There are many living who can remember the unwillingness with which the Court of Directors of our own time parted with the interests which they regarded as vested for ever in their body. The dislike, then, which their predecessors of a century earlier must have felt towards the man who, in advance of the age in which he lived, dared to make a similar proposition, may be easily conceived.

The delay in bestowing upon Clive a mark of the approval of the Crown was not the only mortification he experienced at this period. The Court of Directors showed their deep-rooted hostility by disputing his right to the jaghír bestowed upon him by Mír J'afar, and actually sent instructions to their Council at Calcutta to pay into the Company's treasury the



amount due as rental for the same, and to take the necessary steps to enable the Court to compel a refunding by Clive of the sums he had already received on account of it. Clive resisted this act of tyranny, and filed a bill in Chancery against the Company. The matter was about to be carried to extreme lengths, the most eminent lawyers of the day were engaged, when, before it could be brought to an issue, the state of affairs in Bengal forced the hand of the Court. From being bitterly hostile to the man who had given them their influence, they became suddenly his humble slaves.

To understand how this came to pass it is necessary to enter somewhat more into detail. Clive had, at the general election of 1761, obtained a seat in the House of Commons. The Duke of Newcastle was prime minister, Pitt and Bute were secretaries of State. But Pitt almost immediately resigned, the following year the Duke of Newcastle followed his example, and Lord Bute formed a new ministry from which Pitt and Newcastle were excluded. To this ministry, and more especially to the peace which it concluded in 1763,* Clive offered a determined opposition. He appears, at this time, to have attached himself personally to George Grenville, and to have accepted him as his political leader. His opposition to the ministry greatly strengthened the influence of the strong party opposed to him in the India Office, for the leader of that party, the Chairman of the Court, Mr. Lawrence

* The Peace of Paris.



Sullivan, was a firm supporter of Lord Bute. The fall of that lord's ministry in 1763, and the consequent accession of Lord Grenville to office, weakened, however, the effect of that hostile alliance.

It was in that year, prior to the fall of the Bute ministry, that Clive, bitterly resenting the manner in which the Court of Directors had treated him, the contempt with which they had received his recommendations, especially those on behalf of Forde and his other companions in arms who had been neglected, endeavoured to break down the power of Mr. Sullivan by the only means left open to him. It happened that the re-election of that gentleman and his friends to their offices depended upon the votes of the proprietors of East India stock. To turn those votes against Mr. Sullivan, Clive left no means untried. He purchased stock to the value of a hundred thousand pounds, and distributed it in parcels of a thousand pounds each amongst friends upon whom he could rely. But all was in vain. Victorious at the meeting by a show of hands, Clive was beaten at the poll. Secure, now, in his seat, Sullivan persuaded his colleagues to pass the measure which would have deprived Clive of the jaghír which had been bestowed upon him by Mír J'afar.

It was when the contest which this extreme measure provoked was about to be transferred to the court of law, that ship after ship from India conveyed the information that the edifice which Clive had erected in Bengal was crumbling to the earth under the effete and corrupt rule of the government which had