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# SIR EYRE COOTE









A LIFE OF  
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL  
SIR EYRE COOTE, K.B.

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SIR EYRE COOTE

*From the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*



'PRIMUS IN INDIS'

A LIFE OF  
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL  
SIR EYRE COOTE, K.B.



Compiled by  
COLONEL H. C. WYLLY, C.B.

WITH

An Introduction by

GENERAL SIR CHARLES MONRO, BART.  
G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G.

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THE words *Primus in Indis* form the motto of the 39th Regiment now the 1st Battn. Dorsetshire Regiment, the first of the Royal Army to serve in India, and that in which Sir Eyre Coote served as a captain at Plassey.

## INTRODUCTION

THIS History of a memorable life by Colonel Wylly should be read with great interest, we are presented for the first time with a full account of a great soldier whose achievements have not perhaps received the recognition which his services deserve. Few commanders in the annals of history have been so severely tried, he conducted his campaigns hampered by the lack of all the facilities needed for the prosecution of his designs. His Transport Supply and Medical Services were unorganized and inadequate.

The want of Cavalry prevented him driving home the great tactical successes which he gained on the field of battle, whilst the abundance of this arm possessed by Hyder Ali denied him all means of Intelligence. Our ally the Nawab of Arcot proved subsequently to have been treacherous and unreliable.

His colleagues in the Government of Madras cannot be said to have supported him with full cordiality or intelligence; the faults were probably not all on their side, Coote was no doubt a difficult man to work with, yet on occasions they appear to have been more occupied with exacting the deference they regarded as due to their position than with meeting situations of great gravity.

Colonel Wylly has made a wide study of the history of this period, and has placed at our disposal not only a graphic account of Coote's achievements but also a very interesting narrative of the men with whom he was associated in India at that time.

Coote landed in India with the 39th Foot in 1754, it seems to have been his fate from the first to have had to face almost insurmountable difficulties.

Very soon after his arrival in India the news reached Clive of Surajah Dowlah having captured Calcutta, a relieving

force was hastily prepared in Madras with which Coote sailed as a Captain in the 39th.

Colonel Wyllly gives us many instances of the influences which impeded success, we find undignified misunderstandings existing between Clive and Watson, an unprofessional jealousy prevailing between the Officers of the King's and the Company's Service, the 39th refusing to take part in the expedition except as Marines—the fighting quality of the troops was however undeniable and Calcutta was soon relieved.

Even at this early stage of his career, Coote seems to have won if not the affection at any rate the admiration of his superiors for his high military qualities; his courage and rare judgement are indicated in the opinions which he expressed at the Council of War assembled by Clive when the latter arrived at his momentous decision prior to the Battle of Plassey.

After this victory Clive showed his appreciation of Coote's capacity in entrusting him with the command of an expedition which penetrated Bihar and did so much to solidify British power in that part of India. This was Coote's first independent command, and on this occasion he showed the power of leadership which was to distinguish him through life. He certainly returned to Calcutta with an enhanced reputation.

Very shortly afterwards he sailed for England with the 39th and remained at home for about two years, when he returned to India in command of the 84th Regiment. The high opinion which the Board of Directors held of him is clear from the fact of their appointing him Commander-in-Chief at Fort William in Bengal, and directing the Civil Authorities to receive him into their Council and Secret Committee.

On arrival at Madras, although the situation must have improved since the withdrawal of the French before that city, it is evident that considerable apprehension still existed, and although the 84th was primarily intended for service in Bengal, yet Coote was landed with his Battalion

and given command of the force assembled to operate against Lally.

The record of this campaign, including the brilliant victory of Wandewash, the capture of Pondicherry, and the surrender of Lally, is admirably described by Colonel Wyllly and is well worthy of study. It comprises the period when the final blow to French ambitions in India was administered by the surrender of Lally at Pondicherry.

Apart from the general narrative of this campaign many details of considerable interest are introduced, we hear for the first time of Monson, and gather information regarding Claude Martin whose name survives as a benefactor in the United Provinces to the present day.

It is strange also to read of the light hearted way in which the combatants transferred their allegiance. Several British names are mentioned by Colonel Wyllly as defending fortresses against us, whilst Coote systematically enlisted French deserters for service against their fellow countrymen and even went so far as to incorporate a Company of this type of man into his Regiment.

Having restored the fortune of our arms in Madras, Coote sailed for Calcutta with his Regiment and shortly afterwards in 1762 proceeded home on furlough. He remained in England for seven years, during which period he sat in Parliament for the Borough of Leicester, when, having been promoted Major-General and appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Company Forces in India, he sailed for Madras in January 1770.

The opposition at that time directed by the Civil Government to soldiers appears to have proved intolerable to Coote, for in the following year he returned to England having resigned his position as Commander-in-Chief and remained at home until 1778. He was then summoned back to his former position and took up his residence at Calcutta as Member of the Supreme Council.

Colonel Wyllly now gives us a most interesting account of Calcutta Society of that period, we hear of Warren Hastings and his wife, of Barwell, Monson, Clavering,

Francis, Mrs. Grand, and other celebrities of the day. At this time Coote appears to have occupied himself chiefly in the organization and inspection of the troops holding the extended territory administered by the Company, which latter duty compelled his absence from Calcutta for considerable periods; it is not improbable, however, that he prolonged as far as possible his tours in order to avoid the perpetual discord prevailing between Warren Hastings and Francis.

In 1781 the news of Hyder Ali's descent on the Carnatic reached Warren Hastings. The situation was indeed grave. The Madras Government do not seem to have made any preparation to meet this onslaught from Mysore, and as a consequence our forces sustained severe reverses, and our control over the Province of Madras practically entirely lapsed.

Warren Hastings grasped the situation with his unerring instinct and realized that Coote was the only man capable of restoring our fortunes in the Carnatic. Coote arrived at Madras in November 1780 and in under two months had established confidence in the Army which had been lost under Hector Munro's command and was able to take the offensive against Hyder Ali with a force which was regarded as the finest body of men ever seen in India. The difficulties experienced by Coote in this campaign are lucidly described by Colonel Wylly, his want of Cavalry completely prevented his acquiring any information as to the enemy's movements, he complained in fact that 'the Camp Guards Boundary represented the extent of his knowledge'.

Rarely has a commander been placed in such a condition of peril as that to which Coote was exposed when the French fleet appeared off Pondicherry and Hyder Ali made his lightning descent on the coast, it was a situation to unnerve even a resolute commander, but Coote remained undaunted, and after suffering some small reverses to which all commanders are exposed he displayed his splendid grit as a soldier and tactical skill as a commander by moving from Porto Novo and inflicting a defeat on Hyder Ali, which

might have been converted into a rout had Coote only possessed a sufficiency of the arm needed to complete a victory.

The handling of his force in this battle was bold and well conceived, and if no brilliant results in the nature of prisoners or arms followed this victory, yet this battle can be truly said to have given a decisive blow to Hyder Ali's prestige and to have perhaps caused the idea to germinate in his mind that no good results could accrue from waging war on the British.

A lack of all resources needed for the prosecution of an offensive campaign on a large scale hampered Coote's activity, yet he continued throughout the heat of two summers to administer a succession of blows, some of which were more successful than others, on Hyder Ali which must have depreciated the latter's reputation in the eyes of the natives.

At this time Coote suffered a serious breakdown, and it can only have been his high sense of duty that sustained him through this trying period.

For almost a year in this manner he struggled against increasing physical weakness, whilst the French being temporarily masters of the Bay of Bengal must have added largely to his difficulties, and in September 1789 the state of his health compelled him to hand over his command and sail for Calcutta.

The departure of Coote was followed by unseemly disputes between the Governor and the new Commander in Madras, such a grave military situation thereby arose that Warren Hastings felt himself compelled to make yet another appeal to Coote. He knew well the wretched condition of health of the Commander-in-Chief, as can be seen in his letter to Scott in which he said ' His zeal and spirit are without example, his condition is irrevocably gone '.

His ill health seems to have developed an irritability which made him a difficult colleague, for Warren Hastings adds in this letter ' I am certain he will quarrel with me the moment we are separated '.

Nor can Coote have been unaware of his infirmities, for when starting from Calcutta he observed to a friend that he had one foot in the grave and the other at the edge of it.

There was, however, no hesitation on the part of this indomitable soldier, and he went off undismayed to meet not only the enemy but 'the opposition of the noble President and his Committee'.

His strength was however exhausted, his many campaigns throughout the hot weather in a climate such as Madras and Bengal had worn him out, and he died a few days after reaching Madras.

Colonel Wylly has brought to notice the career of a commander who has never been fully appreciated, probably for the reason that great events in Europe obscured the less important ones in India.

He has faithfully described his many virtues as a soldier and also his temperamental defects—he was no doubt a very self-reliant arbitrary man, touchy and ill-disposed to accept criticism or restraint, but he always retained the affection and the confidence of his troops, and his superiors were not slow to realize that they possessed in him a commander of high merit who by his forethought, never failing courage, and ability might be trusted in the greatest emergency.

Methods of war are especially in our minds at the present time, we recognize that the application of military principles must necessarily vary; although therefore the lessons to be gathered from Coote's day are not readily apparent, yet there is one principle in particular which is eternal and this is well illustrated by Colonel Wylly in his most interesting history.

*W. C. Coote*

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## ERRATA

PAGE 140, line 2, *for* Robert *read* John  
 PAGE 159, line 21, *for* present *read* former  
 PAGE 242, line 37, *transpose* and *and* guns  
 PAGE 244, line 20, *for* Flint *read* Finch

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

To the majority of those who have in any way assisted me in the preparation of this book, I have already made my grateful acknowledgements as occasion arose in the course of the story: but I must make special mention of my indebtedness to my friend, Colonel W. W. Norman, late of the Indian Army, to whom the genesis of this biography is due, for he very kindly placed at my disposal a considerable mass of notes and material which had been some years before collected by his father who appears to have himself contemplated embarking upon a life of the hero of these pages.

H. C. W.

## CHAPTER I

1350-1755

THE family of Coote is one of considerable antiquity and is of French extraction—indeed it seems by no means unlikely that the name may have originally been Coutes, and that consequently the soldier who, in helping materially to establish our Empire in the East, warred so manfully and so continuously with the French, possibly sprang from the same stock as Jeanne d'Arc's *petit page*, the Sieur Louis de Coutes,<sup>1</sup> who followed during her brief life the fortunes of La Pucelle, and who gave evidence in her defence at the *Procès de réhabilitation* held nearly a quarter of a century after her captors had done her to death.

The first member of the Coote family of whom there is any authentic record is a Sir John Coote, a native of France, who, about the year 1350, married Isabel, the daughter of a Seigneur du Bois or des Bois, a name which has been anglicized in the family pedigree into Lord Boys. The son of this union, another Sir John Coote, came over to England during the reign of Richard II and settled in Devonshire, where he married a daughter of Sir John Fortescue of that county and had issue a son, William, who, marrying into the Mansel family, had a son—also William.

We are so accustomed to connect the many English families of French extraction now domiciled in England with the exodus from France of the Protestants after the revocation of the edict of Nantes, that we are apt to overlook the circumstances which doubtless induced many French men and women to make their homes in this country at a far earlier date. In the year 1360, after the Treaty of Bretigny, the English possessions in France were very considerable; the whole of Aquitaine, from Poitiers to Bordeaux and Lourdes, belonged to the English; and the victory at Cocherel won by Du Guesclin over the Captal de Buch in 1364 was mostly over Frenchmen, vassals and subjects of the English king. This being the case, and Richard II having married Isabella of France in 1396, it is exceedingly probable

<sup>1</sup> See Villaret's *Louis de Coutes, page de Jeanne d'Arc*; this family contained many a Jean de Coutes between 1300 and 1406.

that many French families may have come over and settled in England about this period.

The second Sir William Coote married a Wortesley who gave him a son, afterwards Sir John Coote, who allied himself with a Sacheverell—*his* son Robert marrying a daughter of the house of Grantham. The issue of this marriage was Thomas Coote who, by wedding a Miss Darnall, had a son—Sir John Coote. Sir John married into the Tyrwhyt family and had two sons, John and Robert. John married a daughter of the house of Fotherby and had three sons—Richard, from whom was descended the Norfolk branch of the Cootes; John, and Robert. John, the second of these three brothers, inherited considerable property from his uncle Robert, who became Abbot of St. Albans and Rector of St. Edmundsbury in Suffolk, dying in 1474.<sup>1</sup> John Coote married Margaret Drury and had four sons—Richard, who married in 1520 Margaret, daughter of Sir William Calthorpe; Francis; Christopher, who bought Lemene Hall Manor, in the county of Norfolk, in 1521 and died in 1563, his son Sir Richard Coote being servant to Queen Elizabeth and dying in 1653 at the extraordinary age of 124—his wife was Elizabeth Felton; and Nicholas Francis, the second of the four brothers, was seated at Eaton in Norfolk, and had a son, Sir Nicholas Coote, who was the ancestor of the Irish Cootes from whom the subject of this biography is descended.

Sir Nicholas Coote had two sons, Charles and William; the latter entered the church and became Dean of Downe, while Charles the elder adopted the profession of arms. He landed in Ireland in the year 1600, as a captain in Mountjoy's army, and, on the 4th June 1605, he was appointed provost marshal of Connaught for life, being created a baronet on the 2nd April 1621. When the Rebellion broke out in 1641 he was empowered to raise a thousand men and was appointed governor of Dublin. In this capacity he evinced remarkable energy and resource and made himself a terror to the rebels; but, in May 1642, he fell in a petty skirmish at Phillipstown. He had married, in 1617, Dorothea, younger daughter and co-heir to Hugh Cuffe, of Cuffe's wood in the county of Cork, and had by her four sons and one daughter.

Sir Charles Coote, the eldest of these four sons, succeeded his father as provost marshal of Connaught, and was equally energetic in the suppression of the Rebellion. In 1649, having declared for the Parliament, he was besieged in Londonderry by those Irish who had

<sup>1</sup> A Henry Coote was also Alderman of London and Sheriff in 1490.



taken up arms for King Charles II ; but ‘ Sir Robert Steward and Colonel Mervin were beaten from the siege of Londonderry by a resolute sally out of the town by Sir Charles Coot (*sic*), the Governor thereof for the Parliament. Upon the news of this good fortune in Ireland, Cromwell, with his son-in-law, Ireton (next to him in chief command of the Irish army), altered their purpose of landing in Munster, and with all imaginable haste transported their forces to Dublin, near to which city in a short time after the victory they landed ; and after a little stay to refresh the soldiers, Cromwell marched the army to the town of Drogheda, which a little after the defeat near Dublin had been strengthened with an additional five and twenty hundred foot and three hundred horse, with many stout and resolute officers. Sir Arthur Ashton, heretofore Governor of Reading and Oxford for the late king, was Governor of the place, a person in whose conduct and courage great confidence was placed. As soon as Cromwell came in sight of the town, he sent a summons, which being refused, he immediately began his approaches and was very active at the siege, making many furious onsets on the town, with great loss to his army, but, at last, he carried it by storm.<sup>1</sup>

In 1660, however, Sir Charles Coote entered into negotiations for the restoration of the Monarchy, performing work of much the same character and importance in Ireland as did Monck in England, and for his services he was eventually rewarded by King Charles the Second, by, among other honours and grants, the title of Earl of Mountrath, in the peerage of Ireland. Sir Charles Coote, first Earl of Mountrath, died on the 18th December 1661, and was buried in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, leaving three sons and three daughters.

The brothers of Charles Coote were Chidley, Richard, and Thomas. Richard was created Lord Coloony under date of the 6th September 1660, and *his* son Richard, second Lord Coloony, was in 1696 advanced to the earldom of Bellamont ; was made Treasurer and Receiver General to Queen Mary, and in 1695 was appointed by King William III Governor of New York, where he died in 1701 ; while holding this office he was instrumental in the capture of the noted pirate, Captain Kidd. Thomas, the youngest brother, became a soldier ; while Chidley—of Killester near Dublin, the eldest of the three, commanded a regiment of horse under Cromwell after the death of King Charles, and, dying in 1668, left two sons—Chidley and Philip.

Philip was the ancestor of the Cootes of Mount Coote in the county

<sup>1</sup> Baker, *Chronicles of the Kings of Ireland*, p. 592.

of Limerick, while the elder son, Chidley, married in 1675 Catherine Sandys, aunt of Colonel Robert Sandys, and left behind him a son, Chidley Coote, D.D., of Ash Hill, Kilmallock, in the same county. This, the third of the family to bear the name of Chidley, married in 1702 Jane Evans, sister of the first Lord Carbery, and had by her one daughter and six sons—Robert, George, Charles, John, Thomas, and Eyre, the subject of this memoir. The name ‘Eyre’ was taken from that of a family with which the Carberys had intermarried—the Eyres of Eyre Court in Ireland, a family which originally came from Wiltshire and went to Ireland in the reign of Queen Elizabeth or a little earlier. Chidley Coote died on the 1st August 1730, and was buried at St. Stephen’s Church, Bristol, and his eldest son, Robert, became the immediate ancestor of the present Sir Algernon Coote of Ballyfin, Premier Baronet of Ireland, his grandson Charles succeeding to the original baronetcy on the demise, without male issue, of the last Earl of Mountrath in 1802.

Young Eyre Coote was born in 1726—the actual date and month cannot be traced—a year which witnessed the birth of another of England’s great commanders, James Wolfe, who was to win fame in another continent and under different skies.<sup>1</sup> Of the early life of Eyre Coote but little is known, and it is probable that he received the ordinary education of a youngster of those days before, on the 8th June 1744, he was gazetted to an ensigncy in Blakeney’s or the 27th—‘Our Inneskilling Regiment of Foot, vice James Holmes, senr., to be lieutenant.’<sup>2</sup>

At the period when Eyre Coote joined Blakeney’s regiment that corps was largely composed of young soldiers and recruits. It had but comparatively recently returned from that ill-fated and worse-managed expedition sent under Cathcart, Wentworth, and Vernon to the West Indies, where it had warred less against mortal enemies than with a deadly climate; and when, after barely two years of foreign service, the regiment landed in England, there remained but *nine* privates out of the six hundred men who had originally embarked.<sup>3</sup>

Before the 27th Foot had been recruited up to its full establishment the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 broke out in Scotland, and about the time of the defeat of Sir John Cope at Prestonpans half the regiment was at Porchester guarding French prisoners, while the remaining

<sup>1</sup> Clive, Coote’s chief in India, was born the year previous, in 1725.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, W.D. 25/21, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Records of the 27th Foot.





GENERAL HAWLEY

From the portrait in the possession of Colonel Hawley

five companies were marching from Warwick to Chester. Orders were now received for the concentration of the Inniskillings at Doncaster, whence they were hurried up to the north, and by the end of the month of September they formed, with two British and seven foreign battalions, part of the garrison of Newcastle under old Marshal Wade. The regiment took part no doubt in the futile marches and counter-marches whereby that worn-out commander endeavoured to harass the young Pretender's southward progress and to intercept him when finally he set his face to the north; and, at last, on the 3rd January 1746, Blakeney's regiment found itself in Edinburgh awaiting the arrival of a new commander.

On the 20th December 1745 Lieutenant-General Henry Hawley had been informed that he was 'placed in command of the army which is to be sent to Scotland—Major-General Huske to have the next command under you';<sup>1</sup> and on the 6th January 1746 Hawley arrived in Edinburgh.

This officer had been a soldier since 1694; he had seen service in the war of the Austrian Succession; he had served in the Dettingen campaign; and at Fontenoy he had succeeded to the command of the cavalry on the death in action of Sir James Campbell; while as long ago as at the battle of Sheriffmuir in November 1715 he appears to have first acquired the high opinion of the influence of cavalry upon an action which he ever subsequently retained. The Duke of Cumberland entertained a good opinion of him as a soldier, holding that he was 'the first officer in the whole allied army for leading a line of cavalry'; and both the Duke and Ligonier appear to have been on terms of considerable intimacy with Hawley, for there are letters among the Hawley papers in which the Duke of Cumberland signs himself 'your affectionate friend' and 'your very affectionate friend', while his correspondence with Ligonier is more cordial in character than was usual at that period.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, S. P. Scotland, vol. ii, Series 26.

<sup>2</sup> The Hawley Papers contain the following statement of General Hawley's emoluments:

	£	s.	d.
'Lieut.-General Hawley has, as Commander-in-Chief in Scotland, for himself, per diem.	4	0	0
being the same as Lieut.-General.			
For an Aide-de-Camp		10	0
For a Secretary		10	0

He must have more for two Aides-de-Camp £1, and forage money for himself, and three Aides-de-Camp, which article should be paid out of

There can be no doubt that the Highlanders by their methods of fighting had established serious misgivings in the minds of the king's soldiers as to the result of any action which was likely to take place. This dread—for such it almost amounted to—can hardly have been allayed by the memorials and letters which were addressed from people of all classes to head-quarters, and the contents of which were doubtless communicated to the men in the ranks, containing suggestions as to how best the royal troops should escape defeat and rout.

Among the Hawley papers are two such documents to be found, and the insertion here of these may serve to show how very seriously the Jacobite rising was taken, and what an exaggerated idea was then entertained of the powers of the Highland clans and of the irresistible character of their onslaught.

The first of these appears to have been written in 1745, and is entitled a 'Memorial of the manner of fighting the Highlanders':

'During the Civil Wars in King Charles the First's Time, we had frequent opportunities of fighting with the Highland men; and at the beginning, before we were acquainted with their manner of fighting, they destroyed three or four of our best Regiments, but after we were acquainted with their way of fighting, we found that it was the easiest thing in the world to beat them. Their manner of fighting is, they place their bravest men with their Pipers in the Front, and when they come within Musket shot, they throw away their Plaids, and having fired their muskets they throw them away, and trusting to their broad Swords, they attack twelve or fourteen men deep.

'The way to fight them is this. Place your men three deep, and make them kneel, stoop and stand, let them charge with two bullets in each Gun, and keep their fire till they come within ten or twelve yards of them, and then let them fire by ranks which must destroy most of their bravest men, and then let the Horse from the two Wings fall on them; when thus put in confusion, and I never saw this method fail of ruining them, for they have no defence against a regular body of Horse, but if you fire at a distance you must probably be ruined for you never get time to charge a second time, and if you are defeated you may give over your Foot for dead for they run so fast that scarce any Footmen can escape them, and they give no quarters; but if you observe the above Directions, they are a despicable enemy; what I have said is founded on long experience.'

The other document of this nature is a letter addressed to the contingencies in the same manner as was done for General Clayton on his going to Flanders.

'To avoid increasing the Establishment for Scotland the proper Warrant I will take care of.' (No signature.)

Duke of Cumberland by a clergyman from Bowness near Carlisle and it is dated 3rd February 1745 :

‘I am a clergyman,’ he begins, ‘and strongly attached both in duty and interest to the present Government, and therefore I shall make no other preface to the following lines, as supposing they contain a discovery of no little importance to the good cause in which his Royal Highness has drawn his sword.

‘The arms which I suppose our Foot chiefly rely on against the rebels are their muskets. Now these I hold by the present method of charging them with an excessive quantity of powder, are not in any degree so effectual as they would be with half the quantity. I myself love a gun, and have made frequent nice experiments with balls, and I find that a charge of powder in height equal to the diameter of the ball, is the most general rule to hit a mark fifty, sixty, or seventy yards distant ; so that about one inch of powder for a musket, and three quarters of an inch for a fowling piece are the competent quantities ; and if a piece hath two inches of powder for a charge (which I am told is the quantity allowed for battle) I have frequently found that it will throw the ball one, two, and sometimes near three yards above the mark at fifty or sixty yards distant ; for there is a great difference in this point arising from the hardness or softness of the metal.

‘I would therefore humbly recommend it to his Royal Highness to order an experiment to be made with eight or ten muskets charged with one and two inches of powder put into the hands of good marks men and levelled upon a rest, for the greater steadiness, at a mark fifty yards distant ; this easy experiment will soon show that an inch of powder will carry with greater certainty and be equally fatal even at a hundred yards distance or more.

‘If two balls be put into a musket they will require near double the allowance I propose for one, and spread usually to the right and left about two yards off each other at sixty yards distance, and therefore I should humbly consider that it would be a good method to make all the first discharge with two balls and about one and a half inches of powder.

‘If a pistol of seven inches barrel be loaded with near two inches of powder, it will throw the ball about two yards above a mark fourteen yards distant ; whereas if about three quarters of an inch only be given it, the ball will go level.

‘These observations are humbly submitted to the consideration of his Royal Highness, to whom all possible success is heartily wished by  
Sir

Your most obedient Humble Servant

G. L.

‘(This letter is addressed “for Sir Everard Fawkener, Secretary to His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland, or in his absence for His Royal Highness at Edinburgh”).’

On the 6th January then Hawley arrived in Edinburgh, and on the following day he reported that there were six battalions in garrison in the city with Brigadiers Mordaunt and Cholmondeley, that two more were to be in the next day, and that another two regiments were not expected until the 13th. He made complaint that he was in the utmost distress for money; that no powers had been conferred upon him for the convening of courts martial; while as to artillery—'there's not a gun here', he wrote, 'can move for want of gunners, the same at Berwick. . . . For want of horses part of those at Newcastle are to be left there'. When the new commander wrote again on the 11th, he appeared to have collected two additional battalions to those he had at first expected, but seems to have been somewhat aghast at their numerical weakness; 'the twelve regiments then at Edinburgh,' he says, 'make but 6,600 men, rank and file, fit to march', and he concludes with—'tis not the name of twelve battalions that will do business, tho' I do and always shall despise the rascals'.<sup>1</sup>

In a return dated the 13th January 1746 the numbers of the effective rank and file of Blakeney's regiment are given as 460 only, while those of thirteen infantry regiments which are named amounted to no more than 5,488 men.

At this time the forces under Prince Charles were besieging Stirling Castle, stoutly defended by its garrison commanded by General Blakeney, the colonel of the 27th; and, in order to force the Highlanders to raise the siege, General Hawley—the last of his reinforcements from Newcastle having joined him on the 10th January—moved out his troops from Edinburgh as under:

On the 13th Major-General Huske, with Brigadier Mordaunt, marched to Linlithgow accompanied by the Royals, Wolfe's, Fleming's, Cholmondeley's, and Munro's regiments.

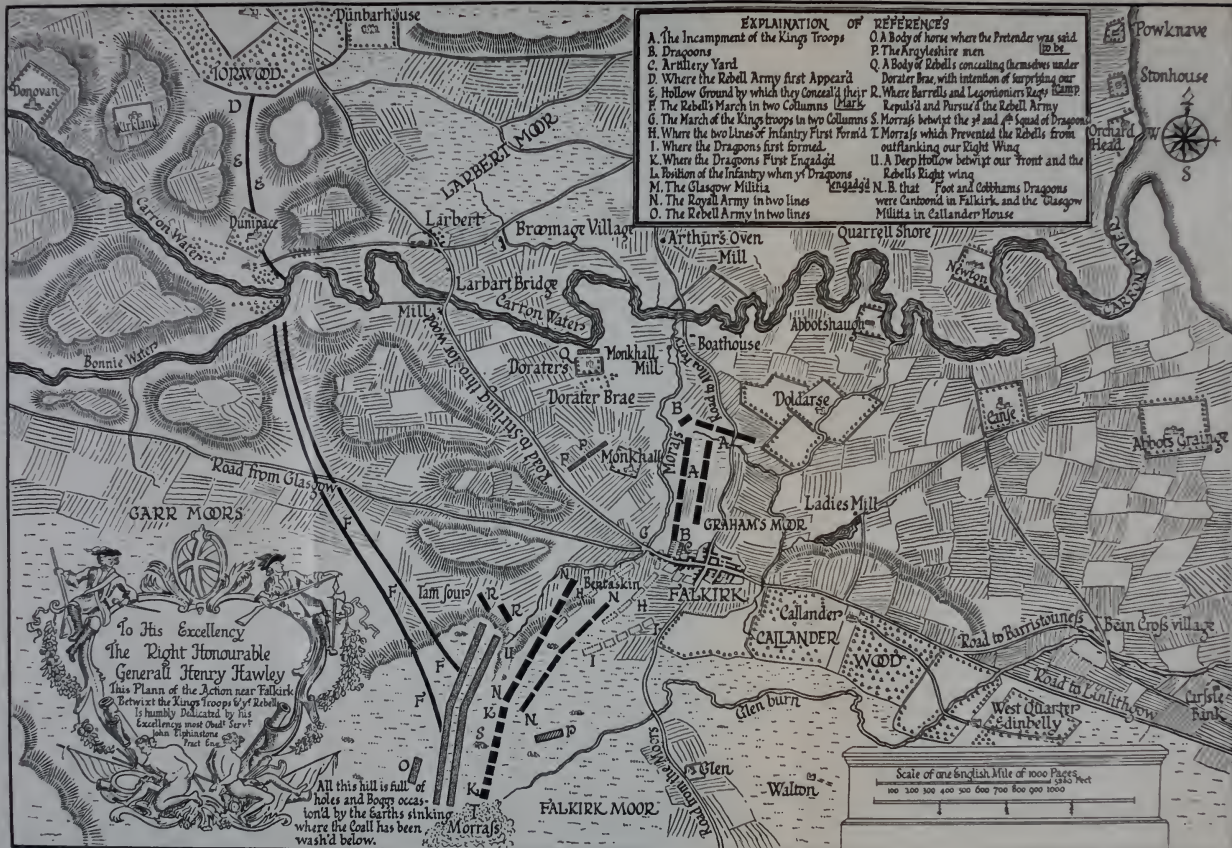
On the 14th Brigadier Cholmondeley set out to Barrowstoness, thence to march and join Huske at Falkirk on the 16th, with Howard's, Ligonier's, and Batereau's regiments.

On the 15th Barrell's, Pulteney's, and Blakeney's regiments moved, via Linlithgow, to Falkirk there to join Huske; and on the same day Ligonier's and Hamilton's Dragoons also marched by the identical route. The train proceeded independently to Coltbridge, whence Price's regiment was to provide an onward escort. Hawley himself followed his troops the same day,

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, S. P. Scotland, vol. ii, Series 27.





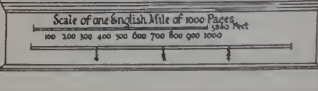


**EXPLANATION OF REFERENCES**

A. The Incampment of the Kings Troops	O. A Body of horse when the Pretender was said
B. Dragons	P. The Argyleshire men
C. Artillery Yard	Q. A Body of Rebels concealing themselves under
D. Where the Rebell Army first Appeard	R. Dorfer Brae, with intention of surprizing our
E. Hollow Ground by which they Conceald their	S. Repuls'd and Pursu'd the Rebell Army
F. The Rebels March in two Columns	T. Morrajs which Prevented the Rebels from
G. The March of the Kings troops in two Columns	U. Morrajs which Prevented the Rebels from
H. Where the two Lines of Infantry First Form'd	V. A Body of horse when the Pretender was said
I. Where the Dragons first formed.	W. A Body of horse when the Pretender was said
K. Where the Dragons First Engag'd	X. A Body of horse when the Pretender was said
L. Bottom of the Infantry when y <sup>e</sup> Dragons	Y. A Body of horse when the Pretender was said
M. The Glasgow Militia	Z. A Body of horse when the Pretender was said
N. The Royal Army in two lines	AA. Foot and Cobham's Dragons were
O. The Rebell Army in two lines	BB. Foot and Cobham's Dragons were

To His Excellency  
The Right Honourable  
General Henry Hawley  
This Plan of the Action near Falkirk  
Between the Kings Troops & the Rebels  
is humbly Dedicated by his  
Excellency most Obedt<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>  
John Topham  
Print Ed. 1746

All this hill is full of  
holes and Bores occa-  
sion'd by the earthen stinking  
where the Quail has been  
wash'd below.



accompanied by Cobham's Dragoons,<sup>1</sup> and encamped his whole force on the west of the town of Falkirk, some nine miles from Bannockburn, where Charles, having left a thousand men to carry on the siege of Stirling, had established his head-quarters.

Hawley's ten guns appear to have reached the rendezvous rather later than the rest of the army, being driven from Falkirk by a number of carters, who, with their horses, had only at the last moment been pressed into the service. It was possibly owing to this delay that Hawley now decided to defer his attack to the following day and thereby surrendered the initiative to the Young Pretender.

On the morning of the 17th, the British commander had left his camp to breakfast at Callendar House, when *Battle of Falkirk,* about eleven o'clock Prince Charles, sending *17th January 1746.* a small party to make a demonstration along the Stirling road, himself led his clansmen across the River Carron to a wild upland of irregular surface called Falkirk Moor, two miles south-west of the English camp, thus repeating the tactics which had been so successful against General Cope at Prestonpans. Hawley was hastily summoned, and, on joining his army, sent his three regiments of dragoons to anticipate the Highlanders in possession of the high ground. The infantry followed as rapidly as possible and the guns brought up the rear, but these sticking fast in the swampy ground, their drivers cut the traces and galloped back to Falkirk. The rebel army reached the upland first, and Hawley was thus obliged to draw up his men on the lower ground, while a violent storm of wind and rain which now arose drove in their faces, blinding the soldiers and damping their powder.

The English order of battle was as follows: on the extreme left of the first line and slightly in advance of it were the three regiments of cavalry, then came Wolfe's, Cholmondeley's, Pulteney's, Price's, and Ligonier's regiments, with the Royals on the extreme right; the second line contained, from left to right, Blakeney's, Munro's, Fleming's, Batareau's, and Barrell's<sup>2</sup> regiments, with Howard's in reserve in rear.

Hawley now ordered his dragoons to attack. Two out of the three regiments, however, had failed Cope at Prestonpans, and when, advancing, they were received with a murderous fire at point-blank range, panic seized them anew. Ligonier's and Hamilton's dragoons

<sup>1</sup> The regiment in which Pitt first held a commission as cornet—now the 1st Dragoon Guards.

<sup>2</sup> James Wolfe was then a major in Barrell's regiment.

went about, broke tumultuously through the left of both lines of infantry, and carried the news of their overthrow to Linlithgow ; while Cobham's dragoons wheeled to the right and went off between the rival armies. The infantry on the left broke in their turn, and only the steadfastness of some of the battalions on the right, and the fact that certain of the others were presently rallied, prevented a disaster if it could not avert a disgrace, and the whole army retreated on Linlithgow.

The 27th was severely handled, having 4 captains, 1 lieutenant, 1 sergeant, and 39 rank and file killed,<sup>1</sup> while the loss of the army amounted to about 280 killed and wounded.

That night General Hawley wrote two letters from Linlithgow announcing his defeat ; to Newcastle he said :

'No sooner were the troops engaged with them, but some of the dragoons took a most shameful flight, and was followed by a great part of the infantry, so that from the most promising prospect of success, we were obliged to retreat to our camp, but without being followed, which was owing to the behaviour of two squadrons of Cobham's and four battalions on our right.'

To the Duke of Cumberland he began :

'My heart is broke . . . we had enough to beat them for we had 2,000 men more than they. But such a scandalous cowardice I never saw before. The whole second line of Foot ran away without firing a shot : three squadrons did well, the others as usual. The dragoons were all on the left. I was beat with them, the brigade upon the left of the first line and all the second line. . . . Major General Huske's people beat their left and made a handsome retreat with two squadrons of Cobham's dragoons. But at the very beginning all the horses of the artillery ran away. . . . I got off three cannon of the ten. By guess I think there was not above a thousand shot fired on each side. . . . I must say one thing, that every officer did their duty, and what was in the power of man to do, in trying to stop and rally the men ; and they led them on with as good a countenance till a Halloo began before a single shot was fired and at 500 yards distance ; then, I own, I began to give it over.'

Hawley was early given to understand that his failure at Falkirk was not to be taken too seriously either by his military superiors or by other men in high station. On the 23rd January the Duke of Cumberland wrote to him :

'I have deferred answering your two letters, the one before, the other after the affair, till we had received an ample account how matters

<sup>1</sup> On the 28th January the strength, all ranks, was 489.

stood, and to-day the desired account arrived, which has eased people's minds vastly. I sincerely congratulate you on the King's being intirely satisfied with your conduct on that disagreeable occasion. I can assure you that I think you have done wonders in coming off so after such a panick was struck in the troops. . . . Officers should especially be made examples of. . . . For God's sake purge the foot, for they did not use to run away formerly.'

On the 24th January the Duke of Argyll wrote :

' Though I don't wonder at your being affected with your troops having deserted you in so unaccountable a manner, yet I can give you this comfort, that I don't find that it has lessened you in the esteem of anybody here, and I verily believe the Duke's going for Scotland has taken its rise from nothing but an opinion that his Royal Highness' presence will animate our army, and be the means to take of that silly apprehension they have had of the danger of the Highlanders ; you shewed us in 1715 how easily they are beat if they fight with those who are not afraid of them. You may be assured that there is, and will be, all the justice done you that your best friends could wish.'

While Hawley also received another comforting letter, dated the 25th January from Lord de la Warr saying :

' As I came to town from New Forest I met with the news of your affair on Falkirk Moor. I wish with all my heart I could have congratulated you on the victory, but that is not to be obtained if the troops run away ; but I wish you joy that this town takes your part, and lays no blame on you in the least. I think so much the contrary that you cannot but be satisfied with it. I wish, and doubt not, but I shall soon hear of your better success. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

It is clear, however, that not many days after the battle, General Hawley had found reason to change the opinion he had expressed in his letter to Cumberland of the good behaviour of all his officers. The conduct of the officer commanding the Train, who seems to have led the race to Linlithgow, was early the subject of remark and condemnation. Writing on the 19th January the General said :

' We are getting everything repaired and the men promise their officers to redeem their credit the first occasion, but to forward that I am going to make some necessary examples, for we have some things too scandalous to be bore.'

On the same day a court martial was convened with Brigadier Mordaunt as president ; on the 20th Hawley wrote that he was trying two officers of Blakeney's regiment and one of Fleming's for mis-

<sup>1</sup> These three letters are all preserved among the Hawley papers.

behaviour before the enemy ; the name of a third officer of Blakeney's was subsequently added—and one of the three was Ensign Eyre Coote !

The following is the text of the order convening the general court martial :

' Edinburgh. Sunday, 19th January.

' A General Court Martial is to be held to-morrow morning consisting of one Brigadier, four field officers and the rest of the Members Captains to sit to-morrow where the President shall appoint for the Trial of those Officers who are in arrest for cowardice, and to begin with Captain Cunningham of the Train. All officers who are evidence against him to appear, the Judge Advocate to prosecute him in the King's name, Colonel Leighton to prosecute the officers.

' Brigadier Mordaunt, President.  
' Lieut. Cols.     { Ramsay.  
                          { Calkerwood.  
' Majors.           { Elrington.  
                          { Blesset.  
' 8 Captains.'

Among the Hawley papers there is an ' Abstract of the Sentences of a General Court Martial held at Edinburgh January 20th 1745-6 ', and in this Ensign Eyre Coote's finding and sentence are thus set forth :

' Ensign Eyre Coote of Major General Blakeney's Regiment accused of cowardice in leaving the Regiment and going before it to Edinburgh.

' The Court having considered the evidence against the prisoner, with what he has to say in his defence, are of opinion he is not guilty of cowardice, but that he is guilty of a breach of part of the 14th Article of War, by misbehaving in going to Edinburgh with the Colours, before the Regiment, and therefore do adjudge him to be suspended during the pleasure of General Hawley.'

In the same collection there is a ' List of officers who have been cashiered, suspended, or Dismissed the Service since the army came into Scotland ', and the following names appear in it :

Lieut. Baldwin Leighton, Blakeney's	} Super- seded	Perth, Feb. 15, 1746.	
Lieut. Willm. Skipton			„
Ensign Eyre Coote			„
Ensign John Love, Fleming's			
Captain Cunningham	Broke	Montrose, Feb. 22.	
of the Artillery			
Lieut. Foley	Cashiered	Montrose, Feb. 22.	
of Fleming's			
Quartermaster Wright	Suspended	Aberdeen, March 9.	
of Howard's	for 6 months		
Ensign Austins	Suspended	Aberdeen, March 23.	
of Dejean's	for 3 months		

Ensign Danl. Hart of Dejean's	Broke at	Aberdeen, March 23.
Captain Minshin of Guise's	Cashiered	Inverness, May 20.
Major General Grant Lt. Gov. of Fort George	Cashiered	Fort Augustus, June 7.
Ensign Alex. Barker of Cholmeley's	Suspended for 6 months	Fort Augustus, June 21.

At the Public Record Office there is a letter<sup>1</sup> from Sir William Yonge, dated War Office, 8th February 1746, acknowledging the receipt of the proceedings of the general court martial from the Duke of Cumberland, who, on the 30th January, had relieved General Hawley in the command of the troops in Scotland. 'The King', wrote Sir William Yonge, 'is not pleased with the sentences of the court martial, neither on this' (Cunningham) 'nor on the trial of the three other officers for misbehaviour at the battle near Falkirk, as he does not think the excuses made by them sufficient justification for their not returning to rejoin their regiments, and therefore thinks they ought to be suspended.'

The promulgation of the sentence of the court martial on the infantry officers is dated Perth, the 15th February, and runs as follows :

'Lieut. Baldwin Leighton of Major General Blakeney's Regiment, Lieut. William Skipton and Ensign Eyre Coote of the same Regiment, and Ensign John Love of Brigadier Fleming's Regiment, Having been tried for misbehaviour or cowardice at the action of Falkirk and sentenced to be suspended during the pleasure of Lieut. General Hawley, His Majesty upon perusing the Court Martial sent to him for his approbation (General Hawley not having the power at that time to confirm any sentences upon officers) thinks their crime so infamous a nature that he has ordered them to be suspended, the Commanding Officers therefore of those Regiments are to acquaint the aforementioned gentlemen that His Majesty has no further occasion for their services.'<sup>2</sup>

Then on the 20th February the Duke of Cumberland wrote to London,<sup>3</sup> forwarding a list of the commissions thus rendered vacant, with his recommendations for replacements; there are contained in the return twelve names in all and among them is to be found the following :

'Ensign Coote (broke), Blakeney's. Mr. Cawfield, Blakeney's.'

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, W. O. 4/41.

<sup>2</sup> For the composition of the court martial, and above promulgation, I am indebted to Mr. W. B. Blaikie, the possessor of a MS. copy of the Duke of Cumberland's orders.—H. C. W.

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, S. P. Dom. Scotland, Military 17.

Different historians have offered various reasons and many excuses for the extraordinary panic which in many of the actions of the Rebellion of 1745-6 seized upon and dominated the Royal troops when, as under Cope at Prestonpans or under Hawley at Falkirk, they were opposed to the clansmen. Fortescue says<sup>1</sup> that 'the effect of Prestonpans on the troops was much the same as that of the disaster of Isandhlwana in 1879, when most of the reinforcements sent out after the action were very young troops'. But while this parallel may stand in the case of regiments, like Blakeney's, which were probably full of recruits, some other corps behaved no less badly at Falkirk which, little more than a year previously, had covered themselves with glory at Fontenoy. But with the evil memory of Prestonpans and Falkirk behind them, it was the Duke of Cumberland who, by his exhortations and by the training he gave his men when he assumed command, restored their confidence and made possible the 'crowning mercy' of Culloden. He directed that the infantry should meet the charge of the Highlanders, the front rank kneeling with fixed bayonets while the two other ranks fired; he ordered also that at close quarters the men should not seek to bayonet the opponent immediately in their front who was protected by his targe or shield, but should engage the Highlander on the *right* front whose body lay open to the deadly thrust; and the cheers which met Cumberland's final words to his soldiers on the morning of Culloden proved how successful he had been in raising their *morale*<sup>2</sup> and restoring their lost confidence in themselves and in their commander. 'If there is any amongst you', he said, 'who through timidity are diffident of their courage or behaviour, which I have not the least reason to suspect; or any others who through conscience or inclination cannot be zealous or alert in performing their duty; it is my desire that all such would immediately retire . . .; for I had much rather be at the head of one thousand brave and resolute men, than ten thousand amongst whom there are some who by cowardice or misbehaviour may dispirit or disorder the troops and so bring dishonour and disgrace on an army under my command.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *History of the British Army*, vol. ii, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> I am aware that I am not in the fashion in thus spelling this word, but I think I am right in saying that at the time, many years ago, when it was adopted in our army as meaning 'spirit' it was thus spelt in French also.—H. C. W.

<sup>3</sup> The losses in the Royal army at Culloden amounted to 310 killed and wounded.



In the *Historical Records of the 27th Foot*, written many years ago by Mr. W. Copeland Trimble, and published in the *United Service Magazine*, it is stated :

‘ A remarkable circumstance occurred at this battle (Falkirk) when the services of a clever officer were nearly being lost to his country. Sir Eyre Coote, afterwards commander in chief in India, was at this time an ensign in the 27th, and on the retreat of the Royal army he escaped with the King’s Colour, which he had carried in the action, to Edinburgh. For this he was tried by a court martial and broke, but as, fortunately, it was discovered afterwards that his sole motive had been to save the Colour entrusted to his charge from falling into the hands of the rebels, he was duly restored to his former rank in the service.’

I have been unable to find, and Mr. Trimble expressed his inability after so long a lapse of time to give me, any authority for the latter part of the above statement. No record whatever of the court martial has been preserved in the Judge Advocate General’s department, and no detailed account of the proceedings is to be traced in old newspapers of that date available in the British Museum or in any of the Public Offices in Edinburgh. The Fawkener, Pelham, Ligonier, Cumberland, and other papers at the British Museum have been searched in vain for anything in the nature of an appeal by, or on behalf of, Coote against the sentence passed upon him ; and though it would appear from a letter from Sir William Yonge, an extract of which is given on page 13 that certain ‘excuses’ were put forward for some of the officers tried by the court presided over by Brigadier Mordaunt, I have failed to trace the letter to which this was a reply.

That the sentence passed upon this boy of nineteen was quashed, happily for the secure establishment of British power in India, there can be no doubt ; though of the circumstances under which this was brought about there appears to be no contemporary record. It is very possible that the Duke of Cumberland may have interested himself in the lad ; severe as were his measures for putting down the rebellion in Scotland, and for transforming ‘ the army under his command from a sullen, dispirited body of men to an enthusiastic and efficient fighting force ’,<sup>1</sup> it is certain that with his subordinates in the army the Duke was ever humane, considerate, and deservedly popular. When the insurrection was finally at an end much was forgiven ; a general Act of Pardon was passed in June 1747 ; and if full and free forgiveness was accorded to the rank and file of those

<sup>1</sup> Charteris, *William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland*, pp. 358–9.

who had lately been in arms against the King, it seems not unlikely that any plea put forward in favour of a boy-officer would have met with a generous hearing—the more that it would be recognized that Ensign Coote was probably swept away in the general rout at Falkirk, and that he was only more conspicuous than many others by reason of the Colour he bore and to which he clung desperately during the retreat. A similar crop of courts martial had sprung up after the battle of Prestonpans of the 21st September 1745, and documentary evidence proves that many of those then tried and convicted for misbehaviour before the enemy were speedily forgiven. The following two letters seem to show that there was a growing disposition to exercise something of the same clemency after Falkirk.

Writing from Holyrood House on the 30th January 1746 to the Duke of Newcastle the Duke of Cumberland says :

‘ As Hawley communicated to me copies of the infamous sentences that are passed on our cowardly officers, I thought it better to pardon all the private men to give a sort of mark of favour to the corps ; if I might venture to give my opinion on the officers I wish the King superceeded (*sic*) them all since they are not hanged. . . . ’

And writing again from Stirling on the 2nd February to the same correspondent, the Duke added :<sup>1</sup>

‘ Those officers whose names General Hawley sent up some time ago are look’d upon as free and I have given orders for their repairing forthwith to their respective Regiments. I have not got an exact list of those that have render’d themselves useless by their folly or something worse, but will send it when I have.’

A very careful and exhaustive search has failed to discover these lists of which Cumberland here makes mention, but subsequent events seem to prove that Coote must have been one of those who were to be ‘ look’d upon as free ’.

At this period of her history England was not facing enemies within her borders only ; the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 was no more than an episode introduced into the midst of the War of the Austrian Succession ; and some of the regiments which had fought at Dettingen and Fontenoy and which had been brought home in haste to meet the danger in the north, were hurried abroad again to face a foreign enemy at Roucoux and Lauffeldt. Officers and men were urgently required to fill battalions depleted by many years of war ; in some

<sup>1</sup> These letters are at the Record Office in S. P. Scotland, Military 27 and 28.

notices of Sir Eyre Coote it has been stated that he served with distinction in Germany, and it is more than probable that he sought to re-establish his reputation by serving with one of our regiments on the continent.

For more than two years then does Eyre Coote disappear from sight, but we find his name again in the Army List of 1748, when the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle gave England something of a respite from war, when the establishment of the army was reduced, and many officers were placed on half-pay. On the 25th December 1748 six cornets *en second* were gazetted to the half-pay of the Earl of Rothes' dragoons (6th Inniskillings); their names were William Beatty, Kean O'Hara, William Warrender, Gustavus Dalrymple, John Whitefoord, and Eyre Coote.<sup>1</sup>

Roths' Dragoons had embarked for Flanders in 1742 and had fought at Dettingen and at Fontenoy, and were one of the regiments which had been ordered home at the outbreak of the Jacobite Rebellion; these orders had, however, been cancelled and the 6th remained abroad until the peace of October 1748 and were engaged at Roucoux, at Val or Lauffeldt, and in other actions.

It does not, of course, follow that because Coote was placed on the half-pay of Roth's he had therefore served on the active list of that regiment, though it is sufficient proof that he must then have been on the active list of the army; but if he did not at any time serve in the 6th Dragoons, he was the only one of these six cornets whose name is not to be found in the regimental rolls either before or after December 1748.

Thus Beatty appears on full pay in the rolls for 1747 and 1748, on half-pay in 1749 and 1750, and as restored to full pay in Roth's in 1751.

O'Hara is shown on full pay in 1747, on half-pay in December 1748, and does not re-appear.

Warrender is on the full pay list in 1748, on half-pay in December of that year, and thereafter disappears.

Dalrymple, after being placed on half-pay of Roth's in December 1748, returns to full pay in it in 1750 and serves on.

Whitefoord, after being placed on half-pay of the 6th in December 1748, re-appears on its full pay list in 1758.

Coote had, however, no intention of remaining indefinitely on half-

<sup>1</sup> Record Office, W. O. 24/697.

pay, and early in 1749 we find him exchanging back to the active list, and in a higher rank, with a Lieutenant Charles Fleury of the 37th Regiment: 'Rothes', Coote, Eyre, 2nd Cornet from 25th December 1748, pro<sup>d</sup>. 18th April 1749, Lt. Charles Fleury *vice* him',<sup>1</sup> and again: 'Eyre Coote, Gent., to be lieutenant in our Regiment of Foot commanded by Colonel Lewis Dejean. Given at St. James's the 18th April 1749.'

Charles Fleury was now a subaltern officer of nearly fourteen years' service, and was not apparently a man of much ambition. The date of his first commission was 19th July 1735 and of his lieutenancy 1st June 1742, while in the Army List of 1755 we still find him serving as junior cornet *en second* on half-pay of Rothes' Dragoons. It is curious that the man with whom young Coote exchanged should also have been tried by general court martial. On page 305 of Maclachlan's *Life of the Duke of Cumberland* we find the following extract from the Duke's general orders:

'Inverness, April 29th, 1746. Captain Doyne and Lieut. Clements of Dejean's Regiment being mentioned in yesterday's orders as having neglected their duty by being absent from Camp when on ye Picquet was a mistake caused by Lieut. Fleury, Adjutant of ye Regiment making a false return in reporting those two officers on ye Picquet when they were upon Guard in Town, the said Adjutant Fleury therefore is to be confined and tryd by a General Court Martial for making such false returns and for neglect of duty in not warning two other officers for ye Picquet. . . . May 22nd, H.R.H. having approved the sentence of the General Court Martial held yesterday upon Adjutant Fleury of Colonel Dejean's Regiment for neglect of duty, he is suspended from acting and pay three months.'

Shortly after joining the 37th, the regiment was ordered to Minorca, and Coote appears to have accompanied it thither or at any rate to have served with it during part of its stay in that island, for it is on record<sup>3</sup> that on the 28th January 1752 'leave of absence for twelve months from the date hereof is granted to Lieutenant Eyre Coote of Colonel Lewis Dejean's Regiment of Foot, serving in our island of Minorca, in order to go to Ireland to settle his private affairs'.

In the year 1755 the 37th embarked at Minorca to return home, and the following extract from an Inspection Return<sup>4</sup> may here usefully be given:

'General Return of the names, country, age and service of the

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, W. O. 25/2987.

<sup>2</sup> Record Office, W. O. 25/22, p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> Record Office, W. O. 25/3191.

<sup>4</sup> Record Office, W. O. 27/3.

Officers of H.M.'s 37th Regiment of Foot, commanded by Major General James Stuart, with dates of their several commissions.

' Reviewed by General Sir John Mordaunt at Reading, 3rd June 1755.

	Country.	Age.	Years' Service.	Cornet or Ensign.	Second Lieut.	Lieutenant.
Eyre Coote.	Irish	30	11	8th June 1744 <sup>1</sup>	—	18th April 1749.

Absent Officers.

Lieut. Coote. Since 29th April 1755. On duty at London.'

Coote served in the 37th Foot for just over six years, obtaining his company on the 18th June 1755.

The peace of 1748 had brought the struggle between England and France to a close on the continent, without however, as we shall see, effecting much more than an armed truce between these ancient foes either in India or in the New World.

<sup>1</sup> The date of Coote's original commission—a further proof of his complete reinstatement in the army after his court martial.

## CHAPTER II

1755-1757

DURING the war between England and France which was ended in October 1748 by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, both Powers had considerably increased their garrisons on the coast of Coromandel, and, as observed by Orme, 'as if it was impossible that a military force which feels itself capable of enterprises should refrain from attempting them, the two settlements, no longer authorized to fight with each other, took the resolution of employing their arms in the contests of the princes of the country—the English with the greatest indiscretion, the French with the utmost ambition'.<sup>1</sup>

Having decided to aid the princes of the country in their wars with each other, it was not long, in spite of the peace in Europe, before the troops of the two Powers found themselves, under the title of 'auxiliaries', opposed to one another in the field. The British arms have seldom acquired greater glory than was gathered by the troops led by Lawrence, Clive, Kilpatrick, Forde, and Coote, but the representatives of both the English and the French Companies in Europe were anxious to put an end to a war so wasting and so anomalous; and the former were the more inclined to a settlement since the French in India were in receipt of greater support from the Mother Country, and had, moreover, formed connections with the more powerful of the native princes. Attempts at negotiation having proved profitless, the Governor and Council at Madras represented to the Court of Directors in London the urgent necessity for sending out a reinforcement of troops to enable them to obtain a solid advantage over the French. The Court of Directors applied to the Crown for aid, and in answer to their appeal it was decided to send to the East Indies a small squadron of men-of-war, under Rear-Admiral Charles Watson, and the 39th Regiment, commanded by Colonel Adlercron. A small detachment of artillery under Captain Hyslop or Hislop, accompanied the regiment, and 200 recruits for the East India Company's forces were also embarked.

The following ships were ordered to rendezvous at Plymouth:

<sup>1</sup> Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, vol. i, Bk. II, p. 107.

the *Kent*, 70 guns, with the Admiral's flag ; the *Eagle*, 60 ; *Salisbury*, 50 ; *Bristol*, 50 ; *Bridgewater*, 20 ; and *Kingfisher*, 16 guns. With these ships Admiral Watson put to sea on the 9th March 1754. The Admiral's orders were to proceed to Cork and there receive on board his vessels as many of the King's troops as they conveniently could accommodate. Watson did his best to carry out these instructions, but the wind being unfavourable, he put into Kinsale, and wrote on the 12th to Colonel Adlerson acquainting him of his arrival and requesting him to march with his regiment to that port.

On the afternoon of the 19th the wind blew hard from the south-east, accompanied by sleet and hail, and a very high sea poured into the bay. This occasioned the *Eagle* to part her small bower cable and to drive athwart the hawse of the *Bristol* ; the former was soon cleared, but not without the loss of the *Bristol's* head and bowsprit ; during the night both these ships parted their anchors and drove very near shore ; their masts were cut away and signals of distress were made ; but the sea was running so high that no assistance could be afforded them. In the morning the sea and wind having abated, all the boats of the squadron were sent to their aid, but both the *Eagle* and *Bristol* were so much disabled that they were unable to proceed on the expedition.

The Admiral now decided to put to sea with the remaining ships, and to send the *Eagle* and *Bristol* to Plymouth under convoy of the *Garland* ; and, in accordance with this determination, he wrote to Colonel Adlerson desiring that the portion of the 39th intended for embarkation on the *Kent*, *Salisbury*, *Bridgewater*, and *Kingfisher*, should be put on board with all possible expedition ; and that another division should be embarked on the two disabled ships and proceed in them to Plymouth, ' where he did not doubt but other ships would soon be ready to receive them and follow him to India '. The rest of the regiment was to embark in some of the East India Company's ships, which of course would not fail to follow the Admiral, but as they were not ready at the time he sailed from England, he had orders not to wait for them.

On the 29th March a division of the 39th Foot having been embarked, the Admiral put to sea with the *Kent*, *Salisbury*, and *Bridgewater*. On the 6th April he anchored in Funchal road off the Island of Madeira and remained there till the 19th. On the 18th July the squadron came to an anchor in St. Augustine's Bay in the southern portion of the island of Madagascar, when the sick, who were very numerous,

were sent ashore, but 'so salutary was the land and the refreshment it produced that in less than three weeks after they were put ashore, almost all of them happily recovered their health and vigour'.<sup>1</sup> On the 7th August, having filled up the water casks and taken on board as many live cattle as could be stowed away, together with a large quantity of limes and oranges, the squadron resumed its voyage, and, on the 10th September 1754, anchored off Fort St. David, when the detachment of the 39th was at once disembarked, and was joined by another portion of the regiment which had sailed from England in some Indiamen.

While Admiral Watson had been journeying eastward, negotiations had been resumed between the British and French Governments, and the French accepted a proposal put forward by the English that both Mr. Saunders, the Governor of Fort St. George, and M. Dupleix, the Governor of Pondicherry, should be removed, and that each nation should send a commissioner to India to settle all disputes between the rival Companies, and to prevent warfare between their troops for the future when their respective nations were at peace. The French Ministry nominated M. Godeheu on behalf of the King, and the French East India Company appointed him Governor of all their settlements. For some unexplained reason the British did not remove Mr. Saunders,<sup>2</sup> but invested him and his Council with full powers. On the 1st August 1754 the *Duc de Bourgogne*, with M. Godeheu on board, arrived at Pondicherry, and on the following day Dupleix made over the government to the French Commissioner, embarking for Europe on the 14th October. Godeheu assumed the government of the French settlements on the 2nd August, while Watson arrived on the 10th of the following month with his ships of war and the head-quarters of the 39th. Godeheu early opened negotiations with the English, and a suspension of hostilities, to commence on the 11th October and to endure for three months, was agreed to; but before the end of the year a treaty was concluded subject to confirmation in Europe, and on the 11th January 1755—the day the suspension of arms expired—a truce was agreed upon until the pleasure of the Home authorities should be known.

On the day that the suspension of arms commenced, Admiral Watson, with the *Kent* and *Salisbury*, sailed for Bombay, where they arrived on the 13th November. Here the Admiral remained

<sup>1</sup> Ives, *Voyage from England to India, &c.*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Saunders, however, left India on the 14th January 1755.



until the 16th December, when he sailed again for the Coromandel coast, arrived at Fort St. David on the 13th January 1755, and anchored on the 18th in Madras roads, where was found the *Cumberland*, 70 guns, Commodore Pocock, joined eight days later by the *Tiger*, 60 guns, Captain Latham. Admiral Watson was now apprised of the conditional treaty arranged between Godeheu and Saunders, and which, as it was to remain in force until either ratified or rejected from home, made peace assured for at least eighteen months. Watson then, to avoid the risks of the monsoon, sailed early in April for Trincomalee, and remained there till the 11th May, when he returned with his fleet to the Madras coast; the monsoon was, however, not yet over, and the ships were obliged to put to sea again till the end of the month, but on the 19th August the fleet was once more anchored in Madras roads.

Before the arrival in India of the 39th Regiment under Colonel Adlercron, the troops on the establishment of Fort St. George had been commanded by Major Stringer Lawrence, but this officer was superseded by Adlercron, who was not only senior in rank to Lawrence, but 'had been appointed by His Majesty Commander-in-Chief'.<sup>1</sup> Adlercron, however, seems to have been a man of but small capacity, and did not effect anything in the East to enhance the moderate military reputation which he had established in other fields. On the 11th October of this year Wolfe wrote: 'Our military concerns are under the guidance of a very poor insignificant officer'—alluding to Adlercron—'and the death of Scott is an irreparable damage to the Indian Army.'<sup>2</sup> (Scott had arrived from Bengal about the 20th April 1754, but had declined to take over the command from Lawrence; he died on the 12th May.)<sup>3</sup>

In 1755 it was decided to send out two additional companies to the 39th Regiment,<sup>4</sup> and Eyre Coote appears to have been transferred from the 37th to the command of one of these, the date of his transfer

<sup>1</sup> Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. ii, p. 447.

<sup>2</sup> Wright, *Life of Wolfe*, p. 318. Adlercron had succeeded Brig.-Gen. John Richbell removed to the 17th Foot.

<sup>3</sup> Scott held the appointment of Engineer General in the East Indies, and Commander of the Forces in Bengal: he was Lieut.-Col. of the 29th Foot and A.D.C. to the Duke of Cumberland.

<sup>4</sup> This, the first Royal Regiment sent to India, was raised in Ireland under a warrant, dated 13th February 1702, by Col. Richard Coote, who was killed in a duel early in the year following by Lord Mohun and Warwick—see *State Trials*, 1703. Colonel Coote was a kinsman of Chidley Coote of Ash Hill.

being the 14th July 1755, succeeding to the vacancy of a Captain Thomas Williams, who had died on the 25th January. On the 1st November these two extra companies, then quartered at Coventry and Huntingdon, were ordered to Tilbury and sailed to join their head-quarters in Madras, and must have arrived there late in 1756.

The 39th Regiment appears to have remained for some considerable time at Fort St. David after disembarkation; it was certainly there in August 1755 when the Nawab of Arcot visited that place, for it is on record that he was met at the boundaries by Colonel Adlercron and a captain's guard of the 39th; but in July of the year following—in 1756—the regiment was brought up to Fort St. George, Madras.

Clive, who had returned to England in 1753, had in 1755 been appointed Governor of Fort St. David, with a provisional commission to succeed to the government of Madras; and to obviate quarrels about rank between the King's and the Company's officers, he had been given the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the British army. On leaving home Clive had been directed to proceed in the first instance to Bombay to command a force which, in conjunction with the Mahrattas, was to attack the French and their allies in the Deccan. The armistice concluded between Saunders and Godeheu caused this project to be abandoned, and the Bombay Government then took advantage of the presence of Clive and of the fleet to crush the power of the pirate Angria and to capture his stronghold at Gheria; both these results were attained by the 14th February 1756. Clive now proceeded to Fort St. David, of which he took charge on the 20th June.

Admiral Watson had for some time past been anxious to return to England; 'his constitution was sanguine and his habit rather corpulent, and the heat of the climate had been greatly distressful'<sup>1</sup> to him; and he was rejoiced on arrival off the Coromandel coast on the 14th May to learn that his application to proceed home was sanctioned, and that he was at liberty to hand over his command to Pocock, who had been promoted rear-admiral a short time before. This agreeable prospect was, however, soon marred by the news which reached Madras both from Europe and from Bengal.

The directors of the East India Company had sent word to their representatives in Madras that 3,000 regular troops had embarked at French ports in six ships of the line and in the same number of large vessels belonging to the French East India Company; and that these last, as soon as they reached Mauritius, were to be converted

<sup>1</sup> Ives, p. 89.

into ships of war. This report was not confirmed in letters received at the same time by Admiral Watson from the Admiralty, but the news was to a large extent corroborated by the French and Dutch residents in India. It was therefore determined to prepare to receive the French on their arrival off the coast in the most effective manner, and it was to this end, and at the particular request of the Government of Fort St. George, that the 39th Regiment was embarked at Fort St. David and brought round to Madras.

It is now necessary to turn to the course of events in Bengal. Ali Verdy Khan, the Nawab, who had always been on terms of friendship with the English, died on the 19th April 1756, and was succeeded by his grand-nephew, Surajah Dowlah, who was known to be hostile to Europeans generally and especially to the British. This animosity was fostered and encouraged by those about him, who pointed out the wealth that might be obtained by the capture of Calcutta, and the honour which would be his by the defeat of the English. These arguments took root, and an excuse for war was soon found. The factory at Cossimbazar was surrounded, and being untenable surrendered on the 4th June; on the 9th the Nawab commenced his march on Calcutta; and on the 16th his advance guard appeared in sight of the walls of the Fort, and active operations at once commenced. The garrison made a spirited defence, but, having been deserted by Drake, the Governor, and by the Commander of the troops, Captain Minchin, surrendered on the 20th June, on the night of which day occurred the Tragedy of the Black Hole.

Such of the garrison as effected their escape took refuge at Fulda, forty miles lower down the river, and were here joined by all the English who could reach that haven from the out-factories.

News of the capture of Cossimbazar reached Madras on the 15th July, and on the 20th Major Kilpatrick, with 230 soldiers, chiefly Europeans,<sup>1</sup> sailed for Calcutta in the *Delaware*. This detachment was happily ready to move, having been prepared in obedience to orders from home, where it had been anticipated that disturbance might arise in Bengal on the death of the aged Ali Verdy Khan, and it had been directed that the force in Bengal should be reinforced.

The report of the capture of Calcutta was not received in Madras until the 5th August, and caused great consternation. The Council at once met, and after much discussion it was decided to send the fleet and a large force to Bengal; the propriety of conferring the

<sup>1</sup> One hundred of these belonged to the Madras European Regiment.

command of the expedition on Adlercron was discussed, but it was finally decided that the force should be dispatched under Clive, whose nomination gave great offence to the colonel of the 39th, he declining to allow the four field pieces and detachment of artillery to accompany the expedition. Much valuable time was wasted in these debates, but the *Kingfisher* sloop was hurried off to Fulta to give notice that assistance was being sent ; the season of the year, however, was not favourable for a quick passage.

The composition of the expeditionary force was finally settled as under : it comprised the *Kent*, bearing the flag of Admiral Watson, the *Cumberland* with Admiral Pocock, the *Tiger*, the *Salisbury*, and the *Bridgewater*, and to these were added the *Protector*, *Walpole*, *Marlborough*, and two others of the Company's ships. The military force was composed of about 900 Europeans, of whom 250, or three companies, belonged to the 39th, who were shipped on the distinct understanding that they were to serve as marines. These companies were commanded by Captains Archibald Grant, Weller, and Eyre Coote, with Lieutenants Waggoner, Corneille and Carnac, Ensigns Yorke, Donnellan, and Bradbridge.<sup>1</sup> Coote's company was on board the flagship. The rest of the force was made up of five companies of the Madras European Regiment,<sup>2</sup> 650 strong, 80 artillerymen, and 1,200 Madras sepoy, with a few field pieces.

All being complete the fleet sailed for the Hooghly on the 16th October 1756—according to most of the authorities.

A copy of the journal kept by Coote at this period is preserved at the India Office,<sup>3</sup> and in that he gives the date of leaving Madras as the 17th October. On Tuesday, the 30th November—the expedition was sailing in the teeth of the monsoon—the fleet came to an anchor in Ballasore Road, and on the 15th the *Kent* reached Fulta with the *Tiger* and the *Walpole*, Indiaman. By this time two ships of the fleet had parted company ; the *Salisbury* seems to have taken the shore in Ballasore Road, while the *Marlborough* had been obliged to bear away for Vizagapatam. The temporary defection of these vessels rather impaired the efficiency of the expedition, for on board the *Salisbury* were some three hundred Europeans, while in the *Marlborough* was the greater part of the field guns and stores.

At Fulta, Colonel Clive disembarked 600 of the sepoy, directing

<sup>1</sup> This is Broome's list ; Wilson's is rather different.

<sup>2</sup> Now the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

<sup>3</sup> *Orme Collection, India*, vol. vii, p. 1650 *et seq.*

them to continue their journey by land; at Maidapore some more of the Company's troops were put on shore, and Budge Budge being the first object of attack, it was arranged that the ships should cannonade the works whilst the troops under Clive should make a détour to the northward of the fort and get between it and Calcutta, and so cut off the retreat of the garrison. The general conduct of these operations may now well be described in Coote's own words.

' Decembér 29. The Admiral's ship with the *Tiger*, who took the van and *Salisbury* the rear, arrived before Bougee Bougee [Budge Budge] about 7 o'clock in the morning; the *Tiger* began to cannonade the fort, and a quarter of an hour after the *Kent*; the *Salisbury* did not come up till near 12. About 11 o'clock the Admiral made the signal for the King's troops to land and to join some of the Company's troops we saw marching under the bank of the river. Upon my landing I found they were a detachment from Colonel Clive's army composed of the Grenadiers and Sepoys; Captain Pye, who commanded them, told me he had orders from Colonel Clive to take possession of the bank under the fire of the ships, but that as he was under my command he was ready to obey what orders I pleased to give. Upon which I formed the King's troops into platoons (who were by this time all arrived from the *Kent* and *Tiger*), the Company's Grenadiers in the rear of mè, and divided the Sepoys into the advanced and rear guards.

' I immediately advanced and took possession of two out forts the enemy had evacuated, without taking away their Colours; from one of the forts I could plainly see that there was a narrow road into the interior fort and that the gate was made of wooden bars, so that I thought we might enter without much difficulty—especially as the men of war had silenced all their batteries. I therefore ordered a march to be beat and was advancing to storm the fort, when word was brought to me that Captain Weller, who was my senior, was landed with the troops from the *Salisbury*, and desired I would halt till he came up, which I did. While I was representing the situation of affairs word was brought that a very large body of Horse and Foot had attacked Colonel Clive, therefore Captain Weller thought it necessary to desist from my project and go to the Colonel whom we knew to be very weak; and after three miles' march we joined him. He was then drawn up in a plain, and had a smart skirmish with the enemy before he could disengage himself from some enclosures and houses that the enemy had possessed themselves of. After remaining for about an hour we marched back to the place I had been in possession of, and the Colonel went on board to consult with the Admiral; on his return I found that we were to have a body of seamen to join us, and that we were to storm the place when night came on. All this time the enemy fired nothing but small arms at us, by which they killed and wounded some of our men.

' When night came on four hundred sailors came on shore under the

command of Captain King. The Colonel and Major Kilpatrick were retired to rest as they had a very fatiguing march all the night before, and Captain Weller was gone sick on board, so that I had the command, and as my opinion was all day for storming the place, I was in hopes then to have the honour of doing it, but the Colonel sent me word he would have nothing done till the morning. Upon which I went to him to represent how things stood, and that the sailors were all landed and that our men would suffer from lying out all night ; he sent me then on board the Admiral to know if he would have the sailors sent on board till morning. While I was on board, a sailor<sup>1</sup> that was drunk stole away to the fort gate and fired his pistol, and cried out " the place was his " ; upon which the King's [troops], who were next the gate, entered the fort without any opposition. Thus the place was taken without the least honour to any one. We found the fort very strong with a wet ditch all round it, and I had the honour to command it that night.'

On the 30th December the European troops were once more embarked, and the fleet proceeded up the river, the sepoy again marching by land. The fort at Tannah was seized on the 1st January 1757, and next morning early all the ships sailed on to Calcutta, leaving behind the *Salisbury* to demolish the works at Tannah and Budge Budge, and bring off the guns. At 9 a.m. the foremost ship, the *Tiger*, got within sight of Calcutta, when the enemy opened fire upon her, and for half an hour the *Tiger* could not get a gun to bear.

The *Kent* then came up and joined in the cannonade, and the garrison, finding that Clive had nearly invested the fort on the land side, evacuated the place, when the inhabitants waved their hands in token of surrender, one of them raising the British flag on a tree.

The Admiral now ordered Captain Coote on shore to hoist the English colours and to take command of the fort, sending him written orders to the following effect :

' You are hereby required and directed to garrison the fort of Calcutta with his Majesty's troops which you have now on shore, and take care to post centinels and guards so as not to be surprised by the enemy. In the evening I shall be on shore ; and you are not to quit your post or deliver up your command till farther orders from me. During your continuance on shore you are to take care that no disorders be committed by His Majesty's troops, or any other people, but to treat the natives with humanity, and take particular care that there is no plundering as such offenders may depend on the severest punishment.'

<sup>1</sup> Ives, *Narrative of Operations under Watson and Clive*, p. 101, gives the sailor's name as Strahan.

This led to some correspondence and exchange of acrimonious messages between the Admiral and Clive. Clive denied that Admiral Watson had any authority to appoint as Governor of the Fort an officer inferior in rank to himself, and told Coote that he (Clive) would himself take command, and that if Coote offered any difficulty he would place him under arrest. Coote now asked that he might communicate these particulars to the Admiral, and, this being done, Watson sent on shore Captain Speke of the *Kent* to inquire by what authority Colonel Clive had taken the command of the fort upon himself. Clive replied, 'by virtue of His Majesty's commission as lieutenant-colonel and as commander in chief of the land forces'. Speke returned on board with this message, but soon came back with an intimation from the Admiral that, if Clive did not at once abandon the fort, the ships would open fire and compel him to do so. Clive was still obdurate, but at this juncture Captain Latham of the *Tiger*, an intimate friend of Clive, left his ship to talk matters over, and it was agreed that, if the Admiral himself came on shore, Clive would make over the command to him. The Admiral accordingly landed next morning, when Clive delivered the keys of the fort into his hands.

The Admiral then in turn handed them to Mr. Drake, the late Governor, and he and his Council were now persuaded by Clive of the urgent necessity of at once publishing a declaration of war against the Nawab, in the name of the East India Company, Admiral Watson doing the same in the name of the King.

Watson and Clive determined to prosecute the war with vigour, and with the *Bridgewater*, the *Kingfisher* sloop, and the *Thunder* bomb-ketch, with all the boats of the squadron manned by 150 sailors, started to reduce Hooghly.

Under date of the 4th January 1757 Coote notes in his journal :

'I received orders to embark with the King's troops on board the 20-gun ship and sloop of war, and the rest of our detachment that was on board the *Salisbury* all joined, except Captain Weller who was left sick on board. Major Kilpatrick with the Company's Grenadiers and 170 Sepoys were also embarked ; we were in all about 200 Europeans and 170 Sepoys.'

'9th. The Ships came to an anchor off Hooghly.

'10th. The troops landed and took possession of the town ; the 20-gun ship and sloop went abreast of the fort and began to cannonade it, which they continued doing till about 12 o'clock at night. The Major sent me to examine the breach that the ships had made, which I found practicable to enter, on which we formed two attacks ; one of fifty men went to the main gate and kept [up] a great noise with

continual firing, whilst we entered privately at the breach. The sailors under Captain King, that were on shore with us, put up our scaling ladders and assisted us in getting in, which we did without any loss, for the enemy, as we had imagined, went all to the place where our false attack was made, and ran away through one of the gates. We found the fort much stronger than we at first imagined, and the garrison consisted of 2,000 men; we had some of our men killed and wounded before we stormed.'

The actual casualties in this affair were 3 European soldiers and 10 sepoy killed, and several wounded; while of the sailors, several were killed, including one midshipman, 3 midshipmen and 25 sailors were wounded, and Lieutenant James Moddam of the *Kent* died of fatigue.

On the 12th Captain Speke of the *Kent* was sent by the Admiral to take command of the sailors, and in conjunction with 50 Europeans and 100 sepoy under Coote marched on a village three miles to the northward to destroy the granaries there. On returning the party was surrounded by 3,000 to 4,000 of the enemy: Coote ordered the village to be set on fire to protect his rear, and again advanced boldly towards the enemy, who, consisting of horse and foot, had taken possession of the houses and men of war's boats and were advancing up the street. The fire of Coote's men killed several of the enemy, their cavalry fled, and the infantry, throwing themselves into the neighbouring houses, kept up a desultory fire; but Coote succeeded in bringing off his party with a loss of no more than one sergeant wounded. Major Kilpatrick had moved out in support on hearing the firing, but the affair was over before he arrived upon the scene.

The fort at Hooghly was now demolished, the troops re-embarked and sailed for Calcutta, where they landed on the 19th January, Captain Weller taking over command of the King's troops.

Meanwhile the authorities at Madras were gravely disturbed at the news which had reached them from Europe. On the 12th November 1756, accounts came to hand of the outbreak of war in Europe between England and France; the intelligence was at once transmitted to Clive, and the Governor and Council at Madras, after suggesting an attack on the French settlement at Chandernagore, entreated Clive to return southward with as many troops as could be spared to protect the settlement from the dangers likely to result from the expected arrival of a French expedition from Europe. These tidings reached Calcutta and Clive while the operations against Hooghly were in progress.





ADMIRAL WATSON

From the portrait by T. Hudson



Meanwhile the Nawab, Surajah Dowlah, irritated by the capture and plunder of Hooghly, commenced his march towards Calcutta, and his army appeared in sight of that place on the 2nd, the Nawab himself arriving with his main body on the 3rd February; in his journal Coote estimates the hostile force as 'consisting of 40,000 horse and 60,000 foot, 50 elephants and 30 pieces of cannon; our body, for I cannot call it our Army, consisted of 711 men in battalion, about 100 artillery with 14 field pieces—six-pounders, besides the cannon on our batteries, and 1,300 sepoy': there was some skirmishing on this day, and 'we had a few men killed and Captain Weller was wounded in the thigh'.

Negotiations for peace were opened, Colonel Clive sending Messrs. Walsh and Scrafton to treat with the Nawab, but these efforts were fruitless, and Clive determined to attack the Nawab's camp. At 3 a.m. on the 5th he set out on his march, having been joined a couple of hours previously by 600 sailors from the squadron, under the command of Captain Warwick, and the whole force at Clive's disposal consisting, in addition to these, of '500 rank and file in battalion, 800 sepoy, 6 field pieces, 1 cohorn, and 60 artillerymen'. A little before daybreak the advance came upon the enemy's picquets, and these, after a hurried discharge of matchlocks and rockets, took to flight. Unfortunately a rocket struck the pouch of one of the sepoy and exploded his cartridges, the explosion injuring several of his comrades and creating great confusion. Coote, however, who was at hand, soon restored order. As day dawned a heavy fog spread over the ground, and nothing could be seen at a distance of more than a very few yards. When about 9 o'clock the fog began to disperse, the British force found itself nearly opposite the Nawab's camp, 'which was behind an entrenchment<sup>1</sup> made many years ago by the English for the defence of the town against the Morattoes', and a sharp but indecisive action ensued.

All hopes of a surprise being long since dissipated, and the troops having been many hours under arms, the force was ordered to return to the fort, which was reached about noon.

The loss had been heavy in so small a force, distant moreover from all possible reinforcement. Twenty-seven European soldiers, 18 sepoy, and 12 sailors had been killed, while 70 European soldiers, 35 sepoy, and 12 sailors had been wounded. Two captains of the Madras service—Pye and Bridges—were killed, as was also Mr. Belcher, Clive's

<sup>1</sup> For more about this 'entrenchment' see Chap. IX, p. 165.

secretary; Lieutenant Lutwidge of the *Salisbury* was mortally wounded, while Mr. Ellis of the Civil Service, who with other civilians served as a volunteer, lost his leg.

The enemy's loss had been still heavier, 1,300 having been killed and wounded, while 500 horses, 300 draught bullocks, and 4 elephants were killed or disabled. This loss induced the Nawab to treat, and on the 9th peace was concluded on very favourable terms, the Nawab commencing his homeward march on the 11th. Before he left the neighbourhood of Calcutta, Clive sought permission from the Nawab to attack Chandernagore; a temporising reply was returned, which was interpreted by Clive as containing no actual prohibition, and he proceeded accordingly to arrange matters with the Admiral.

On the 18th February he crossed the river with his whole force, whereupon the French solicited the protection of the Nawab, who wrote to Clive forbidding the English to continue hostilities; Clive and Watson then desisted, for both agreed<sup>1</sup> that, without the Nawab's consent, no offensive operations could be thought of.

During the first half of March reinforcements, amounting to 400 men of the Bombay army, under Captains Buchanan and Armstrong, had reached Clive, and already he had again been urging decisive measures, the Admiral refusing, however, to co-operate without the consent of the Nawab. In reply to a letter from Watson complaining that the terms of the treaty of the 9th February had not been fully complied with, the Nawab at last gave a half-hearted consent to the attack upon Chandernagore in a letter received by the Admiral on the 13th March. The objections of Admiral Watson were now removed, and he determined to aid in the expedition, although another communication was almost immediately received from the Nawab containing a positive prohibition.

Having agreed to co-operate with Clive, the Admiral did his part well; 'few naval engagements', says Sir John Malcolm,<sup>2</sup> 'have excited more admiration; and even at the present day, when the river is so much better known, the success with which the largest vessels of this fleet were navigated to Chandernagore, and laid alongside the batteries of that settlement, is a subject of wonder'.

Clive commenced operations by summoning the garrison to surrender on the evening of the 13th March; he received, however, no reply. The French had erected a four-gun battery commanding

<sup>1</sup> Elphinstone, *Rise of the British Power in the East*, p. 291.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Clive*, vol. i, p. 191.

the approaches to the south of the fort, and as the English approached the enemy sent out skirmishers, who, availing themselves of their local knowledge, held the English in check until three o'clock, when they were compelled to take refuge in the battery. The British now took possession of the houses in the immediate vicinity, and kept up so hot a fire with their small arms that when night fell the French spiked their guns and retired into the fort. In this affair Coote particularly distinguished himself; the possession of this battery rendered four other batteries untenable, and the guns were withdrawn into the fort at daybreak. On the 15th the English established themselves on the glacis, brought up their artillery, and constructed batteries which opened fire on the 19th March.

'Began to erect a battery of five 24-pounders,' records Coote in his journal, 'behind the wall of a house that was close to the glacis, and opposite to the south face of the south-east bastion, likewise turned a battery of the enemy's on the south flank of the north-east bastion and mounted three 24-pounders. Admiral Watson, with the *Kent*, *Tiger*, and *Salisbury*, arrived this morning from Calcutta which they left on the 14th inst. and anchored just out of gun shot from the fort.'

'20th. The enemy began to play upon our 3-gun battery, which we returned, but they soon silenced it and almost demolished the work.

'21st. Continued making the 5-gun battery and almost finished the 3, when the enemy began firing warmly again at it, and knocked down a veranda close by the battery, the rubbish of which choked up one of our guns, very much bruised two artillery officers, and buried several men in the ruins. Admiral Pocock and Captain Grant (of our regiment) arrived from Culpee, where they left the *Cumberland*.

'22nd. Finished our 5-gun battery, but got no more than four guns in it. The enemy in the evening found out where we were making our battery and fired very warmly on it; the detachment of the King's troops was ordered on board His Majesty's ships *Kent*, *Tiger*, and *Salisbury*. At night Admiral Pocock hoisted his flag on board the *Tiger*.

'23rd. At 6 o'clock in the morning Signal was made for weighing. Soon after the Colonel marched with the Company's troops into the town, opened the 4-gun battery, and began to fire from the 3-gun battery which was tolerably well repaired. The Colonel had likewise placed musketry on several houses, who kept up a continuous fire on the south-east bastion; at half past six the *Tiger* was under sail and stood up the river for the fort: the *Kent* following her, and the *Salisbury* bringing up the rear. The enemy had a mud battery of six guns close to the water's edge, from which they kept up a continual fire on the *Kent* and *Tiger*, as well as from the south-east and north-east bastions, which did the *Tiger* some damage. But on her coming abreast of the mud battery the enemy spiked up their guns and retired into

the fort. At 7 o'clock the *Tiger* came to an anchor opposite the north-east bastion, and a few minutes after the *Kent* came to opposite the south-east—both of which bastions consisted of five guns in face and three in flank; they fired very warmly and with a good deal of success. The *Kent*, very unfortunately dragging her anchor, exposed her quarter to the fire of the flank of the southward bastion; the *Salisbury* brought up the rear. After a very warm engagement of two hours, the French, having bravely defended their fort, hung out a flag of truce.

Coote and Lieutenant Brereton were sent on shore by Admiral Watson to receive the French proposals, and at 3 p.m. the capitulation was concluded.

Coote was ordered to take possession of the fort, his force being composed of a company of artillerymen, his own company of Grenadiers of the 39th and the East India Company's Grenadiers, and here he remained until the 27th, when the force marched and encamped a little to the northward of Chinsurah.

During the engagement the *Kent* had three of her 32-pounders dismounted, 19 men were killed, and 74 were wounded; among the former was the First-Lieutenant, Perreau, and among the latter, Captain Speke, Lieutenant Hay, Captain Speke's son, and four or five petty officers. Of Coote's detachment, which consisted of 30 rank and file, 9 men were killed and 5 wounded. The port side of the *Kent* was hulled in 138 places, and there were three or four shot through the main mast, and as many through the mizzen. The *Tiger* had 14 men killed and 56 wounded—Admiral Pocock among the latter; of Captain Grant's detachment, 1 was killed and 3 were wounded. The *Salisbury* had no casualties, and the troops on shore under Clive had only 1 killed and 10 wounded.

'The fort of Chandernagore', wrote Coote, 'is a regular square about three quarters of a mile in circumference with four bastions, each of which mounts 16 guns, besides some guns on the curtain, and a battery of 4 pieces on the top of a church. [There is] a dry fosse round the three sides to the land, with a glacis of about 40 yards; out of the northward port, a small ravelin mounting five guns, and opposite the port towards the waterside, a mud battery of six guns which flanked down the river.'

The garrison, Coote gives at '500 Europeans and about 500 blacks'; and the Governor or Director of Chandernagore was Pierre Renault, of whom we shall hear again.

## CHAPTER III

1757-1758

WHEN the Nawab Surajah Dowlah heard of the fall of Chandernagore he was exceedingly incensed, and while his dread of the might of the English, which he now recognized, led him hastily to set about fulfilling the articles of the treaty he had made and had hitherto disregarded, he intrigued with those he hoped might help him yet to evade his obligations. He made overtures to the Mahrattas; and he summoned to his aid the French soldier, de Bussy, who had occupied since 1751 the post of Viceroy of the Deccan, but who, having recently been dismissed, was reported as being on the march to Bengal with his army.

After the capitulation of Chandernagore the ships returned to Calcutta, as did also, on the 2nd May, the Bengal and Bombay troops, Chandernagore being temporarily occupied by the King's and the Madras forces. On the 12th June Major Kilpatrick returned to Chandernagore with the troops from Calcutta, and on the following day the captured fort was handed over to Lieutenant Clerke, first-lieutenant of the flagship, who took command of it with a hundred sailors; and on the same day 'our army under the command of Colonel Clive, consisting of 750 military (including 100 Topasses),<sup>1</sup> about 150 of the train, including 50 sailors, with 8 pieces of cannon, six-pounders, and one Hobit (*sic*) embarked in boats. The Sepoys, being 2,100, marched to the northward through Hooghly'.<sup>2</sup> Nyasarai was reached this day, and the force halted on the 14th at Kalna, 15 miles north of Hooghly. On this march Clive gave certain officers local rank: on the 15th Captain Archibald Grant, and on the 16th Captain Eyre Coote, were appointed to be majors.

Clive had already adopted measures to force the hand of the Nawab. He had written to him that nothing less than permission to attack the French at Cossimbazar could convince the English of his good-will; he insisted that the Nawab should withdraw his protection from Monsieur Law, the chief of the French factory at Cossimbazar, who

<sup>1</sup> Indo-Portuguese soldiers—from *Top*, a gun, or *Topi*, a hat.

<sup>2</sup> Coote's *Journal*.

had been joined by some of the escaped garrison of Chandernagore ; and the Nawab alternately stormed and refused, fawned and consented. ' At one time he professed the utmost cordiality towards the British and ordered Mr. Law to march out of Murshedabad, but supplied him with money and ammunition and stationed him within call ; at another time he drove the English *Vakeel* with insult from his presence, threatened to impale Mr. Watts, the chief of the Company's factory, and avowed his determination never to rest till he had extirpated the English.'<sup>1</sup>

The Nawab's followers now began to fall away from him ; there was great disaffection among his adherents, who were disgusted equally by his weaknesses and his cruelties : and Clive entered into negotiations with Meer Jaffier, the Nawab's Commander-in-Chief, proposing to seat him upon the throne occupied by his master. The details of these negotiations, leading to the stain which their execution has left upon Clive's name, are outside the scope of this biography ; they are fully described by Elphinstone and other writers. It will probably be sufficient to say that one Omichand, a leading banker of Murshedabad, was privy to the negotiations between Clive and Meer Jaffier : that he threatened to reveal the plot to the Nawab unless an enormous sum of money was secured to him as the price of his silence ; and that to prevent the miscarriage of the scheme, his adhesion was gained by deceit—by the preparation of two treaties, one to be observed, the other to be repudiated.

On the 14th Clive had sent the Nawab a declaration of war, and, moving on up the Hooghly river, was on the 16th at Paltee.

On the 18th ' about 9 o'clock ', writes Coote, ' the Colonel ordered me, with a detachment of 200 Europeans and 500 sepoy, 1 field piece, 6-pounder, and a *Hobit*<sup>2</sup> to march and reduce Katwa, a fort belonging to the Nabob, distant from us about 12 miles. At noon embarked the military with the two pieces of artillery, the sepoy marching along the bank of the river. About 10 o'clock at night disembarked the military about 3 miles below Katwa, and gave orders to the officer of artillery to go with his boats in the front and proceed on to Katwa, where I should take care to secure his landing. Marched on towards Katwa where I arrived that night about 12 o'clock, took three prisoners who informed me that the enemy, to the number of 2,000, had quitted the town and retired into the fort, which was at half a mile's distance, and that Raja Manik Chand (late governor of Calcutta) was expected that night with 10,000 horse to reinforce the garrison. As soon as I had found a place proper for disembarking the artillery, I sent to the

<sup>1</sup> Elphinstone, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> Evidently a howitzer is meant.



officer and ordered him to land with all expedition and went with a small party to reconnoitre the fort. About this time one of the King's soldiers, being suddenly taken ill, grew delirious, and whilst in the agonies of death made so great a noise as to discover to the enemy where we were drawn up, on which they began firing at us pretty briskly.

'I then marched from thence and made a lodgement on a huge bastion, belonging to the town, exactly opposite the fort, by which I secured myself from any parties of horse. The officer of artillery sent me word that he could not bring the boats any higher up, most of them being aground, upon which I ordered him to land the artillery at the place where he was.

'19th. At daybreak he himself came and informed me he could not find the limbers of the 6-pounder nor the wheels of the Hobit carriage. At this time the enemy, perceiving where we lay, began to fire upon us very briskly. Finding I could have no dependence on the artillery and being apprehensive of Manick Chand's arrival, I altered the plan I had before resolved on, and sent Jemadar Mirza Shah Abbas Beg with a flag of truce to acquaint the governor of the fort that, being invited by the principal men of the country, we came as friends to assist them against the tyranny of the Nabob; and notwithstanding his continual firing upon us I had resolved not to return it (though in my power, my batteries being all ready) until I received his answer with regard to delivering up the place, which if he refused I would immediately storm and give no quarter. To which he sent me for answer that, as he had received the command of the fort from the Nabob, he could not deliver it up without his orders and was resolved to defend it to the last. The Jemadar likewise informed me that he had not been permitted to cross the river which divides the town from the fort, but that the governor had come down to the waterside to him.

'I then formed the whole into two divisions, the Europeans making one and the Sepoys the other, and gave orders to Mooten Beg, who commanded the Sepoys, to march on very briskly, cross the river, and lodge himself under the opposite bank (which was about 30 yards from the fort), and from thence to keep up a continual fire, whilst the Europeans crossed the river a little higher up. On our advancing the enemy fired some shot without effect, and I could perceive them running out of the fort, which we immediately entered and found 14 pieces of cannon of different calibres and a quantity of ammunition.

'The fort of Katwa is about half a mile in circumference, made of earth with eight round towers, situated on the left bank of the Cossimbazar river, which covers the east face, with a large creek that covers the south face, which we were obliged to cross and found it very deep and rapid. This face with the other two are surrounded by a deep dry ditch, having a narrow passage to walk over without a drawbridge. As soon as I had made myself master of the place, dispatched a letter

to the Colonel acquainting him with it, and received a congratulatory letter in answer ; about two in the afternoon he joined me. The army arrived here about 12 o'clock at night.'

An immense supply of grain was found in Katwa, together with a considerable quantity of military stores.

At Katwa Clive was to have been joined by Meer Jaffier, but that arch intriguer did not appear, and though he had written explaining his position the letter had been delayed in transit. What had happened was that the Nawab was now thoroughly alarmed at the advance of the English, the apparent weakness of the French support, and the defection of his own adherents. He opened negotiations with Meer Jaffier and a reconciliation of a kind was patched up ; but before Meer Jaffier was able to establish communications with Clive telling him that he intended to abide by the treaty, notwithstanding his apparent resumption of friendly relations with his former master, intelligence had reached Clive from Omichand that the whole plot was at an end. It had never been contemplated that Clive's small force should engage, unsupported, the Nawab's huge army ; the rainy season was at hand—Coote's journal under date of the 20th mentions ' heavy rains ' ; and if Clive now advanced across the river he would find himself in the presence of overwhelming hostile forces, before which there could be no retreat, neither with honour nor with life.

The situation was one to try the strongest nerves. Clive's first idea was to write to Calcutta for instructions, his second to summon a council of war composed of all the officers above subaltern rank then present with his small force. This was the only council of war that Clive ever summoned, and, as he stated in his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, had he abided by the votes of the majority he would have caused the ruin of the East India Company.<sup>1</sup>

Coote's journal contains, under date of the 21st June, a complete record of the proceedings of this historic council, and it may here be given in full.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Bonaparte in Italy in July 1796 ; Wurmser's descent from the Tyrol while Bonaparte was besieging Mantua placed the French army in some danger. Bonaparte called a council of war at which all present, except Augereau, were in favour of withdrawal across the Po. Bonaparte expressed no opinion himself, but, like Clive before Plassey, retired to reflect, with the result that he determined on a bold course, raised the siege of Mantua, and shortly after defeated Wurmser at Castiglione.

' A council of war was held, composed of the following members, viz. :

Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Clive, President : against an immediate action.

Majors. { James Kilpatrick : against.  
Archibald Grant : against.  
Eyre Coote : for immediate action.

Captains. { Frederick Gaupp : against.  
Alexander Grant : for.  
John Cudmore : against.  
Thomas Rumbold : against.  
Christian Fischer : against.  
Charles Palmer : against.  
Andrew Armstrong : for.  
Grainger Muir : for.  
M. le Beaume : against.  
Robert Campbell : for.  
Rudolph Waggoner : against.  
John Cornelle : against.

Richard Hater, lieutenant in the Navy, did not give his opinion because he thought he had not his proper seat in Council.

Captain-Lieut. Peter Casters : for.  
Wm. Jennings : for.  
John Francis Paschoud : against.  
— Molitore :<sup>1</sup> against.

' The Colonel informed the Council that he found he could not depend on Meer Jaffier for anything more than his standing neuter in case we came to an action with the Nabob ; that Monsieur Law with a body of French was then within three days march of joining the Nabob, whose army (by the best intelligence he could get) consisted of about 50,000 men ; and that he called us together to desire our opinions, whether in those circumstances it would be prudent to come to immediate action with the Nabob, or fortify ourselves where we were and remain till the monsoon was over, and the Morattoes could be brought into the country to join us.

' The question being then put began with the president and eldest

<sup>1</sup> Of these, Kilpatrick, Gaupp, Rumbold, Campbell and Paschoud, belonged to the Madras army ; Archibald Grant, Coote, Waggoner, and Cornelle to the 39th Foot ; Alexander Grant, Cudmore, Fischer, Muir, Le Beaume, and Casters to Bengal ; Palmer, Armstrong, and Molitore to Bombay ; and Jennings to the Artillery ; see Broome, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Army*, p. 139. Gaupp and Paschoud had originally come to India in a Swiss infantry and artillery company respectively ; a Rodolf Wagner also reached India in 1752 in the same Swiss company as Gaupp.

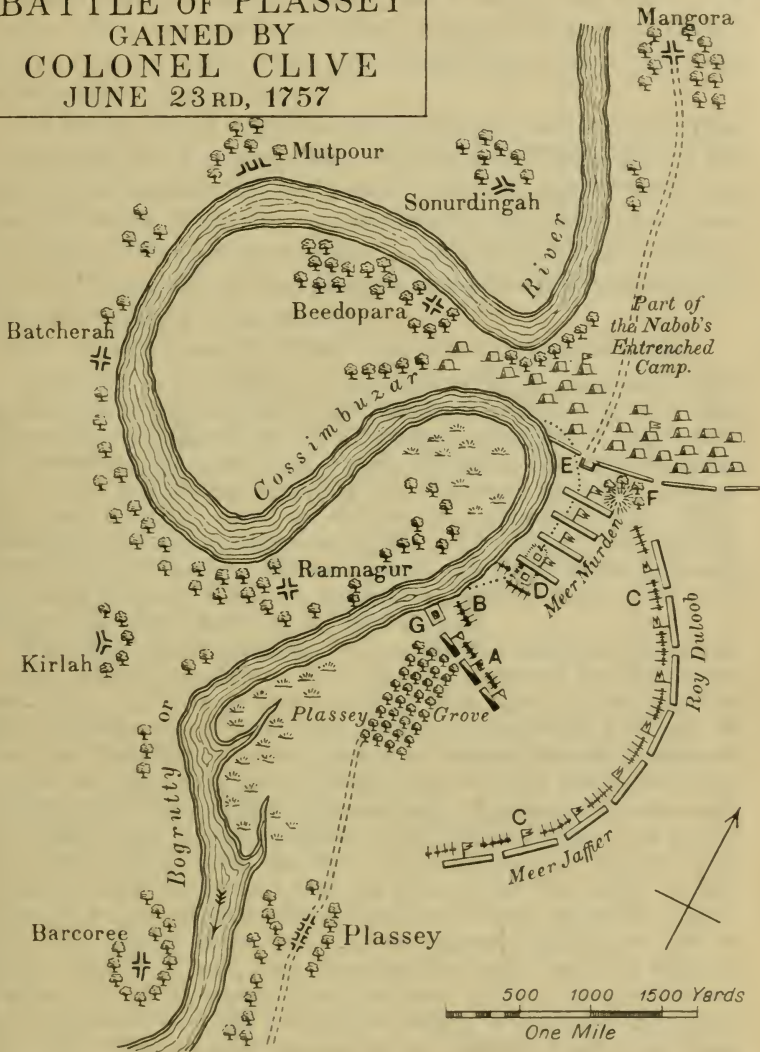
members, whose opinions are opposite to their names. And I, being the first that dissented, thought it necessary to give my reasons for doing so, which were that, as we had hitherto met with nothing but success, which consequently had given great spirits to our men, I was of opinion that any delay might cast damp. Secondly, that the arrival of Monsieur Law would not only strengthen the Nabob's army and add vigour to their councils, but likewise weaken our force considerably, as the number of Frenchmen we had entered into our service after the capture of Chandernagore would undoubtedly desert to him upon every opportunity. Thirdly, that our distance from Calcutta was so great that all communication from thence would certainly be cut off, and therefore gave us no room to hope for supplies, and consequently that we must be soon reduced to the greatest distress. Therefore gave it as my opinion that we should come to an immediate action, or if that was thought entirely impracticable, that we should return to Calcutta, the consequence of which must be our own disgrace and the inevitable destruction of the Company's affairs.

'About an hour after we had broken up, the Colonel informed me that, notwithstanding the resolution of the Council of War, he intended to march the next morning, and accordingly gave orders for the Army to hold themselves in readiness, leaving a subaltern officer's command, together with all our sick, in the fort at Katwa.'

At 6 a.m. on the 22nd June 1757 Clive's little army crossed the River Baggiruttee and marched two miles, when  
*Battle of Plassey,*  
*23rd June 1757.* a halt was called; at 4 p.m. the march was resumed, and about midnight the force arrived at the *Tope* or orchard of mango trees which formed the now famous grove of Plassey, known locally as the Laksha Bagh. Here the trees grew thickly and the grove was, as is usual in India, surrounded by a low mud wall. The *Tope* ran almost north and south and was some 800 yards long by 300 broad; it lay at an angle to the river, the northern corner being within fifty yards of the bank and the southern angle being some four times that distance away from it. To the north of the grove and on the river bank was what Coote calls 'Plassey House'<sup>1</sup>—a hunting lodge of the Nawab enclosed by a garden wall. About a mile to the north of this house the river bends to the south-west, and here was an entrenchment, the right of which rested on the river, then ran for 200 yards westward parallel with the grove at Plassey, and there made a bend to the north-east. At the angle of this entrenchment there was a redoubt; to the left front of the

<sup>1</sup> It is recorded in *Oriental Field Sports* that in 1787 a certain Colonel John Mordaunt, on his way from Calcutta to Lucknow, landed at Plassey from his *budgevow* and shot a tiger which he found asleep in the verandah of the Nawab's old house. *Tempora mutantur!*

**BATTLE OF PLASSEY**  
**GAINED BY**  
**COLONEL CLIVE**  
**JUNE 23RD, 1757**



- A. Position of the British Army at 9 in the Morning.
- B. Four guns advanced to check the fire of the French Party at the tank D.
- C. The Nabob's Army.
- D. A Tank from whence the French Party cannonaded till 3 in the Afternoon, when part of the British

Army took Post there, and the Enemy retired within their Entrenched Camp.

- E & F. { A Redoubt and mound taken by Assault at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 4, and which completed the Victory.
- G. The Nabob's Hunting House. The dotted line BE shows the encroachment of the River since the Battle.



redoubt—outside the entrenchment—was a tree-covered hillock, and further still to the south, and nearer the north-west angle of Plassey grove, were two tanks, about one hundred yards apart, and both surrounded by mounds of earth.

The march, though comparatively a short one, had been fatiguing, for rain had fallen continuously. On arrival at Plassey grove Clive received information that the Nawab's advance guard of 6,000 men was then within three miles, and the English commander now caused the house at Plassey to be occupied by 200 Europeans and 300 Sepoys with two guns, while several picquets of native soldiers were posted about the outskirts of the plantation.

Here is Coote's account of one of the decisive battles of India :

' 23rd June 1757. Soon after daybreak in the morning, discovered the Nabob's Army marching in two lines towards Plassey grove, which we were in possession of, as if they intended to surround us, upon which we formed the line a few paces without the grove, our army consisting of 750 men in battalion (including 100 Topasses), which was told off into four divisions ; the 1st division was commanded by Major Kilpatrick, the 2nd by Major Grant, the 3rd by Major Coote, and the 4th by Captain Gaupp. We had besides 150 of the Train, including 50 sailors, 8 pieces of cannon, 6-pounders, and one Hobit, with 2,100 Sepoys who were formed on the right and left.

The enemy took possession of the adjacent eminences with their cannon, which appeared to be irregularly supported by their horse and foot ; and a large detachment of their army, commanded by Meer Murdan, one of their chief generals, together with a body of about 40 Frenchmen<sup>1</sup> with 4 pieces of cannon, lodged themselves within the banks of a tank, distant from us about 200 yards, from whence, and the rest of their advanced posts, they began to cannonade so briskly that it was advisable we should retire into the grove, where we formed behind the ditch that surrounded it, our left being covered by Plassey house which was close to the river side. In this situation we cannonaded each other till 12 o'clock, when the Colonel came from Plassey house and called the captains together in order to hold a council of war, but, changing his mind, returned without holding one. The cannonading continued on both sides till about 2 o'clock, when we could perceive the enemy retiring into their lines, upon which Major Kilpatrick marched out with his division, and took possession of the tank the enemy had quitted. Here the Colonel joined him and sent to the grove for another detachment, upon which I marched out and joined him with my division.

' The Colonel then sent the King's Grenadiers and a Grenadier Company of Sepoys to lodge themselves behind a bank that was close

<sup>1</sup> These were part of the escaped garrison of Chandernagore ; they were under M. St. Frais.

upon the enemy's lines, from whence they kept up a continual fire with their small arms, as we likewise did from four pieces of cannon from the tank. Perceiving the enemy retire on all sides, I was ordered to march into their lines, which I entered without opposition. The remainder of the Army were then ordered to march, while we pursued the enemy, which we continued till it was dark and halted at Daudpore, about six miles from the field of battle, where the rest of the army under the command of Major Kilpatrick joined us . . . Whilst we were pursuing the enemy, a large body of horse was observed on our right, and upon our firing some shot at them, a messenger arrived with a letter to the Colonel from Meer Jaffier, acquainting him that he—Meer Jaffier—commanded that body, and requesting an interview with him that night or the next morning.'

Surajah Dowlah escaped from the field and reached Rajmahal in disguise. Here he was recognized by a man, one Dana Shah, whom he had ill-treated, was seized, carried to Murshedabad, and handed over to Meer Jaffier, by whose son he was put to death.

The whole loss of the British in this battle amounted to no more than 11 Europeans and 13 Sepoys killed, 24 Europeans and 21 Sepoys wounded.

'It was a small price to pay for dominion over the provinces of Bengal, Orissa, and Behar, for such and no less were the fruits of victory. Yet it is not by the mere tale of the slaughtered and maimed that such successes must be judged. The victory may have been easily won when the moment came for the actual clash of arms; but the main point is that the British were there to win it. The campaign of Plassey is less a study of military skill than of the iron will and unshaken nerve that could lead three thousand men against a host of unknown strength, and hold them, undaunted, a single slender line, within a ring of fifty thousand enemies.'<sup>1</sup>

On the 25th June at daybreak the British army resumed its march and arrived at Maidapore, and on the same day, at Murshedabad, Meer Jaffier was proclaimed Nawab, the British Resident appointed to his court being a young man of whom we shall hear more—his name was Warren Hastings; on the 28th the army reached Cossimbazar; and on the 30th Clive, escorted by 200 European troops, 500 Sepoys, and two guns, the whole under the command of Major Grant, made his public entry into Murshedabad. Here the army received orders to march at a moment's notice, for reasons which may now be explained.

By the articles of the capitulation of Chandernagore the whole of the garrison were to become prisoners of war and so remain as long

<sup>1</sup> Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, vol. ii, p. 430.



as the war should last, being sent to Pondicherry when peace should be concluded. But before the treaty became operative a small body of French troops made their escape, as has been seen, and succeeded in joining Law at Cossimbazar. Some of these fought under St. Frais<sup>1</sup> at Plassey, and others left Cossimbazar with Law, when he, having been supplied by the Nawab with money, arms, and ammunition, moved slowly towards Patna—prepared at the same time for a message of recall to Murshedabad when the Nawab should believe himself able to assume a more hostile attitude towards the British. Law reached Patna and collected together about 200 French troops, and, as soon as he heard of the commencement of active hostilities between the British and the Nawab, he retraced his steps and was within two days' march of the Nawab's camp when he heard of the British victory at Plassey. He then halted, but learning of the Nawab's escape from the field, he again advanced and was within a few hours' march of him, when he heard, first of his capture and then of his death. On receipt of this tidings Law retreated to Patna.

Clive now promptly decided to destroy the French detachment,<sup>2</sup> and on the 4th July a force was detailed to march in pursuit of Law, and Subadar Mooten Beg, with his two companies of Madras Sepoys, was at once sent forward as an advance guard. This force was composed of two companies of European infantry under Captain Alexander Grant of the Company's service, three companies of Madras Sepoys, and a small detachment of artillery with two light six-pounders under Lieutenant Kinch. The small column was at first placed under command of Major Archibald Grant of the 39th Foot, but on the 5th July Coote was sent for to Murshedabad and was directed to relieve Grant in command. The strength of his force was 223 Europeans,<sup>3</sup> 500 Sepoys—including the two advanced companies—50 lascars and 10 bildars or pioneers. The baggage, stores, ammunition, and provisions were embarked upon 40 boats, ill-provided, however, with crews and the necessary appliances for towing.

Coote lost no time; he started on the 6th July and reached Rumna that night, when he was much disturbed by the drunkenness which prevailed among some of his men; in a letter he wrote to Clive on the 13th he reports the loss of the boat containing 'all the Arrack'—

<sup>1</sup> Had been Secretary to Council at Chandernagore: Hill, *Three Frenchmen in Bengal*, spells the name Sinfray.

<sup>2</sup> This was composed of 175 Europeans and 100 Sepoys.

<sup>3</sup> Of the 39th and Bengal European Regiments.

a loss which he is not likely, under the circumstances, to have regretted. On the following morning he embarked his Europeans in boats, and continued his route, the Sepoys marching along the bank of the river. He reached Belghatta on the 8th, and here found the Royal fleet of boats from Dacca. He was now able to obtain three additional boats and the services of eighty-seven boatmen, and leaving his boats and Europeans under Captain Grant at this place, Coote, with Mr. Johnstone of the Civil Service, who was officiating as his secretary, pushed on to join the advance guard, and that night reached Suti. On the evening of the 9th he was at Dogatchi where he had an interview with Daud Khan, Meer Jaffier's brother, who informed him that Law had left Terriahgully only a few days previously; and on the morning of the 10th he joined Mooten Beg, whose party had been increased by the arrival of 'two of the Nabob's Jemadars with about 120 horse and 7 gunmen'. The combined force reached Rajmahal the same evening.

At Rajmahal Coote was shown by the Dewan, Shitab Roy, a letter from Law dated the 6th July and written from Bhagalpore, acquainting him with his arrival at that place, and stating his intention of proceeding by slow marches to Patna in expectation of receiving a *purwannah* or permit from Meer Jaffier, for which purpose he enclosed a petition which the Dewan was to present to the Nawab. Coote took possession of this letter and forwarded it the same night to Clive, bringing to his notice at the same time the small assistance he was receiving from the Nawab's officials, and concluding by asking for instructions relative to one Alexander Saussure, a Swiss, who had been arrested by some of Coote's Sepoys disguised in native dress.

This letter was forwarded to Clive through Captain Grant at Belghatta, who was directed to join Coote with all possible expedition.

By this time Coote was beginning to realize the difficulties of his situation. Mooten Beg reported to him that half his sepoy had marched without having been completed with ammunition; and on the 11th a letter came in from Grant stating that some of his boats had been wrecked, that the whole fleet was in great distress for want of proper gear and a sufficiency of boatmen, but expressing a hope that he might be able to join Coote some time in the night with the light boats only. On receipt of this letter Coote applied for assistance to the Dewan, who promised to procure 10 boats and 500 boatmen; but in reply to a request for troops he pleaded that his men were much dispersed and that it would be impossible to collect them, while even

if got together they would certainly refuse to march until the two months' arrears of pay, now due to them, had been paid by the Nawab.

At 10 p.m. on the 10th Grant came up with all the boats, except that which carried the ammunition and a Tumbril-boat, of which nothing could be learned.

The next day, the 12th, Coote sent out parties in search of the missing boats, and these were recovered ; while all the *mistris* who could be procured were employed in repairing the rest of the fleet. Daud Khan, the Dewan, had not yet collected the extra boats and boatmen required, but assured Coote of the continued efforts he was making and of the ultimate success of which he professed to be sanguine. This day Coote received a letter from Clive ordering him to follow up Law to Patna, if he could not sooner come up with him.

On the 13th a sergeant of Grenadiers, whose name is variously given by Coote as Devergee and Devergy, but who is called by Ives, Devergne, and by Broome, Duvergne, made a report to Coote that the prisoner Alexander Saussure, before mentioned, had been endeavouring to persuade him (the sergeant) to desert and carry off as many men as possible with him to join the French ; that he had concerted a plan of escape with the sepoy who was on guard over him ; and that he had about him a letter which he had written to Law. On learning all this, Coote sent a Lieutenant Flaction<sup>1</sup> to seize and search Saussure, when a letter of a most incriminating character was found upon him.

This letter is given in the original French in Coote's journal and is of considerable interest ; it is dated the 12th July and the writer recalls himself to Law's recollection through M. St. Frais. He first came from Europe to Bombay to serve in a Swiss company, but soon after left the East India Company's service and entered that of the Dutch in Batavia. He appears to have been of a quarrelsome disposition, and having killed one officer and wounded two others in duels, he went to Pondicherry. Here he got into fresh trouble in connection with a duel and was obliged to leave, sailing in a Danish ship bound for Bengal, and joining the French at Cossimbazar just prior to the battle of Plassey. In his letter to Law he claims that he warned the late Nawab of the treachery by which he was encompassed,

<sup>1</sup> Francis Flaction was a Vaudois who came to India as a cadet with a Swiss artillery company in the *Montfort* in 1753: in the roll he is described as 'Labourer'. He died before the end of this year (1757).

and was to have been given 4,000 men to advance to and seize the grove at Plassey. No more than 200 men, however, were placed at his disposal and consequently it was *la petite armée angloise* which occupied the grove, where, with a pardonable exaggeration, he describes our troops as *retranchés jusqu'aux dents*. He concluded his letter by giving a full account of the composition, general movements, and present location of Coote's detachment, and urged Law to turn about and make a night attack upon the small British force at a certain place which he described.

Saussure, when brought before Coote and the officers of the detachment, acknowledged the letter and had nothing to urge in his defence; he was then unanimously condemned to be hanged as a spy and the sentence was at once carried into effect.

In acquainting Clive with all that had passed, Coote expressed the hope that he would be able to reach Patna in ten days' time, but mentioned that his men were in great distress for want of shoes, that money was running short, and asking that 'a supply of small arms, flints, ramrods, cartouch boxes, prickers, worms, and drumheads' might be forwarded. He also mentioned a report from native sources—without, however, appearing to attach any particular importance to it—that the French had struck off at Monghyr towards Darbangah.

On the 15th July Coote started from Rajmahal without having been supplied with the promised boats or boatmen, and the sepoy were thus compelled to continue to march along the bank of the river instead of embarking in boats as Coote had intended had boats been procurable. Sikragully was reached that night, but the rearguard with eleven boats did not get in at all, for want of enough men to tow them up against the stream. The detachment was at Shahabad on the 16th, and here, being informed that the French were not far in his front, Coote detached a hundred sepoy with orders to push on and harass the enemy's retreat by firing on their boats, but on no account to bring on a general action. Leaving Shahabad at daybreak, Coote continued his progress, learning *en route* that Law was still ten days ahead of him, and arrived at Colgong in the evening with some of the lighter boats, but most of the remainder did not get up till midnight and some not until the following morning.

At Colgong the discontent of the men found expression. The sepoy complained bitterly of the fatigue they had undergone by such long and continuous marches over the broken ground on the river bank, while the boatmen professed they could work no longer at the rate

their indefatigable commander was driving them forward. These complaints were temporarily silenced by money presents.

This day a coast sepoy joined Mooten Beg on the march. He stated that he had deserted from the French, having left them ten days before when encamped at Monghyr; that they then numbered 140 Europeans and 90 sepoys with three pieces of cannon, were well-armed, but in great want of money. He said that when Chandernagore was taken he and several others joined Law, but that not being regularly paid and having had some dispute with his native officer, he had made up his mind to desert to the English.

On the 18th the whole party reached Bhagalpore. Here Coote received two letters from Clive, one expressing some dissatisfaction at Coote not having got further on his road—to which Coote replied giving unanswerable reasons for the apparent delay, and assuring Clive that 'it is my greatest ambition to merit your approbation, but I fear I have not yet been so happy, notwithstanding all my endeavours, as to obtain it'; the other letter enclosed *purwannahs* from the Nawab Meer Jaffier to the different chiefs and government officials on the way to Patna, directing them to supply everything of which Coote stood in need, and to obey his orders relative to the employment of the Nawab's troops. His hands thus strengthened, Coote ordered the Phousdar<sup>1</sup> of Bhagalpore to furnish sixty horsemen to be in readiness to accompany him on the next day's march, and wrote also to the Raja of Currackpore desiring him to supply 200 mounted men to join him in two days' time at Monghyr. He sent instructions in addition to the Jemadar at Bhar requiring him, on the supposition that the French were in that place, to distress them by burning their boats and throwing every impediment in their way, so as to detain them until Coote should come up.

At midnight, however, Coote received a letter from Mr. Pearkes, the East India Company's official at Patna, dated the 16th, stating that the French had passed by that city and were moving on to the extreme boundaries of the province. Their force, he said, consisted of about 100 Europeans, 125 Coast and 40 Bengal sepoys, 8 field pieces and 9 'patteroes'—small swivel guns.

Coote, directing the son of the Phousdar of Bhagalpore to supply forty boatmen to enable his detachment to get on with greater speed, left this place on the 19th, his sepoys and horsemen marching along the bank, and arrived the same night at Jehangeera. From here he

<sup>1</sup> Commandant or governor of a district.

wrote to Ram Narain, the Governor of Patna, directing him to oppose the French and prevent them going farther up the river, and sent a letter also to Mr. Pearkes, enclosing papers calculated to induce the French soldiers to desert, and which he desired might, if possible, be dropped in their camp.

Late on the 20th Coote reached Monghyr, and on the Dewan waiting upon him he demanded 140 men to tow the boats, none having so far been supplied him by the Nawab's officials. Two of his boats ran aground in arriving here, one was upset, one man and five stand of arms being lost; and two more boats were, on the 22nd, capsized by the violence of the current. Coote had intended to collect his boats and men at Monghyr, but on the 21st he pushed on and reached Hybutgunge that day and Nawabgunge on the night of the 22nd. Here he was joined at midnight by the rearguard, but part of his fleet had passed Nawabgunge without touching and had got as far as Lakhinore.

At daybreak on the 23rd, Coote left Nawabgunge and shortly after his boat was driven ashore by the wind and current. Leaving the boat to be refitted he proceeded on foot to Lakhinore where he joined the rest of the fleet and the sepoys, and putting off from here reached Bhurrai by five in the afternoon.

Considering the difficulties he had already experienced in navigating the flooded river, the number of boats that had been lost and injured, the delay that had been occasioned, and realizing that a continuance of these misfortunes must inevitably bring disaster upon the expedition, Coote now judged it advisable to disembark the troops, artillery, and stores of all kinds, and marched by land to Derriahpore, the guns being drawn and the ammunition carried by the troops. On the 24th the force marched 20 miles to Purraruck, the European soldiers showing a very bad, and even mutinous, spirit, complaining of their fatigues and hardships, the want of shoes and of any spirit ration, and finally refusing to go any farther. Finding the men disposed to mutiny, and noticing at the same time that the wind was favourable and the current less rapid, Coote re-embarked the Europeans, and then, putting himself at the head of the artillery and sepoys, marched 6 miles on to Bhar.

On the European soldiers reaching this place, Coote proceeded to reason with, cajole, and threaten them—saying he would leave them behind at Patna, but this latter, they declared in reply, was what they desired. Coote was distressed that his remonstrances were

without effect, but he had no idea of desisting from his pursuit of the French: he wrote on the 25th July to Clive informing him that if, on arrival at Patna, he should still find Law and his party within the Nawab's country, he proposed to continue in pursuit of them with the sepoy only, leaving the Europeans, who in their present temper were unreliable, to follow by easy marches under Captain Grant; he further asked for specific orders whether, if the Nawab's forces refused to accompany him, he should follow Law into the next province with the sepoy only.

On this day Coote reached Bykumpore, 20 miles from Bhar and about 16 from Patna, and here he was handed a letter from Ram Narain, expressing regret at not having received earlier advices of Coote's arrival in the province, and adding that he had sent some of his officers to meet him, and that had he been warned in time he could easily have stopped the French, but now unfortunately they had passed the frontier. On the 26th Coote, having sent on the artillery and sepoy by land, set off with the fleet and arrived at 10 a.m. at the English factory at Patna, where he put up all his troops. It was soon apparent that Ram Narain was not well disposed to the English; he made many excuses for avoiding a meeting with Coote, and his ill-feeling was reflected among his people by whom some of Coote's men were beaten and even wounded.

Coote's position was now somewhat precarious; he was isolated and far from reinforcement in the midst of a semi-hostile people, and with the European portion of his small force on the verge of mutiny. He at once took the best means of dealing with the situation. He made friends with the Mohammedan nobles of the province—Mohammed Ahmi Khan and Meer Cassim, the brother-in-law and the brother of Meer Jaffier, who were hostile to Ram Narain, a Hindu. These met him half way, warned him to place no reliance on Ram Narain, who wished to make himself independent of Meer Jaffier, who had actually contemplated falling upon Coote's small party, and who, so far from attempting to intercept Law, had offered him every assistance. With his own insubordinate troops, Coote adopted strong measures; he tried their ringleaders by court martial, thirty of them were sentenced to be flogged and the punishment was at once carried into effect. By this well-timed severity a stop was put to further disorder among the European soldiers.

Coote wrote this day to Clive explaining the state of affairs, and sent a letter also to the Nawab of Oudh, the ruler of the next province,

asking him not to permit the French to enter his territories, but, if already there, to seize and deliver them up, or at least to permit Coote to advance in pursuit of them. He would expect an answer, concluded Coote, on arrival at the frontier.

The British leader's troubles were not yet over ; on the 29th several of his boatmen and native establishment deserted, and the sepoy, who up to this had behaved admirably, now, when paraded to march off, to a man grounded their arms and refused to move. They expatiated on the fatigues they had undergone, the distance that separated them from their families, the promises made them that they should go no farther than Calcutta—than Chandernagore—than Murshedabad ; they complained of not receiving their pay. By ' argument and fair words ', wrote Coote to Clive on the 4th August, ' I prevailed upon them at last to take up their arms again,' and for a time at least the mind of the much harassed commander was at ease.

The advance was resumed, the artillery and sepoy marching by land and the Europeans embarking on boats and proceeding by water. Bankipore was reached on the 30th July and here Coote called his four captains<sup>1</sup> to a council of war, and laid before them two letters he had received from Clive and in which he was ordered to pursue Law as far as he possibly could. He observed that they had now proceeded beyond Patna, and that he had positive intelligence Law was, at that time, a day's march out of the province and encamped in Oudh ; he therefore put the question—' did they think it possible that the detachment could proceed with the same expedition as hitherto ? '

It was considered by all to be impossible for the following reasons : (1) Because the sepoy had already laid down their arms and had with difficulty been prevailed upon to take them up again. (2) Because of the discontent among the Europeans, and the desertions among the native followers, with the difficulty of replacing them. The council was, however, unanimously of opinion that they should still proceed in the best manner they could, though by easier marches, in pursuit of Law.

On the 31st July the force made a short march to Dinapore, and next day reached the town which Coote calls ' Munere ', at the confluence of the Soane and the Ganges. Here Mooten Beg reported to Coote that on his arrival Hyat Khan, who commanded for Ram Narain at this place, had sent word that neither Mooten Beg nor any of his

<sup>1</sup> These were Grant, Cudmore, Rumbold, and Campbell.



people would be admitted on pain of death, while Lieutenant Kinch, who commanded the artillery, informed Coote that the inhabitants of all the villages through which the guns and the sepoy had passed were armed to a man. Hearing these reports, Coote encamped his men near their boats, reinforced his picquets, and trained his guns on the town.

The night passed quietly and on the 2nd August the force moved on to Chupra, where the Europeans and sepoy were lodged in the large saltpetre warehouse and the factory. Here Coote learnt that Law had left Chupra seventeen days previously and was now at Benares. Late on the night of the 2nd—3rd Pheroo Sing, an officer of Ram Narain, came to Coote and told him that he must be very cautious how he proceeded, for his master, Ram Narain, was throwing every obstacle in the way of the onward progress of the force, and had given Pheroo Sing himself positive injunctions to proceed no further ; it also became abundantly evident that no assistance of any kind would be accorded by Ram Narain to Coote.

The British commander now summoned another council of war, and laid before it all the information he had been able to glean. This was to the effect that the French had reached Benares thirteen days previously and were now holding an old ruined fort 4 miles on the Patna side of the town by the river side, some of them occupying this fort while others remained in the boats. Coote told the council of the message he had caused to be conveyed to the Nawab of Oudh, and informed them that the Raja of Benares had 4,000 men under arms, while the Nawab of Ghazipore—with whom the French had stayed two days—had collected 3,000 men and was marching towards the borders of his district. There were also rumours that troops were assembling from all sides on the news of the approach of the English. Finally the roads in front were all under water, there were three rivers before them to be crossed, and the current near Benares ran very strongly.

With all this intelligence at their disposal, it can hardly be matter for wonder that the council of war came unanimously to the opinion that the force under Coote had no hopes of effecting any important result by continuing in pursuit of the French—considering the state of the roads, the want of boats, and the almost certainty of the ruler of Oudh affording assistance to Law ; considering also the difficulty of obtaining provisions in a hostile country and the evil consequences which might ensue from embroiling themselves and the Nawab,

Meer Jaffier, in disputes with the neighbouring princes at this particular juncture. Finally the members of the council recorded their opinion that it was necessary to return to Patna, 'especially as the surgeon had represented that the men fell sick apace owing in a great measure, as he believed, to the ground of the quarters they were now in being prodigiously impregnated with saltpetre. Besides it appeared that the arrack was entirely expended and no fresh supply could be got at that place.'

During the night two deserters came in from a town 14 miles north of Chupra, bringing news that the raja, one Dunsee Ram, was collecting troops and had already assembled 3,000 horse, 1,500 foot, and 4 guns. And Pheroo Sing now at last admitted that the local rajas, after the death of the late Nawab, no longer considered themselves obliged to pay revenue to Meer Jaffier, and were collecting their forces to resist any demand which might be made upon them.

Despite the overpowering strength everywhere gathering around him, Coote remained undismayed and held his head high. He sent a messenger to Dunsee Ram asking his reasons for the concentration of troops, and ordering him at once to dismiss them, assuring him that if this were not done he, Coote, would march instantly and attack them. The raja immediately collapsed; he replied that he was merely collecting troops for his own protection, but that on receipt of Coote's message he had at once dismissed them. He also apologized, on the ground of illness, for not himself waiting upon Coote, but sent his *vakeel*, whom, however, Coote declined to admit to his presence.

The detachment now retraced its steps. On the 13th August the European troops, guns, and sepoy were embarked in boats, and so rapid was the current that the force reached Patna in a few hours.

Immediately on arrival here Coote sent for Mohammed Ahmi Khan and read him a letter which had arrived the day before from Clive, but which had taken a week in transit. It contained Meer Jaffier's instructions for a combination between Coote, Mohammed Ahmi Khan and Meer Cossim to depose Ram Narain; of this proposal the raja had doubtless heard and was filled with an alarm, which the sudden return of the detachment did not tend to dispel. Ram Narain completely changed his tactics and showered civilities upon Coote, and shortly after matters were amicably arranged upon the raja swearing allegiance to Meer Jaffier in full *darbar*.

While in this part of the country Coote had been much impressed by the possibilities, as a source of revenue, of the collection of saltpetre,

then almost entirely in the hands of the Dutch, and this he was able to put on a footing satisfactorily remunerative to the English Company.

On the 1st September Coote received orders from Major Kilpatrick, then commanding at Murshedabad, to return there with his whole force; the next morning he sent off the guns, bullocks, and lascars by march route under a small escort; and on the 7th the troops were embarked in boats and reached Futwah the same night. The detachment left this place on the following day, but Coote, who was very unwell, made over the command to Captain Grant. Murshedabad was reached on the 13th September, and here Coote found orders from Clive to proceed to Chandernagore, taking the King's troops, a company of Swiss, and 200 sepoy. Coote was, however, still in very bad health, and was obliged to remain some days at Cossimbazar, the troops above mentioned moving to Chandernagore under command of Captain Gaupp.

Thus ended this expedition which, although the immediate object was not accomplished, was satisfactory and beneficent in its results; and which, when the circumstances connected with it are taken into consideration, must always be regarded as an extraordinary exhibition of military hardihood and perseverance. A mere handful of troops pursuing an enemy, little inferior in numbers and equipment, for nearly 400 miles, through a country almost unknown, and either secretly or openly hostile, with continued obstacles and difficulties occurring at every step, and this too at the most unhealthy and trying season of the year—from the 4th July to the 13th September.

Coote got back to the neighbourhood of Calcutta to find that Admiral Watson had died just a month before—on the 16th August—at the early age of 44. 'He was frank, honourable, and disinterested, capable of sacrificing even his prejudices to the public service, good-hearted, and no less beloved than respected by all connected with him.'<sup>1</sup> He rests in a 'churchyard where lies the dust of Job Charnock, of Surgeon William Hamilton, and of Admiral Watson, the founder, the extender, and the saviour of the British dominion in Bengal.'<sup>2</sup>

On the 14th September Clive left Murshedabad for Calcutta, and on the 17th the *Revenge*, Commodore James, brought news of the arrival on the Madras coast of a powerful French fleet, with a large military force on board. Further advices speedily followed, accom-

<sup>1</sup> Elphinstone, p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> From a speech by Lord Curzon quoted in Wilson's *Old Fort William in Bengal*, vol. i, p. xxxiii.

panied by urgent solicitations from the Madras government for the return of the troops which had been sent to Bengal under Clive.

The large amount of prize money obtained by the troops—Meer Jaffier had promised Rs. 5,000,000, to be divided equally between the navy and army<sup>1</sup>—had produced the worst possible effects upon the health of the men, there had been a very serious mortality among the rank and file, and, had it not been for the opportune arrival of several vessels with recruits from England, the force would have been totally inefficient. Thus of the 230 men who, under Kilpatrick, had left Madras for Fulta on the 20th July of the previous year, only five were now alive.

Meer Jaffier was now beginning to find that his nawabship was to be no easy appointment; his treasury was empty, enemies sprang up on all sides, his troops mutinied because they received no pay, and he had to apply to Clive for military aid. Clive was unable to move until the 17th November when he embarked his whole available force in boats at Chandernagore; he had only 400 Europeans and 1,300 sepoy, all Company's troops, the detachment of the 39th having refused to march, though Admiral Pocock, who had succeeded Watson, had placed their services at Clive's disposal. Writing to Pocock on the 16th November Clive says: 'Notwithstanding your offer of putting the King's detachment under my command on this expedition, I am sorry to inform you I cannot accept it without prejudicing the service; for all the officers (Captain Weller and Captain Coote excepted) had expressed a disinclination to go upon it. Under these circumstances, I think it better for the Company to be served by those who are willing, and may be attached to their service, than by persons who seem to have lost all remembrances of what they owe to them.'

That Coote volunteered for this service is clear from the following letter to him from Clive, dated 17th November 1757:

'I return you many thanks for the offer you made of your services on the present expedition, which will be a lasting proof of your zeal and attachment for the Company's interest. It would give me a real pleasure if I could accept it without giving umbrage to the Company's officers, which of consequence must prove hurtful to the Service.'

Clive reached Murshedabad on the 25th November and left on the 30th, having been joined by the detachment stationed at Cossimbazar, consisting of 250 Europeans all in excellent health. Those, however, whom he had brought with him had fallen sick *en route* and

<sup>1</sup> Broome, p. 131.

he had to leave more than a hundred behind. His detachment now comprised little more than 550 Europeans, including artillery, 1,500 newly raised sepoys and some lascars. He reached Rajmahal on the 3rd December. He left this place on the 2nd January 1758—the English detachment leading, then Raja Dulab Ram's force of 1,000, while the Nawab with 4,000 men brought up the rear. The outskirts of Patna were reached on the 4th February; on the 14th April the Nawab was confirmed in the Subadarship of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, while Clive was appointed an Oomrah or Privy Councillor of the Empire; <sup>1</sup> and on the 15th May Clive retraced his steps to Murshedabad and Calcutta.

During Clive's absence the detachment of the 39th had remained partly at Calcutta and partly at Chandernagore; on the 20th June 1757 the *Hardwicke*, East Indiaman, arrived from home bringing orders for the return of the 39th Foot, but liberty was given to such officers and men to enter the Company's service as might desire to do so. As a result nearly all the men of the detachment serving in Bengal joined the Bengal European Regiment, while many of those remaining in Madras with Adlercron entered the Madras European Regiment; and the following officers of the 39th joined the Company's service with a step in rank, viz. Lieutenants Carnac and Yorke as Captains, and Ensigns Donnellan and Bradbridge as Lieutenants.

The 39th actually received orders to proceed home in August of this year, and head-quarters seems to have embarked at Madras in November and sailed for St. Helena, where the remaining transports and Indiamen were to rendezvous and await an escort; but one or more of the ships containing the 39th seem to have suffered shipwreck on the west coast of Ireland. The regiment must, however, have reached home much reduced in numbers if, as stated by Cannon, 350 men entered the Company's service receiving a bounty of ten pagodas each. Major Forde, then acting paymaster, remained at Madras to await the troops from Bengal and to settle the accounts of the men transferred.

The following letter <sup>2</sup> from Colonel Adlercron to the Secretary of State gives some account of the voyage: it is dated Cork, 27th October 1758.

'I do myself the honour to acquaint your Lordship of part of the Regiment through stress of weather being arrived in Cork harbour the 25th instant after a tedious voyage of upwards of eleven months from

<sup>1</sup> Broome, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Record Office, W. O. 1976.

Fort St. George, four of eleven sail of India ships which left the island of St. Helena parted from us about three weeks ago, two of which I this moment hear are arrived in Kinsale, a harbour about ten miles from hence. I have wrote to the Commander in Chief of His Majesty's troops in Ireland to acquaint him of my arrival lest he may have instructions relating to the destiny of the Regiment; if I find he has no order contradicting my former, the Regiment shall proceed to England with the India ships. Our numbers are now so inconsiderable that I shall take the liberty of setting out for London by way of Dublin having already suffered greatly in my health by the length of the sea voyage.

'Major Forde on my leaving Fort St. George represented to me that the detachment from Bengal being expected to call in there on their way to England, and that being Paymaster his presence would certainly be necessary in order to strike off such men as might be willing to enter the Company's service on the Coast; therefore if I thought proper he would remain there some time longer which could be of no bad consequence as there was a ship expected from Bengal which was to be dispatched directly on her arrival at Fort St. George for England, and as all the homeward bound ships from India were ordered to assemble at St. Helena there to wait for a convoy he must certainly arrive at that island before we left it. I therefore consented leaving with him a written order how he was to proceed to England by the first ship. Whilst waiting at St. Helena a ship arriving from Bengal brought me a letter from Major Forde intimating that proposals being made to him by the Company's Managers in Bengal to take upon him the command of their troops, he had gone thither and accepted it, that he had wrote to England and desired that I might back it; that he hoped he should be allowed to keep his rank and commission, which I thought so unreasonable that I immediately superseded him and the supersession went through accordingly, which I beg will meet with His Majesty's approbation. I was informed by the officers who came in that ship which brought me the major's letter that on his accepting the command of their troops he had received a present of five thousand pounds. . . .'

Whether Coote returned with the regiment or previously seems uncertain; he had suffered much from fever and may have gone home in advance of the 39th. Some accounts<sup>1</sup> state that he sailed from India at the close of 1757, others<sup>2</sup> expressly say that he 'went home with the Colours'.

<sup>1</sup> *From Cromwell to Wellington*, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Williams, History of the Bengal Army*, p. 61.

## CHAPTER IV

1758-1760

COOTE returned to England with a small fortune and no inconsiderable military reputation, while it is possible that his temporary withdrawal from the Indian theatre of war was not without certain compensations. It has been said that the officer under whom he had immediately served in Bengal

'entertained at this period a strong prejudice against him, which may possibly have originated from the prominent manner in which that officer, when only a captain, was brought forward at Calcutta to support the alleged rights of His Majesty's service against those of the Company. But we have nevertheless proofs that Clive appreciated his talents from his employing him on all occasions, and particularly in detaching him, after the battle of Plassey, in pursuit of the French corps. But at the same time that he entertained this high opinion of his military talents, he considered from his whole conduct in Bengal that he was mercenary and prone to intrigue, and, consequently, an unfit person to be entrusted with great powers in such a scene. I do not find among Clive's papers any specific grounds to justify this opinion; and, in the absence of all such documents, we must conclude from the high reputation which Coote attained and supported it was erroneous, or, at all events, that, if this eminent commander evinced in his youth any such dispositions as those of which he was suspected, they were early corrected; for, though he never displayed any remarkable talents as a statesman, he assuredly became as qualified for the chief military command in India as any person that ever held that station; and during his latter years, the love and esteem in which he was held by his countrymen was exceeded by the affectionate regard and attachment of the native troops whom he so often led to victory.'<sup>1</sup>

Clive's biographer seems here rather to suggest that it was only in later life that Coote enjoyed the affection of his contemporaries; but that even at the initial period of his service in India he was on the best terms with those associated with him in the operations described in the last chapter, is clear from a letter preserved at the India Office and written to Coote by that splendid soldier, James

<sup>1</sup> Malcolm, *Life of Clive*, vol. ii, p. 178.

Kilpatrick, only some three months before his death by fever ; it is as follows :

‘ Cossimbazar, 24th August 1757.

‘ DEAR COOTE,

I have had the pleasure of your much esteemed and obliging favour, which is by far more than I deserved of Major Coote. I don’t mean in point of friendship, as in that you only do me justice, for let me assure you there is not a man in India that I esteem more worthy of the title of a friend, a soldier, and a man of strict honour, nor whose merit and conduct I am more sensible of than Major Coote’s. How necessary would it be now for me to apologize for my neglect in not writing to my friend before, but when I reflect that I can’t any otherwise do it but by acknowledging that I am a very idle fellow who cannot write well and very seldom conforms to do it as well as I can. However, I make myself happy in thinking I stand excused among my friends. . . . You have had, I am sensible, a most disagreeable and fatiguing command. However, all your friends and indeed everybody are well satisfied that you have done as much as could be done on the occasion. . . . Believe me, dear Coote,

Your most affectionate and most obedient humble servant,

JAMES KILPATRICK.’<sup>1</sup>

‘ Coote, on revisiting his native country after the campaign of 1757, was received with favour and distinction ; he had laid the foundation of a small fortune, he was well connected, and his manners and address were manly and agreeable. He became prominent from having been the senior officer of the King’s service employed on the expedition to Bengal ; and from the comparatively low estimation in which the East India Company’s officers were at that time held—for Clive, though holding the King’s commission as a lieutenant-colonel, was always regarded as a Company’s officer—his fame was advanced to detract from their pretensions. Details of the battle of Plassey reached England with every homeward bound Indiaman, whose passengers were partisans, some of Clive and others of Coote, The latter was represented as a rising officer of whose talents Clive was jealous ; it was said that it was through Coote’s advice and remonstrances alone that the army had advanced to Plassey ; but in justice to Coote it should be said that even those who, like Ives,<sup>2</sup> were staunch supporters of Clive, frankly declare that Coote was on all occasions ever ready to do full justice to the merits and abilities of his

<sup>1</sup> Whenever Coote refers to or quotes this officer he spells his name thus, but the more correct spelling appears to be Killpatrick ; see the Orme MMS., 19-11.

<sup>2</sup> Ives, *Narrative of Operations*, p. 153.



late commander.'<sup>1</sup> Coote, moreover, would probably have been one of the first to admit that, in voting as he did at the Plassey Council of War, he and the rest of the minority considered mainly the military question as put before them, while Clive, perhaps alone of the twenty councillors, recognized that a defeat would be ruinous to the English Government, and was the only thing which could preserve that of the Nawab from dissolution.

Coote, too, seems on arrival in England to have made a powerful friend, for as Malcolm tells us,<sup>2</sup> 'he enjoyed the marked favour and friendship of Mr. Sullivan, the Chairman of the Court of Directors, whose subsequent rupture with Clive is in a great degree to be attributed to their difference in opinion with regard to the respective merits and pretensions of Forde and Coote'.

At this time the Directors of the East India Company had become persuaded of the need for a larger leaven of European troops among their forces in Madras and Bengal; and, owing to certain representations which they made to the Home Government, two new regiments were raised in England for service in India. The first of these in many cases short-lived, but hard-fighting, corps was raised by Captain William Draper of the 1st Foot Guards, afterwards to become Sir William Draper, and to win a military reputation as the captor of Manilla, and a literary notoriety as the opponent of 'Junius'. The regiment was numbered the 79th, it was got together mainly at Colchester, and was made up of companies drafted from the 4th, 8th, and 24th regiments, with some sergeants from the Foot Guards. It was raised under an order dated the 2nd November 1757, and during its service in the East it lost 30 officers and over 1,000 men; the first portion of the regiment reached Madras, under Colonel Draper, in September 1758,<sup>3</sup> the remainder, under Major Monson, early in 1759.

The presidency of Madras being thus provided with additional troops from England, it now became necessary to take steps for furnishing the same reinforcement for the greater security of the English settlement in Bengal. The matter was represented to the Government in the winter of 1758, and no doubt at the same time Coote's name was brought forward as that of an officer whose appointment to command such a regiment would be eminently acceptable to

<sup>1</sup> Elphinstone, p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm, vol. ii, pp. 180, 181.

<sup>3</sup> The remnant of the Regiment was disbanded after Manilla was restored to the Spaniards, and Draper erected a monument on Clifton Downs, recording its services.

the Directors of the East India Company. The result of the negotiations which had been in progress is thus recorded at the India Office :

‘ At a Court of Directors held on the 10th January 1759

‘ Lawrence Sullivan, Esq., Chairman.

‘ The Chairman from the Committee of Secrecy acquainting the Court with his Majesty’s most gracious intentions of ordering a battalion consisting of a thousand men of His troops to the East Indies for the support of the Company’s trade and defence of their settlements there, and that the Committee of Shipping for expediting that measure had entered upon concerting the proper steps towards the embarkation of those troops, whereupon it was

‘ RESOLVED that the Officers and Soldiers of the said battalion be granted the same allowances at the Company’s expenses as was made to the Officers and Soldiers of the battalion commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Draper which proceeded to India last year, for putting them on the same pay as the Company’s own forces, with the same allowance to the Field Officers for their house rent and table abroad, likewise the same consideration for diet for these and the other officers who shall embark on board the Company’s ships for the voyage out as those of Colonel Draper’s battalion had, according as these were settled by the Court on the 23rd November 1757, and that the Committee of Correspondence be desired to prepare the proper clauses in the Advices for India on this subject, and

‘ THAT it be referred to the Committee of Shipping to give the necessary directions for the reception of the said troops on board the Company’s ships agreeable to the plan whereon that service was performed for the battalion sent last season.’

In the *Roll of Officers of the 84th Regiment*, compiled by Major Raikes and Captain Key, the date of the raising of the 84th (Coote’s) Regiment is given as the 25th December 1758, but, from the following letter<sup>1</sup> the actual date would seem to have been somewhat later :

‘ George R.

‘ WHEREAS we have thought fit that a battalion of foot should forthwith be raised and formed under your command, which is to consist of nine companies of 4 sergeants, 4 corporals, 2 drummers and 100 effective private men in each company, besides commissioned officers, with the addition of 2 fifiers to the Grenadier Company, AND WHEREAS we have been pleased to direct for the more speedy raising and forming the said battalion that drafts shall be made from several of our marching regiments of foot, and that the same when compleated shall embark for the East Indies to assist the forces of the United Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies in the vigorous prosecution of the war in those parts, THESE are to authorize you by

<sup>1</sup> Record Office, W. O. 26-23.

beat of drum or otherwise to raise so many men in any county or part of Our Kingdom of Great Britain as shall from time to time be wanting to the said battalion compleat, AND all Magistrates, Justices of the Peace, Constables and other Civil Officers whom it may concern are hereby required to be assisting unto you in providing quarters, impressing carriages and otherwise as there shall be occasion.

‘ Given at the Court of St. James’s this 13th day of January 1759 in the thirty-second year of Our reign.

‘ By His Majesty’s Command,  
‘ BARRINGTON.

‘ To Our trusty and well-beloved Eyre Coote, Esq., Colonel of a battalion of foot to be forthwith raised for our service in the East Indies.’

Although Coote is in this letter addressed as ‘ Colonel ’, the date of his commission as Lieut.-Colonel is the 20th January 1759.

The new regiment took rank as the 84th, and on the 19th December 1759 a tenth company was ordered to be added to it, while on the 14th January following its establishment was augmented by the addition of two more.

All the financial and other arrangements were made with business-like dispatch: the agent, Mr. Richard Cox, was directed to ship £3,000 in bullion, ‘ freight free,’ for the use of the regiment; the Treasury sanctioned an allowance of £2,976 levy money for 992 men, and £4,036, the amount of eighteen months’ off-reckonings to be paid by Coote to the colonels of regiments which had supplied drafts, ‘ for replacing clothing and accoutrements of men taken for Colonel Coote’s battalion ’; Coote’s allowance for house rent and entertaining was fixed at £400 per annum; he was given a commission as commander-in-chief, dated the 14th March 1759, ‘ of our military forces at our presidency of Fort William in Bengal and the other places and settlements subordinate thereto ’; and it was laid down by the Court of Directors to the authorities in Bengal that ‘ whenever you deliberate on military affairs or any matter relative thereto, Colonel Coote is constantly to be of council both at the Council Board and in your Secret Committee, and to have a voice therein, his rank is to be next to Colonel Lawrence if he happens to be in Bengal—otherways next to the President ’.

Then on the 23rd January a letter had been sent from the Court of Directors in London to the President and Council of Fort William in Bengal, from which it seems quite clear that Coote and his regiment were intended to serve only in the northern presidency, and that it was practically owing to the fact that the ships conveying the commander

and his corps touched at Madras, that Colonel Coote was afforded the opportunities of which he made such admirable use. The letter mentions the difficulties which had been experienced in raising a sufficient supply of recruits to meet the demand for European troops, and states that the King had been graciously pleased to assist the Company with a battalion, 'which it is our intention shall be employed in Bengal only, as we are in hopes our Presidency of Fort St. George will not be under any necessity of detaining any of them, considering the force they must have upon the arrival of Colonel Draper's battalion'.

The letter went on to name the ships which had been taken up for the conveyance of the 84th Regiment: these were the *Houghton*, *Essex*, *Valentine*, *Pocock*, *Suffolk*, *Denham*, and *Oxford*, mostly Indiamen, which were to proceed first to Fort St. George, where the troops were to be landed and reimbarbed for Bengal. To these were subsequently added the *Ajax* and the *Stormont*, while the rest of the officers and men were to be accommodated on the following men-of-war, viz. the *Lenox*, 74 guns; the *Duke of Aquitaine*, 64; the *York*, 60; and the *Falmouth*, 50 guns; these were to provide the escort and reinforce the squadron in East Indian waters.

The distribution of the battalion in the different ships was as under :

Ship.	Lieut.-Colonel	Majors	Captains	Lieuts.	Ensigns	Chaplain	Adjutant	Surgeon	Surg. Mates	A.D.C.	Volunteers	Quarter Mtr.	Musick	Sergeants	Drummers	Rank and File
INDIAMEN :																
<i>Essex</i>		1			1				1		1			2	1	51
<i>Valentine</i>				2										2		49
<i>Pocock</i>				1					1					2	1	52
<i>Suffolk</i>				1	1									2	1	52
<i>Denham</i>			1	1										2	1	52
<i>Oxford</i>				1	1									2	1	51
<i>Houghton</i>	1		1	3		1	1	1		1	1	6		5	5	124
<i>Ajax</i>			1	3	2				1		2			5	3	136
<i>Stormont</i>			2	2					1		2	1		5		114
MEN-OF-WAR :																
<i>Lenox</i>		1							1		1			2	1	50
<i>D. of Aquitaine</i>			1	1	1						2			2	1	48
<i>York</i>				1	1									2	1	48
<i>Falmouth</i>			1	1	1					1	1			2	1	48
	1	2	7	17	8	1	1	1	5	2	10	1	6	35	17	875

The four men-of-war forming the escort were under the command of Admiral Cornish.

The *Essex*, *Valentine*, *Pocock*, *Suffolk*, *Denham*, and *Oxford* appear to have got away earlier than the others, and on these ships were three companies of the 84th under Major Robert Gordon, the junior, or, as he was then called, the *second* Major. Colonel Coote, with the remaining six companies, embarked on the 4th April, sailing from Spithead on the 6th, but prior to leaving home he wrote to the Chairman of the Court of Directors, making two suggestions; one was that a *dépôt* should be added to his and to Colonel Draper's regiment for the purpose of providing a regular supply of recruits, while he also proposed that a company be raised from the two companies of artillery at Bombay, and sent to Bengal with a field-train consisting of four short 12-pounders, with four howitzers, and a proper supply of shot.<sup>1</sup>

Madeira was reached on the 1st May, and the squadron touched again nowhere until it made Madagascar on the 9th August, when it anchored in St. Augustine's Bay, and the whole of the troops and all the sick of the squadron were landed and encamped. The behaviour of the natives was at first not altogether friendly, but the goodwill of the ruling family seems to have been early secured by the 'Musick' of the Regiment which played before the King, and by a present of a pair of embroidered slippers which Colonel Coote was able to persuade the Queen to accept!

'Purchased eight black men for Pioneers for the Regiment,' writes Colonel Coote in his journal; he adds, however, that one of these soon after ran away.

The squadron remained at Madagascar until the 1st September, when it proceeded on its voyage, and on the 7th October, when off Cape Comorin, they spoke an English ship, the *Hopewell*, from which they heard of Admiral Pocock's action off Negapatam in the preceding month, and of all that had happened at Forts St. David and St. George. On the 19th the squadron fell in with Admiral Pocock's fleet—nine sail of the line, a 20-gun ship, and two store ships—and, on going aboard the flagship next day, Colonel Coote was handed a letter from the Governor and Council of Madras directing him to proceed thither with his regiment and assume command. Accordingly, on the same evening he transferred his men from Cornish's four men-of-war to the *Queenborough*, one of Pocock's squadron, and sailed under her convoy

<sup>1</sup> These letters, dated 8th March 1759, are preserved at the India Office.

with the Indiamen for Madras, where he arrived on the 27th, disembarking the troops on the 29th, 30th, and 31st October.

It is now necessary to touch briefly upon the events which had been happening in southern India while the British arms were advancing to dominion in Bengal, and during the period which followed when Coote was recruiting his health in England and voyaging to Madras. When the expedition under Clive left Madras for the recovery of Calcutta, the British force in the south was thereby so greatly reduced in strength, that it was scarcely equal to the task of upholding the authority of their ally, the Nawab of the Carnatic. The French, however, were fortunately equally unable to attempt any considerable enterprise, since they had weakened their forces by sending their troops to the assistance of Bussy, who in August 1756 was reinstated in full enjoyment of his former honours, dignities, and titles at Hyderabad. War between England and France broke out in Europe in May of this year, and the French Government came early to a decision to strike a weighty blow at the English possessions in the East. But while the projected expedition was being prepared, orders were sent out to Pondicherry to refrain for the time being from any operations of importance.

In September 1757 French intrigues at Madura and Tinnevely caused the British commander at Trichinopoly to lead an expedition into those districts; two months later Lieut.-Colonel Forde, of the 39th Foot, unsuccessfully besieged Nellore; and, in the middle of May, the French commander in this quarter seized the opportunity of the division of the Madras forces to collect a large body of troops and besiege Trichinopoly. The defence, however, under Captain Joseph Smith, was most gallantly protracted until Major Caillaud<sup>1</sup> was able to hurry back from Madras and raise the siege. Then in September of this year the French received a small but welcome reinforcement of regular troops, but in compliance with the very definite orders from Paris little was attempted and less effected, with the result that at the close of the campaign of 1757 in the south the troops of each nation had wrested one small place from the forces of the other.

The French now prepared to support their Indian possessions with greater vigour, and 'in the month of August 1756 Count Lally was appointed to command an expedition to the East Indies, for which the

<sup>1</sup> Caillaud was of Huguenot extraction and had served with the 8th Foot at Fontenoy and Culloden before joining the Company's service.



COUNT DE LALLY





court had destined six millions of livres in money, six battalions, and three men of war, to be joined by what ships the Company could fit out for the same purpose'.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Arthur, Count de Lally and Baron de Tollendal, was then in his fifty-ninth year, and had been engaged in the study and practice of war for nearly half a century. He came of the O'Mallalys of Tullendaly near Tuam, and his father, Sir Gerard, who had entered the service of France after the capture of Limerick in 1691, had risen in that army to the rank of Brigadier-General. Young Lally was entered to war early in life; before he was in his teens he had smelt powder at Gerona and Barcelona; he was a captain in Dillon's Regiment of the famous Irish Brigade at 18; he fought at Kehl and Philipsburg and Fontenoy; he served under the Young Pretender at Falkirk; he was engaged at Lauffeldt and Bergen-op-Zoom; he had shown himself, when the opportunity was afforded him, as no mean diplomatist; and Voltaire has recorded of Lally that he possessed 'a stubborn fierceness of soul, accompanied by great gentleness of manners'. Such was the man to whom was now entrusted the decision of the question as to which nation should be paramount in the Peninsula, and with him sailed men who bore some of the great names of France—a d'Estaing, a Crillon, a Montmorency, a Conflans; but while Lally's great military qualities were marred by intolerance, and by a contempt, shared by an even greater French commander than he, for Sepoy Generals, he was indifferently supported by his second in command, de Soupire, who was indolent and unenterprising, and by his naval colleague, d'Aché, who was the weakest of admirals.

A fatality seemed from the first to pursue the expedition. The fleet on leaving Brest encountered bad weather and had to return to port to refit; ill news from Canada caused certain of the ships and some of the troops to be withdrawn; when the fleet finally sailed fever broke out on board and caused the deaths of many seamen and soldiers; d'Aché prolonged the voyage by constant and needless delays; and the expedition did not reach the Coromandel coast until nearly a twelvemonth after it had sailed from France, and nineteen months from the time when the project had originally been decided upon.

On the 12th December 1758 Lally appeared before Madras, and on the 14th took possession of the Black Town. The French opened their batteries on the 2nd January 1759, and the siege continued

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Count Lally*, English translation, 1766 edition, p. 1.

until the 16th February, on the night of which day the English squadron under Pocock anchored in the roads bringing six companies of Draper's regiment.<sup>1</sup> Early on the following morning the enemy abandoned their trenches and batteries, and marched for Pondicherry, leaving behind, besides their sick and wounded, twenty-six guns, 18- and 24-pounders, most of which, however, were disabled.

Immediately after the retreat of the French, preparations were made for the recovery of the districts of which they had taken possession. On the 6th March the English took the field under Colonel Stringer Lawrence, and followed the retreating army to Conjeveram, Lawrence having with him 1,156 Europeans, 10 guns, and about 2,700 sepoys. While the two armies remained in sight of each other, letters were received from Colonel Forde, who after his victory at Condore had marched to the siege of Masulipatam, despairing of success unless supported by men and money. The Presidency authorities, feeling that their resources were not equal to keeping Lawrence's force in the field, were inclined to bring it back and send 200 men from it to Forde. Lawrence, however, although fully persuaded of the imprudence of attacking the French at Masulipatam—a plan which had been adopted contrary to his advice—was equally convinced of the impolicy of withdrawal. He accordingly proceeded to Madras on the 26th March in order to try and dissuade the Council from this measure; he was successful, but while there this distinguished officer was compelled by the state of his health to relinquish the command, and embarked in April for England, fully intending never again to return to India. Colonel Draper being at the time too ill to assume the command in his place, it devolved upon Major Brereton, of the 79th, Major Caillaud succeeding to that of the Company's troops.

Brereton now made a movement towards Wandewash in hopes of inducing de Soupire—who on Lally's return to Pondicherry was commanding the French force at Conjeveram—to break up his camp. The ruse succeeded, Soupire being alarmed for the safety of Wandewash, and Brereton made a second movement and then retired. Soupire had been instructed not to provoke a battle, but to wait until he was attacked, and conceiving the retirement of the English an advantage that permitted him to fall back on Arcot, he did so.

<sup>1</sup> In the *Tilbury*, *Winchelsea*, *Prince of Wales*, and *Britannia*, convoyed by H.M.S. *Queenborough*, 24 guns, Captain Kempenfeldt, and the Company's frigate *Revenge*.

Brereton then made a forced march on Conjeveram, came upon the place by surprise, invested the pagoda on the evening of the 15th April, and carried it on the 18th by storm. Late in June he made a dash upon and captured Cauveripauk, and about the same time three of the usual ships of the season arrived at Madras from England bringing 200 recruits sent by the English Company, and conveying the intelligence that the 84th Regiment, 1,000 strong, in the King's service, was coming out in other ships under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Eyre Coote.

In the beginning of September the first party<sup>1</sup> of the 84th—300 in number—landed at Madras and marched to join Brereton then in camp at Conjeveram; taking advantage of this reinforcement, and 'knowing that Eyre Coote must shortly arrive to take the command from him',<sup>2</sup> Brereton, miscalculating the strength of the French garrison, attempted the capture of Wandewash, but was repulsed with considerable loss.

On the 27th October Coote reached Madras with the remainder of his regiment, and immediately assumed command of the troops in the south.

On the death of Major Kilpatrick in October 1757, Clive had recommended that the command of the Company's troops in Bengal should be offered to Colonel Forde, 39th Regiment, an officer of whom he entertained the highest opinion. There appears to have been an interchange of letters between Clive, Forde, and the Select Committee at Calcutta, Forde holding out for certain terms which were to compensate him for resigning the King's service and for accepting the then unknown risks of an Indian military career. Forde proceeded to Calcutta, arriving there early in 1758, and negotiations were resumed, Forde finally accepting, on the 6th March, the command in Bengal subject to the approval of the Court of Directors of the East India Company in London.

The arrival of the French expedition on the east coast of the peninsula, and the danger by which Madras seemed thereby to be threatened, determined Clive to effect a diversion by employing as large a force as could be spared against the French in the country lying between the Krishna and the Mahanudi rivers, usually known by the name of the Northern Circars; the conduct of this expedition was committed

<sup>1</sup>Another account says that five ships with the first division reached Negapatam on the 30th June and Madras on the 25th July; the statement here made is taken from Cambridge, *Account of the War in India*, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup>Fortescue, vol. ii, p. 465.

to Colonel Forde, and something has already been said as to the success of the operations which he there conducted. Almost immediately, however, after the capture of Masulipatam, news reached India that the Court of Directors in London had refused to confirm Clive's nomination of Forde to the command in Bengal, and that he was to be superseded by Coote, who only a year or so before had been his junior in Adlercron's regiment.<sup>1</sup>

'The news of Colonel Coote's arrival reached Clive about the same period as the account of Forde's capture of Masulipatam and of the conclusion of the Treaty with the Subadar of the Deccan. Desiring at such a moment to afford every consolation to the mind of that meritorious officer, he not only stated his opinion as to his superior claims to those of the officer by whom he was superseded, but gave him the most unqualified assurance of his future support.'<sup>2</sup>

'I can easily conceive', he observes in a letter dated the 24th August 1759 to Colonel Forde,<sup>3</sup> 'that such rank and honour bestowed (I think I can say without flattery) on one so much your inferior in every respect, must give you much concern. I assure you it has affected me greatly, and is one of my principal motives for wanting to push home with the utmost expedition in the *Royal George*. I flatter myself the request I have to make will not be denied me, which is that you will stay in Bengal all next year, provided Coote remains on the Coast. If within that time I do not get you a colonel's or lieutenant colonel's commission, and an appointment of *commander in chief of all the forces in India*, I will from that instant decline all transactions with Directors and East Indian affairs.'

Forde appears to have remained in command at Masulipatam until the 15th October, when he sailed for Calcutta on board the *Hardwicke*, going home with Clive in the *Royal George* in February 1760, his active military career then coming to an end. On Clive's departure, Mr. Vansittart, a member of the Council of Madras, had at Clive's recommendation been appointed to succeed him in Bengal, where the chief military command was taken over by Major Caillaud.

Colonel Coote departed from Madras to join the army on the 19th November, leaving the rest of his regiment to follow, and arrived the next day at Conjeveram. He was now but thirty-three years of age:

'tall and erect, with stalwart, sinewy frame, he looked every inch a soldier. A quick, vigorous intellect was combined with a cool,

<sup>1</sup> When Forde was promoted major on the 13th November 1755, Coote was then the junior captain in the 39th.

<sup>2</sup> *Lord Clive's Right-hand Man*, pp. 145 and 146.

<sup>3</sup> Malcolm, vol. ii, p. 176 *et seq.*

calculating spirit. Under the most trying difficulties he preserved an equable calmness that inspired confidence. A rigid disciplinarian, he added tact to firmness, and his innate kindness and consideration for others gained him a real affection from those he led. . . . Masterful, like Clive, he made his decisions quickly and never altered them. The regard felt for him by the troops he so often led to victory was ardent and constant. For years after his death no Sepoy who had served under him would pass the portrait that hung in the Madras Exchange without saluting the revered Coote Bahadur. Under such a leader the *morale* of the troops was doubled and the singular power of discipline made more than usually conspicuous.<sup>1</sup>

The choice of operations had been left to Coote, who, on the 21st November, summoned a Council of War composed of himself as president, Major Brereton, 79th, Major the Hon. George Monson, 79th, and Major Robert Gordon, 84th Foot. At the Council it was agreed that the distance by which the enemy's forces were now separated offered a reasonable chance of reducing the fort of Wandewash, and this it was determined to attempt. The six head-quarter companies of the 84th arrived from Madras on the 23rd under Major William Gordon, and on the same day Captain Preston went off, with his company of the Madras Europeans, the Pioneers, and all the Horse that could be spared from Madras, to remain at Chinglepet in readiness to proceed to Wandewash when called for.

With the view of puzzling the enemy, Coote on the 25th moved in the direction of Arcot with the main body of his force, while Brereton with a strong detachment proceeded to Trivatore, which he assaulted and captured, the garrison, however, effecting their escape. On the next day, the 26th, Brereton arrived before the fort of Wandewash, attacked the *pettah*,<sup>2</sup> and carried it after but a slight resistance; and Coote, hearing of this success, immediately made a forced march to join Brereton, pushing on himself with the small cavalry force at his disposal, while leaving Monson to follow with the main body. On arrival before Wandewash, Coote found that Brereton was erecting a battery for the two 18-pounders which had accompanied him, and he at once commenced the construction of another for two guns of the same calibre which Captain Preston was to have brought with him from Chinglepet, but as these had not come up the new battery was armed with 12-pounders. On the 29th, the whole army having arrived, the heavy guns opened against the south-east tower of the fort, which

<sup>1</sup> Coote, by Lieut.-Colonel Pratt, in *From Cromwell to Wellington*, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> Yule, *Glossary of Indian Terms*, from the Tamil word *pettai*, the suburb of a fortress. It is often separately fortified.

was soon silenced and a breach made ; at noon the garrison was summoned to surrender, but Lieutenant Mahony, who commanded, refused, when the fire of the English batteries was renewed and various parts of the defences were dismantled.

On the morning of the 30th the Killadar,<sup>1</sup> or native commandant, sent to treat, but the negotiations did not lead to anything at the moment. Later on in the day, however, some of the French soldiers mounted on the works and offered to deliver up the fort, whereupon Coote ordered a company of sepoy to take possession of the gate, while he himself with another company and several officers entered by the breach. 'The garrison', says the victor in his Journal, 'consisted of five subaltern officers, 63 private men, and between 8 and 900 sepoy. We found in the fort 49 pieces of cannon and a great quantity of ammunition. During the siege one officer of artillery was wounded and a sepoy, and a lascar's arm broke.'

The French officers were sent to Pondicherry on parole, and 61 French prisoners of lower rank were marched under a sepoy escort to Madras.

While at Wandewash Colonel Coote seems to have had some trouble with his officers, who had expected to have realized a substantial amount in prize money from the capture of the place, and from a sum which the Killadar was said to have promised the army should he be retained in his position. Colonel Coote was able, however, to quell any feeling of injury or dissatisfaction by acquainting his subordinates that no bargain had been made with the Killadar, and that whatever was taken in the fort belonged of right to the Company.

From Wandewash the British force marched on the 4th December 35 miles to Carangoly, the town of which had already been seized by the Company's Grenadiers and some native cavalry. On the 6th a battery of two 18-pounders was constructed and opened fire against the north-west bastion of the fort, while on the next day a similar battery was erected, one of its guns firing upon the same bastion and the other upon the curtain ; later a howitzer was placed in position further to the east in order to enfilade the rear of the wall exposed to the fire of the 18-pounders, and approaches were opened. On the 10th, 'being near the crest of the glacis and having dismounted all their guns but four, Colonel O'Kennely,<sup>2</sup> who commanded, sent out

<sup>1</sup> On a contemporary plan of the fort the name of the Killadar is given as 'Tucky Saib'.

<sup>2</sup> Orme says he was 'an officer of reputation in Lally's regiment'.

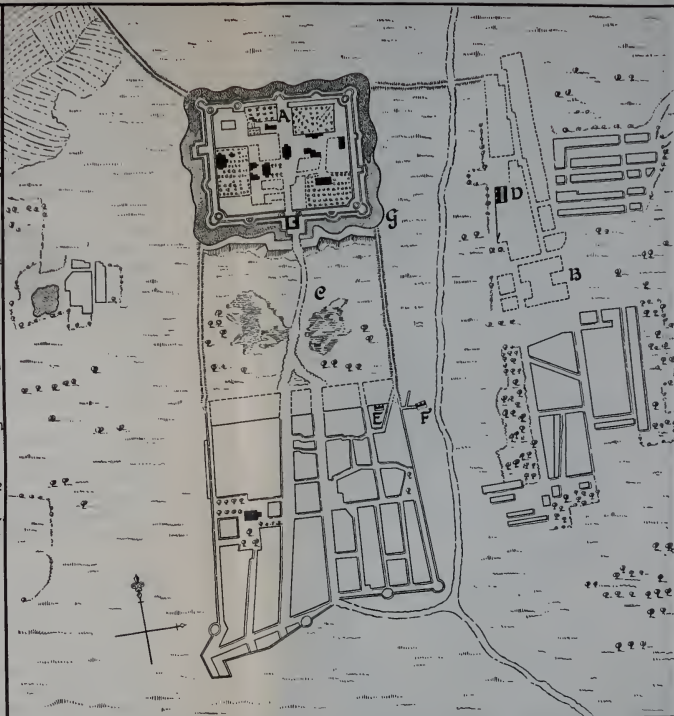
## REFERENCES

A. The Fort of Wandewash, with a Pettah on the South Side, inclosed by a Mud Wall.

B.B. Two open Pettahs on the East & West.

C. An Esplanade, between the Fort and South Pettah.

The Fort of Wandewash was in the possession of Tucky Saib, a Killidar who had maintain'd himself some Years in a kind of Independency from the Authority of the Nabobs of Arcott & had under him a Jaquir, worth 4 or 5 Lacks of Rupees Yearly. Towards the latter end of 1759, the Nabob Mahomed Ally Cawn & the English Army March'd to Wandewash & Demand'd the Arrears of Tribute, which, after a show of Attacking the Fort, was adjust'd & the Nabob retir'd. The Killidar either from a Family Connection or Inclination, had always shewn an Attachment to Chinda Saib's party and the French, who tho they did not possess y<sup>e</sup> Fort were always well receiv'd there & afraid the English might gain possession of it. In 1757, when the French March'd to attack Trencherapoly, Col: Aldeon was sent from Madrajs to Attack, or make a shew of attacking Wandewash, which soon brought the French back. In 1759, about the beginning of April, Maj: Brereton with the English Army appear'd before Wandewash & endeavour'd to get possession of it, but the French Army Encamping near it interrupt'd that project & Major Brereton making a sudden March to Conjeouram Attack'd and took it by Assault: the 16<sup>th</sup> April while the French were at a distance. In Sept<sup>r</sup> the same year when the French seem'd not to suspect such a



motion, Major Brereton again projected the Conquest of Wandewash, and march'd from Conjeouram to attempt it but 1000 French having posted themselves on the Esplanade, under the Walls he Attack'd the inclosed Pettah the 30<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> at 9 in the morning & after having possession some hours was oblig'd to abandon it with Loss. & a day or two after the Army retir'd to Trivullore on the 27<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup> 1759. Col: Cooté having then the Command of the English Army Detach'd Major Brereton to invest Wandewash. The 27<sup>th</sup> at night & the 28<sup>th</sup> the Battery D of 2. 18 P<sup>o</sup> was erected, and that at E of 2. 12 P<sup>o</sup>. The Battery F for 2. 18 P<sup>o</sup> was also begun, & the 29<sup>th</sup> a Breach was nearly made at G. About 50 French then appear'd on y<sup>e</sup> Walls & declar'd they would Surrender the Fort the 30<sup>th</sup> on which Col: Cooté push'd a Body of Sea-pigs thro' the Breach, & enter'd himself without Loss during the Enemy's Confusion.

Profit

Scale  
10 20 40 60 Yards

Prisoners taken ~  
M Mahony Commandant  
4 Subalterns  
68 Private  
600 Swabeyes

Plan of the Fort of Wandewash, taken by Colonel Cooté y<sup>e</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> of November, 1759

Guns & Ammunition taken ~  
49 Guns of different Calibres, & Military Stores of all kinds ~  
Loss of y<sup>e</sup> British Army ~  
a. Private wounded





a flag of truce and on account of his gallant defence granted him the following terms : that the Europeans should have leave to march out with their arms, 2 rounds per man, drums beating, and 6 days' provisions. The sepoys to be disarmed and turned about their business'.<sup>1</sup>

The garrison consisted of four officers and 96 European other ranks, 500 sepoy, and 9 guns. Our loss was one officer—Captain-Lieutenant Campbell of the Artillery, whose thigh was broken by a 6-pound shot—and one gunner killed, 2 sepoy mortally wounded ; that of the French 2 Europeans killed and 5 dangerously wounded, besides some sepoy.

On the 12th the force received a welcome reinforcement of 180 Europeans, 160 Black Horse, and 1,205 sepoy, under Captain Moore ; this was urgently needed by reason of the reports which reached Coote almost daily of the strength of the different French detachments, and of the efforts which these were making to oppose the English commander who had shown himself so active. Thus under date of the 15th December we read in his Journal :

' Received intelligence that 600 Patan Horse, part of Bussy's forces, was arrived at Arcot, and that he had with him 2,000 sepoy and 500 Arabs. Got account of 1,000 Morattas arriving at Arcot, and that 2,000 more were expected.'

The great superiority of the French in cavalry enabled Lally to cover his movements and to lay waste the country, thus putting the British to the greatest distress for rice and forage. On the 18th December heavy rain set in ; the army, wrote its commander, was in a ' dreadful situation', and on the 19th the army moved into cantonments at Cauveripauk, on the north bank of the Paliar, with that river separating the two forces.

On the 20th December, Coote, who had suffered from a smart attack of fever, went in to Madras, where he found the Government disposed to indulge the Nawab of Arcot by reinforcing Trichinopoly in order to retake Seringham, which the French had captured on the 22nd November, and Uttatoor. Coote, however, pointed out to the Council the error Lally had made in sending out detachments and the impropriety of diminishing the army at a time when the French were collecting their whole force to risk the fate of the Carnatic in a general action. His arguments prevailed, and he returned on

<sup>1</sup> See Coote's despatch to Pitt, *London Gazette* of 23rd September 1760 ; also his despatch to Lord Barrington, Record Office, W. O. 40-1.

the 25th to Cauveripauk, but with strong warnings, if not explicit instructions, in his pocket against fighting an immediate action with Lally.

Thus closed the year 1759, the third of this dubious war, the two armies in sight of each other, but neither ready for instant action; the British hoping, almost, it may be said, against hope, to draw off the body of Mahrattas serving with the French, expecting too to be joined by 2,000 more men still remaining with Innis Khan behind the mountains. On the other hand, Lally was also negotiating for the same assistance, and although his European troops were more than equal in numbers to the British, he mistrusted their attachment to himself, and waited for an addition to their numbers by the early return of the force which had been sent in April to the northern province under Moracin.

The two armies remained comparatively quiet in their respective camps during the early days of January 1760. Both were awaiting the result of the negotiations for bringing Innis Khan and his Mahrattas to their side; each offered the same sum, the English in bills, the French in cash; and Innis Khan joined the latter on the 8th January with 3,000 horse and an even greater horde of foot men bent on plunder; on the 9th the French army took the road to Trivatore.

In the meantime intelligence, alternately cheering and disquieting, had reached Coote. On the 4th January he received a letter from Captain Joseph Smith at Trichinopoly stating that he had intercepted a French convoy from Uttatoor and had made prisoners of a company of grenadiers; the rumour of a move by the French upon Wandewash caused Coote anxiety for the safety of that place, and he sent special orders for its protection to Captain Sherlock, the commandant; one day several French soldiers would desert to the English representing the fortunes of the French as being at a low ebb, and the next day some of Coote's company of foreigners would go over to the other side. The British commander further was constantly harassed by the fears expressed by the government of Fort St. George; on the 5th January he records in his Journal the receipt of a letter from the Governor and Council: 'they seem to be of opinion that the situation of our affairs is now in as bad a way as last year before the siege of Madras, and therefore desire me to move with the army nearer home'.

At this time Lally's objective was not Wandewash but Conjeveram, where he expected to find large stores of rice and other food-stuffs;

and, employing his great superiority in cavalry to veil his intentions, by a rapid night march he reached Conjeveram early on the 12th of January and obtained possession of the town. He did not find the amount of supplies he had expected, but he plundered the place and carried off 2,000 head of cattle; being without guns Lally did not attack the pagoda, and collecting his troops together he now marched upon Trivatore.

Coote does not seem to have suspected this move upon Conjeveram, until informed of it by an express from Lieutenant Chisholm, who was commanding at that place; he then marched at once with the army and reached Conjeveram at 4 a.m. on the 13th, to find that the French had left and were at Jangolam. Lally had, however, broken up his force, and leaving a large body under Bussy to watch the English, he himself marched on the 14th against Wandewash, the garrison of which, repeatedly warned by Coote, was on the alert. Lally's movement did not pass unnoticed in the British camp, and on the 15th the army had crossed the Paliar, and by the 17th had taken up a position at Outramalore, midway between Wandewash and Chinglepet, and thus being within easy distance of either place and, through the last named, with Madras. Here Coote learned that the enemy had effected the capture of the *pettah* at Wandewash with but small loss.

Lally, in ignorance of Coote's movements, had begun at once to lay siege to Wandewash, and had commenced the construction of a battery nearly on the same spot from which Coote had before effected a breach, when news came from Bussy of the approach of the English. At first Lally refused to believe the tidings, but, on its being confirmed from other sources, he directed Bussy to join him at Wandewash with his whole force.

What follows is taken from Colonel Coote's journal:

'Monday, 21st January. Went out from Outramalore with all the cavalry to reconnoitre the enemy. Having received a letter from Captain Sherlock that they had made a breach, I was determined to engage them the next morning, therefore sent the Major of Brigade back to the army with the following orders. "The tents of the line, except six per company and the bell tents are to be struck immediately and packed up in order to be sent to Carangoly under an escort of one company of sepoy, and are to move off at General Beating. The *General* to beat at 2 in the afternoon and the *Assembly* half an hour after, and the whole to march off at 3 in order to join the Colonel at Trimborough.<sup>1</sup> It is recommended to the officers to keep with them only what baggage is absolutely necessary.

<sup>1</sup> Orme calls this place Tirimbour.

' After the arrival of the army gave out the following orders :—

' Trimborough Village, 7 o'clock in the evening.

' The Army to march off to-morrow morning at 6 o'clock by the left upon the Taps beating (which is to be looked upon the same as the General's beating). It is to form and be ready to march immediately after. All the cavalry and 5 companies of sepoys to form the van of the army, except 200 Black Horse, who, together with three companies of sepoys, are to cover the baggage in the rear. The army to observe the orders given out the 27th December, which were :—that the first line consist of Colonel Draper's regiment on the right, Colonel Coote's on the left, and the Company's<sup>1</sup> in the centre. The artillery to be divided as follows : four pieces on the right, four on the left, and two pieces between each interval, making in all twelve in the first line. The second line to consist of the Grenadiers of Colonel Draper's, Colonel Coote's and the Company's, with one piece of cannon upon each flank, who are to form 200 paces in the rear of the first line : an 8-inch Howitz to be between the two lines. Major Brereton to command the right of the first line, Major William Gordon the left, and Major Robert Gordon the centre. Major Monson to command the second line. The cavalry to be divided into five squadrons, the Europeans<sup>2</sup> to make the centre squadron. The names of the Jemmidars (*sic*) who are appointed to command the different squadrons to be given in to the Commander-in-Chief to-night. When the line forms, the cavalry will have orders to form about 50 paces in the rear of the second line, leaving a proper interval between each squadron. At the same time the five companies of sepoys that supported the cavalry are to form upon the right of Colonel Draper's regiment, and the five companies that were in the rear of the line of march to form on the left of Colonel Coote's regiment. Five companies who were upon the left flank in the line of march are to form in the following manner : two on the right of the second line and two on the left, and one in the rear with the cavalry. The whole army, as well Europeans as black, are to have a green branch of the Tamarind tree fixed in their hats and turbans, likewise upon the tops of the Colours in order to distinguish them from the enemy. The commanding officers of corps are to take particular care that their respective corps are properly told off, and that the men know their right and left hand men and file leaders. They are to be cautioned not to give their fire till they are ordered by their respective officers.'

Colonel Coote passed the night at the village from which he had issued his orders, and at sunrise his army  
*Battle of Wandewash,* marched towards the south side of the hill of  
*22nd January 1760.* Wandewash and in the direction of the fort, while he himself pushed forward with an advanced guard of 200 horse and

<sup>1</sup> Madras Europeans, now the 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

<sup>2</sup> According to Wilson the European cavalry under Coote at Wandewash only numbered eighty, *inclusive* of a troop of foreign deserters forty-five strong.



**REFERENCES**

- Strength of the British.  
 3800 European Infantry  
 1000 Sepoys  
 84 European Cavalry  
 2800 Moorish Cavalry  
 100 Artillery Men  
 14 Field Pieces  
 1 Howitz
- Strength of the French.  
 10000 European Infantry  
 10000 Black Troops, including  
 the Marhatta Cavalry  
 1000 Coffyns  
 30 Pieces of Cannon besides  
 5 Heavy Pieces in Battery  
 against Wandewash Fort.

The Troops are distinguished as follows

British	French
Infantry	Infantry
Cavalry	Cavalry
Black Troops	Black Troops
Sepoys	Sepoys
Cavalry	Cavalry

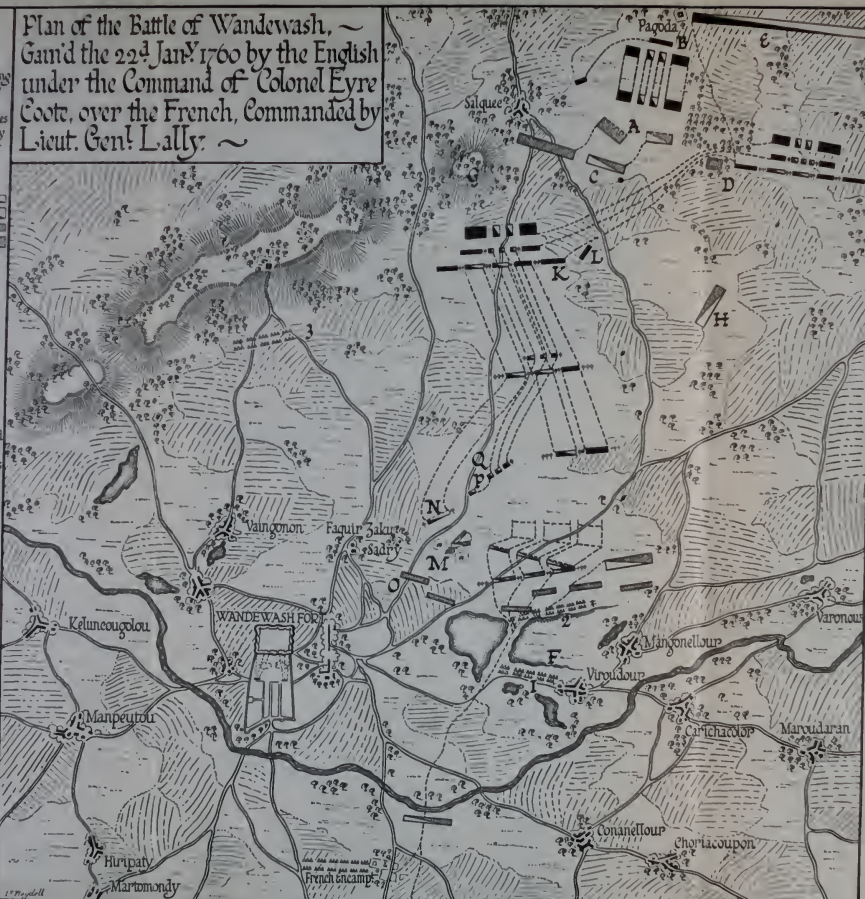
The Fort of Wandewash was Garrisoned by 100 Europeans & 500 Sepoys. Invested by the French 3<sup>d</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1700 & the Batteries opened 1<sup>st</sup> 15<sup>th</sup>

- The Position of the Enemy the morning of the Action was as follows. 1 The Engagement of the European Infantry. 2 Escapement of the European Cavalry and Sepoys. 3 Escapement of the Marhatta Cavalry.

**Col. Coote's Relation of the Action.**

About 7 o'clock in the morning our advanced Guard of Horse and that of the Enemy began to fire at each other. A upon which I order'd Captain Baron de Vajsero, who Commanded the Cavalry, to fire then in order of Battle. He was supported by 5 Comp<sup>y</sup> of Sepoys B & at the same time I order'd up 9 pieces of Cannon & advancing myself with a Comp<sup>y</sup> of Sepoys charged the Enemy & their main Body of Horse C which consisted of 200 Europeans, & 5000 Marattas on their left. Upon the whole of our Cavalry advancing that of the Enemy retir'd in pretty good Order, till our Cannon began to play which was extremely well serv'd, & obliged them to retire precipitantly. I then order'd the Major's Brigade to retire to the Army (which was about 3 quarters of a mile in the Rear) with orders for them to fire in Line of Battle, but not to advance till I had join'd them. Soon after having taken possession of the Tank D which the Enemy's Cavalry had occupied, I retir'd to the Line, which by that time had been form'd according to my Orders E. After reviewing the whole, & finding the Men in great spirits, & eager to engage, I order'd the Army to move forward. About 9 o'clock we arriv'd at the post we had driven the Enemy from, which was about 2 miles from their Camp F & hal'd in their View near half an hour, during which time I went very near them, & reconnoiter'd their Situation. Upon finding they were strongly post'd, & our Flanks expos'd to the Enemy's Cavalry, which was vastly superior to ours, I order'd the Army to march by the Right in order to gain 1/2 advantage of a Hill G 3 miles from us, and about two from Wandewash, & the Horse which were then in the Front to wheel to the Right & Left, and form behind the 2<sup>d</sup> Line, in order to make the Rear Guard, & cover the Baggage. By this Motion I cover'd my Right Flank by the Hill, & had some Villages in the Rear where I then order'd 1/2 Baggage. During all this time we Cannonaded each other, and skirmish'd with their Advanced posts, & Marhatta Horse the latter disappear'd about 11 o'clock. The Enemy after making their 2<sup>d</sup> Disposition mov'd towards us about the

**Plan of the Battle of Wandewash, ~ Gam'd the 22<sup>d</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1700 by the English under the Command of Colonel Eyre Coote, over the French, Commanded by Lieut. Genl. Lally. ~**



distance of 1/2 of a mile, under cover of a bank. The Cannonary then began to be smart on both sides & upon seeing the Enemy coming briskly up, I order'd the Army to march forward at 10 o'clock, the Enemy's European Cavalry push'd with a great deal of resolution F in order to force our Left K, & come round upon our Rear L immediately order'd up some Companies of Sepoys & 2 pieces of Cannon L which were to sustain our Cavalry, who had own orders to oppose them, upon the Cannon & Sepoys flanking them they broke. The Cavalry then had orders to charge, who drove them above a mile from our Left, upon the Rear of their own Army, we continu'd all this while advancing towards each other, the Enemy's Flank being very well cover'd by a Tank. It was one o'clock when we arriv'd within reach of Musquetry, when a shot from an enemy one of their Jumbills N I blew up. I then immediately order'd Major Breerton to wheel Col Drapers's Regt to the Left, & charge their Left Flank N which was executed in good order, & much Honour to that Corps. Seeing their Regim<sup>t</sup> likely to suffer from a Body of Black Troops O together with their Marines who were under cover is fir'd very briskly upon them, & and at 3/4 same time finding they had Reinforc'd their Left with a party from Lally's Regt I order'd the Grenadier Comp<sup>y</sup> of Drapers P which was on the right of the 2<sup>d</sup> Line, to support their own Regim<sup>t</sup> & having likewise a piece of Cannon play- ing upon the Enemy's Flank, compleat'd 1/2 hour of their wing, who abandon'd their Cannon and fix upon their own Center, which was by this time together with their Right, closely engag'd with our Left. I then order'd up Major Monson, with the rest of the 2<sup>d</sup> Line Q and plac'd him so as to be able to support any part of our Line, at the same time flanking the Enemy. About 2 o'clock the whole Army gave way, & ran towards their own Camp F but finding we pursued them they escap'd 2 1/2 left us entire Masters of the Field.

The Enemy's loss amounted to 600 Europeans Kill'd, wounded, & Prisoners including 50 Commanded Officers, also their whole Artillery, except 5 Field Pieces) together with their Apparatus for the Siege of the Fort of Wandewash.

Our loss of Europeans was 3 officers & 48 non-Commission'd Officers and Privats, Kill'd, 9 officers and 157 Non-Commission'd Officers & Privats, wounded.

two companies of sepoy to reconnoitre the enemy's position. This is what he saw : a hard, dry, wide plain, dotted with trees, admirably suited for the movements of cavalry, an arm in which Lally was so strong and Coote so weak ; on the north, the plain fringed by the rocky serrated peaks of the low range known as Wandewash Hill or mountain, the drainage from which was caught in several tanks of varying size which occupied the centre of the low ground ; to his right front a village, and in the middle distance the fort of Wandewash with its *pettah* on three sides ; and to the east of it the camp of the last army of French-India, from which the men were hurrying to take up their ground, under a leader of European experience and reputation, and fight out the question as to which, to France or to England, was to belong the Empire of India.

About 7 a.m. Coote's party came into touch with some of Lally's advanced mounted troops, and, attracted no doubt by the sound of the firing, some 3,000 Mahratta Horse emerged from the French camp on to the plain. Coote, however, now brought up two brass guns, a 12- and a 6-pounder, and advanced the small force of the three arms which was with him, and the good countenance of these and the fire of the two pieces, which were ably served, one by Captain Barker, the O.C.R.A., obliged the enemy's cavalry to retire precipitately. Coote now, remaining himself in observation of the enemy, sent back his brigade-major<sup>1</sup> to the main body, about three-quarters of a mile in rear, with orders for the line of battle to be formed as already laid down, but not for the present to move forward. Leaving a small party to hold a tank from which the enemy's cavalry had been driven, the Colonel now returned to his main body and led it forward, arriving about 9 a.m. at the tank which his advanced troops were holding, and which was some two miles from Lally's camp. Here the line was halted for half an hour, while Coote again rode well to the front and examined the position, which he found to be a very strong one.

Lally had drawn up his force in a single line ; his own regiment was on the left, and its left, thrown rather forward, rested on a tank with an entrenchment on the further side of it ; in the centre was the Battalion of India, and on the right of the infantry line was the Regiment of Lorraine ; his cavalry, European and Native, was for the most part on the right which was rather *en l'air*. In the intervals

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Coote's A.D.C. in this battle was Lieutenant Eiser, 79th Regiment.

between the regiments were the guns, and the native infantry were distributed in rear of the French regiments.

Having observed the enemy for some little time and seeing no disposition on their part to advance, and fearing also for the safety of his flanks in face of so numerous a body of cavalry, Coote now moved his army to the right in order to gain for that flank the protection afforded by the stony hill 3 miles distant; his small body of cavalry was directed to wheel outwards and form in rear of the second line, to form a rear guard and cover the baggage now moving to some small villages in rear. This movement caused Lally to alter his dispositions, and, still keeping his left on the tank and entrenchment, held by his marines and sailors, he wheeled forward his right so as to maintain a line parallel to that of the British. An artillery combat had begun and was still going on, and skirmishing was in progress with the Mahratta Horse attached to Lally's army.

It was now midday; the French made a short move forward and Coote's regiments advanced joyously to meet them; the cannonading became very brisk; and the French hussars, pushing resolutely forward to attack our left and rear, were smitten in flank by cannon and musketry, and being then charged by Vasserot<sup>1</sup> and his small body of horse, were driven back to the shelter of their own lines. Continuing steadily to advance, the British arrived at one o'clock within musket shot of the French, when a most destructive fire was opened, and Lally, finding his men chafing at their losses, ordered an advance. Coote halted his native troops and moved forward with his Europeans alone: the domination of India was to be settled by a struggle of white men only.

'When we came within sixty yards of them,' wrote Major William Gordon of the 84th,<sup>2</sup> 'our platoons began to fire. I had the honour to lead the 84th against the Lorraine Regiment on their right that resolved to break us, being as they said a raw young regiment, but

<sup>1</sup> Baron de Vasserot appears to have commenced his Indian career as a subaltern in a Swiss company commanded by a Captain de Zeigler or Ziegler—there was a Second Lieutenant Conrad Ziegler in a Swiss infantry company in the service of the East India Company in 1755—but Vasserot seems to have been transferred to the European cavalry troop and distinguished himself in the defence of Madras against Lally in 1758-9, when Vasserot's mounted force appears to have consisted of but ten troopers.

<sup>2</sup> At the Public Record Office, W. O. Supplementary Lists 40-1, there is a long letter from this officer, and also one from Captain Cheshyre, 79th, describing all these operations. Cheshyre had already lost an arm in Brereton's unsuccessful attack on Wandewash.



we had not fired above four rounds before they went to the right about in the utmost confusion'. The Lorraine regiment, it should be noticed, had been formed by Lally himself in a deep column with a narrow front; and at *Wandewash under Coote, as in the Peninsula under Wellington, the fire of the thin line was to triumph over the mere weight of the column.* The Lorraine regiment actually pierced the 84th line by sheer weight of numbers, but only to fall back shattered by the volleys which tore its flanks. While the two regiments were struggling with bullet, bayonet, and butt, a shot from an English gun struck a tumbril near the tank and blew it up, the officer there in command and many of his men being killed and wounded; and something of a panic setting in on this flank, Coote at once ordered Brereton to wheel the 79th to the left, charge and occupy the entrenchment; this was done, but the gallant Brereton fell mortally wounded, and Coote had to bring up part of the second line to sustain the 79th, threatened by some of Lally's regiment and a body of black troops.

A heavy gunfire was now directed upon the enemy's left, and this wing being completely routed, fell back upon and threw into confusion the French centre and right closely engaged with our left. Major Monson was ordered to bring up the second line, and about 2 p.m. the whole of Lally's army gave way. Lally's sepoy refused to move forward, his Mahratta allies left the field when they saw how things were going, and only the devotion of the French hussars, who covered the retreat, saved the army from annihilation.

Judging from a letter, anonymous, among the Orme MSS., addressed to a Captain White, and containing an account of the operations of this period, it appears that the British cavalry were none too eager to close with the French horsemen. 'I asked a very great man', says the writer, 'how it was that our cavalry did not pursue. He answered with a most satirical and meaning smile, "Our horsemen want spurs", and that was all he said.' Considering, however, that Coote's European cavalry were only 80 in number, and that more than half of these had deserted to him from the French under their own officer, Captain de Beck, their reluctance to charge home is hardly to be wondered at.

The French carried off three small guns, but they left twenty-two on the field, iron and brass, with a quantity of shot and many tumbrils of powder. Bussy's horse was shot and he surrendered to an officer of the 79th; other prisoners were the Chevalier Godeville, the quartermaster-general, five officers of Lally's regiment, two of the regiment of Lorraine, four of the India Battalion; while of the Marines the

Chevalier de Poete, Knight of Malta, was captured but died of his wounds. The French acknowledged to a loss of 800 killed and wounded, and of the former 200 were buried on the field by the English, who took over 200 wounded and 40 unwounded prisoners. The casualties in Coote's force were distributed as under :

*Draper's Regiment.* Killed : Ensign Collins and 17 privates.  
Wounded : Major Brereton and Lieutenant Brown (both died), Captain Knuttal, Ensigns Halfpenny, Thompson, and Horler, and 66 privates.

*Coote's Regiment.* Killed : Ensign Stuart and 13 privates.  
Wounded : Lieutenants Frazer and Tydd, Ensign Heron, and 36 privates.

*Company's Troops.* Killed : Ensign Evans and 18 privates.  
Wounded : Cornet Kuhn and 29 privates.

Of the native troops some seventy were killed and wounded.

' During the whole engagement', wrote Coote in his despatch,<sup>1</sup> 'and ever since I have had the honour of commanding the army, the officers and men have shown the greatest spirit, nor can I say too much for the behaviour of the artillery.'

One may imagine with what deep interest the garrison of the fort of Wandewash must have followed so much as could be seen from its walls of the course of the battle. There is in existence<sup>2</sup> a journal kept during the siege by Cotsford, a young officer of Engineers. On the 22nd January there is the entry : ' About seven this morning a great fire of cannon was heard to the westward of the Hill, which we may reasonably expect to be the Army coming to our Relief'; adding, with a rare prescience : ' Then followed the Battle which gave us India !'

<sup>1</sup> *London Gazette*, 23rd September 1760, despatch dated Arcot Village, 13th February 1760.

<sup>2</sup> Orme MSS. 63-10, p. 81.

## CHAPTER V

1760-1761

THE news of the victory at Wandewash reached Madras by one of the English spies on the morning after the battle, and later another spy arrived bringing with him two lines written on the field by Coote announcing his success. Eyewitnesses soon after reached Fort St. George giving details of the action, and the joy evinced by the inhabitants of Madras on receiving intelligence of the victory is said to have equalled that felt at Calcutta when the tidings of Plassey reached that place.

Ministers at home exchanged congratulations when news of the victory reached them, though probably they did not then fully appreciate all that it meant to England or to India. The Duke of Newcastle wrote on the 11th July 1760 to the Marquis of Granby, saying,

'I send good news which we have received from the East Indies. I am very sorry for the loss of poor Colonel Brereton. He was a very valuable good officer. But this blow there will affect the French much, for the French King and the whole Court are interested in the French East India Company.'

While on the same day Granby heard from the Earl of Holderness reporting

'advices of Colonel Coote's victory over the French near Pondicherry. Our loss small, but including Major Brereton, a young officer of great merit.'

It has been said<sup>1</sup> that 'it is more than probable that, had the English immediately fallen upon Pondicherry, they would have carried that place in eight days. There was not a single grain of rice in it'. This seems to impute blame to Coote for not more quickly following up his success by attacking the seat of the French government in India; but it should be remembered that he had no accurate knowledge of the straits to which that city had been reduced, the French forces though defeated were not crushed, and it seemed to Coote that by seizing in turn all the minor posts held by the French, Pondicherry itself must ultimately fall into his hands when he had cut off all the sources from which it drew its supplies.

<sup>1</sup> Lally, *Memoirs*, p. 38.

Lally had fallen back on the day of the battle to Chittapet, and on the 23rd, without reinforcing the garrison of this place, he retired to Gingee. Some of his sepoy troops, of whose fidelity he had doubts, he sent to act under the commandant of Arcot, while Innis Khan with his horsemen was ordered to renew his incursions to the north of the Paliar.

Coote's cavalry was too fatigued to engage in any very vigorous pursuit of the French; but on the 23rd the following dispositions were made and orders given. Two bodies of horse were sent out to harass the enemy; Captain Wood, commanding at Cauveripauk, was ordered to invest Arcot and all the men who had been sick at Conjeveram were ordered to join him; the authorities at Madras were asked to send to Conjeveram all men of the King's regiments who were out of hospital, together with stores, heavy guns, and ammunition for the siege of Arcot; the baggage left at Outramalore was ordered up to the army; a letter was written to Innis Khan ordering him to quit the province without delay; and on the 26th Baron Vasserot was sent off with 1,000 horse and 3 companies of sepoys to ravage and lay waste the country between Allamparvah and Pondicherry.

Coote was greatly concerned about the condition of the wounded men of his own army and Lally's. The medical arrangements seem from the outset of the campaign to have caused him some anxiety, and on the 13th December he had represented to the authorities at Fort St. George the desirability of appointing a surgeon-general to the staff of the army. Two or three days after the battle of Wandewash the condition of the wounded elicited the following from him: <sup>1</sup>

'Really the scene is now dreadful to see. Such a multitude of poor objects, and not in my power to give them the least assistance for want of every one necessary requisite for an hospital. I make no doubt upon this representation you will do everything humanity can direct. If it is possible to send surgeons and proper people from Madras to attend the wounded here who are very numerous, you may by that means save the lives of many gallant men, several of whom have not been dressed since the day of action. As I shall be obliged to carry away some surgeons out of the few, numbers must lose their lives.'

On the 28th, however, in response to a request which Coote had addressed to him for medical help, Lally sent two surgeons to the British camp; and about this period, or shortly before, a Mr. Briggs was appointed surgeon-general to the army, and was apparently

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, vol. i, p. 133.

placed at the head of the medical departments of both the King's and the Company's services, at the by no means extravagant remuneration of ten shillings a day.

Prior to the commencement of this campaign, arrangements had been made between the belligerents for a mutual exchange of prisoners, and for the ransom of any surplus remaining over on either side. After Wandewash Coote had permitted Bussy and two other French officers to be released on parole, pending exchange in the manner arranged, but Pigot, the Governor of Fort St. George, disapproved of this indulgence and refused to carry out the terms of the agreement, on the grounds that some twenty French officers, then on parole, had taken part in the action at Wandewash, none of whom had either paid their ransoms or been exchanged. Pigot's attitude led to a very acrimonious correspondence between him and Lally and between the French commander and Cornish and Coote; and it seems that the dispute was still proceeding so late as the time of the capture of Pondicherry.<sup>1</sup>

Coote, learning of the little care Lally had taken for the security of Chittapet, determined to reduce that place before moving against Arcot, and on the evening of the 26th a portion of the force marched from Wandewash, and invested and summoned Chittapet on the following morning. The commandant, de Tilly, refused to surrender, but the whole army arriving before the place on the 28th, and a breach being made by a battery which had been thrown up during the night, at 11 a.m. on the 29th de Tilly hung out a flag of truce and surrendered. 'We found in this place', writes Coote, 'officers 4, sergeants 2, corporals 4, artillery 10, privates 38; 73 wounded in the hospital, 300 sepoy, 9 guns, and a good quantity of ammunition.'

News now came in from Vasserot that he had raided up to within 8 miles of Pondicherry, had burnt twenty-four villages and seized 4,000 head of cattle; and from Wood that he had taken possession of the *pettah* of Arcot, driving out the native auxiliaries who were holding it for the French.

Coote's journal continues:

'February 1st. Set out from the army (which marched this day to Timmery) for Arcot, leaving orders with Major Monson to throw a few shells into Timmery and to summons it.

'February 2nd. This day the army marched and encamped within two miles of this place (Arcot). Major Monson reported to me that Timmery fort surrendered yesterday. There were found in the

<sup>1</sup> See Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. ii, p. 581; Wilson, vol. i, p. 134; and India Office, Lally's correspondence with Coote of this date.

garrison six guns, one sergeant, 20 Europeans and sixty Sepoys. Began to erect batteries against the fort, viz : one of five 18-pounders against the curtain between the N.W. corner tower of the gateway, one of two 18- and one 24-pounder against the tower and curtain west of the S.W. corner tower ; and one of one 12-pounder against the north gate to enfilade the west front.'

Then follows in Coote's journal a statement which seems to require some explanation. He says :

' Wrote to the Governor and Council that as the French company increased daily, I proposed to chuse (*sic*) out of their best sergeants one proper to be made an officer, and to pick out 50 men whom I intended calling " Volunteers ", that were to be always ready to go upon any dangerous attack.'

The sergeant selected was Rudolph Marchand.

In October 1758, ' in order to encourage desertion among the enemy's troops ', all deserters had been formed into a separate company with officers either of their own nationality or speaking their language, and the first commander of the new company was a Captain de Monchanin, with Ensigns Faizan, Bonjour, and Villarete. At the time of the siege of Pondicherry this French company seems to have been increased by a Free Company which consisted of two officers, 3 volunteers, and 73 non-commissioned officers and men of the infantry and 27 of the artillery. The only member of this company whose name has endured was Claude Martin, who deserted to the English during the siege of Pondicherry—on the 9th May 1760—was taken into our service, served under Lord Cornwallis at Seringapatam in 1792, and died as a major-general in Lucknow in 1800, the founder of the Martinière schools there and in Calcutta.<sup>1</sup>

On the 5th the batteries opened upon Arcot fort, the defences of which had of late years been greatly improved, and the return fire from the works killed a man of the 84th and wounded four of the artillery, while on the next day two guns in the attack were disabled, and six more casualties were incurred.

' February 7th. . . . Began to carry on approaches to the S.W. about 350 yards off the fort, also to the west. . . . In great want of powder and shot, owing to their not coming up from Chingliput and Wandewash as ordered. This day one man killed and two wounded.

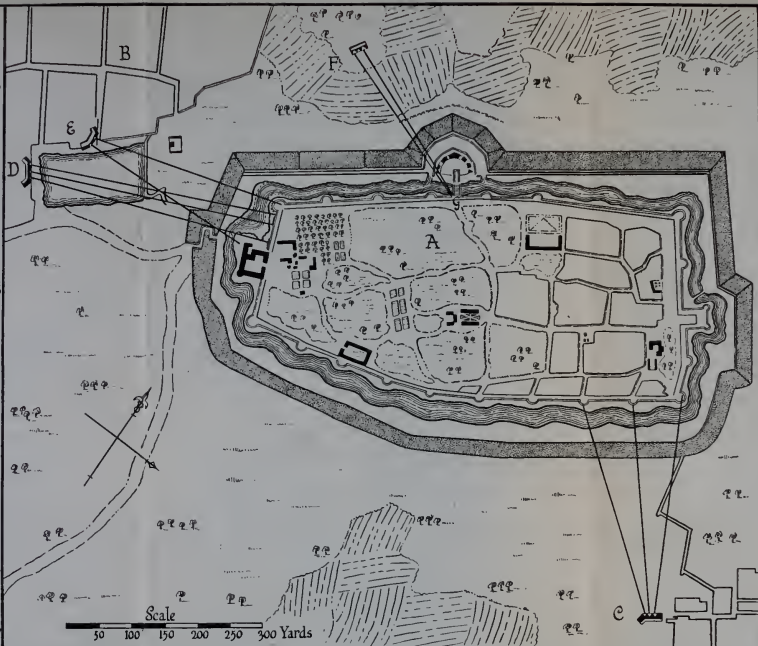
' 8th. Carried on our approaches to the S.W. to within 260 yards of the crest of the glacis, and those to the W. within 250 yards.

<sup>1</sup> See Wilson, vol. i, pp. 122, 140, 174. In justice to Martin it should be stated that the reason he gave Coote for deserting was that Lally insisted on his serving before he was exchanged or ransomed.



**REFERENCES**

A The Fort of Arcott. B part of the Town where the Nabob usually resides, and which gives name to a considerable province on y<sup>e</sup> Coast of Coromandel, tho' the Country under the Government of Mahomet Ally Cawn is usually called the Carnatick. Arcott is about 70 miles W.S.W. from Madrafs, and was first possess'd by the French and Chinda Saib's party, in the Beginning of 1751. In Augt the same year when the French & Chinda Saib were Besieging Trichanopoly Captain Clive march'd suddenly with a small party from Madrafs and took possession of Arcott; which Chinda Saib's Son quitted on his Approach. It was then a miserable Fort, and the French with Raja Saib Besieg'd Captain Clive in it; soon after he got possession. However, he repulsed them in the Attack of the Breaches they had made, and oblig'd them to raise the Siege. It remain'd in the hands of the Nabob, and the English till M. Lally was preparing to Besiege Madrafs, and then tho' it had been tolerably well Fortified, it was prudently Abandon'd and the Garrison withdrawn to Madrafs. After Gen<sup>l</sup> Lally rais'd the Siege of Madrafs, he retir'd to Arcott and the French kept possession of that place till February 1760



notwithstanding two slight attempts the English made to drive them out in 1759. After the Battle of Wandewash and the taking of Chittaputt; Colonel Coote march'd y<sup>e</sup> Army to Arcott, and Invested it the 2<sup>d</sup> Febr<sup>y</sup> 1760. The 5<sup>th</sup> 6 Guns were open'd in Battery against the Fort, and two Breaches made by the 9<sup>th</sup> so that y<sup>e</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Capt Husly of Lally's Reg<sup>t</sup> who commanded, surrender'd the Fort; and y<sup>e</sup> Garrison made Prisoners of War.  
 C A Battery of 2. 18 & 1. 24 po<sup>rs</sup>  
 D A Battery of 3. 18 po<sup>rs</sup>  
 E A Battery of 2. 18 po<sup>rs</sup>  
 F A Battery of 2. 22 po<sup>rs</sup> to break the Drawbridge, and destroy the Gate at F

Prisoners, Guns, etc taken  
 3 Captains, 8 Subalterns.  
 236 Europeans & 300 Seapoys.  
 22 Guns, 4 Mortars, and all kinds of Military Stores.

Loss of the British  
 4 Privates kill'd & 20 Wounded  
 1 Ensign Wounded

Plan of the Fort of Arcott, which Surrender'd to Colonel Coote  
 y<sup>e</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> of Febr<sup>y</sup> 1760

Drawn from a copy of the original at West Park.



Summoned the garrison to surrender. . . . To which summons I received for answer from Captain Hussey, who commanded the garrison, that provided he was not relieved in six days he would deliver it up if I would grant him the honours of war. Soon after the receipt of this hostilities recommenced. This night the enemy set one of our trenches on fire with their shells and fireballs; killed, one man; wounded, Ensign MacMahon, who acted as engineer, and 10 men.

'9th. Received powder and shot from Chingliput. Two breaches made, one at the N.W. corner tower and another at the S.W. The approaches carried to within 60 yards of the crest of the glacis.'

*Fall of Arcot,*  
*9th February 1760.*

From Coote's diary above quoted no one would realize the straits to which the attackers were reduced: shells were sent from Madras unaccompanied by powder, and those forwarded were not suited for siege ordnance. The stock in camp grew so low that it seemed likely to be exhausted before the place could be opened to assault. Owing to the dearth of serviceable bullocks only fifty shot came with the 18-pounders from Chingliput, 'and fifty barrels of powder expected with them were still', so Orme tells us, 'lagging on the road'.

This day the fort at Arcot surrendered. The garrison was found to consist of 3 captains, 8 subalterns, 236 Europeans, and between 200 and 300 sepoys, with 4 mortars, 22 pieces of ordnance and a great quantity of military stores of all kinds. The total British casualties were 4 killed and 21 wounded.

'Gave the command of the garrison', writes Colonel Coote, 'to Captain John Wood of the Company's troops<sup>1</sup> on account of his assiduity in supplying the army with provisions when he had the command at Cauveripauk, and by that means enabling me to keep the field, otherwise should have been obliged to have gone into cantonments which must have been the entire ruin of our affairs on the coast.'

This appointment seems to have been the origin of a course of unwarrantable interference with Colonel Coote, which was now initiated by Mr. Pigot and the Council of Fort St. George.

On the 12th February Coote received a letter from Pigot recommending that Captain Cheshyre of the 79th should be placed in command of the fort at Arcot, but to this wholly improper suggestion Coote made answer that he had already appointed another officer to the post, for which, moreover, Cheshyre was unfitted owing to his being at the time, by reason no doubt of the wound already mentioned, something of an invalid. Coote offered, however, to appoint Cheshyre to Wandewash

<sup>1</sup> The 'Madras Europeans' would seem to be meant.

or Carangoly. On the 15th another communication was received from Madras again pressing the claims of Captain Cheshyre for the command at Arcot, and Coote then decided that it was time to show the Madras Council that he would suffer no interference in a matter so wholly within his province as appointments in the field :

' Since I find, Gentlemen,' he replied to the Governor and Council, ' that you think it absolutely necessary that Captain Cheshyre should come here, and I not being able to suffer a thing of that kind (after appointing another) with any propriety to my own character, I therefore, in order that your inclinations may be gratified in this respect, now resign the command of the army, and shall, upon your appointing another officer to take upon him that heavy task, go to Madras in order to take the first opportunity for Bengal, where I find I am wanted.'

Pigot and his council replied defiantly that Colonel Coote could do as he pleased in regard to resignation, but that ' if you determine to do so, we are entirely of opinion that you resign at the same time all sort of command in the East Indies '. For such a statement the Madras Council had of course no warrant whatever ; high military appointments were not made by local councils but by the directors in London—and Captain Cheshyre does not appear to have been appointed to Arcot ! As we shall see, though this is the first, it was by no means the last occasion on which the Governor and Council of Fort St. George were to try a fall with the victor of Wandewash, and on no single occasion do they appear to have accomplished his overthrow.

The army had not restored its equipment sufficiently to move forward from Arcot until the 20th February, and even then three heavy guns, whose carriages had been broken, could not be repaired in time and had to be left behind. Timmery was reached on the 20th and Arnee on the 21st ; on the 23rd the army marched to and encamped near Chittapet and here another gun carriage broke down, while a letter was received from Captain Smith stating that he had taken possession of the *pettah* of Trinomally, but that the garrison of some 200 sepoyes seemed determined to hold out. Coote accordingly detached to Smith's assistance fifty men of the French company with two 12-pounders.

The Government of Fort St. George now sent a letter of a somewhat remarkable nature to their commander in the field ; they pointed out that eleven days had passed since the surrender of Arcot and expressed their surprise that the army was still lying there inactive. They insisted that the enemy had thus been given time to put supplies

into Pondicherry and to assemble their forces; that had Coote at once marched to 'the back of Pondicherry' as the Council recommended, the enemy would have been taken at a disadvantage; they suggested that the army should march by the nearest road to take possession of some post to cut the communications of Pondicherry with Gingee and Allamparvah, which last place was to be taken and destroyed, *if Coote thought it practicable*. Finally they complained that the expenses of the army were becoming heavier than could much longer be supported.

To this, on the 24th February, Colonel Coote sent a crushing reply; he pointed out that the siege of Arcot had been a very trying one, that approaches had been carried on in two places, and that four breaching batteries had been erected; that practically the whole army was on duty by day or night during the siege, when, moreover, 400 carts with draught bullocks had to be sent to Madras for ammunition, and that these did not rejoin until ten days before the army marched; that parts of the army had been detached to make diversions or effect captures; and that between the 21st January and the 21st February the army under his command had marched nearly 200 miles, had fought one general action, and had taken three forts, one of them the capital of the province. 'If this is thought a dilatory way of proceeding', wrote the justly-indignant commander, 'I assure you it is beyond my capacity to know how to act better. . . . You are pleased to mention the expense of the army. It is certainly very great, and you, gentlemen, are the best judges whether that expense answers the end of the conquests that have been gained'—a reply which seems effectually to have silenced the unreasonable complaints of the Madras Council.

On the 29th February the army reached Tindavanom, and Colonel Coote went forward with the cavalry and two companies of sepoy to reconnoitre the rock-fortress of Permacoil, coming under a heavy fire from the defenders. The *pettah* was captured by Ensign Carty and a company of sepoy, and four guns were found deserted therein, but they had been spiked and their carriages set on fire before the enemy retired. The fort was placed on so high a hill that Coote's guns and howitzers could not throw shells into it; our casualties were mounting up; and Coote determined to storm the place with the grenadier company of the 84th and the French volunteers. At 8 o'clock on the night of the 2nd March, having secured two guides, Coote sent two companies of sepoy to mount the hill by a little known track and endeavour to seize a pagoda near a tank just under the

fort. These were followed by a party carrying ladders, gabions, and fascines, and as soon as all were in position, a section of the grenadiers with a company of sepoy were ordered to make a false attack by the main approach to the fort.

Coote himself then joined the first party, and 'I was in hopes', he says, 'of being able to escalate the place, but found our ladders were too short. On this attack a sergeant of pioneers, one French volunteer and seven sepoy were killed. I was wounded myself in the knee, and Captain Adams, my aide-de-camp, shot through the hip, and 16 Europeans and 25 sepoy were wounded. . . . On the other attack Ensign Blakeney was killed and two sepoy wounded.'

The attackers held on, however, all night and having ordered more scaling ladders to be got ready, the indomitable commander was preparing to storm, when Colonel O'Kennedy desired to treat. Nothing came of the negotiations until, with infinite difficulty, a 6-pounder had been carried, by the exertions of Captain Barker, to the top of the hill and began battering the gate and parapet, while the men were actually mounting the ladders to storm when, on the 5th, the fort surrendered.

'The situation of this place is of such a nature', said the captor in his report to Government, 'that I may venture to say with 50 Europeans and two companies of sepoy I could defend it for twelve months against any army that could be brought against it, and to make use of Colonel O'Kennedy's own expression, nothing but devils or monkeys could take it. . . . The good behaviour of the sepoy was more remarkable than anything I could conceive. I have ordered a gold medal to be made for Bulwan Sing, a commandant of sepoy, who led the attack the night we took possession of the hill.'<sup>1</sup>

The prisoners taken in the fort were Colonel O'Kennedy, 1 surgeon, 15 picked European gunners, 32 Coffrees, and 100 sepoy, with 20 guns. During the five days' siege the attack had 1 officer, 3 Europeans, and 43 native ranks killed, 3 officers, 1 volunteer, 12 Europeans, and 70 sepoy wounded.

On the 7th March Coote, taking the whole of his cavalry and four companies of sepoy, moved forward to reconnoitre towards Pondicherry, but after marching 10 miles he left the infantry behind and moved on another 10 miles which brought him to within a mile of the bounds of Pondicherry. Here three squadrons of the enemy's cavalry appeared on the side of the Red Hill, upon which Coote

<sup>1</sup> Said to be the first medal ever given to an Indian soldier.

directed a portion of his cavalry to push round and endeavour to get in their rear, while Coote himself, taking the rest of his horse, followed up some infantry who, with six guns, were hurrying to get within their bounds. The broken nature of the ground—rice fields and dykes—and the absence of infantry, caused Coote to judge it to be inadvisable to push any attack home; he followed the enemy up, however, until they had retreated within their lines and a battery opened upon him. Captain de Beck got round to the rear of the opposing cavalry, burnt the bazar, killed several European and native soldiers, and took nine European prisoners; and before Coote fell back on his infantry he had burnt the cavalry barracks on the Red Hill and captured an 18-pounder which, however, he was unable to bring off, although the carriage was destroyed. The British had two horses killed and one sowar wounded, but the native cavalry obtained so much plunder in the bazar they destroyed, that they dispersed for a time in order to secure or enjoy it.

The following is a description of the ground:

‘ a large collection of sand-hills, of which the whole together is called the Red Hill, rises about half a mile from the sea-shore and a mile and a half to the north of the town; they extend four miles to the westward and the last hill, where they cease on this side, is called Perimbé; across from north to south they extend two miles and have passable dales between; directly opposite to the side of Perimbé stands the Fort of Villenore, a strong outpost, situated near the north bank of the river of Ariancopang, which falls into the sea about 500 yards from the wall of Pondicherry, and in its course from Villenore forms a curve to the south. The Red Hill, on the other side the plain, recedes to the north-east from Perimbé to its end towards the sea. So that the interval between Villenore and Perimbé is the narrowest part of the plain between the river and the Red Hill, being here scarcely more than a mile, whereas farther back it is three. The plain as far as the bound-hedge was occupied by country houses, enclosures, avenues and arable ground.’<sup>1</sup>

On the 9th, having moved his army forward, Coote marched at daylight to reconnoitre the northern defences of Pondicherry, and approached them very slowly so as to draw fire and make the defenders disclose the position of their batteries, but ‘ without any disturbance from them’. On this day Major Monson was detached, with the grenadier company of the 84th, the Coffrees<sup>2</sup> and ten companies of sepoy, to invest Allamparvah and take possession of the *pettah*.

<sup>1</sup> Orme, vol. iii, p. 610, 1778 edition.

<sup>2</sup> Negroes from Madagascar or Africa.

The army encamped near Allamparvah on the 10th and Coote was now obliged to hand the conduct of the siege over to Monson as his wound had become very painful. During the night the erection of two batteries was commenced and fire was at once opened.

Within three hours of sunrise on the 12th March most of the guns of the defence had been dismantled and many of the works were in ruins, so that it is not surprising that in the afternoon the Chevalier Viart, the commandant of Allamparvah, recognizing the futility of further resistance, finally surrendered. The garrison consisted of 1 officer, a surgeon, 50 Europeans, and 150 sepoys, and it had sustained a loss of 3 Europeans killed and 12 wounded. There were found in the fort 20 guns, 2 howitzers and much ammunition. The casualties of the attackers are given as four killed, and among them was Lieutenant Angus of the 84th, who was killed on the 11th March.

Coote now decided to betake himself for a few days to Madras; his wound was giving him a good deal of trouble and he was suffering much from fever; it was also necessary to confer with the Madras authorities as to the prosecution of the campaign, and particularly in regard to the reduction of Pondicherry, for which the co-operation of the fleet—Admiral Cornish had reached Madras on the 23rd February with six ships—was urgently required; further, some anxiety must have been caused Colonel Coote by the intelligence he had received that Lally was intriguing with Hyder Ali, the commander of the Mysore armies, for his assistance in men in exchange for the cession of large tracts of territory.

Before quitting the army, however, Coote issued an order to his soldiers which shows the generosity of his character, and goes far towards disproving the charge of mercenariness which has been brought against him by some of those who have described his services. The order stated that, as it seemed unlikely that the army would derive any pecuniary advantage from its great successes, and as Colonel Coote felt that the substantial gain he had met with since his arrival in India was owing to the gallant and good behaviour of the officers and men he had had the honour to command, he proposed to hand over, for equal division throughout the army, all the money presents which, according to the custom of the country, had been paid or promised to Coote as commander, 'from different black powers', which, concluded the order, 'is the only acknowledgement he can at present make the army for the services they have done their country'.

It is not pleasant to learn from later entries in Coote's journal

that some of these presents were claimed by the Madras Government, and this too at a time when their commander was considerably out of pocket owing to no batta having yet been paid him while in the field ; while he was also, as he writes in his journal under date of the 17th March, ' paying myself 8 per cent. for every farthing of money I received from the Governor and Council to pay my regiment ' !

Before Coote left the army for Madras it had been decided that, as a preliminary to the siege of Pondicherry, the fort of Karikal, some 70 miles to the south, must be reduced. Major Monson had been detailed for this service, and he embarked on the 25th March on the *Falmouth*, taking with him Captain Barker and two other artillery officers, Capt.-Lieut. Leigh of the Engineers, 7 gunners, and 50 pioneers. He was to be assisted in the siege by the marines of Admiral Cornish's squadron, increased by 40 gunners, 100 Europeans, and 2,000 sepoy sent from Trichinopoly.<sup>1</sup> During the absence from the army of Coote and Monson the command devolved upon Major William Gordon of the 84th. Karikal surrendered to Monson on the 5th April.<sup>2</sup>

On the 7th April Coote rejoined and resumed command of the army at Killenore, whither during his absence it had marched, and on the following day he set out with the cavalry and some sepoy to reconnoitre Valdore, 9 miles NNW. of Pondicherry. On the 11th Major Robert Gordon of the 84th was detached with two companies of grenadiers, the French volunteers, the Coffrees, and six companies of sepoy, with two 6-pounders and a howitzer, to seize the *pettah*, and on the day following two batteries opened fire against the fort. The actual siege operations did not give the army much trouble, the garrison of Valdore—3 officers, 80 European soldiers, and 280 sepoy with 25 guns—finally surrendering on the 17th, but there was much desertion in the British force. A large number of the French soldiers who had lately become prisoners of war and been sent to Madras, were there enlisted into the Company's service—quite contrary to Coote's wishes—and unwisely sent back to fight in the ranks of the British army. These now deserted every day and forty of them had gone before Valdore fell ; several of the French volunteers, whose behaviour had hitherto been exemplary, also deserted to their country-

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge, *The War on the Coromandel Coast*, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> The British loss was 6 killed and 6 wounded ; Karikal was commanded by Renault, the defender of Chandernagore ; the garrison was composed of over 750 Europeans and natives, and some 160 guns were captured.

men ; but, on the other hand, during the siege, and to an even greater extent when the fort fell, new deserters came over to the English camp.<sup>1</sup> Coote was under the necessity of disarming all the Frenchmen enlisted at Madras and ordering them back there into confinement.

From Valdore Coote sent one of his native commandants, Asaf Beg, with 200 horse and 300 sepoys, to take Trivadi, which was abandoned at his approach, whereupon Asaf Beg, on his own initiative, moved on to and took possession of Cuddalore—a place of great value.

On the 19th another reconnaissance was sent out to the Red Hill overlooking Pondicherry, and some skirmishing took place ; on the 22nd Monson reported the capture of Chillambrum ; news came in of the enemy having evacuated Cuddalore and Fort St. David ; and on the 25th Admiral Cornish announced his arrival at Cuddalore with his squadron to co-operate with the army in the reduction of Pondicherry.

Coote, escorted by the European cavalry, set out for Cuddalore and had a consultation with Admirals Stevens and Cornish ; ‘ found both very desirous to give me all the assistance in their power for carrying on the service ’.

On the 3rd May Monson rejoined, having done very useful work during the time he had been detached from the main army. He was ‘ accompanied by the Nabob with 2,000 horse. . . . Sent Captain Monckton, one of my aides-de-camp, to wait on him. He returned with a present from him and his compliments to me that he would be glad to see me in the afternoon, accordingly I waited on him and was received in a most friendly manner. He expressed his high sense of the services I had done, and made me a present of a fine Arabian horse and a string of pearls with an emerald at the bottom ’.

Early in this month the French garrison of Pondicherry had retired within ‘ the bound hedge ’, or thick cactus fence which encircled, and still surrounds, Pondicherry on the landward side, strengthened by four redoubts at regular intervals ; but the French now began to display considerable activity.

On the 11th Coote heard a rumour that an attack was in contemplation upon Cuddalore, and at once sent warning to the commander. The message does not seem to have reached him in time, for on the

<sup>1</sup> Orme seems to suggest that throughout the operations no man of Lally's or the Lorraine Regiment deserted to the British. Coote's journal, however, contains frequent mention of cases of desertion from both corps.



12th Coote learnt that the attack had been duly made and had been so far successful that the enemy had got into the place and had carried off 2 surgeons, 3 mates, and 64 petty officers and men belonging to the fleet who were in the hospital. 'Ensign Leabor, who commanded our sepoys there,' writes Coote, 'throws the blame entirely on the sailors, who said they were not sent on shore to fight, but to recover their health!' A reinforcement under Lieutenaut Fitzgerald and consisting of 20 European horse, 2 companies of sepoys, and a 3-pounder was sent to Cuddalore, but another attack was made almost immediately after its arrival. This was beaten off with loss and the French fell back, taking, however, the 3-pounder with them; this was later recaptured by Fitzgerald and the cavalry. On the 21st the enemy to the number of 1,250 with 4 guns, made five separate attacks upon Cuddalore, but better defences having by this time been constructed they were repulsed with a loss of 2 officers and 60 other ranks killed, and were pursued to the Paliar river.

On the 23rd May the *Salisbury* joined the squadron from Bombay, bringing a small but welcome reinforcement for the army: this was a detachment of 178 men of the Royal Artillery under Captain Maitland, which had been sent out from home for the defence of the island of Bombay, the Government of which, wisely and patriotically, sent them on to the coast, deeming they would be most usefully employed there. This party joined Coote from Cuddalore on the 28th.

Just at this time when everything looked promising for the prosecution of the blockade of Pondicherry, thanks to the continued success which had waited upon the English arms, news reached Coote from a correspondent in Pondicherry of the alliance which Lally had now concluded with Hyder Ali, and by virtue of which the Mysore chief was to bring 3,000 horse and 5,000 foot into the field to the assistance of the French. It must have been an anxious time for the British commander, but he remained undismayed; it was a sickly season, the army had made great exertions, many men had died, and more were in hospital; but Coote put heart into his men by constantly attacking the enemy's outposts, cutting up stragglers, making captures, and preventing supplies, urgently needed, from being swept into Pondicherry from the surrounding country.

For some weeks nothing of any consequence transpired, the communications of Pondicherry, whether by land or by sea, being daily more and more constricted; until, on the 17th July, Coote, having received intelligence that the Mysore reinforcements, already received

by Lally, were likely before long to be still further augmented, decided to adopt more active measures.

'This morning,' he writes in his journal, 'about 3 o'clock, Major Monson with the grenadiers of the army, the detachment from Bombay, the Coffrees and 15 companies of sepoy, with two 18-, two 12-, four 6-pounders, a 13-inch mortar and a howitz, marched and took post at Perambeck. At 4 o'clock the rest of the army followed. As soon as we had taken possession of the ground, I detached a party to destroy a redoubt belonging to the enemy, which was accordingly done. At the same time, sent a company of grenadiers with a field piece, and six companies of sepoy, to take possession of Villenore *pettah*. In the afternoon the 13-inch mortar was sent down and everything made ready for erecting batteries against the fort. Ordered all the Nabob's horse to join me immediately, and his sepoy to follow with the greatest expedition. This night half the army lay on their arms.

'18th July. Threw up a redoubt leading into the village of Villenore and another about half a mile to the front of our right on the Pondicherry road. Received intelligence that Major Moore had had an engagement with the Mysoreans, which ended to his disadvantage.'

What had happened was that Coote had detached under Major Moore a force of cavalry and infantry<sup>1</sup> to intercept a body of Mysore troops commanded by Mukdoom Ali, Hyder's brother-in-law, which was escorting a convoy of provisions into Pondicherry. Moore's force was met on the 17th July near Trivadi by Mukdoom Ali's troops and completely routed; the native horse and foot were entirely dispersed; the European troops escaped into Trivadi, the infantry with the loss of one-third, and the cavalry of one-half of their numbers.<sup>2</sup>

When, on the 20th July, fire was opened from five 18-pounders in two batteries, the enemy, considering no doubt that Villenore was likely to be hard pressed, marched out in force to endeavour to effect its relief. Coote reinforced his troops in Villenore village with infantry and guns, got his whole army under arms, increased the fire of his batteries upon the fort, and sent his men forward to storm. When the assaulting party got into the covered way, the garrison of Villenore at once surrendered, and the batteries were turned upon the enemy's relieving forces, who fell back under the guns of the redoubt of Arian-copang.

It must by this time have become apparent to Lally that the net

<sup>1</sup> 180 European infantry, 30 Coffrees, 50 European cavalry, 1,100 sepoy, and 1,600 irregular horse.

<sup>2</sup> Wilks, *Historical Sketches of India*, vol. i, p. 414.

was closing in upon him, and that French rule in India was drawing to a close. The allies he had secured were beginning to be alienated from him by the scarcity of supplies and by the conviction that they had espoused a losing cause; Coote, though not strong enough actually to besiege Pondicherry, had established a very effective blockade, all avenues by which supplies could be brought in were closed, all sorties had been driven back, and in numerous small affairs of posts the British had evinced their superiority. And now at last substantial reinforcements reached the English commander. On the 14th August drafts for the 79th and 84th to the number of 600 joined the camp before Pondicherry, having come out from home in the *Carnarvon*, *Lord Mansfield*, *Warwick*, *Princess Augusta*, and *Falmouth*, Indiamen; on the 30th Admiral Stevens, after repeated requests, landed 422 marines (all ranks), and placed them at Colonel Coote's disposal; while the *America*, *Medway*, and *Liverpool*, men-of-war, and the *Prince Edward*, *Latham*, *Sandwich*, and *Admiral Watson*, Indiamen, landed at Cuddalore on the 2nd September a wing of Colonel Morris's Highlanders,<sup>1</sup> under Major Hector Munro. But it was not only the army which had thus been reinforced, for the ships which had escorted the transports raised the strength of the squadron under Stevens before Pondicherry to seventeen sail.

Coote now felt himself strong enough to commence the siege in earnest, and on the evening of the 2nd September he had issued orders for the investment of the redoubt of Ariancopang; but that very night Lally made a supreme attempt to hurl back his assailant and snatch victory out of impending disaster.

At this period the position taken up by the besieging or blockading force was as follows: the right rested on the captured fort of Villenore on the left bank of the Ariancopang river, the left was on the base of the hill of Perimbé, where a redoubt had been thrown up, with a detached post—the Tamarind Redoubt—further still to the left, while well in front of the centre the British had established a strong post in a house surrounded by a hedged garden, past which a main road led directly to the town of Pondicherry.

It is said that Lally had received information of the arranged attack, but not of its cancellation,<sup>2</sup> and he determined to make a sortie

<sup>1</sup> Numbered the 89th Regiment.

<sup>2</sup> Coote in his journal says as to these orders, 'difficulties arising from certain people I countermanded them.' According to Orme the 'difficulties' appear to have been raised by Monson: see vol. iii, p. 659.

in three columns, surprising the Perimbé redoubt and the fortified garden house in the British centre, while another force, advancing from the Ariancopang direction, should cross the river behind the British camp and fall upon its rear. He made his arrangements with much care and skill, and his enterprise deserved to succeed; the surprise was complete; both sides fought with great resolution; but the turning movement, upon which Lally depended for ultimate success, hopelessly miscarried. All the sailors, 150 in number, had been landed from the three ships lying at anchor before the town, some lascars being sent on board in their stead, and this small naval force, with some sepoy, was distributed among the redoubts in the bound hedge, thus relieving all the soldiers, except men required to serve the guns, who were to take part in the attacks. The total force thus made available was not large, amounting to no more than 1,100 European infantry, 100 horse, and 900 sepoy. Lally's position was at the bridge of Ullagarry, and from here he arranged to send up two rockets as a signal when the columns were to advance from the points whence their respective attacks were to be delivered, and as to which the most careful calculations of time and space had been made. The signal must have been given some little time after midnight, for Coote records that 'about one o'clock this morning (the 3rd) the whole French army attacked our outposts'. The right French attack succeeded, the enemy penetrating into the redoubt, carrying off three gunners and a brass 3-pounder, and setting the battery on fire. The Tamarind redoubt was also assailed, but held out gallantly. In the centre the fighting was very severe; 'the French never fought better';<sup>1</sup> Coote himself brought down reinforcements to the garden house and led a vigorous counter attack; but the stubborn French infantry held their ground, expecting every moment to hear sounds of the main attack upon the British right flank and rear. The commander of this column, however, although he had been taken over the ground by Lally himself the day before and shown the exact direction he was to follow, had crossed the river too low down, and, instead of coming up in the rear of the English, suddenly made his appearance a mile to the front of their lines. Success was now unattainable and the French fell back, having lost between twenty and thirty Europeans killed and wounded, while Lieut.-Colonel d'Auteuil and four men were made prisoners.

On the day after this success, which seemed to clear the way for

<sup>1</sup> Malleison, *History of the French in India*, p. 572.

the final capture of Pondicherry, Colonel Coote received a letter from Lord Barrington, the Secretary of War, which must have occasioned him the deepest chagrin. No trace of this letter, nor of one dealing with the same subject and addressed to Colonel Monson, is to be found, but Coote in his diary gives the substance of it. It was to the effect that 'His Majesty had granted the rank of Colonel to Lieut.-Colonel Monson and myself, and that "the reason of Colonel Monson's commission being of a prior date to mine was to give him that rank he had lost when I was put over his head, though a much younger officer"'. In this His Lordship must have been misinformed, as I was an officer and received a wound in an action when Colonel Monson was not in the Service'; the letter then went on to say that Colonel Coote was to proceed as soon as possible to Bengal and assume command there.

On the 5th September Colonel Coote wrote to the President and Council of Fort St. George saying,

'it gives me the greatest concern to find that His Majesty has so ordered it as to put it out of my power to continue here and see a conclusion to the operations you are pleased to think have been hitherto so happily carried on, and which are now so near a crisis. Therefore take the liberty to inclose you a copy of Lord Barrington's to me, by which you will see I am superceded in my rank by Colonel Monson, who (as he tells me) will write to you to-day, and send you a copy of Lord Barrington's letter to him, in which it appears that my departure is urged in a more strong manner than in mine. Indeed that gentleman thinks every moment's delay I make here is injurious to him, to obviate which and not hinder the public service from going on, I intend setting out this afternoon for Madras, and have ordered my Regiment to hold itself in readiness to march at the shortest warning, however unhappy this makes me, yet such is my fate and I must submit.'

The President and Council replied on the 8th, saying that they must resign themselves to the will of the Sovereign, but that 'justice, as well as our own inclination, urges us to acknowledge thus publickly your good services to the nation and to the Company on this coast, where a series of success (the consequence of wise measures) ever since you took the command have crown'd your indefatigable endeavours, and brought the enemy to such streights within their Capitall that we hope, not unreasonably, a short space may even expect them thence'. At the same time the Council pointed out the disadvantage under which the besieging army would labour were the 84th Regiment to be withdrawn from before Pondicherry, and they urged Colonel Coote to leave his regiment behind him.

This letter must have been received by Coote at Fort St. George, whither he had repaired, having addressed a very noble letter to Monson before leaving the army :

‘I own to you, Sir,’ he wrote, ‘it is with no small regret I quit an army for which I have so justly the highest regard, and from whose continued good behaviour I flatter myself I have gained some reputation. At the same time, give me leave to assure you that it is the greatest satisfaction to me to resign the command to a gentleman, who, I am well persuaded, is not only extremely capable of rendering his country the most signal service, but will seize every opportunity to effect it.’

To the President and Council of Fort St. George Colonel Coote replied on the 9th expressing his grateful acknowledgments of the praise they had given him for his services, and adding,

‘the principle on which I have always acted (the good of the Service) will not allow me to hesitate in the least acquiescing to your request with respect to leaving my Regiment for the present on the Coast ; and I flatter myself that His Majesty will not be displeased at this step. My situation was resembling that of a fond Parent quitting a Family, which from their affectionate behaviour and strict observance of their Duty have endeared them to him, will, I hope, be an inducement to you to send my Regiment after me so soon as its services here shall not be absolutely wanted.’

Within a very few days of the receipt of the first letter of this correspondence the situation underwent a change. At daybreak on the 10th September, Monson made an attack in force upon the bound hedge and the redoubts which guarded it, captured the Valdore and Villenore redoubts, a small fortified post between the Villenore and Ariancopang redoubts with seventeen pieces of cannon, and repulsed an attempt made to retake the Villenore redoubt. Our losses amounted to 117 killed and wounded, among them being five officers, and one of these being Colonel Monson, the two small bones of his leg being shattered by a grape shot.

Monson at once wrote to inform Coote of his injury, and begged him to resume command, a request which was repeated in very gratifying terms by the Governor and Council of Madras in a letter written on the 13th September. They told Colonel Coote of what had happened, and said they considered it a fortunate circumstance that he had not yet left the Coast or entirely quitted the command,

‘as we cannot doubt but that seeing how great importance your presence with the Army may be, and considering also the reason which induced His Majesty to order you to Bengall will no more exist if

Colonel Monson should be obliged to quit the field, we say, we cannot doubt but that you will immediately resolve to resume full command ; permit us to add our request that you will do so. We are urged by many weighty reasons which we need not particularize, as we conclude them all when we say your Country calls for your service, a call which you are always ready to obey.'

Coote replied on the 15th in a letter expressing a doubt whether he would be justified in returning to the army, considering that the orders received from England left him no alternative but to proceed at once to Bengal ; he further stated that by disobeying His Majesty's instructions, ' I should do the greatest injustice both to Colonel Monson and the officers in succession under him, who I daresay will acquit themselves with the greatest honour, and much more satisfaction to their superiors at home, than either I have, or should do, were I to remain here.'

This drew a very long and strongly worded remonstrance from Fort St. George. Writing on the 16th the President and Council expressed their keen disappointment at the reply received from Colonel Coote. They had, they said, carefully considered Lord Barrington's letters to Coote and to Monson, and were convinced that the resumption of the command would be agreeable to His Majesty, whose sole motive in sending his forces to India was for the protection of the Company and the annoyance of the enemy ; that the main danger was in the south and not in Bengal ; that it was clear from Barrington's letters that there was no design of superseding Coote, but merely of ensuring that Monson should not come under the command of a younger man ; that the manner and place of Coote's employment was left to the good pleasure of the Company ; that it was clear that Coote was not intended to go to Bengal so long as he was required in the south ; and they again urgently requested Colonel Coote to reconsider the resolve to which he had come.

On the 18th Coote replied that he would rejoin the army, though he expressed himself as still in doubt ' whether I may not be accounted blameable should I remain for the present on the Coast ' ; and consequently on the 20th he returned to Army Head-quarters and re-assumed command.

There is a letter from Colonel Monson to Lord Barrington which appears to have been commenced soon after Coote had left the army, and to have been concluded after Monson had been incapacitated by his wound from exercising command. It is dated the 13th September, and in it Monson distinctly states that while his commission ' was

antedated to Colonel Coote's, it was His Majesty's pleasure that if Colonel Coote should be at Madras', Monson was to make no use of his new commission, and that Coote was to continue his command during his stay at Madras. Monson adds that on showing his letter to Coote that officer said he had also received one 'to the same purport', but from Coote's letter of the 5th September, already quoted, this does not seem to have been the case. Colonel Monson then made bitter complaint of the proposal to withdraw the 84th Regiment, and stated that if this were allowed, 'he begged leave to retire from the Command and to have permission to return to Europe in order to justify his conduct'. At the end of the letter Monson speaks of his having been wounded and of Colonel Coote having 'returned to the command at the request of the Gentlemen of Madras'.

No doubt Coote also made early acknowledgment of Lord Barrington's unexpected and unwelcome communication, but if he did the letter is not to be traced. There is, however, extant one written by him to Barrington on the 15th October, from which the following are extracts :

'Permit me, my Lord,' he writes, 'to assure you that I have the most grateful sense of His Majesty's goodness in promoting me to the rank I so little merited, and which of consequence I did not expect, but at the same time, my Lord, my being superseded by two<sup>1</sup> junior officers, who has (*sic*) been serving under me, was as undeserved as it was unexpected.

'When I acquaint your Lordship that I had been nineteen<sup>2</sup> years in His Majesty's Service, and was severely wounded in action when Colonels Brereton and Monson were at school, I hope you will be pleased to alter your sentiments with regard to my having superseded them.'

If he is not considered a proper person to command at Madras, he asks leave to return home, 'as my health is impairing daily by constant fatigues, and as I am spending my private fortune, and receiving the greatest slights from home'. He enclosed copies of his correspondence with the Madras Council to explain the circumstances under which he had resumed the command of the army before Pondicherry.<sup>3</sup>

One cannot help entertaining a suspicion that this promotion of

<sup>1</sup> Brereton was the other, but he, as we have seen, had been killed in action.

<sup>2</sup> For this and the following statement supporting evidence is not forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> The whole of this correspondence is at the British Museum, Add. MSS. 32912-3.



Monson was something of the nature of a 'job'. At the British Museum there is a memorandum<sup>1</sup> to be seen regarding Colonel Monson, and mentioning the difficulty as to his promotion owing to Brereton being a senior officer; as a way out of the difficulty *both* received promotion! But in an odd volume of letters and papers at the Record Office there are some two or three letters regarding the promotions of Monson and Brereton, and giving expression to the anxiety of the Directors of the East India Company lest these might appear to supersede Coote.<sup>2</sup>

The following table, giving the dates of the various commissions of Colonel Coote and Colonel Monson, taken from contemporary army lists, does not throw much light upon the nature or fact of the supersession of the former officer by the latter:

COOTE.		MONSON.	
Ensign, 27th Foot,	8 June 1744	Ensign, Foot Guards,	24 Nov. 1750
Lieut., 37th Foot,	18 April 1749	Lieut. and Captain,	
Capt., 37th Foot,	18 June 1755	Foot Guards,	22 Dec. 1753
Lieut.-Colonel, 84th		Major, 79th Foot,	18 Nov. 1757
Foot,	20 Jan. 1759	Lieut.-Colonel,	29 Sept. 1760
Colonel, East Indies,	4 April 1761	Colonel, 96th Foot,	20 Jan. 1761
Colonel in the Army,	4 April 1765	Colonel in the Army,	30 Nov. 1769

On rejoining the army Coote found matters in a by no means satisfactory condition; there were 600 European soldiers sick and wounded, supplies were scanty, and the men had received no pay for some time past; while the Admiral was pressing for the return of his Marines, required in view of the daily expected arrival of the French squadron under d'Aché, and without their assistance the blockade by land could scarcely be maintained. So long, however, as the Marines remained with him, Coote actively prosecuted the siege. On the 27th September the Ariancopang redoubt was seized without casualties, and an attempt at its recapture made two days later was repulsed with some loss to the enemy. On the 1st October, finding that the French were strengthening their posts to the northward, Coote took three companies of sepoy in that direction, drove in the enemy, and captured and occupied a small redoubt. The French returned in strength at midnight and retook it, a British officer, Ensign MacMahon, being killed, and the commander of the sepoy, a Dane, abandoning the post. Subadar Coven Naik then assumed command, rallied his men outside the work, led them back to the assault and retook the redoubt, causing the French 54 casualties.

<sup>1</sup> Add. MSS. 33055, folio 283.

<sup>2</sup> See W. O. 1-863.

On the 6th October the army moved to higher ground ; next day the boats of the squadron cut out of Pondicherry road the French frigates *Hermione* and *Baleine*—a very smart piece of work ; and during the next few days several ineffectual attempts were made by the French upon the Ariancopang redoubt. During the rainy season the Admiral withdrew most of his ships from before Pondicherry, and Coote was unable to carry on any very vigorous operations during their absence, and was unwilling to construct works which must be destroyed by the heavy rains. He contented himself, therefore, with closing all avenues of approach to the town ; but at the same time he reinforced the troops blockading Gingee, and enabled their commander to intercept convoys and to dispossess the French of such small forts or posts as they still held. <sup>1</sup>

During the month of November Captain John Call,<sup>2</sup> of the Engineer Corps, came from Madras and arrived at Pondicherry on the 18th, to take charge of the siege operations ; he has left an account of the siege, as of that of Karikal, both of which may be seen at the India Office among the Orme Manuscripts.

On the 9th November, what Coote calls a 'reconchet' battery of four 18-pounders, was established to the northward of Pondicherry and within 1,400 yards of the walls, opening fire the next day ; on the 14th a convoy of supplies and slaughter cattle was intercepted before it could reach the French lines ; and it was now clear, from the number of townspeople who applied for passes and endeavoured under various pretexts to leave Pondicherry, that the long defence was weakening.

Towards the end of November the weather improved, and Coote called upon his engineers to design and trace new batteries.

'Accordingly they resolved to erect a battery of two 24- and two 13-pounders, one 13, one 10, and one 8-inch mortar to the north-west quarter at about 1,000 yards distance, so as to be able to enfilade the north face of the large counter-guard before the north-west bastion. Another of four 18-pounders near the breach on the north side to enfilade the grand streets, which run north and south through the white town and pass before the citadel gates. And a third of two French 28-pounders to the south on a sandy island called Prince Edward's Island, at about 1,200 yards distance, to enfilade the streets from south to north, so as to cross the fire from the northern battery.'

On the 6th December a battery of two 15-pounders and an 8-inch

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> Call was an unsuccessful candidate for the governorship of Madras when Macartney was appointed : he died in 1801—a baronet.

mortar, called Prince William's battery, to the south-west of Pondicherry, was established at a distance of 1,100 yards from the south-west bastion ; and at midnight on the 8th fire was opened from all the above-mentioned batteries and maintained during the rest of the night. This bombardment was steadily kept up ; on the 22nd December another battery, armed with eight heavy guns and two mortars, was commenced on the west within 800 yards, to enfilade the north-west bastion and curtain ; on the 25th the greater part of the squadron under Admiral Stevens returned ; while intelligence from within the town was to the effect that no more than eight days' rations were in the magazine, and that Lally, the indomitable, was prostrated by sickness and harassed by intrigue, disloyalty, and disaffection, which were rife among his followers.

At 10 p.m. on the 1st January 1761 a sudden and violent storm arose and continued, increasing in intensity, for four or five hours. The batteries of the besiegers were almost ruined and many men were killed ; the men-of-war *Newcastle* and *Queenborough* and the fire-ship *Protector* went ashore to the south of Ariancopang, but nearly the whole of the crews were saved ; about 1 a.m. on the 2nd the men-of-war *Duke of Aquitaine* and *Sunderland* and the store-ship *Duke* foundered, only 3 men escaping out of the warships and but 7 out of the crew of the *Duke* ; the *America*, *Panther*, *Medway*, and *Falmouth* were dismantled, and the *Norfolk*, flagship, was blown away from the station.

Lally seems to have built hopes of succour upon the misfortune which had overtaken the British by land and sea : the following is a translation of an intercepted letter sent by the commander at Pondicherry to M. Raymond, French Resident at Pulicat, dated the 2nd January 1761.

' M. RAYMOND.

' The English squadron is no more, Sir ; out of the twelve ships they had in our road, seven are lost, Crew and all ; the four others dismantled ; and it appears there is no more than one frigate that hath escaped ; therefore dont lose an instant to send us Chelingsoes<sup>1</sup> upon Chelingsoes loaded with Rice. The Dutch have nothing to fear now ; besides (according to the Rights of the Nations) they are only to send us no provisions themselves, and we are no more blocked up by Sea.

' The Saving of Pondicherry hath been in your Power once already : If you miss the present Opportunity, it will be entirely your fault :

<sup>1</sup> Chelingas, lighters, small country craft.

Dont forget also some small Chelingsoes ; Offer great rewards ; I expect seventeen thousand Morattoes within these four days. In short, risque all, attempt all, force all, and send us some Rice, should it be but half a Garse<sup>1</sup> at a time.'

Coote acted under this disaster with commendable decision ; he sent up and down the coast ordering ships up to Pondicherry to replace those sunk, ashore, or dismantled ; he wrote to Madras for fresh supplies of ordnance stores to replace those lost in the *Duke* ; he dispatched native boats north and south to assist the storm-beaten vessels ; and he collected supplies of provisions and arrack for the crews of the three warships thrown ashore near Ariancopang.

But this was not the limit of this energetic officer's activities, for ' thinking it necessary ', as he writes, ' at this critical time to push everything to the utmost against the enemy, I went this night . . . to attack St. Thomas's redoubt, a place of great consequence to the enemy. Between 11 and 12 we took it,' but the garrison Coote left there—170 strong—was surprised at daylight on the 6th and the post reverted to the French. On the 10th Coote's aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Duespe, was killed by a cannon shot, fired by some misunderstanding as he was receiving a flag of truce.

On the night of the 13th trenches were opened and a parallel begun, the siege batteries fired very briskly, and in places the bastions and curtains were in ruins ; finally, about 6 p.m. on the 15th, Lieut.-Colonel Durre, of the artillery, Père Lauvoir,<sup>2</sup> the head of the Jesuits, and Messrs. Moracin and Courtain with Mons. Tobin, as interpreter, came out of the lines to open negotiations.

The following correspondence passed between the two commanders ; Lally wrote to Coote :

' The taking of Chandernagore contrary to the Faith of Treaties, and of that Neutrality which has always subsisted between all European Nations, and namely between the two Nations in this part of India ; and that immediately after a signal Service which the French Nation had rendered the English, not only in taking no part against them with the Nabob of Bengal, but in receiving them in their Settlements, to give them Time to recover from their first Losses (as appears by the Letters of Thanks from Mr. Pigot himself, and from the Council of Madras to that of Pondicherry) added to the formal Refusal of fulfilling the Conditions of a Cartel, agreed upon between our respective Masters, though it was at first accepted by Mr. Pigot, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Garse*, a measure equal to 8,400 lb. of grain.

<sup>2</sup> Thus spelt by Coote in his Journal, Lavaur by Malleison and in Lally's *Memoirs*.

Commissaries were named on both sides to go to Sadrass to settle amicably the Difficulties which might occur in its Execution, put it out of my Power with Respect to my Court to make or propose to Mr. Coote any Capitulation for the Town of Pondicherry.

‘The King’s Troops, and those of the Company, surrender themselves, for Want of Provisions, Prisoners of War of His Britannick Majesty, upon the Terms of the Cartel, which I reclaim equally for all the Inhabitants of Pondicherry, as well as for the exercise of the Roman Religion, the Religious Houses, Hospitals, Chaplains, Surgeons, Servants, etc., referring myself to the Decision of our two Courts for Reparation proportioned to the Violation of so solemn a Treaty.

‘Accordingly Mr. Coote may take possession To-morrow Morning at Eight o’Clock of the Gate of Villenour; and after to-morrow at the same hour of that of Fort St. Louis; and as he has the Power in his own hands, he will dictate such ulterior Dispositions to be made, as he shall judge proper.

‘I demand, merely from a Principle of Justice and Humanity, that the Mother and Sisters of Rezasaiib be permitted to seek an Asylum where they please, or that they remain prisoners among the English, and be not delivered up into Mahomet Ally Caun’s Hands, which are still red with the blood of the Husband and Father, that he has spilt, to the Shame indeed of those who gave them up to him; but not less to the Shame of the Commander of the English Army, who should not have allowed such a piece of Barbarity to be committed in his Camp.

‘As I am tied up by the Cartel in the Declaration which I make to Mr. Coote, I consent that the Gentlemen of the Council of Pondicherry may make their own Representations to him with regard to what may more immediately concern their own private Interests, as well as the Interest of the Inhabitants of the Colony.

‘Done at Fort Louis off Pondicherry, the 15th Day of January 1761.  
‘LALLY.’

‘To Colonel Coote, Commander in Chief  
of His Britannick Majesty’s Forces  
before Pondicherry.’

Colonel Coote’s reply to M. Lally’s proposals was as under :

‘The Particulars of the Capture of Chandernagore having been long since transmitted to His Britannick Majesty by the Officer to whom that Place surrendered, Colonel Coote cannot take Cognizance of what passed on that occasion; nor can he admit the same as in any way relative to the Surrender of Pondicherry.

‘The Disputes which have arisen concerning the Cartel concluded between their Britannick and most Christian Majesties being as yet undecided, Colonel Coote has it not in his Power to admit, That the Troops of His Most Christian Majesty, and those of the French East India Company, shall be deemed Prisoners of War to be used as he shall think consistent with the Interests of the King his Master. And

Colonel Coote will show all such Indulgences as are agreeable to Humanity.

‘Colonel Coote will send the Grenadiers of his Regiment between the Hours of Eight and Nine o’clock To-morrow Morning to take possession of the Villenour Gate ; and the next Morning, between the same Hours, he will also take possession of Fort St. Lewis.

‘The Mother and Sisters of Raza Saib shall be escorted to Madras, where proper Care shall be taken for their Safety ; and they shall not, on any Account, be delivered into the hands of Nabob Mahomud Ally Cawn.

‘Given at the Head Quarters at the Camp before Pondicherry, this 15th Day of January 1761.

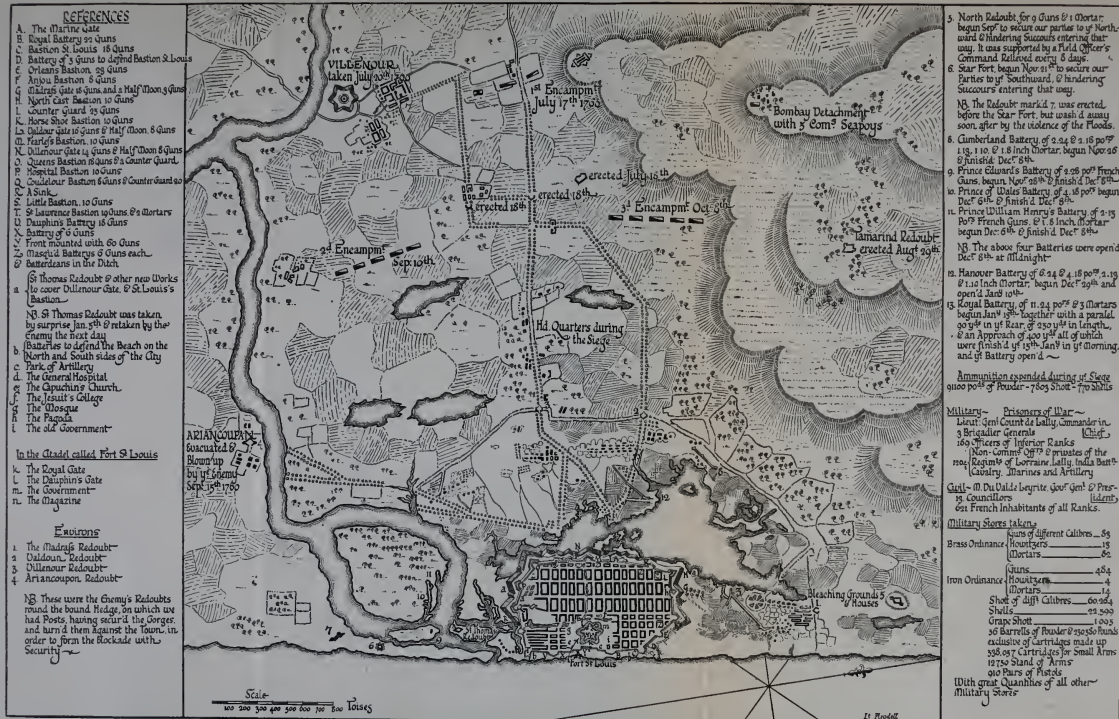
‘EYRE COOTE.’

‘To Arthur Lally, Esq., Lieutenant General and Commander in Chief of his most Christian Majesty’s Forces in India, at Pondicherry.’

Between 7 and 8 o’clock on the morning of the 16th January the *Surrender of Pondicherry*, 16th January 1761, grenadier company of the 84th took possession of the Villenore gate of the fortress, and the grenadiers of Draper’s regiment occupied that of the citadel. In the afternoon the whole garrison paraded—the regiments of Lorraine and Lally, the India Battalion, the Marines, the Volunteers of Bourbon, the King’s and the French East India Company’s artillery—and laid down their arms in the citadel. On the following day the white flag with the golden lilies was struck and the English colours were hoisted in its place.

Pondicherry may be said to have fallen to Coote on the 15th January, when the deputation came out to him with Lally’s proposals for surrender ; and, by a curious coincidence, on that very day, many hundreds of miles to the northward, Coote’s old enemy, Law, in alliance with Shah Alam, was defeated by and surrendered to Major Carnac near Gaya in Behar. But the fate of Law was very different to that of Lally ; Law reached home to be rewarded with the honour of Chevalier of the Order of St. Louis, to be promoted colonel in the army, to become Commissary for the King, Commandant of the French nation in the East Indies, and Governor of Pondicherry on its rendition to France in 1763. Lally, returning to France on parole, found himself assailed by the malevolence of all those whose enmity he had incurred in India, he was tried for having betrayed the interests of the King and of the Company, was refused legal aid, convicted, and died on the scaffold in May 1766.





Plan of the City and Environs of Pondicherry. Invested the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 1760 by the English Army under the Command of Colonel Eyre Coote, and Surrendered the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1761 Prisoners of War



Thus ended the long struggle for supremacy in India between France and England ; the success of the British arms was ' brought about by the conduct of the civil and military officers, and the bravery of the troops ; for when first Colonel Coote came upon the coast the English army was greatly inferior in number to that of the French, yet under that disadvantage he gained the decisive battle of Wandewash, and thus not only secured our own districts, but by steadily pursuing his plan, without any considerable reinforcements, had the glory of delivering the English settlements in India from their most formidable rival '.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge, p. 276. The British casualties during the siege of Pondicherry amounted to 32 officers and 500 other ranks killed and wounded.

## CHAPTER VI

1761-1762

COLONEL COOTE announced his success in laconic terms to the government of Fort St. George : in a letter dated the 19th January he wrote :

‘ I have the pleasure to acquaint you that the garrison of Pondicherry surrendered themselves prisoners at discretion on the 16th instant. In the morning of the same day we took possession of the Villenore Gate, and in the evening of the Citadel. I beg leave to congratulate you on this happy event.’

The spoils of war here taken were very considerable ; the prisoners amounted to 1,437 soldiers of all ranks with 381 government civilian officials, including the Governor and Council ; while of ordnance stores there were captured 484 guns, iron and brass, including cannon, howitzers, and mortars, over 12,000 muskets, 22,000 shells, 60,000 round shot, more than 230,000 lbs. of gunpowder, and other stores, tools, and warlike implements of all kinds and descriptions.<sup>1</sup>

The news of the surrender reached London in July ; ‘ early on the morning of the 21st July,’ records a journal of the period,<sup>2</sup>

‘ Captain Hughes and the Hon. Captain Monckton arrived in town from the East Indies with an account of the surrender of Pondicherry. The express reached the King as he was going out for his morning ride, which on that account he declined. At noon there was a great Court on the occasion and the Park and Tower guns were fired. At night there were bonfires, etc., and the East India House in particular was finely illuminated.’

The Earl of Bute wrote to the Marquis of Granby :

‘ I send you the *Extraordinary Gazette* with an account received by Captain Monckton of the success of His Majesty’s arms in the reduction of Pondicherry, which surrendered at discretion the 15th January last.’

Writing on the 22nd July 1761 to George Montagu on the events of this period, Horace Walpole said :

‘ I dont know where I am. I had scarce found Mecklenburgh Strelitz with a magnifying glass, before I am whisked off to Pondicherri—well,

<sup>1</sup> For full details see Appendix A. II, Colonel Coote’s despatch of the 3rd February 1761.

<sup>2</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine* of date.

I take it and raze it. I begin to grow acquainted with Colonel Coote and to figure him packing up chests of diamonds and sending them to his wife against the King's wedding—thunder go the Tower guns and behold Broglio and Soubise are totally defeated.'

On the 18th Count Lally set out for Madras under a guard of an officer and fifteen men of the European cavalry which Coote had thoughtfully provided for him, and without which he would have been insulted and possibly even murdered by some of those whose hatred he had incurred during the siege. With the British commander Lally had throughout been on good terms; their correspondence, even on contentious matters, had invariably been conducted with courtesy and a certain degree of cordiality; each had recognized and appreciated the soldierly qualities of the other; and after the surrender of Pondicherry Coote wrote:

'No one has a higher opinion of Lally than myself. He has fought against obstacles which I believed invincible, and he has conquered them. There is not another man in all India who could have kept on foot for the same length of time an army without pay and receiving no assistance from any quarter.'<sup>1</sup>

On the 20th January Captain Stephen Smith was detached with eight companies of sepoy to invest Gingee, which place held out until the 5th April 1761, and when it fell the French flag had ceased to float over any strong place in Coromandel.

Mr. Pigot, the Governor of Fort St. George, had, at Coote's invitation, been in camp with the army for some short time prior to the fall of Pondicherry,<sup>2</sup> and he now, on the 21st January, addressed a letter to Colonel Coote, demanding that the captured town and settlement should forthwith be handed over to him as representing the East India Company. This communication Coote laid before the two admirals, when it was decided that the matter was of too important a character to be decided off-hand, and it was arranged to call a Council of War to consider the question. The Council accordingly met on the 22nd, and was attended by Rear-Admirals Stevens and Cornish, and Captains Haldane, Hyde Parker,<sup>3</sup> Tinker, and Affleck, representing the navy,<sup>4</sup> and by Colonel Coote, Majors William Gordon, Robert

<sup>1</sup> Malleon, p. 561.

<sup>2</sup> Auber, *Rise and Progress of the British Power in India*, vol. i, p. 104, says he joined the army on the 9th January.

<sup>3</sup> Afterwards served at Manila, Toulon, Corsica, Genoa and, in command, at Copenhagen with Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> Admiral Stevens's flag-captain at this time was Kempenfelt, who afterwards, in August 1782, went down in the *Royal George*.

Gordon, and Moore, on behalf of the army, and, as a result, a letter was written to Mr. Pigot asking him to quote the authority under which he required the cession of Pondicherry to the Company. In reply the Governor of Fort St. George represented that the King's patent of the 14th January 1758 regulated the East India Company's share and title to *all* places captured in the East Indies.

The Council of War was of opinion that, neither under the original Charter of the Company, nor under the Patent quoted, had the Company any claim or right of possession until the pleasure of His Majesty became known; but Mr. Pigot having made it quite clear that unless Pondicherry were given up no funds would be forthcoming from the Madras Government for the subsistence either of the troops or of the prisoners, the Council of War had no choice but to cede the settlement to the Company. On the 24th January the town and citadel of Pondicherry were delivered over 'for the use and benefit of the East India Company' to Mr. Pigot, who at once commenced the demolition of the works and fortifications; so great, however, was the size of the place that it was not until the October following that the task of destruction was completed.

Pondicherry having fallen and the campaign being thus closed, Coote seems to have been anxious to increase in other fields the reputation he had acquired in India, for in the Public Record Office there is a letter<sup>1</sup> from Monson to Draper, dated 2nd March 1761, in which the former speaks of Coote as being desirous of accompanying an expedition against the French islands and of taking his regiment with him, 'but this the Council do not intend allowing unless it can be proved that the Gentlemen of Bengall require it more than they do in Madras'.

Arrangements were now made for the reduction of the army; the six companies of Highlanders had already marched to Madras; the Bombay detachment was ordered into Pondicherry preparatory to embarking for Bombay; the Marines were sent back to their ships; and on the 3rd February the remainder of the troops went into cantonments at Cuddalore. On the 13th Coote departed for Madras, and began to urge the Governor and Council to send him and his regiment to Bengal, their services appearing to be no longer required on the Coromandel Coast.

On the evening of the 9th<sup>2</sup> March Coote sailed for Calcutta on board the *Ganges*, leaving his regiment to follow when transport

<sup>1</sup> Add. MSS. 32919, folio 416.

<sup>2</sup> Orme says 'the 13th'.

should be provided. On the same day Count Lally left India in the *Onslow*, Captain Hinde, for Europe, and in regard to his passage Pigot wrote home to the Directors :

‘ We have paid Captain Hinde £30 for the passage of Mr. Lally and the other gentlemen he carries home by our order. The Lieut.-General will certainly be an expensive passenger, and we therefore beg leave to recommend the Captain to your notice.’

Lally, however, was by no means pleased with the accommodation provided for him : in a letter to Coote’s aide-de-camp he complains of being ‘ hoisted as a criminal on board the *Onslow* ’ ; while in his *Memoirs*<sup>1</sup> it is stated that

‘ Count Lally, though scarce able to leave his bed, is put on board a crazy merchant ship and at a bad season. He is not permitted to take with him the smallest quantity of provisions, in consequence of which he is reduced to live three months, at the discretion of his trading captain, on broths made of fresh and salt pork, till his arrival at St. Helena, the military governor of which omits nothing to make him forget the unworthy treatment of his Indian countrymen.’

From Calcutta Coote forwarded strong recommendations from the government of Fort William that the 84th should be sent north, and to Major William Gordon he sent instructions to enlist from the French prisoners of war up to the number of a hundred into the regiment, to make good some of the casualties sustained in the campaign lately concluded. The 84th did not, however, rejoin its commander for some time ; by an entry in Coote’s journal, dated the 8th June, it seems that at that date there was some intention among the heads of the Madras Government to employ the regiment in an expedition then contemplated against the island of Mauritius. This idea seems, however, to have been almost at once abandoned, since on the 18th July Coote records in his diary : ‘ Received advice of the arrival of the *Hawke*, Indiaman, with three companies of my regiment.’

A terrible disaster, however, overtook that portion of the 84th Foot which sailed later from Madras in the *Fatteh Islam*, and of which the following account is to be found in the India Office among the documents connected with Colonel Coote’s journals. Under date of the 9th November 1761 he writes as follows :

‘ Captain Caulfield and Lieutenant Hill of my Regiment arrived at Calcutta from Cuttack ; they give the following account of the *Fatasalam* : “ The 23rd August a detachment consisting of one major, 3 captains, 14 subalterns, 3 surgeons, one volunteer, 17 sergeants,

<sup>1</sup> p. 74.

8 drummers, and 222 rank and file of the 84th Regiment ; the French Company consisting of one commandant, 2 ensigns, 4 volunteers, 4 sergeants, and 107 rank and file of the Company's troops embarked in Madras road on board the *Fatasalam*, a large country ship, bound to Calcutta, loaded with 50 pieces of heavy cannon, 10,000 shot and other stores for the new fort, 200 ton of salt, a quantity of wood and some other cargo. She sailed in the morning of the 26th, and the 27th at night grew very leaky, but was kept free by pumping and baling until the 28th in the morning, when she gained so considerably on them that they were obliged to throw some of the guns overboard and cut away from her bows five anchors to lighten her. About 11 o'clock the water got to the salt, which immediately working into the wells choked the pumps in such a manner as to render them useless. There being a rolling sea, the ship's upper-works, by the extraordinary weight of her cargo and her age, opened, and the water came in now so fast that, imagining she must sink instantly, the Captain, 25 other Europeans and 14 Blacks threw themselves without provisions or water into the long boat (the only boat they had that could stand the sea) and remained hovering off the vessel until night, when they conjectured she went down, as they could not see her in the morning and had observed her at close of day quite water lodged (*sic*).

“ Being 40 leagues from land they were five days before they reached the shore, during which time the sea ran so high that they were obliged to work constantly, watch and watch, to keep her free from the water she shipped. The third day many lost their reason. Thirst seemed to contribute to it more powerfully than hunger, which they had no way to supply but by drinking their urine. The 2nd of September they at last made land, and with some difficulty got through a great surf all safe on shore in False Bay, Point Palmiras, where the inhabitants at first used them kindly, but the next day, by command of the Rajah, confined the Europeans, and after they had kept them a month in great misery, sent them up into the country, where they underwent most uncommon hardships. Major Gordon, Surgeon Brown, Captain Scott, and Ensign Oglevy are dead, and all the others left sick at different places as by the annexed list. There is only Captain Caulfield and Lieutenant Hill who had yet reached Calcutta on the 7th November.

‘ Lost in the vessel ; belonging to the 84th Regiment :

Lieutenants Jones.	Ensigns Ward. <sup>4</sup>
Mehue. <sup>1</sup>	Brabazon.
Pain. <sup>2</sup>	Mr. Hart, Surgs. Mate.
Predeuax. <sup>3</sup>	„ Waterman, „
Dewar.	„ Sampson, Volunteer.
16 Sergeants, 8 Drummers, 218 rank and file.	

<sup>1</sup> Should apparently be Mehew.

<sup>2</sup> No *Pain* in regimental roll, two Lieuts. *Paine*.

<sup>3</sup> (?) Prideaux.

<sup>4</sup> Should apparently be *Warde*.

French Company :	Mr. Martin.	
	Ensign Bastide.	
	1 Surgeon.	
	4 Volunteers.	
	4 Sergeants and 106 rank and file.	
Belonging to the ship :	2 Mates, Europeans.	
	1 Mate, Portuguese.	
	80 or 90 Lascars.	
Saved from her :		
Major Gordon		Dead at Cuttack, 22nd October.
Captain Sherlock		Left sick at Cuttack.
,, Caulfield		Arrived at Calcutta.
,, Scott		Dead at Mundick (?), 3rd October.
Lieutenant Tate		Left at Ballasore.
His wife		,,    ,,    ,,
Lieutenant Neilson		Left at Cuttack.
His wife		Dead at Mandrapore (?)
Lieutenant Manning		Left at Ballasore.
,, Mackarell		,,    Cuttack.
,, Hill		Arrived at Calcutta, 31st October.
Ensign Oglevy		Dead at Ballasore    ,,    ,,
,, Frazer		Left very ill at Ballasore.
Mr. Henry Brown, Surgeon		Dead in the island of Izapore, 24th September.
Sergeant Cooper		Left at Goape (?)
Corporal Dalrymple		,,    Cuttack.
Private Duncan	} all dead.	
,, Taylor		
,, Morris		
Ensign Martin of the French Company, <sup>1</sup>		arrived at Calcutta.
Captain Carney of Lally's Regiment,	,,    ,,    ,,	
La Vелlette, private in the French Company,		Left at Goape.
A French valet of Major Gordon's		Dead.
A French Sergeant of Captain Carney's		Dead.
Captain Simmons, commander of the ship		Arrived at Calcutta.
Mr. Rodly, supercargo	,,    ,,    ,,	
In all 26 Europeans.		

'Of the 14 Blacks, three, being promised a large reward, undertook to go to Calcutta to give an account of the loss of the vessel, but only one out of the three got as far as Ballasore, about 150 miles from hence, from which place he gave us the first intelligence of this melancholy affair. Eight were left sick at Goape. Three attempted to travel with the party, only one of which arrived at Cuttack, one being eat by a Tyger on the road''.

It has been stated<sup>2</sup> that these two ships, the *Hawke* and the *Fatteh*

<sup>1</sup> There were two Martins, brothers; this was Claude.

<sup>2</sup> See Broome, p. 334, and Williams, p. 64.

*Islam*, contained the whole of the 84th, which, at the time of leaving Madras, was not more than 300 or 400 strong, having been considerably reduced by the casualties incidental to some fifteen months of war, and having also probably given volunteers to the Madras Europeans.

Before proceeding to recount the operations in which Colonel Coote now became engaged in Bengal, it may be well to narrate what had taken place in that province during the three preceding years.

In the month of November 1759, Alamgir II, the nominal Emperor, was murdered, and his son, Shah Alam II, escaping from Delhi, assumed the title of emperor and appointed the Nawab of Oudh as his Vazir. He then proceeded to take possession of the eastern provinces and defeated the governor of Patna—the Ram Narain of whom we have already seen something—who threw himself into Patna, which was relieved by a force sent by Clive under Colonel Caillaud, by whom and by Major Knox the Imperial and Oudh forces were defeated in two actions fought near Patna in February and April 1760. Shah Alam now entered into correspondence with the British and agreed to evacuate the province of Behar.

Meer Jaffier, the Nawab of Bengal, was becoming old and indolent; Clive had gone home, and his successor, Vansittart, was a weak man who was unable to control and influence his own Council, and who, on arrival from Madras, had found the government of Bengal in financial difficulties, the servants of the East India Company concerned only with their own enrichment, and Meer Jaffier's dominions misgoverned and his subjects miserable and discontented. The son of the Nawab of Bengal had lately died, and pressure was put upon Meer Jaffier to resign in favour of a kinsman, one Meer Cossim. As to this action Coote remarks in his Journal, under date of 7th December 1760: 'Whether this piece of Indian policy will agree with the natural faith and justice of the English nation I shall not pretend to determine'.

Meer Cossim was installed on the 27th September 1760, ceding to the East India Company the provinces of Midnapore, Chittagong, and Burdwan as the price of his elevation, and handing over to the President and members of the Select Committee, as their share of the plunder, a sum amounting to Rs. 1,744,000,<sup>1</sup> roughly £195,000!

The new Nawab, though lacking nerve and military enterprise, was resolved to be no mere puppet. He introduced reforms, reduced

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Second Report of the Select Committee*, p. 20; Mr. Vansittart, Rs. 500,000; Mr. Holwell, Rs. 270,000; Mr. Sumner, Rs. 255,000; Mr. McGuire, Rs. 255,000; Colonel Caillaud, Rs. 200,000; Mr. Smyth, Rs. 134,000; and Captain York, Rs. 134,000.



expenses, paid off the ill-trained troops of his predecessor, removed his capital to Monghyr, and raised a new army, small but well disciplined and trained. At this time the Emperor Shah Alam, unable to return to his capital, was wandering about Behar, in which province he, allied with the Frenchman, Law, was, as already mentioned, defeated by Carnac near Gaya on the same day that Pondicherry surrendered to Coote. Shah Alam was persuaded by Carnac to join him and accompany him to Patna, where Meer Cossim was induced to pay him homage, and was thereupon formally installed as Subadar of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa. It was at this juncture that Colonel Coote reappeared upon the scene of his earlier successes in the Bengal Presidency.

‘ Upon my arrival in Bengal,’ said Coote,<sup>1</sup> ‘ I found there was two different parties of the Council, the one that had formed the revolution and the other that disapproved of it. I was intimately acquainted with the gentlemen of both these parties, and therefore, as the affair had happened, however unfortunate I thought it might prove, I made it my business to endeavour to reconcile the two parties, with a resolution at that time not to interfere in any matter of business or politics where I thought no honour was to be gained.’

He now assumed general command of the forces in Bengal, with a seat in Council, while Major Carnac still retained the subordinate command of the troops about Patna. In the original instructions given to this officer by the governor and Council, he was reminded of the understanding and friendship existing between Ram Narain, the governor of Patna, and the Bengal government, and was directed to afford him any protection which might be necessary. There was no reason to suppose the Nawab of Bengal, Meer Cossim, might intend to injure or oppress him, but Ram Narain was wealthy, and, as is not unusual in such cases, was believed to be wealthier than he was ; the heavy drains made upon Meer Cossim’s treasury had greatly exhausted his resources ; and with a view of replenishing his exchequer at the expense of Ram Narain, he ordered that official to produce his accounts, which were much in arrear.

Carnac openly sided with Ram Narain in the dispute which arose, and both he and the Nawab sent written complaints as to one another’s conduct to the authorities at Fort William, until at last, to use Coote’s own words, ‘ I was over-persuaded by Mr. Vansittart and the other gentlemen (as a measure which they told me they imagined would be of great service to the Company) to go up to the army at Patna ’.

<sup>1</sup> *First Report*, pp. 38-40.

The following is the full text of the instructions given to Colonel Coote under date of the 21st April 1761 :

‘The present tranquillity of these provinces, and the valuable territories the Company are possessed of, render the securing that tranquillity and the confirmation of those advantages, the most worthy objects of our attention.

‘The connection betwixt our nation and the Shahzadah, the eldest son of the last Mogul, may afford the most effectual means of answering those purposes, if circumstances should turn out so as to put it in our power to assist him in prosecuting his title to the throne of his father. There have been so many revolutions of late in the affairs of Delhi, that it is hardly possible for us to describe to you how the several chiefs may stand affected ; but, so far as we have been able to observe, the chiefs who have shown the most constant attachment to the cause of the Shahzadah, are Sujah Dowlah, the Nabob of Oude, and Nazeba Dowlah, the chief of the Rohillas. The territories of the former extending from the Caramnassar very far towards Delhi, it is his alliance that would be most useful in promoting the success of an expedition to that capital ; nor should we think it rash, if the Shahzadah should desire our assistance, to declare openly in his favour whenever Sujah Dowlah should have agreed to the plan, and given assurance of his readiness to act in conjunction with us.

‘By the latest advices from Delhi we are informed Abdallah<sup>1</sup> was on his return to his own country ; and that a very large force of Morattoes was on its march towards Delhi, with intentions, after executing their purposes there, to attack Sujah Dowlah’s country. These advices, if true, should we imagine have the effect of making the Shahzada the more seriously inclined to ask our assistance, and Sujah Dowlah wish to strengthen himself by such an alliance. It is true you would have a troublesome enemy to deal with in so large a body of Morattoes ; but we should little doubt of your beating them if they would venture to come to an action ; and, at the same time, such measures might be taken by the other Presidencies as to oblige them to return to the Deccan ; such measures we shall strongly recommend to the gentlemen at Madras and Bombay if this enterprise should be carried into execution. Letters are dispatched to Sujah Dowlah proposing this alliance to him ; and by the time his answer arrives we may hope also to see your regiment, without which reinforcement we are not able to spare troops enough for so distant an expedition ; another necessary consideration is a sufficient advance of money for the expenses of the army on the march ; ten lacks at least will be necessary to set out with ; and, as it is a principle with us that the Company shall bear no part of the burthen, this sum must be furnished by the Nabob out of the revenues of Behar and Bengal ; but whether he has the means of doing this, besides discharging his balance to the Company, paying off the arrears due to the troops of

<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Shah, Abdali, the Afghan monarch.

the late Nabob and the current expenses of the government, seems to us very doubtful. We recommend to you, Sir, rather to consult with him on the means of raising such a sum than peremptorily to demand it; nor do we in the least doubt but, on your representing to him the security and advantage that will accrue to his government from the intended expedition, he will exert himself to comply to the utmost of his power with whatever you shall think necessary. Such assistance as he may be in need of to collect the balance due to the Circar, we desire you will be pleased to yield him.

'We are advised by Major Carnac that there is a difference between the Nabob and Ram Narrain relative to the accounts of the Patna province; we hope this may be amicably and reasonably adjusted and request you will give your assistance towards it as much as possible; as Ram Narain has been remarkably steady in his alliance with the Company, and received from Colonel Clive particular assurances of protection with respect to his person, fortune and government, we recommend to you to secure him against all attempts of oppression or injustice; and further that the government of Patna be preserved to him, if it be his inclination to continue it. It is needless for us to add, that it will be far more agreeable to all parties if that can be done, by representing to the Nabob the obligations we are under to Ram Narain, and preventing by that means the necessity of any forcible measures.

'The Shahzadah has often been pressing us to have *siccas*' (rupees) 'struck and the *cootbah*<sup>1</sup> to be read in his name; but we have hitherto declined on account of the uncertainty of the expedition taking place; but whenever it may appear to you that the giving him these marks of royalty will be the means of strengthening our alliance, and bringing other chiefs to join us, we leave it to your discretion to act accordingly.

'Many other circumstances may occur which may require your determination before you can communicate them to us, which we, with the greatest pleasure and confidence, leave to your discretion, assuring you of our most hearty wishes for your success in all your undertakings, being with perfect esteem etc.'

On the 28th April the Bengal Government wrote again to Colonel Coote<sup>2</sup> saying that the Nawab had repeatedly represented the difficulties with which he was met in obtaining a settlement from Ram Narain, that while anxious to support the one, they recognized the justice of the other's complaint, and finally requested the Colonel to act as arbiter in the matter. 'We therefore,' ran the letter, 'request you will make this business one of the first articles of your attention:

<sup>1</sup> Equivalent to the 'bidding prayer' used in our universities—a prayer for the reigning sovereign.

<sup>2</sup> Vansittart, *Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal*, vol. i, pp. 192 *et seq.*

and when you are yourself acquainted with the merits of the cause, you will transmit them to us with your sentiments thereon'.

Mr. McGuire was associated with Coote in the settlement of this rather delicate affair, and the views of the Governor and Council were again communicated to the two arbiters in a further letter dated the 8th May.

Colonel Coote left Calcutta on the 22nd April for Patna, and 'upon my arrival', he states.

'I applied with the closest attention to the business upon which I was sent there. I informed the Shahzadah of the sentiments of the Board towards him and the desire the English had to assist him to the utmost of their power, which he seemed very sensible of and very desirous of having: at the same time desiring that he might be proclaimed and acknowledged by us as he had been by different powers in Indostan; and said he thought it very extraordinary that, where he himself resided, there he was not acknowledged. Those matters I communicated to the Board to receive their instructions. . . . I likewise informed Ram Narain that I had orders from the Governor and Council to protect him, provided he would settle his accounts with the Nabob; and therefore I desired him immediately to set about it, informing the Nabob of the same, as may be seen in my correspondence with the Governor and Council. During those transactions I received a letter from the Board recommending it to me to proclaim the King. I found that had I immediately complied with the request of the Board, it might prove of fatal consequences to the Nabob and to the Company at that time; for he had given away several of the best provinces to different people that belonged to him, particularly Purnea, which will likewise be seen in the correspondence; I therefore thought it, to the best of my judgment, for the advantage of the Company and the Nabob, as it was the Shahzadah's inclination, to let him go to Shujah Dowlah; at the same time I had got the Nabob to consent to that measure and to pay a visit with me to the Shahzadah; then it was thought advisable, both by the Nabob and several of the Company's servants who were present, that the Nabob for himself, and I on behalf of the English, should coin the *Siccas* and acknowledge him Mogul on the day that he should pass the boundary of the province; this he seemed satisfied with and it was agreed that Major Carnac, with part of the army, should escort him, the Major informing me, in proper time, of the day he should join Shujah Dowlah in order that I might keep my promise, the Nabob consenting entirely to all this matter; and at the same time agreed that, if we prosecuted the expedition and settled matters with Shujah Dowlah, that he would advance the ten lack towards the payment of our forces.

'The King was but a few days gone when the Nabob seemed to alter his sentiments entirely with regard to the promises he had made, and turned his thoughts entirely towards the seizing of Ram Narain,

for which, if I would give him up, he offered me seven lack and a half of rupees, and whatever I pleased to the gentlemen of my family; this I communicated by letter to the Governor and Council of 17th July 1761.<sup>1</sup>

The following extracts from Coote's letters from Patna to the Governor and Council of Fort William go far to disprove the charges repeatedly brought by Vansittart in his *Narrative* against Coote's impartiality in the conduct of the mission with which he had been entrusted.

25th May 1761. 'On the 25th I paid the Nabob a visit and had a long conference with him. At first he seemed to evade every proposal I made to him. Ram Narain he insists on having turned out. If he gains this point, which I think would throw a disgrace on the English, he intends (as I am credibly informed) one Raja Nobit Roy to succeed to the government of the province. Ram Narain, who has been to wait on me, assures me that he will adjust every matter with the Nabob that shall be thought reasonable, and begs that the different Zemindars who owe money may be obliged to pay in their revenues.'

6th June. 'The Nabob has made up matters with Raja Bullub, and has appointed him to assist in settling the affairs with Ram Narain, who does not seem desirous of parting with his money. I have assured him of our protection, provided he acted the just part with the Nabob; but at the same time informed him he was not to look on himself as Soubah<sup>2</sup> of this Province.'

13th June. 'Ram Narain is settling his accompts with the Nabob, but goes on so slowly that I can hardly say he has made a beginning. I most sincerely wish this affair was settled one way or other.'

25th June. 'A letter I received from Captain Champion informs me that Kamgar Chan, on account of my letter, had wrote to him that he was ready to come in to settle his affairs with the Nabob on our faith, and would meet him as last Wednesday, but I do not find the Nabob inclined to settle with any one, on the contrary, he insists on Ram Narain's being turned out, which he says settles all at once. I sent to the latter two days ago to know when his accounts would be ready. He answered, in a very few days, according to the plan which was sent from the Board.'

It was not long, however, before relations became greatly strained between the Nawab Meer Cossim on the one side, and the two soldiers, Coote and Carnac, on the other; and the wily Asiatic now resolved to bring a charge of a serious character against the senior of these by whom he considered himself to be opposed. He wrote a letter to

<sup>1</sup> There is no mention of this in the *Narrative* of Vansittart, who seems to have throughout been prejudiced against Coote, probably because he knew that officer disapproved of the revolution Vansittart had engineered.

<sup>2</sup> Viceroy.

Vansittart declaring that his enemy, Ram Narain, had persuaded Coote that the Nawab had prepared a plan for attacking the English at Patna, whereupon, he stated, Colonel Coote 'in a great passion with his horsemen, peons, sepoy, and others, with a cocked pistol in each hand, came uttering God-dammee into my tent!'

Mr. Vansittart took a very serious view of this complaint, and seems from Coote's letter to him of the 17th July, to have at once condemned that officer unheard and on the unsupported statement of the Nawab; according to Coote's explanation, given in the letter above mentioned, what had actually happened was that on hearing this rumour of an intended attack, Colonel Coote at once sent word to the Nawab that he proposed coming to see him early on the morning of the 17th June. Arriving at the Nawab's camp, accompanied by even a rather smaller escort than usual, Coote, taking his pistols from his holsters—'as I seldom ride with a sword'—dismounted, and, entering the Durbar tent, sat down, having previously taken the precaution of mounting two sentries on the outside of it. Having waited some little time, and finding the Nawab did not make his appearance, the Colonel then rode away.

Meer Cossim seems also to have made some other accusations or insinuations against Colonel Coote; these are alluded to somewhat mysteriously in a letter to that officer from the Council, dated Fort William, 28th September 1761, and in which it appears to be suggested that the Nawab imagined that Coote was in some way or other intriguing against him. The Council found that these suspicions were wholly groundless, and wrote to the Colonel that 'it is highly just and necessary he (the Nawab) should make you all possible amends for the groundless suspicions entertained of you: at the same time we think some apology is due from you to him for the alarm you gave him upon a suspicion, equally unreasonable, of his intending to attack the city of Patna'.<sup>1</sup>

It had by this time become tolerably clear that no good purpose was to be served by retaining Coote at Patna—the more that the Bengal Government had now decided to leave Ram Narain to his fate—a decision which seems to have given something of a shock to native confidence in British faith; and at the end of June orders were issued from Fort William directing Colonel Coote and Major Carnac to return to the Presidency.

<sup>1</sup> While Coote was at Patna, Captain Eiser seems again to have officiated as his aide-de-camp.

Colonel Coote left Patna on the 5th July and reached Calcutta on the 16th. He made over command at Patna to Major Carnac, who had just returned from escorting the Emperor to the boundary of the Province, and who was ordered to follow as soon as possible with the bulk of the troops, leaving some 300 Europeans and two battalions of sepoys behind under a Captain Carstairs.

Of all that subsequently transpired—the abandonment to the merciless exactions of the Nawab of Clive's old *protégé* Ram Narain—the operations undertaken against Meer Cossim—the massacre at Patna—the extraordinary campaign of 1763, in which Major Adams and the remnant of the 84th regiment played a distinguished part—there is here no need to write since Coote was in no way concerned with these events.

At the end of 1761 the Court of Directors summarily dismissed certain members of the Bengal Council; one of these was Coote's colleague, Mr. McGuire, whose place at Patna was taken by Mr. Ellis, who was not only violently opposed to Vansittart's policy, and consequently to the Nawab Meer Cossim, but was also, *pace* Elphinstone, 'a man of strong prejudices and ungovernable temper'. As usual in the East, the open hostility of Ellis towards the Nawab encouraged all the disaffected in the province, conspiracies were hatched against him, and he was led in the spring of 1762 to believe that 'Mr. Ellis was actually resolved to attack him, and that Colonel Coote was coming up' (from Calcutta to Patna) 'with the same design'.<sup>1</sup>

On the 11th March Coote signed a letter to the Select Committee in London, expressing the dissent of himself and five other members of the Council of Fort William, from the measures which had been taken in regard to and consequent upon the late revolution in Bengal; and on the 14th November 1762 Colonel Coote sailed for England in the *Godolphin*.

This chapter may perhaps fittingly conclude with some final words about the fate of the 84th regiment, the corps which Coote had raised, which he had taken on a distant and arduous service, and which he had commanded during the campaign in Southern India. When Coote left Calcutta, the remnant of the 84th remained behind occupying the newly-built fort, and mention has already been made of the operations in which they played—what was left of them—a distinguished part under Major Adams.<sup>2</sup> In October 1763 orders came out

<sup>1</sup> In April 1762, see Vansittart, vol. ii, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> The death of Major Gordon at Cuttack had presumably given Adams his majority.

to India from home for the disbandment of the 84th, such officers and men as wished being permitted to transfer to the Company's service. Nearly all the men and about twelve of the officers entered the Bengal army, and several sergeants came in as cadets and ensigns—the men of the 84th forming extra companies in the European Battalion. The rest of the men remained embodied until they returned home in 1764, and the remaining officers were placed on half-pay under warrants dated December 9th and 30th, 1763.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Broome, pp. 392, 393 and Williams, p. 64. In the Orme MSS. VII, 14(4), p. 1736, there is a 'state' of the officers of the 84th Foot, dated 24th June 1763: in this list the surgeons of the regiment are shown as holding military rank, one as lieutenant, another as ensign.



## CHAPTER VII

1762-1773

It must have been on his way home that Colonel Coote met his wife, for on the 8th July 1763 he married, at St. Helena, Susanna, daughter of Charles Hutchinson, Governor of that island. 'She seems to have been universally admired and beloved. Hastings's friend Holt speaks of her "engaging and noble merits" in a letter to him, and Coote's chaplain, Westrow Hulse, calls her "that living pattern of excellence".'<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Coote, not long after his arrival in England, purchased the estate of West Park, near Fordingbridge in Hampshire, from the Earl of Salisbury. The estate was at that time held on lease by General Cholmondeley, then Colonel of the 6th Dragoons, and under whose command Coote, in his early days, had marched from Edinburgh to Falkirk.

He had not been long at home before the Directors of the East India Company showed him that they were not unmindful of the services which he had rendered them. At a Court of Directors held on Wednesday the 25th January 1764, it was ordered :

'The Chairman from the Committee of correspondence representing to the Court the eminent services rendered by Colonel Coote in the East Indies, which the Court had through the Secretary at War taken the liberty humbly to set forth to His Majesty; and that the Committee having deemed it fitting that the Colonel should receive some mark of the Court's approbation of his distinguished behaviour in the East Indies, had provided a sword enriched with Diamonds for that purpose.

'The Court agreeing with the Committee therein, and Colonel Coote being introduced, the Chairman acquainted him, in the name of the Court, with the high sense which they entertained of his signal services, valour and good conduct in the East Indies, and, as an acknowledgement thereof, the Chairman presented him with the sword accordingly, as a Testimony due from the Company to his particular merit.

'And the Colonel, receiving the same, expressed his grateful sentiments of the Court's favour and of their approbation of his behaviour and then withdrew.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Grier, *Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife*, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> This sword, which was of the value of 700 guineas, is now at West Park in the possession of Sir Eyre Coote, great-grandnephew of the General. The actual amount paid for the sword by the Company, as per the account preserved at the India Office, was £747.

The draft of the reply from the Secretary at War is among the papers at the Record Office; it is dated 'War Office, 11th June 1763' and is addressed to Mr. Dorrien:<sup>1</sup> it is as follows:

'I have the pleasure to acquaint you that in pursuance of what you and Mr. Sullivan on the part of the Board of Directors of the Honble. E. India Company gave me in charge namely to lay before His Majesty in the most dutifull manner the Testimony of the Board of Directors to the eminent services performed by Lieut.-Colonel Coote in India, a Testimony which they consider'd as due from them in Justice and Gratitude for the many signal successes obtained by the zeal, conduct and courage of that officer, and also to lay at His Majesty's feet their humble recommendation of his services to His Majesty's notice. I have had the honor to lay the same before His Majesty which His Majesty was pleased to receive very graciously and to express his entire satisfaction in the good services of Lieut.-Colonel Coote.'

On the 14th April 1765 Colonel Coote was promoted Colonel in the Army, and three years later—in 1768—he was elected member of Parliament for the borough of Leicester.

The treaty of Fontainebleau which was followed, in February 1763, by the Peace of Paris, had led to the rendition to France of Pondicherry and Chandernagore, two places with the capture of which Coote had been very actively concerned, and to the withdrawal from India, in the year following, of all the King's regiments then serving in that country. In 1763 and 1764 the 79th, 84th, 89th and 96th Regiments of Foot were recalled—what was left of them—to England, and for close upon sixteen years, until the 20th January 1780, when the 1st Battalion of H.M.'s 73rd Foot, or Lord Macleod's Highlanders,<sup>2</sup> landed in Madras, no King's troops served in India.

The absence of these regiments, and the difficulty experienced in recruiting such European corps as were maintained by the East India Company, caused the Directors in England, and the governors and councils in India, no small anxiety. On the 27th April 1764 Clive wrote to the Directors, recommending that they should apply to his Majesty for permission to maintain two battalions each 500 strong in England, with the object of supplying with efficient soldiers any unexpected demands which might arise in India. He further suggested that, as a reward for the important services which they had rendered,

<sup>1</sup> The Mr. Dorrien, to whom this letter was addressed, was then Chairman of Directors of the H. E. I. Company: he was great-great-grandfather of General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, G.C.B.

<sup>2</sup> Now the 71st Highlanders or 1st Battalion Highland Light Infantry.

Colonels Forde and Coote should be appointed to command these corps.<sup>1</sup> This proposal does not appear to have materialized.

The maintenance of their own troops seems also to have given the Indian authorities considerable and serious thought. Writing from Madras on the 17th April 1765, Clive said :

‘ Let us, and without delay, complete our three European regiments to 1,000 men each ; such an army, together with 500 Light Cavalry, three or four companies of artillery, and the forces of the country, will certainly render us invincible.’<sup>2</sup>

And later, on the 30th September of the same year, the Select Committee at Fort William in Bengal wrote home to the Court of Directors reminding them that, to secure all the valuable possessions which had been acquired :

‘ a constant regard must be paid to your military establishments. By the regimental returns which we enclose in the packet, and which are very exact, you will see at one view the deplorable condition of our infantry, to complete which, agreeable to your directions and to the proposals made by Lord Clive, not less than nine hundred men will suffice. We therefore most earnestly request that you will, next year, send out twelve or fourteen hundred men for this establishment, giving such peremptory orders as must be obeyed, that none of this number be detained, upon any consideration, upon the coast of Coromandel. Our numbers once compleated, we shall require for the security of your immense possessions in this country not more than six hundred recruits to be sent out annually, in the following manner, viz., five hundred infantry, sixty artillery, twenty cavalry, and twenty sergeants for the sepoy. To this number must be added thirty volunteers and officers ; and it would be of the utmost benefit to our plan that you send out every year six or seven gentlemen from the academy at Woolwich for artillery officers ; this being a service that suffers extremely for want of persons properly instructed to conduct it ; since no officer who knows the benefit of the infantry service here, will choose to quit it for any advantage the artillery will afford.’<sup>3</sup>

In the same letter Clive and his committee asked for 10,000 stand of small arms at once and a further 4,000 annually ; they called attention to the indifferent quality of the muskets supplied, and suggested that twenty-seven shillings per musket be paid instead of the contract price hitherto obtaining of eighteen shillings ; and they urged that drastic measures be adopted to stop the illicit importation of small-arms to India and especially to Bengal—a trade which had

<sup>1</sup> Malcolm, vol. ii, p. 308.

<sup>2</sup> *Second Report of the Select Committee*, Appendix 82.

<sup>3</sup> *Second Report*, Appendix 86.

become a very profitable one with the captains of European ships voyaging to the East.

At this time Colonel Cooté—his regiment having been disbanded and he himself being temporarily unemployed—was desirous of being given some other command. Among the Chatham Papers at the British Museum (vol. xxvii) are some letters from Cooté to Lord Chatham, then Lord Privy Seal, and in one of these dated ‘ West Park, August ye 9th 1766 ’, he solicits :

‘ Your Lordship’s recommendation to His Majesty to procure me the command of that Regiment of which General Adlercoon (*sic*) was lately Colonel ; and I flatter myself that you will not think me too forward in my present application to you (when there are so many other officers of far superior merit to what I can boast in the same situation as myself) when I acknowledge the truth to be that the Regiment in question was raised by one of my ancestors, Colonel Richard Cooté, and if I mistake not, he was killed at the head of it ; added to which, I myself served in that corps, at the time that your Lordship was pleased to procure for me from his late Majesty the command I had in the East Indies . . . ’

The cessation of the Seven Years’ War in Europe and the consequent reduction of the British army, had caused to turn their thoughts to India, as a possible and profitable field for military enterprise, many of those officers who had been schooled in Germany under Ferdinand of Brunswick—‘ the greatest commander who led British troops to victory in Europe between Marlborough and Wellington ’<sup>1</sup> or under Wolfe and Amherst in the New World.

Thus before a Court of Directors of the East India Company there was read in London, on the 8th June 1769, a letter from General John Monckton,<sup>2</sup> of the same date, offering his services to command the Company’s forces, and stating that he had His Majesty’s permission to do so. He was informed in reply that the Court had no intention of making any change, but that if any should be hereafter decided upon his application would be taken into consideration.

Monckton wrote again on the 25th of the following month stating that

‘ His Majesty had been acquainted with his offer to command the Company’s forces, and was graciously pleased to say that he considered him a fit and proper person for the command, consequently there would be no difficulty in obtaining the King’s leave for that

<sup>1</sup> Fortescue, vol. ii, p. 566.

<sup>2</sup> Distinguished himself in America and the West Indies ; first Viscount Galway.

purpose, and adding that in case the Court should think his services could in any way contribute to the advantage or good of the Company, he would be happy to execute their commands.'

On the 6th October of the same year the Court of Directors received an even more powerful recommendation of an officer for employment with their military forces. This was contained in a letter of the 22nd September from His Serene Highness Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick and Luneburg, recommending Major-General Beckwith<sup>1</sup> for an appointment in the Company's forces suitable to his rank.

At this time, however, the Directors of the East India Company had already selected their Commander-in-Chief, and their choice had fallen upon Colonel Coote, who had written on the 14th October from Queen Anne Street to the Marquis of Granby, then Commander-in-Chief, notifying his appointment and the fact that it had the King's approval. Lord Granby was, however, out of town, and Coote then applied through the Duke of Grafton :

'As I considered myself upon the immediate service of my country, I took the liberty of reminding the Duke of Grafton, that I did suppose it could not be a means of preventing me from receiving that mark of honour which His Majesty had graciously promised to confer upon me in giving me the command of the third vacant regiment. His Grace's reply was that your Lordship and himself had already settled that matter with His Majesty's approbation, he therefore did not see that my acceptance of this command could occasion the least objection to it.'<sup>2</sup>

In the *Middlesex Journal* of the 28th to 31st October 1769 we read :

'Last Wednesday the Court of Directors of the East India Company gave a splendid entertainment at the London Tavern to Colonel Coote ; and on Friday last he had the honour to kiss His Majesty's hand on being appointed a major-general and commander in chief in India, and we hear the *Bridgewater*, Captain Scottoe, is now preparing in the river for his reception.'

On the 27th October 1769 Colonel Coote was appointed a major-general in the East Indies, and the same was notified by the Right Honourable Lord Weymouth to the Court of Directors on the 31st idem, and read at their meeting on the 3rd November.

On the 6th December the Court of Directors decided that the powers and appointment of Major-General Coote as commander-in-chief of

<sup>1</sup> Commanded the *Légion Britannique* and at times a brigade in the Seven Years' War.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., Rutland MSS., vol. ii.

the Company's forces at their several presidencies be established as follows :

' That he be employed in the said station wherever and whenever his presence may be necessary.

' That as his services are more immediately wanted at Fort St. George, he is to proceed to and remain at that Presidency, but if the country should continue in a state of tranquillity, and his immediate services be no longer necessary there, and he should judge it proper for the good of the service to proceed to either of the other Presidencies, he may in such case lay his case before the Governor and Council who are finally to decide thereon, it being intended to avail the Company of the military abilities of General Coote in that part of India where he may be most wanted, constantly observing the rule that he shall not depart from the Presidency where he is resident without the permission of the Governor and Council. . . .

' He shall have a seat and voice at the Council of the Presidency at which he may be resident next to the President in like manner as General Lawrence had.'

His pay was not to exceed that of General Lawrence,<sup>1</sup> viz., £1,500 a year, with a share of one-twenty-fourth of the Commission of 5 per cent. on the farmed revenues of Bengal.<sup>2</sup> Travelling charges were to be allowed when in the field in addition to those of the present appointment of twelve pagodas a day, on days of march only ; he was also to be furnished with twenty or thirty coolies to assist in carrying his baggage. He was to be supplied with a house or apartments, suitable to his rank, at the Presidency where he might reside, and particularly at Fort St. George to be put on the same footing as General Lawrence. A sum of £1,000 was to be given to Major-General Coote for passage money, and the Committee of Correspondence was directed to prepare a draft of the Commission to Major-General Coote as Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in the East Indies.

He was further permitted to take three menial servants with him to India, and sanction was given for Mr. John Grant to accompany General Coote, ' to remain there while the General does,' and to have the rank of major in the East Indies with the allowances annexed to

<sup>1</sup> This refers of course to General Stringer Lawrence, the first Commander-in-Chief in India, who checked the designs of Dupleix and established the prestige of the British arms ; he was a great leader in the field and of sound judgement in council.

<sup>2</sup> The amount of the Commission in Bengal from 1st June 1767 to 31st August 1768 inclusive was Rs. 562,175. 2. 9, or over five and a half lacs of rupees. The amount available for distribution from the revenues of Fort St. George was apparently 60,000 current pagodas : the pagoda seems to have been worth about nine shillings.

that station, 'but that he be not appointed to any corps in the Company's troops, as it is not designed to supersede any officer of that rank by this appointment; his wife, Mrs. Ann Grant, permitted to accompany him.'

At a meeting of the Court of Directors, held on the 22nd December 1769, Major-General Coote, Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in India, being introduced, took his oath and leave of the Company.

The Commission granted him, and dated the same day, was as follows:

'The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies.

'To Major-General Eyre Coote, Greeting.

'We, the said United Company, reposing especial trust and confidence in you Major-General Eyre Coote, do by these presents constitute and appoint you to be commander-in-chief of all our military forces in the East Indies, and you are to the utmost of your skill and power to do and perform all such offices and services as appertain to the post of commander-in-chief of all our military forces in the East Indies as aforesaid, subject, however, to all such rules, orders and instructions as you shall at any time receive from the Court of Directors of the said United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies, in writing or under the hands of thirteen or more of them, or from the Commissioners appointed to superintend their affairs in India, or from the said Company's Presidents and Councils of Fort St. George, Fort William, Bombay, or Fort Marlborough, respectively, whenever you shall be present at any such respective Presidency, or any of the settlements or places subordinate thereto, according to the rules and discipline of war, in pursuance of the trust we hereby repose in you; and we do hereby strictly require, charge and command, all commission officers, non-commission officers, soldiers and others belonging to our military forces, at the several places above mentioned, to yield you as their commander-in-chief, during your residence at such places as aforesaid, due obedience accordingly. In witness whereof the said United Company have caused their common seal to be affixed in London, this 22nd day of December, in the tenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Third, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, defender of the faith; and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and sixty nine.

'By order of the Court of Directors of the said United Company.

'PETER MICHELL, Secretary.'

As will be seen, however, from a resolution of the Court given on another page, General Coote's commission as commander-in-chief was dated the 4th January 1770.

From the following extract from the East India Company's General Letter to Bengal dated the 17th January 1770, some slight changes seem to have been made in the assessment of the emoluments and allowances of the Commander-in-Chief. Paragraph 11 runs :

'In consideration of the rank Major-General Coote holds by His Majesty's Commission, and in order to place him on the footing of allowances superior to the present commanding officers in India, without incurring a more considerable charge than by the appointments which were assigned to General Lawrence, it is our order that General Coote be allowed a salary of £1,500 a year, to be paid him out of our cash at Fort St. George, or such other Presidency at which he shall reside, by quarterly or half-yearly payments, to commence upon his arrival; and that  $\frac{1}{18}$  part of the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. commission upon the net territorial revenues in Bengal is to be deducted out of the full commission, and remitted to the General wherever he may reside, and the remainder thereof is to be distributed according to our directions, in the General Letter to you of the 20th November 1767; also that he be further allowed  $\frac{1}{24}$  part of the commission of Five per cent., taken on the farmed revenues of Fort St. George and its subordinates, to be deducted in like manner from the said commission, and the remainder thereof to be distributed according to the directions in our General Letter to Fort St. George dated 25th March 1768.

'Further that his travelling charges in going from one Presidency to another be borne by the Company, and that whenever it may be necessary for him to take the field, he is in such case to be allowed, in addition to his before mentioned appointments, the sum of £10 sterling a day for the expenses of his table and field equipments, and that on days of marching (and not otherwise) he be supplied by the Commissary with 32 coolies to assist in carrying his baggage. . . .

'You are to observe that the before mentioned salary and allowances are to be in full consideration for Major-General Coote's services as Commander-in-Chief, also for assisting at the Board of Commissioners and as a Member of Council, and of the Select and all other Committees, and which allowances are not to be exceeded on any pretence whatever.'

Something has before been mentioned, in describing the Wandewash campaign, of the sympathy General Coote evinced for the sick and wounded soldiers of his own and the French forces, and of the successful representations he made for the appointment of a permanent head of the medical department of his army in the field. Before leaving London for India he showed that the care of his soldiers was still, as ever, his first consideration, for there is a letter in the India Office dated the 23rd March 1770, from the Directors to the Governor and Council of Fort St. George, in which mention is made of 'a plan for the relief of sick and wounded soldiers and their widows as having been pressingly



represented by Major-General Coote before he departed for India'. Small wonder then that this officer was able to get so much out of his men, that the regard felt for him by his troops was ardent and constant, and that the *morale* of the native soldiers grew and flourished under his leadership. It has been suggested<sup>1</sup> that it was not until his campaign of 1760 that the sepoy had really begun to be of service; while Orme, when closing his account of the siege of Pondicherry, remarks upon the improved efficiency of the sepoy as follows: 'Colonel Coote, by constantly exposing his own person with the sepoy, had brought them to sustain dangerous services from which the Europeans were preserved.'

Something was said above about the 'Commissioners appointed to superintend the affairs of the Company in India', and it will be as well here to explain how these officials came to be appointed, what were the duties they were required to perform, and in what manner one at least of these Commissioners was concerned with General Coote.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 1768 the East India Company had become involved in a very troublesome and expensive war with Hyder Ali on the Coromandel coast, and a war, moreover, which was attended with no material or moral advantage to the British. Its conduct gave rise to many scandals; the Madras officials thought only of making money out of supplying the army; there was a very great deal of desertion, bribery, and corruption; trade came to a standstill; and when the war ended there was in India and also in England very considerable financial depression, India Stock falling about 60 per cent. in the course of a few days.

To put a stop to all the abuses which had arisen, to straighten matters out again, and to prevent any recurrence of similar mismanagement, the Court of Directors decided to appoint a special Commission composed of three gentlemen of ability and experience to superintend all the Presidencies and settlements in India, and with full powers to remedy all abuses and to dismiss or suspend any servants who were judged to have been concerned in the proceedings of which complaint had been made. The Directors also resolved to apply to the Crown for naval aid for India; this request was granted, and Admiral Sir John Lindsay was appointed Commander-in-Chief

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, vol. i, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> For full particulars about these appointments see Thornton, *History of India*, vol. ii, pp. 16 and 17; Auber, vol. i, p. 274; Forde, *Lord Clive's Right-hand Man*, pp. 157-71; and the *Annual Register* for 1769, 1771.

of the King's ships and Company's vessels in Indian waters, and also to settle matters in the Persian Gulf. The Commissioners appointed—also known as Supervisors—were Messrs. Vansittart and Scrafton and Colonel Forde. These three embarked on the frigate *Aurora* towards the end of September 1769; the vessel was heard of as leaving Madeira in October and the Cape on the 27th December, but between that port and the coast of India she foundered with all hands and no trace of her was ever met with. Admiral Sir John Lindsay in the *Stag* reached Bombay early in 1770 and proceeded thence to Madras, where he 'acquainted an astonished Council with his powers, of which the Directors themselves were as yet in ignorance'.<sup>1</sup> He asserted his right to inquire into the conduct of the late war, and to hold direct communication with the Nawab of Arcot. By this not only were the Council placed in an awkward position in regard to the Nawab, but he was encouraged to believe that there was in the country an authority superior to theirs. The Council at Madras made strong representations to England, with the result that Lindsay was recalled and was succeeded in September 1771 by Sir Robert Harland.

On the 8th January 1770 Major-General Coote embarked at Spithead on the Honourable East India Company's ship *Bridgewater*, Captain Nicholas Skottowe, sailing on the 11th of the same month. He reached Madras on the 30th June 1770, disembarked the same day under a salute of nineteen guns, and assumed command on the 2nd July. He 'immediately commenced to carry out certain reforms in accordance with instructions from the Court of Directors, but a difference of opinion having arisen as to the manner in which the orders should be promulgated to the army, it was ruled by the whole Council,<sup>2</sup> with the exception of Brig.-General Smith, that the commission held by Mr. Du Pré, as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Fort and Settlement at Madras, was superior to that of General Coote'.<sup>3</sup>

Another authority says,<sup>4</sup>

'a difference of opinion arose as to the terms in which the General was to be announced in orders to the army on assuming the command. The Council (on the 20th August) proposed that the same terms should be used as on the occasion of General Lawrence's appointment; to this Coote objected. The Council, impressed with the necessity of

<sup>1</sup> Love, vol. iii, p. 47. Lindsay had served in the West Indies under Pocock in 1762, was appointed C.-in-C. in the East Indies at the age of thirty-three and in 1783 was C.-in-C. in the Mediterranean. He died in 1788 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Hastings was at this time second in Council at Madras.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, vol. i, p. 293.

<sup>4</sup> Auber, vol. i, p. 297.

preserving the supremacy of the Civil Power, suggested in order to obviate the greater evil that, in lieu of a general order being published, letters should be addressed to all the commanding officers to make their returns to General Coote. The General would not consent to this and he determined to remain in a private capacity, until he received the opinion of the Councils at the other presidencies. As the remodelling the military establishments required that no time should be lost, Brigadier General Smith was requested by the Council to take the command of the troops on the coast ; but, believing that General Coote intended very shortly to proceed to Bengal, he suggested that the order might be deferred until his departure.'

Major-General Coote left Madras in October 1770 and proceeded to Calcutta ; he went home by the overland route via Bussorah—which he was one of the first to adopt<sup>1</sup>—in the summer of 1771 ; and there is a reference to his journey in a book by Eyles Irwin, called *A Series of Adventures in the Course of a Voyage up the Red Sea on the Coasts of Arabia and Egypt, and of a Route through the Deserts of Thebais in the Year 1777*, where in vol. ii, p. 281, we read that, at Aleppo, Mr. Irwin was successful in obtaining 'through Mr. Smith, a considerable merchant, the services of Abdul Azah—the shaik who conducted the late Sir Eyre Coote over the desert in the year 1771, and who had on all occasions maintained the character of an honest and able Arab.'

Josias du Pré, the Governor of Fort St. George, who had from the first so strongly opposed Coote, had only been appointed governor on the 31st January 1770, succeeding Mr. Charles Bouchier, and appears to have been one of those energetic, bustling men, who can brook no interference with the plans they have formed, nor any departure from the lines on which they conceive that their views should be carried into effect. His reign was not a long one, as he resigned office on the 1st February 1773.

Some letters of his are in existence<sup>2</sup> which show how very seriously he took himself and what 'heavy weather' he made with his Council. In a letter to Robert Orme of the 4th October he writes :

'Never was any galley slave so totally oppressed and worn down with fatigue as I am. I have not a moment's rest, and my Constitution is so much impaired by incessant application that I think it will be impossible for me to hold out much longer, nor have I any encouragement. The Company use us very ill ; we cannot do a single act to please them ; everything is wrested to our disadvantage. They sent us out an Officer as Commander-in-Chief who, when he was in India

<sup>1</sup> *Roll of the Officers of the 84th Regiment*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. iii, pp. 3 and 17.

before, quarrelled continually with both Presidencies where he served. They raise his ideas of his own importance, give him undefined powers, and here he comes, sets himself above Controul, quarrels with us, and throws everything into confusion ; and now he is gone to Bengal where, my word for it, if they do not let him rule and do as he pleases, they will not be long in peace with him. . . . 'Tis impossible for a government to be more distressed. Every man's hand is against us, threatened by foreign and domestick enemies, and the Company at home in such a humour that we are almost certain to be blamed, do what we will.'

Again in a letter from the Governor and Council of Fort St. George to the Company in England, dated 25th March 1771, we read at the end of a somewhat querulous statement of affairs in Madras :

'Deprived of the confidence of our employers, engaged in contests with the Nabob, with General Coote, with Sir John Lindsay, on subjects the most interesting to your property, to your government, and, as we apprehend, to the very being of the Company, obnoxious in every step we took to popular clamours, to the wrath of government, perhaps to parliamentary impeachment, and even to your displeasure, how was it possible for us to attend to the internal regulation of the Colony, while so many external dangers beset us all around? A pursuit of this kind is only suitable to a state of quiet and established security.'

In the meantime the authorities at home had decided to confer the honour of K.B. upon Admiral Sir John Lindsay and Major-General Eyre Coote,<sup>1</sup> and the insignia were sent out to India from England, on the 27th June 1770, in the *Dolphin*, frigate, Captain Dent, which also took to India the following letter of above date, addressed by His Majesty King George the Third to the Nāwab of Arcot :

'Having thought proper to bestow a high mark of Our approbation on two of Our subjects, whose conduct We hope will have rendered them worthy of your esteem, We cannot add to the dignity of conferring those honours on them more than by desiring you will represent Our person upon this solemn occasion, and that you will perform those functions for Us which We always perform ourselves when the circumstances will admit. Our intention being to confer the Order of the Bath, one of our most honourable marks of distinction, on Our trusty and well-beloved Sir John Lindsay, Knight, Commander-in-Chief of our ships and vessels in the East Indies, and of the marine forces of Our United Company of Merchants trading to and in those parts, and on Our trusty and well-beloved Eyre Coote, Esq., Major-General of Our forces in the East Indies and Commander-in-Chief of all the said Company's military forces there, We have directed the said Sir John Lindsay to deliver to you this letter, with the Ensigs of the

<sup>1</sup> The date of General Coote's appointment as K.B. was the 28th June 1770.

Order, and to learn from you the time when it may be most agreeable to you to perform this ceremony, as well as to make known to you the nature and manner of bestowing these honours upon him and the said Eyre Coote, and so repeating Our wish for your felicity, We bid you heartily farewell.'

As to this letter and subsequent investiture—at Chepauk in March 1771—a historian has recorded :<sup>1</sup>

'Major-General Coote had been prevailed upon to return to India, and the Crown conferred upon him the honour of a Knight of the Bath. This was before Sir John Lindsay returned home, and at the same time the honour was conferred upon him also. The Royal government took a most extraordinary course upon this occasion, sending the insignia to the Nawab with directions for the investiture. Whether this was the result of some joint intrigue of Lindsay and Coote to spite the Council does not appear, but the humiliation it inflicted upon the President was very acceptable to those chiefs.'

Further in referring to differences between the Nawab and certain rajas which later resulted in an appeal to arms, Nolan says :

'It appeared as if Lindsay, Coote and the Nawab had entered into a confederacy to ignore the Company', and it is suggested that 'the erroneous impression which had been created in the mind of the Nawab received additional force from the fact that the Nawab had asked to invest Harland (Lindsay's successor) and Coote with the Order of the Bath.'

As a matter of fact, however, Coote was not invested by the Nawab at all, as he had left Madras before the arrival of the *Dolphin*, and the ceremony was performed by the King at St. James's on the 30th August 1771, 'when his Majesty was graciously pleased to invest Colonel Coote with the ensigns of the said order, late Sir Francis Blake Delaval's.'

Nolan's statements will not bear investigation. Coote, who could have known nothing of the Nawab nor foreseen his own differences with the Madras Council prior to leaving England, can hardly have had anything to do with the request contained in King George's letter, which was written in England in the very month in which Coote reached Madras ; if intrigue there was, Major-General Coote certainly had no hand in it. Further Sir Robert Harland reached Madras on the 2nd September 1771,<sup>2</sup> at which date General Coote had already arrived in London on his return from India.

<sup>1</sup> Nolan, *History of the British Empire in India and the East*, vol. ii, pp. 314 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> See Auber, vol. i, p. 308.

At a meeting in London of a Court of Directors of the East India Company on the 21st August 1771, a letter was read from Major-General Sir Eyre Coote, dated Paris the 14th idem, enclosing a General Monthly Return of the Company's troops; and two days later, at another meeting, a second letter was read from Major-General Sir Eyre Coote, late Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in India, dated 21st of the same month, advising his arrival in England.

On the 5th September 1771 Major-General Sir Eyre Coote, K.B., was appointed colonel of his old regiment, the 27th Inniskillings, then stationed in Ireland.

General Coote seems to have had no intention of allowing the treatment he had received from the government officials in Madras to remain on record without inquiry; and on the 11th September the Court of Directors ordered the Committee of Correspondence 'to consider the dispute between the Governor and Council of Fort St. George and Major-General Sir Eyre Coote and to report their opinion'. At a meeting of the Court on the 13th November it was resolved:

'That this Court is of opinion that the Company's Commission granted under their seal to Sir Eyre Coote of Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces throughout India, did, both in law and by the usage and practice of the army, supersede during his residence at Madras any power or authority which had been granted to Mr. Du Pré, or any other commission granted by the Company to any other person whatsoever as Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces at that settlement. That if any difficulties could have arisen upon the construction of the two several commissions, the Court is of opinion that their instructions, accompanying General Coote's commission, was sufficiently in favour of General Coote's commission to have prevented this dispute, And that the neglecting or refusing publicly to publish General Coote's commission at the said settlement, which the Court understand was not done, was very unjustifiable, And that the Resolution of the Governor and Council of Madras of the 20th August 1770, whereby the Commission of Mr. Du Pré as Commander-in-Chief is pronounced to be superior to General Coote's Commission as Commander-in-Chief with respect to the forces of that settlement is in the opinion of the Court wholly unjustifiable.'

On the 5th February 1772 it was resolved at a meeting of the Directors that 'the Secretary do write a letter to Sir Eyre Coote, late Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in the Indies, and enclose a copy of the Resolution of this Court of the 13th November last respecting the dispute which subsisted between him and the Governor and Council of Fort St. George as to the Power granted

to him by the Company's commission'. To this Major-General Sir Eyre Coote replied on the 7th expressing 'the high sense he entertained of the Resolution of the Court'.

It must have been a further satisfaction to General Coote to learn that His Majesty the King had entirely approved of his resignation of the commander-in-chief-ship under all the circumstances of the case.

Considering the staunch alliance which in after years was cemented between Eyre Coote and Warren Hastings, it is strange to learn the feelings which at this time the great Pro-Consul entertained towards him who was later to be his loyal supporter in the Council. On the 10th February of this year Warren Hastings wrote from India to Mr. Sullivan as follows: 'Your sentiments with respect to General Coote's powers, though such as I expected, afforded me great satisfaction. May success and honour attend him in any other part of the world, but God forbid that he should ever return to India again.'

On the 26th March also Hastings wrote to Mr. Du Pré from Fort William: 'I think a war with France very impossible, but I much fear the news of Coote's returning is too well founded. If it proves so, he will probably return a slave of the Ministry, not a servant of the Company.'

The idea of Major-General Sir Eyre Coote's immediate return to India seems at this time to have been seriously entertained.

On the 1st April the Directors resolved that 'he be desired to hold himself in readiness to embark to resume the command of the Company's forces in India'; on the 21st May the General informed the Directors that he had 'obtained His Majesty's leave to resume the command'; and this state of preparedness seems to have endured until the 26th January 1773, when the Court of Directors resolved that 'a tranquillity prevails in India and it is unnecessary at this time to continue the appointment of a Commander-in-Chief in the East Indies, that Major-General Coote be acquainted therewith, and desired to state the amount of his expenses, and of what may be due to him in consequence of his appointment of Commander-in-Chief in the East Indies'.

In regard to the latter part of this resolution the East India Company seems throughout to have dealt liberally with Coote. His pay as Commander-in-Chief was paid him from the 30th June 1770, the date of his arrival at Fort St. George, until the 26th January 1773, the day the Court informed him they retracted their desire of his proceeding to India; he received his share of the Fort St. George and Bengal

revenues in the proportion laid down ; and a further sum of £1,000 for the expenses of the return journey to England—the total amount eventually sanctioned for payment being £14,916 5s. 4d.

In the meantime, Sir Eyre Coote had been installed as a Knight of the Bath. On the 15th June 1772 the installation ceremony took place, among the fifteen knights then installed being Lord Clive, who had been invested in 1764, Sir John Lindsay, Sir William Draper, Sir Eyre Coote, his kinsman Lord Bellamont, Horace Walpole's friend, Sir Horace Mann, Lord, then Sir George, Macartney, and others. According to a publication of the period,<sup>1</sup>

' the Knights in their surcoats, mantles and spurs met in the Prince's Chamber at Westminster, each attended by three esquires. From thence they went in procession to the south-east door of the Abbey, and from thence to King Henry VIIth's chapel, where they were installed with the usual ceremonies. There were fifteen vacant stalls, absentees were installed by proxy. At night there was a most magnificent supper and ball at the Opera House in the Haymarket, at the expense of the new Knights, to which were invited the nobility and foreign ministers, and almost every person of distinction in town.'

On the 19th February 1773 Sir Eyre Coote was transferred to the colonelcy of another regiment in which he had previously served—the 37th Foot—and in the autumn of this year it was stationed at Fort George, Inverness, where Coote was in command of the Fort, and where on Saturday, 28th August, Dr. Johnson and Mr. Boswell called upon him.

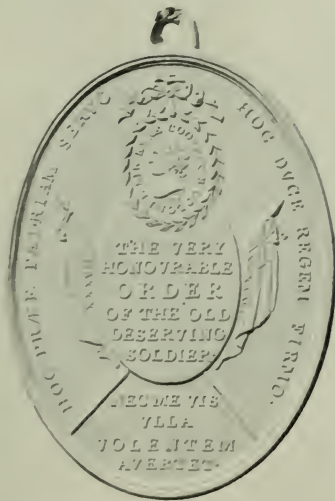
' He asked us to dine with him, which we agreed to do. At three the drum beat for dinner. I for a little while fancied myself a military man and it pleased me. We went to Sir Eyre Coote's in the Governor's house and found him a most gentlemanlike man. His lady is a very agreeable woman, with an uncommonly mild and sweet-toned voice. We had a dinner of two complete courses with a variety of wines, and the regimental band of music played before the windows after it. I enjoyed this day much. Dr. Johnson said—" I will always remember this fort with gratitude."'<sup>2</sup>

Sir Eyre Coote retained the colonelcy of the 37th Foot until his death, when he was succeeded, on the 1st November 1783, by Lieut.-General Sir John Dalling, Bt., who was commander-in-chief at Madras

<sup>1</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* of date.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of a Tour in the Hebrides*, by James Boswell. General Studholme Hodgson was then governor of Forts St. George and Augustus at a salary of £500 for both. There was also a deputy-governor of each at £300 per annum.





Obverse and reverse of two regimental medals instituted by Sir Eyre Coote in the 37th Regiment when he was Colonel



from the middle of 1785 to the end of 1786. He was president of the court martial on Sir John Burgoyne.

There are two medals in existence which were instituted by Sir Eyre Coote while commanding the 37th : they are both in silver gilt. The one is called ' the Distinguished Order of the Advanced ' and of this several are in private collections, some oval and some round, the latter being probably those earliest struck. The one illustrated was in the possession of Colonel J. Hook, of the Manor House, Headington, Oxford.

The second medal is called ' the very honourable Order of the deserving old soldier ', and appears to be more scarce. The specimen here illustrated belongs to Sir Mervyn Manningham-Buller, Bt. of Broomhill, Spratton, Northamptonshire. The Coote regimental medals are, in point of antiquity, among the earliest issued, having only been preceded by that introduced by the 5th Foot in 1767.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Eyre Coote's nephew and heir, afterwards General Sir Eyre Coote, G.C.B., joined the 37th in 1776 at the age of fourteen.

<sup>1</sup> See Hastings Irwin's *War Medals and Decorations*, pp. 256, 257.

## CHAPTER VIII

1773-1779

IN the year 1772 a Parliamentary Committee was appointed to inquire into the affairs of the East India Company. This inquiry terminated in the Act known as 'The Regulating Act of 1773' under which a Governor-General and four Councillors were appointed for Bengal and, in the first instance, these were to be nominated by Parliament, while the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay were to be subordinate to the Supreme Government of Bengal. Under this Act, Warren Hastings, then Governor of Fort William, was nominated Governor-General, and the four Councillors appointed were Lieut.-General Clavering, Colonel the Hon. George Monson, Richard Barwell, and Philip Francis.

Of these four, Monson is the only one we have met before—as a major in Draper's Regiment in the campaign of Wandewash and Pondicherry; Clavering was a Guardsman who had served with distinction at the capture of Guadaloupe, when he became aide-de-camp to the King, and in 1772 he had been appointed Colonel of the 52nd Foot; Barwell was the son of a former Governor of Bengal and Director of the East India Company, had been himself in the service of the Company since 1756, and was in Calcutta at the time he was appointed one of the four Councillors; Francis had been a clerk in the War Office since 1756, and is generally regarded, and with good reason, as the author of the *Letters of Junius*. He was a man of remarkable talents, but disappointed and soured at the small recognition these had received, and at an advancement which had not been equal to his expectations. He had lately resigned his clerkship in the War Office and was in comparatively needy circumstances, when the influence of Lord Barrington obtained for him the appointment of member of the new Council of India about to be constituted under the Regulating Act.

The nomination of these councillors had been a matter of considerable discussion. On the 8th June 1773 Lieut.-General Monckton had presented a petition to the House of Commons praying that he might be nominated by Parliament to the military department of the superior council in India. The question then seems to have been put whether

Monckton or Clavering should be appointed, when the latter was successful by 115 votes to 60.

On the 9th June Lord North had an interview with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Court of Directors, when he asked them if the Court would state whether Lieut.-General Clavering, who had been appointed by Parliament first Councillor, would be granted a commission as commander-in-chief of the Company's forces in India. The question was brought before a numerously attended meeting of the Proprietors of India Stock on the 11th June, when, however, a recommendation was put forward that Lieut.-General Monckton be appointed. Major Grant thereupon begged to propose Major-General Sir Eyre Coote for the office of commander-in-chief by reason of the services he had already rendered to the Company. The Court acknowledged General Coote's good work, but observed that in the present case General Monckton had not only been balloted for on a former occasion, but approved by His Majesty, although objected to by Ministers merely because they did not wish to accept any officer of the Company's appointment. The motion (the appointment of Monckton) was therefore agreed to without one dissentient voice.

On the 14th June, however, a different complexion was put upon the matter by the receipt by the Court of Directors of a letter from General Monckton saying that in view 'of His Majesty's gracious intention of providing for me, which was communicated to me the day preceding the General Court, I cannot with propriety accept any offers of power or command in India, however honourable or advantageous'.<sup>1</sup>

The provisions of the Regulating Act were laid before the Proprietors of East India Stock in July, but these resolved 'to maintain their privileges, and, not out of disrespect to General Clavering, they further resolved that they did not choose to appoint him their Commander-in-Chief in India'.

Later they seem, however, to have reconsidered the matter, and on the 8th February 1774 it was resolved by the Proprietors of India Stock, by 354 votes to 311, that 'it be recommended to the Directors to nominate General Clavering Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in India, with an express proviso that, in the event of his succeeding as Governor-General, his appointment as Commander-in-Chief immediately cease and determine'.

On the 25th February the following appointments were made: Colonel Robert Gordon to be Commander-in-Chief of the East India

<sup>1</sup> He was appointed governor of Portsmouth in 1778.

Company's forces in Bombay; General Robert Clavering Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in India; and Colonel the Hon. George Monson to be Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in India in the event of General Clavering becoming Governor-General.

Clavering appears to have been sworn in on the 16th February; his pay was fixed by Parliament at £6,000 a year, in addition to £10,000 a year as Member of Council. He embarked for India at St. Helens on board the *Ashburnham* on the 1st April 1774, taking with him the following members of his staff, viz. Lieut.-Colonel Thornton, Captains de la Duespe and Webber, A.D.C.'s, and Mr. Addison, Secretary.

On the 24th April Clavering wrote from Madeira to the Court of Directors urging the importance of appointing an adjutant-general for the better government of the Company's army, and recommending Lieut.-Colonel Thornton, of the King's service, for the appointment. In the same letter he drew attention to the inadequacy of his allowances as Commander-in-Chief to meet travelling and other expenses on taking the field.

The *Ashburnham*—on board which were also Philip Francis and Colonel Monson—reached Madras on the 21st September, arrived at Kedgeree on the 14th October, and on the 19th of that month the new Commander-in-Chief landed in Calcutta.

The *Anson* sailed from England at the same time and reached Calcutta almost on the same date, carrying with her Sir Elijah Impey, Messrs. Hyde, Chambers, and Lemaistre, the newly appointed judges of the Supreme Court of Calcutta.

From the very first Philip Francis took the lead in opposing the policy of the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, and in this course he was aided by the support of Clavering and Monson, who were gallant soldiers but men of narrow minds, and who, while they served at the Council Board in Calcutta, were as clay in the hands of Francis. Thus began that struggle of parties in the Council, 'which throughout four long years continued to make its baleful influence felt to the remotest corner of the Company's possessions in India'.<sup>1</sup>

It would appear<sup>2</sup> that in September 1776 both Clavering and Monson had written home tendering their resignations, probably on the ground of health, but the first had done so privately, Monson after consulting his colleagues.

<sup>1</sup> Gleig, *Memoirs of Warren Hastings*.

<sup>2</sup> See Parkes and Merivale, *Memoirs of Sir P. Francis*, vol. ii, p. 110.

On the 23rd September General Clavering wrote to the Directors representing that Colonel Monson's illness had long deprived the Board of his valuable services. He stated that the government of Bengal had in fact been vested in the hands of Mr. Hastings and Mr. Barwell for an indefinite time, by the Governor-General's casting vote. 'Men whose conduct you have censured in every letter of this season, but whose principles are so incompatible that my duty to you, to the Public, and to myself, oblige me to declare that I do not hold myself responsible for the safety of these provinces while the government continues conducted as it now is.' He concluded by requesting that the king's ministers might be informed of his intention to resign his post of Councillor and Commander-in-Chief in November or December 1777.<sup>1</sup>

Monson died at Calcutta on the 25th September 1776, just a few months before the news reached India of his appointment as a lieutenant-general in India, which was dated 11th February 1777, a date which would have made him senior to Coote whose gazette as lieutenant-general was dated 29th August 1777.

Warren Hastings, finding that ever since the arrival in India of Francis he was constantly thwarted by the majority in the Council, and that these were supported by the Court of Directors in London, had, on the 27th March 1775, authorized his agent at home, a Colonel MacLeane, to submit his resignation to the Court, should the Directors express disapprobation of the treaty with the Nawab-Vizier, concluded at Benares, or of the Rohilla War. On reflection, however, he wrote again to MacLeane on the 27th May withdrawing the discretionary powers he had entrusted to him.

The Ministers of the Crown and the Directors of the Company continuing to show hostility to Hastings, MacLeane, after consulting with some of the Governor-General's friends in London, wrote the following letter to the Court of Directors of the East India Company :<sup>2</sup>

'GENTLEMEN,

'Mr. Hastings, seeing the necessity of unanimity in the Supreme Council in Bengal for conducting the affairs of the Company there, and for establishing any permanent system of government for the good and prosperity of that country, and finding, from the unhappy divisions which have subsisted in the Supreme Council, that such union is not likely to subsist, and having anxiously on every occasion studied to promote the welfare of the Company—a conduct which he will ever

<sup>1</sup> Auber, vol. i, pp. 530, 531.

<sup>2</sup> See Auber, vol. i, p. 546.

continue—has from these motives authorised, empowered and directed me to signify to you his desire to resign his office of Governor General of Bengal, and to request your nomination of a successor to the vacancy which will thereby be occasioned in the Supreme Council.

‘ L. MACLEANE.

‘ London, 10th October 1776.’

The Directors made some inquiries as to the authority under which MacLeane had acted, and on the 16th October wrote ‘ a letter to the Secretary of State signifying that Mr. Hastings, for the reasons contained in it, had intimated a desire to resign, and praying that His Majesty would be pleased to appoint Mr. Wheler ’ (their late Chairman) ‘ to fill the vacancy that would be occasioned in Council when Mr. Hastings resigned the Chair ’.<sup>1</sup> These last words are important, inasmuch as they seem to prove that there had been no formal resignation,<sup>2</sup> and in the Commission appointing Wheler it reads : ‘ whereas the said Warren Hastings hath caused notice to be given . . . that he desires to resign the said office of Governor-General of Bengal . . . And whereas upon such resignation of the said Warren Hastings as aforesaid, the said John Clavering, according to the directions of the said recited Act of Parliament, will succeed to the said office of Governor-General.’ The inference would seem to be that until Hastings confirmed MacLeane’s letter by actual resignation, Clavering could not occupy the chair in his stead, nor could Wheler take his place in the Council.

Shortly after his appointment to a seat in Council—in April 1777—Wheler proceeded to Portsmouth to embark for India, but before leaving, the *Syren* arrived from Bengal bringing the news of Monson’s death. Wheler was probably astute enough to foresee that, under the changed conditions of affairs, Hastings would not now resign, and, posting back to London, he obtained a fresh appointment to succeed Monson ; then, returning again to Portsmouth, he embarked on the *Duke of Portland* and reached Calcutta before the end of the year. Mrs. Wheler accompanied him and seems to have been the cynosure of all eyes at a ball very shortly after her arrival. ‘ She appeared in public,’ wrote Francis on the 6th December to his wife,<sup>3</sup> ‘ for the first time at our ball, the night before last, in wonderful splendour.

<sup>1</sup> Gleig, vol. ii, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> See Forrest, *Selections from State Papers, Warren Hastings*, vol. i, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Parkes and Merivale, vol. ii, p. 116.



At sight of her hoop all our beauties stared with envy and admiration. I never saw the like in all my life.'

On the 19th June 1777 despatches containing all these alterations in the government reached Calcutta by the *Ripon*; they were read in Council, but no action regarding them was at that time taken.

The following morning, as Mr. Barwell was on his way to the Council Chamber, he received a note signed 'J. P. Auriol, Secretary', requesting him to meet in Council by order of General Clavering, 'Governor-General'; and at the same time a letter was presented to Mr. Hastings from General Clavering requiring him to hand over the keys of Fort William and of the Company's Treasury.

Hastings replied that he knew of no act of resignation on his part, and that it was his intention to retain office; and orders were at once sent by him to Colonel Morgan, the officer commanding the garrison of Fort William, forbidding him to obey any other orders than those from Mr. Hastings as Governor-General. Similar orders were sent to the officers commanding at Barrackpore and Budge Budge.

In a letter to Mr. Sullivan, dated Fort William, 29th June 1777, Hastings wrote:

'I own I was greatly dissatisfied with the offer which Mr. MacLeane had made to the Directors of my resignation, but my regard for his honour, and the sense which I entertained for the undoubted zeal and attachment which he had so long manifested to me, left me no choice. I resolved to ratify his act and resign at the time which should be pointed out, either by the subsequent advices from the Court of Directors, or from my friends, who, in their last letters, had desired me in a particular manner to suspend every thought of resigning until I should hear from them again . . . But the extravagant behaviour of General Clavering caused a total change of the question. It made my resignation, which my superiors had left optional, an effect of violence and compulsion to which I could not submit without a total forfeiture of every principle of duty, and without a baseness of spirit which would have rendered me the derision and detestation of all mankind.'

In another part of this letter he says, speaking of his instructions to MacLeane:

'one condition of this engagement was that the time of my resignation was to be left to my own choice; but that condition has been broken by the attempt made by General Clavering to wrest the government from me by force, and by persisting to assert his claims to the government in despite of it.'

But already, 'with admirable judgment', as Macaulay says,

Hastings had offered to submit the decision on the case to the Supreme Court and to abide by the judgment which might be pronounced, an offer which, after some demur, Clavering and Francis accepted.

The Judges then assembled for the purpose of their opinion being obtained, and the instructions of the Court of Directors, with the whole of the papers, having been submitted to them, the Judges expressed their opinion 'unanimously, clearly and decidedly, that Mr. Hastings had not resigned. It was quite evident that he was not dead, that he was not removed, and that he had not resigned.' Adverting to Colonel MacLeane's letter, they remarked that it contained no resignation, but the expression of a desire to resign, and that the appointment of Mr. Wheler was to an office which *would* become vacant, and not which *had*; and that the resignation of the Governor-General was a *proposed* resignation. This, and no other, the Judges observed, could be the Court's intention.

The Judges were not disposed to go any further; for when Hastings, wishing to press his advantage, put forward a resolution that Clavering by his conduct had vacated his seat as senior member of Council, and could no longer sit in any capacity, the Judges refused to support him.

In the meantime, however, General Clavering had not been idle. On the 21st June he caused a proclamation to be issued, and took the oath as Governor-General; on the 22nd the Council resolved that he had assumed office as Governor-General, and had relinquished those of second member of Council and of Commander-in-Chief; but now the tide turned and the malcontents saw that the decision of the Judges must be accepted.

On the 24th June Francis recorded a Minute in which he remarked: 'Everything is at stake, everything has been hazarded, I fear by some degree of passion and a great degree of precipitation; much may be retrieved by prudence and moderation. I trust it will appear that I have given a signal example of both, not only in my immediate and implicit acquiescence in the decision of the judges, but in my present attendance here. Let me have the honour and happiness of assuming the character of mediator!'

On the following day Hastings moved, 'That under the advice of the Judges, the Council do recede from putting into execution all their resolutions passed since the 20th instant, and that all parties should be placed in the same situation in which they stood before the

receipt of those orders.' This resolution was unanimously agreed to and thus terminated a state of affairs which might well have involved the government and the settlement in anarchy and confusion.

After this long, but, under the circumstances, perhaps not unnecessary digression, we may now return to General Sir Eyre Coote, who here comes again into the story.

On the 29th September 1775 he had been promoted a Major-General in the army, and on the 16th November of the same year His Majesty King George III wrote to Lord North :

' A winter expedition against the four Southern Colonies of America having been decided upon, the King proposed that the 15th, 37th, 53rd, and 54th Regiments, completed to 677 men each, and two companies of artillery, should be sent together with the eight battalion guns. Sir Eyre Coote,' said His Majesty, ' who has distinguished himself on service, shall have the command when the service is over, he, being a junior general to those in America, will join when the service is effected.'<sup>1</sup>

The Directors of the East India Company had, as has been seen, heard of the death of Colonel Monson before Mr. Wheeler left England, and, in view of the expected resignation of Warren Hastings, they now began to look about them for somebody to fill this second vacancy ; and not unnaturally their thoughts turned to the man who had already performed such good work for the Company in India.

Sir Eyre Coote was approached to know whether he would go again to Bengal, but there seems to have been considerable uncertainty as to whether he would accept the offer on the terms by which it was accompanied.

MacLeane, writing to Hastings on the 12th May 1777, said :

' Thus you stand without a successor, for Sir Eyre Coote has not accepted ; and, till a successor arrives, how can you resign ? This is my opinion upon the most mature consideration, and unless Lord North speaks out, I must, from what has passed, think it to be his, as well as Mr. Robinson's<sup>2</sup> opinion also. This much I know for a certainty, that they are in no hurry to clear away Sir Eyre Coote's doubts and difficulties : seeing things in this situation, I brought about a measure, unknown to anyone, that will prevent Lord North's being under any embarrassment by Sir Eyre Coote's refusal to accept his appointment in the present state of things, or in the event of General Clavering's death or resignation, for I have prevailed on

<sup>1</sup> This seems to refer to the expedition to Cape Fear under Cornwallis in the following spring, an expedition intended to rally the loyalists of North Carolina and Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> This was Lord North's secretary.

General Monckton to write to Lord North that in case Sir Eyre Coote declines to go to India, because he is not to be appointed second in Council, he, General Monckton, will accept the command of the Army in India, to prevent any impediment in His Majesty's affairs, without a seat in Council.'<sup>1</sup>

The succession to Monson was still, however, undetermined, for, on the 11th July of this year, Lord North wrote from Downing Street to Sir John Clavering :

'We felt sincerely for you upon the loss of Colonel Monson. The Company think of Sir Eyre Coote as his successor, and I wish the arrangement may take place, as I know he will heartily co-operate with you. His acceptance of this commission, or refusal of it, depends, I believe, a good deal upon the probability of your continuing in India or returning to Europe.'

This letter, however, Clavering never received, for he died at Calcutta on the 30th August 1777 after a comparatively short illness : he had been appointed to the Bath barely a year previously—in the *Gazette* immediately succeeding that in which Mr. Wheler had been nominated to a seat in Council.

At the commencement of the year 1778 the state of affairs in Calcutta was as follows : Warren Hastings was Governor-General, Barwell was senior member of Council, Francis was second, and Wheler was third member ; while Brig.-General Giles Stibbert was provincial Commander-in-Chief, but without a seat in Council. There was thus a vacancy on the Council, and at a meeting of the Court of Directors held on the 17th April, 'according to the powers vested in the Court by the Act of the Thirteenth Year of George III,' Sir Eyre Coote was unanimously chosen to succeed General Clavering, and a petition was forwarded soliciting His Majesty's approval of the appointment.<sup>2</sup>

On the 28th April there was another meeting of the Directors when Sir Eyre Coote was introduced to the Court, and having taken the oath as Commander-in-Chief of all the Company's forces in the East Indies, and as one of the Council at Fort William in Bengal ;

'the chairman in the Company's name congratulated him on his unanimous appointment to those offices, and assured him that, from the experience of his former essential services, the Court formed their future prospects of the appreciation of his great prudence and abilities

<sup>1</sup> Gleig's *Hastings*, vol. ii, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Under this Act, Cap. 63, Sec. 10, the approbation of the King was required to any appointment to the Council made within five years from the date of such Act.

for the advantage and security of the Company's possessions, wherein the fullest support would be granted him.

'The Chairman particularly recommended that both by his influence and example he would use his utmost endeavour to check the baneful spirit of dissipation and gaming<sup>1</sup> which the Court understood now prevails in Calcutta, and concluded by expressing the Court's wishes for his successful voyage and happy return laden with honours.

'In reply Sir Eyre Coote assured the Court of the high satisfaction and gratitude with which he was impressed in their unanimous appointment of him to the Company's service, and promising to exert himself therein in every respect for promoting the Company's true interests. He then took his leave of the Court.'

(There is a point in regard to the Commission granted to Coote on this appointment which is not clear. In a letter from Lord Cornwallis to Lord Sydney, written from Mansfield Street on the 10th April 1786, the statement is made that 'Coote's commission contained the power of granting all commissions below the rank of Colonel'. This, however, would refer to His Majesty's forces only, and at the date of Coote's appointment there were no King's troops in India. It would be interesting to learn whether a *second* commission, as Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's forces in India, was given to Sir Eyre Coote when the 73rd Regiment, Lord Macleod's Highlanders, went to that country in 1780.)

On the 17th April 1777 there was read at a meeting of the Court of Directors a Memoir by Mr. Arthur Owen, late a lieutenant on the Fort St. George establishment, representing the hardship of his case in not succeeding to the post of Fort Major of Madras on the removal of Captain Chaigneau, although appointed thereto by the Court, and soliciting the rank of field officer in Bengal as first aide-de-camp to Sir Eyre Coote.

'Court of Directors, 29th April 1777. Resolved that Sir Eyre Coote have leave to take Mr. Arthur Owen, as one of his aides-de-camp, and that Mr. Owen is granted a commission of lieutenant colonel by brevet during the continuance of the General in India, but not to be appointed to any corps in the Company's service, or supersede any of the officers of that rank by his appointment, and to enjoy the usual pay and allowances of a Lieutenant Colonel on the Bengal Establishment for such time as General Coote shall continue in the command of the Company's forces.

<sup>1</sup> See Busted, *Echoes of Old Calcutta*, pp. 144-6, for accounts of the high play then in vogue; also Parkes and Merivale, vol. ii, pp. 67-70, for relation of the gains of Francis at the card table.

'The Rev. Westrow Hulse to be a chaplain to the 1st Brigade in Bengal and to attend the General wherever he shall think fit.

'Mr. William Tierney as his Secretary.

'Dr. Robert Bruce as his Physician.

And that General Coote have leave to take the undermentioned persons with him as part of his family : Lady Susanna Coote, Miss Mary Bazett, Miss Caroline Purling, six men servants, and Lucy, a native of Bengal.'

In the *Gentleman's Magazine*<sup>1</sup> it is recorded that Sir Eyre Coote—  
'Embarked at Portsmouth the latter end of May 1778, accompanied by his amiable lady and suite, on board the *Stafford*, Indiaman, commanded by the brother of his lady, Captain Hutchinson, and son of the late Governor of St. Helena, the last Indiaman which sailed that spring from England, and had been detained for the important service of conveying Sir Eyre to India in order to commence hostilities against the French Settlements immediately on his arrival.'

Burgoyne's capitulation at Saratoga in October 1777 was not only a military disaster and a serious blow to the prestige of England, but it provided this country at once with two new foes in Europe in addition to the enemy she was facing in America. The dread that the American colonists might make peace with England, and considerations of a financial character, had all helped hitherto to induce France to refrain from declaring war and joining in the struggle ; but the news of Saratoga was the prelude to an alliance between France and America which left England no alternative but war. The example of France was soon followed by Spain, and England was also threatened with the hostility of the Dutch. War was declared in London against France on the 18th, and in Paris against England on the 30th March. The news reached Calcutta via Cairo on the 7th July 1778, and Warren Hastings at once sent orders to the Governor of Fort St. George to prepare for an immediate attack upon Pondicherry, while in the north he set an example of activity by occupying Chandernagore on the 10th July.

The main army, under Sir Hector Munro, encamped near Pondicherry on the 8th August, but ground was not broken until exactly a month later. Batteries were opened on the 18th September, and after a most gallant defence the place capitulated on the 17th October. The loss of the British amounted to 49 Europeans and 153 native soldiers killed, 122 Europeans and 496 natives wounded ; the French casualties numbered 136 killed and 332 wounded, while

<sup>1</sup> vol. lxiv, p. 203 ; the narrative is signed ' J. Henn ', who would seem to have been one of the officers of the *Stafford*.

265 serviceable pieces of ordnance and some 6,000 muskets were captured.

In the meantime the *Stafford* with Coote on board had been prosecuting its voyage. It sailed from Spithead in company with a large West India fleet, convoyed by two ships of the line, arrived at Madeira on the 9th and left that island on the 18th June, when the West India fleet and convoy bore away to the westward, the *Stafford* proceeding alone. He had communicated his intentions in a letter<sup>1</sup> to the Court of Directors dated Madeira the 15th June 1778 in which he wrote :

‘ Your ships which sailed under convoy of the *Asia*, were I find obliged in consequence of a disagreeable passage of five weeks to put in here, the *Morse* excepted which by some accident or other had parted company with them. They left this place on the 30th of last month, and as their first rendezvous was to be St. Jago, where I am told Captain Vandeput purposed staying three days with the view of being joined again by the *Morse*, I do not think it at all unlikely but the *Stafford* may overtake them even before we get the length of the Cape ; but if not that I make not the least doubt of finding them there. In that case I think it more than probable I shall proceed with them to Bombay, and when I have arranged your Military affairs in that Presidency I shall, as the season of the year will by that time admit of it, call upon the Coast, where I purpose landing if possible at Anjengo, as I shall by that means have an opportunity of going through all your Southern Garrisons, in my way to Madras, while the *Stafford* is getting round there : should war with France be commenced it will certainly be necessary for me to continue there while the Service requires it, as that must be the place of action, and it is our business to confine the Campaign to that part as much as possible, in order to prevent the enemy from forming any schemes against Bengal, the safety of which must ever be the primary object... .’

Table Bay was reached on the 8th September, and here, we learn, Sir Eyre landed with his suite and ‘ was accommodated in a respectable Dutch family whose house was large and commodious’. On the 1st October the *Stafford* sailed from Cape Town in company with the *Asia*, 64, and two Indiamen, and on the 20th November fell in with a Dutch ship from Batavia, from which news was received that hostilities had already broken out on the coast of Coromandel and in Bengal.

On receiving this intelligence General Coote decided to go at once to Madras, and, parting with the *Asia* and the Indiamen, which were bound for Bombay, he reached Fort St. George on the 28th December 1778.

The new Commander-in-Chief and member of Council was anxiously

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, T. 1/544, f. 342.

awaited at Calcutta by the opposing factions. On the 9th December Hastings wrote to Sullivan :

‘Coote’s declarations to you accord with those which he formerly made to poor Elliott.<sup>1</sup> They are sincere I doubt not. I shall give him no cause to retract them—on the contrary he shall have all he wants and more than he probably expects. I only fear the aptitude of his temper to yield to incendiary impressions, and Francis is the vilest fetcher and carrier of tales to set friends, and even the most intimate, at variance, of any man I ever knew. Even the apparent levity of his ordinary behaviour is but a cloak to deception . . . I hear that the *Stafford* sailed from the Cape for Bombay about the time that these ships left it. Sir Eyre Coote must before this be arrived, and I have many fears that the gentlemen of that presidency will engage him in some design to thwart the expedition,’

in allusion to the fact that Francis was urging the recall of Colonel Goddard.

On General Coote’s arrival at Fort St. George a house appears to have been purchased for him from a Mr. Cotsford for 15,922 pagodas ; this was situated in the Fort.<sup>2</sup> Later on it seems to have been used to accommodate the officers of the 73rd Highlanders when they arrived in January 1780.

Coote reviewed the troops in Fort St. George on New Year’s Day 1779, and issued the following General Order :<sup>3</sup>

‘Lieutenant General Sir Eyre Coote, on his return to the command in India, felt himself particularly happy in the recollection that he should have the honour of once more leading those troops, whose military firmness and intrepidity he has been an eye-witness of during former wars. But on his arrival here he begs leave to address the army on this establishment with the overflowings of a heart replete with gratitude to them as an Englishman, as King’s and Company’s officer, for the essential services they have so lately rendered the English nation, its allies, and more particularly their Masters, the Honourable East India Company. The service they have been employed on during the siege of Pondicherry required leaders of approved abilities, and soldiers in the highest sense of the word, and as such the Army on the Coromandel Coast have signalled themselves to all the world.’

Sir Eyre Coote wrote to the Chairman of the East India Company, dated Fort St. George, 18th January 1779 :

‘ . . . The intelligence I received from a Dutch ship determined me,

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Elliot (*sic.*), interpreter at the trial of Nuncomar, private secretary to Hastings, died at Cuttack when on a mission to Nagpore in 1779.

<sup>2</sup> Love, vol. iii, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> Neill, *Records of the Madras European Regiment*, p. 271.



instead of going to Bombay, to proceed hither directly, where I imagined my services might be more immediately necessary. But I had the pleasure to find everything in a state of present peace and security upon the coast, from the wise and spirited exertions of the Government and Council here in support of the Army. I wish I could give as favourable an opinion of the proceedings of the presidencies of Bengal and Bombay; but it appears to me that they ought at this critical time to have united against the national enemy, and given due assistance to this presidency, which has hitherto borne the whole burden of the war: instead of which a large army is sent from Bengal, at an immense expense, into the heart of the country, where, if I can judge from the information I have received, they can produce nothing but distress to the Company, not to say dishonour to the Nation, whether successful or otherwise, and Bombay is left defenceless by sending their whole force on a Mahratta expedition,<sup>1</sup> which, besides the danger to which they are exposed, brings upon us the inconvenience of transporting troops from hence to Mahé, the attack upon which ought naturally to have fallen upon the settlement so nearly its neighbour. Indeed, I may say, the sending troops upon this expedition is rather calculated for the security of Bombay in its present weak state, than any great prospect of success we have against Mahé, as I am apt to suppose Hyder Ali will interfere in defending that place against any attempt we may make upon it. However, it is determined no risks shall be run, as they are to wait at Anjengo, in readiness either to pursue the plan against Mahé, if advisable, or to embark for the defence of Bombay, if necessary.'

In the same letter Coote reports having reviewed several corps 'brought to a state of perfection I could hardly have an idea of in this country. Your artillery is equal to any in Europe, and nothing left for us to wish but for an addition to the numbers of both. The officers merit every thing that can be said in their praise for the unwearied pains they have taken to bring the troops to the state they are now in'.

Hyder Ali, of whom mention has above been made and to whom Coote was in the future to be so strenuously opposed in the field, was a man of humble birth, who as a lad had entered the Mysore army, and, having shown military talent of unusual quality, had there risen to high rank. He then, like other military adventurers in the Eastern and Western worlds, had snatched for himself the sceptre from hands incompetent to retain it. The officials, who in Madras represented the East India Company, do not appear to have thought of playing off Hyder Ali against the Mahrattas, their ancient foes, and took sides

<sup>1</sup> That which ended at Wurgaum.

with the Nizam of the Deccan who was at war with Hyder Ali, with the result that in 1768 the Mysore chief turned his arms with such success against the British, that the Madras authorities sued for peace, and engaged to assist Hyder against the Mahrattas. Twice did Hyder Ali find himself at war with these restless freebooters, and twice did the British fail him when called upon to fulfil their obligations; and at the time when Coote arrived in India for his last campaigns Hyder Ali was as incensed with the British for their faithlessness as the Mahrattas were enraged at our interference in their quarrels in Tanjore and in other parts of India.

When the Madras Government announced to Hyder Ali the capture of Pondicherry he heard the news with regret, but replied in cold and formal terms congratulating the English on their success. When later on, however, the Governor communicated to Hyder the intention of sending an expedition to reduce Mahé, he viewed the prospect with alarm, since if Mahé fell into English hands not only would the source be closed whence he drew his military supplies from France, but his allies, the French, would lose their last remaining possession in India. He, therefore, replied to Rumbold, the Governor, that he considered the Dutch, French, and English settlements on the Malabar coast to be equally entitled to his protection,<sup>1</sup> as being erected on his territory, and warned the Governor in no uncertain terms that, in the event of an attack upon Mahé, he would not only aid in its defence but would retaliate by laying waste the province of Arcot or by invading the Carnatic.

Orders for the reduction of Mahé had been received from the Court of Directors, but when it was found that it would be obnoxious to Hyder Ali, Rumbold proposed that it should be abandoned: he was, however, overruled by Coote.

'Select Committee, Fort St. George, 4th February 1779. Present, The Honourable Thomas Rumbold Esquire, President; General Sir Eyre Coote; John Whitehill; General Munro, absent on service; Mr. Smith, indisposed.

'*Resolved*, that the expedition to Mahé be prosecuted, notwithstanding the disaster<sup>2</sup> which has befallen the Bombay troops, and that a letter be immediately prepared for Bengal communicating the intelligence received from Poona; and stating our own situation and

<sup>1</sup> For comments on this plea see Wilks, vol. i, p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> This is in reference to the defeat and convention of Wurgaum, 14th January 1779. The news of the reverse was communicated to Rumbold by the Nawab of the Carnatic on the 4th February—the day the Committee met.

the probable views of the Country Powers in consequence of the success obtained by the Mahrattas over the Bombay Army, also the resolution we have taken in regard to the expedition to Mahé.'

The force sent on this expedition consisted of two battalions of the Madras European Regiment, two companies of artillery, and three regiments of native infantry, and was commanded by Colonel Brathwaite; it arrived before Mahé early in March. The troops of Hyder Ali took part in the defence, and his colours were hoisted with those of the French to indicate that the place was under his protection. Mahé surrendered on the 19th March.

'Select Committee, Fort St. George, 11th March 1779. Present, The Honourable Thomas Rumbold Esquire, President; Sir Eyre Coote; John Whitehill; Charles Smith; General Munro absent on service.

'Despatch to the Court of Directors. The *Stafford* with Sir Eyre Coote on board, proceeds for Bengal in company with the *Britannia*, armed ship.'

In compliance with the above, on the 13th March 1779 Lieut.-General Sir Eyre Coote re-embarked on the *Stafford* for Bengal. On his stepping on board a 'bougie pendant', with the Union, was broken at the main top gallant mast head, in token that he was now a member of the Supreme Council in India and Commander-in-Chief of the land forces.

On the 23rd March the *Stafford* anchored off Kedgerree, when the Company's yacht arrived from Calcutta and conveyed Sir Eyre and Lady Coote and suite to the Presidency.

## CHAPTER IX

### CALCUTTA 1779-1783

It is proposed in this short chapter to try and give some description of life in Calcutta during the years between 1779 and 1783, when General Coote left it for the last time, and of the men and women and scenes among whom he and his wife lived and moved.<sup>1</sup>

First, as to the house wherein the Commander-in-Chief took up his abode. In a letter written by Hastings on the 18th April 1779 to Mr. Sullivan, he stated : ' Sir Eyre Coote has a claim to the house and adjacent lands of Gheretty, in virtue of a *sunnud* which I formerly procured for him from Cossim Ally Cawn. He has applied for and obtained the renewal of it.'

Francis had already before this date learnt what was proposed and wrote in his journal :

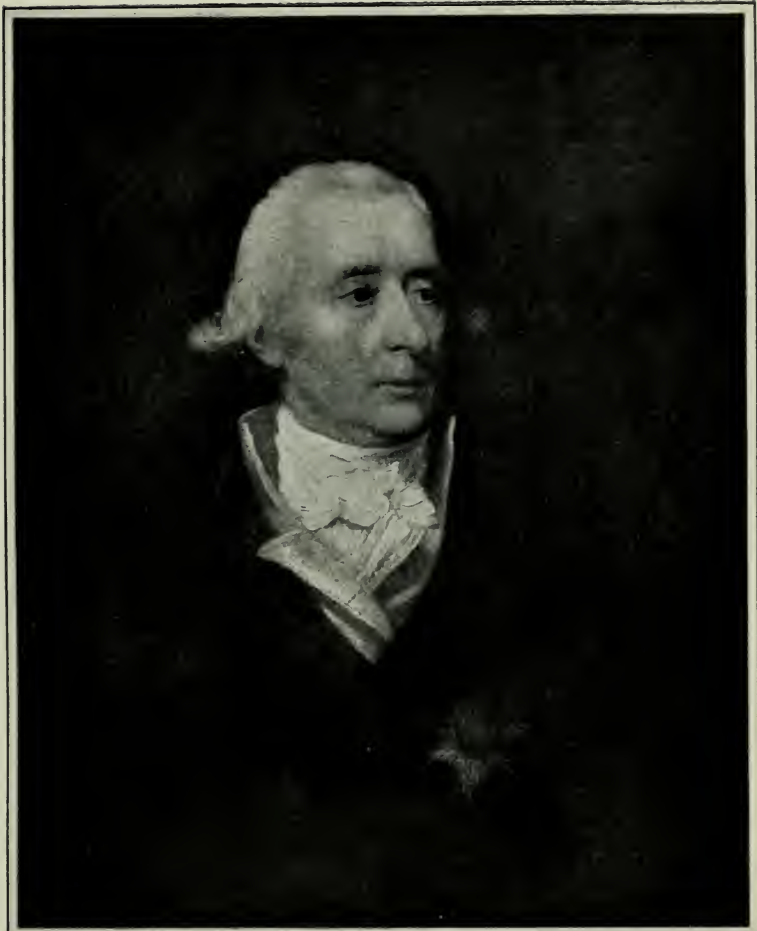
' Sir E. C. applies to be put in possession of Ghyretti House and grounds under pretence of a grant, supposed to have been obtained for him from Cossim Ally in 1762, by the mediation and solicitation of Mr. Hastings, and for the reality of which Mr. Hastings now vouches. The period they both fix on is remarkable considering that Colonel Coote at that time was in open professed enmity with Cossim Ally, Vansittart and Hastings. The famous letter<sup>2</sup> to the Court of Directors was signed by Coote, Carnac, etc., on March 11, 1762, and in that month H. was deputed to Cossim Ally at Sasseram. Granted of course.'

Grier says :

' Gheretty (the word is spelt in many different ways), close to Chandernagore, had been the private residence of M. Chevalier, the Swiss Governor of that place for the French. . . . The place would seem to be represented on the Ordnance Map by the modern Gourhattee, but, though it was the scene of a military camp and a review by Hastings in 1785, it must soon have lost its social importance. Bishop Heber writes in 1824, " there is a large ruined building a few miles to the south of Chandernagore, which was the country house of the Governor during the golden days of that settlement, and of the

<sup>1</sup> For the materials of which this chapter is composed I am indebted to Busted's *Echoes of Old Calcutta* ; Sydney Grier's *Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife* ; Mrs. Fay's *Letters from India*, 1908 edition ; Parkes's and Merivale's *Memoirs of Philip Francis* ; articles in the *Calcutta Review* ; Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* and the *India Gazette*.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Chapter vi, p. 119.



SIR PHILIP FRANCIS

From the portrait by J. Lonsdale



French influence in this part of India. It was suffered to fall into decay when Chandernagore<sup>1</sup> was seized by us ; but when Mr. Corrie came to India, was, though abandoned, still entire, and very magnificent, with a noble staircase, painted ceilings, etc. ; and altogether, in his opinion, the finest building of the kind in this country. It has at present a very melancholy aspect, and in some degree reminded me of Moreton-Corbet, having, like that, the remains of Grecian pillars and ornaments, with a high carved pediment ”.’

Here Coote established himself—much to the indignation of Francis, who writes of him : ‘ he loiters with his wife at Ghiretti and is fit for nothing else . . . L’insensé s’amuse à arranger sa maison et ses jardins à Ghiretti, comme s’il avoit encore un siècle à vivre ’.

This then was the principal residence in Bengal of the Commander-in-Chief, and he lived here in much state : a gun was fired morning and evening at Gheretty.

Another historian tells us something more about the neighbourhood :

‘ The next stage brings us to the village and heath of Champdani, once as much dreaded for scenes of robbery and murder as Hounslow or Bagshot, but which the traveller may now cross with perfect confidence. The place is marked down as Mr. Storrie’s factory. The estate was conferred as rent-free tenure by the nabob of Moorsshedabad, and title-deeds are still in the possession of the native family to whom the lands have come by purchase. It lies exactly opposite the village of Pultah, where regiments proceeding from Barrackpore to the upper Provinces, or from them to the neighbourhood of the Presidency, cross the river. . . . Immediately to the north of this *ghat* is the French garden of Ghyretti, about one third of the extent of Barrackpore park.’

But the distance from the seat of government, and the indifferent state of the communications in those days, made it necessary that the General should also have a residence in Calcutta ; and the writer of an article called ‘ Calcutta in the Olden Time ’ in vol. 18 of the *Calcutta Review*, states that ‘ the Treasury included the building first erected by Sir Eyre Coote as a residence in Council House Street ’. And here, or at Gheretty, during the comparatively short period that he was to serve in Bengal, Sir Eyre lived with Lady Coote ‘ and her inseparable friend ’, as Mrs. Fay calls her, ‘ Miss Molly Bazett. It was agreed between them when they were both girls, whichever married first, the other was to live with her ; and accordingly when Sir Eyre took his lady from St. Helena, of which place her father was Governor, Miss Molly, who is a native of the island, accompanied them to England and from thence to India, where she has remained ever since. Thus

<sup>1</sup> Chandernagore is some thirty-one miles above Calcutta by river.

giving a proof of steady attachment not often equalled and never perhaps excelled'.

Calcutta in those days would seem to have looked best when approached by river from the sea :

'As you enter Garden Reach,' wrote Mrs. Fay, 'which extends about nine miles below the town, the most interesting views that can possibly be imagined greet the eye. The banks of the river are, as you may say, absolutely studded with elegant mansions called here, as at Madras, garden houses. These mansions are surrounded by groves and lawns, which descend to the water's edge, and present a constant succession of whatever can delight the eye or bespeak wealth and elegance in the owners. The noble appearance of the river also, which is much wider than the Thames at London Bridge, together with the amazing variety of vessels continually passing on its surface, add to the beauty of the scene.'

In the city itself the prospect was probably somewhat less pleasing. When Coote arrived in Calcutta early in 1779 the period was doubtless gone by when 'Chowringhee was out of town, when shots were fired off in the evening to frighten away the *Dakaitis*, and when servants attending their masters at dinner-parties in Chowringhee left all their good clothes behind them, lest they should be plundered in crossing the Maidan—the Hounslow Heath of those days'; but the times were still sufficiently primitive. Correspondents in the newspapers of the period make frequent complaints of the indescribably filthy condition of the streets, of the congested state of the canals, of the open cesspools, and of the dead bodies carried naked through the streets to the *ghats* at all hours of the day, and sometimes left to lie in or near Calcutta for two or three days. The chief, if not indeed the only, drinking water supply of those days was in the tank in Lall Diggee (now Dalhousie Square), which was supposed to be fenced in, but so insecurely that a correspondent of Hicky's *Bengal Gazette*, writing in April 1780, mentions seeing a pack of pariah dogs refreshing their mangy bodies by bathing in it.

No wonder, perhaps, that the European inhabitants of the city Job Charnock had established were seldom teetotallers, and that they drank large quantities of arrack punch, mulled claret, madeira, or port, and that they suffered much from 'a putrid fever' or a 'flux'. Dr. Rowland Jackson was the leading medical practitioner in Calcutta in Coote's time, and was probably rather above the average in professional knowledge; but the usual panacea for mortal ills was 'bleeding'. It is recorded that on one occasion a fasting man was



three times 'blooded', then blistered, and finally given two strong narcotic draughts—all within twenty-four hours; while we know that Philip Francis after his duel with Hastings, about which more will be said presently, was bled twice in one day, and that during the sickly season, for a comparatively trifling flesh wound in the shoulder. We need not therefore be surprised that Calcutta already possessed several burial grounds; one in the very centre of the city where the Portuguese inhabitants buried every year, without coffins and in shallow graves, some four hundred of their dead; there was St. John's Churchyard, where rest the bones of old Job Charnock, of Admiral Watson, and of little Billy Speke, the son of the captain of the *Kent*; a third cemetery was in South Park Street—so called because it led past the park surrounding the house in which the Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey, lived—and here were interred General Clavering, who died in August 1777, Colonel Monson, who died at Hooghly seven months after his wife had died at Calcutta in February 1776, Wheler, and—twenty years later—Justice Hyde.

At this time there were no hanging punkahs; the house of the Governor-General was the only one in the 'settlement' which possessed glass windows, the others having only venetians or cane-work windows; there were no changes to the hills; and the only relief obtainable during the hot weather was to go to Beercool, the Brighton of Bengal, where there was a fine beach, sea-breezes, and sea-bathing.

In Calcutta itself much hospitality was dispensed; large breakfast and dinner parties—the latter at 2 p.m.—were fashionable; there was a theatre, which had been erected in 1775 near Writers' Buildings, then the dwelling-house of Mr. Barwell; and dances took place at 'the Harmonic', accounted 'the handsomest house in Calcutta', which stood in Bow Bazar facing the old jail, close to the present head-quarters of the Calcutta Police.

When we come to consider General Coote's contemporaries, perhaps the most remarkable thing about them is the comparative youth of the men who at this period composed the Supreme Council, and who bore, serene and undismayed, what must at times have been the almost intolerable burden of Empire. Warren Hastings, the Governor-General, was 47 in 1779; Barwell was only 38; Francis was a year older; while even Coote, the most advanced in age of them all, was hardly a veteran as historians are fond of describing him, being then no more than 53 years of age.

Some eighteen months before General Coote's arrival in Calcutta—

in August 1777 to be exact—Warren Hastings had married for the second time, his wife being Madame Imhoff. She, as described by a Dr. Hancock in his letters from Calcutta to his wife in England, was ‘the wife of a gentleman<sup>1</sup> who has been an officer in the German service and came out a cadet to Madras. Finding it impossible to maintain his family by the sword, and having a turn to miniature painting, he quitted the sword and betook himself to the latter profession. After having painted all who chose to be painted at Madras, he came to Bengal the latter end of the year 1770. . . . She is about twenty-six years old [this letter is dated 1772], has a good person and has been very pretty, is sensible, lively, and wants only to be a greater mistress of the English language to prove she has a great share of wit.’

Writing of her ten years later, when she had become Mrs. Hastings, Mrs. Fay says :

‘Mrs. Hastings herself, it is easy to perceive at the first glance, is far superior to the generality of her sex, although her appearance is rather eccentric, owing to the circumstance of her beautiful auburn hair being disposed in ringlets throwing an air of elegant, nay almost infantine simplicity over the countenance, most admirably adapted to heighten the effect intended to be produced. Her whole dress too, though studiously becoming, being at variance with our present modes, which are certainly not so, perhaps for that reason, she has chosen to depart from them. . . . It is easy to perceive how fully sensible she is of her own consequence. She is indeed raised to a giddy height, and expects to be treated with the most profound respect and deference.’

The Imhoffs, when at Madras, had filed a suit in the Court of Franconia for the dissolution of their marriage on the ground of incompatibility of temper, but the decree was not announced until 1775, when, two years later, the lady married Hastings, and Imhoff, who had returned to Germany, married a lady of his own nationality and station in life named von Schad.

Busteed states that ‘in the vestry records of St. John’s Cathedral, Calcutta, it appears that the marriage [of Madame Imhoff and Hastings] was solemnised on Friday, the 8th August 1777, by the Rev. William Johnson. The bride was married under her maiden name of Miss Anna Maria Appollonia Chapusettin’; but Lawson, in *The Private Life of Warren Hastings*, has it that her name was ‘Marie Anne von Chapuset, whose family (enobled in Germany) is believed to have migrated from France to Germany after the revocation of the

<sup>1</sup> Imhoff was not the first of his name to serve in India. In 1756 a Lieut. Alexander Peyer Imhoff was serving on the Coromandel Coast in a Swiss infantry company under the East India Company.

Edict of Nantes'. Whatever her baptismal name may have been, she was never called by it by her second husband: to Hastings she was ever 'my beloved Marian', and his love, as Macaulay says, 'like his hatred, like his ambition, like all his passions, it was strong, but not impetuous. It was calm, deep, earnest, patient of delay, unconquerable by time'. Of the appearance of Warren Hastings at this period when Coote joined his Council I have been able to find no record, but I can hardly do better than quote what has been said of how he looked ten years later, when the reward of his great administration was his impeachment in Westminster Hall:

'He looked like a great man, and not like a bad man. A person small and emaciated, yet deriving dignity from a carriage which, while it indicated deference to the court, indicated also habitual self-possession and self-respect, a high and intellectual forehead, a brow pensive, but not gloomy, a mouth of inflexible decision, a face pale and wan, but serene, on which was written, as legibly as under the picture in the council-chamber at Calcutta, *Mens aequa in arduis*; such was the aspect with which the great pro-consul presented himself to his judges.'

When Sir Eyre and Lady Coote arrived in Calcutta early in 1779, Mr. and Mrs. Hastings were possibly still living at Belvedere, the nucleus of the present residence of the governors of Bengal. This house, however, Hastings sold in February 1780 to Major Tolly, the constructor of Tolly's Nullah, and thereafter lived in the New House, now known as Hastings House, Alipur, renovated by Lord Curzon and since used as a guest-house for Indian Chiefs of distinction.

Its appearance at the time of Hastings's occupation has been variously described: Francis's brother-in-law, Macrabie, wrote of it as 'a pretty toy but very small, tho' airy and lofty. These milk-white houses with smooth shining surfaces utterly blind one'—in allusion to the walls, inside and out, being dressed with Madras *chunam*, the secret of the manufacture of which has now been lost. On the other hand, a friend of Hastings calls the house 'that beautiful model of architecture which introduced into Bengal an improvement till then unknown, and stands an elegant, original, and lasting monument of public spirit, in which, though its author suffers a heavy loss, subsequent imitators will have made their fortune by'.

It was here that Mrs. Fay paid her state call at the end of May 1780, when, writing home, she says:

'You will expect me to say something of the house, which is a

perfect *bijou* most superbly fitted up with all that unbounded affluence can display, but still deficient in that simple elegance which the wealthy so seldom attain, from the circumstance of not being obliged to search for effect without much cost, which those but moderately rich find to be indispensable. The gardens are said to be very tastefully laid out.'

Hastings also owned an extensive estate called Rishera, situated two miles above Serampore on the western bank of the river—an investment which proved a profitable one, since, on leaving India, he sold it for twice the sum he had originally paid for it; he had also a little country villa and experimental farm at Suksagar, about forty miles from Calcutta; and finally Mrs. Hastings possessed a small house of her own in Calcutta, which Busteed has identified with No. 7 Hastings Street.

Richard Barwell, Hastings's ever staunch supporter—despite the discredit which Francis so often seeks to throw on their relations—was born in India in 1741 and had served the East India Company since 1756. He was a great card-player, and it has been suggested—without apparently sufficient grounds for the assertion—that he seriously set himself to 'break' Francis in order to get him into his power and so destroy his opposition in Council. If such was indeed his intention, he signally failed, for much of the wealth with which Francis eventually returned to England was won from Barwell,<sup>1</sup> though the latter retained enough to play the part of the typical Nabob when he left India for England in March 1780. Barwell at one time—in 1775—seems to have contemplated an alliance with one of General Sir John Clavering's<sup>2</sup> daughters; nothing came of it, however,—perhaps a duel which the General forced upon Barwell may have cooled the ardour of the latter—and Barwell married in September 1776 a Miss Sanderson, who died but little more than two years later and was buried in South Park Street Cemetery. Busteed thinks that Barwell married again after his return to England; but at any rate he purchased a fine estate, went into Parliament, entertained largely, and died in September 1804.

While in Calcutta Barwell's house was 'Writers' Buildings', but his garden house was at Alipore, what is now known as Kidderpore House, and of the ballroom of which Busteed, writing in 1888, says:

'What generations of exiled feet—the gayest and lightest—have not disported on this floor! The very lamps and wall-shades which

<sup>1</sup> £40,000 is the sum named as won by Francis from Barwell.

<sup>2</sup> General Clavering lived in a house at the corner of Waterloo Street; Colonel Monson in one near Mango Lane.

were lighted in the consulship of Warren Hastings are sometimes lighted still. What stately minuets and cotillons and romping country dances, long obsolete, have those old lustres not looked down on? Who does not wish that they could speak of the past and its faded scenes, and tell us stories of the many "ladies and gentlemen of the settlement"—of their laughter and their love?

Certainly by far one of the most remarkable of the men who—can one in truth say, *helped*?—to govern India during these troublous times, was Philip Francis. He came to India at something of a crisis in his fortunes, when he had resigned the appointment he had held in the War Office, and when, if one may believe, as there is now small reason to doubt, that he was the author of the letters of Junius, 'it is not strange that the great anonymous writer should have been willing to leave the country which had been so powerfully stirred by his eloquence'. His appointment to the Supreme Council in Bengal was, under the circumstances, an extraordinary one: more extraordinary still perhaps is the fact that he should have begged it of one whom, as Junius, he had described as 'bloody Barrington'—'the name that implies everything that is mean, cruel, false and contemptible'—'the fawning traitor to every party and person'—'the assiduous parasite'.

On arrival in India, Francis, says his secretary, 'pays £500 a year for a large but rather mean house, like a barn, with bare walls and not a single glass window. His establishment of servants, which is thought mean, consists of sixty'. But within a few months he had purchased what is described as a small 'lodge' in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, consisting of a 'spacious hall and four chambers, surrounded by a verandah and colonnade, and standing in the midst of twenty acres of ground: pleasant to the last degree'. This house, stated by Busted to be on the site of that occupied for many years as the official residence of the Collector of the Twenty-four Pergunnahs, or Calcutta district, was in the immediate neighbourhood of Tolly's Nullah; it was purchased in 1775 and sold for Rs.30,000 in 1780. But early in 1776 Francis rented what Macrabie calls 'a capital house, the best in town', but at a rental of £1,200 a year. The site of this, too, is identified by Busted as being that occupied by the Oriental Bank, at the corner of Clive Street and Old Fort Ghat Street.

A very few months before Sir Eyre and Lady Coote arrived in the Hooghly, Francis had been the defendant in the case brought against him by Mr. G. F. Grand for criminal conversation with the wife of the plaintiff. Full details of the case, in which Francis was cast in

fifty thousand sicca rupees,<sup>1</sup> may be read in Busted's *Echoes of Old Calcutta*, but it may be enough here to say that Grand belonged to a family of Huguenot extraction, who, obtaining a cadetship in Bengal, sailed for India in January 1766 in the *Lord Camden*, occupying a cabin with eleven other youngsters, one of whom was the grandfather of Thackeray, the novelist. Grand entered the military service and rose to the rank of lieutenant, but his health failed and he returned to Europe in 1773. He came back to India as a writer three years later, and in 1777 married Miss Noel Catherine Werlée, daughter of Mons. Werlée, Capitaine du Port at Pondicherry and Chevalier de Saint Louis. Mrs. Grand was then sixteen years of age and was born at the Danish settlement of Tranquebar. Francis himself described her many years after scandal had associated her name with his, as being 'at that time the most beautiful woman in Calcutta. She was tall, most elegantly formed, the stature of a nymph, a complexion of unequalled delicacy, and auburn hair of the most luxuriant profusion; fine blue eyes, with black eye-lashes and brows gave her countenance the most piquant singularity'.

Early in the same month that Coote reached Calcutta, Francis records in his diary: 'March 6. Judgment against me in the Supreme Court'.

After the trial Francis established Mrs. Grand under his protection at Hooghly, and when they parted, on his return home at the end of 1780, we lose sight of Mrs. Grand, or Madame Grand as Busted prefers to call her, for some sixteen years, when she reappears in Paris, first as the mistress,<sup>2</sup> and then later, when the First Empire made the re-establishment of respectability something of a fashion, as the wife of Talleyrand, the unfrocked Abbé, Prince of Benevento and Minister of France. Princess Talleyrand died in December 1835.

But if Francis achieved a certain measure of success in the courts of Venus, he was not equally fortunate in the fields of Mars, and mention must here be made of his duel with Warren Hastings. 'Substantially, the quarrel was this; Francis had promised Hastings not to interfere with his conduct of the war against the Mahrattas, then carried on near the Malabar coast. Hastings wanted to carry on

<sup>1</sup> £5,109 2s. 11d.

<sup>2</sup> M. Lolić, in his *Life of Prince Talleyrand*, mentions a remarkable dinner given by the future Madame de Talleyrand at Neuilly in 1802, shortly before her marriage: there were present, among others, Mr. Grand, her former husband, Sir Philip Francis who had wronged him, and Sir Elijah Impey who had tried the case!

operations against the same enemy on the Jumna, in an entirely different quarter of India. Francis deemed himself not precluded by his promise from opposing this. Hastings maintained that he was.<sup>1</sup> But most men who have examined the evidence on either side will, we think, agree that 'no impartial judge can read the respective minutes of the two men without coming to the conclusion that Francis was guilty of a gross breach of faith'.<sup>2</sup> The resulting indictment brought by Hastings against Francis was a terrible one, couched in terms which admitted of no misunderstanding, and leading only to an appeal to arms.

When the quarrel and the duel took place—on the 17th August 1780—Coote was away from Calcutta, inspecting the troops in the up-country stations, and on his return he told Francis that 'he would have prevented this unfortunate accident had he been here', which the other seemed to think impossible.

The meeting, with pistols, took place near Mr. Barwell's house, on an old road that separated his grounds from Belvedere, and the distance was fourteen paces. Francis was wounded and fell, but the injury was of no consequence and he was never in any danger—unless possibly from the subsequent ministrations of the local medical officers—Doctors Campbell and Francis, the latter the Governor-General's own surgeon. In this affair Colonel Watson, the Chief Engineer at Fort William, was second to Francis; he it was who built the docks at Kidderpore, and who also—a curious development of military engineering—built the first ship ever laid down at Calcutta in 1781. The name Kidderpore is taken from that of a Colonel Kyd, who at one time was commanding engineer of the Company's establishment.

Hastings's second was Colonel T. D. Pearse, commandant of artillery, who afterwards commanded the force which marched to the Carnatic by way of Cuttack in December 1780, and which on its return was inspected by Hastings at Gheretty—the last public ceremony performed by Hastings before leaving India in January 1785. The 5,000 men who had left Midnapore had been reduced to less than 2,000. Colonel Pearse died in June 1789 and was buried in Park Street Cemetery; Lord Cornwallis was present at the funeral.

Francis is said to have been known in Calcutta as 'King Francis' or 'Francis the First', but he left India knowing very little about the

<sup>1</sup> Parkes and Merivale, vol. ii, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest, *Warren Hastings*, vol. i, p. 194.

country or its inhabitants; and during the six years he passed in Calcutta, from his arrival in October 1774 to the date of his departure in the *Fox* on the 3rd December 1780, he was never a hundred miles from Fort William. We know the main object to which he henceforth devoted his time and all the powers of a singularly able, if malevolent, brain; the hatred with which he pursued Hastings and the self-acknowledged defeat of his efforts. He entered Parliament, married a second time, was made a K.B., bought and for some years occupied No. 14 St. James's Square, now, appropriately enough, the East India United Service Club; and, dying in December 1818, was buried in Mortlake Church.

Mr. Wheler, usually alluded to in Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* as 'Ned Silent' or 'Ned Wheelabout', was originally, according to Grier, 'a linen-draper in Cheapside'. His first wife, the size of whose hoop attracted so much attention at her *début* in Calcutta society, died seven months after landing. Her maiden name was Chichely Plowden. Wheler married *en secondes noces* a Miss Durnford, described by Mrs. Fay as bearing 'her honours so meekly', and as contriving 'to soften the refusals, which she is frequently compelled to give, by so much affability and sympathy, as to conciliate all parties and render herself generally beloved'.

Among the other distinguished men and women who at this period moved in Calcutta society may be mentioned Sir Robert and Lady Chambers. Sir Robert was one of the four justices who came to India in the *Anson*; he was a schoolfellow of other men who became great lawyers—Stowell and Eldon, while he was a friend of Samuel Johnson, of Edmund Burke, and of Sir Joshua Reynolds. He succeeded Impey as Chief Justice in 1791, and he and his wife remained in India until 1799; he died near Paris in 1803, and his widow, who survived him by thirty-six years, brought his body to England and buried him in the Temple Church. They lost several children in India—one of them had for godparents Impey, Francis, and Hyde—and their names, and that of Sir Robert's mother, who came to India with him, are recorded on a tomb in South Park Street Cemetery. Of Lady Chambers Dr. Johnson wrote in 1774 in a letter to Boswell: 'Chambers is either married, or almost married, to Miss Wilton, a girl of sixteen, exquisitely beautiful, whom he has with his lawyer's tongue persuaded to take her chance with him in the East'. She was Frances, the daughter of Joseph Wilton, the Royal Academician, but Mrs. Thrale calls her 'Fanny Wilton, the statuary's daughter, who stood for Hebe



at the Royal Academy. She was very beautiful indeed, and but fifteen years old when Sir Robert married her'.

Mrs. Fay received much kindness from Sir Robert and Lady Chambers—the latter even straining friendship to the point of lending Mrs. Fay some of her dresses to copy!—and being described as 'the most beautiful woman I ever beheld—in the bloom of youth, and there is an agreeable frankness in her manners that enhances her loveliness and renders her truly fascinating'.

The Chambers family lived in a house in Old Post Office Street with a garden house at Bhowanipore.

Of the remaining two judges, Lemaistre was, says Impey, 'violent beyond measure', but withal a convivial man and a gambler, joining in high play with Francis and others. He lived in Free School Street, and dying in November 1777 was buried in Park Street Cemetery.

Mr. Justice Hyde is said by Impey to have been 'abusive on the Bench', 'an honest man but a great coxcomb. His tongue cannot be kept still, and he has more parade and pomp than I have yet seen in the East'. Busted tells us that Hyde

'lived next to the Supreme Court, in a house on the site of the present Town Hall, for which he is said to have paid twelve hundred rupees a month. He was married and a great favourite in social life, where his hospitality was genuine. He died in harness (aged 59) after twenty-one years' uninterrupted service, handsomely acknowledged in a Government notification which also referred to the virtues of his private character. He was buried (July 1796) in South Park Street Cemetery. The tablet on his tomb records his "boundless benevolence", and speaks of him as "a model of unexampled yet cautiously concealed charity".'

These then were some of the better known of the men and women who during the four years that Sir Eyre and Lady Coote inhabited Calcutta also had their abode behind the Mahratta Ditch, the defence which, beginning at Chitpore Bridge, was dug in 1742 to protect the English territories—then seven miles in circumference—from the Mahrattas, who, having watered their horses at every river in India, had invaded Bengal in 1741. The ditch was never completed, for the panic subsided; but when the writer served in Bengal in 1886 a portion of the line of the ancient excavation could still be traced on either side of the main road leading from Calcutta to the cantonment of Dum Dum.

## CHAPTER X

1779-1780

At this time the state of affairs in Calcutta was as follows : Hastings and Barwell were opposed in the Council by Francis and Wheler, but the Governor-General, having the casting vote, was able to carry his measures. In a council thus divided the arrival of the new commander-in-chief was eagerly awaited and both parties were anxious to obtain his support. At this period, and for some little time previously, Francis had cherished the hope that he would succeed to the office of Governor-General, and at a meeting of the Council on the 25th January 1779 he had declared himself to be in possession of private intelligence to the effect that ' a total change in the ruling power of this Government was determined when Sir Eyre Coote left England, and I have no doubt that Sir Eyre Coote will give us some very satisfactory information on this point '.

Francis had addressed a letter to Coote at Madras, and in his Memoirs we find under date of the 7th February 1779, ' Letter from Sir Eyre Coote dated Fort St. George 18th January 1779. Everything I could wish.'

Francis seems to have built much upon the expectations he had formed—apparently without very great reason—of attaching Clavering's successor to his side, and his fury was proportionately great when he discovered that Coote was no party man and was ready to vote only according to his conscience. In a book,<sup>1</sup> said to have been largely influenced, if not indeed partly written, by Francis, it is stated that ' at the Cape of Good Hope, on his passage out, at Madras, and even after landing in Bengal, Sir Eyre Coote in the strongest terms openly and frequently reprobated the conduct of Mr. Hastings, with declarations expressive of a decided opposition to his measures ' ; and it appears that Francis became more venomous towards the newcomer as he watched the gradual disappearance of the hopes he had built on the enjoyment of his support.

Coote seems to have been expected to reach Calcutta at an earlier date than he actually arrived, for on the 14th February Francis entered in his diary : ' Going down to meet Sir Eyre Coote,' adding

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa*, vol. ii, p. 227.

with characteristic readiness to accept any evil report about a colleague, 'Ironsides confirms to me the truth of an anecdote (his receiving two lack of rupees from Cossim Ally Cawn through Mr. Vansittart in 1762) about Sir E. C. in the Government of Mr. Vansittart—vide my narrative. Barwell I am assured is going to meet him.'

'20th February. Stibbert and Wheler dine at my house. Hastings' present plan is to buy Coote and send him up to the army.'

'22nd March. Mr. Barwell says that he now understands it to be current at Madras that Sir Eyre Coote will not sail before the arrival of the first Europe ship, and that the Nabob had presented him with a star and epaulette of very fine diamonds; but this he supposes to be scandal. N.B. The fact is public and could not be matter of doubt with Mr. Barwell. I find they are all highly pleased with taking this present.<sup>1</sup> At night advice of the arrival of the *Stafford*, *Royal Henry* and *Britannia*.

'23rd March. . . . Sir Eyre Coote arrives in the afternoon. He passed by Barwell, who waited for him at Budge Budge. I visited him immediately. Charming bustle. No particular conversation.'

On the 24th March Sir Eyre Coote was sworn in, when Francis records: 'I see they are at his feet. He professes a desire to please everybody, but I fancy he will soon find that impracticable. They have invested him completely. He requests that Captain Hutchinson may be returned to Madras for the China voyage—granted of course. Job the first'—in allusion no doubt to the fact that Hutchinson was Coote's brother-in-law.

On the following evening Sir Eyre dined with Francis, when 'he explains himself liberally enough to me about future conduct, my credit in England, and his wish to establish a friendship and confidence between us. At the same time I see no inclination in him to act. Il paroît très bien disposé à tenir la balance et à en profiter. Nous verrons'. Two days later Francis seems to have secured the General's attendance at what is described as a 'convention of nearly three hours, in which I give him my opinion at large of the state of the Government and country, of persons, parties, characters, interests, &c., without reserve. I find we are nearly agreed'.

It does not seem to have occurred to Francis that Coote was no fool, that he was a man of the world, with an experience of Indian affairs infinitely wider than that of Francis, and that it was probably

<sup>1</sup> It seems to have been customary at this time for the Nawab to give a diamond star to any high government official possessing the insignia of any Order. Admiral Hughes also received a star from the Nawab.

the soldier who, throughout these negotiations, was correctly sizing up the civilian.

On the 18th April the leader of the opposing faction in the Council, the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, wrote as follows on the subject of the new arrival to Mr. Sullivan :<sup>1</sup>

‘ . . . Sir Eyre Coote, after a very long stay on the coast, arrived at Calcutta on the 23rd of last month. He was received with every military honour that could be paid to him, and more perhaps than he expected. On such occasion I judged it best to exceed, rather than to incur the hazard of offending by doing too little. In my personal conduct to Sir Eyre Coote I have endeavoured to gain his friendship by an official support of his pretensions, by an unreserved surrender of the military department, and by other more important concessions. I have consented to the removal of Mr. Middleton from the residence at Lucknow, and to the appointment of Mr. Hosea in his stead, a young man of lively parts, but not equal judgment. Mr. Middleton has the option to make the first his own act, and he will have no right to complain. This point I had preconceived with Mr. Barwell long before the General’s arrival. It will add greatly to his consequence and influence whenever he takes the immediate command of the army in that quarter, and in the present constitution and state of our government it will diminish little of my own. He proposed the appointment of an Adjutant General for Bengal. I supported the motion by my voice, and by reasons that unanswerably justify the measure. . . . I have formed an establishment for his expenses in the field on a very liberal scale, viz., table allowance 7,500 rupees per month, being 50 per cent. above that allowed by the Court of Directors to Colonel (since General) Stibbert, and a discretionary liberty to draw for boats, elephants, and other contingent charges, to the amount of — more for himself and all his staff. This is not much, and incomparably less than the allowed and assumed charges of his predecessors in the military command of this presidency, General Clavering not excepted, because he never was in the situation to which these allowances are applied. . . . I hope my conduct will receive your support. General Clavering, who never intended to take the field, might content himself with a gratuitous salary of 60,000 rupees per annum ; but you must be convinced that the Commander-in-Chief could not possibly support the indispensable charges of his rank and command with so scanty a sum ; and it is a dangerous maxim to connive at unauthorized perquisites, the inevitable consequence of too close an economy. . . .

‘ The General took a very early occasion to declare his resolution to act an independent part, to confine himself as much as he could to the line of his own department, and to regulate his conduct in all matters which were brought before the Board by these two principles, to which he vowed that he would inflexibly and undeviatingly adhere—

<sup>1</sup> Gleig, vol. ii, pp. 260–2.

an implicit obedience to the Company's orders, and an avoidance of all retrospections. Mr. Francis undertook to force him from this moderating plan by a motion to recall Mr. Graham from Benares, and to appoint Mr. Francis Fowke in his stead, in conformity to the Company's orders of the 30th June 1778. This was intended to produce an irreparable breach between the General and me; and by a decision so well adapted to the understanding of the public, which had seen Joseph Fowke the original incendiary and the prime instrument of all our past dissensions, to hold out the General as the determined follower of the same party. Happily, though not at first aware of the snare, he was at length convinced of it, and refused to give an opinion upon the question, as a resolution had passed upon it before he had received his appointment to the service, and had been formally referred back to the Court of Directors, whose answer may be expected by the early ships of this season. . . .

'The rule which Sir Eyre has prescribed to himself to decline all matters of former controversy will, if he can adhere to it, do him infinite credit. I will not be the cause of his departing from it. On the contrary, I have assured him that I will never bring on any business at the Board when he is present which can revive our past disputes, or oblige him to declare himself on the side of either party, and that I will apprise him whenever any subject shall come in Council before us which has such a tendency. In this respect I have been so delicate that in the many and long conversations which I have had with the General, I have never mentioned the name of Francis, or alluded to the man, except on the occasion of the question concerning the residency of Benares, when it became necessary to warn the General of the design which it covered. And this reserve I shall continue to maintain, not so much on Sir Eyre Coote's account as my own, for I disdain to support my influence by means which I could not reconcile with the principle of honour. . . . All the eyes of our world were fixed on the General on the late occasion, and, if I can judge, his decision has given universal satisfaction. I will also add, for his honour, that in a great political question we have been for the first time unanimous. Francis is miserable, and is weak enough to declare it in a manner much resembling the impatience of a passionate woman, whose hands are held to prevent her from doing mischief. He vows he will go home in November, but I do not believe his resolution is so fixed as he pretends. . . .'

'It is instructive to note that had he lived to return to England, Coote would have been included in the proceedings against Hastings. "What would poor Coote have suffered", writes the survivor, "had he lived to have been placed where I have been? The first three days would have killed him."<sup>1</sup> The extra allowances which had been granted him were withdrawn by the order of the Directors, and he found himself obliged to maintain three establishments and keep the

<sup>1</sup> See an article in *Harper's Magazine* for December 1904.

field in the Carnatic upon less than half the sum enjoyed by his subordinate, General Stibbert, as Commander-in-Chief in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Almost desperate he hit upon the plan of asking the Nawab-Vizier, who had provided the additional allowances he had hitherto enjoyed, to continue them, and this was done. It was one of the charges against Hastings that he had allowed it,<sup>2</sup> and had Coote lived, he must in consistency have been included in the accusation.<sup>3</sup>

Edmund Burke, in his speech of Thursday 12th June 1794, being the seventh day of reply on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, said, referring to the alleged oppression of the Nawab of Oudh, that 'there was a whole pension list upon it, with such enormous pensions as £18,000 a year to Sir Eyre Coote'.

Warren Hastings, replying to the charge of having formed an establishment for Sir Eyre Coote, and having continued it after it had been disallowed, stated :

'When Sir Eyre Coote arrived at Calcutta he proposed visiting the different stations of the Army, and he moved the Board that a Field Establishment should be formed for him. The allowances of General Stibbert, the Provincial Commander-in-Chief, as authorised by the Court of Directors, were very considerable, his table allowance was above £7,000 a year, and Sir Eyre Coote's allowances of every kind, as ordered by the Court of Directors, £6,000 a year. An establishment was formed for Sir Eyre Coote for boats, budgerows, table expenses, camp equipage, etc., when in the field, calculated, as I firmly believe, so as not to exceed the additional expenses which he incurred by his absence from Calcutta, for it was there only that he was to draw the additional allowances. On his crossing the Caramnassa, the advances were paid by the Nabob-Vizier. In the month of September 1780 he returned to Calcutta and embarked for Madras with a powerful reinforcement and a large supply of treasure in the height of the monsoon.'

In the month of April 1781 the order of the Court to discontinue the allowance was received. This was brought to Hastings's notice in January 1783 when Coote was on the point of returning to Madras,

<sup>1</sup> The respective sums were £6,000 and £13,000.

<sup>2</sup> Charge XIII. That in 1779, with a view to increase his influence, and in disobedience of positive orders, he granted to Sir Eyre Coote extra allowances amounting to £18,000 a year, and that in direct violation of the treaty subsisting between the Company and the Nabob-Vizier, he directed that when Sir Eyre Coote was in Oude these extra allowances should be carried to the debit of the Nabob-Vizier's account. That when these allowances were struck off by a letter from the Directors, Mr. Hastings of his own private authority continued to Sir Eyre Coote certain large sums, which were paid by the Nabob-Vizier. (Not Guilty, 22. Guilty, 4.)

<sup>3</sup> Grier, *Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife*, p. 167.



**WARREN HASTINGS**

From the portrait by T. Kettle in the National Portrait Gallery





and Hastings did not like to trouble him. Sir Eyre Coote's expenses at this time were very heavy—one establishment in Calcutta, another at Madras, and a third in the field.

Francis, of whom Sir James Stephen has said that he was 'as false and treacherous to his friends as he was persistent in his malignity against his enemies', was beginning to find that Coote was not inclined to play the part which Francis would assign him, and his Journal now shows constant signs of his virulence :

'19th May. Coote, I find, is despised by all parties; his faculties—if ever he had any—are gone.

The Commander-in-Chief did not attend any of the meetings of Council held in May until the 24th of that month, being returned in the Minutes as 'absent forming military arrangements', but on this date he submitted a long Minute relative to the convention of Wurgaum.

At a Council held on the 11th June of this year General Coote proposed that Colonel Goddard, who had commanded with distinction the forces sent by Bengal to the assistance of Bombay, should have the rank of Brig.-General, and that he should be recommended to the Court of Directors to succeed to the command at Bombay on the first vacancy. As to this very natural proposal Francis records in his Journal of the same date : 'I oppose it and warm discourse ensues.'

Then on 14th June. 'Bombay letter voted. Hastings, Barwell, and Coote against Francis and Wheler. I then desire leave to enter my dissent, on which the Commander-in-Chief leaves the Board and sets out for Ghyretti.'

For some days after this Coote appears to have been indisposed and absented himself from the meetings of the Council, but on the 28th a Minute from him dated the previous day was read : 'Although', he wrote, 'I regret that I have already been induced to write more Minutes since my arrival here than I did in all my former transactions in India, yet I find myself so particularly pointed at in the last paragraph of Mr. Francis' Minute of the 14th instant that I cannot now avoid saying something in reply to the assertions it contains.' These were relative to Goddard's powers, and he concludes, 'however, as I do not intend now or hereafter to devote my time to controversial writing, I shall leave my conduct to the decision of my employers, to whom alone, with my country, I am answerable'.

During the greater part of July Coote seems to have been unwell, but he had been greatly occupied in the compilation of army regula-

tions, which were read and discussed in Council—Francis, as usual, making many objections, though it was hardly a matter in regard to which his knowledge can have been either special or profound.

Mackintosh,<sup>1</sup> prompted no doubt by Francis, describes these regulations<sup>2</sup> as ‘unmilitary, unjust, and absurd’, and as ‘consisting of about one thousand articles, and occupying about as many folios’; but this appears to have been one of the earliest attempts at the compilation of regulations for the Indian Army as a whole, and, inasmuch as ‘Army Regulations, India’, now comprise some fourteen portly volumes, containing over 4,000 paragraphs, there seems no good reason to accuse Sir Eyre Coote of excessive verbosity.

On the 27th September Coote, accompanied by Lady Coote and his staff, started up country to inspect the different garrisons of the army. As the General was not well conversant with the native languages, Mr. Henry Vansittart, who was a proficient both in Hindustani and Persian, was appointed interpreter, and all communications with the chiefs and nobles of the country were directed to pass through him.

The departure of Coote excited the bitter animosity of Francis, whom it left once more at the mercy of Hastings and Barwell. A native historian—one Fakir Khair-ud-Khan—who accompanied Vansittart as an assistant, has recorded :<sup>3</sup>

‘A struggle now commenced between the Governor General and Messrs. Wheler and Francis to gain over the General, and it was at last settled that, as the General had been put to great expense in his journey, he should make a tour of inspection of the English troops from Berhampore to Futteghur, and on the way the chiefs of Bengal and Patna, and the Nawab Asuf-ud-Dowla and his nobles, would be certain to make him valuable presents, and thus recoup his expenses. Sir Eyre, who saw and disliked the discussions in Calcutta, gladly consented and prepared for the journey.’

The Commander-in-Chief took with him as his personal escort a small corps of French *Chasseurs*, which then numbered about 120, and which was increased in November of this year by twenty-three French soldiers who had been taken prisoners on the coast and who had volunteered to serve the East India Company. This measure also incurred the displeasure of Francis, and is thus alluded to by the writer<sup>4</sup> from whom quotation has already been made : ‘a measure

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa*, vol. ii, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> These were printed by Hicky at the *Bengal Gazette* Press.

<sup>3</sup> Curwen’s translation of the *Bulwuntnamah*.

<sup>4</sup> Mackintosh, vol. ii, p. 228.

contrary to the law of nations and a violation of a sacred treaty; I mean his enlisting, and placing as his bodyguard, the natural-born French capitulant soldiers, taken prisoners at Pondicherry.'

After inspecting the troops at Berhampore, the Commander-in-Chief increased his escort by a couple of battalions of sepoy taken from that station. These men were not provided with boats, but marched along the bank of the river, keeping pace with the flotilla as best they could.

From Berhampore the General went to Murshedabad and was received with every distinction by the Nawab, who made valuable presents to him and to his staff. On reaching Ghazipur, Cheyte Singh met him, but, as the course of the river from Ghazipur to Benares is tortuous and the current rapid, the General and staff, lightly equipped, quitted the boats and marched to Benares, amusing themselves by shooting, while the boats with the heavy baggage followed as quickly as they could. At Benares Coote demanded of Cheyte Singh the payment of a lakh of rupees which had been promised to Colonel Hector Munro by Bulwunt Singh, and after considerable demur and much pressure the money was at length paid. Cheyte Singh's personal gifts to Coote consisted of twenty-one trays of cloth, one of jewels, ten horses and an elephant. From Benares the Commander-in-Chief marched to Chunar, and from thence to Allahabad, where the Nawab of Oudh had promised to meet him.

As to Coote's departure from Calcutta on inspection duty, Francis wrote on the 13th November to his friend D'Oyly, who had been in the War Office with him, and had lately held the appointment of Secretary in the American department:

'After settling some of the most infamous and atrocious measures in perfect conjunction with Hastings and Barwell, he is gone up the country with infinite pomp and parade, for a purpose so well known that he would lose nothing by avowing it. . . . I will not content myself with saying I never knew, but upon my soul I never heard of so abandoned a scoundrel. It is a character to which your English ideas of dirt and meanness do not reach. Nor is to be met with even in Bengal. Even here it excites execration and contempt.'

During this portion of his tour General Coote had been engaged in reorganizing portions of the Company's forces. From very early days the Court of Directors had always been strongly opposed to the native soldiers of India being trained in the duties of the artillery. In their warrant dated 17th June 1748 they had directed that 'no Indian, black, or person of mixed breed, nor any Roman Catholic,

of what nation soever, shall, on any pretence, be admitted to set foot in the laboratory, or any of the military magazines, either out of curiosity, or to be employed in them, or to come near them, so as to see what is doing or contained therein'.

Again in their military letter to Bombay of the 6th April 1770, they wrote :

'As it is very essential that the natives should be kept as ignorant as possible, both of the theory and practice of the artillery branch of the art of war, we esteem it a very pernicious practice to employ the people of the country in working the guns ; and if such practice is in use with you, we direct that in future you attach European artillerymen to the service of the guns which may belong to the sipahi corps, and that no natives be trusted with any part of this important service, unless absolute necessity should require it.'

At the end of the year 1775 three companies of native artillerymen, to be commanded by European officers, were ordered to be raised for the Nawab of Oudh, to be attached to the brigade of disciplined troops maintained for his service. Whether these companies were at that time created or not is doubtful ; it is certain, however, that three companies of native artillery were raised for this service in August 1777.

On the 7th July 1778 news was received in India that war had been declared in London against France, and in consequence of this an augmentation to the army in Bengal was ordered by Hastings in August. It comprised four battalions of native artillery, the latter to be composed, with some additions, 'of the lascars with the advantage of discipline given to their former laborious duties'. The three native companies of artillery then already in existence were all in the brigade in the Nawab's service ; one company had been sent Bombay-wards with Leslie's—later Goddard's—detachment.

Of the four battalions ordered only three were actually raised ; each consisted of 8 companies of 2 jemadars, 8 havildars, 8 naiks, 1 drummer, 1 fifer, and 100 golundaz, making a total force of 48 jemadars, 192 havildars, 192 naiks, 24 drummers, 24 fifers, and 2,400 golundaz or gunners. The Court of Directors, opposed as they were to having any native artillerymen, issued orders for their disbandment. On Coote's arrival in March 1779 it was *rumoured* that he had brought orders from the Court of Directors to carry out these instructions.

To this corps, Colonel Pearse, the commandant of artillery, was much attached, as well on public as on private grounds, and when orders for disbandment were issued he determined to spare no

exertions to save it. As soon as the rumour above-mentioned reached him, he addressed Sir Eyre Coote, urging the need for native artillery by reason of the impossibility of keeping up sufficient European artillery for our extended empire :

‘ that in reality for many years past there were thirty men, nominally infantry but in reality artillerymen, attached to each battalion for the service of the two field guns, which arrangement entailed the possibility of all the evils now feared, though without the advantages which a regular corps of artillery would give. He deprecated the system of battalion guns as useless, the guns being without officers to manage them so as to produce the best effect by attending to the advantages of ground and selection of ammunition best adapted to the occasion ; the two European artillerymen detached with each battalion for this purpose being ignorant of the higher—the more scientific—part of the profession, which knowledge is confined in general to the officers ; that it ruined the discipline of these men, who though they went out good men, returned in general drunken vagabonds ; that the lascars sent, though of the artillery, were only employed in dragging the guns, and were unarmed and undisciplined, but that they served for menial offices which made them desirable to the captains commanding the infantry battalions. He recommended that the guns should be collected in small brigades or batteries, and brought to the points wanted instead of being frittered away along the line ; that the discipline of the men working them, from being under their own officers, would be better looked after and their fire produce more effect in action by being under the exclusive command of an officer bred up to the profession.’

When final orders on the subject were passed and issued, Colonel Pearse again attempted to prevent the measure being carried out. He pointed out that the European artillerymen numbered all told only 370, of whom not more than 150 were at the Presidency, and that two ships of the season had arrived without a single recruit for the corps.

This representation was sent direct to Government, Sir Eyre Coote being away up country on inspection duty. On the matter coming to the notice of the Commander-in-Chief, General Coote looked upon Colonel Pearse’s action as insubordinate, and on the 5th December 1779 wrote from Chunar in severe terms to Colonel Pearse, taxing him with ‘ unmilitary and unprecedented conduct, tending to sap subordination and obedience to its foundations, and telling him that he was called upon for obedience and not for any opinion, and that he (Pearse) was in no wise answerable for the results’. (In justice to Pearse it must be observed that during the absence of General Stibbert from the

Presidency he had been accustomed to write to Government direct.) He wrote in reply to General Coote's letter, regretting that he had fallen under the Commander-in-Chief's displeasure, and 'begging that the step he had taken might be considered as founded on error of judgment and not on want of obedience: and entreated the Commander-in-Chief to overlook his error and entertain a more favourable opinion of him than that expressed in the letter with which he had been honoured'.

The representations, however, which had been put forward by Colonel Pearse were of no avail. On the 23rd November 1779 a Minute of Council directed 'that the Native Officers of the Golundaz Corps at the Presidency be paid up to the end of this month and immediately discharged from the service; that the commandant of artillery be directed to repeat the offers already made to the men and that those who still declined to accept them be immediately discharged'.

These offers were that they should enter the line or become lascars, and as to this Buckle <sup>1</sup> says: 'the Golundaz considered themselves belonging to the most honourable branch of the army and were unwilling to enter an inferior service; the difference of pay was another and a stronger reason, and we accordingly find that of the 2,438 golundaz of all ranks who were on the rolls of the regiment in November 1779, in December 1,788 took their discharge'. What became of the remaining 650 is not known, but Buckle again says, 'it is probable some were those who were entertained from the lascars in 1778 and had less objection to return'.

The three original companies were retained; the first accompanied the expedition to the west coast, the second the expedition under Pearse, while the third remained in the province of Oudh.

Another matter may here be mentioned which subsequently became the subject of discussion in the House of Commons in connection with the impeachment of Warren Hastings.

The necessity for the organization of a train of draught bullocks for the artillery was pressed upon Government by Sir Eyre Coote, and as a result 4,000 bullocks were ordered to be maintained at certain stations for this purpose. The animals were to be from four to six years old, fifty inches in height, and to be cast when twelve years old, while they were to be capable of drawing ordnance as noted below. The commanding officers of the artillery and the train were to be inspectors of all bullocks received into the service, and responsible

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir of the Services of the Bengal Artillery*, p. 54 et seq.

that none but proper cattle were to be admitted, these being branded in the presence of an artillery officer.

24-pounder	12	pair	of	bullocks.	8	-in.	howitzer	7	pair.
18	”	9	”	”	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	”	”	5	”
12	”	6	”	”	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	”	”	3	”
6	”	3	”	”	Wagon			7	”
3	”	2	”	”	Tumbril			5	”

The contract for the supply of these bullocks was given to a Mr. Croftes, and there does not appear to have been anything irregular in the manner in which he obtained it, but the matter is referred to in two of the charges against Warren Hastings.

Charge XI. That in 1779 he annulled the existing contract for the provision of bullocks, and concluded another with his friend Charles Croftes, Esq. upon wantonly extravagant terms. (Not guilty, 23; Guilty, 3.)

Charge XII. That he granted the provision of bullocks to Sir Charles Blunt, by the mode of agency, though the Directors condemned agencies. (Not guilty, 23; Guilty, 3.)

Burke, in his speech at the trial of Hastings, thus referred, on the 14th June 1794, to the bullock contract: ‘You have seen,’ he said, ‘the corruption of Sir Eyre Coote in giving to Mr. Croftes the bullock contract.’

One other small matter may here be referred to as showing the zeal of the Commander-in-Chief for the welfare of his troops. Prior to his appointment the only meat ration issued was beef, which does not seem to have been of good quality, while eaten continuously without change it was said to be ‘productive of disorders’. Coote caused an alteration to be made in the victualling contract under which mutton, which was rather more expensive than beef, was to be issued during the months of April, May, June, July, August, and September, and on alternate days with beef during the remaining months of the year.

The General was at Papamaw on the 9th and at Allahabad on the 11th December, whence he wrote as follows to the Board at Calcutta:

‘HONOURABLE SIR AND SIRS,

‘The day before yesterday I encamped near Allahabad, where the Vizier did me the honour of a visit, and yesterday morning on my way hither I returned it, and was received by His Excellency with every mark of respect and distinction. This morning he called here, and we had some general conversation, which principally turned upon the subject of his attachment to the English, and his readiness to

show the sincerity of it upon all occasions. It is to be wished we had employed the influence which such favourable sentiments must have given us more to the benefit of the country and ourselves ; but I fear that the distresses which evidently appear on the face of the one, and the failure of the revenues to the other, are not to be wholly ascribed to the Vizier's mismanagement.'

This letter was quoted by Burke on the 12th June, 1794 in the trial of Warren Hastings, when he made the following comment upon it : ' This is the testimony of Mr. Hastings' own pensioner, Sir Eyre Coote, respecting the known state of the country during the time of this horrible usurpation, which Sir Eyre Coote mentions under the soft name of " our influence ".'

In this year—1779—the 1st Battalion of His Majesty's 73rd Regiment, or Lord Macleod's Highlanders,<sup>1</sup> re-numbered in 1786 as the 71st, was ordered to Madras under the command of Lord Macleod. This was the first regiment of the Royal Army to be sent to India since 1764.

Sir Eyre Coote was desirous of having a detachment of this regiment sent round to Bengal to form a bodyguard for himself, and he wrote on the 9th December the following letter from Allahabad to the President and Members of the Select Committee at Fort St. George, Madras :

' GENTLEMEN,

' Having been advised by General Sir Hector Munro that part of the King's Forces are arrived at Madras, I think it necessary to transmit to your Board the enclosed copy of my Commission as His Majesty's Commander-in-Chief in India, and His Power for ordering and approving general courts martial.

' The Public will, I hope, feel the advantage as I do the honour of His appointment, since by uniting the King's and Company's Commission in one person all such disputes and disagreements as have formerly happened between the two services, must be prevented, and I have only to assure you, Gentlemen, that my zeal for the Service is equal to the power placed in my hands.

' I have directed General Munro to send me, as soon as possible, a certain number of Lord Macleod's regiment to form a proper guard for my person as His Majesty's Commander-in-Chief ; and I must request of you to give the necessary orders to the earliest of your ships coming to Bengal to receive them on board. When the regiment arrives in India, they will be disposed of as the situation of affairs seems to require ; and I shall always pay the strictest attention to

<sup>1</sup> For a good deal about this corps see Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. iii, pp. 169-71.



such requisitions as may be made to me from any of the Presidencies, where the service and protection of His Majesty's troops may be judged necessary.'

The Madras authorities did not view this request with favour, and on the 18th February 1780 the Select Committee at Fort St. George replied that

'On the arrival of Lord Macleod's regiment (on the 20th January when the Head-quarters arrived) General Munro applied for the conveyance of one company to Bengal to serve as General Coote's body-guard, but that the Committee had declined to comply with the request for the following reasons: 1st. Because nearly 700 Europeans, Infantry and Artillery, had been sent to join General Goddard at Surat, together with a battalion of sepoys, besides which a battalion and a half of sepoys were acting at Tellicherry against the Nairs. 2nd. Because without doubt the intentions of Hyder Ali were hostile, and that in their opinion he was only kept in awe by the strength derived from Sir Edward Hughes' fleet and the King's troops. 3rd. If the French or Spaniards had any designs upon our possessions in India, the attempt would be made upon the coast or on the Malabar side, in either of which cases the strength of the Madras Presidency would be called forth, and particularly if Hyder Ali were to join or favour such an attempt.'

This letter was acknowledged by Coote from Lucknow on the 28th March. He would not allow the force of the reasons given for not sending the company of the 73rd to Bengal, and he continued:

'Your attention to the Public Service, as well as to supporting that dignity which His Majesty has been most graciously pleased to honour me with by His Commission of Commander-in-Chief of His Forces in India, it is my firm resolve to support the former and to guard inviolably the honour of the latter. With these objects as my guide I depend upon obedience from those immediately under my command, and look, upon all occasions, for assistance and co-operation from the Company's different Presidencies in India.

'My powers over the King's troops in India I need not explain to you, they are known to and acknowledged by your Board; but that there might not, from my requisition, remain even the shadow of weakening your force at Madras, I leave the proceeding of the whole company, agreeable to my former order, to General Munro, and require from you assistance for conveying it to Bengal as soon as possible for the conveyance of my guard, a detachment of one captain, two subalterns and fifty non-commissioned officers and privates from His Majesty's 73rd Regiment.'

According to some authorities the opposition to sending the detachment to the north chiefly emanated from the Governor of Fort St.

George, Sir Thomas Rumbold, and this may account for General Coote having made something of a special appeal to him in a letter written on the 27th January from Lucknow. In this letter he complains of both the Minister and Directors having broken faith with him in not having put him in his proper place in Council. 'Lord North,' he writes, 'assured me it should be done and the Chairman pledged himself to see it performed, and without a confidence in those declarations I most certainly had not come out; yet a Bill for prolonging the term of the Act has passed without any notice being taken of it. . . . I consider this so essential a point that I even represented to His Majesty the impropriety there would be in my sitting as the youngest of the Board, when holding the rank I did in His service, and possessing his Commission as Commander-in-Chief.' And he concludes with: 'I am sure you will readily lend your assistance to lessening some part of my difficulties, which may be done by dispatching as soon as possible that part of Lord Macleod's regiment which I have already wrote for, and that you will have them embarked before your departure.'

Rumbold<sup>1</sup> resigned on account of ill-health in April of this year, and his successor, Mr. Whitehill, seems to have been more accommodating, for the detachment of the 73rd Highlanders which had been asked for was eventually sent to Calcutta under the command of Captain the Hon. James Lindsay.

There were at this time three Lindsays, brothers, in the 73rd—Colin, James, and John. Colin seems to have served with the First Battalion in America and the West Indies and then at Gibraltar with the Second; James was in Bengal with the detachment and accompanied Sir Eyre when he went to Madras in October 1780, and died of wounds received at the siege of Cuddalore in June 1783; John was taken prisoner in the disaster to Colonel Baillie's detachment in September 1780, when he was wounded in four places, and suffered imprisonment at Seringapatam for three years and ten months.<sup>2</sup>

About this period—the end of 1779 and the beginning of 1780—the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief appear to have had a serious difference, the correspondence in which it is contained having been commenced by Coote in a letter dated the 19th December 1779. In this—written from Allahabad—he objected to Warren Hastings having sent up a Captain Palmer in a political capacity, on

<sup>1</sup> According to a correspondent in Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* of April 22nd to 29th, 1780, Sir Thomas Rumbold took home with him a fortune of 'little more than six hundred thousand pounds sterling!'

<sup>2</sup> *The Lives of the Lindsays*, vol. ii, pp. 345-7.

the grounds of the misunderstanding which might arise in the minds of Europeans and natives on the spot, from the fact of Captain Palmer being employed as a private agent, while the Commander-in-Chief, a member of the Supreme Government, was himself present.

This letter may be seen <sup>1</sup> and there is certainly no sign in the manner of its expression of its having been written in the 'fury' described by Hastings in a letter to Mr. Baber : <sup>2</sup>

'The General and I,' he wrote, 'parted with mutual professions of confidence, friendship, and promises of mutual support. . . . I communicated to him the first overtures from the Rana of Gohud. These contained the same conditions in substance as were afterwards digested and improved into the treaty. . . . I wrote a short letter purposely to inform him of Captain Palmer's deputation. . . . He received my letter in a fury, answered it with a complaint of the indignity offered to him by delegating such a trust to any other person, which could be better performed by one of his family. . . . Two days after arrived a letter from him to the Board, repeating the same resentment at the deputation of Captain Palmer, and enclosing a protest in form against the treaty, declaring every article of it exceptionable, the whole teeming with certain destruction to the Company; and that any treaty whatever with a man so inconsiderable as the Rana of Gohud was disgraceful and dangerous etc. Yet I have letters from him containing the completest approval both of the design of the treaty and of the proposed terms of it.'

'I forgot to tell you that I regularly advised him of the progress of this business from the beginning to its conclusion. . . . Mr. Barwell insisted on my keeping back the General's letter and protest till means were taken to bring him to reason; and on my objecting has taken it upon himself. He has written to the General, stating the fatal consequences of so declared an act of hostility, and entreating him to withdraw them back. . . . Lest you should suspect that I have given him some secret cause of disgust, I assure you on my honour that I know of none. I have invariably supported his authority and enforced his regulations, though these are not all conformable to my own opinion, and some against my own practice. I have avoided every kind of interference in the military department, even to private recommendations, and endeavoured by every mark of public attention and personal kindness to secure his confidence. My letters have been all friendly to him, his to me all petulant and suspicious; I know not why or for what. I bear with him and will bear, for I am lost if he abandon me, my influence, even with his support, being unequal to the difficulties and dangers which daily grow around me. . . .'

To Coote himself, Hastings wrote: 'You have also given me your

<sup>1</sup> British Museum, Add. MSS. 29144, folio 214.

<sup>2</sup> Gleig, vol. ii, p. 240 et seq.

promise and frequent repetitions of it that you will support my authority. The political department is most especially and most essentially mine. If you deny me this, what is my authority to which you have promised your support ?'

The prospect of a serious breach between the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief was naturally a very pleasing one to Philip Francis—the more that while Barwell was now eager to leave India, his loss to the party in Council which was led by Hastings, seemed likely to be balanced by the defection from the other of Wheeler, who was becoming restive under the imperious rule of Francis. On the 5th January 1780 Francis notes in his diary that he has seen a letter from a man at Allahabad 'full of the ravings of Coote against Hastings. Enraged at the treaty with the Rana of Ghode, and at Palmer's going up *to be a spy on him.*' On the 20th he mentions having been informed by Hastings that 'Coote has protested against the treaty with the Rana of Ghode in a letter to the Board, which Barwell and he (Hastings) have withheld until Barwell can receive an answer about it from him. Ample justice done by us both to the character and conduct of Sir Eyre Coote'.

Again he writes in his journal under date of the 17th February :

'Hastings shows me a letter from Captain Palmer at Benares. Coote exasperated at his going up ; and pulled different ways by the different parties in his family. His punishment is begun and I trust will never end but with his life. At night a letter from Wombwell, dated Lucknow, February 5, that Coote is ready to join me, body and soul, provided I will write him a letter of compliment ; now at last I have got the scoundrel at my feet.'

On the 24th February he notes :

'John Wombwell arrives from Lucknow with full powers from Coote to treat, offering to come down if Barwell stays. Pity and compassion is all that Wombwell hopes to obtain for him. Resentment would be thrown away upon him.'

From the above extracts from the letters of Hastings and the diary of Francis we may realize the value which the rival parties attached to the support of Coote—himself a soldier and no partisan. Barwell finally sailed from Calcutta in the *Swallow* on 3rd March 1780, and it is possible that Hastings, appreciating the danger about to assail British rule in the Peninsula, was somewhat overwrought, and was inclined to attach undue importance to Coote's representations in regard to the deputation of Palmer, just as Francis based, upon

inadequate foundation, the hopes he now entertained of attaching Coote to his fortunes.

As a matter of fact a perusal of Hastings' correspondence with Sir Eyre Coote—commencing with a very friendly letter of welcome addressed to him at Madras, continued at Calcutta, kept up during the campaign in the Carnatic, and closing with his death—establishes the conviction that the statesman and the soldier, allowing for occasional differences of opinion, were on excellent terms; that they were ever in general agreement on all matters of real importance; that Coote constantly asked, and deferred to, Hastings's opinion even on purely military concerns; and that the soldier was the last man to 'take sides' because he considered himself personally aggrieved. It must be remembered that the two men had now known each other many years, and that though Coote had long been absent from India he appears to have maintained very friendly relations with the Governor-General. When, under the Regulating Act, Warren Hastings became the first Governor-General, he received from England a presentation sword bearing the inscription, 'Presented to Warren Hastings, Esqre., Governor-General of Bengal, on the 25th February 1773, By his esteemed Friend, Sir Eyre Coote;' when Hastings finally left India he gave special instructions for the careful shipment of a picture, by Zoffany, of his dead friend and colleague; and in this year 1780 it seems impossible that two men who had been friends so long, could seriously fall out in view of the anxious times which both must have seen to be before them, and which could only united be successfully passed through.

'Towards the close of 1779, intelligence reached Hastings from various quarters of a general conspiracy which had been formed by the Nizam and Hyder and all the Mahratta chiefs, with the exception of the Guicowar, for the expulsion of the British from India.'<sup>1</sup> The operations of Goddard had effected something of the nature of a check against the machinations of the Mahratta confederacy; but on the 28th March 1780 that commander wrote to Coote saying, 'It would certainly be of advantage to the operations of the war on this side to cause a powerful diversion to be made on the other, which could not fail to distress and divide their attention exceedingly.'

As a result of this appeal Captain Popham, who was then about to conduct reinforcements to Goddard, and Major Camac, at this time

<sup>1</sup> Thornton, *History of India*, vol. i, p. 373.

stationed with a small force on the Jumna, were ordered to advance to the assistance of the Rana of Gohud, a small state between the Jumna and Gwalior, and with whom the treaty, previously mentioned, had just been concluded. These operations, so far as they went, were perfectly successful, but it is unfair and incorrect to suggest, as some historians have done, that they were successful *despite* Sir Eyre Coote, and that they were actually undertaken against his advice. I do not share this view after a perusal of such letters as passed between Coote and Hastings on the subject of these operations and the dispatch of the reinforcements they necessitated. The General certainly objected to reinforcements being sent to Goddard from *Bengal*, considering with much reason that these should be furnished from Bombay ; but he carefully states the number of troops of all arms which *ought* to be sent.<sup>1</sup>

What the Commander-in-Chief seems very rightly to have objected to was the employment of the army in operations so extended *en petits paquets*—methods, which however excusable and even desirable when used against a single foe, could only lead to disaster when attempted against combinations so vast and foes so numerous as those by which the Supreme Government in India was now about to be confronted.

At one time—in September 1779—Coote seems to have had some idea of proceeding to Bombay to take over himself the conduct of the operations,<sup>2</sup> but this intention was not carried out.

In May 1780 the Commander-in-Chief was still in Lucknow, but the news of the preparations of Hyder Ali causing great anxiety he determined to return to the Presidency. Writing from Lucknow on the 11th May he said he was making arrangements to avail himself of the first rise in the river to start for Calcutta ; and ‘ he proceeded down the river by boat ’, says the author of the *Bulwuntnamah*, ‘ although it was the height of the rainy season.’

Hicky’s *Bengal Gazette* of the 12th August announces that ‘ Sir Eyre Coote was expected at Cossimbazar on the first of this month on his way to the Presidency ’. On reaching Murshedabad news was received of the duel fought on the 17th August between Hastings and Francis, and, greatly disturbed by the tidings, Coote started at once by *dak* for Calcutta, dropping Lady Coote at Gheretty *en route*.

<sup>1</sup> British Museum Add. MSS. 29410, folio 459 ; 29144, folios 54 and 110.

<sup>2</sup> See Add. MSS. 29144, folio 86.

## CHAPTER XI

SEPTEMBER 1780—JANUARY 1781

WITHIN a very few days after Coote's return to Calcutta the Supreme Council was forced to face so powerful a combination of enemies, so serious a military disaster, as might well, had less resolute leaders been at the head of the Government, have made the years 1780 and 1781 'as fatal to our power in Asia as to our power in America'.<sup>1</sup>

'Thirty thousand Mahratta horse were encamped on the western frontier of Bengal. An invasion of Behar by the same enemy seemed to be imminent. Oude was threatened. The Maharajah Scindiah stood ready to fall upon Korah and Allahabad. The whole power of Poona confronted General Goddard. But there was worse news behind. Hyder Ali had descended in force on the Carnatic and was sweeping over it with fire and sword.'<sup>2</sup>

The relations between the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief appear, on the return of the latter, to have at once resumed much of their former friendly tone: the General seems at first to have wished to take the field against the Berar army. Hastings, writing on the 6th September to Sullivan, mentions with evident relief:

'the General is friendly and we are confidential. He is for vigorous measures, but we do not yet look the same way; some mischievous person having laboured to convince him that the first and most necessary measure was to drive the Naigpoor army from Cuttac. I have had the good fortune to remove the greatest part of these prejudices, if I have not entirely convinced him, and I have hopes that, while he is with us, I shall find him not inimical.'<sup>3</sup>

On Friday the 22nd September, the *Nymph*, 'a swift ship flying before the south-west monsoon', arrived from Madras in the Hooghly, and brought to the Council tidings of dire import by the hand of Stephen Sullivan, the son of Hastings' and Coote's friend, the Chairman of the Court of Directors. The news he brought was of the sudden irruption of Hyder Ali into the Carnatic.

'The hostile sword was drawn upon the 20th of July 1780; and these barbarians rushed like an impetuous torrent through the ghauts, dispersing themselves all over the Carnatic, like herds of furious animals

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay's *Essay on Warren Hastings*.

<sup>2</sup> Hastings, *A Vindication of Warren Hastings*, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> Gleig, vol. ii, p. 319.

in quest of their prey, and committing every act of cruelty and devastation that it was possible for savage minds to suggest. The forts of Trinomaly, Chittaputt, Arnee, Gingee, Chillumbrum, Caverepauk, and Carrangooly, &c., were all given up according to agreement; so that in less than fourteen days he possessed a chain of our frontier garrisons that completely secured the safety of all his convoys from the Misore country; and before the Council of Fort St. George could be persuaded that he had at all entered the Carnatic, his horse, with astonishing rapidity, penetrated the length of Choultry Plain and the environs of Madras, surrounding many of the English gentlemen in their country houses, who narrowly escaped being taken; whilst he himself commenced the siege of Arcot.<sup>1</sup>

Although Hyder Ali's attitude had long been a threatening one, his actual invasion found the Government of Fort St. George wholly unprepared. The Company's troops were scattered over the Presidency, and there was no compact force to oppose the enemy; the members of the Madras Council occupied themselves rather in quarrelling with one another, and in the endeavour to dissociate themselves from blame, than in concerting measures to meet the crisis. At length, after Hyder's cavalry had raided the suburbs of Madras, Sir Hector Munro, the provincial Commander-in-Chief, took the field. A force under Colonel Baillie, which was marching from Guntoor—from which months previously the Supreme Government had ordered the withdrawal of the Madras forces—to join Munro at Conjeveram, was interrupted by Hyder Ali when on the point of junction and was annihilated, the survivors, of whom David Baird was one, being carried to Seringapatam in chains. Munro threw his guns into a tank and retreated to Chingleput, harassed on all sides by the Mysore cavalry. From Chingleput he retired to Saidapett, and occupied the north bank of the Adyar, while Hyder Ali renewed the siege of Arcot.<sup>2</sup> Altogether, allowing for some pardonable exaggeration, the magnitude of the reverse can hardly be called over-stated, when described in a minute, drawn up by two members of the Government of Fort St. George in the following terms: 'The disaster which has befallen us is such as cannot be paralleled since the English had possessions in India. We have lost a great part of our best officers, about 600 Europeans and 4,000 Sepoys. The remains of our Army have been obliged to retreat with the greatest precipitation, and Hyder Ally, fearless

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, *Narrative of the Military Operations against Hyder Ali Cawn*, pp. 133-4.

<sup>2</sup> For full details of Baillie's disaster and Munro's retreat see Innes Munro, Letter 12.



and unopposed, now ravages the Carnatic.' The inhabitants of Madras put on mourning, Munro was hooted in the streets; 'such as had habitations in the Fort crowded into them for safety, such as could not come into the Fort crowded into the Black town.'<sup>1</sup>

Nor was this all, for Sir Edward Hughes, the Admiral in command on the East Indian station, sent word of having received reliable intelligence that seven sail of the line, carrying seven thousand soldiers, had sailed from France to assist the enemies of England in India.

Warren Hastings at once grasped the situation and acted with decision. Most men would immediately have called a meeting of the Council, but Hastings purposely put off summoning his colleagues for two days, thus avoiding the taking of measures bred of the panic of the moment, and giving him time for evolving and perfecting his plans. He gave up all idea of engaging the Mahrattas; he disregarded the imminent danger facing Bengal and its adjacent territories; he determined that 'while I have a soldier, or a rupee, I will never abandon the Carnatic; for if we do not fight Hyder Ally in that country, we shall have to fight him here'. Having decided upon his line of action, he issued two important orders; he laid an embargo on all the shipping in the Hoogly river, with directions to be ready to proceed to Madras in five days, and he ordered that fifteen *lakhs* of rupees stored in Fort William should be packed ready for transport.<sup>2</sup>

On Monday the 25th September the great Pro-Consul met his Council, and read a minute he had prepared, and which is surely, all the attendant circumstances considered, one of the most forceful and dignified of State Papers ever penned.

The minute<sup>3</sup> is unfortunately too long to be here quoted *in extenso*, but the following extracts must be given. Mr. Hastings began by reminding his colleagues present—Messrs. Francis and Wheler and General Sir Eyre Coote—that 'this is not a time either for long deliberation at home or the formal and tedious process of negotiation abroad', and after relating to his hearers all that had happened in the South, telling them of the alarm and despondency so conspicuous at Fort St. George, and of the reinforcements expected from France, he proposed the steps which he considered should be taken to meet the most serious danger and to hold off, temporarily at least, the more trifling menaces. The proposals were briefly that fifteen *lakhs* of

<sup>1</sup> Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. iii, chap. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Grier, p. 78 et seq.

<sup>3</sup> Forrest, *Selections from State Papers*, 1772-85, vol. ii, pp. 718-20.

rupees be sent to Madras ; that a large detachment of European infantry and artillery be at once transferred to Fort St. George ; that an immediate offer of peace, under certain conditions, be made to the Mahrattas ; that these be invited to enter into an alliance with the Company against the French and Hyder Ali ; and that Goddard and Camac be forthwith directed to suspend all hostilities. To the proposition that a detachment of European infantry and artillery be sent to Fort St. George,

‘ as a necessary and essential part of it,’ said Hastings, ‘ I must add the following, viz., that the Commander-in-Chief be requested, and I do for my own part make it my most earnest and particular request that he will proceed himself immediately to the Coast, and take the command of the army in that establishment.

‘ The Commander-in-Chief will pardon this formal and official solicitation. I know the ardor of his zeal for the public service, and that this principle will of itself impel him wherever it shall most require his presence ; but I think this a case in which it would mark too great an indifference to the public welfare, and too cold a sense of the utility of his services, to leave the offer of them to his unsolicited option. I make no scruple to avow that although I am convinced that the danger impending on our interests in the Carnatic might be easily repelled even with the force which it already possesses for its defence, yet I cannot place any reliance upon it, unless it shall be properly applied and conducted ; that I do not think it has been properly applied, nor expect that it will be properly conducted, unless Sir Eyre Coote will at this crisis stand forth and vindicate in his own person the rights and honor of the British arms. I mean not to compliment. It is military experience, and above all the high estimation in which his name is held by the world, and especially by that part of it where it was principally acquired, mark him as the only possible instrument to retrieve our past disgraces, or to preserve the British interests and possessions in the Carnatic from utter ruin. Our armies which have been so long formed to the habits of conquest, will not easily recover from the impression of the dreadful reverse which has lately befallen them, nor be brought to act with their former confidence under unsuccessful commanders. The addition of numbers will not relieve their apprehensions, and will not but contribute to oppress the hands which have been already proved too weak to sustain the weight of an inferior charge.’

The consideration of these wise proposals was deferred until a meeting of the Council on the following day, when Francis and Wheler objected to every single one of them, except that respecting the Commander-in-Chief, on the ground that Bengal itself was in danger, and that consequently neither treasure nor troops could be spared for Madras.

Sir Eyre Coote concurred with the Governor-General, whose casting vote enabled every one of these proposals to be carried into effect ; but when we consider all that the votes of the administrator and the soldier that day meant in the preservation of India to England, it should be remembered that when Hastings, following the line which his duty clearly showed him, sent Coote to the coast, he virtually, for all that he then knew to the contrary, was resigning the government of affairs at this supremest crisis into the hands of Francis and Wheler.<sup>1</sup>

The Commander-in-Chief at once agreed to proceed to Madras, and at a consultation held on the 26th September he handed to the Council a 'state' of the forces in Bengal, and also a plan for the defence of Bengal and Oudh, which he had prepared at the request of the Board. As an invasion of Behar was to be expected, Sir Eyre Coote proposed to station a large body of infantry in that province, together with two regiments of horse, and one thousand or as many of Cheyte Singh's cavalry as they could command. (This was the origin of the demand for cavalry on Cheyte Singh ;<sup>2</sup> it was suggested by Coote and not by Hastings, whom Macaulay accuses of making the demand in order to fasten a quarrel upon Cheyte Singh whom he had determined to punish.) Coote further recommended that Rohilcund should be defended by a battalion of sepoys, a thousand of the Vizier's infantry, and as many of the troops of Faizulla Khan, the Rohilla chief, as could be procured. The Board unanimously adopted the suggestions put forward by the Commander-in-Chief.

Sir Eyre asked that directions be sent to the commanders of all detachments in the field to act in concert with the Commander-in-Chief and obey his orders in all matters : this more particularly referred to Goddard's and Camac's detachments, and the necessary orders were issued on the 18th October.

The ships taken up for the accommodation of the troops and treasure destined for Madras appear to have been the *Duke of Kingston*, the *Fox*, the *Walpole*, and the *True Briton*, but as they were all unrigged and with no stores on board the troops seem to have been ready before their transport.

In the *Bengal Gazette*, under date of the 6th October, there is an announcement of the sale of carriages and horses the property of

<sup>1</sup> Fortunately Francis returned to England on the 3rd December in the *Fox*.

<sup>2</sup> This formed part of Charge 1 against Hastings at his trial.

Lieut.-Colonel Arthur Owen, Adjutant-General and Aide-de-Camp to General Sir Eyre Coote; and on the 14th of the same month we read that

‘ Sir Eyre Coote with the detachment for Fort St. George embarked this day. The troops made a handsome appearance and behaved themselves on the occasion with all the steadiness, cheerfulness and obedience that may be expected from good soldiers, not a man declined the service, but the whole went off with a determined resolution not to dishonour the establishment from which they were sent; and the Commander of the brigade to which these brave men belong having, by a very humane regulation, secured their children and other dependents from want during their absence, it has enabled them to go on this service with the greatest tranquillity and satisfaction.’

The sailing of the transports was, however, delayed, for it is on record in the *Bengal Gazette*, under date of the 21st October, that

‘ the troops lately draughted from this settlement, and which embarked for Madras the 14th, are still lying at Culpee in a very sickly situation, that one or more of the ships taken up by Government was so deeply laden with rice that the pilots refused to take charge of them as they drew too much water to pass over the flats. The *Duke of Kingston*,<sup>1</sup> with 15 *lacs* aboard, has been aground for several days and believed to be much injured.’

Hastings went down the river to inspect the ships and the troops, and ‘ the General ’, he writes to Sullivan,<sup>2</sup>

‘ sailed on the 23rd, and on that night and the succeeding day we had a violent storm; it blew from the north, and though it shifted after some hours to the south, yet the Deputy Harbour-master who attended the *Duchess* (sic) of *Kingston*, assures me that she was advanced into such fair sea-room that she could not have suffered much by it. Two of the vessels had sailed on the 21st.’

The resolution which had been passed by the Council at Calcutta was that ‘ two companies of artillery with three battalions of lascars, four field pieces, and one battalion of European infantry from the 1st Brigade were to embark for Madras immediately ’. The European battalion selected for this service was the 2nd Battalion 1st European Regiment.<sup>3</sup> (To each company of artillery a battalion of six companies of lascars was attached: they were to perform the whole duty dependent on the corps of artillery, and to be instructed in the usual services of artillery, with the exception of ‘ loading and pointing guns

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards—20th August 1783—destroyed by fire off the northern coast of Ceylon, 3 passengers, 22 of the crew, and 32 men, 6 women and 2 children of the 52nd Regiment being lost.

<sup>2</sup> Gleig, vol. ii, p. 324.

<sup>3</sup> Now the 1st Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers.

and mortars'. They were dressed in uniform and armed with light pikes so constructed as to be capable of being formed into a *chevaux-de-frise*.) But the force which actually accompanied the Commander-in-Chief consisted of 330 European infantry, two companies of artillery each one hundred strong, a corps of volunteers numbering 45, the detachment of the 73rd Regiment which had been sent up from Madras to serve as his body-guard, and 630 gun lascars. According to a note on p. 175, vol. i, *Naval and Military Magazine*, containing the memoirs of the late Lieut.-Colonel Richard Scott,

'this body of volunteers was composed of young gentlemen, mostly from Ireland, who had been recruited by Colonel Brooke, afterwards Governor of St. Helena; they served with great credit and as vacancies occurred in the Bengal Corps of Infantry, they were appointed officers; Sir Eyre Coote often spoke of this small corps in terms of high commendation.'

Sir Eyre Coote took with him 15 *lakhs* of rupees in specie, not for a civil supply, but for the sole use of the army, and he also carried with him an order for the suspension of Mr. Whitehill, the acting Governor of Madras—an act which had been ordered by the Supreme Council for permitting the retention of Guntoor after having been directed to give it up, and for a flagrant and general disregard of the wishes of the Governor-General and Council.

Mrs. Fay dismissed the General with the valediction one might expect of her: she writes on the 27th September: 'that fine old veteran Sir Eyre Coote is about to take the field, and his very name will strike those undisciplined hordes with terror. Oh! how I feel interested in the event!'

Lady Coote does not appear to have accompanied Sir Eyre to Madras, but remained behind at Gheretty.

It was now further decided, in consequence apparently of a recommendation which had been made by Sir Eyre Coote prior to his departure, to send additional reinforcements to the Carnatic by land, and the force selected was in the first instance to have consisted of six battalions of sepoy, with a company of European infantry and twelve guns. The command of these troops was bestowed upon Colonel Pearse, commandant of artillery, and they were to march from Midnapur to the Carnatic by way of Cuttack, where they were to be joined by 2,000 of the Berar Cavalry.<sup>1</sup> The six battalions were

<sup>1</sup> For a brief memoir of Colonel T. D. Pearse see *Blackwood's Magazine* for May 1909; while there is an account of his march in the British Museum Add. MSS.

reduced to five owing to the sixth being found to be in a state of mutiny due to some unsettled claims for prize money, and its place was then apparently taken by one of those companies of Golundaz of which mention has already been made. The regiments selected for this service were the 12th (Edmonstone), 13th (Blane), 24th (Kilpatrick), 25th (Wedderburne), and 26th (Byrnes).

Colonel Pearse had incurred the enmity of the proprietor of the *Bengal Gazette* by recalling to duty an English gunner who had been allowed to assist Mr. Hicky with his press, and Hicky never loses an opportunity of ridiculing or belittling Colonel Pearse. In his anxiety to be quite clear as to every detail of his instructions, the Commander of the Cuttack column had addressed a series of twenty-three questions<sup>1</sup> to the Governor-General as to his conduct under various situations. In Question 14 he inquired what he was to do with Hyder Ali should the Mysore chief fall into his hands, whose prisoner he was to be considered, and whether he was to be sent to Bengal or Madras. Hicky naturally could not allow this to pass without notice, and in a contemporary copy of the *Bengal Gazette* we read as follows: 'From the known valour and great martial ability of Colonel — who commands the detachment under marching orders for the Coast, we may shortly expect to see Hyder in chains, a companion to the Lyon in the G——'s compound at Buckingham House. N.B. The Cage is preparing.'

Colonel Pearse's force suffered many delays, and did not finally start from Midnapore until the 9th January 1781.

Sir Eyre Coote reached Madras on the 5th November, two days after Arcot fell to Hyder, and was received, alike by soldiers and civilians, with demonstrations of joy and relief.<sup>2</sup> One who was then serving in the 73rd Regiment wrote on the advent of the Commander-in-Chief:

'From a state of unmanly despondency, every countenance was flushed with joy and expectation by the appearance of Lieutenant General Sir Eyre Coote, who had come thither from Bengal to take upon him the command of the Army. With the generality of people, unaccustomed to weigh causes with events, his very name carried with it a charm sufficient of itself to effect a retrieval of our affairs. The appearance of this officer is indeed highly pleasing and respectable. Though much emaciated by a long residence in this enervating climate, he yet bears the air of a hardy veteran; and though at the age of

<sup>1</sup> Gleig, vol. ii, p. 393 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> Innes Munro, pp. 205-6.

sixty-three,<sup>1</sup> cheerfully submits to the unremitting duties and trying hardships of the field. He is also renowned for an intrepid spirit and judicious conduct; which together with a fascinating mien and an outward affectation of countenancing the sepoy, are said to have given him a great ascendancy over the black troops; an important accomplishment not easily to be attained by commanders in this country. This last indeed is the chief cause assigned for sending General Coote to command at this critical period upon the Coromandel coast.'

In Hicky's *Gazette* of the 16th December 1780 there is published a letter from Madras, dated 17th November, in which it is stated: 'Sir Eyre Coote's arrival made us very happy. The troops are a reasonable supply though not a force equal to our exigencies.'

One of the first duties Sir Eyre had to perform was the suspension of Mr. Whitehill—a task he carried out with very considerable tact. At a Council meeting held two days after his arrival, General Coote took his seat as Second in Council, and producing the Order suspending Whitehill, signed by the four members of the Supreme Council, delivered a Minute 'declining to enter upon any discussion of the matter, declaring his conviction of the right of the Council of Bengal to exercise their authority as they had done, and his intention of supporting it. At the same time he made it clear that he had no personal feeling in the matter and that should Mr. Whitehill hereafter be reinstated, he (Coote) would cheerfully co-operate with him'.

By these methods Mr. Whitehill seems to have been in a measure disarmed, and the motion that he be suspended and succeeded as President and Governor by Mr. Charles Smith was put and, on the 8th November, carried, Mr. Whitehill apparently doing no more than announcing his intention of prosecuting the Supreme Council for committing an illegal act.

In Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* of the 9th to 16th December 1780 Whitehill's deposition is thus referred to:

'Madras, 17th November. The suspension of Mr. Whitehill by the Supreme Council, tho' undoubtedly illegal, met with no opposition. Our critical situation demands unanimity of councils and measures, and Mr. W——'s private and public character is so despicable as to render him undeserving a moment's consideration. The times require a Cotsford at the head of our Presidency; they require not only an honest but a sensible man.'

<sup>1</sup> General Coote was at this time in his fifty-fifth year.

Mr. Whitehill's *honesty* seems to be seriously impugned in the *India Gazette* of the 13th July 1782 :

' Europe Intelligence via Bussorah. Mr. Whitehill, has been obliged to fly to France in order, it is said, to save his life ; there appearing strong proofs of his being the owner of the *Elizabeth*, the ship that took the *Osterley*, Indiaman.'

There was also another disciplinary measure which at this time engaged General Coote's attention. General James Stuart<sup>1</sup> had arrived in Madras in May 1776, and had been appointed a colonel of infantry on the Fort St. George establishment. In the autumn of the same year he was instrumental in arresting the Governor, Lord Pigot, for which act he was suspended by order of the Board of Directors dated the 11th June 1777. He remained under suspension throughout the administration of Rumbold, the Government being doubtful whether a charge could be framed against him, as he had acted throughout under the orders of the majority in Council, and points of difficulty were constantly referred backwards and forwards between India and England. Sir Eyre Coote seems to have experienced no hesitation in coming to a decision on the matter, and directed the assembly of a court martial, in November 1780, on a charge of ' having begun, excited, caused and joined in Mutiny in seizing and causing to be seized and arrested, and in imprisoning and causing to be imprisoned by a Military force, on the 24th August 1776, the person of George, Lord Pigot, then President and Governor of Fort St. George, and Commander-in-Chief of the Garrison of Fort St. George '.

Lord Macleod of the 73rd was president of the court martial, and the finding was as follows :

' After the most mature consideration of what has appeared for and against the Prisoner, Brigadier-General James Stuart, the Court are of opinion that he is not guilty of Mutiny as exhibited in the charge against him by the Honorable the East India Company, and they do therefore Honorably acquit him.'

Stuart was accordingly restored to his office as Second in Command, with succession to Munro as Commander-in-Chief in Madras.

General Stuart was not approved of by the proprietor of the *Bengal Gazette*, by whom he is always referred to, unflatteringly, as ' Brigadier General Judas Iscariot '.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He had served as a captain in the 56th Foot in Nova Scotia, Belleisle, Martinique and Havana, becoming Lieut.-Colonel in 1761. Not to be confused with Colonel James Stuart of the 78th. Both officers performed very similar service, both held the chief command in Southern India.

<sup>2</sup> See Love, vol. iii, where the Pigot-Stuart episode is fully described.





ADMIRAL HUGHES

From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds



The Admiral commanding the East India station at this time was Sir Edward Hughes, who had relieved Admiral Vernon in January 1780, when he escorted to Madras the transports conveying the 73rd Regiment. He was said to have accepted a present of Rs.300,000 from the Nawab of Arcot, and under the name of 'Sir Edward Durbar' is frequently abused in Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* for spending his time on shore with the Nawab at Chepauk instead of aboard his flagship. When he put to sea, Hicky affected to be much concerned and offered a trifling reward for the recovery of his body, dead or alive, circulating at the same time the following libellous description: 'He is a short, thick-set, fat man; his skin fits remarkably tight about him; has very rosy gills, and drivels a little at the mouth from the constant use of quids'.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Eyre Coote had reported his arrival and the fate of Arcot to Hastings, but on the 10th November he submitted a long despatch to the Bengal Council, which was read and replied to at their meeting of the 14th December. In his communication the Commander-in-Chief pointed out the need he experienced of the appointment of an *Adjutant General for India*, now that armies from the different establishments were acting together, and he asked that Lieut.-Colonel Owen be appointed to the new office. 'The officer who fills the post of Adjutant-General in this establishment is, I dare say, deserving,' he adds, 'but from the partial routine of his duty is totally unacquainted with the general system of all the different establishments.'

To this letter he added words of graver import. The Madras correspondent of Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* writes in the issue of the 2nd December: 'General Coote, on his landing at Madras and finding the infamous mismanagement of affairs, uttered the following expressive words from Hamlet: "Ah me, seeing what I have seen, seeing what I now see"'.<sup>2</sup> Mention has already been made of the disorder he had found in the government of Fort St. George, and from what follows it will be noticed how greatly the recent disaster had caused Sir Eyre to change the views he had formerly held, and had indeed expressed only as recently as January 1779, in regard to the efficiency of the Madras army.

'I went yesterday,' he wrote from Fort St. George, 'to review the

<sup>1</sup> Hughes served under Vernon at Porto Bello in 1739; he became an Admiral in 1793. For full details of his various actions with Suffren see Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power upon History*.

<sup>2</sup> The correct quotation would seem to be, 'O, woe is me, to have seen what I have seen, see what I see.' *Hamlet*, Act iii, Scene 1.

army encamped five miles from hence; appearances not in their favor, but what is worse I found from the officer in command of the sepoy that the capture of Arcot, from whence they most come, has, from the circumstance of their wives, families, and other near relations being there, not only dispirited them, but created in them that kind of aversion to the service which has already produced many desertions, and in case of actual service given us every reason to apprehend infidelity. Judge from this, how anxious I must be for a recruit of sepoy from Bengal, even if the detachment which is to come by land is set out, as it is impossible it can reach me for these four months to come, long before which time I conceive everything will be decided one way or other. I must entreat it of you as a point most material to the success of my operations, and absolutely necessary to avert that danger, that you use your endeavours to obtain volunteers from among the battalions. There are many possibly who will undertake a voyage which at this season is very short, and send some to me, many opportunities may offer by the ships which now daily sail from Calcutta to this place. When at camp I was surprized to regard their supply of provisions, which I found come in so scanty as to be scarcely sufficient for one day's expense. The town of Madras now lives on the supply lately come from your quarter, of which there is not enough in store for one month's expenditure. The country around affords us no assistance. They promise a supply of grain from the north, but none is likely to arrive soon—in short we have no certain dependence but from Bengal. I must request therefore that you afford us every assistance by sending constant supplies, and giving every encouragement to the importation of all kinds of grain to this place.'

Coote further estimated his requirements in cash at over seven lakhs of rupees *per mensem*, 'every cowrie of which must come from Bengal'.

On the 13th November all the troops in the neighbourhood, except those actually comprising the garrison of Fort St. George, were formed into three divisions and sent into cantonments at Madras as follows:

The 1st or Right Division, under Major-General Sir Hector Munro, was stationed at Vepery and Egmore, and consisted of:

- 1st Regiment of the Nawab's Cavalry.
- The Bengal Detachment.
- Six Companies of Grenadiers from the Northern Circars.
- The 2nd Battalion of Sepoys.

The Centre Division, under the Commander-in-Chief, was located on or near the Choultry Plain, and contained:

- 1st Battalion H.M.'s 73rd Regiment.
- Artillery and Stores.

The 2nd Battalion 1st European Regiment.

The 15th, 17th, and 21st Battalions of Sepoys.

The 2nd or Left Division, under Colonel Lord Macleod, was quartered at the Luz and in St. Thomé ; it consisted of :

The troop of European Cavalry.

The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Regiments of the Nawab's Cavalry.

The Tanjore Grenadiers.

The 16th Battalion of Sepoys.

The posts at the Great and Little Mounts were occupied by the Trichinopoly detachment (minus the grenadiers from Tanjore) under Captain Bilcliffe, with a party of artillery. Many of the principal residents of Madras gave up their houses and grounds for the accommodation of the troops.

On the 29th November the government of Fort St. George reported to the Directors as follows on the military situation :

' When our army had retired from Conjeveram in consequence of the defeat of Lieut.-Colonel Baillie, Hyder Ally moved towards Arcot, and laid siege to the Pettah of that place, which fell into his hands by assault the 31st ultimo after a resistance of six weeks. The Fort surrendered to him by capitulation the 3rd inst. The fall of Arcot is certainly an event of great importance to Hyder. It is the capital of the Nabob : there were lodged in it a very large quantity of Military Stores, which must prove highly serviceable to Hyder in prosecuting his further views of conquest and it is large enough to afford protection and accommodation for his whole army. . . . The whole country to be completely overran and laid waste by large bodies of cavalry is another circumstance exceedingly depressing to us as it cuts off our chief supplies of provisions and Draught and Carriage Bullocks for the use of the army. . . . From the best accounts we have obtained, Hyder Ally's force consists of 700 Europeans, 70,000 foot, 30,000 horse and 100 pieces of cannon. All the force we have that could be carried into the field, leaving but a small garrison in Fort St. George, would not, including all denominations, Infantry, Cavalry, and Artillery, exceed 5,000 effective men. . . . Every possible arrangement is being made by us and Sir Eyre Coote to act defensively, and, if practicable offensively, after the rains, but the General thinks our force is as yet inadequate to this task.'

It would appear that up to this time the Commander-in-Chief had not always been the channel of communication between officers of the army and Government, and the following order was consequently issued in December 1780 :

' Ordered that the channel of application in all military business

from officers to Government in future be through the Commander-in-Chief of the Forces. Resolved that temporary leave of absence be granted by the Governor to officers doing duty in the garrison of Fort St. George or town of Madras, and to all other officers by the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>2</sup>

This month also saw the publication of another order of far-reaching importance—that *all corps should in future parade two deep, unless particularly ordered otherwise*—a formation not unusual in the British army in America in this year, but now for the first time adopted in India.

To General Coote's letter of the 10th November reply was made on the 14th of the following month to the effect that Pearse's detachment had received orders to start for the coast, his guns and stores proceeding as far as Balasore by sea; that as the Court of Directors had once previously refused to consider the appointment of an Adjutant-General for all the military establishments, the Board, though regarding the proposal with favour, could do no more than again strongly recommend; but that the government of Fort William entertained no hope of being able to get sepoy volunteers to proceed to Madras by sea. As to the urgent request for supplies, the Board wrote:

'We are sorry to hear of the great scarcity of provisions of which you complain, and shall do all that we are able to furnish Fort St. George with supplies of grain from hence. The large quantity of rice which Mr. Fergusson engaged to deliver at that Presidency is shipped, and we have lately appointed an agent for providing several kinds of grain for their service in any quantities which he may be able to procure. We have already sent away some salt provisions on ships which have lately sailed; we have agreed to purchase a large quantity belonging to Mr. Samuel Touchet and now at Fort St. George, and we have agreed for a further supply of beef and pork deliverable here in February next.'

This official letter was supplemented a few weeks later by one to Coote from Hastings,<sup>1</sup> who quoted the offers which had been made to volunteers, viz. a gratuity of three months' pay; men to be commanded by their own officers; and ground to be granted for the residence of their families during their absence. The result had, however, been disappointing, and was less due, Hastings considered, to the remembrance or tradition of former ill-treatment when transported by sea, which had occasionally been 'brutal in the extreme', than to the secret influence of the native officers who persuaded the men not to

<sup>1</sup> British Museum Add. MSS. No. 29147, folio 48.

volunteer. As the ships available could not be filled up with men, Hastings had tried to send draught bullocks in their place, but here again, he says regretfully, he has been foiled as all the drivers ran away, He closes his letter in the following encouraging and sympathetic note : ' I can add no more at this time, but that you shall receive from me every aid and support which the resources of this Government can afford, and even more perhaps than you will be inclined to demand, and may God grant you the success which you deserve '.

Happy the commander in the field who is thus loyally supported by the responsible head of the Government which he serves !

On the 20th November Coote wrote again to Bengal pointing out that

' the field artillery requisite for the service is not in readiness, of which there needs no other testimony than barely my mentioning that at this moment carriages and tumbrils are making for it. This circumstance evinces how little that very essential branch of the service has been regarded. The draft cattle, besides being deficient in numbers, are in so weakly a condition that twenty yoke of them but two days ago with the greatest difficulty dragged a 12-pounder through the streets of the garrison. What then is to be expected of them in the unequal grounds and bad roads which must be met in the course of the campaign. . . . It is evident then that whenever I may march I must carry every article of provision for the use of the troops from hence ; and as I could not either in prudence, or from a knowledge of the length of time to which my operations may be extended, limit myself on that score, the quantity for which (supposing I either had or could procure sufficient carriage, of which there is not enough to convey six days' provisions) would be so considerable that against the very large bodies of horse which would harass me on all sides, my little army would scarcely prove an adequate guard. Had I but 4,000 cavalry to assist in this necessary part of duty I should apprehend nothing. As it is, until I am sufficiently prepared to act offensively, all I can promise myself is, that I shall most certainly engage the enemy should he move this way. I am at present taking means to procure a body of cavalry, in which, should I succeed, I shall esteem myself fortunate, notwithstanding the heavy additional expense it may subject the Company to. Favoured by the season, I am now preparing to send off, under a strong escort, a small supply of provisions for the garrison of Chingleput.'

Four days later he writes to Hastings and tells him that communications by land are cut between Madras and Bengal, that despatches have to be sent up the coast by *catamarans*, and that all the forts garrisoned by the troops of the Nawab of Arcot have surrendered on the appearance of a few of Hyder Ali's cavalry.

But it should be remembered that the vast size of the Mysore army—computed at 90,000 horse and foot, well-drilled and well-disciplined, supported by a powerful artillery manned by Europeans, ably led, and cared for by an admirably organized commissariat department—these were neither individually nor collectively its greatest asset. Hyder's real strength lay in the fact that the war, upon which he had entered, and for which he had so long been preparing, was of all those ever waged against the British in India, the one which is said to have enjoyed the most public sympathy,<sup>1</sup> prayers being offered up in all the mosques for the success of the Mysore chief and for the downfall of 'a people worse than women . . . a set of merchants without a name . . . a handful of tradesmen who in their nature are like foxes', as described by the Nizam in an intercepted letter.

Innes Munro gives a very full description<sup>2</sup> of the army of Hyder Ali, who was then about 60 years of age; he gives its numbers as 60,000 horse and 50,000 foot, with a hundred guns; of Europeans there were two troops of French cavalry under M. Pimoran, and 500 infantry under M. Lally, a nephew of Coote's old antagonist. 'The regular infantry', he adds, 'really cut a good appearance, being clothed in red and green, with different coloured facings, and armed with French and many English musquets and bayonets of a good kind. . . . Hyder's train of artillery is chiefly composed of French and Danish guns of different calibres, but most commonly heavy metal, which are doubly yoked with trained bullocks; and are as well and expeditiously served as ours.'

Something should now be said about the troops which Coote was to lead against one of the most formidable antagonists whom the British have ever had to meet in India.

The cavalry maintained in Madras by the Company consisted at this time of only a weak troop of Europeans, some 33 in number, under a Lieutenant Younge. For Native Cavalry the Presidency depended on the Nawab of Arcot, who maintained several regiments officered by Europeans, some of which belonged to the Company's service and others to that of the Nawab. A regiment of this force was in camp at the Mount in August 1780, when Sir Hector Munro was about to march for Conjeveram, but the men's pay was fourteen months in arrear and they declined to move without it. This the Nawab refused, and the Company having no funds for such a purpose, the men were

<sup>1</sup> Keene, *History of India*, vol. i, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> Innes Munro, p. 130 et seq.



disarmed and sent to Madras ; the cavalry which eventually accompanied Munro consisted of the 33 European troopers and some 56 native cavalrymen, mostly native officers and non-commissioned officers.

It was, however, absolutely necessary that Coote should have a body of cavalry, and in order that the regiments should be regularly paid, four of the Nawab's regiments were taken into the Company's service, and rules framed regulating the relative rank of the European officers of the Company's and Nawab's service. These four formed a brigade commanded by a Colonel Cosby. Their strength in January 1781 did not exceed all told 800 rank and file.<sup>1</sup>

They were commanded respectively by Captains John Paterson (Wilson calls him Pater) of the Nawab's service, Edward Jourdan, Company's service, J. D. Stevenson, Nawab's service, and John Macalister, Company's service. All these four regiments mutinied at Arnee in 1784 owing to their pay being in arrears, and the only one which survives is the 3rd Regiment, now represented by the 27th Light Cavalry, late 2nd Madras Lancers.

According to Innes Munro two light guns drawn by horses were attached to each regiment, and the guns were served by 50 men of the light infantry for every two guns.

At this time Coote seems to have been much disturbed at the reduced state of the 73rd, the only King's regiment under his command. This corps had suffered very greatly, while operating under Munro, from the effects of the sun, and on the 1st December 1780 Sir Eyre Coote felt constrained to address the Right Honourable Charles Jenkinson, then Secretary at War and afterwards Lord Liverpool, as follows :<sup>2</sup>

' You will observe from the Returns the very reduced strength of His Majesty's 73rd Regiment, which presents to us too strong a proof that Highland constitutions are not suitable to this climate, although they are men of apparently robust habit ; the same mortality prevailed in Colonel Morris' Highland Regiment when I commanded it here last war. I must therefore recommend that in future in recruiting for the India service, as few of them as possible be sent out.'

These remarks were evidently ' passed for information and remark ' to Colonel (then Major-General) Morris, who retorted that the *sobriety* of the Highland soldier was greatly in his favour. In a letter from

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, vol. ii, p. 106 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> This letter, a very long one, or a copy of it, will be found in the Public Record Office in W. O. unnumbered Papers, 40-2.

Coote to Jenkinson of the 31st August 1782 he admits that 'preference may certainly be given to the Highlanders for their temperance', but he remarks on the fatal effects of the climate on the 78th, then lately arrived, 'which furnishes strong and recent proof that their constitutions are not adapted to service in this country,' and states he has always observed the sufferings of Highlanders in India to be greater in proportion than those of men of other countries.

The want of European troops was much felt: neither the Bengal nor the Madras European Regiment was at full strength; and Hastings in a letter written on the 28th April 1781<sup>1</sup> mentions a statement by Coote that 'without a great augmentation of European infantry he could not risk an engagement with Hyder Ali'. To meet this want Hastings adopted extraordinary measures: he entered into negotiations with the Dutch East India Company for the loan of a body of European troops, of which a thousand were to be infantry and two hundred artillery. The Governor-General offered terms which his biographer admits were 'somewhat extravagant', but the negotiations came to nothing, the Dutch, as usual, 'giving too little and asking too much': and before any arrangement could be made and ratified war had broken out between Great Britain and Holland. The Madras authorities and the Commander-in-Chief had vehemently opposed Hastings's proposals.

The following extract from the advertisement page of a London newspaper<sup>2</sup> of the period shows that the Directors at home were doing all they could to attract recruits to keep up the establishment of their European regiments in India:

'A number of Recruits are now raising in London by Mr. Bate, By Order of the East India Company, which are to sail with the next fleet. Young men of spirit, from 16 to 34 years of age, that are free from rupture or any other disorder, and willing to serve the Hon. United East India Company, in their military service, only for five years, under the command of that noble and brave Hibernian, General Sir Eyre Coote, K.B. Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in India.—Now is your time to apply to Mr. Bate, No. 16, Cumberland Street, Goodge Street, Tottenham Court-road, London.—Observe it is not a public-house. He engages Volunteers for that Hon. Company's service.

'Each young man will be fitted out when on board of the Company's ships at Gravesend with bed, bedding and all necessary cloathing for the voyage, and a compliment in money at the Company's expence.

<sup>1</sup> Gleig, vol. ii, pp. 336-7.

<sup>2</sup> *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 31st August 1781.

Likewise a copy of his attestation, signed by one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, to certify for the time, and no longer, which will be delivered to him, and a tin case to keep it in at the time of engaging. When in camp your pay is 1s. 8d. per day, with other advantages. Men five feet three and upwards are taken; lads five foot one are entered, but no apprentice without his master or friends' consent.

'Swiss and Germans wanted. The ships will soon be ready to sail.'

In the letter which Coote wrote on the 1st December 1780 to the Secretary at War, and from which quotation has been made already, he asked for 'six battalions of Europeans and a large corps of artillery to defend and give permanency to our possessions'; and we may perhaps here state what was done during 1781 to give effect to the demands of the Commander-in-Chief. There is some correspondence in the Public Record Office,<sup>1</sup> about the raising of regiments for service in India, between Lord Amherst and Mr. Jenkinson. The first of these is dated 15th September 1781, and discusses the raising of a regiment of light dragoons to be commanded by Colonel Sir John Burgoyne, Bt., and composed of drafts from the several regiments of light dragoons in England. Then two letters dated the 19th September refer to the raising of two regiments of infantry. The first of these, afterwards numbered the 101st, was to be commanded by Colonel Robert Sandford and raised from independent companies under Captains Douglas, Fuller, Cole, Freer, S. Campbell, Warren, Beacroft, Baillie, Jackson, and A. Campbell. The other, which enjoyed a brief existence as the 102nd Foot, was to be made up of independent companies commanded by Captains Armstrong, Mallett, Ryan, Honeybourne, Featherstone, G. Browne, and Pyne, with three others not named, and was to be under Colonel William Rowley. The date of the creation of these three corps is given as the 24th September, and they all reached India during 1782.

These efforts seem to have exhausted the supply of British corps for the safeguarding of our Indian Empire at that date, for the other troops obtained and sent to India were Hanoverians, comprising a regiment of two battalions under a Colonel Reinbold, raised in Hanover, administered under its own martial law, and having two small field guns attached to each battalion.

On the 30th December 1780, General Sir Eyre Coote called a Council of War composed of himself, Sir Hector Munro, and Lord Macleod, at which it was unanimously agreed that the whole army should move

<sup>1</sup> W. O. unnumbered Papers, 40-2.

to the relief of the garrisons of Vellore, Wandewash, and Permacoil—the safety of these two last, and of Chingleput, which had also been invested, being considered as of great importance. ‘The effective strength of the army was 6,885 infantry, cavalry and artillery, and perhaps another 500 sepoy might be added. Taking a comparative view of the enemy’s force and his own,’ the General was of opinion that ‘they might engage with success, if forced to do so; that employing detachments was not desirable as the army could not afford to detach a division. A movement for the relief of those garrisons would necessarily expose Fort St. George, the foundation of the English interests on the Coast, from whence indeed our army must derive its supplies’. On that point the Commander-in-Chief wished to have the advice of the General Officers and also upon this other point—whether, if they should succeed merely in relieving the garrisons above mentioned and return to the station they had left, any disadvantage to their affairs would follow from that step? That he despaired of sepoy being sent by sea from Bengal, and those who were to march by land had not set out on the 14th of that month, and that it depended on Moodajee Bhonsla<sup>1</sup> whether they should ever come or not.

According to the Madras correspondent of Hicky’s *Bengal Gazette*,<sup>2</sup> the view of the Council of War was ‘that from the good discipline and numbers of our present force, much superior to any ever brought into the field in Asia, and from a confidence in the abilities of the Commander-in-Chief and officers under him, many advantages were to be expected, and that at all events the evident danger of procrastination more than preponderated the chances of success which they had every reason to flatter themselves with’. Mr. Hicky’s correspondent adds that, ‘in consequence of this spirited opinion our army immediately marched, and we have every reason to expect a speedy and happy issue to our troubles in this quarter’.

The Commander-in-Chief’s arrangements having been completed, he marched from the Mount on the 17th January 1781 with the following force :

Artillery: From both the Bengal and Madras Presidencies, in number about 400, with four 5½ inch howitzers, two 18-pounders, four 12-pounders, and thirty-four 6-pounders.

<sup>1</sup> The Berar Chief.

<sup>2</sup> *Bengal Gazette* of the 17th–24th February 1781.

Cavalry : The European troop about 50 strong.

Four regiments of the Nawab's cavalry, paid and officered by the Madras Government, each regiment 200 strong.

Infantry : H.M.'s 73rd Regiment, 600 strong.

The Bengal European Battalion, 350 strong.

The Madras European Battalion, 200 strong (Munro says 250).

Seven battalions of sepoy.

The Trichinopoly detachment.

The Grenadier battalion, 8 companies, from the Northern Circars.

A company of marksmen.

A company of Pioneers.

'General Stuart was left in command of Fort St. George, Black Town, and the Mount with 200 Europeans, fifty artillery and 500 Sepoys. The effective force under the immediate command of Sir Eyre Coote, consisted of the finest body of men, Europeans and native, ever seen in India, numbering 8,000 infantry, 800 cavalry, and sixty-two pieces of artillery with gunners complete and abundance of military stores ; all were animated with the highest spirits and confidence in a leader who had so often led them to victory, and on leaving the Mount this feeling was expressed by loud and hearty cheers.'<sup>1</sup>

This estimate is rather too high, for the total effective strength of the force was 7,450, of whom 1,600 were Europeans.

#### NOTE TO CHAPTER XI

It has been considered best to give in the form of a note the substance of the complaints put forward by General Sir Eyre Coote from time to time against the members of the Supreme Government in Bengal as a body, and individually against the Governor-General, since they extended over two or three years, during the time that the Commander-in-Chief was conducting the operations in the Carnatic ; and it is thought better to give a consecutive record of them rather than to interrupt the main narrative by mentioning these complaints as they occurred.

It has been usual with historians, who have dealt with this particular period, to represent Sir Eyre Coote as one whom age, infirmity, and ill-health had rendered unduly querulous, prone to find fault in and out of season, ready to take offence without excuse, and to resent attacks upon the dignity of his office which had never been made. It must be confessed that this view finds some justification when we

<sup>1</sup> Neill, *Historical Records of the Madras European Regiment*, p. 283.

read only the Commander-in-Chief's many letters and complaints, without previously analysing the causes which had led him to pen them. It should be remembered that when Coote first served in India the whole administration, civil and military, of the British settlements, was entirely in the hands of the civilian element in the different governments. 'In those days the civil servants had the sole controul of the military. They gave out the parole, and all orders from the Council passed through them.'<sup>1</sup>

It is quite clear that the wholly subordinate position of the soldier in India was designed by the directors of the Company, from the fact that all military men were warned, prior to their admission to the H. E. I. C.'s service, that 'they were to be entirely subject to the authority of the Company's Civil Representatives'; and in a letter, dated 25 March 1768 from the Court of Directors, it is expressly stated that this notice or warning was given 'not merely with respect to such officers, but to remind the Presidency' (in this case Madras) 'of the power they always had, and which it was necessary constantly to keep up, in order to preserve that authority over the military which was essentially necessary for the good of the Service.'

It is possible that in times of actual emergency this most pernicious system was set aside by soldiers of real strength of character, conscious of their own ability, and willing to take the consequences of their assumption of a responsibility denied them by regulation, custom, and tradition; and it must also be admitted that in the majority of cases the head of the government was sufficiently large minded to pass over, and even to approve, the over-setting, in time of stress, of the established authority of the civilian. But it is not good military policy to have one system during peace which *may* be upset on the outbreak of war or disturbance; and one may well believe that what seem like mere querulous complaints by the Commander-in-Chief against the invasion of his authority, were no more than carefully thought out protests against the continuance of a system which he *knew* to be wrong, and which it was his intention to try and improve away during his tenure of office.

It may be noticed that these complaints seem to commence, or to become acute, from the time that the General left Calcutta, soon after his arrival, to proceed up country on inspection duty. During 1779 and 1780 the Commander-in-Chief reviewed every corps in the northern army; he reported well on nearly all of them, particularly distinguishing the corps in Oudh, the furthest removed from the control of superior authority, as being 'some of the finest corps he had ever seen in the field';<sup>2</sup> but he probably noticed that the units of the army looked rather to the civilian heads of their districts than to the military superior, as the authority under whom they served and as the fountain of honour and advancement. This feeling as to the general outlook of the army must have been intensified by the way in which, during

<sup>1</sup> Williams, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, pp. 191, 192.

Coote's absence from the Presidency, orders on military matters were issued without reference to him as head of the army. This system was no doubt one of old standing, though possibly in abeyance during the time of General Clavering, who seems to have been more of a Councillor than a Commander-in-Chief, and rarely absented himself from Calcutta for other than very brief periods; probably it was inconvenient to refer matters to a Commander-in-Chief when up country, and still more so when Coote was moving about the Carnatic; but a careful consideration of the whole question from the point of view of a soldier, must lead one to the conclusion that it was really high time that the Head of the army made a stand to change a system which, always unwise, had now become a danger; while no one can read the replies to General Coote's complaints without coming to the conclusion that those to whom they were addressed admitted their justness, while smarting sometimes under the terms in which they were expressed.

One of the earliest of these many letters of complaint was commenced in Bengal and was concluded at Madras on the 1st December; it is addressed to the Secretary at War, and in it Coote writes bitterly of the 'inimical proceedings of the Board' towards him, that they 'exclude him entirely from all knowledge of their transactions, make him merely a channel for the conveyance of their orders, and set him aside both as Commander-in-Chief and as member of the Board'. In this letter, however, as in all others containing complaints and accusations, the Commander-in-Chief bears ungrudging testimony to the manner in which the Bengal Government has met all his 'proposals for our safety'.

In August 1779 certain new regulations for the army had been proposed by the Commander-in-Chief and had been 'passed' by the Board; but thereafter a new organization was created, and on the 1st March 1780 Coote addressed a letter to Fort William protesting against these arrangements having been made without 'the least public report having been made me of them. I protest against the whole as irregular, unmilitary and burthening the Honorable Company with an enormous additional expense, which I am clearly satisfied there was no necessity for incurring, and much less at a time when the Company's funds can so ill afford it.' He complained later that many of the officers who had accompanied him from Bengal on the present service had not only been passed over for promotion, but had all with one exception been excluded in the distribution of commands to which their seniority gave them an undoubted right. He further protested against Colonel Pearse having been given 'a permanent and exclusive authority', and he wound up: 'In short, Gentlemen, I see so little credit to be derived from acting in my capacity of Commander-in-Chief in India, whilst its powers and privileges are liable to be wantonly arrogated by others, that I declare nothing but my attachment for the welfare of my nation, and the very critical situation of the English interests in India would delay me a moment in exonerating

myself from a charge so irksome and unthankful. Nor will I deny myself the satisfaction of committing in this place to record, that I ascribe the whole of these late encroachments upon the rights of my station to the Governor-General, as he now unites in his own person the whole powers of Government, and who, in his public character, I had a right to have expected far different treatment from.'

This letter was considered by the Bengal Council on the 21st May 1781, when Hastings stated that he had been informed by Brigadier-General Stibbert that copies of the military decisions come to on the 26th December 1780 had been transmitted regularly to the Commander-in-Chief: but that 'whether that had or had not been the case such communication was not due to the Commander-in-Chief by the Board, as reports and returns are always made by the inferior to the superior authority', and not *vice versa*—an explanation which hardly seems a satisfying reply to Coote's complaint.

An answer was sent objecting to the spirit of Coote's letter, and to his severe animadversions upon measures in which he had no concern, deploring the impression he seemed to have received, and which was mistaken, of an intended injury to his character and authority, and assuring him of the most cordial support and confidence of his colleagues in the Council.

On the 30th July 1781 Coote wrote again in a milder strain, acknowledging receipt of the above, but justifying his action in writing as he had done. The change of tone was evidently very acceptable to the Bengal Council who replied on the 22nd October that the terms of Coote's letter were 'liberal and such as become a man of character and station'. The explanation for over-riding in December the regulations recommended by the Commander-in-Chief in August was that the military situation had changed from that which had earlier existed, and that the withdrawal from the Presidency of the comparatively large force included in the detachments accompanying Coote and Pearse, had led General Stibbert to make proposals, which had been accepted, for a change in army organization, admittedly not referred to the Commander-in-Chief.

Sir Eyre Coote was, however, in no way placated or satisfied with the explanations which had been made him: and the events connected with the insurrection at Benares in the summer of 1781, gave the General a further opportunity to reiterate his complaints, of which he was not slow to avail himself.

On hearing of the danger which had menaced the Governor-General, he wrote<sup>1</sup> to Mr. Hastings from Fort St. George on the 3rd April 1782: 'You have not been more free than myself from the personal risks attendant upon war.'

But in a letter addressed direct to the Company in London, and written on the 29th of the preceding January, he complained that since he had left Bengal the military arrangements on that establishment

<sup>1</sup> British Museum, Add. MSS. 29153, folio 25.



which he had framed with labour and attention to the Company's interest had undergone a complete change 'under the wisdom and authority of the Governor-General'. The increase of field officers in the Bengal establishment created grievances amongst the officers on the Coast and on the Bombay establishment. He concludes with: 'I cannot, however, bring this epistle to a conclusion without remarking on the late extraordinary excursion of the Governor-General to the Upper Provinces of Bengal; and on the still more extraordinary measure of appointing himself Commander-in-Chief of the Army. How he has conducted himself in that capacity will become known to you by the accounts from the Bengal Government.' He states that he had heard of the rebellion at Benares with great anxiety, 'seeing it, as I did, big with consequences which would unavoidably have struck at the very root of our existence in Bengal, and thereby have destroyed the only remaining pillar to the British interests in India. Had the contagion extended itself to our more interior possessions, I fear that in the then disposition of the Bengal Army, it would have become formidable to a degree far beyond our ability to suppress. I consider it then in a light of the greatest good-fortune that the evil received so early a check, and rejoice most sincerely that it was brought to so favourable a crisis. I cannot, however, banish from my recollection the unhappy omission of not furnishing the guard that arrested the Rajah with ammunition, and to which I believe may in a great measure be ascribed all the subsequent misfortune which ensued.

'It is an occurrence the more to be wondered at, possessing, as Mr. Hastings, and I suppose every other person there did, a previous knowledge of the Rajah's contumacious temper, and having, as appears from what has since been declared, a confirmed suspicion of his attachment to the English Government; if anything could awaken minds to caution, surely symptoms so striking and alarming as these ought to have had the effect.'

Such then were some of the worries of Sir Eyre Coote's command, and the words in which he gave expression to his manner of regarding them. He seems, however, to have throughout felt confidence that he could always rely upon the staunch support of his colleagues at the Bengal Board for the prosecution of the war: all else was of wholly secondary account. We shall see later how Warren Hastings stood by General Coote when that commander found himself grievously thwarted by the head of the Madras Government.

## CHAPTER XII

1781

### SPRING AND SUMMER

ONE who served in this campaign with the 73rd Regiment has recorded<sup>1</sup> that,

‘To the detachment commanded by General Munro, the reinforcement brought by Sir Eyre Coote being added, that gallant veteran found means, by his popularity and indefatigable exertions, to assemble at St. Thomas’ Mount in the beginning of January 1781, one of the finest armies that ever appeared upon the plains of the Carnatic. . . After having settled his plan of operations for the ensuing campaign, and properly adjusted in Madras measures for the supply of the army, General Sir Eyre Coote, attended by Sir Hector Munro and Lord Macleod, began his march to the southward upon the 17th January. The first object was to form a junction with a large body of sepoy collecting in the Tanjore country under Colonel Burrows [? Brathwaite] and, as Hyder’s attention was thereby attracted from the environs of Madras, an opening was left for the presidency to be well supplied with provisions. Such yet, however, were the perils attendant upon this critical juncture that apprehensions were hourly formed of the appearance of the French fleet upon the coast in order to avail themselves of our recent misfortunes.

‘The first exploit of the present expedition was performed upon the 21st by a detachment under Captains Davies and Moorhouse, which left our camp upon the banks of the Palliar river, and gallantly stormed the fort of Carangoly, about eight miles in front of us, before the succeeding morning.’

Sir Thomas Munro, then serving as a young subaltern with the 16th Madras Native Infantry, states<sup>2</sup> that the army marched on the 16th January from the Mount, and that owing to the small parties of the enemy’s horse which were continually hovering about the camp and raiding the draught cattle, ‘it was with the greatest difficulty that a sufficient number could be collected to carry the grain and military stores necessary for the expedition.’

The Commander-in-Chief’s first object was the relief of Chingleput, Wandewash, and Permacoil—Amboor had fallen on the 15th January.

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, *Operations on the Coromandel Coast*, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Gleig, *Life of Sir Thomas Munro*, vol. i, pp. 30-1.

The first named was relieved on the 19th, and on the following afternoon a detachment under Captain Davies, composed of one and a half battalions of sepoys,<sup>1</sup> the Grenadiers from the Northern Circars, and 12 European artillerymen under Captain Tanner with two 12-pounders and four 6-pounders, were sent to capture Carangoly, eight miles in front of the army. Although General Coote sent a comparatively large force against the fort, he seems, from faulty intelligence,<sup>2</sup> to have formed the idea that it was but very weakly held, and that it would be surrendered on the mere appearance of troops before it.

The garrison turned out, however, to be some 700 strong, and the fort and *pettah* had to be taken by storm, a 12-pounder being brought up to break down the three gates which were successively met with, and the assailants being throughout exposed to a very heavy fire. Three Europeans and 8 sepoys were killed; 4 European officers and 59 other ranks were wounded.

The same morning, the 21st, the army encamped at Carangoly, where a large quantity of grain was found. On this day the General issued an order of which the following is an extract :

‘The Commander-in-Chief’s thanks are in the strongest manner returned to Captain Davies and the rest of the gallant officers who this morning so eminently distinguished themselves in the very spirited attack and capture of Carangoly. The cool determined executive parts the assailants acted has given the army an ample and critical supply of provisions, a post of the first consequence, and will prove of essential advantage to our future operations. The Commander-in-Chief cannot help repeating that his particular thanks are due to Captain Davies and to Captain Tanner, and the voluntary services of Captains Moorhouse and Pringle merit every commendation, the commanding officers of the sepoy battalions, and, in short, the whole corps have had such a share in the success of this day, that they are, one and all, marked as parties to whom the public are indebted. The European artillerymen have proved themselves what the enemy have long found them to be, the first of troops; and the favourable report of the surgeon relative to the wounds of Captain Moorhouse, Lieutenant Anderson, Ensign McAlister, and Lieutenant O’Brien (fire-worker) that they are not dangerous, adds greatly to the pleasure attendant on our success.’

In the same order Coote directed that the amount realized by the sale of the captured property should be divided amongst the actual captors.

<sup>1</sup> The 2nd and half the 17th. Sir Thomas Munro says three battalions were employed.

<sup>2</sup> Such intelligence reports to the General for this year’s campaign as are to be found, are signed ‘John Pringle, Captain, Corps of Guides’.

A large detachment of the troops of Hyder Ali, under his principal officer, Meer Sahib, had laid siege to Wandewash early in December 1780; other detachments were investing Vellore and Permacoil; while great numbers of the Mysore Chief's irregular horse and foot were continually hovering round Coote's camp, raiding cattle and cutting up stragglers. On the other hand, whilst the army was at Carangoly 300 Mahratta horsemen, discontented with Hyder, had been induced to join the British.

The garrison of Wandewash consisted entirely of Indian troops<sup>1</sup> commanded by Lieutenant Flint, with whom was Ensign Moore, and it had for some time past been invested by Meer Sahib 'with a powerful train of artillery, 11,000 foot and 22,000 horse. Two approaches were carrying on towards the south and west faces, which had by this time been advanced close to the counterscarp of the ditch.'<sup>2</sup>

Early in the preceding August Flint had been sent to occupy Wandewash, and arrived there just as the native commandant had agreed to surrender it to Hyder Ali. Flint established himself in this important post, reawakened the martial zeal of the original garrison, repaired the works, built carriages for his guns, made powder and trained men as gunners, and not only held the place for the British; but made it a base of supply for the whole army.<sup>3</sup>

By this time Flint had nearly come to the end of his stores and ammunition, and he sought assistance from Coote, who, leaving 5 companies of Grenadiers, 300 levies and some 6-pounders in Carangoly, marched on Wandewash, 23 miles to the west. Flint had defeated equally the wiles and assaults of the enemy, made wooden mortars, raised a corps of cavalry, and had even sallied out of his works and overcome Meer Sahib's troops in the field. The advance of the main army caused the Mysore General to raise the siege on the 22nd January, and Coote encamped his force on the very ground whereon he had set up his tents when, twenty-one years before to a day, he had fought the battle and raised the siege of Wandewash.

The order which he issued, dated Camp Wandewash, 23rd January 1781, runs as follows:

'The Army is now encamped on the field where a glorious victory was achieved over the French on the 23rd January 1760, and the Commander-in-Chief directs that an extra dram and biscuit be drawn for the Europeans and dry *batta* for the native troops.'

<sup>1</sup> One company each from the 14th and 15th, and one officer and thirty-seven men from the 12th Battalion.

<sup>2</sup> Innes Munro, pp. 209, 210.

<sup>3</sup> Fortescue, vol. iii, pp. 433-4.



HYDER ALI



He also eulogized the ' judgment, bravery and activity of Lieutenant Flint in maintaining the fort of Wandewash against very powerful attacks ', thanked Ensign Moore and the men of the garrison for their conduct, and granted the latter a gratuity of one month's pay. He further promoted Flint and Moore a step in rank, but these promotions were subsequently cancelled by the Court of Directors as being contrary to the rules of their service, which directed promotion to be by seniority alone. Flint, who was now left in command of Wandewash with ample supplies for standing a prolonged siege, was shortly after given the command of the 3rd Native Battalion.<sup>1</sup>

On the 28th January the army marched towards Permacoil, but the force had only proceeded a very few miles when an express arrived from Madras stating that a French squadron, under Admiral d'Orvés, had appeared off that place. In consequence of this intelligence the route of the army was changed, and it proceeded to Carangoly, where further news was awaited, that place being conveniently situated for a move on Pondicherry or Madras.

D'Orvés' squadron consisted of the following vessels :

<i>L'Orient</i> , 74	. . .	800 men.
<i>Brillant</i> , 64	. . .	700 „
<i>Sévère</i> , 64	. . .	700 „
<i>Bizarre</i> , 64	. . .	700 „
<i>Ajax</i> , 64	. . .	700 „
<i>Flamand</i> , 50	. . .	500 „
and the frigates, <i>Consolant</i> , 40	. . .	400 „
<i>Subtile</i> , 20	. . .	200 „
with the sloop, <i>Expédition</i> , 12	. . .	80 „

' The French ships proved, however, to be engaged upon no more than a cruise of observation and had no troops on board ; this was fortunate, as Sir Edward Hughes' squadron was at this time off the Malabar coast, engaged in destroying some ships of war which Hyder had equipped at Mangalore and had sent out to intercept our traders, and it was on this account late in the spring before the British Admiral made his appearance to co-operate with the Army.'<sup>2</sup>

During the time that the Army remained at Carangoly, Amboor surrendered to Hyder's son, Tippoo Sahib.

Finding that there was no immediate cause for alarm from the

<sup>1</sup> He actually commanded at Wandewash from 12th August 1780 to 12th February 1783, and when he first went there had not a single artilleryman to help him. Other subalterns in similar circumstances did almost equally meritorious work—Ensign Allan, a boy of seventeen, at Warriapollam, Lieut. Parr at Carnatic Ghur, and Ensign Macaulay at Gingee.

<sup>2</sup> Innes Munro, p. 212.

French fleet, Coote proceeded on the 2nd February to Permacoil, then besieged by a large body of the enemy, and defended by Lieutenant Bishop with one company of the 16th Native Battalion. The fort, however, was practically impregnable, and on the approach of the army the siege was raised.

The army then marched to Pondicherry, and on the 5th February encamped on the Red Hills, from whence seven French ships of war could be seen lying in the Roads. A party was at once sent out to destroy all the *masula* or surf boats and thus prevent any communication between the French fleet and the shore; also to seize what military stores and provisions were concealed in the town, and of the former of these large quantities were found, some being brought into camp and the remainder destroyed; no grain was discovered.

The inhabitants of Pondicherry had, 'after its reduction in 1778, sworn allegiance to the British government, but Colonel Brathwaite, who had commanded there since that period, had no sooner turned his back upon them' (12 August 1778) 'to join the main army at Madras, than they unanimously resolved in favour of Hyder, and used their utmost exertions to arm themselves and collect military stores for their countrymen. All this was effected chiefly by the instigation of Monsieur Moneron, one of the principal inhabitants, to whom the British had been uncommonly indulgent ever since that garrison had fallen into their hands'.<sup>1</sup>

Hyder was at this time at Arcot, but hearing of the arrival of the French fleet, and elated with hope, made a forced march from Arcot, and the first intimation the English had of his approach was the sudden arrival of his whole army, in an amazing cloud of dust, about five o'clock on the evening of the 8th February, within 2 miles of the British camp, apparently with the intention of getting between it and Cuddalore. Pondicherry was at this time still encircled, as it had been one and twenty years before, at the distance of about a mile and a half, by an impenetrable 'bound hedge',<sup>2</sup> wherein, if Hyder's army had once established itself, he might during a siege have defied every effort to succour the garrison.

The English drums quickly beat to arms, whilst an express was sent to Pondicherry to warn the garrison. Coote, while seeing his orders put into execution, narrowly escaped capture by one of the many

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> These hedges are usually of prickly pear or aloes, impenetrable by man or beast; that at Pondicherry is even now unusually thick.



bodies of the enemy's irregular cavalry which had pushed forward. As soon as the picquets had come in, the army moved off to Cuddalore, taking a road that led thither between the enemy and the coast. Hyder continued his march abreast of the British army, and early in the evening opened a distant cannonade, which, favoured by the moonlight, caused some casualties and retarded the march. The rearguard, under Major James Mackenzie, 73rd, skirmished the whole night through, and, being ably handled, inflicted some loss on the enemy and effected a few captures.

It was a race between the two armies as to which should first reach Cuddalore, but the British gained that point the earlier, arriving at daybreak on the 9th, and establishing themselves under the guns of the place and with a deep river between them and the enemy. Hyder Ali now turned off at some distance to the west of the 'bound hedge'.<sup>1</sup>

On the 10th the General went out personally to reconnoitre the enemy, and on his return gave orders for the line to get under arms, telling the troops that 'This day their labours should be all at an end, for that in less than an hour he expected to give battle to the enemy, an event which he had long wished for, and doubted not but they would all do their duty like brave men'. The line of battle was formed with the Punar river on the right, the Bandapollam Hills close upon its left, and its rear guarded by the 'bound hedge' having redoubts at intervals.

Here for three days the army remained in position offering battle to Hyder Ali, but there was no reason why he should accept it. The country to the north was swept clean and desolate, every road to the south was barred by Hyder's detachments; while the French fleet prevented the arrival of supplies for the army by sea; and it seemed to the astute Mysore leader that he had merely to wait and the British army was doomed. The British force had soon consumed the provisions which had been brought with it and such as had been found in Pondicherry; the Madras Council had failed to send the promised supplies by sea; and even had Coote been well provisioned his transport was so greatly reduced that movement was impossible. He decided then to hold his position at Cuddalore until Admiral Hughes should again make his appearance on the coast.

The Commander-in-Chief was soon, however, relieved from his

<sup>1</sup> The British casualties during this night were twenty-seven killed, wounded, and missing.

anxiety, 'for Hyder not choosing to comply with the demands of the French for money, they sailed from the coast the following day' (12th February) 'and left the navigation open to Madras from whence supplies were immediately sent to camp'.<sup>1</sup> At Cuddalore the army remained for five months, receiving grain from Madras, but having to forage for beef and mutton, a work of great labour and difficulty since Meer Sahib lay at Trivadi, fifteen miles distant, with an army of observation, from which he constantly detached parties of horse in all directions to prevent supplies from the country passing to the English camp. At the same time Tippoo Sahib had been detached to besiege Thiaghur and Lally had marched to seize Nagore.

While at Cuddalore General Coote wrote on the 1st March to the Bengal Council saying :

'I entertain a proper sense of the endeavours you exerted to send me volunteers by sea, and I can only regret the ill-success which attended them. Had they prevailed and two thousand men by that means been added to my force, I am persuaded I should have been able to have transmitted to you accounts still more favourable than those which shall form a part of the sequel of this address. It affords me pleasure to receive your repeated assurances of support in money for the expenses of this army, as upon its safety and maintenance as it now is, in contending with the most powerful and formidable enemy amongst the natives of Hindostan, I am satisfied the very existence of the British interests in this Eastern world depend.'

In the same letter he urged that peace should be made with the Mahrattas :

'Of this, however, I am certain, that if to enable us to direct our whole force against Hyder Ali, it was necessary to make peace with the Mahrattas, even upon their own terms, it would have been acceding to what I am fully convinced ought not to be put in competition with the risk which is now seen by prosecuting the war ; and would, in the present situation of our affairs, which is a truly desperate one, have been a much better policy and in the end have terminated more to the advantage of the Company and the Nation than that which has been adopted, and which nothing but a succession of the most fortunate circumstances can possibly bring to a happy conclusion. Our deliberation on the subject of peace with the Mahrattas gave a latitude for the cessation of hostilities ; but I do not find that any endeavours have been executed to that end, which certainly, circumstanced as we are, was an object at least to have been pursued, even if we had

<sup>1</sup> Gleig, *Life of Sir Thomas Munro*, vol. i, p. 34. The very day after the French fleet had passed Madras, the *Portland* arrived there from Bengal with twenty lakhs of rupees for Madras and Bombay.

failed in the attainment of it. . . . On the 12th at noon my anxieties were greatly alleviated by seeing the French fleet get under all sail, and as they steered a course to clear the Bay, a prospect of procuring assistance from the northward was opened to me, and I lost not a moment in sending intelligence of it to Madras and to Sadras, where, knowing the distress I might be in, some rice vessels had been previously sent and which I had the satisfaction of seeing come to an anchor in this road on the 17th at noon. By this time the inhabitants of the town were next to starving, some absolutely had died for want, and two days more would have completed the melancholy scene, as the troops also must then have been without a grain to eat. . . . I need not take up your time with commenting on the conduct of the French admiral, or describing the injuries we must have suffered, and the risks we must have run if he had acted with common spirit. I may with safety advance that we are entirely indebted to his irresolute behaviour for the little security we now enjoy on this coast. He drew Hyder from Arcot with strong assurances of support, and when he came near failed in the performance. . . . The enemy have plundered and burnt all the country and villages lying along the sea-coast, from hence as low as and beyond Negapatam. . . . Hyder's army occupies the country from Treride (Trivadi) to Chillambram, being in a direct line upwards of 36 miles, and from the former place to Pondicherry it is possessed by huge bodies of horse, so that in our present situation we are completely surrounded.'

Sir Thomas Munro gives the following reasons for Coote's detention at Cuddalore<sup>1</sup>; he says:

'We must, however, suppose we had good reasons for remaining there. If it was not the smallness of his force, it might have been with a view to keep Hyder to the southward, and to draw his attention from the reinforcement which was then coming from Bengal.'

On the 14th the General wrote again to Bengal, saying that he could carry no more than twelve days' rations for Europeans and one day's supply for the natives, mentioning that his draught cattle were scarcely equal to dragging the guns during a single day's march; on the 16th he represented himself as being without either transport or the necessary money to procure it; while on the 22nd he was happily able to report a trifling surprise of the enemy whereby many of them had been killed and wounded and some small captures of cattle, &c., had been effected—a petty success which must have heartened his ill-fed and sickly soldiers.

The army was compelled to remain inactive until April when the fort at Trivadi, some 16 miles west of Fort St. David, was captured

<sup>1</sup> Gleig, *Life of Sir Thomas Munro*, vol. i, pp. 35-6.

by a detachment<sup>1</sup> under the personal command of Sir Eyre Coote, but he found himself for the present unable to undertake any further operations.

'The rapidity with which Hyder at this time penetrated the country, the severe and successive misfortunes of the army, joined to the fact of its being pent up within the "bound hedge" of Cuddalore, all conspired to impress the minds of the soldiers with melancholy and desponding ideas. Desertion and sickness therefore very considerably prevailed; and such was the languor which pervaded the whole camp, that the necessary functions of duty were performed in the most listless and negligent manner. . . . Some seasonable reinforcements, however, from Tellicherry and the southward joined us by sea, which served in some measure to replace the losses we had sustained by sickness; but when necessity at last obliged us to move, we still laboured under almost insurmountable difficulties.'<sup>2</sup>

The 'seasonable reinforcements' mentioned by Innes Munro were composed of two companies of the 2nd Battalion Madras European Regiment and a battalion and a half of sepoys who had been serving under Goddard against the Mahrattas, and who were brought round from the Malabar coast on the ships of Hughes' fleet, and of two battalions of sepoys under Captain Lamotte from Nagore, which left that place by sea just before the troops under Lally entered the town.<sup>3</sup>

It will be remembered that Brig.-General Stuart had been tried<sup>4</sup> by order of the Commander-in-Chief, on charges connected with his arrest of Lord Pigot, on the 12th-19th December 1780, and his acquittal had been promulgated in orders two days later. When the army marched from the Presidency, Stuart had been left in command of the troops at Fort St. George and in the immediate neighbourhood; but early in May he joined head-quarters in the field by sea, and in virtue of his rank was naturally posted to command one of the two divisions into which the army was divided. Colonel Lord Macleod, who was thus in a measure superseded and who was not inclined to serve under Brig.-General Stuart, appears to have entered something of a protest, pointing out to the Commander-in-Chief that, under a ruling of Lord Amherst, a colonel in the King's service could not be commanded by a brigadier in the service of the East India Company, whose rank in His Majesty's service was inferior. General Coote, however, decided in favour of Stuart, whereupon Macleod obtained

<sup>1</sup> The Trichinopoly Detachment, and the 2nd, 4th, 9th, 14th and 21st Battalions.

<sup>2</sup> Innes Munro, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 299.

<sup>4</sup> At the Admiral's house in Fort St. George.

leave, 'owing to a severe bilious disorder,' to return to Madras, whereby, to Coote's expressed regret, 'the army was deprived of the services of a gallant and experienced officer.'<sup>1</sup>

But at this period the Service bristled with anomalies of this kind ; when the 39th Foot came to India in 1754 it was agreed between the Home Government and the Court of Directors that the King's officers should take precedence of Company's officers of the same rank. This ruling was not perhaps much felt so long as the King's officers were contained in a single regiment, but the grievance became acute when in 1782 several corps arrived in India from Europe. Then injustice was also caused by the grant of local rank frequently bestowed upon senior officers of the British service ; and, during the war in the Carnatic, by the promotions, of which Coote had had occasion to complain, given to Bengal officers by Hastings and which made them senior in rank to their contemporaries of the Madras army. Wilson<sup>2</sup> quotes two cases of the hardship and absurdity of the seniority enjoyed by King's officers ; one, where a lieutenant, fourteen years *of age*, took command in face of the enemy of a piquet of native troops under a Company's lieutenant of fourteen years' *service* ; and another, where a captain of the Company's forces of seventeen years' standing had to yield precedence to a captain of a King's regiment, who had only just arrived in India, and who had only twenty-six months' service all told !

Hyder Ali was at this time in the Tanjore country, devastating it on all sides, and he now with a tolerably large force laid siege to Thiaghur, a hill fort 20 miles south-west of Cuddalore, commanded by Lieutenant Roberts. Urged by the Council at Madras, by General Hector Munro, and other officers to embark upon some enterprise to relieve public clamour and to raise the *morale* of the troops, Coote now undertook the relief of Thiaghur, which had been invested by Tippoo Sahib since the 20th March, and strained all his resources in the attempt ; but his efforts failed and he had to fall back upon Cuddalore, his rearguard, under General Stuart, being sharply engaged, and a considerable quantity of baggage, both public and private, falling into the hands of the enemy. His ammunition having been expended, Lieutenant Roberts<sup>3</sup> was forced to surrender on the 7th June. This

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, W. O. unnumbered Papers 40-5.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Madras Army*, vol. ii, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> He had with him two companies of the Company's and two of the Nawab's Sepoys.

success, and the retirement of the main army, so encouraged Tippoo that he made a general attack upon all the British posts at Cuddalore, but he was everywhere severely handled and smartly repulsed. The 16th Battalion behaved especially well on this occasion.

The next enterprise to be attempted was the reduction of the fortified Pagoda of Chillambrum, three miles south of the river Vellaar, and about 26 miles in the same direction from Cuddalore. This Pagoda, one of the first of Hyder's conquests in the Carnatic, had been fortified by him for the dual purpose of arresting his enemy's progress to the south, and of serving as a *depôt* or magazine for provisions for the use of his own army, as well as of such French troops as might be thrown ashore on the coast.

The Bengal troops, under Colonel Pearse, had by this time entered the Carnatic—they had reached Ellore on the 20th May and were marching rapidly southward—and the Commander-in-Chief, to prevent Hyder Ali from striking a blow at them *en route*, marched south on the 16th June towards Chillambrum, and on the 18th at noon crossed the Vellaar. Finding that the enemy were not in strength in the neighbourhood, and his intelligence having grossly misled him as to the numbers of the defenders of the Pagoda, General Coote determined to attack it that night and carry it by a *coup de main* in the same way that Carangoly had been captured. The garrison was not, however, composed of the few hundred irregulars that Coote had been led to believe, but consisted of 3,000 men, partly regulars and the remainder irregulars, under Jehan Khan, an officer of considerable reputation.

At dusk three battalions of sepoy<sup>1</sup> with eight pieces of ordnance—two 12-pounders, four 6-pounders, and two howitzers—moved under General Coote's immediate direction. They carried the *pettah* without difficulty and pushed on rapidly to a second line of defence which encircled the place at the distance of one hundred yards; a 12-pounder was run up and blew open the gate, and, under a heavy fire, the troops then advanced to the main defence the entrance to which was guarded by traverses and by three successive gates, each banked up in rear by several feet of masonry to prevent them being blown in. The first and second gates were forced, but the third had been better protected, while the ground between it and the second gate was commanded by the ramparts of the place. Here were the thatched huts in which the garrison had their quarters, and these were now set on fire, the assailants were exposed to showers of stones, wooden logs and combustibles

<sup>1</sup> The 4th and 9th Battalions and the Trichinopoly detachment.

of all kinds, and throughout were plied with a continuous discharge of small arms and arrows.

The gunners were all killed or wounded and Captain Moorhouse and Lieutenant Taafe only were left to keep the guns in action, the last round being fired by Captain Moorhouse, who 'rammed home the charge with his fuzee and fired the gun with the lock'.

The sepoys after a time could not be induced to renew the attack, and one gun had to be abandoned while the troops only saved the others with difficulty. The small number of Europeans in his force, and the very natural desire to save them for more important enterprises, had induced the Commander-in-Chief to attempt the capture of Chillamburum with sepoys and a few artillery only; but Coote now ordered up the European Grenadiers,<sup>1</sup> intending to renew the assault with them. Before, however, these had come up, the General seems to have become better informed of the means of defence possessed by the garrison, and during the night he drew off his troops, carrying with him a small quantity of grain which had been found in the *pettah*: four days later he crossed the river and encamped near the village of Porto Novo, some six miles distant, which had been burnt by Hyder Ali in July 1780 on his first irruption into the Carnatic, and where Coote hoped to be able to obtain some battering ordnance from the fleet.

The casualties<sup>2</sup> sustained in the unsuccessful attack upon Chillamburum on the 18th June were:

*Killed*: Europeans, 1 sergeant, 1 rank and file;  
Natives, 1 subadar and 72 rank and file.

*Wounded*: Europeans, 2 captains, 3 lieutenants, 2 lieutenant-fire workers, 1 ensign, 2 sergeants and 6 rank and file;  
Natives, 1 commandant, 2 subadars, 4 jemadars, 2 serangs, 1 drummer, 1 pukally (water-carrier), and 101 rank and file.

*Missing*: Europeans, 1 ensign, 1 sergeant, 1 rank and file;  
Natives, 34 rank and file.

A volunteer of the name of Hawkins was also wounded, making a total of 10 killed, 129 wounded, and 37 missing.

<sup>1</sup> Wilson says—vol. ii, p. 22—'H.M.'s 73rd Regiment, the grenadier companies of the Madras European corps, and the 14th and 15th Battalions of Sepoys.' Wilks, vol. ii, p. 307, gives the smaller force above mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> The casualties in these and in several other actions are given in detail in Public Record Office, W. O. 40-5. Another account gives the following casualties among officers: Lieut. Bruce, Asst. Eng. killed, Captain Hussey, Lieuts. Younge and Montgomery badly wounded, Captains Shaw and Lamotte, Lieuts. North, Ford, Clark, and Collins slightly wounded.

Sir Eyre Coote had himself a narrow escape from a cannon ball, which broke the leg of Lieutenant Younge upon whose shoulder he was then leaning.

The exultation of the enemy was unbounded; they considered themselves invincible against a force so inferior in number as the British, refused to listen to their French allies who urged caution, and anticipated with confidence the speedy and complete annihilation of Coote's army. The English General therefore determined that it was necessary to achieve something to restore the spirits of his army and to check the presumption of the enemy, and deciding to undertake a regular attack upon Chillambrum, at once commenced to make gabions and fascines.

On the 24th June Sir Edward Hughes arrived from Madras in the *Superb*, and Sir Eyre went on board the same evening to concert measures with his naval colleague.

The Admiral brought news of the arrival at Fort St. George—on the 22nd June<sup>1</sup> in the *Swallow*—of a new Governor in the room of Mr. Whitehill. This was Lord Macartney,<sup>2</sup> who under considerable opposition—the post having always hitherto been given to one already in the employment of the Company—had been appointed in the previous December. The appointment, as we shall see, was not to prove a very acceptable one to Coote, who from first to last never received from Macartney the consideration and support which had been extended to him by Hastings; while Macartney's constant interference with military operations was a perpetual source of irritation to one so jealous of the privileges of his appointment as was the Commander-in-Chief.

On the 20th December 1780 England had declared war against the Dutch, whereupon Hyder Ali had agreed to cede to Holland the British district of Nagore, and to protect the Dutch settlement of Negapatam, on condition that the garrison of that place should furnish assistance to him when called upon; and Macartney had come.

<sup>1</sup> Love, vol. iii, p. 221, says on the 22nd April, but this seems to be an error; see Robbins, *Life of Lord Macartney*, p. 120; see also Barrow, vol. i, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Macartney was born in 1737, and, entering the diplomatic service, was Envoy Extraordinary at St. Petersburg for three years, then Chief Secretary for Ireland, and was appointed in 1775 Governor of the Caribbees, being raised to the peerage in the following year: he was Governor of Madras from 1781-6, went on an embassy to China 1792-4, was employed on a confidential mission to Louis XVIII, then at Verona, in 1795, became Governor of the Cape of Good Hope in 1797, and died 9th April 1806.



out from England impressed with the advisability of seizing the Dutch settlements on the Coromandel coast, to prevent their being used by Hyder who possessed no ports there.

Hughes had left Madras charged with orders for the immediate commencement of hostilities against the Dutch possessions in India, and the admiral's first suggestion to Coote was for a descent upon Negapatam by the fleet, aided by a part of the army. On discussing the question, however, in all its bearings, it was agreed that, independently of the danger of detaching a force from an army already small enough for the work demanded of it, the army would be wholly without food if the object proposed could not be achieved within twelve days; and it was therefore decided that the combined efforts of the fleet and of the army should be devoted to the early reduction of Chillambrum. The whole force was moved to Porto Novo, and the landing of the heavy guns was at once commenced.

In his report of the repulse of the British at Chillambrum, Jehan Khan had so magnified his success that Hyder Ali at once made up his mind to annihilate the English. He made a forward movement of 100 miles in two days and a half, placed himself between Coote and Cuddalore, and began to fortify a position scarcely 3 miles from the British camp, thus 'hemming the British army nearly into an equilateral triangle formed by his camp, the sea and the Porto Novo river.'<sup>1</sup> Hyder covered the whole country with cavalry to prevent the possibility of intelligence regarding his strength or situation leaking out, and thus, to quote Coote's own words, 'rendering the camp guards the boundary and limited extent of their knowledge.' This position had been taken up by the Mysore chief with the view, not only of frustrating the intended operations against Chillambrum, but of covering his own against the fort of Cuddalore, intended as a depôt for his French allies, whilst making it impossible for the English army to move in any direction or receive any supplies except by sea.<sup>2</sup>

'The ground which the enemy had occupied was entirely composed of sand-hills and deep nullahs intersecting each other; and on every commanding hillock large masked batteries were expeditiously constructed, so that Hyder, having in this manner unexpectedly entrapped us, could not but flatter himself with the most advantageous consequences. We, on the other hand, since chance had thus conducted us into a situation so pregnant with danger, and made a decisive battle inevitable, determined that our valour should render this as memorable

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 309.

in the annals of Britain, as the battle of Platea is in those of ancient Greece.

‘Preparations were made on both sides for the important event ; Hyder constantly sending huge bodies of cavalry to reconnoitre our camp, and keep the outposts to their arms, at the same time taking care to possess himself of every advantageous spot ; and information was hourly brought to us of new batteries having been constructed.’<sup>1</sup>

Sir Eyre Coote now directed the discontinuance of the preparations for the siege of Chillambrum ; the heavy guns and all impedimenta were embarked on the ships of the fleet ; four days’ grain was landed and ordered to be carried on the men so as to enable the army to manœuvre, to turn or force the enemy’s position, or to bring on a general action ; while Admiral Hughes was asked to cover Cuddalore with a portion of his fleet and to hold the remainder in readiness to embark what should be left of the army in the event of the impending operations proving unsuccessful.

The Commander-in-Chief had intended to move out of his position at 3 a.m. on the morning of the 30th June ; on the night of the 29th–30th, however, heavy rain fell, and the condition of the transport bullocks was so poor that it was necessary to give time for the sodden tent equipage to dry. The march consequently did not commence until 5 a.m. on the 1st July.

The strength of the British army, as given by Wilks,<sup>2</sup> amounted to :

Cavalry . . . . .	830
Artillery . . . . .	598
Infantry . . . . .	7,048
	<hr/>
	8,476

while that of the enemy was estimated by General Sir Eyre Coote at :

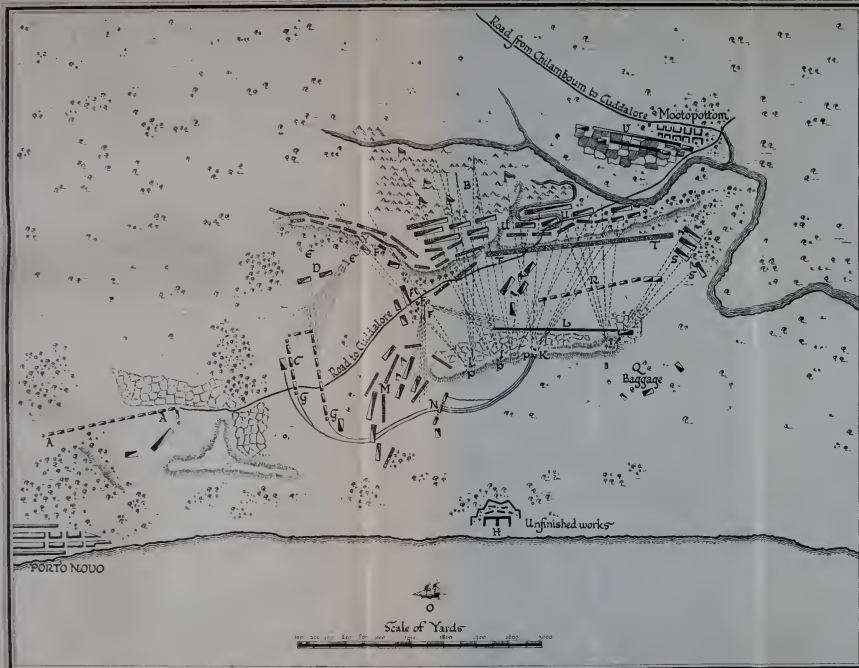
Artillery . . . . .	47 guns.
Europeans . . . . .	630
Topasses . . . . .	1,100
Cavalry . . . . .	40,000
Infantry (formed in 23 battalions)	18,400
Irregulars . . . . .	120,000

besides a horde of fighting men from the armies of the petty chiefs who had joined Hyder since his entry into the Carnatic.

His unwieldy and slow-moving baggage train, with its accompanying

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, pp. 224–5.

<sup>2</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 316.



**PLAN**  
 of the  
**ACTION**  
 between the ARMY under the Command  
 of his Excellency  
**LIEUT. GENERAL SIR EYRE COOTE K. B.**  
 And the FORCES of HYDER ALLY  
 between Porto Novo and Cuddalore  
 1<sup>st</sup> July 1781  
**REFERENCES**

- A. Encampment of the Army
- B. Enemy's Camp
- C. Army formed for engaging in 2 Lines two Battalions making a right angle with them to prevent their being taken in flank by the Body of Horse D supported by the Infantry YYY ~
- EE. Guns of the Enemy enfilading the Line
- FFF Redoubts of the Enemy thrown up to flank the Road to Cuddalore. ~
- GG. Army filing off to the right to get round the sandhills PPP and to avoid the fire of the Redoubts H. An unfinished Work near the Sea intended by the Enemy for 20 Guns. ~
- III. Guns firing upon the Enemy from the Heights
- K. Opening between the sandhills; at which the first Line was stopped by a large force of the Enemy and fired upon in flank from the Guns at the point F
- L. The first Line form'd to oppose them
- M. A considerable Body of the Enemy going round to fall on the Rear
- N. The second Line form'd to receive them
- O. Intelligence Schooner run in close to the Surf to fire on the Enemy and to prevent their getting round on the Baggage, which she did effectually
- Q. The Baggage Guarded by two Regiments of Cavalry and 1 Battalion of Sepoys
- R. The first Line advancing on the Enemy's Guns and Infantry
- SS. Bodies of Cavalry endeavouring to form on our Left
- TT. The Enemy's Line of regular Infantry, which on the near approach of our Line gave a general Discharge at Random and then fled precipitately
- UU. The Enemy's Irregular Horse and foot in the Rear
- V. The Encampment of our Army after the Action.

NS. The English Line is shown Black & White, Hyder's Dotted & White



host of camp followers, Coote placed between his right and the sea, guarded by two regiments, the 3rd and 4th, of the Nawab's cavalry, the 21st Battalion of sepoy, and a few other details, with three 6-pounders and four 3-pounders; and on moving out into the wide plain, then dotted with bodies of Hyder's irregular horse, the British order of battle was formed in two lines.

The first line, under General Sir Hector Munro, was composed of the 1st and 2nd Regiments of the Nawab's cavalry, the 73rd Foot, the Madras Europeans, the Bengal Europeans, the 2nd, 4th, 9th, 14th and 15th Battalions of sepoy, and the Trichinopoly detachment.

The second line, under Brig.-General Stuart, contained the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 20th Battalions of sepoy. With the first line were thirty guns, with the second there moved twenty-six.

The army now faced slightly west of north and advanced for rather more than a mile, when the enemy's position was clearly discovered; it lay across the road to Cuddalore and extended from commanding ground on the right to the sand-hills near the sea, and was strengthened by earth-works and gun-emplacements. Here, within 1,300 yards of the position, the army was halted, when Sir Eyre Coote, riding forward, examined the ground 'with his accustomed coolness and penetration',<sup>1</sup> while his troops suffered a warm cannonade from guns which were well served, but to which the British gunners were not permitted to reply.

'It was necessary', wrote the commander, 'to explore, if possible, the ground on our right, in hopes of its admitting to advance from that point, by which we should avoid the enemy's direct fire from their batteries, and have a chance of gaining the left of their posts to turn or other ways command them. The principal force of their army was drawn up in the rear of their works, extending further on the plain, than either eye or horizon could command, with large bodies of cavalry in every direction, and their rockets were thrown in numbers to impede and harass our movements. During this interval of unavoidable inaction, thoroughly to examine their position, we were obliged to suffer a warm cannonade. Their guns were well served and did execution; we could not afford to throw away any shot to answer them, having occasion for every round we had for more decisive service.'

'Coote', writes Fortescue,<sup>2</sup> 'was fifty-five years old and prematurely aged by hard work, sickness and long residence in unhealthy climates; but he had not forgotten how to fight a battle.'

<sup>1</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Fortescue, vol. iii, p. 451.

It was clear to the British leader<sup>1</sup> that an attack upon Hyder's right would involve the army in broken ground, a network of low hills and ravines; an advance on the centre under the concentrated fire of the Mysore semi-circle of guns was not to be thought of; but there seemed a chance of turning the left of the position by an advance north for a mile or more, followed by a wheel to the westward to bring the British down on the extreme left of Hyder's huge but unwieldy force.

The rain which had delayed Coote's advance, had also prevented the completion of his enemy's dispositions; his arrangements on right and centre were perfected, but a day's work was yet to be done on the extreme left near the sea, where a well-designed redoubt remained half-finished and unarmed. Between this redoubt and the Cuddalore road, and parallel to the sea, were some low sand-hills, and Coote's practised eye saw that these would help to conceal his movements. Whether there was a road or not through the hills remained uncertain, but the presence of the redoubt made it likely that a road existed whereby materials and guns might reach it. 'At nine o'clock Sir Eyre Coote had determined on his measures; and without any previous movement among his troops that should indicate a change of disposition, he ordered both his lines to break into column, by the simple tactic of that day, of facing to the right, a battalion from the left of each line changing their front, for the purpose of protecting that most exposed flank and covering the whole interval between the lines.'<sup>2</sup> To these battalions were added eight field pieces.

Arrived at the cover offered by the sand-hills, Stuart halted and faced to the west, while Coote moved Munro's column further to the north, where at but a short distance was found the expected road through the hills. This pass was seized and held, and Munro, pushing through, deployed in the plain beyond, his right protected by a thick hedge. Stuart, in echelon on the left, was to drive the enemy from his immediate front before the troops with Coote could advance further.

Hyder's position was turned and he had to leave his entrenchments, but the day was not yet won. He moved his artillery to a fresh position, massed a large body of infantry in front of Munro, and sent a strong force of infantry and cavalry against Stuart. This officer

<sup>1</sup> Begbie, *History and Services of the Madras Artillery*, states that Coote now called a Council of War, when Munro alone was in favour of immediate attack; I can nowhere find any corroboration of this statement except in a letter, in Hicky's *Gazette*, of the 4th July 1781 from Cuddalore.

<sup>2</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 311.

behaved admirably ; he seized the position which had been pointed out to him, repulsed all attacks upon it, and so established himself as to make possible Munro's further advance. He, however, could only move very slowly forward, fighting every inch of his way under a heavy cannonade, the British artillery struggling manfully against the heavy and numerous ordnance of the enemy ; and Hyder now, seeking to bring the battle to a close, poured down his best horsemen under Lally and Pimoran on both British divisions. Those who attacked Munro withered away before the steady volleys of the two-deep line, while the cavalry body which made for Stuart's rear came unexpectedly under the fire of a light-draught schooner, the *Intelligence*, Captain Murray, which Hughes had sent close in shore. Meer Sahib was slain by this fire and his followers fell back in confusion.

It was now 4 p.m. and Hyder Ali refused for some time to believe that his career of conquest had been checked ; but his followers urged him to fly, and finally forced him from the field, his army melting away behind him, and nowhere rallying till it reached Chillambrum.

' It is impossible ', wrote Innes Munro, ' to describe the awful magnificence of the scene that our army beheld from the heights upon which it halted. The space as far as the eye could reach, was entirely covered by multitudes of horse, foot, artillery and heaps of baggage, all intermingled in the greatest confusion, flying in the utmost consternation, galloping across each other over an extensive plain, and raising such clouds of dust as almost to obscure the sky.'

The fleet could not take any part in the action, except so far as the *Intelligence* was concerned, but the ships kept abreast of the army and the masts and yards were covered with sailors anxiously awaiting the issue of the battle in which the sister service was engaged.

Coote's cavalry was numerically too weak to pursue, and the army bivouacked on that night and the two following days at Mootypollam, moving on the 4th to a camp near Cuddalore.

The General gave unstinted praise to his troops for their conduct in this battle :

' the behaviour of the whole army . . . was uniformly steady and worthy of the highest commendation. . . . Every individual of our little army seemed to feel the critical situation of our national concerns. . . . The only difficulty was to restrain the ardour of the troops within prudential bounds. . . . The spirited behaviour of our sepoy corps did them the greatest credit ; no Europeans could be steadier ; they were emulous of being foremost in every service it was necessary to undertake.'

Innes Munro, himself a Highlander, says that the General especially praised the steadiness of the 73rd, and that

‘ being in the rear of our regiment as the line advanced to action under a very heavy fire, fixed his eye upon the bagpiper, who stalked from right to left with astonishing composure, playing a favourite Highland march, as if the fate of the day depended entirely upon his exertions. “ Well done, my brave fellow,” exclaimed the veteran. “ You shall have a silver pipe when the battle is over.” And accordingly the General presented the regiment with one hundred pagodas to purchase a handsome pipe in honour of that day.’

In a letter dated Cuddalore 4th July 1781 and published in *Hicky’s Gazette*, it is stated :

‘ Sir Eyre Coote was everywhere and exposed himself to great danger ;’ and in the same publication of the 11th August a private letter from Madras is printed which says that ‘ the Commander-in-Chief is one of the most active officers in the field. His steady and uniform conduct and affability towards his officers and men render the campaign very agreeable to them all.’

The victor put the enemy’s loss at about 3,000 men—Mons. Lally was among the wounded : the British casualties were as under :

*Killed* : Europeans : 1 lieutenant, 3 sergeants, 1 drummer, 14 rank and file.

Natives : 2 jemadars, 1 havildar, 53 rank and file, 8 lascars.

*Wounded* : Europeans : 1 lieutenant, 5 ensigns, 2 sergeants, 1 drummer, 2 fifiers, 26 rank and file.

Natives : 4 subadars, 1 jemadar, 14 havildars, 3 drummers, 153 rank and file, 23 lascars.

*Missing* : Europeans : 1 rank and file.

Natives : 18 rank and file.

*Total.* Killed 83, wounded 235, missing 19.

‘ Considering’, wrote Coote, ‘ the trying situation this army is in, destitute of most of the common resources for carrying on service ; weak draft and hardly any carriage cattle (our guns in the face of the enemy’s heaviest fire were through deep sand obliged to be drawn a full mile by the soldiers) ; no provisions but from day to day ; pay considerably in arrears ; the principal part of the Carnatic and its capital in the possession of the enemy ; our armies in different parts of India having also unfortunately received checks ; an enemy in great force to deal with, whose rapid success had strengthened his cause with the natives to an alarming degree ; no proper force of cavalry on our side, and not half carriage sufficient for our wounded and sick ; these things considered, I think I may venture to say that



fairly to beat Hyder on his chosen fortified ground was as much as could be expected.'

It has been said of the battle that 'it broke the spell formed by the defeat of Colonel Baillie and the events of that disastrous year; it destroyed the terror the name of Hyder inspired, as well as the success which superstitious persons believed to attend all his undertakings';<sup>1</sup> while the historian of the British army<sup>2</sup> has declared of Porto Novo that 'the victory was not in the ordinary sense a great one, for Coote had no trophies to show of guns and prisoners taken nor of the enemy's army destroyed; but it was the salvation of Southern India'.

<sup>1</sup> Neill, *Services of the First European Madras Regiment*, p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> Fortescue, vol. iii, p. 454.

## CHAPTER XIII

1781

### AUTUMN

THE pride which Coote assuredly felt in so splendid and well-timed a victory, must soon have been damped by the recollection of the state to which his army was reduced by want of supplies and transport. On the 2nd July the general wrote feelingly to the Council at Fort St. George about 'the sufferings and distress of the brave soldiers'. On the 7th of the same month the Select Committee at the Presidency lamented that they had 'no money, supplies or bullocks to send their commander, but that they are applying to Bengal', but the owners of the country craft were by no means anxious to accept freights from northern and southern ports by reason of the activities of the French privateers then infesting the coast of Coromandel, and of which frequent mention is made in Madras contemporary records. In a letter dated the next day the Committee wrote again stating that Admiral Hughes proposes to try and get possession of Negapatam; they can give him no assistance and have referred Hughes to Coote 'as alone competent to decide on the steps most proper to be taken'.

On the 10th July Sir Eyre said that he could now 'supply himself with bullocks, rice, grain and every other essential article, but that his troops being nearly three months in arrears with their pay and no money being in the tumbrils, it was totally out of his power to purchase—in short', added the greatly-tried commander, 'so absolutely destitute is this army of every requisite that, unless a large supply of cash is immediately sent for its support, the most fatal consequences must be expected.' Again, on the 20th July, he writes, 'distresses daily increasing and this probably at the eve of another general engagement;' while the precarious nature of the communications may be gathered from the complaint put forward by Coote in the same letter to the Madras authorities that 'it is now twenty-eight days since I heard from you'.

The General was anxious to move northwards, for already two days previous to the action at Porto Novo—on the 29th June—he had heard from Flint at Wandewash that Tippoo Sahib 'with 7,000

infantry, a large body of cavalry and twelve guns had arrived within six miles of Wandewash with intent to besiege it', and Coote was fretting to effect the relief of this stronghold and to form a junction with the Bengal detachment now close at hand.

Leaving his wounded at Cuddalore, and having been joined by some convalescents who had been placed there when the army moved on Chillambrum, Coote, taking such supplies as were procurable and as his scanty transport could carry, moved on Wandewash, and on the 15th July came in sight of the camp of his enemy who struck his tents and hurried westward. On the 18th Tippoo Sahib was repulsed in an attempt to carry Wandewash by storm and was obliged to raise the siege; and on the 20th the British army arrived before the fort, when Sir Eyre Coote, having complimented Captain Flint, its gallant defender, was able to report to the government of Fort St. George that 'Wandewash is safe, being the third time in my life I have had the honour to relieve it'.

Tippoo's force, strongly reinforced, had moved to the northward to try and intercept Pearse, whose march, according to Innes Munro, had been much delayed by 'innumerable impediments and a superfluous degree of luxury and pomp'; but most probably, as it would seem, by disloyalty among his subordinates, and by a journey of nearly a thousand miles, mostly through unsurveyed country, and by an epidemic of cholera, one of the very first of its kind known in India. To join Pearse, Coote performed the remarkable feat of making a forced march of 150 miles, practically without transport or supplies, finally joining hands with the Bengal contingent at Pulicat on the 2nd August.<sup>1</sup>

Pulicat, the earliest Dutch settlement in India, and some 25 miles north of Madras, had surrendered on the 2nd July, with its fort Geldria and two Dutch vessels, to a small force sent direct thither from Madras under Major Elphinstone, 73rd Regiment.<sup>2</sup> The garrison did not amount to one hundred men, few of whom were Europeans, under a Mr. Tadama. The lake of Pulicat, some 33 miles long from north to south, and 11 miles across at its greatest breadth, is an inlet of the sea, produced by the surf breaking through a low sandy beach and overflowing the land behind, its communications with the sea being very narrow, like the embouchures of small rivers. The ordinary road

<sup>1</sup> Thus Wilks: the 3rd, according to Innes Munro.

<sup>2</sup> He had with him 80 European infantry, 850 sepoy, 250 levies, 130 horse and 9 guns.

from the north, by which it was expected by Hyder that Pearse would march his detachment, passed to the west of the lake, but there was a practicable route along the shore or beach, and this Pearse followed, being ferried across the narrow seaward openings of the Pulicat lake.

The detachment had not been delayed by fighting during its long march from Bengal, though at one time an attack upon it by the Raja of Nagpore seemed by no means improbable. But at Ganjam cholera had broken out among the men and camp followers, the troops losing 905 of their number by death and desertion between the 12th February and the 5th April. These losses had, however, been made good during the latter part of this remarkable march, and the actual reinforcement amounted to some 4,000 men with a well-organized and ample transport.

The whole army now returned to St. Thomas' Mount and on the 8th August it was brigaded as follows :

The four regiments of cavalry formed one brigade under Colonel Cosby.

1st Infantry Brigade.

Colonel James Crawford.<sup>1</sup>

Brigade-Major, Lieut. Braggs, 73rd.

73rd Regiment ; Bengal European Infantry ; 2nd Batt. 1st Madras European Infantry. Nine 12-pounders and five howitzers.

2nd Infantry Brigade.

Colonel Ross Lang.<sup>2</sup>

Brigade-Major, Lieut. Richardson.

12th Regt. Bengal Sepoys ; 15th Regt. Bengal Sepoys ; 8th Carnatic Battalion ; 16th Carnatic Battalion ; 21st Carnatic Battalion. One 18-pounder, one 5½-inch howitzer, and ten 6-pounders.

3rd Infantry Brigade.

Colonel T. D. Pearse.

Brigade-Major, Captain Williamson.

13th Regt. Bengal Sepoys ; 9th Carnatic Battalion ; 17th Carnatic Battalion ; 18th Carnatic Battalion ; The Trichinopoly Detachment.<sup>3</sup> One 18-pounder, one 5½-inch howitzer, and ten 6-pounders.

4th Infantry Brigade.

Lieut.-Colonel Arthur Owen.

Brigade-Major, Captain John Grant.

<sup>1</sup> Had been appointed Lieut.-Colonel in the 73rd on 13th January and Brevet-Colonel in the East Indies in the same orders.

<sup>2</sup> Was at this time commanding at Vellore and joined the army later.

<sup>3</sup> The Grenadier companies of the 9th and 18th Carnatic Battalions had been ordered to rejoin their respective corps. The Trichinopoly Detachment was at this time composed of 5 companies of the 19th, 2 of the 6th, 2 of the 12th, and 2 of the 13th Carnatic Battalions.

24th Regt. Bengal Sepoys ; 2nd Carnatic Battalion ; 14th Carnatic Battalion ; 7th Circar Battalion ; 8th Circar Battalion. One 5½-inch howitzer and ten 6-pounders.

5th Infantry Brigade.

Lieut.-Colonel Brown.

Brigade-Major, Lieut. Oliver.

26th Regt. Bengal Sepoys ; 4th Carnatic Battalion ; 15th Carnatic Battalion ; 20th Carnatic Battalion. One 5½-inch howitzer and ten 6-pounders.

Sir Hector Munro commanded the right wing, composed of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Brigades, while the left wing, comprising the 4th and 5th Brigades, was under Brig.-General James Stuart.

According to Innes Munro, 'two parks of artillery had been formed, one upon each flank of the European brigade, the Bengal artillery being posted on the right under Colonel Elliott, and the Madras artillery upon the left under Major Mackay, besides two guns and an officer attached to each battalion in the line, and two light field pieces, drawn by horses, to each regiment of dragoons. Such was the general order of battle, which, however, was frequently changed as occasion required.'<sup>1</sup>

It must be conceded that in appointing the commanders and staffs of the above brigades, the Commander-in-Chief had recognized the claims of the King's troops and of those of the Bengal and Madras establishments, and had done his best fairly to apportion the sweets of office. The Commander and Brigade Major of the 1st Brigade were officers of the 73rd Foot ; Lang and Richardson were Madras officers, as were also Brown and Oliver of the 5th Brigade, while Colonel Pearse and his staff officer, Captain Williamson, hailed from Bengal. The case of the 4th Brigade and of its commander, Lieut.-Colonel Owen, is not so clear. The *History of the Bengal Artillery* states that Owen was a Madras officer with a king's commission as lieut.-colonel, which gave him precedence over all Company's officers of equal rank. But Wilson<sup>2</sup> says that there is nothing in the Madras records to show that Colonel Owen belonged to that establishment. It will be remembered, however, that in Chapter VIII mention was made of a memoir 'by Mr. Arthur Owen, late a lieutenant on the Fort St. George establishment', asking for the award of the rank of 'field officer in Bengal as first aide-de-camp to Sir Eyre Coote'. In reply to this application the Court of Directors granted Mr. Owen a commission as Lieut.-Colonel by brevet during General Coote's stay in India, but decreed that

<sup>1</sup> p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Madras Army*, vol. ii, pp. 30, 31.

Owen was 'not to be appointed to any corps in the Company's service, or supersede any of the officers of that rank by his appointment'. It would seem then that Lieut.-Colonel Owen's position was something of an anomaly—he was a Madras Officer with a Bengal brevet, a Madras lieutenant but a lieut.-colonel on the Bengal establishment.

It appears that General Coote entertained a high opinion of Owen, whom he had already proposed making Adjutant-General of all the Company's forces; while he now, notwithstanding the orders of the Court of Directors to the contrary, gave him the command of a brigade. He had, however, been appointed in orders dated 10th November 1780 'to the command of the Bengal Detachment', and we read in Hicky's *Gazette* of the 16th December 1780, under head of 'Intelligence from the Coast':

'The command of the Bengal troops is conferred on Lieut.-Col. Owen, who is stationed on the right under Munro. . . . The affronting supercession the Bengal Officers have met with in the appointment of Colonel Owen has spread general discontent among them.'

In the next issue of the *Gazette*, we read, relative to the Bengal detachment:

'Captain Harvey and two others spiritedly refused to do duty under Colonel Owen, as being inferior in rank to them; they were in consequence ordered in arrest. Major Briton, it is said, has not submitted in being commanded by a young (if at all) captain.'<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Pearse seems to have anticipated some such appointment as that now conferred on Owen, for, when submitting to the Governor-General certain points relative to the march of his detachment, then under orders for Madras, he wrote: 'I think Colonel Owen may join us; if so, it will be necessary to guard against the discontent that will prevail.' But to this Hastings, recognizing that it was a matter for the exclusive decision of the Commander-in-Chief, returned an evasive reply.

In another matter connected with Pearse's detachment, Sir Eyre Coote exercised his undoubted prerogative, in defiance of instructions given personally and in writing by the Governor-General to Colonel Pearse. In the same paper of questions Pearse had inquired: 'When the detachment shall join General Coote are the Bengal troops now there to become part of my detachment or remain separate?' And

<sup>1</sup> A Captain Henry Harvey belonged to the 2nd Battalion, 1st European Regiment: no *Briton* is traceable, but there was a Major Thomas *Breton* in the Bengal Infantry.

the reply to this was : ' Your detachment will remain in all respects a separate corps with respect to its immediate command, its account, detail and pay. The rest must depend on the will of the Commander-in-Chief.'

There were no doubt several excellent reasons why Sir Eyre Coote decided against keeping Colonel Pearse's detachment as ' a separate corps'. The Madras troops had lately been badly shaken, and, although the recent victory had doubtless done much to restore their confidence in themselves, it must have seemed to the Commander-in-Chief in every way desirable to give his Madras sepoys a stiffening of regiments which for years past had been almost uniformly successful in the field, and that too against great odds. Further, the Bengal detachment had brought with it an efficient transport, and no doubt the General judged it best to turn the whole into a common stock, rather than to maintain Colonel Pearse's detachment as a distinct and separate force equipped with a well-ordered transport, which, as it rendered the detachment more mobile than the rest of the army, must have led to its more frequent employment as something of a *corps d'élite*.

It had been found impracticable for the detachments assembling in the Tanjore country to join Coote without serious risk, so they were formed into a corps of observation for the defence of that district, and having, by the addition of various reinforcements, become a comparatively formidable body of 5,000 men, Colonel Brathwaite was sent from the Presidency to take command of it ; it will for the future be referred to as the Southern Army.

Coote had now received all the help in men that could be afforded by the other Presidencies. Bengal, which had hitherto supplied reinforcements, was no longer able to send another man, that settlement, as well as Bombay, being taxed to the utmost extent of its resources by the war still raging with the Mahrattas. The supplies also of rice and money had become so infrequent and so scanty that nothing less than actual starvation seemed to stare the army in the Carnatic in the face ; and to prevent such a calamity, and, at the same time, to divert the attention of the enemy, required great deliberation, constant care, and ceaseless activity.

Preparations were now set on foot for a march to lay siege to Arcot and to relieve Vellore, whilst the enemy retained in their memory the defeat at Porto Novo. Before, however, the army could attempt either of these projects, it was necessary to take Tripasore, 33 miles

to the westward, a fort lately much strengthened and garrisoned by 1,500 men. The difficulty of supplies again cropped up; of the transport cattle, reputed to have been collected at Madras during the absence of the army, scarcely half was forthcoming, and the whole army transport was incapable of taking with it more than one and a half day's supply of grain, besides what the men could carry on their backs. It was consequently necessary for the army to march to and encamp first between Madras and Poonamallee and then midway between that place and Tripasore, sending back every bullock with the army to bring up supplies and establish advance magazines from which the troops might be fed during the siege operations.

Eight days' rice having thus been brought forward and stored, the army marched on the 16th August and arrived on the 19th before Tripasore. Hyder, who was then encamped at Conjeveram, was quickly informed of Coote's intentions, and advanced to harass the British. On the 22nd a breach was effected in the walls of the fort and the garrison demanded terms, but Hyder's army now appearing in sight orders were given to storm, whereupon the commander of the fort surrendered at discretion.<sup>1</sup>

Hyder Ali drew off on seeing the British in possession, and to a request by Coote that the Mysore troops taken at Tripasore should be exchanged for an equal number of British prisoners in Hyder's custody, the answer was returned that 'the men taken at Tripasore are faithless and unworthy, they know they dare not approach me; they are your prisoners and I advise you to put every one of them to death speedily.' Coote's resources not admitting of feeding some 1,400 prisoners, he had no alternative but to release them on parole, an obligation to which he could scarcely have ascribed any real force.<sup>2</sup>

The store of grain found in the fort at Tripasore was so trifling that it became necessary on the night of the capture to send a convoy to Poonamallee for a fresh supply, and having, by the 25th, obtained enough rice for six days, to be carried on the men's backs, Coote marched on the 26th seventeen miles in a westerly direction from Tripasore with a view of bringing Hyder to action. Four of his five iron 18-pounders were left behind in the fort, with a battalion of

<sup>1</sup> Our losses here were six killed and ten wounded, Ensign Carey, of the 8th Battalion of sepoy, being killed by the bursting of one of our 18-pounders.

<sup>2</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 325.







**PLAN**  
 of the  
**ACTION at POLLORE**  
 Between the British Troops under his Excellency  
**LIEUT. GENERAL SIR EYRE COOTE K.B.**  
 and the Army of Hyder Ally Cawn.  
 on the 27<sup>th</sup> August  
 1781  
**REFERENCES**

- aaa. Situation of the Enemy as they appeared when viewed from the tree b. before the Action began.
- c. Grove, into which a Battalion was thrown early in the Day which was soon reinforced by four Battalions more.
- A. English Army marching by files to the Right
- B. Position of the English when first formed, and before the Second Line were detached to support the left.
- d. Village possessed by a considerable Body of the Enemy, from whence they Cannonaded us with Eight Guns.
- CC. Second position after the Second Line had Attacked and carried the Village at e. and the Enemy had retired from d.
- f. A deep Watercourse lined by the Enemy's Guns with Embrasures cut through the bank.
- D. Three Battalions advancing to attack the Villages and Pagodas at E where the Enemy were strongly posted.
- g. March of the second Line to turn the Enemy's Right
- F. Position of the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigades, whilst our Left was advancing.
- h. Village into which the Baggage was thrown during the Action.
- G. Three Battalions with the Cavalry protecting the baggage.
- i. Deep Watercourse
- H. Second Line at Sunset cannonading the Enemy on their retreat
- J. Retreat of the Enemy
- K. Place where the Detachment under Colonel Baillie was defeated.



sepoys under Major Cotgrave, while the other gun accompanied the army to take the place of the brass 18-pounder that had burst during the siege.

‘His first day’s march brought him to the vicinity of Perambaucum, where large bodies of cavalry to the south-west indicated the presence of the enemy on the expected ground.’<sup>1</sup> The march was renewed on the 27th, and about 9 a.m. the advanced guard, moving nearly due west, discovered the enemy’s army in force in its front and extending towards both flanks, strongly posted behind the woods and village of Pollilore, the scene of the disaster to Colonel Baillie’s column scarcely a year previously. ‘Inflamed by the dictates of a blind superstition, Hyder entertained the vain idea that this was a lucky spot, and, under the influence of this suggestion, confident that victory would again declare for him upon ground consecrated by former success, he was encouraged to hazard a second general engagement.’<sup>2</sup>

Sir Thomas Munro relates that<sup>3</sup> ‘it was said, and I believe with foundation, that he sent a challenge to General Coote to meet him on the same ground where he had cut off Colonel Baillie, where, as well from the natural strength of the situation as from the superstitious notions of his people about fortunate places, he knew that, if ever he was to be successful, it must be there. Coote, always fond of fighting when there was a prospect of victory, marched on the 27th to attack him.’

The advanced guard, moving along the tree-shaded road to Conje-  
*Battle of Pollilore,* veram, was fired into by four 18-pounders in a  
*27th August 1781.* grove on the left of the line of march; it halted,  
 and the General, riding forward, examined the  
 position, which he found to be one of great strength, the enemy  
 occupying three villages, the ground in their front and on the flanks  
 being intersected in every direction by nullahs and water-courses,  
 while the guns were fired from embrasures cut in the banks of the  
 ditches. The main body of the Mysore army was massed in rear.  
 Coote’s quick and practised eye detected, as the strong land wind  
 dropped for a moment and permitted objects to be discernible through  
 the dust it had raised, a small thick grove of trees on a slight eminence  
 nearly encircled by a water-course, some 800 yards to the left front;  
 this he at once ordered to be occupied by the 8th Battalion of Madras  
 sepoy with its guns. A heavy fire, rapidly increasing in intensity,

<sup>1</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> Innes Munro, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> Gleig, vol. i p. 40.

was opened upon the defenders of the grove, and a Bengal battalion was then ordered up in support.

The first line—three brigades under Sir Hector Munro—was deployed in advance of the tree-crowned hillock facing south-west, fronting what then, in the broken and wooded ground, seemed to be the main body of the enemy; the second line, under Stuart, formed in support of the first and provided the reinforcement above mentioned for the troops holding the grove. Munro, however, had scarcely deployed before he found his line enfiladed by eight or nine guns from a somewhat distant wooded village to the west. As pointed out by Fortescue,<sup>1</sup> ‘Hyder had, as at Porto Novo, drawn up his main body on the left flank of Coote’s advance, with its left resting on Pollilore and its right on another village further to the eastward, and had sent only a detachment forward under Tippoo Sahib to check the British in front.’

Munro now changed front to the right, his line covered to some extent by the jungle before him. This was found to be penetrable, and the British first line moved through it, and lining a commanding bank on the further side, brought up their guns and soon overpowered the enemy’s ordnance.

This movement, however, had the effect of widely separating the two divisions of the army. The grove and eminence first occupied were so fiercely cannonaded by the enemy from a naturally strong position, flanked on one side by the pagoda and village of Pollilore and on the other by a smaller village, that Stuart found himself obliged to employ every man at his disposal to strengthen and extend the position at the grove against which the enemy were directing their chief efforts. In this part of the field the outlook, nowhere reassuring, seemed to assume an almost desperate appearance. The unfavourable *terrain*, broken ground, deep nullahs and thick jungle, divided the battalions into confused and scattered clusters; one newly-raised corps fell back in disgraceful flight from an attack upon a village; and it was at this crisis of the battle that Sir Eyre Coote came from the right to the left of his far-flung line to decide how its two parts could again best act in unison.

He saw that Pollilore village was the real objective, but also that, before attempting to capture it, a connected line must be re-formed. Munro was then ordered to change position for the third time—facing south, his left some 1,300 yards further west than where it had originally stood, and with its right exactly opposite the village of

<sup>1</sup> *History of the British Army*, vol. iii, p. 456.

Pollilore. The right brigade of the first line, supported by an overwhelming fire from every British gun, moved directly upon the village, turned out the defenders, and plied them with fire from two light guns accompanying the advance. The battle had now been eight hours in progress; the rest of the first line supported the attack on Pollilore; while the second line drove back the enemy in its front and gained some high ground whence its guns cannonaded the enemy now everywhere in retreat. The advance of the first line had led the men over the ground where lay the unburied remains of their comrades who had perished the previous September with Baillie.

‘On the very spot where they stood lay strewed amongst their feet the relics of their dearest fellow-soldiers and friends, who, near twelve months before, had been slain by the hands of those very inhuman monsters that now appeared a second time eager to complete the work of blood. One poor soldier, with the tear of affliction glistening in his eye, picked up the decaying spatterdash of his valued brother, with the name yet entire upon it, which the tinge of blood and effect of weather had kindly spared. Another discovered the club or plaited hair of his bosom friend, which he himself had helped to form, and knew by the tie and still remaining colour: A third mournfully recognized the feather which had decorated the cap of his inseparable companion. The scattered clothes and wings of the seventy-third’s flank companies were everywhere perceptible, as also their helmets and skulls, both of which bore the marks of many furrowed cuts.’<sup>1</sup>

The enemy retired that night to Conjeveram, and on the next day to Arcot, while the British army encamped on Hyder Ali’s original position.

Again, Coote’s want of cavalry prevented his profiting by the success of the day, but the victory was a dubious one, the action generally had been, to say the least of it, extremely hazardous, and, while the Mysore soldiers admitted that they had been severely beaten at Porto Novo, they always declared that at Pollilore they had fought a drawn battle. But, however complete the victory might have been, the army was in no position to pursue, since on the 29th there was not one single day’s provisions in hand for the fighting men, while the followers had been fasting for forty-eight hours. Moreover, the army does not seem to have fought so stoutly as on the day of Porto Novo; the ground was not in favour of the rigid formations of those days; battalions were dangerously disordered, and one, as we have seen, behaved badly. This was one of the Circar battalions which, enlisted

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, pp. 240 and 241.

for local service only, had suffered in discipline and efficiency from being called upon to serve beyond the limits of the Circars. But, as Wilson<sup>1</sup> reminds us,

‘the aversion to general service does not seem to have been peculiar to sepoy, as will appear from the following extract of a letter to Government from Major General Allan Campbell, dated 18th September 1783: “that your memorialist used his utmost endeavours to prevail upon the 36th Regiment of Infantry to offer their services in India, in which endeavour he happily succeeded, at a time when some regiments in England broke out into actual mutiny, and others refused to embark when ordered for service in this country.” This feeling seems to have continued, for in 1787 when European troops were required for India, the 74th, 75th, 76th and 77th were raised for that special purpose.’

Sir Eyre Coote estimated the strength of the enemy’s forces on this day at 150,000 men with 80 pieces of cannon, and their losses at nearly 2,000. The effective British force on the 27th was about 11,000 European and Native, and the casualties were as under :<sup>2</sup>

*Killed* : Europeans, 1 captain, 1 assistant surgeon, 22 other ranks.  
Natives, 1 subadar, 2 jemadars, 82 other ranks, 20 lascars.

*Wounded* : Europeans, 1 brigadier-general, 1 lieutenant-colonel,  
1 captain, 1 lieutenant, 2 ensigns, 48 other ranks.  
Natives, 1 commandant, 6 subadars, 8 jemadars, 160 other  
ranks, 32 lascars.

*Missing* : Natives, 31 rank and file, 32 lascars.

Total casualties, 129 killed, 261 wounded, and 63 missing.

Among the killed was Captain Hislop, the General’s aide-de-camp, while, by a curious coincidence, Brigadier-General Stuart and Colonel Brown of the Madras European Regiment, who had commanded the advanced guard this day, each lost a leg from the same cannon shot ; the first named recovered, but Colonel Brown died the same night.

On the 28th August the following order was published by Lieutenant-General Sir Eyre Coote :

‘The Commander in Chief takes the earliest opportunity of returning his thanks to the whole army he has the honour to command for their very steady and gallant conduct throughout the action of yesterday, and which alone insured the success of the operations of the day. He desires that this order may be particularly explained to the black troops, whose behaviour on all occasions gives the greatest satisfaction. The spirited conduct of our troops must strike the enemy with that awe and respect for our arms, which cannot fail to be of essential

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, vol. ii, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Mill, vol. iv, p. 187, greatly exaggerates our losses.

service to our national cause, and, it is hoped, will eventually be the means of shortening the confinement and suffering of our brother soldiers in the enemy's miserable prisons. The Commander in Chief takes this opportunity also of mentioning that he will set forth to His Majesty and to the Company the very essential services this army has rendered.

Commanding Officers of Corps to make strict enquiry concerning arms taken from the enemy yesterday, and to send them to the Commissary of Stores.'

The 28th was employed not only in attending to the wounded and in burying the dead, but in gathering together and interring the remains of those who had fallen in the disaster which had overtaken Colonel Baillie's detachment; on the 29th the army returned to Tripasore.

Sir Hector Munro had now been for some considerable time in the field, enduring much fatigue and exposure of body and no small degree of anxiety of mind, and on the return of the army to Tripasore he obtained leave from Sir Eyre Coote to proceed to Madras preparatory to taking his departure for Europe. There were not wanting some who declared that his decision was influenced and his departure hastened by a harsh reply he had received from the Commander-in-Chief to a suggestion Munro had offered at the battle of Pollilore.<sup>1</sup> But, however that may be, Sir Eyre wrote him a letter expressive of his 'regret at losing the services of so experienced an officer at a time of such incumbent peril and requisite exertion.'

'To the north-west of the road leading from Madras to Arcot is situated the strong country usually denominated that of the Western and Chittoor poligars. . . . The chiefs of these countries, varying in extent and strength of territory, had sought to conciliate the belligerents, to extend their possessions at the expense of their neighbours, or by neutrality to save their countries from devastation, as suited their respective views of their own relative strength and interest. The poligars of Vencatigherry, Calastray and Bomrauze were the most powerful of these chieftains; the spearmen of the former had joined Sir Eyre Coote, and had formed a portion of his baggage guard in the late action; but their expenditure of provision much outweighed their utility. Calastray and Bomrauze were both with Hyder; but had, with a very pardonable prudence, assured his adversary that the junction was of mere necessity to save their countries from devastation, and that they awaited the opportunity when they might safely change sides and place their resources at his disposal. The numerous

<sup>1</sup> See Grier, *The Great Pro-Consul*, pp. 340 and 344; also *Memoirs of the War in Asia*, pp. 269 and 270.

minor chieftains had also, after the first symptoms of a favourable change, sent deputations of similar character, and all were profuse of assurances that the English army would find abundance of provisions by moving in that direction.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Macartney, with an ingenuity that did more credit to his imagination than his common sense, had conceived the idea of employing some of the fugitives who had taken refuge in Madras to carry loads of grain to the army, but these heroic measures did not answer during a period of scarcity, and while some made off with their loads and others arrived with them seriously depleted, the greater number absconded; but it became possible to fill the magazines in Tripasore, where on the 30th August the army had arrived.

Immediately after reaching this place Sir Eyre Coote proceeded to Madras to confer with the government and to resign his charge, for it seemed to him that no useful object was to be served by maintaining an army incapable of movement; but the commander was prevailed upon by Lord Macartney to continue at his post.<sup>2</sup> On the 21st September, then, the army once more broke camp and marched into the country of the Polygar chiefs, the intention being to obtain subsistence from them and by defeating Hyder to attach them definitely to the British cause. These efforts were only partially successful; the chiefs assisted the English general only by stealth; and the army and its transport animals lived from hand to mouth by the aid of a small store of food found in the little fort of Pollore, captured on the 23rd September, and by the discovery of hiding places in which grain had been stored by the country people.

The condition of the garrison of Vellore occasioned the General no small anxiety, Colonel Lang, the commandant, having declared that he must shortly surrender unless relieved or re-victualled; while it was now reported that Hyder Ali was only ten or twelve miles distant, holding a pass in the Sholinghur Hills on the direct road between Pollore and Vellore, and some thirty miles due west of Tripasore. To Coote this must have appeared as affording him an opportunity, not lightly to be disregarded, of bringing his great adversary to immediate action without the necessity of undertaking any extended operations, for the prosecution of which his ill-supplied army was quite unfitted.

Leaving some of his heavy and guns, the greater part of his baggage, in the fort of Pollore, Coote moved on the 26th September some seven miles down the Arcot road, intending to pursue his march early on the

<sup>1</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 332.

<sup>2</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, pp. 332-3.





PLAN  
of the  
ACTION near SHOULLANGUR  
between the ENGLISH ARMY under  
HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL SIR EYRE COOTE K:B:  
and the TROOPS of HYDER ALLY CAUN  
on the 27<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 1781

REFERENCES

- AA. English Army marching by files to the Right.  
 B. Second Brigade, with the Cavalry, Detached to turn the Enemy's Left.  
 aaaa. Bodies of the Enemy advanced to cannonade our Line.  
 bbb. The Enemy's Encampment  
 CCC. Position of the English Army when halted on Account of the Attack on the Left.  
 cccc. Enemy's horse charging our Left.  
 D. Position of the Second Brigade at sunset cannonading the Enemy on their Retreat.  
 ddd. Hyder's Army retreating in confusion.  
 E. Three Batt<sup>ies</sup> of Europeans pushing through the Paddy Fields to support the Second Brigade being alarmed at its distance, and the briskness of the Cannonade.  
 F. Baggage of the English Army during the Action.  
 eee. Two Batt<sup>ies</sup> covering the Baggage  
 G. Encampment of the English after the Action.

~ N. B. the English Troops are shown black & white: Hyder's Lotted & white

~ Scale of Yards ~

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 1100 1200 1300 1400 1500 1600 1700 1800 1900 2000



following morning. During the night rain fell very heavily, and Hyder Ali who, by means of his numerous spies, well knew the limitations of his opponent's transport, decided that Coote would make no movement on the next day, and the cattle of the Mysore army were permitted to graze far a-field and the soldiers to disperse in order to seek provisions or plunder. Such carelessness was, however, almost criminal when so tried a commander as Coote was in the field, and Hyder was to pay the penalty usually demanded of those who affect to despise their enemy.

Early on the morning of the 27th September Sir Eyre Coote, attended *Battle of Sholinghur,* by a small escort, rode forward to reconnoitre, and saw in his front a long rocky ridge, a spur from the Sholinghur Hill, which was occupied by the enemy. Sending for the Second Brigade, under Lieut.-Colonel Edmondstone, the enemy was dislodged from his position on the ridge, and General Coote, pursuing his reconnaissance, presently descried Hyder's army encamped to the south and within not more than three miles of him. Coote now sent back an order for his troops to get under arms and to advance. They moved in two lines, but in a single column, to their right, passing almost along the foot of the Sholinghur Hill and moving parallel to the enemy's encampment until the centre of the first line was opposite the hostile main body. The first line then moved forward, its flanks covered by small rocky hillocks, while the second line broke into echelon of corps, the left back, with the object both of supporting the baggage guard of two battalions left near the hills, and of watching large enemy cavalry bodies hovering on their flank. Coote's object was obviously to force the hostile and unwieldy mass to change position, and to take such advantage as might offer of the superior manœuvring power of his own troops.

Up to this Hyder seems to have regarded Coote's movements as of the nature of a reconnaissance only, but he now realized that he was about to be attacked, and sent out horsemen in every direction to recall his cattle, drivers, and soldiers, drawing up his main force behind the crest of a gentle rise on which the bulk of his artillery was posted, his front covered by swampy rice fields: Lally led his right, Tippoo Sahib, with a numerous cavalry, held command on the left, while Hyder himself was in the centre. The Mysore army numbered 150,000 men with 70 guns. Coote commanded at most 11,500, British and Indian.

It had been intended that Edmondstone's brigade, moving well

round to the right, its front covered by a large tank on the enemy's left front, should endeavour to cut Hyder's communications with Arcot, while Coote's main body, having fronted, advanced directly to the attack. The Second Brigade went, however, rather further to the right than had been intended, and Hyder opened fire upon the British line from every gun, hoping to throw Coote's troops into confusion, while Edmondstone's error was in process of correction. The English general, immutably serene, bade the Second Brigade incline to its left to diminish the interval and maintained at the same time the general advance, seeming, as has been said, to be 'moving into the midst of a huge circle of enemies'.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the *terrain*, here rocky and there marshland, caused temporary gaps to appear in the British line, and into these gaps Hyder boldly poured his cavalry. In the centre Colonel Pearse and his staff fought hand to hand with the straggling horsemen; some of our guns had to be turned about and trained on the cavalry as they burst through to the rear, assailed by a cross fire of musketry from the 18th and 21st Carnatic battalions, the latter corps capturing a standard; <sup>2</sup> an ex-hussar, a servant of Colonel Owen, of the name of Flint, cut down a standard-bearer and presented the emblem to the General, who directed that the man should receive a pension of £20 a year for life.<sup>3</sup>

Similar attacks were made upon the left, but were beaten back, and, the line continuing to advance, the 13th Bengal Infantry captured a 6-pounder sunk to its axles in the mud, which was found to be one of the eight guns lost with Colonel Baillie's detachment just over a year previously.

There was a moment of anxiety, almost indeed of crisis, when Tippoo Sahib opened with several guns on the British left, enfilading the line; owing to the rapid advance and the state of the ground the tumbrils had not come up and the limber ammunition was running short, while some of the fuzes failed to act. There arose a cry that the gun ammunition was expended, and the rumour reaching the ears of General Coote, he halted the whole line, then entering upon the final advance, and galloped to the left to ascertain by personal inspection

<sup>1</sup> Fortescue, vol. iii, p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> The 20th Madras Infantry, later the 80th Carnatic Infantry, still carried a third Colour in honour of this deed until disbanded in 1921.

<sup>3</sup> One is glad to hear that this award was confirmed by the Secretary of State: see letter from Lord Shelburne in *Selections from State Papers*, vol. iii, p. 914.

and inquiry the situation of affairs in this quarter. The delay, slight as it was, afforded Hyder an opportunity for drawing off, his retreat covered by Tippoo's horsemen, cannonaded by Edmondstone's guns, and harassed until darkness fell by the attacks of Coote's small body of cavalry.

Lieutenant-Colonel Scott remarks in his diary that 'the setting sun blushed upon the ill-use we had made of his brighter rays', but, indeed, it is not easy to see how Coote could have done more. He had inflicted another heavy blow upon Hyder—'the Mysoreans,' writes Wilks, 'uniformly describe the battle of Sholinghur as a surprise and admit it to have been a severe defeat, in which their loss probably exceeded 5,000 men'; but in a note written from the field Sir Eyre Coote stated that he would have willingly exchanged the trophies he had won, together with the credit of the victory, *for five days' rice*. One must agree with the writer<sup>1</sup> who remarks that 'one cannot, upon reflection, but seriously lament the unfortunate check which was invariably given to the ardour of General Coote in all his exploits. He never was once provided with a sufficient quantity of provisions to render any one action decisive; for a victory was no sooner gained than he was forced to retire to Madras for a fresh supply of grain, a necessity which rendered battles fruitless and the successful support of a war impossible.'

The British losses at the battle of Sholinghur had been remarkably small; of the European troops, one ensign and one man had been killed and five of the rank and file had been wounded, out of some 1,500 white soldiers engaged; of the 10,000 natives who took part in the action, one subadar, nineteen rank and file, and one lascar had been killed, one subadar, two jemadars, forty-three rank and file, one serang, one golundaz, and eight lascars were wounded, while one drummer and eight rank and file were reported missing, making a total of killed, all ranks, 23, wounded 58, and missing 9.

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, p. 246.

## CHAPTER XIV

1781

### WINTER

THE principal Polygar chiefs of North Arcot and Nellore were three in number—Vencataputtyraze, Bomraze and the Calastry raja ; the first named of these was with the British force while the other two, impelled by their fears, were with Hyder, though covertly they appear to have given a certain measure of assistance to Coote in obtaining supplies from their country. The success of the British at Sholinghur now induced Bomraze and the Calastry raja to declare more openly for what seemed to them the winning side, and on the 28th September Sir Eyre Coote, having only one day's supply of rice with his transport, marched his army through the Sholinghur Pass, with the double object of drawing nearer to Bomraze and of placing himself in close proximity to Vellore, which commanded one of the main passes to the Mysore plateau and the relief of which had become a matter of extreme urgency.

Leaving the Second Brigade to hold the Sholinghur Pass, Coote, finding that the grain supply did not realize his expectations, pushed, on the 2nd October, further into the Pollams—part of the district of North Arcot—and remained for some days at a place called Attaman-cherry, a strong position within seven miles of Paliput, where the raja Bomraze had his capital. From here the general sent out parties into the surrounding country for the collection of grain, and a scanty and precarious supply was thus temporarily assured.

But indeed the question of supplies was giving the Commander-in-Chief the most acute anxiety. The Madras Government, finding themselves unable to satisfy the demands of the army for money and grain, actually suggested that Coote should maintain his army from a country which was desolate, and appeared to consider that he ought to be able to subsist his troops entirely from stores of grain hidden about the abandoned villages and reaped from fields which during two seasons had remained uncultivated. On the 10th October Coote, resenting these foolish and ill-timed suggestions, wrote to the Council expressing surprise that he should be expected to find rice, &c., in

a ruined country, and proposed 'leading back the army to some cantonment which the Madras Government may select, and then resign its future guidance to some one or other whom they may deem better qualified than myself, or who may be perhaps more lucky in exploring from the bowels of the earth both money and provisions !' On the 20th it was necessary to remind Macartney that 'as Governor of Madras he had no military power or authority vested in him out of that government, and was not warranted either in placing officers in command of garrisons or in recalling them'.

Furious at the defection of the Polygar chiefs, Hyder Ali determined upon their punishment, and on the 12th October intelligence reached the British camp that a select body of 6,000 horse and foot, having forced a pass into the Pollams, was destroying and carrying off the crops, burning the villages and massacring the inhabitants. Coote acted at once with his usual decision ; he had for some days past been in bad health, but, placing himself at the head of a body of troops taken chiefly from the second brigade, he marched on the 14th October and was able to return to his head-quarters after an absence of thirty-eight hours, thirty-two of which were spent in the saddle, having surprised, discomfited and dispersed the enemy, who fled, leaving their plunder, tents, and equipment behind them.<sup>1</sup>

A few days previously—on the 10th October<sup>2</sup>—Coote, who was then preparing to advance to the relief of Vellore, sent Colonel Owen some twenty miles in advance for the purpose of commanding the resources of a greater extent of country, to guard the friendly natives against attack, and to afford opportunity of intercepting the grain convoys which frequently descended the Damalcherry Pass from the Mysore country for the supply of Hyder's army at Lalpet. The force which accompanied Colonel Owen was by no means insignificant, consisting as it did of a detachment of cavalry, the 24th Bengal Infantry, the 4th, 8th, 14th, 16th, and 21st Battalions of Madras Sepoys, with their battalion guns—3-pounders, and a detachment of Pioneers.<sup>3</sup> On the 21st October Colonel Owen was joined by Captain Moorhouse<sup>4</sup> and some artillerymen with two 6-pounder guns, and 50 Grenadiers of the Bengal European Regiment.

<sup>1</sup> Wilks, vol ii, p. 340, and Wilson, vol. ii, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> So stated by Colonel Scott in the *Naval and Military Magazine*, vol. i, p. 400 ; the author of the *Memoirs of the War in Asia*, p. 277, says on the 7th October.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, vol. ii, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> No doubt the Lieut.-Colonel Moorhouse killed at Bangalore in March 1791.

Colonel Owen established himself at Veracundalore, about twelve miles north-east of Chittore and situated at the southern end of the Devalampettah Pass ; he was not especially successful in securing supplies of grain, but he seems to have cut off some of the enemy's sheep and cattle and to have thought that Hyder would not venture to molest him while he was in such proximity to the main army. He was not holding a position of very great strength, and appears to have relied overmuch for warning of any attack upon a post he had placed in a fakeer's hut on a rock, whence a commanding view of the surrounding country was obtainable. The rock was known as Fort Generet from the name of the officer holding the post. Hyder had, however, laid his plans for the surprise of Owen's detachment with much skill. In order to lull the British force into security he sent a spy into Owen's camp who declared that Hyder had destroyed Arcot and that he (the spy) had himself walked over the ruins ; further Hyder sent detachments of cavalry to guard all approaches to the Pollams and to prevent any information of his movements getting through, and finally orders for a general muster of his troops early on the morning of the 23rd October had been issued. At day-break the look-out on the fakeer's rock reported cavalry in sight, later infantry, and later still guns ; and before seven o'clock it was evident that Owen was about to be attacked by Hyder himself at the head of nearly all his regular infantry, the whole of his best cavalry, and his light guns. Intelligence of the impending attack was sent off to Coote by the hand of Lieut. Innes of the Madras Army, and the General, starting soon after midday from his camp with a select body of troops, with orders for the remainder to march as soon as practicable, set out for Veracundalore. After marching some few miles, fugitives belonging to the irregular horse were met, who reported that Owen's detachment had been destroyed, but, pressing on, Coote was relieved by the receipt of a note from Colonel Owen, intimating that he was safe and holding a strong position, where the army joined him on the same night.

The situation of the detachment had, however, been one of real peril, and for some time the issue had hung in the balance : the troops were fighting at great odds and not merely for the preservation of their own lives, since had Owen's force been overcome, Coote must have fallen back on Madras and Vellore would have been forced to surrender to Hyder. Colonel Owen appears at first to have been in some doubt whether to stand his ground or retire, and by the time



he had decided on the latter course the enemy's cavalry had drawn so near and in such overpowering strength that the British outposts had to be reinforced before steps could be taken for their withdrawal. The effect of this was, however, rather to Owen's advantage, for the Mysore General, believing the British were in greater strength than he had been led to expect, commenced his deployment for attack at a considerable distance. As a matter of fact, Owen was actually weaker in numbers than he had been when he first arrived at Veracundalore, for one battalion—the 16th—had been detached to the village of Mogral to collect supplies. This battalion, under Captain Cox, was unable to rejoin Colonel Owen, but, handing all supplies collected over to the safe-keeping of a friendly chief, it was able by following a route through the hills to effect a junction with the main army under General Coote. 'Our encampment', says Colonel Scott, describing the attack upon Owen's position, 'was at the foot of a range of hills, forming one side of a pass, at little more than a mile distant from our right flank, the hills covering our rear; Fort Generet, our further outpost, nearly two miles distant on our left, betwixt which and our encampment, Captain Walker's battalion (the 8th) and the cavalry were strongly posted, the better to preserve the communication.'<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Owen, now recognizing his danger, set fire to his tents, abandoned his baggage, and made for the pass from which Hyder was hastening to cut him off. The Mysore troops had, however, the longest way to go, but Owen's men were constantly threatened by the hostile cavalry, which were only dispersed by halting and opening fire upon them with the guns, while the enemy on their side managed to get a gun on to a high rock whence they raked Owen's column now entering the pass. The 8th Battalion, forming the rear-guard, was exposed to a severe cannonade, charged by cavalry and broken, its commander, Captain Walker, being killed, and the situation was only saved by the resourcefulness of Captain Moorhouse of the artillery, the gallantry of Captain Moore and his Grenadier Company of the Bengal European Regiment, and the support of the 21st Madras Sepoys. The Grenadiers, Scott tells us, 'were much galled as they advanced, but preserved their fire which they delivered, following it with their bayonets and crying out "Coote Bahadur! Coote Bahadur!"' The enemy was confounded at so vigorous an attack, perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Lieut.-Colonel Scott appears at this time to have been serving with the 24th Bengal Infantry.

thinking Sir Eyre Coote had actually joined,' a gun which had been for a while lost was now recovered, and the retirement of Colonel Owen's force was no longer molested. Captain Moore and his Grenadiers were specially mentioned in Coote's order of the day, their conduct being eulogized 'as a proof of the merit of that company in particular and honorable to the corps they belong to'.

Our losses in this action were heavy, amounting to 317 killed and wounded, Captain Walker and Ensign Maclean being killed, and Lieut. Price, Ensigns Dods, Hall, Symons, and Darley wounded; but the casualties of the enemy were rated at 3,000, and Hyder was much disappointed and disheartened at the failure of his attempt to destroy the detachment.

On the 26th October Sir Eyre Coote moved his camp to Paliput, whence the sick and wounded of his army were sent under escort to Tripasore. This party on its return brought with it treasure from the Presidency amounting to 70,000 pagodas, but no doubt the General would have preferred grain and cattle, for, in a letter dated 29th November of this year and addressed to the Supreme Council at Fort William, Coote complains that from the 16th September to the 23rd November he had not drawn a grain of rice from Madras, but had been obliged under great difficulties to live entirely on the country. Happily some 700 bullocks were captured from Hyder's raiding parties, a large quantity of rice was discovered buried under ground near Paliput, the Polygar chiefs had been busy collecting and storing grain, and at last on the 1st November the General was able to set out for Vellore, taking with him all the rice that his transport animals could carry.

So rapid was his march that on the 2nd Coote, who seems with his body-guard to have accompanied the advance, came unexpectedly upon a small body of Mysore cavalry, posted to prevent supplies or messengers from getting through the hills to Vellore. The General at once ordered this party to be charged by his body-guard; 'the European troop, about thirty men, chiefly did the business as they were better mounted than the Native Cavalry';<sup>1</sup> all the staff seem to have taken part, Lieutenants Dallas<sup>2</sup> and Rolleston particularly distinguishing themselves; and 'the gallant old General himself exchanged a pistol-shot with a horseman'. Sir Eyre had before

<sup>1</sup> *Naval and Military Magazine*, vol. i, pp. 406 and 407.

<sup>2</sup> Dallas was a noted swordsman and his black charger was regarded by the natives as was that of Claverhouse by the Covenanters. He died as Lieut.-General Sir Thomas Dallas.

brought the services of Dallas to notice ; in the previous year, writing to Macartney on the 30th September about a cavalry skirmish, he said : ' Two horses were taken from the enemy, both the riders of which were killed by a Mr. Dallas, a fine, brave young fellow, a Cornet in the Nabob's service, and who singly the morning after the action, killed two of the enemy and took both their horses.'

There were no casualties on the British side in this small affair, but of the enemy a hundred men were killed, wounded and taken prisoners, while some fifty horses were also captured.

On the 3rd, when Vellore was finally relieved, there was but five days' store of provisions remaining in the garrison ; Coote was, however, able to fill up the magazines with sufficient supplies for thirty-six days for the reduced force which he now proposed to leave there.

The following complimentary order was published by the Commander-in-Chief :

' The Commander-in-Chief feels the most sensible satisfaction in expressing his opinion of the gallant and steady conduct of Colonel Lang and the Garrison \* under his command in the defence of Vellore.

\* Hdqrs. 1st Btn. the 1st Madras European Regt. : 5½ coys. 5th Btn. N. I. : Deth<sup>nt.</sup> of artillery.

The spirited, able and persevering exertions of Colonel Lang since Hyder Ally's invasion of the Carnatic about sixteen months ago, nearly twelve months of which time the enemy have been in possession of the fortresses and country within twenty miles of Vellore, place his professional abilities in a strong point of view, and entitle him to the most distinguishing marks of attention for the very eminent services he has rendered his country and the East India Company in maintaining the important fort of Vellore amidst the most trying situations, and under every difficulty that must necessarily have occurred so circumstanced. The Commander-in-Chief requests Colonel Lang to make known to the officers and men of his garrison the very high opinion he has of their merits and services.'

Some idea of the distress endured by the garrison during the long investment may be formed from the following extract from the correspondence of the Paymaster, Mr. Thomas Ogilvie, with the Madras Government in April 1781 :

' I assure you that such is the distress of the sepoy, lascars and artificers, for want of the common necessities of life, they are so wasted and exhausted as to be unable, many of them, to attend to their daily duty. The bullock people, five months in arrears, are equally distressed. I cannot move out of my house that I am not surrounded by them calling out for wherewithal to live ; to my certain knowledge many

of them for some time past have lived on the seed of grass picked in the fields. In short it is impossible for me to paint the distress of this garrison.'

Shortly afterwards he repeated that the sepoy's pay was nearly five months in arrear, that their families were starving, and that the enemy was offering large bribes to induce the men to desert. Grain was only introduced by stealth and at night through the agency of friendly villagers, and was paid for by remittances carried in small sums from Madras to Vellore by daring sepoy's who went to and fro in disguise.

The enemy had been in great strength, well supplied with artillery, and the siege operations had been conducted by French officers; the defences had been beaten down, the breaches became practicable, and more than one assault had been attempted; but the undaunted garrison issuing forth by way of the breaches, descended by the very ladders which the besiegers had raised against the entrenchment, and cleared the enemy away with butt and bayonet. For gallant conduct in these desperate encounters Captain Robert Sale,<sup>1</sup> Lieuts. Champneys and Parr, Sergeants Lantwein and Johnston were specially mentioned, and it was due to the spirited nature of the defence that the siege was by Hyder converted into a blockade.

It would seem that while General Coote was still at Vellore, Hyder became acquainted, by means of his innumerable and well-organized spies, with the position of one of the principal depôts whence, for the time being, the British were drawing their supplies, and he accordingly sent out a force of 3,000 cavalry to effect its capture.

'The approach of this body of cavalry was reported to Sir Eyre Coote whilst reconnoitring in the vicinity of his camp, and alarmed lest the great object of his toil should be lost he ordered three battalions of sepoy's to join him and marched to its protection. He surprised the enemy and convinced them that they would not be permitted to sleep with impunity so near his camp; and he was obliged to return with equal celerity for the security of head quarters. He marched upwards of thirty miles in the course of a few hours; and was so weak when he arrived in camp that he was obliged to be taken from his horse, and fainted the moment he was laid upon his couch. It was too apparent that the anxiety of mind, and the daily fatigues he underwent had impaired his constitution which had before suffered from long and severe service.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The father of the General Sir Robert Sale of Jellalabad fame.

<sup>2</sup> *Naval and Military Magazine*, vol. i, p. 407; Lieut.-Colonel Scott was about this time transferred to the 26th Bengal Infantry.

There was, however, much to be done and the Commander-in-Chief was not the man to spare himself at this anxious time. The main army remained no more than two or three days at Vellore, and the General then, taking with him Colonel Lang and the Grenadiers of the European Battalion under Captain Champneys, in order to lessen the number of Europeans to be fed, fell back towards Chittore, the command of the fort of Vellore being entrusted to a Captain Cuppage. The army sat down before Chittore on the 7th November and on the 10th the garrison—some 1,400 good troops under Gholam Hussein Beg—capitulated, but the British commander was disappointed in the amount of grain which he had hoped to find in Chittore, and which was actually no more than a few months' supply for the ordinary small garrison of the fort. In the capture of Chittore the senior engineer officer, Captain Theobald, was killed, and Sir Eyre Coote, himself, received a slight contusion on the neck from a stone splinter raised by a shot, or, as some say, from a fragment of a stone shot, fired while he was reconnoitring the place. Another officer was wounded and a lascar was killed.

Hyder now resolved upon reprisals ; he sent a portion of his army under Tippoo Sahib to lay siege to Tripasore, while he himself at the head of another body attacked the post at Paliput where Captain Temple had been left, with the 18th Battalion of Sepoys, in charge of sick and stores. This officer evacuated the place on the approach of Hyder, abandoning guns, stores and baggage, and was able to join the main army by a hurried retreat through the woods. About the same time the small fort of Pollore fell to Hyder, the garrison<sup>1</sup> escaping and rejoining at Madras on the 31st December, but the enemy captured four 18-pounders which the Commander-in-Chief had left there, from insufficiency of carriage, when he moved to engage the enemy at Sholinghur.

Coote was now called upon to make an awkward and difficult decision ; Hyder could not be permitted to continue these successes, trivial as they were, while to attempt the relief of Tripasore it was necessary to leave some kind of a garrison in Chittore, thus risking another sacrifice similar to those which had recently been experienced. Coote's army was by this time considerably weakened, his objective throughout his operations was the defeat of Hyder's main army, he had no idea of waging war by *petils paquets*, and some historians have

<sup>1</sup> Two companies of Sepoys and 200 Levies under Lieut. Brickmire of the Nawab's troops.

stated that it was only under the strongest pressure from Madras that Coote left one small garrison in Chittore while he marched his army to effect the relief of another at Tripasore. Captain Lamotte and the 9th Battalion remained to hold Chittore, and that the danger of their situation was abundantly apparent to them is clear from the words which were written by some wag on the main gate of the fort—'the high road to Seringapatam!'

On the 17th November the army marched for Tripasore; on the next day Paliput was reached, where the fire of the guns at Tripasore could be distinctly heard; and on the 19th the troops had no sooner set out on their march from Nagherie Hill 'than the clouds broke and those rains descended, which in the fall of the year, pouring from the perpendicular sides of extensive mountains, render the rivers impassable in the short space of two days. The General, urged by the gathering floods, with the beds of three rivers on the route that lay before him, continued his march without interruption till ten o'clock at night, when the van was ordered to halt; but the rear did not come up till one o'clock on the next day. The roads were already so much deepened by the rains that an elephant, three camels and a number of horses with many carriages and bullocks, stuck fast in the mud and were left behind our men on their march. The last branch of the Paliar was found just fordable when they crossed it on the 21st, and on the evening of that day the army encamped near Tripasore with no more than two days' provisions. Tippoo Sahib, although he had made a breach in one of the sides of the fort, had already withdrawn his forces.'<sup>1</sup> The place had been admirably defended by its garrison under Captain Bishop (of Permacoil fame) and Lieut. Oram.

Of the trials of this march Sir Eyre Coote wrote on the 29th November 1781 to the Supreme Council at Fort William:

'Such was the distress to which the army was reduced for provisions that in the march from Chittore to the relief of Tripasore, one half was three successive days alternately without rice. The followers of the army from the last time of their leaving Madras until they came back to Tripasore had had two *seers* (4 lb.) of paddy served out to them. Numbers have died by hunger and the inclemency of the weather, from which causes in the course of two marches we lost nearly a hundred cavalry, likewise bullocks, elephants and camels, both public and private. In short the scene exhibited was more like a field of battle than a line of march.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of the War in Asia*, pp. 284 and 285.

<sup>2</sup> *Selections from State Papers preserved in the Foreign Department*, vol. iii, p. 827.

Innes Munro estimated that 600 followers and others perished on this march.

Owing to the dearth of supplies, the British commander found himself at this time obliged to set free some thousand of Hyder's troops who had been captured, whom the Mysore Chief declined to exchange, and whom Coote had no means of supporting.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the month the army returned to Madras, the Commander-in-Chief so prostrated by illness that he had to be carried in his palanquin; and on the 3rd December the force was distributed in cantonments, the sepoy brigades being stationed at the Mount under the command of Colonel Pearse, the remaining troops on the Choultry Plain and other places near Madras. That the state of health of Sir Eyre Coote was very serious is clear from his letter of the 29th November, already quoted, and in the last sentence of which he announces his intention of seeking the first favourable opportunity of returning to Bengal for the re-establishment of his health.

The last event of this campaign of 1781 was the recapture by Hyder of Chittore, which surrendered about Christmas Day on the stipulation that the garrison should be permitted to return to Madras. This condition was not observed; the officers were sent to join those already in captivity at Seringapatam, and the bulk of the men to Bednore, where many of them remained until released at the capture of that place by General Matthews in January 1783.

'One prominent topic', writes Wilks,<sup>2</sup> 'pervades the official correspondence of Sir Eyre Coote throughout the whole of this campaign, namely, "the duplicity and iniquity of the nabob Mahommed Ali's government".' The Nawab of Arcot not only misgoverned his people, but he afforded no assistance whatever to the army in the field in the procuring of supplies, while he did not contribute either money or men for the furtherance of a cause which affected him even more than it did the British. Lord Macartney exhausted all the usual measures of diplomacy, in which he considered himself to be something of an expert, to persuade the Nawab to alter his course of conduct and to convince him that by so doing he would be best consulting his own interests. Mahommed Ali was, however, not only obstinate but wily; he played off Coote against Macartney, and addressed a letter to the latter declaring that he had furnished the army with abundant supplies, and intimating that nothing but avoidable delay

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> vol. ii, p. 347.

had prevented the defeat of the enemy and his expulsion from the Carnatic ; while later, the Nawab reviled the Governor of Fort St. George and used every endeavour to undermine Lord Macartney's power and to disparage his character. Sir Eyre Coote had repeatedly pointed out, and he had been supported by Warren Hastings, the urgent need that existed for the Madras Government to assume the management of what remained of the misgoverned country and to put an end to a dual authority ; and towards the close of 1781 the Nawab consented to assign the revenues of his country to the Company for a period of five years, reserving one-sixth part for his own personal expenditure, and the revenues being administered by a carefully selected Board of Revenue Commissioners. The outlook therefore for 1782 was, thanks to the foresight and determination of the Commander-in-Chief, of a promising character—provided only that the Commissioners proved to be men of character, ability, and decision.

Of the other operations conducted during the campaign of 1781 those only now remain to be described in which the main army under Sir Eyre Coote did not share, but which may be regarded as having no small influence upon the general course of the war.

When in June of this year Lord Macartney had arrived at Madras and assumed the reins of government, it had seemed to him that his future conduct should be guided by two chief motives—the one, to prosecute with the utmost vigour the war with the Dutch, the news of the outbreak of which he had himself carried to India, and the other to persuade the chiefs of that part of India in general that the East India Company had no intention of extending the boundaries of its possessions, and Hyder Ali in particular, that a settlement of all existing differences with him was an object very near the heart of the Company's representative at Fort St. George. It was in the hope of achieving such objects that the following attempts were made to carry these resolutions into effect. To secure the Dutch settlements on the coast of Coromandel and prevent their being of service to Hyder Ali, attacks were made upon the petty forts of Sadras and Pulicat, and these places fell into our hands on the 29th June and 2nd July respectively. Then the success of the British at Porto Novo seemed to offer some hope of effecting an honourable termination of the war with Hyder, and Lord Macartney, with the concurrence of General Sir Eyre Coote and Admiral Sir Edward Hughes, addressed a letter through the



medium of the former to the Mysore prince, in the hope that by this means negotiations might be opened whereby the hostilities, for the successful conduct of which the British resources were obviously inadequate, might possibly be brought to a conclusion satisfactory to both the contending parties. In acting in this manner Lord Macartney was exceeding his authority, since the Bengal, the Supreme, Government was alone empowered to conclude treaties and to make peace or war with the country powers ; but in forwarding this letter to Hyder Ali through Sir Eyre Coote, the Governor of Fort St. George expressed his 'determination that no consequence which might result personally to himself from any displeasure of the Bengal Government should prevent him from undertaking or persevering in any measure conducive to the honour and interest of the Company, or from hazarding his responsibility in any step of such a tendency for which the Admiral and General were likewise willing to become responsible.'

The letter was duly received by Hyder Ali ; but his reply, though certainly evasive enough, seems to afford clear proof of the dissatisfaction and distrust which had been awakened in the minds of some at least of the ruling chiefs of the country by reason of former transactions between them and the several governments of the East India Company :

'The Governors and Sirdars,' wrote the Mysore Chief, 'who enter into treaties, after one or two years return to Europe, and their acts and deeds become of no effect ; and fresh Governors and Sirdars introduce new conversations. Prior to your coming, when the governor and council of Madras had departed from their treaty of alliance and friendship, I sent my vakeel to confer with them and to ask the reason for such breach of faith ; the answer given was, that they who made the conditions were gone to Europe. You write that you have come with the sanction of the King and Company to settle all matters ; which gives me great happiness. You, Sir, are a man of wisdom and comprehend all things. Whatever you may judge most proper and best, that you will do. You mention that troops have arrived and are daily arriving from Europe ; of this I have not a doubt ; I depend upon the favour of God for my succours.'

It was not felt that this reply was sufficiently conciliatory in tone or contents to warrant any hope that hostilities would cease between the British and Mysore armies ; and, since it was also incontestable that Hyder was entering into communication with the French and Dutch in the hope that their united forces would be able to overthrow the British power in India, Lord Macartney now determined upon further action against the possessions of the Dutch, and was especially

desirous of capturing Negapatam and Trincomallee. Coote's views as to the dispersion of his strength have already been emphasized, and he was opposed to the siege of Negapatam being undertaken at this season of the year (July), intending at that time to employ the whole of his army against Arcot ; but we have seen how his activities were limited and his operations influenced by the questions of transport and supply which had hampered him from the moment of taking the field.

Macartney was, however, set upon the capture of Negapatam, and decided to attempt it with the assistance of the fleet, and of such troops as could be drawn from the forces in Tanjore, where Colonel Brathwaite, for some months past, had been more than holding his own. This decision was communicated to Coote, who replied in the following terms :<sup>1</sup>

‘ I am not sorry in being relieved from so great a part of my burden, and as I conceive myself exonerated from all responsibility in that quarter, and indeed in some degree from what would otherwise have been my share here, I shall not attempt to send away further orders to the southward. I wish most sincerely those you have sent may be attended with success equal to your most sanguine wishes ; but I will venture to foretell that if the attack on Negapatam is commenced, leaving an enemy in the rear equal to cope with our besieging army, and they move towards its relief, we shall be disgraced ; and if we are not more fortunate than we have a right to expect, it will terminate in the loss of Tanjore, Trichinopoly, and all the southern countries ; as well as bring on the ruin of this army.’

By some of Macartney's biographers and supporters this letter, taken by itself, has been held as showing that Coote did not care for Munro to attempt a capture which, if successful, would redound greatly to the honour of the actual captor while bringing none to the Commander-in-Chief at a distance. The following extract, however, from a letter from Coote to Munro, dated ‘ Camp Chittoor, 14th November ’, places Sir Eyre's objections in their true light. ‘ I will own to you that however anxious I was in my own mind for the attack of Negapatam, viewing it, as I have always done, as an object of which the acquisition would prove of essential benefit to our affairs in general, still I could not help seeing an attempt of the kind in a light of a very great risk whilst Hyder had so formidable a footing as that I have ever understood he had in its neighbourhood.’ That

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Coote to Macartney, dated camp near Paliput, 31st October 1781.

is to say the Commander-in-Chief had no doubt of the success of the enterprise—so long as Hyder was content merely to look on.

By this time the operations against Negapatam had commenced, but on the 4th November Lord Macartney endeavoured to justify his interference in military matters in a letter to the Commander-in-Chief. In this he said :

‘ Personal prudence may be sometimes prejudicial to the public cause, and caution beyond the danger is a weakness which may be as fatal as the rashness of enterprise beyond the means of success. . . . I ought not to shrink from the responsibility of the present measure ; most cheerfully (*sic*) I take it upon myself alone, trusting to be justified by the motive of doing essential service, and by my efforts to pursue the fittest methods of accomplishing it. In the midst of the efforts I made for giving success to this expedition, I was mindful of that attention towards you which was due to your station, and which my sincere esteem for you will naturally suggest. No officer who could be supposed to belong to the army under your command was called upon to serve on this occasion. Those who offered, I refused, as is known to you ; though I wished much for the services of Lord Macleod and others of them ; the recovered men of his regiment I sent to you in lieu of sending them to Negapatam.’

Lord Macartney had experienced some little difficulty in finding a commander for the Negapatam expedition ; although he had embarked upon it against the wishes and advice of the Commander-in-Chief, even Lord Macartney’s overweening self-confidence did not induce him to undertake the conduct of the military operations, or indeed to assume any command other than that of the local militia. The only man of experience and standing immediately available was Major-General Sir Hector Munro, who had left the main army after Pollilore, and who had been intended to take over the command in the Tanjore country ; he had been, however, for some time in bad health and was now actually waiting at Madras for an opportunity to return to England. When approached by Lord Macartney he appears at first to have declined the command now offered on the grounds of health, and also by reason of an intense dislike he entertained for Mr. Sadlier,<sup>1</sup> one of the Members of the Select Committee, and which had caused Munro to declare that under no circumstances would he serve under any orders with the framing of which Mr. Sadlier was concerned.

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Sadlier, or Sadleir, had already, in October 1780, declined a challenge from Munro, but he fought a duel with and wounded Macartney in September 1784.

Both these difficulties were got over, Sir Hector Munro observing 'if it is thought that I can be of service, I will cheerfully attempt it, though in the state of health in which I now am, it may be at the hazard of my life;' and he accordingly left Madras in the fleet under Admiral Sir Edward Hughes, arriving off Nagore about the 20th October. In a letter to Sir Eyre Coote, dated the 30th October, Munro assures him that he 'had resolved not to proceed till I heard from you and received your sanction for so doing'.

The operations had commenced with an advance against Nagore, situated on the coast about four miles to the north of Negapatam, by a detachment from the southern army under the command of Colonel Nixon. This officer arrived before Nagore on the 21st October, on which date the garrison evacuated the place, being pursued by the cavalry under Lieutenant Sampson and losing 200 men, 4 standards, 4 guns, and 2 tumbrils.

The garrison of Negapatam was a large and powerful one, being composed of 8,000 men, made up of 500 European regular troops, 700 Malays, 4,500 sepoy, and 2,300 of Hyder Ali's best troops, one thousand of which were cavalry. The chief engineer was a Frenchman and there were several German officers with the infantry.

On the 21st October Sir Edward Hughes sent on shore 443 marines to join the force under Sir Hector Munro, which amounted to some 4,000 men; on the day following a battalion of sailors, 827 strong, was landed under command of Captains Mackenzie, Mackay, and Reynolds, while sixteen 18-pounders, two 12-pounders, two mortars, and a quantity of ammunition were successfully put on shore by the boats of the squadron in spite of the heavy surf. A chain of five redoubts, connected by lines to the northward of Negapatam, had to be forced before trenches could be opened; this operation was effected by the 29th October, and trenches were opened on the 3rd November. On the 6th the Admiral came ashore to concert with the General means for prosecuting the siege with renewed vigour, the fleet having already been moved closer in, and a battery of ten 18-pounders was established within 300 yards of one of the bastions. Two separate sallies by the garrison were repulsed, and on the 12th November the Governor capitulated.

The losses in the fleet totalled 30 killed and 56 wounded, in the army 135, but the military stores captured were numerous and

valuable, amounting to 188 serviceable guns, 8 brass mortars, 277 barrels of gunpowder, and a large number of muskets and other weapons. Many naval stores also fell into our hands, besides three Dutch ships which were then in the harbour, and a certain amount of treasure. There were a number of German and Swiss soldiers in the garrison and of these upwards of a hundred entered the British service.

Sir Eyre Coote, though he had been unable to approve of the operations when contemplated, did not fail to express his satisfaction at the capture of a place so important, depriving the Dutch of all chance of assisting either the French or Hyder Ali, while the fall of Negāpatam obliged the Mysore ruler to evacuate many strong forts in the Tanjore country. To the Council at Fort William, Coote wrote on the 29th November as follows :

‘Several advantages have been gained by our troops to the southward, amongst the most important has been the capture of Negāpatam, which surrendered on the 12th inst. to Sir Edward Hughes and the troops under General Munro, on which event permit me to offer you my most hearty congratulations. The public are principally indebted for this acquisition to the unwearied application and perseverance of the Admiral, and to the powerful aid he afforded by landing so formidable a body of seamen and marines, whose brave, active, and spirited behaviour gave life to every operation.’

The capitulation came just in time, for immediately after it had been concluded the weather became stormy, and for three weeks the Admiral was unable to re-embark his landing parties, and sail southwards to the capture of the Dutch possessions in Ceylon.

Meanwhile the Directors of the East India Company, ignorant of Sir Hector Munro’s present success and mindful only of his earlier failures when in chief command, had decided to get rid of him ; and in a letter dated London the 25th January 1782 to the Council at Fort St. George, they wrote :

‘Having frequently and most seriously considered the general conduct of Sir Hector Munro, Commander-in-Chief at your Settlement; we have found it our indispensable duty without delay to remove him from his said command and from the service of the East India Company, of which we give you this information, and direct, immediately upon receipt hereof, you communicate this our resolution to the General.’

*Within twenty-four hours* of this letter of dismissal having been penned at home, the Madras Government was lauding Munro for his success

at Negapatam; on the 26th January the Council wrote to the Directors :

' General Sir Hector Munro, still continuing in a very indifferent state of health, is returning to this Presidency and takes his passage for Europe, closing his services in this country with the important conquest of Negapatam. The Zeal and Alacrity with which he undertook that enterprise, and the Ability with which he accomplished it do him the highest Honour.'

How many things by season season'd are  
To their right praise and true perfection !

Lord Shelburne in a letter to Coote, dated Whitehall, 6th July 1782, acknowledged the general's despatch of the 20th January which had been taken home by Colonel Crawford of the 73rd, and wrote :

' It is at the same time His Majesty's pleasure that Sir Hector Munro, General Stuart, and all the officers and men, who have so greatly distinguished themselves by their endeavours to act in a manner worthy the example you set them, should be informed of His Majesty's perfect approbation of their conduct . . . The recall of Sir Hector Munro from his station in the Company's service which must have occasioned his departure from India before the arrival of this despatch, makes it useless for me to answer his letters from Negapatam, except by signifying the King's pleasure that you, or the Commander-in-Chief for the time being, should notify to the officers and men employed in the siege of that place His Majesty's approbation of their behaviour upon that service.'

Munro had intended proceeding home almost at once in the *Rochford*,<sup>1</sup> Indiaman, but delayed his departure until September of this year. He had performed good service in his time but his soldiering days were now over. He came out to India in 1761 as Major of the 89th, having previously served in Loudon's Highlanders, and in 1764 when commanding at Patna won the decisive battle of Buxar. He then went home, coming out to India again in 1778 as Commander-in-Chief at Madras, when the capture of Pondicherry enhanced his fame, which the annihilation of Colonel Baillie's force did something to tarnish. On returning home again in 1782 he sat in Parliament as Member for the Inverness Burghs, and occupied himself in the enlargement of the Novar estate by the purchase of adjoining properties, and in building castellated erections on the hills around. He is described in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as a man of

<sup>1</sup> I cannot find this vessel in Love's list in *Vestiges of Old Madras*.—H. C. W.

fine person, a firm but humane disciplinarian, and a brave soldier. He died in 1805 at the age of 79.

The year 1781, if not indeed an *annus mirabilis* as was 1759, had been one of hard fighting in all quarters of the globe :

‘ It is worth while,’ writes the historian of the British army,<sup>1</sup> ‘ to think for a moment of the great array of British officers who were standing at bay against heavy odds during that terrible year—of Clinton fencing with Washington at New York ; of Cornwallis, misguided indeed but undismayed, fighting his desperate action of Guildford ; of Rawdon continuing to stem the tide of invasion for a few days so as to save his garrisons ; of Campbell, helpless and deserted in his sickly post at Pensacola ; of the Commanders in the West Indies set down in the midst of treacherous populations and of a deadly climate ; of Murray still defiant at Minorca ; of Elliott proudly disdainful of perpetual bombardment at Gibraltar ; of Goddard trying desperately but in vain to fight his way to Poonah ; of Popham snatching away Gwalior by surprise ; of Camac plucking himself by sheer daring from the midst of Scindia’s squadrons ; of Flint making mortars of wood and grenades of fuller’s-earth at Wandewash ; of Lang indomitable among his starving sepoyes at Vellore ; lastly of Coote, shaken by age and disease, and haunted at every step by the spectre of famine, marching, manœuvring, fighting unceasingly to relieve his beleaguered comrades. With such men to defend it the Empire was not yet lost.’

<sup>1</sup> Fortescue, vol. iii, p. 464.

## CHAPTER XV

1782

### JANUARY TO APRIL

VELLORE had been provisioned by Coote up to the 15th December, and by various means Captain Cuppage, the commandant, had succeeded in obtaining additional supplies sufficient to last him until the 11th January; but it was clear at the beginning of the New Year that the relief of Vellore had again become a matter of paramount importance. In order, therefore, to facilitate its relief, the army, while it had remained near Madras, had been employed in escorting grain convoys to Poonamallee and Tripasore, garrisons conveniently situated upon the route it was intended that the relieving force should take. Vellore is about eighty miles directly west of Madras.

The quartermaster-general<sup>1</sup> of the army had estimated that 35,000 bullocks would be required to carry thirty-five days' supplies for a force of twelve or fourteen thousand men, and for the re-victualling of the garrison of Vellore, but it is difficult to see how so long a baggage and supply train could have been safeguarded in a country as intricate and against so enterprising an enemy as Hyder, by a force as weak in cavalry as that which Sir Eyre Coote commanded. The question was, however, early settled by the discovery that no more than 8,000 bullocks were available for this service, and it was then decided that this four-footed transport having been augmented by the employment of 3,000 coolies, the army should march light to the relief of Vellore, leaving behind all the heavy guns and as much baggage as possible.

Coote had, however, already made his arrangements for embarking for Bengal, partly in order to concert with the Governor-General some remedy for the inefficient equipment and supply of his force, but mainly because his health had sunk under the pressure of bodily fatigue and mental anxiety to a degree that had induced his medical advisers to protest against his continuing to keep the field.

Colonel Pearse in a letter written on the 17th December 1781 says :

' I do not see how we are to effect the relief of Vellore if Hyder does his duty, as he is between us and the place with all his force, and

<sup>1</sup> This would appear to have been Lieut.-Colonel Campbell, the Adjutant-General being Lieut.-Colonel Malcolm.



knowing our project he will certainly be under no anxiety in providing for the defence of Arcot, and therefore may bring his whole force against us. We must go off without necessaries, tents, &c., we take only light guns, and our distressed state he knows as well as we do. Coote is too ill to go. Colonel Lang must command; he nobly defended Vellore—not that it was attacked in force, but for a year he found ways and means to maintain his garrison and his detachment in a fort which was enclosed in another on a hill close to Vellore and commanding it, and he repulsed Hyder in three attacks.

‘If Lang commands I must be second in command. I heartily wish, however, as the case is critical that Coote was going with us, because I believe the sepoys have an opinion of him; but if we get well through the business so much the better, as it will show them we can do without him.’

At this time urgent appeals for succour were received from Cuppage at Vellore; added to this the sepoys were without necessaries and had received no pay since the 1st September; but though there had been several instances of discontent, amounting to mutiny, among the native troops, this misbehaviour was confined almost entirely to those serving in the southern army, and up to January 1782 there had been disorder from the above-named causes in only one of the regiments—one of Bengal Infantry—in the army commanded by Coote.

In this emergency the Madras Government attached the very greatest importance to the presence of the Commander-in-Chief at the head of the force destined to relieve Vellore, and Coote, considering it a service of extreme urgency, resolved to incur any and every risk to ensure its accomplishment. A sum of money sufficient to pay the sepoys up to the 1st November having been raised, their discontent was allayed, and the army was ready to advance, carrying three months’ supplies for Vellore and twenty-one days’ provisions for the fighting men of the relief column.

Just at this moment it seemed that Coote was likely to be deprived of the services of his second in command, Colonel Ross Lang. Mention has before been made of the constant supersession of officers of the Company’s forces, not only from the ruling that officers of King’s regiments took precedence of Company’s officers of the same rank, but from the fact that local rank was frequently granted to senior officers of His Majesty’s regiments. Information was received at Madras that three regiments of the King’s service had sailed for India, and that on their arrival the field officers were to be accorded a step of brevet rank which would make them senior to the officers of the Company’s service. Colonel Lang, seeing that he would be superseded,

applied to Coote for the rank of Brigadier-General. This request Coote was unable to grant, and Lang on the same day sent in his resignation of the service.

Sir Eyre joined the army on the 2nd January, and on the 4th it encamped near Tripasore, whence it was to commence its advance to Vellore on the following morning.

‘On the morning of the 5th, a little before the break of day, when the army had struck their encampment, then about a mile west from Tripasore, Sir Eyre Coote’s valet, on entering his tent to awaken his master, found him senseless; medical assistance was instantly called, and he was found to be in a fit of apoplexy. For nearly two hours, during which little hope was entertained of his recovery, the despondency painted on every countenance, and particularly on those of the native troops whose attachment and confidence exceeded the bounds of human veneration, and who could with difficulty be restrained from transgressing the limits of decorum, to satisfy their anxiety, presented altogether a scene of mournful interest. Expresses to Madras excited a corresponding degree of apprehension; an earnest entreaty from the Government urged his immediate return—“for the preservation of a life so valuable to the State”—and Colonel Lang was ordered to take eventual charge of the Army.’<sup>1</sup>

He set out at once and reached Tripasore at night on the 6th.

Among the papers at West Park there is preserved a letter addressed by Lieut.-Colonel Malcolm, the Adjutant-General, to Lord Macartney. It is written on a scrap of very thin paper, one inch broad by something over six inches long—evidently having been sent in by a runner and concealed in a quill; it is dated ‘Tripasore, 5th January 1782, 7 o’clock a.m.’, and reads as follows:

‘it is with the utmost concern that I acquaint you of the General’s having been taken ill before daylight this morning, an apoplectic fit, he is rather better, I apprehend the worst—at any rate that he will not be able to command the Army, we are ordered to halt to-day on this account; before night I shall be able to give your Lordship more certain information of his situation and the necessary consequences in regard to the movement of the Army.’

The indomitable spirit of Coote triumphed over this seizure, and he recovered sufficiently to be able to accompany the army in a palanquin on its march on the 6th. On the 9th, at the passage of the Poonee river, the British came in contact with the enemy, who fell back; but on resuming the march on the 10th, the column was heavily attacked when passing through some heavy ground of the nature of a morass;

<sup>1</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 355.

but, though the attack was supported by heavy guns, the advance was not seriously impeded, and Vellore was relieved on the 11th—the exact date beyond which the defence could no longer have been sustained by reason of the exhaustion of all supplies. In the action of the 10th January the losses of the British force were Europeans: 1 lieutenant (Greenwell of the Infantry) killed, 2 lieutenants (Speediman and Ruttlidge of the Artillery) and 2 rank and file wounded, 1 missing; Natives, killed, 19 non-commissioned officers and rank and file, wounded, 1 subadar and 35 other ranks, missing, 4 rank and file.

On the very day of the relief Coote sat down and wrote a long letter to Lord Macartney describing the previous day's action and stating his intention of starting the next morning on his return journey, despite the fact that 'my state of health is very indifferent, and being yesterday the whole day obliged to expose myself on horseback to an intense sun, is at this present time severely felt by me'. But Coote was no ordinary man; the depreciatory remarks of Macaulay and the somewhat faint praises of Lieut.-Colonel Pratt<sup>1</sup> may equally be disregarded. 'He jests at scars who never felt a wound,' and the man who after an apoplectic stroke when his life is despaired of, is able within a week to spend a day in the saddle under the July sun of Vellore, is surely a very special type of British soldier. Coote's fault was that he took no thought for himself; it is on record that on one occasion one of his aides observed to him that he endangered his health and the fate of his army by exposing himself too much to the sun. 'Tut, tut,' replied the general, 'the sun has no more effect upon me than upon an old board.' 'Aye, but Sir,' rejoined the aide-de-camp, 'you should recollect that it would not be the first old board the sun has split.' Again the General and his staff were standing in a group one morning when Hyder pointed a gun at them, and the ball struck the ground near the general. 'You had better move, Sir,' said one of his suite, 'you are observed.' 'Never mind,' replied Coote, 'they could not do that again.'<sup>2</sup>

Vellore was left again at sunrise on the 13th January, and on reaching the morass about 11 a.m. the General found Hyder Ali there with his whole army waiting to dispute the passage.

'His 24 and 18-pounders,' wrote Coote,<sup>3</sup> 'commanding a much more

<sup>1</sup> *From Cromwell to Wellington*, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> *Naval and Military Magazine*, vol. ii, p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Macartney dated camp between Malpaddy and Sholinghur, 14th January 1782, in *Selections from State Papers*, vol. iii, p. 841.

considerable distance than our light 6's and 12's, give him an opportunity of attempting these distant cannonades with an idea of some success, and Hyder always takes care to be certain that there is impeding or impossible ground between his army and ours ; thus he is always sure of its being optional with him to draw off his guns in safety before our army can act offensively to advantage. Our troops sustained a heavy cannonade for three hours, happily with little loss.<sup>1</sup> The instant the rear and baggage had crossed the morass, I posted my baggage and stores close to an adjoining hill, leaving for their protection a strong corps with fourteen 6 and 3-pounders, and pushed on the army over high ground by the nearest possible route for the enemy's main body and guns. I moved off from the left lines, in column first, and, as the ground opened sufficiently for forming, marched on in line of battle. This was about 4 in the afternoon. As soon as our army was near enough to do execution, we opened an advancing fire of artillery from all parts, and had the mortification to see the enemy precipitately draw off. I term it a mortification, for if Hyder would have stood and risked the chance of war for one hour, his army would in all probability have been destroyed, such is the ardour and power of the handful of veterans I have the honour of commanding, but truly distressing our situation for the want of proper magazines, means of field subsistence and carriage for it . . . We pursued his army till dark, drove them over the branch of the Poonee River (nor did they halt till they had nearly reached the plains of Timmerly).'

On the night of the 15th the army encamped upon the ground it had occupied prior to the battle of Sholinghur, and on the following morning, Hyder appearing in full force, it was conjectured he intended to offer battle on the same field. Both armies manœuvred for some ten hours without coming to action, and the Mysore chief then fell back under the walls of Arcot, while Coote led his troops back to Tripasore, and having there left them arrived at Fort St. George on the morning of the 19th January.

The following stanzas appeared in the *India Gazette* of the 23rd March 1782, on Coote's return to Madras after his alarming illness and the successful actions of the 10th and 13th of January of this year :

Laud we that Power Supreme—our Chief  
Great Coote returned—the wish'd relief  
Successful to Vellore.  
In health restored, those late alarms  
Created to a world in arms  
Dispersed, to air dissolved.

<sup>1</sup> The casualties on this day were 4 Europeans, 1 Jemadar, and 4 rank and file killed ; 1 captain-lieut., 1 lieut., 6 European rank and file, 1 subadar, 2 jemadars, 1 serang, and 26 sepoy, wounded ; 5 sepoy missing. Captain-Lieut. Lucas of the Artillery died of his wounds

Victorious to our longing eyes  
Indulged, this dear Caesarean prize,  
Again chastised the foe.  
Thy numbers, Hyder, they protect  
In spite of our success—defect  
Thy own intestine war.  
Let Meadows, our good fleet appear,  
Tremendous sounds to thy gall'd ear  
Arcot, a last retreat.  
Haste thee—prepare—a gen'rous foe  
Coote, in that late severer blow  
Advises for the best.  
Walls such as thine may ill defend  
Admonished by a hostile friend  
In time resolve—retire.

This effusion is signed 'T. Underwood'.

Sir Eyre Coote lost no time in acquainting the Madras Government in the plainest possible terms with his opinion of the precarious situation of his army and of the military affairs in the Carnatic, caused by the persistent failure of the Governor and Council to realize and supply his urgent needs. In a letter<sup>1</sup> addressed to the President and Governor and the Members of the Select Committee, dated Fort St. George, the 19th January 1782, he wrote :

' I have the honour to inform you that I arrived here this morning, having left the army last night at Tripasore.

' I am sorry I should be obliged, upon return from so severe a service as the late march for the relief of Vellore has proved, having in the course of it engaged and defeated the enemy, to represent to you the very heavy disappointment I experienced on my arrival at Tripasore, on finding that during the absence of the army not more than 750 bags of rice had been sent to the place for its subsistence, a quantity little more than equal to one day's consumption for the fighting men and followers, and by the report made to me by the grain-keeper there, what remained of the former stock (reserving nothing for the garrison) was not more than equal to two days' subsistence for the fighting men and followers of which last denomination numbers have lately died by want.

' However much I am impressed with a sense of the zeal you must naturally possess for forwarding the service at so very interesting and important a conjunction of our affairs and whereof the army is now the only prop, yet it occurs to me to observe that the 1,700 bullocks which in one of your letters you advise me had arrived here the day after my departure, being the 3rd of this month, do not appear to have been at all employed on this very necessary occasion. Permit me to recommend their being all loaded with rice and sent to the army

<sup>1</sup> *Selections from the State Papers*, vol. iii, p. 842.

with the utmost despatch, as, at this present moment, I do not believe there is more than two days' rice in camp for the fighting men and none for the followers.

'It was my wish until you could have equipped the army in such a manner as to have enabled it to act with effect, by discharging the heavy arrears now due and supplying a sufficiency of carriage for provisions, stores, &c., to have continued it at or near Tripasore, where it could not fail of checking the enemy from pursuing any operations to the northward or southward; but upon finding the stock of rice in that garrison so very small, I of necessity left orders for it to come to Vellore this morning, being about half-way betwixt Pondamallee<sup>1</sup> and Tripasore. Every step that it falls back, from the enemy's situation, is not only a certain loss of credit but of advantage. These are consequences which, arising as they evidently do from the want of supplies, I can in no respect hold myself responsible for, and as from the experience I have already had, I can have no dependence on the army being found in such a manner as to enable me to conduct it to such operations as would produce the most permanent advantages, and do that justice, which my zeal for the interests of the Company and honor of the British arms prompts me to, I must resign the task and leave it to the execution of some one whose health and abilities may be better calculated to surmount those difficulties, which I can no longer, in a due regard to the cause of the public and my honor and reputation as a soldier, pretend to contend against.'

That the General had abundant cause for complaint there can be no doubt, but at the same time it must be conceded that the government treasury at Fort St. George was depleted, and the country on all sides had been made almost a desert by the ravages of war; while the number of followers which in those times—and even up to a very much later period—an Indian army drew with it into the field, greatly added to the amount of supplies which had not merely to be provided, but to be carried and safeguarded on the march and in camp. In those days the number of recognized followers was enormous, and even in August 1782, when the difficulties of supply could only barely, and at great sacrifice of mobility, be overcome, the number of private followers for whom rice was allowed to be drawn from the public stores was fixed as under:<sup>2</sup>

Major-General Stuart, or second in Command . . . . .	50
Colonel Lang or officers of that rank . . . . .	40
Field officers, each . . . . .	40
Captains, each . . . . .	20
Subalterns, each . . . . .	12
To every 100 European soldiers . . . . .	14
To every 100 Native soldiers . . . . .	10 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Now Poonamallee.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, vol. ii, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> Even at the time of the first Afghan War, Havelock, then A.D.C. to Sir

But when all excuse is made for the difficulties of complying, not only with the ordinary needs of an army in the field, but with the extraordinary requirements demanded by an over-liberal scale of field allowances, in a campaign conducted in a ravaged country against an active enemy, it must be admitted that Macartney and his Council have much to answer for. The former could not bear to take a second place in his own Presidency, and, though destitute of military experience of any kind, he desired that he should be consulted in all military matters by the Commander-in-Chief, and contended that Coote's actions must be subject to, and even governed by, the resolutions adopted by the majority of the Madras Council. Upon one point could Macartney always rely for unanimity in his Council, and that was in opposing Sir Eyre Coote as the representative of an external government, the authority of which they never ceased to dispute. Madras had received Coote as a saviour when he first came from Bengal to the assistance of the Presidency; when, sick, and disheartened by total absence of real support, he threatened resignation, the Governor and Council besought him to remain; and Grier seems to put the case in the proverbial nutshell when he writes that 'the General in the field was hampered at every turn by the dead weight of Madras. If the Select Committee could not assert the authority over him which they strenuously claimed, they could at least refrain from any active exertions in his support—and they did so.'<sup>1</sup>

Both parties now carried their complaints to the Supreme Government, and later Coote and Macartney sent their representatives to Fort William, by whom their cases were to be stated, redress sought, and a position which had become intolerable put right. The General sent his Persian Interpreter, Mr. Graham, and Lord Macartney's emissary was his private secretary, Mr. Staunton. Sir Eyre Coote's complaints were that the Governor and Council of Fort St. George did not afford him the support to which he was entitled, that they would neither supply his wants by their own efforts, nor permit him to find supplies for himself, and the Commander-in-Chief sought from the Supreme Council such an enlargement of his powers as would render him quite independent in all matters relating to the conduct of the war. Lord Macartney, on the other hand, accused Coote of acting towards him and his colleagues with studied insolence; that he would pay no

Willoughby Cotton, had eighteen servants, another officer had forty, while the 16th Lancers took a pack of hounds with them on this campaign!

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife*, p. 166.

attention to advice, far less obey an order in matters purely military ; and that at the same time he was for ever interfering with civil affairs which in no way concerned him.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the correspondence may to some extent be gathered from the following extracts from a letter which the Bengal Government appears to have taken an early opportunity of addressing to the President and Select Committee of Fort St. George, and which seems to convey in the very plainest possible terms the disapproval by the Supreme Government of the persistent policy of obstruction and interference for which Macartney and his Council were responsible.

The letter<sup>2</sup> is dated the 11th March, and after acknowledging several others, it goes at once into the matter under discussion :

‘ We perceive the great difficulties you have had to struggle with in supporting the army in its operations in the Carnatic, and we observe with concern that notwithstanding your great exertions, aided by the unwearied zeal and unexampled perseverance of General Sir Eyre Coote, and the established superiority of the forces under his command, that scarce any, if any, substantial advantage has been obtained over the enemy, whose powers may require the same vigorous efforts to resist it when the means shall be less within your reach.’

The letter then proceeds to point out the ruinous consequences, both to Madras and to Bengal, of a long-protracted war, and it is on this account claimed as a right that the Bengal Government should make such observations as occur to them, being principally impelled to such action ‘ by the letters which we have lately received from General Sir Eyre Coote ’. The letter then goes on to state that,

‘ In all the advices transmitted to us of the operations on the Coast of Coromandel since the commencement of the war in the Carnatic, one capital defect has been invariably stated as the cause which has prevented our army from taking the field for any series of services, and prevented it from pursuing the greatest advantages which it had obtained over the enemy with effect, namely, the want of draft and carriage cattle.’

Lord Macartney is then reminded that all his measures and expedients for overcoming these difficulties have failed of success, and it is clearly pointed out to him that ‘ diseases desperate grown by desperate appliance are relieved, or not at all ’, and that if the requisite number of pack animals cannot be obtained by ordinary hire and

<sup>1</sup> See Gleig, vol. iii, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Selections from State Papers*, vol. iii, pp. 347 et seq.



purchase, they must and ought to be impressed ; ‘ this is not a time ’, wrote the great Pro-Consul, ‘ to apply ordinary means or to pay too strict an attention to all the rights of peaceable and tranquil Government.’

The letter then proceeds to the consideration of the position and rights of the Commander-in-Chief—

‘ the power of directing the operations of the army and the exercise of that power. General Sir Eyre Coote has complained to us in strong terms of an interference on the part of your government in his general command, and of the embarrassments arising from it in his measures. and he has declared that unless these are effectually removed and all the military operations in the Carnatic left to his sole and exclusive conduct and control, so that they be consistently and uniformly directed to the same common objects, it will be impossible for him to exercise any longer his command, or to afford his services with any hopes of credit or success, but that he must, in justice to the public and his own honor, relinquish the task as impracticable.

‘ We do not pretend to enquire into the grounds of this complaint, indeed we are better pleased that we are destitute of the evidence requisite to form a judgment, whether it is well or ill-founded, than solicitous to obtain it. We see but one single instance in which the great importance of its object and its complete success will justify the greatest irregularity, admitting that any was committed in the mode in which it was executed, we allude to the siege and capture of Negapatam.

‘ Whether there are any other causes for Sir Eyre Coote’s dissatisfaction besides the above we know not, but we shall offer our opinion upon the general question and beg you will receive it in good part. We think that so much is due to the unexampled zeal and exertions of the present Commander-in-Chief, and to the confidence which we are assured the Army reposes in his command, and so much depends in all operations of war on uniformity of system and authority, that we do most earnestly recommend to you that Sir Eyre Coote’s wishes in this point may be gratified to their fullest possible extent, and that you will allow him an entire and unparticipated command over all the forces acting under your authority in the Carnatic. We do not mean to include your own immediate garrison, excepting in that single case which we will not suppose, and which, if it should happen is already provided for, by the special orders of the Court of Directors.’

After some remarks of a general character regarding unforeseen circumstances which may arise, the letter goes on to say,

‘ We wish that the whole conduct of the war may be left entirely to the management and direction of the Commander-in-Chief, at least to the officer who now holds that station, and whom we consider as entitled to such a mark of confidence in the most distinguished manner.’

While the Bengal Government was careful to say that they did not 'command, we only recommend', they stated at the same time that the Commander-in-Chief's powers should rather be increased than curtailed; and that 'the conciliation of the dependent chiefs of the Carnatic, the acceptance of terms offered by those of the enemy, and in general such other acts as do not fall within the express line of military command, but which may contribute to the success of its operations', should also be left in the hands of General Sir Eyre Coote.

The President and Select Committee of Fort St. George replied to this letter on the 11th April, saying little more than that the recommendations of the Supreme Government would be regarded as commands, in virtue of the authority vested in Bengal by the Directors of the Company, and promising implicit obedience so far as these recommendations concerned 'the extraordinary powers proposed to be given to Sir Eyre Coote'. The subject was revived in a private letter<sup>1</sup> written by Lord Macartney to Warren Hastings on the 22nd May, and by one from the Supreme Government dated the 4th July, replied to by the Select Committee at Fort St. George in another of remarkable prolixity dated the 30th August.

This document is in part reproduced in 'the Life and Writings of Earl Macartney', by Barrow, who calls it 'this very able letter'. At West Park is the original draft with corrections in Lord Macartney's handwriting; it covers no fewer than sixty-four sheets of foolscap and is a most verbose production, filled with complaints against Coote, assurances of the patience with which Macartney has borne with him, and combating the legality of the instructions from the Supreme Government that in all military affairs Coote should be given a free hand. Having carefully perused this letter one marvels at the mentality of the official who, at this crisis in the affairs of his government, could sit down to compose it, or who could hope that it would exert any influence upon the great man at Fort William to whom it was addressed.

None of these letters, however, effected any material improvement in the unfortunate relations existing between the Madras Council and the Commander-in-Chief, and we shall not find, as the campaign proceeds, that matters changed very perceptibly for the better, in regard to the assistance which Sir Eyre Coote, as a member of the Madras Council, had every right to expect from his colleagues in the Government.

<sup>1</sup> Given in full in Barrow's *Life of Earl Macartney*, vol. i, p. 488 et seq.

Nor had any *rapprochement* been effected or understanding come to through the medium of Messrs. Graham and Staunton, who had reached Calcutta early in the year, and whose arrival, and the avowed object of their respective missions, placed Warren Hastings in a position of no little delicacy. He wrote, however, a very carefully-worded and non-committal letter to Lord Macartney, expressing the pleasure it had been to him to meet Mr. Staunton, saying no word of the object of that gentleman's journey to the north, and intimating that no doubt Mr. Staunton would on his return give his lordship details of the many interesting conversations the Governor-General had enjoyed with the Private Secretary.

On the same date—the 21st March—Warren Hastings wrote<sup>1</sup> more fully to Sir Eyre Coote. He assured him of the continued support of the Supreme Government, stated that Madras had been informed of 'our full sentiments on the points which you have specifically referred to us, and it is at their peril if they refuse to conform to them'. The Governor-General told the Commander-in-Chief the 'recommendations' which had been made to the President and Select Committee of Fort St. George; he urged caution and conciliation in dealing with matters in which it might conceivably be necessary for Sir Eyre to act entirely on his own initiative; he allowed it to be inferred that right or wrong the General might be certain of his support and countenance; he told him that he had explained his sentiments fully to Mr. Graham; and he closed on a very kind and friendly note. He expressed regret that their early correspondence had been permitted to languish, and that on one or two occasions Coote had seemed to misconstrue or misrepresent the feelings and intentions of Hastings towards him. 'Perhaps you are the only man now on earth', wrote Warren Hastings, 'from whom I could sustain personal grievances, and not only forgive them, but allow him to extort from me my applause, and even my esteem for his public virtues. Your exertions and sacrifices have been such as exceed any credit which could have been given you for them, or could have been expected from any man'.

Philip Francis might well remark that there was 'no contending with the pen of Hastings.'

Macartney naturally was not pleased that the Supreme Government should support Coote rather than himself, and in his private letters he showed plainly that he regarded the Commander-in-Chief as

<sup>1</sup> Both these letters are given in full in vol. iii, p. 4 et seq. of Gleig's *Life of Warren Hastings*.

somebody who occupied a position that in a measure detracted from his own.

‘It is very difficult to keep on good terms with him,’ he wrote in one letter. ‘He is now no longer what he was. Soured by disappointment, grown old, impaired in health, jealous and fractious. I begin to think this apoplexy has been hanging about him for a long time.’ And again, ‘I never retort any sharp expression which may occur in his letters. In fact, I court him like a mistress, and humour him like a child; but with all this I have a most sincere regard for him and honour him highly. But I am truly grieved at heart to see a man of his military reputation, at his time of life, made miserable by those who ought to make him happy, and from a great public character worked into the little instrument of private malignity and disappointed avarice. All, however, has been and shall be good humour and good breeding on my part.’

It will be found stated in Chapter XVII that General Medows had arrived at Madras on the 11th February 1782—a time when Coote, sore at the want of support afforded him by Macartney, despondent at the prospects of the coming campaign, himself in bad health, and indignant at the manner in which the different reinforcements intended for the army operations in the Carnatic had been largely diverted to the western coast, was seriously thinking of resigning his command. The arrival of Medows, who was actually senior to Coote—seemed to furnish the opportunity the latter was seeking; but the new-comer would not hear of assuming the command of the army, urging his inexperience of Indian warfare, and, as Innes Munro seems to suggest, not caring to serve subject to the interference of the Madras Government. He therefore continued on board ship and was present in two of the actions which Hughes fought with Suffren.

It seems probable that upon the result of Mr. Graham’s mission to Fort William depended in great measure the question of Sir Eyre Coote’s retention or abandonment of his command of the army in the Carnatic; and that Graham may have been commissioned to make certain arrangements for the General under possible circumstances. Early in this year the Commander-in-Chief appears to have relinquished any idea he may have entertained of an immediate return to Bengal, and to have decided to remain in the southern Presidency so long as the war should last, while he must have realized that it was likely to endure for some considerable time. This seems to account for an advertisement which is to be found in the *India Gazette* in March 1782,



ADMIRAL DE SUFFREN

From the portrait by A. Roslin



announcing the sale of the General's horses in Calcutta through his English coachman, Williamson, consequent on the breaking up of his establishment at Gheretty.

From early in January until the 8th of the month following, Admiral Hughes was absent from the Coromandel Coast prosecuting his successful expedition to Ceylon, while for some time after his return to the neighbourhood of Fort St. George, he was engaged in the naval operations described in Chapter XVII. The movements of Coote's army in the Carnatic were so wholly dependent on the command of the sea, that the General was obliged to await the issue of the naval operations before he could again take the field or even draw up any hard and fast plan of campaign, and his troops were consequently for some months after their return in December from Vellore obliged to remain in a state of inaction at Madras.

At first Hyder was in no mood to take the offensive ; he had been foiled in all his efforts to annihilate the British army ; the Nairs <sup>1</sup> had risen in insurrection against him throughout the whole province of Malabar ; he had been disappointed in his expectations of receiving any aid from the French ; while he was aware that the Governor-General at Fort William in Bengal was making great efforts, which seemed to promise success, not only to make peace with the Mahrattas but to induce them to threaten Mysore territory from the north. Affairs, too, in Tanjore had recently been going none too well for Hyder ; from the date of the assumption by Colonel Brathwaite of the command of the Southern army there had been constant fighting with varied results, although on the whole the British had been able to do more than might reasonably have been expected, considering that our combined forces in Tanjore and Trichinopoly did not exceed 4,000 men, including locally raised levies. In September 1781 Colonel Brathwaite inflicted a severe defeat upon the enemy at Alangudi, ten miles to the south of Combaconum ; and this defeat and the capture of Negapatam in November caused the enemy to quit the district of Tanjore, while early in February 1782 Tuticorin, the last remaining Dutch settlement in Southern India, surrendered to a small British force sent thither from Palamcottah. On the whole, then, matters in the south and west had begun to assume a prosperous appearance, sufficient at least to cause Hyder Ali to determine to concentrate his forces as far as possible in his own country.

In the new year, however, there were signs that help was on its way

<sup>1</sup> The military and, at one time, the ruling class.

to the Mysore chief, and that the succour upon which he had been counting was close at hand. Sir Eyre Coote, writing as early as the 11th January 1782 from Vellore to Lord Macartney, said :

‘ A European soldier who yesterday made his escape from the enemy into Vellore, reports that Hyder Ali has taken Chundergeery by assault and put the whole garrison to the sword ; that great preparations were making in his camp for the arrival of a body of 8,000 Europeans ; that he lately received a reinforcement of 15,000 horse and many Polygars ; that the horse were said in his camp to be Mahrattas ; that there was a Frenchman of consequence arrived in his camp within these ten days, whom Hyder’s people styled an Ambassador ; and the language was there that this person had been high in the service at Pondicherry.’

Then on the 8th February the Officer Commanding at Pulicat wrote to Lord Macartney stating that, from reliable information which had just reached him from Ensign Wall of the 11th Battalion of Sepoys, it appeared that there were thirty-four French ships, a little to the northward of Pulicat, engaged in capturing and sinking all the vessels they met with. This French fleet left the neighbourhood of Pulicat on the 14th February and appeared off Madras the next day, when a naval action resulted, after which the French admiral anchored off Pondicherry, while Hughes sailed to refit at Trincomalee, not returning to Madras until the 12th March.

Before this latter date, however, our forces had experienced a great disaster on land. On the 18th February Colonel Brathwaite, with something under 1,700 men and nine light guns, was encamped at a place called Annagudi, about six miles north-east of the town of Combaconum and three miles south of the Coleroon river. He had been warned by friendly natives of the fact that a large hostile force was in his neighbourhood, but he chose to disregard this information and seemed to look upon the Mysore leader as a man wanting in enterprise. In a report he made to the Government in 1780, he had, relates Wilson,<sup>1</sup> sneered at Hyder for not having attacked him once before when on the march from Pondicherry to Madras, and argued therefrom that nothing serious was to be apprehended from such an enemy. Brathwaite was surprised by Tippoo Sahib, the son of Hyder, at the head of a force variously estimated at from 12,000 to 20,000, including about 400 Europeans under Lally, and with 20 guns. Too late the British leader attempted to fall back upon Negapatam, but he was surrounded, and after desperate fighting for twenty-six hours, during

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Madras Army*, vol. ii, note 3, p. 68.



which all the British officers, except one, were killed or wounded,<sup>1</sup> the rest of the force surrendered, only some 500 of the native troops escaping. The British officers were sent to join Hyder's earlier captives at Seringapatam.

It is said that the whole force would have been slaughtered after surrender, but for the intervention of Lally, who cut down some of his savage allies with his own hand. This unfortunate affair gave Hyder possession of the whole of the Tanjore country.

The command of the troops was temporarily taken over by Colonel Nixon, the senior officer on the spot, but from the Madras General Orders it seems that Colonel Humphry Harper was appointed to the command of Tanjore and the south 'vice Brathwaite captured, dated 26th February 1782', and there is at West Park a letter of this date from Sir Eyre directing Colonel Harper to proceed to Tanjore 'with the utmost expedition'.

This appointment was made the excuse for a complaint from Macartney, that Colonel Harper had assumed military command over the civilian chief at Cuddalore, had refused to fire a salute when that official left his quarters, and that Harper had been transferred to the southern army without notice to Macartney. To all this Coote replied that in his presence Mr. Dean, the civilian representative, had concurred in Harper assuming charge, that there was no powder to spare for salutes—Coote himself had refused any on this account—and that the exigencies of the service had demanded Harper's sudden and unannounced transfer.

At this period the Commander-in-Chief was troubled by a disaster of a minor character—what he calls in a letter to Macartney 'this diabolical business' of a convoy which was captured by the enemy when returning empty from Chingleput. The enemy were not in real strength—'I cannot find', wrote Coote, 'there were above one hundred of the enemy's miserable horse who performed that service;' but the loss in valuable transport cattle was serious, amounting to 3,156 bullocks, draught and carriage, and 70 carts with over 300 drivers. The officer in charge of the convoy, Major Byrn, was tried by court martial for neglect, found guilty, and cashiered.

Two days before the British fleet under Admiral Hughes returned from Trincomalee to Madras, the French transports had slipped into Porto Novo and had landed troops, the numbers of which have been

<sup>1</sup> Brathwaite himself was wounded, Lieut. Eastland and Ensign Stewart were killed, the medical officer, White, alone being unhurt.

variously estimated. Wilks<sup>1</sup> gives them as 3,000 inclusive of a regiment of Africans; the author of the *Memoirs of the War in Asia*<sup>2</sup> says that 3,400 men were landed; Barrow<sup>3</sup> gives the strength of the force as 2,000 only; and this is supported by yet another writer,<sup>4</sup> who declares that the French landed 1,200 Europeans and 800 Coffrees at Porto Novo; of the Europeans about 400 were Germans whom the English expected would desert to them.

The news of the landing of the French troops revived Hyder's hopes of conquest and caused him entirely to change his plans. Tippoo was at once ordered to repair to Porto Novo, and Hyder himself shortly after reached that place and had an interview with Admiral Suffren and M. de Cossigny. By these the Mysore chief was informed that the troops now landed were but the advance guard of a large division shortly expected to reach the coast under M. de Bussy, the one-time colleague of Duplex, but now no longer a young man—he was born in 1718—and deficient of much of his early fire. It was then decided by the allied chiefs that Cuddalore should be captured in order that it might serve as a base or *dépôt* for the French, and that on the arrival of the Marquis de Bussy the united forces should seek a decisive action with the British army.

When, in the preceding year, Coote had left Cuddalore he had not destroyed the works, hoping that our naval superiority would permit of our retaining in our own hands a place so convenient for his operations, without any risk of it being seized and strengthened for use by the enemy. Its garrison was far too small for the perimeter to be defended, consisting of little more than six companies of the 12th Carnatic Battalion, amounting in all to 562 men, 100 Topasses, and 25 Europeans, the whole under Captain James Hughes of the 12th Carnatic Battalion. The French appeared before Cuddalore on the 2nd April, and Captain Hughes surrendered on the 3rd<sup>5</sup> without making any attempt at defence. Two ships containing reinforcements had been dispatched from Madras, but they did not reach Cuddalore until after the surrender had taken place. The majority of the sepoy of the 12th Carnatic Battalion entered the French service, but the Native Officers to a man refused the offers held out to them.

The following account of the rendition of Cuddalore was sent to England by the Madras Council :

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii, p. 374.

<sup>2</sup> p. 334.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. i, p. 119.

<sup>4</sup> *State Papers*, vol. iii, p. 861.

<sup>5</sup> Thus Wilson and Barrow, Wilks says on the 8th.

'Towards the end of March Tippoo Sahib moved with his army within a few miles of the Bound Hedge of Cuddalore, and invested that place the 2nd April, in conjunction with Mr. du Chemin and all the French troops from Porto Novo, with a large train of heavy artillery.

'On the 3rd two French officers came to the Fort with a flag of truce from Mr. du Chemin, and offered terms of Capitulation, the substance of which was that the Fort should be delivered up at 5 o'clock that evening to the French troops, private property secured, and the Garrison to proceed to Madras, there to be exchanged for an equal number of French troops. Captain Hughes, to whom agreeably to your orders, the Chief<sup>1</sup> and Council had delivered the command of the place on its being invested, in answer demanded five days, and said he would treat for the surrender of the Fort if not relieved by the expiration of that time. This the French general refused, and the place being too weak to make any effectual resistance against so great a force, the garrison consisting of not more than 400 regular Sepoys and four or five European artillery men, Captain Hughes accepted the terms, and the French took possession of Cuddalore the next morning. . . . Upon receiving intelligence of the investment of Cuddalore, two ships were despatched to the assistance of the Garrison, but it had surrendered before their arrival.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. E. W. Fallafield: died at Pondicherry in 1816 and was buried at Cuddalore Old Town.

<sup>2</sup> This letter is given in *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. iii, p. 240.

## CHAPTER XVI

### COOTE'S LAST CAMPAIGN IN 1782 AND RETURN TO BENGAL

In order to keep as far as possible to the proper sequence of events, in regard at least to the period of their commencement, even if, as often happened, they were protracted to a date long subsequent to others which had in the meantime obtruded themselves upon notice, it may be as well here to narrate certain circumstances in which Sir Eyre Coote was concerned, but in which Admiral Suffren played a chief, and, it must be confessed, an ignoble part, in regard to the disposal of some British prisoners of war who had fallen into the hands of the French Admiral.

On his voyage to, and after his arrival upon, the Coromandel Coast, Suffren had taken several prizes and held as prisoners upwards of sixty officers and more than four hundred men ; among the prisoners was a Mr. H. M. Boyd, a friend of Goldsmith and of Garrick, who had accompanied Lord Macartney to India in the capacity of secretary. He was captured on his return from Ceylon, whither he had been sent by Macartney on a mission to the King of Kandy.

Against these captures must be mentioned one made by the British : a vessel called the *Prince* or *Duke of Tuscany*, formerly the Bombay-built British ship *Britannia*, had been captured off the Cape by the French, rechristened by them, turned into a hospital ship, and sent on to the Coromandel Coast. The *Chapman*, Indiaman, Captain Walker, when lying in Negapatam roads, saw her approach, hoisted Dutch colours, and so lured her into the roads and captured her. The French ship had on board eighteen French surgeons, three priests, about fifty Frenchmen and some sixty British prisoners who had been taken out of the *Hannibal*, 50 guns. Lord Macartney seems, with a humanity which does him credit, to have early sent instructions to the British officer commanding at Negapatam that the French surgeons should be released : but prior to this, Admiral Suffren had already forwarded to the Madras Government proposals for the due exchange of the prisoners held on either side. This first communication does not appear to have come to hand, and on the 26th April Lord Macartney received a letter from the French admiral, through

M. du Chemin, the commandant of troops, proposing a cartel for the exchange of the prisoners in his hands with some three hundred French soldiers at that time in our custody at Madras, and the matter was, as was right and proper, referred for decision and the necessary arrangement of formalities to the Commander-in-Chief, then absent with the army in the field.

To the proposal for exchange of prisoners, Sir Eyre Coote had, of course, no objection to offer, but his feelings, and those of every officer and man among the troops he commanded, had been greatly stirred by all that had been heard of the terrible sufferings of such of their comrades as had fallen into the hands of Hyder Ali, and were then languishing in chains in the dungeons of the fortresses of Seringapatam and Bangalore. Coote therefore expressed the view that, included in the exchange, should be a proportion of the British prisoners in the custody of Hyder, as being a member of the allied hostile force to which Coote was actually opposed, and that no *separate* cartel could be entered into between the British and the French so long as the latter were allied with Mysore against us.

The French Admiral, having no convenient base, was deficient in stores and quarters for his prisoners; he knew that such Frenchmen as we had captured were in the hands of a humane and chivalrous enemy; and he did not scruple to adopt the view that his proposals for an exchange had not been accepted. He therefore determined to deliver to the custody of a barbarian, notorious for his contempt of the laws of civilized war, prisoners of war entitled to honourable treatment from an honourable enemy. In vain did M. Motté, the Intendant of Pondicherry, and the other French officers and civilians, protest against a decision so infamous; the unfortunate prisoners, to the number already mentioned, were landed at Cuddalore on the 30th June, and, chained in pairs, set out on the 14th August for Chillambrum, where they were handed over to Hyder and whence they were sent to join the other unfortunates in the prisons of Mysore.

In the *India Gazette* of the 21st September 1782 a correspondent writes:

‘I am very fortunate in having escaped being sent to Hyder, through indisposition; but sixty-two officers from the *Hannibal*, *Chaser*, *Fortitude*, *Yarmouth* and country ships were confined at Chillambrum in a place scarcely large enough to accommodate a tenth part of the number.’

On the 5th September the Government of Fort St. George wrote home to the Directors :

‘ Soon after the departure of the Fleet, our President received a letter from Sir Edward Hughes, enclosing copy of one from Mr. Suffren to Captain Parr, late of His Majesty’s Ship *Chacer*, by which it appeared that Mr. Suffren, under the pretext of our not having agreed to the Exchange of Prisoners, had delivered most of our Prisoners to Hyder Ally; and we have since learnt from the Reverend Mr. Geryike (Protestant missionary at Cuddalore) that they have been actually sent from Cuddalore to Chillambrum chained two and two together, and from thence to Bangalore and other Forts in the Mysore Country.

‘ Mr. Geryike, together with several French officers at Cuddalore, used their utmost endeavours to dissuade the French Admiral from an act so repugnant to humanity and to the principles upon which war is conducted between Civilised Nations, but without any effect. If it were possible for Mr. Suffren to think such an act justifiable on any ground whatever, he might at least have stipulated that the prisoners should be kept at Chillambrum, where they would have been at hand to be exchanged whenever a Cartel should be agreed on for that purpose. By consenting to their being carried to the Mysore Country he has almost destroyed the hope of such an Agreement.

‘ We doubt not but you will think it right to represent this unexampled proceeding to His Majesty’s Ministers, that proper steps may be taken to obtain redress from the French Court.’<sup>1</sup>

Innes Munro appears to have believed<sup>2</sup> that the dissensions unhappily existing between the Commander-in-Chief and the Madras Council were largely responsible for the fate of these prisoners of Admiral de Suffren ; but it is difficult to follow his argument, for there seem no grounds for conjecture that the Council had any voice in the matter, all the proposals made by the French admiral having been passed on to Coote. But the General appears to have made up his mind, and his point of view is not difficult to understand and appreciate, that in any exchange those who had for so long a period suffered so cruelly in the prisons of Mysore ought to be first considered. The following case appears to bear upon the point and to make clear the position which the Commander-in-Chief took up in the matter.

On board the *Hannibal* captured by the French on the 22nd January 1782 was a Captain Byres of the Madras Engineers, and he, with two other Engineer officers, Major Burrell and Captain Young, remained prisoners on board a French man of war, and were present there during the action with the British fleet off Sadras on the 17th February. On the 6th of this month Admiral Hughes had captured six French

<sup>1</sup> *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. iii, pp. 260–1.

<sup>2</sup> p. 277.

vessels, and of these one, the *Lauriston*, had on board 300 men of the Regiment of Lausanne. Byres, being seriously ill with fever, was sent on shore at Porto Novo by the French admiral on *parole*, with permission to go to Tranquebar, but not to proceed beyond its limits. He was in hopes of being exchanged for an officer taken in the *Lauriston*, and wrote on the subject to the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Eyre Coote.

The French, finding that some of their men who were prisoners had been sent to Bengal, threatened, by way of reprisals, to send the British officers in their custody to Batavia or to Mauritius. After a time, however, Captain Byres was allowed to go on *parole* to Madras on the 29th May, by reason of the state of his health, and again addressed Coote on the 1st June asking to be exchanged for the Chevalier de Roncour, a captain in the Regiment of Lausanne, who had been captured prior to the landing of the French troops on the coast. Sir Eyre Coote was 'sorry for his irksome situation, but considered that the officers and men captured in the beginning of the war, and even now in chains, experiencing the most unheard of cruelties, claimed his prior attention whenever a cartel might be arranged.'

On Sir Eyre Coote returning to Madras. Captain Byres waited on him and said that 'he hoped that the Cartel settled in Europe would be adopted in all its parts, as it had been in part, a number of French surgeons having been permitted to go'. The Commander-in-Chief replied—'Were you my brother I would not exchange you, nor will I exchange any prisoner with the French till all those taken in the beginning of the war by Hyder are first exchanged.' Byres then asked to be allowed to serve in the north where there were no French, but Coote replied that he could not allow him to serve as we were liable to be attacked by the French anywhere.<sup>1</sup>

According to the *India Gazette* of the 17th May 1784 the number of prisoners restored by Tippoo Sahib in March and April of that year amounted to 1,146 British sailors, soldiers and civilians, and 3,000 sepoys; over 200 prisoners were detained, and some did not regain their freedom until 1791. When the prisoners of Baillie's detachment reached Seringapatam in 1780, they found two British soldiers there who had been captured at Erode in 1768!

The account of the action of M. de Suffren and all that followed upon it—an action which has left an indelible stain upon the character of a man otherwise and deservedly admired and respected—has led

<sup>1</sup> See Vibart, *Military History of the Madras Engineers*.

us far from the scene of the operations of the main army, and to this a return must now be made.

Early in April the first of the reinforcements intended for the army operating in the Carnatic reached the Commander-in-Chief. The 78th<sup>1</sup> Seaforth Highlanders arrived at Madras on the 2nd April, but did not prove a very substantial addition to the army. The regiment had embarked 1,100 strong, but had lost 230 men from scurvy and other causes during the voyage, while out of the 880 men who landed, only 390 were fit for duty. The death of their Colonel, the Earl of Seaforth, who expired before the regiment reached St. Helena, cast a gloom over the spirits of the men, and is said to have materially contributed to the prostration of mind which made the Highlanders more ready to succumb to the ravages of disease and the ordinary ailments of the country. On the 10th April, 500 of the 78th joined the army at St. Thomas' Mount, but Sir Eyre Coote, who was now preparing to move out again, decided for the present to leave them in cantonments to recuperate and to draw the equipment, &c., necessary for field service.

Sir Thomas Munro writing later in the year from 'camp near Madras', said :

' the army continued in the neighbourhood of Madras till the 10th April, when we marched to Chingleput. We were joined towards the end of the month by five hundred men of the 78th Regiment. With this reinforcement we ventured to cross the Paliar for the first time since the arrival of the French. From every account it now appeared that their force was so much diminished that we ought rather to seek for than decline an engagement. . . . It was said that of two thousand two hundred Europeans which they landed, between six and seven hundred were already dead, and so many were sick that, after leaving a small garrison in Cuddalore, they could not join Hyder with more than eight hundred men.'

The date on which the 78th Regiment, or part of it, joined Coote at Chingleput may approximately be fixed by the following extract from the letter of a correspondent of the *India Gazette* of the 11th May 1782, which also incidentally affords proof of the remarkable initiative and activity of Hyder.

' A body of Hyder's horse were at St. Thomas' Mount on the 29th ultimo,' we read, ' and General Munro and Mr. Brodie with great difficulty escaped from the General's gardens. They were pursued by Hyder's horse to within a mile of the Black Town. Hyder's troops

<sup>1</sup> Later the 72nd, now the 1st Battalion Seaforth Highlanders.



had come to the Mount with a view of preventing the junction of the 78th Regiment ; *but they arrived about three days too late.* . . . The detachment from Hyder's army consisted of about 15,000 horse and foot. Being disappointed of this first object, they marched down to St. Thomé and plundered it, driving all the Portuguese and native inhabitants into the Black Town. Several European ladies were there at the time, but luckily got away.'

Wilks<sup>1</sup> seems to suggest that Coote moved out with the army from Madras in consequence of information having reached him that the united forces of Hyder and the French had suddenly laid siege to Permacoil, a hill fort some twenty miles north-west of Pondicherry, and held only by a semi-mutinous<sup>2</sup> company of the 16th battalion under Lieutenant Plaw, with provisions and water running very short. From General Coote's own despatches, however, it seems clear that at the time of leaving Madras and even for two days later, the Commander-in-Chief had not made up his mind where Hyder intended to strike. 'Hyder', writes Coote, on the 12th April,<sup>3</sup> 'continues at or near Jallah, a very judicious situation. He may there be joined in a very short time by the French. He is there in readiness to check my operations, and from thence he may with equal pace go against Wandewash, Carangoly or Permacoil ;' and he goes on to say that he believes that while Hyder's own views prompt him to move southward towards Tanjore and Trichinopoly, his French Allies strongly deprecated any southward movement until he should be in possession of the three forts above named.

The Madras Government had managed to raise 60,000 rupees, which were sent to the army just as it was leaving the neighbourhood of the Mount ; but a sum of this amount did not go very far, and in the same letter from which quotation has above been made, Coote complains again of the distress of the army for want of money, and reminds Macartney and his Council of the impossibility of carrying on operations without cash at so alarming a crisis. 'Our sepoy's', he wrote, 'are in such a state as renders every attention to them absolutely indispensable ; they go off in numbers every day, no less than twenty-six, nineteen of whom are from Bengal, have deserted since the night I left the Mount, and there is no saying how long this spirit may prevail among them. Notwithstanding the number of Europeans I sent to the hospital the day before I marched, we have now many carrying in doolies, and they seem to increase hourly.' The Com-

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Innes Munro, p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> *State Papers*, vol. iii, pp. 862-3.

mander-in-Chief then goes on to express his expectation that no efforts will be spared by the Government 'to enable the army to effect those purposes on which the honour and interests of the Nation and Company principally depend'. He asks that the 78th may be rapidly and completely fitted out. 'I may have occasion for them at an hour's warning'; and he begs that a reserve of transport bullocks may be got together and maintained. Knowing how badly in the past he had been supported and how feebly his demands had been met throughout the whole of this long and trying campaign, it is not to be wondered if the much-trying General's despatch closes on a despondent note—'My Lord and Gentlemen, I have a weight upon my shoulders that almost bears me down. Worn out in constitution I feel myself unequal to the constant fatigues and anxieties attending my situation. I shall, however, endeavour as far as lays in my power to stem the torrent that seems almost ready to overwhelm us, not doubting of your exertions to assist my labours.'

At this time the cavalry of the army appears to have been commanded by a Colonel Campbell, for in a letter to Macartney of the 13th April Coote expresses his concern at this officer having had a fall from his horse and broken his arm; 'I regret it infinitely,' wrote the General, 'from having placed great dependence on his ability and activity in the command of the cavalry.'

The General appears to have waited some time in camp at Manimussugulan for the supplies he had expected but which did not reach him, and for the arrival of the 78th Regiment for which he seems to have sent; and on the morning of the 16th May he moved forward, having received intelligence that the enemy had on the 11th laid siege to Permacoil, and, later, that the siege was being prosecuted with all possible vigour. The second brigade was pushed on in advance, escorting provisions and other stores, Coote intending to follow next day with the rest of the army. On the night of the 16th-17th May, however, the monsoon broke with great violence and wholly arrested his progress in the then condition of his transport. The rain did not lessen the intense heat, but made it even more trying, and the 78th, being newly landed from a long voyage and having no experience of the climate, suffered grievously, as did also many of the sepoys.

On the morning of the 19th Coote received at Chingleput disquieting news from the officer commanding at Carangoly as to the situation of Permacoil, and later in the same day came the intelligence that it had been surrendered on the morning of the 17th—'the officer who

commanded', writes Sir Thomas Munro, 'thought it imprudent to stand an assault when there was a practicable breach.' Coote was in hopes of leaving Chingleput on the 20th, but he had already lost over 500 of his few transport cattle, and to carry his supplies was reduced to load up bags of rice on his guns and limbers, thus seriously reducing the mobility of his artillery. He wrote to Madras pointing out that 'a day's rice more or less may decide the fate of the British Empire in India . . . which . . . hinges entirely upon the successful operations of the handful of men now under my command, and with whom I have hitherto been so fortunate as to support the honour of the British arms'; he declared he had no magazines except in Madras itself; that our fleet no longer held undisputed command of the sea; that the Bombay Government had suspended all diversions against Hyder from the west; and that he had been disappointed in the arrival of troops under a Colonel Humberstone.<sup>1</sup> That officer had apparently either not received or had misunderstood the letters sent him in cypher by Coote and by Hughes; and for any misunderstanding it would appear that Lord Macartney must again bear the blame.

That most interfering of governors had made Mr. Sullivan, the resident of Tanjore, the medium of communication between the Malabar and Coromandel coasts, had authorized him to open all despatches, and to send forward all communications which their contents seemed to require. In the exercise of this power Mr. Sullivan opened despatches addressed to the naval and military commanders-in-chief at Madras; and actually ventured to give the commanders on the western coast his own interpretation of the views of the government and even of the military and naval commanders, stating such opinions as he had formed regarding the most advisable plan of operations to be followed. It is hardly perhaps to be wondered that Admiral Hughes and General Coote addressed a joint letter of remonstrance to Lord Macartney against acts of such unwarrantable interference, and of assumption of authority by a civilian which they had

<sup>1</sup> Coote had long before expressed his displeasure and disappointment at the bulk of the reinforcements from home, intended for his army operating in the Carnatic, having been detained on the western coast. When in camp at Attamancherry in the previous autumn he had written as follows to Macartney on the 10th October; 'Considering the general state of our affairs in India, it was in my judgment highly improper to think of landing His Majesty's forces under General Meadows on the Malabar Coast. I have my doubts whether all our difficulties have not arisen from too much attention to that quarter.'

not and could not delegate to any man, and still less to one who was necessarily wholly uninformed of their plans and intentions.<sup>1</sup>

Having effected the capture of Permacoil, Hyder with his French allies at once advanced upon Wandewash. On first hearing of the landing of the French Coote had ordered this place to be mined, but, although in his published despatches he describes the aspect of affairs to be not only embarrassing but desperate, he determined to present himself before these united forces, and to trust for the rest to the tried valour of his troops and their confidence in the skill and fortune of their commander. The allies had been four days before Wandewash when, on the 24th May, the British Army approached and the besiegers drew off at once towards Pondicherry, encamping at Killanore, about fourteen miles north-west of that city. Captain Flint was still in command of the fort of Wandewash, and this most resourceful of leaders had not only held his own in the midst of a ring of enemies, but had actually managed, before his post had been invested, to collect from a devastated country a thousand head of cattle and four hundred sheep—a most welcome addition to the supplies of the relieving force.

This was the fourth occasion on which General Coote had relieved Wandewash, but on his march thither he had on this occasion, as whenever he took the field, been greatly embarrassed by the want of a numerous and efficient cavalry. The advance on Wandewash had been one constant skirmish, and one day a party of the enemy's horse nearly succeeded in carrying off the head-quarter flag after it had been set up in the camp.

Finding that the enemy declined to await an encounter in the neighbourhood of Wandewash, Coote followed them towards Killanore. There were several reasons why the allies agreed as to the propriety of avoiding a general action. The French had suffered much from sickness, and the force they could put in the field had been greatly reduced by the garrisons which it had been necessary to leave at Cuddalore and Permacoil; while Bussy had issued the strictest orders that a general action should not be risked until he himself reached the field; Hyder also had been obliged to send away large detachments from his main army, and thus the allies seemed to have best consulted their own interests and their mutual safety in occupying at Killanore a strong position deliberately and carefully prepared against attack.

There were now two courses open to Coote; to attack an enemy

<sup>1</sup> See Wilks, vol. ii, p. 381.

superior in numbers, entrenched in a formidable position close to their resources and at a considerable distance from his own—thus risking not only a British army, but *the* British army; or to attempt a movement which, by threatening some important possession of the enemy, should draw them from their ground and force them to accept battle upon more equal terms. The British commander then, turning his back upon Permacoil, marched westward fifteen miles and the next night encamped before the fort of Chittapet with the apparent intention of attacking that place. The fort was summoned, but to this the Killadar, 'encouraged by the nearness of Hyder, in terms of great haughtiness, bade defiance.'<sup>1</sup> This movement had the desired effect, for Hyder no sooner heard of the course Coote had taken than, leaving his French allies behind him, he marched rapidly to the relief of Chittapet.

In continuance of his plans Coote now struck off, on the 30th May, further to the west, towards Arnee, a place seventeen miles south of Arcot and seventy-four south-west of Madras. Arnee had been in possession of Hyder since his entrance into the Carnatic, and while it was Hyder's principal depôt and magazine in this district, was known to have been left with a somewhat feeble garrison. This occasioned further alarm to the Mysore chief, and again he followed at speed in pursuit, marching forty-three miles in forty-eight hours.

On the 2nd June, about three miles from Arnee, his advanced

*Battle of Arnee,*  
*22nd June 1762.* parties came up with Coote's rear-guard just as the army was about to encamp. The rear-guard<sup>2</sup> was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Elphinstone of the 73rd Regiment, and it came at once under the fire of twenty pieces of cannon. Elphinstone maintained his ground with much spirit until the General had formed the army into a single line by causing the troops to file off to the right of the rear battalion, having at the same time posted the 2nd Infantry Brigade and some cavalry under Lieut.-Colonel Owen to protect the baggage in the rear. The cannonade now became general and warm on both sides. The British line was no sooner formed than it made a rapid advance upon the enemy's guns, when Hyder, always fearful of losing any of his ordnance, immediately ordered the guns to retire some distance and then to reopen fire. There was a river in the enemy's rear, and it

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of the War in Asia*, p. 337. Wilson states that the author of this work was Lieut. Alex. Read, A.D.C. to Colonel Baillie.

<sup>2</sup> Two cavalry regiments and two infantry battalions.

seemed as though the rapid advance of the British line would drive them into it, but the baggage was now seriously threatened by a body some 11,000 strong, and Coote was obliged to halt his army until Colonel Owen could draw nearer with his unwieldy charge.

This being done the British again advanced at a brisk pace against the enemy, who instantly fell back across the river, and were pursued for a mile beyond it. Some tumbrils and a gun, a long brass 6-pounder, were observed to have stuck fast in the sandy bed of the river with a party of the enemy working hard and pluckily to extricate them. The Grenadiers of the 73rd, under Captain the Hon. James Lindsay, and the Grenadier Company of the Madras European Regiment, under Captain Brown, charged down and captured the tumbrils, while a battalion of Bengal Sepoys on the left, under Major Blane, pushing gallantly forward, succeeded in taking the gun by a spirited dash on Lally's corps which was covering the retreat of the artillery. Want of cavalry prevented Coote from further following up the enemy.

'The usual necessity of allotting the greater portion of the small but efficient corps of English cavalry for the protection of the baggage, deprived Sir Eyre Coote of the opportunity, presented by the discomfiture of Lally's corps, of securing a long train of retreating artillery; and the want of depôts, or of any means of commanding food for a few weeks, left him the usual mortification of being unable by a series of active operations to profit by his success.'<sup>1</sup>

While the action was in progress—the last in which these two great antagonists, Coote and Hyder Ali, were to meet—Tippoo Sahib had moved rapidly to Arnee, removed the treasure, and reinforced the garrison. Coote, though unprovided with battering cannon, prepared for a siege, caused scaling ladders to be constructed of green bamboo, and summoned the commandant of Arnee to surrender; but the summons being rejected and there seeming but small hope of an early reduction of the place, the army on the 6th June began to retrace its steps to Madras.

Of his men's conduct at the battle of Arnee Coote wrote :

'Considering that the first movement of the army commenced at four in the morning, and that its most laborious operations were performed during an intensely hot day, and with the most unparalleled courage and cheerfulness, the praise due to every rank in it, both officers and men, is far beyond what can be expressed—at least such is the sense I entertain of their exertions as to place their merits

<sup>1</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 387.

infinitely above the reach of any encomiums of mine. I have in General Orders paid them the tribute of my hearty thanks and applause, and I am happy in this opportunity of recommending them as highly deserving of every attention or indulgence in the power of your Government to bestow on them. What renders our success on this occasion the more pleasing is the smallness of our loss which you will observe by the enclosed return of killed and wounded is as follows : Europeans killed—3 non-commissioned, rank and file ; wounded—2 lieutenants, 1 cornet, 6 non-commissioned, rank and file. Natives, killed 10, wounded 44. Killed 6 horses, wounded 1. In all Europeans and Natives killed, wounded, and died of fatigue 74. The excessive heat of the weather was most felt by His Majesty's 78th Regiment, the officer, the Hon. Lieutenant Semple, and the 7 Rank and File returned as above to have died of fatigue, belonged to it . . . It has been my misfortune,' continued the General, ' ever since I took the field, on the event of every success, to have cause to lament my inability to pursue the advantages open from victory for want of a sufficiency of provisions. On the present occasion, had I possessed the means of subsistence, I could not only have driven Hyder up the Ghauts, but most probably have got hold of his grand magazine at Arnee, which would most assuredly have so far ended the war as to have checked his immediately returning in force to the Carnatic, whilst it would have given to this army that very support which at this moment maintains his.'

The following is an extract from the General Orders referred to :

' The Commander-in-Chief returns his most sincere thanks to the army for their animated and steady conduct yesterday ; his thanks are particularly due to Major-General Stuart and Colonel Lang, and the Field Officers of the army ; such was the eminently spirited behaviour of the whole, that he has it not in his power to point out the superior merit of any one corps.'

The following order, issued the day after the battle of Arnee, shows how ready the General was to acknowledge good service, and makes us understand the depth of the feeling entertained towards him by his Indian comrades :

' The Commander-in-Chief very much laments the loss of Meer Saleh, commandant of the 4th Battalion, killed yesterday, as a brave and faithful soldier of the Company ; he is pleased to promote his eldest son, Tippoo Saib, to be Jemadar, and his second son, Mahomed Saib, to be Havildar in the 4th Battalion.'

The state of the 78th Regiment—the only material reinforcement which for very many months had reached the army—must have occasioned the Commander-in-Chief very real anxiety. On the 11th June he wrote that its effective strength then in the field was not

one-third of what it was when it left St. Thomé on the 25th April. Wilks states<sup>1</sup> that the effective strength of the regiment was reduced by two-thirds in thirty-eight days; Innes Munro says<sup>2</sup> that 'every gun and cart was loaded with their sick;' while Sir Thomas Munro writes<sup>3</sup> that out of 500 men of the 78th who joined the army hardly 50 were fit for duty three weeks later.

On the 8th June the army halted at Trivatore to refresh the cattle and troops, and Hyder, anxious to obtain some advantage sufficient to blot out the memory of his recent reverse, devised on this day a surprise for the British, which unfortunately was only too successful. Some elephants and camels, to all appearance carelessly guarded, were made to pass within a short distance of what was called the Grand Guard. This was a body of troops which acted as a personal escort or guard to the general and was composed of a detachment of cavalry with two light horse-drawn guns and a hundred sepoy; it was commanded by an officer of the name of McAlister, but as he was on this date for some cause under arrest, the guard was in charge of a Lieutenant Cruitzer,<sup>4</sup> a young officer described by Sir Eyre as 'having more spirit than conduct'.

Seeing the elephants and camels, Cruitzer determined to capture them and sent a message to Lieut.-Colonel James Stuart of the 78th, the Field Officer of the day, explaining what he was about to attempt. Stuart immediately mounted his horse and rode at speed, accompanied by a Lieutenant Peter Campbell, to stop Cruitzer from leaving camp. He was, however, too late; the animals and their attendants had fled, drawing Cruitzer further and further from camp, and Stuart arrived just in time to see the Grand Guard charged into on all sides by clouds of cavalry. Cruitzer had only time to fire a couple of rounds from one of his 3-pounders before he and his men were ridden down; Stuart escaped by leaping his horse over a nullah across which none of the enemy could follow him; Campbell was wounded by one of Hyder's horsemen; thirty of the Guard were killed, many wounded and taken prisoners, Cruitzer among the latter. The loss of the British in this unfortunate affair was 166 men, 54 horses, and two guns. Of the Grand Guard only a Lieutenant Burrows and nine troopers escaped, but among them was a brave jemadar who saved the standards. Coote himself turned out at the head of his cavalry on hearing of the

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii, p. 389.

<sup>2</sup> p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> Gleig, vol. iii, p. 19.

Colonel Scott calls him Kreutzen. *Naval and Military Magazine*, vol. i, p. 419.



attack, but was only in time to see by visiting the spot that the gunners had died by their guns and the sepoy in unbroken ranks. Elated with this success Hyder caused a salute to be fired in its honour in his camp.

The army now proceeded to Wandewash where some stores and ammunition had been left, and after halting here for four days the army returned to the neighbourhood of Madras which was reached on the 19th June. Fatigue and extreme heat had greatly added to the number of European soldiers on the sick list: 'No idea can be formed by those who have not been witnesses to it,' wrote Sir Thomas Munro, 'of the effects of marching on Europeans unaccustomed to the climate;' Coote declared that on 'this trip the intense heat surpasses anything I ever felt'; and the 78th are said to have lost two officers and 150 other ranks.

For some time past Warren Hastings had been devoting himself to an endeavour to detach the Mahrattas from the number of our enemies, and on the 17th May peace had been concluded with the Mahratta Confederacy, through the medium of Scindia, by the Treaty of Salbai. On the 23rd June the signing of the Treaty was announced at Madras and the guns on the ramparts of Fort St. George fired a salute in honour of the occasion.

By virtue of the Treaty of Salbai, Upper India became divided into two spheres of influence, and Scindia was substituted for the Peshwa as the virtual head and representative of the Mahratta nation;<sup>1</sup> all territories conquered from the Peshwa subsequent to the Treaty of Purandhur in March 1776 were to be restored; the Nizam and Hyder Ali were to hand over all that they had taken from the British; and all Europeans, except British and Portuguese, were to be excluded from the Mahratta dominions. The sacrifices made by the British were heavy and even humiliating, but it was at this crisis above all things necessary to reduce the number of our enemies and to permit the Supreme Government to concentrate all its energies on the successful prosecution of the war in the Carnatic against Hyder Ali and the French.

It now became obviously desirable to acquaint the Mysore Chief with the terms of a treaty about which he had not been consulted, and to consider what steps should be taken to cause the due observance by him of those of its conditions with which he was mainly and per-

<sup>1</sup> Keene's *History of India*, vol. i, p. 194.

sonally concerned. The conduct of the negotiations was entrusted to Sir Eyre Coote, and he, as stated by the author of the *Memories of the War in Asia*,<sup>1</sup> 'invested with the powers of peace or war, left Madras on the 1st July, approached to Hyder and required him to accede to the treaty, with intimation, that if he did not restore all the forts, and at the end of six months evacuate the Carnatic, the Mahratta arms were to be joined, for the purpose of compelling him, to those of the English.'

In the opening letter sent by the Commander-in-Chief to Hyder Ali it appears to have been assumed that the Mysore chieftain was acquainted with the terms of the treaty made between the English and those who up to recently had been his allies, and that he would naturally be willing to conclude a peace on the terms which had been agreed to at Salbai. This gave the astute prince an opportunity of which he was not slow to avail himself, and the following correspondence resulted :

From the Nawab Hyder Ali Khan to Sir Eyre Coote, K.B., received at Camp near Shoveram, the 12th July 1783.

'I have received your obliging letter wherein you observe that the news of the treaty of alliance and friendship which has taken place between the Peshwa and the English must have been known to me because my name is included therein, all of which I perfectly comprehend. Without giving me notice, how is it possible that my name can be included? On the contrary, the Sirdars of Poonah have written and continue to write that Mr. Weatherstone had come, on the part of the English, for the purpose of conferring with them about peace, but that his conferences not proving satisfactory they had dismissed him. Wherefore, this being a business of high importance, how is it possible without a knowledge of the object and free and unreserved communications on both sides to enter upon any negotiations? For which reasons I now write you to send Srinivas Row to me with copy of the treaty between the Peshwa and the English. I will then consider well of every particular therein, and whatever I may have to say in consequence I shall inform the said Srinivas Row of and return him to you, and after that I shall send for Mr. Thomas Graham.'

On the same date and from the same place Sir Eyre Coote replied as follows :

'I have received your letter wherein in reply to mine informing you of a treaty of friendship and alliance having been settled between the Peshwa and the English, you are pleased to acquaint me that the Sirdars of Poonah have written and continue to write you that Mr. Weatherstone had come, on the part of the English, to confer

<sup>1</sup> See p. 367.

with them about peace, but that his conferences not proving satisfactory, they had dismissed him. All of this I understand.

'Mr. Weatherstone was sent by General Goddard from Bombay chiefly for the purpose of settling a cessation of arms, which being accomplished he returned to Bombay. For the business of treating regarding peace, you will have heard that a gentleman, by name Mr. David Anderson,<sup>1</sup> was deputed by the Governor General and Council of Calcutta, whom I before wrote you are the chief regulators on the part of the Company in this country of all matters of that nature. You further write me that it is impossible any negotiations can be entered upon without a knowledge of the object and free and unreserved communications on both sides. Of this I am sensible, and therefore agreeably to your request now send you Srinivas Row who will inform you of the points which are essential to the re-establishment of peace and friendship between us, and which you will find exactly to correspond with what I before communicated to you, to your trusty servant, Mahomed Oosman. Srinivas Row, who I request you will return to me as speedily as possible, will inform you of the cause which has prevented me sending for a copy of the treaty between the Peshwa and the English as you desired.'

This letter was delivered personally by Srinivas Row to Hyder Ali, who replied to Sir Eyre Coote, the letter being received on the 19th July in camp at Wandewash, whither the General had moved.

'I have received your kind letter by Srinivas Row,' wrote Hyder, 'and have understood its purport and contents, and I have learned all particulars from the said Srinivas verbally. I have communicated to him circumstantially the causes which have brought on the present war. I have sent copies of the papers.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly to make friendship and peace is most desirable, and it is that alone is your friend's object and wish. But if both parties reciprocally desire it they will certainly promote peace upon a proper and permanent footing. You will learn all the particulars verbally from Srinivas Row and Mahomed Oosman as well as from the substance of the papers.'

On the 20th July Sir Eyre Coote wrote again, saying :

'I have received your friendly letter by Mahomed Oosman from whom and Srinivas Row I have learnt all particulars. You write me that you have communicated to Srinivas Row circumstantially the causes which have brought on the present war. That you have sent copies of papers. It gives me real concern that ever any occurrence should have happened of such a nature as to create even a difference of opinion between you and the representatives of the English nation,

<sup>1</sup> Our envoy at Scindia's court.

<sup>2</sup> In allusion to a letter from the Nawab Mahommad Ali to the Raja of Mysore and agreement to surrender to him Trichinopoly on certain conditions.

and it is from a sincere desire to avoid everything of that tendency which induces me to wish you had waived sending the copies of the papers in the same manner as you have declined mentioning what they are. I choose to take advantage of that line of reserve which you have yourself adopted to confine myself to two observations on the subject. That it was a business which was settled between the parties previous to the accession of your authority. You advanced no claim at the time you made your treaty of peace in the neighbourhood of Madras. These suggestions proceed from motives of the truest friendship, and that to make friendship and peace is most desirable, and that that alone is your object and wish, and that if both parties reciprocally desire it, they will certainly promote peace and friendship upon a proper and permanent footing may operate with its full effect. Surely no peace or friendship can be more just, proper, or promise more permanency than that which is framed to establish a good understanding amongst the powers of Hindustan—that being one of the first objects provided for in the treaty with the Mahrattas and the English. I am persuaded from the strong terms in which you express your desire for peace and friendship, you will speedily accommodate thereto, and that Mahomed Oosman who now returns to you, to whom I have again communicated all particulars, will be soon sent back with the agreeable intelligence.’

Neither this friendly correspondence, however, nor the several long conferences which Srinivas Row, the Vakeel, was permitted to hold with Hyder, availed to secure the peace which the East India Company so greatly desired, or even to cause the withdrawal of the Mysore armies from the Carnatic. In these conferences Hyder Ali expressed himself with much frankness and determination, and spoke in flattering terms of his great antagonist, Sir Eyre Coote.

He had, he said, heard much in the General’s praise, that he was a great and gallant commander and an excellent man; ‘the General,’ he declared, ‘is a man of great distinction and of great worth, the English nation has not seen, nor is likely to see again, such a chieftain as he is . . . Tell the General from me that I hope we shall both be in our hearts good friends. And say a good deal to him in that way.’

Hyder said that it was never any wish of his to quarrel with the English, but that he had been driven to it by their faithlessness; that under the terms of the agreement, which had been come to between them, each was to assist the other by arms, and that yet when the Mahrattas entered his country and he asked for succour, the English put him off with excuses, saying they must await sanction for such a measure from England—the obtaining of which would mean a delay of eighteen months. It was his wish, he stated, to live at

peace with the English, 'and I am now ready to come to terms. If the General, instead of going to Bengal had remained here, he would have prevented the treaty from being infringed. It was for want of some man of weight like him that things wore on so badly. But even now if the General sets his head upon it, it is easy to come to a good understanding together.'

On Hyder being asked by the Vakeel what advantage the war had brought to him, and what he further expected to gain, Hyder said that he had done what, in punishment for our breach of faith, he had sworn to do; that during two years he had desolated the Carnatic and burnt all to ashes—'what I had to do, I have done. Madras only remains, and what great matter is that?' He did not care, he said, for the money his operations were costing him, nor did he expect to get anything out of the Carnatic, whereas, in regard to the English, he added with great shrewdness, 'you are undone if your country is not in a condition to yield revenue; for what avails it that you possess a fort, like that of Vellore for instance, without being able to realize anything from its dependencies?' The last words of the fine old warrior were, 'I am bent upon war'; and the conference and negotiations having been fruitlessly protracted for a month, they were then broken off and the General, with such troops as had accompanied him, returned to Madras.

There was not, however, to be any time afforded either to the commander or to his troops to rest and recuperate; the straits to which Vellore was again reduced gave cause for anxiety, and although supplies had been thrown into it during the month of June, it became clear that the magazines of the fort again needed replenishment. On the 7th August then the army marched, escorting a large convoy, to Vellore, which was reached in six days, and provisions sufficient to last for seven months were passed in. 'We could have thrown in three months' more,' wrote Sir Thomas Munro in a letter dated the 6th October, 'had not the agents at Madras, by their way of measuring, kept about one fourth of the whole in their own hands. We returned on the 20th to the Mount without having seen anything of Hyder.'

That chief, meanwhile, lay encamped at Cuddalore until his army had consumed all the grain and forage in that neighbourhood, when he withdrew it nearer to Mysore, and Tippoo was recalled to represent his father with the French.

During the operations just described General Coote appears to have been more than usually pressed for money to meet the expenses of

his army, and the following extract from a letter of the 25th August to Macartney shows the straits to which he was reduced :

‘ Before the army moved east to the relief of Vellore, I paid into the hands of Mr. Welch, the paymaster, one lack of Pagodas which I borrowed from Sir Edward Hughes, on my own bond and under a promise to have it paid off on the arrival of the first supplies from Bengal, it being Government money. I am therefore now to request that your Lordship will give the necessary orders for the repayment of the same to me to end that I may duly discharge my Bond to the Admiral.’

On the next day the General, doubtful perhaps of Macartney’s help, wrote to Hastings asking that specie to this amount might be sent from Bengal. We shall see later that the Governor-General at once moved in the matter, but Sir Eyre had left Madras on his return to Bengal before re-payment had been arranged.

Coote was now induced to attempt the re-capture of Cuddalore, if, on approaching that place, he should find the aspect of affairs favourable for that enterprise. Lord Macartney promised that nothing should be wanting on his part to forward this expedition, and he accordingly hired for the purpose four or five ships to carry supplies and munitions necessary for conducting a siege ; a frigate was provided for their escort, and Admiral Hughes engaged to keep Suffren amused while these operations were in progress. The army under Sir Eyre commenced its march on the 26th August,<sup>1</sup> flushed with the hope of finishing the campaign with a brilliant success and fully relying on the aid promised by Lord Macartney. Owing to want of carriage, and counting on the supplies which were to be sent by sea, no more than ten days’ rice accompanied the troops, which arrived on the 4th September on the Red Hills of Pondicherry, where they were to wait, as had been agreed upon, for the supplies on board the rice ships and without which it was impossible further to proceed with the expedition. General du Chemin, commanding at Cuddalore, died there on the 12th August, being succeeded by Colonel d’Hoffelise, commanding the Regiment d’Austrasic.

‘ Here,’ writes Innes Munro,<sup>2</sup> ‘ many deserters came in to us from the enemy, from whom we learnt that the garrison of Cuddalore amounted to eight hundred Europeans, three hundred Caffries or Africans, and six hundred sepoys ; who, having expelled the inhabitants and covered the walls with cannon, were determined to fight to

<sup>1</sup> Thus Innes Munro, Sir Thomas Munro says ‘ on the 29th ’, while the author of a MS. account of the War, preserved at West Park, says on the 28th.

<sup>2</sup> p. 294.



EARL MACARTNEY & SIR G.L.STAUNTON

From the picture by L.S. Abbott in the National Portrait Gallery





the last extremity. But it was our fortune to experience a grievous disappointment by which they gained a reprieve ; for upon the day on which General Coote had distributed his last ration of grain to the army at Pondicherry, Lord Macartney's rice ships, which ought to have been there on the 10th, had not then passed Sadras—a circumstance which obliged the General, with great reluctance, to drop this important enterprise.'

The *Medea*, frigate, reached Cuddalore alone on the 13th.

The 'general', however, to whom it fell to make this decision was not Sir Eyre Coote. That officer had reported to the Select Committee at Madras that on the 8th September 'a very severe bilious fever' had attacked him at Pondicherry, and that he had made over command to Major General James Stuart on that day, Coote himself being moved from camp to a country house near Pondicherry. On the 9th a frigate brought the news that a naval action had taken place, and that Hughes, having left the French masters at sea, had returned to Madras ; and Stuart, hearing that reinforcements for the French had arrived under Bussy and that Hyder, in great strength, was within two miles of Cuddalore, judged it expedient that the army should at once and in haste return to Madras whence alone it could be supplied.

Early in the forenoon of the 11th September verbal orders were communicated to the troops to be in readiness to march.

'About two in the afternoon, Sir Eyre Coote came to the head of the line, carried in a palanquin. The affectionate expressions which he addressed to General Stuart ; the warm approbation which he bestowed on his orders and arrangements ; the communication of his opinion with regard to the situation of public affairs ; the sentiments of regret which he expressed at the return of Sir Edward Hughes to Madras, which cut off an opportunity of driving the French at that time from Cuddalore ; and, above all, his apprehensions of the dangers that might arise from the loss of Trincomallee, made a lively impression and will be long remembered by the circle of bystanders at that most affecting interview of the two generals.'<sup>1</sup>

The march was continued late into the night, the army not halting until 11 p.m. when it encamped at Killanore :

'the confusion of the long night's march,' wrote Lt.-Colonel Scott,<sup>2</sup> 'caused our army to appear as if formed by another soul ; and indeed the difference was ever after very perceptible. Sir Eyre Coote was conducted in his palanquin in a state of insensibility, and many were

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of the War in Asia*, p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> *Naval and Military Magazine*, vol. i, p. 421.

of opinion that his death was concealed for political reasons ; so strongly indeed was this question agitated amongst the Bengal sepoys, who adored their old General, that one of them was deputed to ascertain the fact, which he accomplished by lifting up the curtain of the palanquin ; when seeing Sir Eyre Coote was really alive he exclaimed in a rapture of joy—"General Sahib geeta hai" (the General is alive) ; which happy news was hailed by his comrades and spread through the line with shouts of great exultation, and, if understood by the General, must have operated as a cordial to his heart, which no medicine could bestow ; for what can be so gratifying to a commander as to know that he possesses the esteem and confidence of those whom he commands in the hour of danger ? And certainly no one could be more looked up to than this brave and experienced soldier.'

The march was not unmolested ; the Mysore Horse hung upon the rear and flanks ; much of the baggage was captured ; and many men of a new corps known as ' the Rangers ', recruited from French prisoners of war, and employed in the capacity of a body-guard to the Commander-in-Chief, deserted, when the remainder were disarmed and accompanied the army as prisoners. A halt for immediate supplies was made at Chingleput, whence the troops finally returned to and went into camp at the Mount.

It was now abundantly evident that the health of the Commander-in-Chief was hopelessly impaired, that it was impossible that he should any longer endure the hardships of field service, and that if his life was to be spared immediate and prolonged rest was imperative. On the 25th September he wrote to Lord Macartney from the India-man, the *Earl of Hertford*, and after condoling with him in the ill-success which had attended the attempt against Cuddalore, he went on to say :

' My health mends so slowly and I continue in so weak a state that the faculty have recommended to me a sea voyage and change of air. I have therefore come to the resolution of proceeding to Bengal, and shall to-morrow or next day embark on board the *Medea*, frigate, which Sir Edward Hughes has been so obliging as to give me for that purpose.

' As the best chance we yet have of rising superior to our enemies, I must recommend the preservation and support of the army to your most particular attention, and that you allow no consideration whatever to influence you to the measure of disbanding it. On the contrary that you use your utmost endeavours to keep it ready for immediate service. As the efforts of our natural enemies, the French, are at present directed in force against this side of India, it is my firm opinion that every man now here should be employed for the support and

protection of our possessions here and in Bengal, the chief strength to be preserved on the coast. . . . You may rest assured that nothing shall be left untried towards assisting you, both in money and provisions, from Bengal, and that should my health be so re-established as to enable me again to endure the fatigues of field service, I shall, upon its being intimated to me that my presence can be of any use to your affairs here, embrace the first opportunity of returning.

'I entertain a just sense of the very honourable terms in which you are pleased to notice my zeal for the public cause, which it is with the deepest regret, I am, from extreme indisposition, obliged to withdraw from, whilst the great object of my wish and ambition (when I undertook the service on this coast) the restoration of peace to the Carnatic, remains unaccomplished. . . .'

On the 25th September the President and Select Committee of Fort St. George wrote to General Coote, saying,

'We had the honour last night to receive your letter of the 23rd inst., and this moment we have received that of the 25th. We are most sincerely concerned for the necessity which obliges you to return to Bengal and for the cause which has produced it, and most ardently wish that the re-establishment of your health may enable you to continue those services to the Public which have rendered your name so distinguished in the world.'

Nor were Coote's countrymen at home slow to show their appreciation of all that he had done to promote the growth of their Empire and to add to the glory of the British arms; on the 21st December 1782, on a resolution moved by Lord Walsingham in the House of Lords it was 'ordered *Nemine dissentiente* that the thanks of this House be given to Lieutenant-General Sir Eyre Coote, Knight of the Bath, for the services he has performed during his command upon the Coast of Coromandel; and that the Lord Chancellor do transmit the above Resolution of this House to him.' It is, however, to be feared that this acknowledgement of the debt that his country owed to Sir Eyre Coote can hardly have reached him before death overtook him just four months later.

The following further shows the estimation in which Sir Eyre Coote was held by those who served under him:

Extract from a copy of a letter from an officer in Sir Eyre Coote's army to his sister in London, dated Madras, 10th December 1781. Taken from the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* of Monday, 14th October 1782.

'DEAR SISTER,

'Since my last we have had another field day with Hyder, and that on the 27th September; relieved the garrison of Vellore the

3rd of November, that were almost starved, and the 10th took Chittore Fort from Hyder, after three days siege, and our European grenadiers ready to storm the breach, garrisoned by 2,000 of Hyder's troops. July, August, and September, each month a general engagement. I think the last has sickened the enemy. Our brave old soldier, Sir Eyre, began the battle by beating Hyder's out-posts in upon their main body with 300 cavalry, and 2,500 sepoy, at the distance of 2 miles from our grand camp, and obliged Hyder to form his army, not knowing what number had attacked his out guards. Sir Eyre sent orders for us to strike our tents, and march with all possible expedition to his assistance; this was at twelve o'clock in the day. Our drums beat to arms, signal for despatch, and, without loss of time, grenadiers' march, Colours flying, pushed on to support our old General. The action began by a heavy cannonade from the enemy, at least 30 pieces of cannon, as we were marching by files on the high-road, our left flank opposite the enemy's front; they having drawn up in a very advantageous part, covered by high banks, with embrasures cut for their guns, and a large swamp extending the length of their front; the walls of old villages and large ponds. About 700 paces from our line a few of their cannon shot took place, but the most mischief done was amongst our followers; the people under my charge, on the right flank, covered by our line as it advanced; several of them killed, men, women, children, and cattle, by the shot that missed our line; in fact, the shot could not miss such numbers; for I have near 40,000 souls to take care of, besides elephants, camels, horses, bullocks, carts, &c., &c., &c.

'As soon as our little army, consisting of about 12,000 fighting men, and not more than 1,200 European soldiers, included, had got nearly the length of the enemy's front, our old Soldier ordered the whole to turn to the left, to advance upon the enemy, and drive them from their batteries, which was executed without unlimbering. Our line extended near 3 miles, and advanced with a steady, soldier-like pace, at shouldered arms. The grandest sight I ever beheld, and more than the enemy could bear. Panic-struck at the sight they began to limber, and draw off their guns to retreat. Bold fellows! upwards of a hundred thousand of them! It was then we unlimbered our cannon, and began a heavy fire from more than 50 pieces, three, six, twelve, and eighteen pounders, that rent the very air, and did great execution; nothing but confusion appeared in Hyder's army; large bodies of his best cavalry, armed with carbines, pistols, and sabres—many thousands advanced towards our line to cover and forward the drawing-off their cannon. They twice charged that part of our line that was nearest their guns, and were repulsed with great slaughter both times, our infantry reserving their fire till the cavalry were within twenty paces of their bayonets, and with a heavy fire covered the ground in their front with dead men and horses. Our second brigade, on the right of our line, after surmounting every difficulty in marching over a very heavy swamp, turned the enemy's left flank, and with twelve pieces

of cannon enfiladed their line, the shot cutting down whole ranks, and drove the rest of them one upon another like a flock of sheep, and obliged Hyder to quit the field in the greatest hurry and confusion ; then was the time for horse to push in amongst them, and the battle would have been completely finished, and Hyder no more. Four thousand cavalry would have been sufficient—we have them not !

‘ We followed them as fast as our legs would carry us, after attacking them at every disadvantage, occasioned by the swamps we had to march through to get at them ; after all, the sable mantle of night prevented the entire destruction of Hyder’s army. We had stuck so close to them, prudence obliged our old Soldier to halt ; for the baggage and followers of the army, with two battalions of infantry, under my charge, were at least five miles in the rear, and every one expected that we were all cut off, as near 20,000 of the enemy, with 12 pieces of cannon, commanded by Tippey Saiheb, Hyder’s Son, made a severe attack upon the baggage. With the two battalions, and four guns, we obliged him to quit his intentions, and killed and wounded a great many of his men. We lost a fine young lad, an ensign, killed by a cannon shot, and near forty sepoy killed and wounded. We joined the army at ten o’clock at night, to the surprise of everyone, for they had all given us over for lost. We received public thanks from General Sir Eyre Coote, for saving the stores, &c., of the army.

‘ In the whole of the engagement we only lost one officer and fifty men killed, and ninety wounded. We gave the boy a soldier’s burial in his regimentals after dark, with the standards of his battalion planted at the head of his grave.

‘ By the number of dead men and horses on the field of battle, Hyder must have lost in killed and wounded near 6,000 men, and at least half that number in horses, a greater loss to him than the men. I am fully of opinion that he will not be able to get his troops to face our little army again, without the French send a strong fleet, and supply him with three or four thousand soldiers, which we have great reason to think will be the case in a very short time, as we have not as yet received any supply of ships or men. He had retreated before twelve o’clock the next day thirty miles ; since which we have given him every opportunity and choice of ground to fight again particularly when we relieved the garrison of Vellore, that had been blockaded by the enemy for upwards of fifteen months, and at the point of starving. On the 10th we took a strong fort from him, and on the 20th raised the siege of Tripasore, (a large fort we took from him after we formed the junction) besieged by Tippey Saiheb, Hyder’s son, and Lallowe, one of his first black Generals, with 20,000 men, and a train of heavy cannon. They had made a practicable breach, but wanted the chief ingredient for the storming part, courage. Capt. Bishop commanded in the garrison, and cut out a great deal of work for them ; he made two very successful sallies, destroyed their works, and killed many of their men. As soon as Tippey got intelligence that our old Soldier

was advancing he quitted the siege, and retreated with the utmost expedition. On the 3rd of this month we arrived at Madras, and are now all quartered in the garden houses belonging to the gentlemen of the settlement, and to remain during the monsoons, (heavy rains) to recruit our fatigued bodies and weather-beaten countenances, to enable us to complete next campaign what we have been obliged to leave unfinished this. The season gave us a broad hint that it was time to seek shelter; for three days there fell so great a quantity of rain, that during that time there was hardly a man in the army had a dry thread about him, and up to our knees in water in our tents.

'Most people have read of the horrors of war, but the villainous and cruel method used by Hyder's army beggars all description; for hundreds of miles not a vestige of town or village remains, nor could it be possible for you to know that the country was ever inhabited, was it not for the bones of the poor unfortunate wretches that lay scattered over the once cultivated fields, the miserable defenceless owners deprived of life by the cutting swords of cruel barbarians, or the more horrid pangs of want and famine.

'Our army have been without provisions for two or three days at a time, and I do not believe there is a General to be found in such circumstances could keep troops to their duty, excepting our old Soldier, Sir Eyre Coote; our black troops look up to him as something more than human. What must our old General's feelings be when he sees the men who fight by his side look at him, and attempt to smile, with eyes of hunger? The great perplexity, anxiety of mind, and trouble Sir Eyre has encountered and gone through with ever since he took the command of the army in the Carnatic, reflect the highest encomiums on his abilities, both as a man and a soldier: the natives look up to him, and every inhabitant, both black and white, as the saviour of the Carnatic; and it is well known that had not Sir Eyre taken the command of the army, though at every disadvantage, after the great progress and success Hyder, with a victorious army of 150,000 men, had met with, that the Carnatic would have been lost, and probably for ever. May our King and Country reward him equal to his merits, and point him out to the world a subject dear to the name of Briton.'

Sir Eyre Coote embarked and sailed in the *Medea* frigate on the 28th September, accompanied by his assistant secretary, Mr. George Tyler, and by Lieut.-Colonel Owen, who had been accorded the brevet rank of Colonel in the East Indies, as intimated to his chief in a letter from Lord Shelburne dated the 6th July of this year. In this the Secretary of State had stated that 'the King has been pleased to command me to signify to you the high sense His Majesty entertains of the zeal and ardour with which you devoted yourself at so critical a period to the dangerous and difficult service which required your

presence at the head of the army in the Carnatic, and to which is to be attributed the retrieval of affairs in those parts, as far as it was possible to effect it by the weak means with which you were furnished. His Majesty placed the firmest reliance on the further success of your operations, guided by that judicious and resolute perseverance which had surmounted such extraordinary difficulties, and the necessity which you have now found yourself under to leave the work unfinished has, of course, occasioned a sense of disappointment proportioned to the confidence you had inspired.'

At Fort William the Commander-in-Chief was received with all possible honour; the *India Gazette* of this period contains a letter dated the 8th October 1782 in which it is stated that 'General Sir Eyre Coote is to take his place as second in the Supreme Council, agreeable to the late Act of Parliament'; Warren Hastings sent by hand a letter of welcome and appreciation to the General on his arrival; and that Sir Eyre Coote was touched and gratified by the tone of it and by the kindly feeling which prompted its preparation, is evident from the wording of his reply, written on the 22nd October:

'It was too late last night,' wrote Coote, 'to acknowledge the honour of your letter by Captain Frith, but you will now give me leave in few words, my present weakness forbidding more, to return you my sincere thanks for your very friendly assurances, and to express my strong sense of your attention to me. I write with so much difficulty that I fear you will hardly be able to decypher even this much. I hope, however, to supply the deficiency in person as I intend to do myself the pleasure of waiting upon you as soon as it is in my power to go out.'

Here then we may for a space leave the General gradually regaining a measure of health in his home in Bengal, and waiting for the final call which was to summon him to the field and to his death, while we review the naval operations of the war, before returning to the Carnatic to recount what happened there under a commander less capable than Coote, but who was interfered with and controlled, to an even greater extent than was he, by the President of the Select Committee of Fort St. George.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE NAVAL OPERATIONS, 1779-1783<sup>1</sup>

It is proposed in this chapter to attempt as complete a description as possible of all the operations of the British and French fleets during the years 1779 to 1783, in so far as they bear upon the land war then being conducted in India by Sir Eyre Coote and by those who served under his immediate command, or who represented him during his temporary absence in Bengal; or whose operations, in other parts of the Indian Peninsula, had any real connection with those of the general commanding in chief.

In March 1779 Rear Admiral Sir Edward Hughes had sailed from St. Helens for the East Indies with the following squadron :

<i>Ships.</i>	<i>Guns.</i>	<i>Ships.</i>	<i>Guns.</i>
<i>Superb</i> . . . .	74	<i>Worcester</i> . . . .	64
<i>Exeter</i> . . . .	64	<i>Belleisle</i> . . . .	64
<i>Eagle</i> . . . .	64	<i>Nymph</i> . . . .	14
<i>Burford</i> . . . .	64		

and during this and the year following his force remained not only supreme, but practically unopposed, in those distant waters. The French did, it is true, send out occasional ships from their home ports, but during the two first years that Hughes remained on the Malabar and Coromandel coasts no French ship of war proceeded further east than Mauritius or Île de France. In January 1781, when Hughes was wintering at Bombay, Admiral Count d'Orvés appeared off Fort St. George with a squadron composed of one seventy-four, 4 sixty-fours, and 2 fifty-gun ships, and, as has been seen, caused the very gravest anxiety to Coote, whose source of supply by land was then cut by Hyder's numerous and active cavalry, and who realized only too clearly that the continued presence off the coast of the French fleet condemned his army to present inaction and to inevitable and early destruction from sheer want of provisions.

<sup>1</sup> In this chapter Clowes' *Naval History* has been largely drawn upon.



The following statement, from among the papers at West Park, is endorsed :

' List and State of French Squadron which came to Coast of Comandiel, 26th January 1781.

' From Sir E. Hughes.

' The French Squadron which appeared off Madras the 26th January consisted of the following ships commanded by M. Dorver (D'Orvés), Commodore, and this account of them is confirmed by a very intelligent European who was taken in the *Osterly* and permitted by the French Commodore to come on shore here the 29th instant, in the ransomed vessel commanded by Captain Jefferys :

<i>Ships.</i>	<i>Guns.</i>	<i>Pounders.</i>	<i>Nos.</i>	
<i>L'Orient</i>	74	{ 36 18 8	{ 28 30 16	800 Men including 120 Marines } M. Dorver, Comre. (D'Orvés.)
<i>Brilliant</i>	64	{ 32 18 8	{ 26 18 10	700
<i>Sévère</i>	64	{ The same		} 700
<i>Bisare</i> <sup>1</sup>	64	{ as		
<i>Ajax</i>	64	{ above		
<i>Flammand</i> Frigates.	50	24s and 18s		500
<i>Consolant</i>	40	18		400
<i>Subtile</i>	20	8		200
<i>Expedition Sloop</i>	12	6		80

' The above ships left the Mauritius the 9th October last, arrived at Acheen 21st December, and to the Northward the 22nd, and on this day took the *Speedwell*, Captain Jefferys, off Istnapilly, who has since been ransom'd for 7000 Rupees for 80 Days.

' On the 23rd they anchored off Pulicat and were very industrious to conceal from the people on shore the knowledge of what they were—tho' they permitted Captain Jefferys at the same time to come into Madrass Road for the sum he had engaged to pay for the ransom of his ship, by which means the Government knew every particular they wished for respecting this squadron. On the 24th instant the *Tanna* (?), schooner, was taken off Pulicat by the *Flamand*. As the French ships received no intelligence from Pulicat and were given to understand at Acheen that there were no English ships of any force in Madras Roads, they, at first, took the 5 Indiamen for Sir Edward Hughes' Fleet, and were not undeceived until the *Speedwell*, with the *Ransom*, joined them to the southward. While they continued in this error they prepared for action, but in so confused and irregular a manner as plainly expressed their Dread of meeting with Sir Edward, tho' they before boasted this to be the sole intention of their coming to the coast.

<sup>1</sup> *Bizarre*.

' This informant was told by the French seamen etc. on board the *L'Orient*, that the Commodore meant to quit the coast about the middle of February : he had drained the Islands of every good seaman to man his ships, and the vessells left there were worked by Lascars, Caffreys etc., and employed between the islands and Madagascar in bringing supplies of provisions.

' There are about 4000 troops at the Mauritius ; and when these ships left it the French had not the least idea of sending any part of them to this Coast, thinking that their doing so might subject these islands to an attack.

' The following Frigates etc. were there at the time the Fleet sailed :

	<i>Guns.</i>	<i>Pounders.</i>
<i>Pourveyase.</i> <sup>1</sup>	40	18.
<i>Lauriston.</i>	40	12.
<i>Elizabeth.</i>	36	12.
<i>Renegade.</i>	30	9.
<i>Elephant.</i>	36	12 and 8.
<i>Lion.</i>	36	12 and 8.
<i>Pintade.</i>	24	8.
<i>Osterly.</i>	30	9 and 4.

besides a great number of Merchant Ships. The *Soloman* of 28 guns and the *St. Anne*, Brigg, of 16 guns, were the ships that took the English vessels off Ganjam etc. They are now gone to Mauritius with their booty.

' A vessell of 18 Guns belonging to the King, not included in the foregoing list, was ready to sail from the Mauritius upon the Fleet's departure—but her destination not known.

' The French Fleet appears to have gone to Pondicherry, having been seen beyond Sadrass two days ago.'

On the 13th February, however, for some inexplicable reason, the French squadron sailed away and returned to Île de France, without even making any attempt at the destruction of five Indiamen and several grain vessels then lying in Madras roads ; and the folly of d'Orvés saved the British army from a possible military disaster of a most serious and far-reaching kind.

In May, Hughes returned to the Coromandel coast, and in November he was concerned with Sir Hector Munro in the siege and capture of Negapatam. In July the Admiral appears to have addressed a letter to the Supreme Government at Calcutta asking their opinion as to operations against the enemy ; they wrote in reply urging the very great importance of the preservation of the communications by sea between Bengal and the ports on the Coromandel coast, pointing out the depredations of enemy privateers in the previous year, and to this

<sup>1</sup> *Pourvoyeuse* (?)

end suggested that, on the change of the Monsoon, the fleet, or at least a part of it, should be brought up to Ballasore Roads.

When on the 20th December 1780 England declared war upon Holland, the British Government decided to attempt the capture of the Cape of Good Hope, and on the 13th March 1781 a squadron sailed from England, under Commodore Johnstone,<sup>1</sup> in company with the Channel fleet under Admiral Darby, then on its way to relieve Gibraltar. Johnstone's squadron was thus composed: the *Romney*, 50; *Hero*, 74; *Monmouth*, 64; *Jupiter*, 50; *Isis*, 50; *Diana*, 30; *Jason*, 32; *Active*, 32; *Rattlesnake*, 14; *Porto*, 16; *Infernal*, 8; *Terror*, 8; *Tapageur*, 14; *San Carlos*, 20; *Pondicherry*, 20; and *Royal Charlotte*, 20 guns, and convoyed ten East Indiamen each carrying twenty-six guns and a considerable body of troops. These were the 2nd Battalion 42nd, under Lieut.-Colonel Macleod, the 78th under Lieut.-Colonel the Earl of Seaforth, the 98th under Lieut.-Colonel Fullarton, and the 100th Foot under Lieut.-Colonel Humberstone; they numbered about 3,000 and were commanded by General Medows.

Johnstone's destination had been kept secret, and after crossing the Bay of Biscay the secret service squadron parted company from that under Darby, and steered for the Cape. Both the French and the Dutch Governments had, however, obtained information of the fitting out of this squadron, and the latter Power, fearing that it was intended for an attack upon one of her colonies, besought the aid of France. The appeal was successful, and a small but efficient squadron was hastily got together, and, with the fleet destined for the West Indies under de Grasse, left Brest on the 22nd March under the command of a captain named Suffren, who had already made a name for himself in the navy of France by his coolness of judgment and by his ardour in battle. He was instructed to follow Johnstone, watch his movements, and endeavour to frustrate his designs; that done he was to proceed to the East Indies.

Pierre André de Suffren Saint-Tropès, Bailli de Suffren, was born in Provence in 1729; he had fought against the British at Toulon in 1744 and at Cape Breton two years later, being thereafter captured. He was released in time to take part in the engagement off Minorca, and was again taken prisoner in Boscawen's action of 1759, and spent four years in captivity in England. Thereafter he was engaged against the

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Governor of Pensacola and one of the commissioners sent by Lord North in 1778 to promote a reconciliation with America.

Sallee rovers and was employed in the blockade of Gibraltar. He was killed in a duel in 1783. He was one of the greatest of French naval captains, who fought no less stoutly against the enemies of his country than against the false traditions that had grown up in her naval service, and which regarded as a primary duty the saving of ships and the securing of ports rather than the bringing of hostile ships to action. He had his own views of the true functions of a fleet, and is said to have stigmatized tactics as a mere veil behind which timidity sought to hide its nakedness. Despite his extraordinary obesity he was wonderfully active: he had, says Mahan,<sup>1</sup> 'genius, energy, great tenacity, sound military ideas, and was also an accomplished seaman'.

The squadron under Suffren consisted of the *Héros*, 74; *Annibal*, 74; *Artésien*, 64; *Sphinx*, 64; and *Vengeur*, 64 guns, and carried also some French battalions.

Johnstone made a quick passage and arrived unmolested at Porto Praya in the Cape de Verde Islands; but although he seems to have been aware that the French were on his track, and that the protection afforded by this, a neutral port, could not be guaranteed, he permitted his ships to anchor in a confused and irregular manner, and took no precautions against surprise. On the morning of the 16th April the outermost British ship descried a strange squadron approaching, and this was soon after made out to consist of French men-of-war, and the large numbers of men then ashore for various purposes were at once recalled by signal.

Suffren had come in simply to fill his water-casks, but, seeing his enemy, he determined at once to attack, hoping to profit by the surprise and confusion of the British so far as to cripple their fleet and save the Cape of Good Hope at the Cape de Verde Islands.<sup>2</sup>

Pushing in with the *Annibal* and *Artésien*<sup>3</sup>—both of whose captains were killed in the action—and firing broadsides from both as he advanced, Suffren engaged in succession the English *Hero* and *Monmouth*. The French captains either mistook their orders or failed from bad seamanship to reach an effective position, and the battle became a mere 'rough and tumble'.

After something under an hour's action, Suffren drew off and put to sea, having lost 105 killed and 204 wounded, nearly all his casualties

<sup>1</sup> *Influence of Sea-Power*, p. 456.

<sup>2</sup> Bridge, *From Island to Empire*, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> For a full account of this action see Castex's *Manœuvre de la Praya*.

being in his two leading ships, and the *Annibal* being disabled. Johnstone, who had 36 killed and 130 wounded, made a half-hearted effort to pursue, then returned to Porto Praya and remained there another fortnight. Suffren went on to the Cape, landed his troops, and made the colony secure against attack ; so that when the leisurely Johnstone followed, he was able to effect nothing but the capture of five Dutch East Indiamen in Saldanha Bay. He then sent on the *Hero*, *Monmouth*, and *Isis*, under Commodore Alms, with the transports, to India to reinforce Hughes, and himself returned to England with the remainder of his squadron and such prizes as he had gathered.

The reason for this decision was as follows. A French ship, which was on the voyage from Mauritius to France, had been captured by some of our cruisers and taken to England, where she arrived on the 24th April 1781. From papers on board it was learnt that Hyder had invaded the Carnatic, and H.M.S. *Monarque*, 74, was sent after Johnstone, then on his voyage to the Cape, directing him to abandon that expedition and dispatch the men-of-war and transports, with the troops under General Medows, to the aid of Madras, returning home himself with the *Romney* and *Jupiter*. On receiving these instructions Johnstone sent on the *Active* to acquaint Admiral Hughes and the Madras Government of the fresh orders received ; this ship reached Madras on the 7th October 1781.

Commodore Alms, says Sir Thomas Munro,<sup>1</sup>

‘ followed a very uncommon route in his passage to India. After touching at Johannah, he went to Socotra, from thence coasted along the Arabian coast to 172, (*sic*) when he parted with the fleet and pursued his voyage to Bombay, where he arrived on the 6th January 1782 ; having taken on board a supply of water he set sail for Madras, and anchored in the roads on the 11th February with the *Monmouth*, *Hero* and *Isis*, and the *Manilla*, transport, with 450 of Fullarton’s Regiment ; 350 of them were re-embarked as Marines, and General Medows went on board as a volunteer.’

Alms’ voyage certainly appears to have been a protracted one, but he met with bad weather, and, thinking that the journey, with his whole convoy, might be too much prolonged for the rendering of timely assistance to Fort St. George, he selected his best sailing transports with 700 of the 98th Regiment, under Fullarton, on board, and, accompanied by General Medows, pushed forward to join Admiral Hughes.

‘ All the rest of the transports and troops, except the 42nd and 78th Regiments, arrived early in February at Bombay, from whence

<sup>1</sup> Gleig, vol. i, p. 51 : a letter to his mother dated 21st February 1782.

they immediately sailed for the Coromandel coast, but Lieutenant Colonel Humberstone Mackenzie, who commanded the division, finding that, should that plan be pursued, they were likely to fall into the hands of the French, judged it more expedient to make a diversion upon the Malabar coast in favour of the general cause. He accordingly disembarked his troops at Calicut on the 18th February; these consisted of part of the 98th Regiment, four independent companies, and the 100th Regiment, making in all about one thousand effective men.<sup>1</sup>

To return now to the actions of Admiral Hughes. Shortly after the capture in November 1781 of Negapatam, Hughes embarked a detachment of Madras troops under Captain Bonnevaux, consisting of a party of some 30 artillerymen, a battalion of seven companies of Madras sepoy, and 200 pioneers, and sailed on the 2nd January 1782 for Ceylon. Trincomalee was stormed on the 5th, and Fort Osaburg was carried by assault on the 11th, and shortly afterwards the Admiral re-embarked his seamen and marines, leaving the Madras detachment in garrison. This force was augmented later by a British officer and 188 native ranks, 52 artillery men, British and Native, and 62 European infantry invalids who embarked at Madras on the 26th March.

In the meantime Suffren had been prosecuting his eastward voyage. He remained two months at the Cape of Good Hope, and then, leaving for the Île de France, he reached that place towards the end of October 1781. On the 17th December the combined French fleet sailed for the Coromandel coast, capturing *en route* the British ship *Hannibal*, 50 guns. D'Orvès, with the French fleet, consisting of twelve sail of the line<sup>2</sup> (including the captured ship), several frigates, and transports

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> 3 seventy-fours, 7 sixty-fours, and 2 fifty-gun ships.

*Note.*—The following list of French ships, which as regards numbers of ships does not agree with the above, is given in a MS. History of the War preserved at West Park:

<i>L'Orient</i>	74	Commodore d'Orvès	625 men.
<i>Héros</i>	74	„ de Suffren	625 „
<i>Annibal</i>	74	Captain Tromelin	625 „
<i>Brillant</i>	64	„ St. Félix	516 „
<i>Ajax</i>	64	„ Bouvet	516 „
<i>Sévère</i>	64	„ Palière	516 „
<i>Sphinx</i>	64	„ du Chateau	516 „
<i>Artésien</i>	64	„ Maurville	516 „
<i>Bizarre</i>	64	„ Lamandelle	516 „
<i>Vengeur</i>	64	„ Forbin	516 „
<i>Flamand</i>	50	„ Chev. de Cuberville	420 „
and the following frigates:			
<i>Pourvoyeuse</i>	40	Captain Chev. de Galle	400 men.
<i>Fine</i>	40	„ Pierre de Salvert	400 „
<i>Bellone</i>	36	„ Cellard	350 „
<i>Subtile</i>	22	„ Beaulicu	240 „

with 3,000 troops on board, among which was a regiment of Africans, anchored off Pulicat on the 7th February 1782; two days later Count d'Orvés died, leaving Suffren in command. On the 8th, Hughes, returning from his successful expedition to Ceylon, arrived at Madras with six sail of the line and was joined on the 9th by the remainder of his fleet and the transports carrying Medows and the 98th Regiment.<sup>1</sup> News of his arrival at once reached Suffren, who had, however, been led to believe that Hughes had with him no more than four line-of-battle ships, and under this impression Suffren sailed for Madras, hoping by one decisive blow to destroy the British squadron and thus be in a position to at once invest Fort St. George both by sea and land.

Hughes had also heard of the arrival of the French squadron on the coast, and had spared no exertions to get the British ships ready for action. He anchored abreast of the fort, directing the transports and small craft to draw close to the shore and place themselves under cover of the guns of the fort.

Early on the 15th February 1782 the whole of the French fleet was seen steering towards the roads, and about two o'clock in the afternoon it anchored in line abreast about a league from the British squadron, when, perceiving that the latter was far stronger than had been

D'Orvés' transports contained the following Europeans :

Régiment de l'Île de France	800	strong.
Légion de Lausanne	455	„
Régiment d'Austrasie	659	„
Volontaires de Bourbon	139	„
Artillery	200	„

The troops were under the command of Major-General du Chemin.

Hughes had thus 9 ships of war: 2 seventy-fours, 1 sixty-eight, 5 sixty-fours, and 1 fifty gun ship. Mahan says 4 sixty-fours and 1 seventy gun ship.

*Note.*—The same authority as quoted on the last page gives the following list of Hughes's ships.

<i>Superb</i>	74	Admiral Hughes, Captain Stevens.
<i>Hero</i>	74	Captain Wood.
<i>Monarca</i>	70 (?)	„ Gell.
<i>Exeter</i>	64	Commodore King, Captain Reynolds.
<i>Monmouth</i>	64	Captain Alms.
<i>Worcester</i>	64	„ Talbot.
<i>Burford</i>	64	„ P. Rainier.
<i>Eagle</i>	64	„ Reddale.
<i>Isis</i>	50	„ Lumley.

*Sea Horse*, frigate, 24, Captain Montague.

Fire ship, 8, Captain Maclellan.

The frigates *Active*, 32, Captain Mackenzie, and *Coventry*, 28, Captain Mitchell, had been detached to Bengal and Bombay respectively.

expected, Suffren called a Council of War. The odds were certainly against the English, whose squadron was numerically the weaker, while ship for ship also the advantage lay with the French. The War Council, however, decided against attacking the British at anchor, not merely because their line, supported by the shore batteries, seemed too strong, but because, by moving against one of the English ports, Hughes would certainly be drawn out to sea, when Suffren might reasonably hope to disable his fleet in action and obtain also a secure base of supplies and for repairs. At the time of Suffren's arrival on the coast, all the French and Dutch possessions had already passed into the hands of England; the re-capture of at least one of these was of the first importance if the French fleet was to keep the sea; and the need of such a capture and the spirit of Suffren are equally displayed in his remark to his captains at a later stage of the operations: 'Until we have taken Trincomalee, the open roadsteads of the Coromandel coast will answer?'

The French then weighed anchor and stood south towards Pondicherry, then in the power of Hyder Ali, and Hughes, fearing for Trincomalee, which was but imperfectly defended and supplied, followed Suffren at night-fall, moving under easy sail, and at daybreak on the 16th came up with the French transports which had become seriously separated from the battleships. Six transports were captured, but Suffren followed close in chase, and early in the afternoon had nearly overtaken some of the slower sailers of the English squadron. Hughes now drew together his scattered ships, and during the night both fleets stood to the south-east under easy sail.

When day broke on the 17th February the fleets were five or six miles apart, but the breeze being very light it was well on in the afternoon before the two squadrons came to action. The *Exeter*, 64, became separated from the rest of her consorts, received the broadsides of the first five Frenchmen to overtake her, and then remained in close action on both sides, assailed by first two and then three opponents. 'What is to be done?' asked the master of the *Exeter* of Commodore King who commanded her. 'There is nothing to be done,' replied King, 'but to fight her till she sinks.' At the opening of the action Suffren was able to bring eight of his best ships against five of the British, but as the afternoon wore to evening the wind shifted, the British van came into action, and Suffren hauled off and anchored at Pondicherry. The losses had not been heavy on either side, the British having 32 killed and 83 wounded—the captains of the *Superb* and



*Exeter* were both killed—the French 30 killed and 100 wounded. Suffren was not well supported by his captains, and the French gunnery would seem to have left a good deal to be desired.

Hughes went to Trincomalee to refit, returning to Madras on the 12th March.

The following is the account of the action as related by Hughes in a letter to Macartney from the '*Superb*, off Trivatoor, March 9th, 1782.'

'Having left your road in the evening of the 15th of last month with His Majesty's squadron under my command in pursuit of the French squadron, I stood to the Southward all that night under an easy sail, and at daylight next morning found they had separated, twelve sail of line of Battle ships and a frigate bearing East of me, distant about four leagues; and sixteen sail of frigates, transports, and other vessels bearing S.W., distant about 3 leagues and steering direct for Pondicherry. I immediately made the signal for a general chase to the S.W. in order if possible to come up with and take their transports; and well knowing the Enemy's Line of Battle ships would follow to protect them all in their power. In the course of the chase our copper-bottomed ships came up with six sail of ships and vessels, five of which were English, captured by the enemy, with grain cargoes, out of which I ordered the Frenchmen to be taken and the vessels directed to proceed to Negapatam Road; the sixth was the *Lauriston* having on board 300 of their troops taken by the *Isis*. The moment the enemy's Line of Battle ships discovered my intention to chase their transports, they put before the wind and made all the sail they could after me, and by 3 o'clock in the afternoon four of their best sailing Line of Battle ships were got within two or three miles of our sternmost ships, and the ships in chase were very much spread by the ships they were chasing steering different courses—some to the S.E., others to the S., and several to the S.W. I therefore judged it necessary to make the signal for the chasing ships to join me, which they all did about 7 o'clock in the evening, and I continued standing to the S.E. under an easy sail all that night, the enemy's squadron in sight and making many signals.

'At daylight in the morning of the 17th the body of the enemy's squadron bore N. by E. of ours distant about 3 leagues, the morning very thick and hazy with light winds and frequent squalls of short duration from the N.N.E. and the enemy crowding all the sail they could towards our squadron. At 6 o'clock in the morning I made the signal to form in line of battle ahead at 2 cables' length distance, at 25 minutes past 8 our line ahead being formed with great difficulty from the want of wind and frequent intervals of Calms. I made the signal for the leading ship to make the same sail as the Admiral, and made sail formed in the line ahead with intention to try to weather the enemy, that I might engage them closely. At 10 o'clock the enemy's squadron having the advantage of the squalls from the N.N.E. (which

always reached them first and in consequence continued longest with them) neared our Squadron very fast, and I made the signal for our line to alter the course two points to starboard, the enemy's squadron then steering down upon our rear in an irregular double line abreast. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour past noon I made the signal for our squadron to form the Line of Battle abreast at 2 Cables' length distance in order to draw the rear of our line up with the Centre, and prevent the enemy from attacking it separated. At 3 in the afternoon, the enemy still pushing on to our rear in a double line abreast, I made the signal for the ships in our line to steer and bear S.E. and N.W. of each other in order to draw our rear ships still closer to the centre, and at 40 minutes after 3, finding it impossible to avoid the enemy's attack, under all the disadvantages of little or no wind to work our ships, and of being to leeward of them, I made the signal for our squadron to form the Line of Battle ahead at 2 Cables' length distance. At 4 the *Exeter*, which was the sternmost ship in our rear when formed in Line of Battle ahead on the Larboard tack, not being closed up to her second ahead, three of the enemy's ships in their first line bore down right upon her, whilst four more of their second line, headed by the *Hero*, hauled along the outside of their first line towards our centre. At 5 minutes past 4 the enemy's three ships began their fire on the *Exeter*, which was returned by her and her second ahead. At 10 minutes past 4 I made the signal for Battle, and at 12 minutes the action became general from our centre to our rear, the Commanding ship of the enemy with three other of their second line leading down on our centre, yet never at any time during the action advancing further than opposite to the *Superb's* (our centre ship) chestree and beam, and we having little or no wind and some heavy rain during that time. Under these circumstances the enemy brought eight of their best ships to the attack of five of ours, as the van of our line, consisting of the *Monmouth*, *Eagle*, *Burford* and *Worcester*, could not be brought into action without tacking on the enemy, and although the signal for that purpose was at the Masthead ready for hoisting, there was neither wind sufficient to enable them to tack, nor for the five ships then engaged with the enemy, hard pressed and much disabled in their sails and rigging, to follow them without an almost certainty of separating our van from our rear. At 6 in the afternoon a squall of wind from the S.E. took our ships and paid them round, head on to the enemy, to the N.E., when the engagement was renewed with great spirit and alacrity from our larboard guns, and at 25 minutes past 6 the enemy hauled their wind to the N.E. and ceased firing. At this time the *Superb* had lost her mainyard, shot into two pieces in the slings, had five feet water in her hold, and continued for some time to gain on all her pumps, until many of the largest shot holes under water were plugged up, and neither Brace nor Bow-line left entire; and the *Exeter*, almost reduced to the state of a wreck, had made the signal of distress. The other three ships in our rear, the *Monarca*, *Isis* and *Hero*, had suffered less, and indeed the enemy's fire appeared plainly to be directed principally against the *Superb* and *Exeter*.

‘ In this situation I stood to the southward under little or no sail all night, and in the morning at daylight found the *Superb’s* mainmast, foremast and bowsprit so much wounded as to render it exceeding dangerous to carry sail on them. The *Exeter’s* masts were also much damaged and the shot holes in all the ships so far under water as to render it impossible to stop them but by giving the ships deep heels in smooth water, all which, and the wind continuing to blow from the northward determined me to proceed to Trincomalee then as the only proper place to refit the disabled ships ; but having had little winds and a northerly current, I did not reach it until the 24th of last month ; and having done with the utmost expedition what was absolutely necessary to put the ships in a condition for service, I sailed from that place on the 4th of this month, having advanced to Captain Bonnevaux, the Commandant there, a farther sum of money for the pay of the Garrison, and General Medows having left a detachment of the 98th Regiment, consisting of 2 officers and 50 men, for the better securing that important place.

‘ I am now, my Lord and Gentlemen, returning to Madras Road for many purposes, to attack the squadron if by position I can bring them to an equal combat, to compleat the stores and provisions of the squadron, to receive such reinforcements as may be sent me from England, and to cover the arrival of our transports that may hourly be expected from Bombay, and if possible keep open the communication with Bengal.

‘ These are my present objects ; if anything else occurs to you that is consistently in my power to perform, and more essential, you will be pleased to inform me with it.’

Suffren had now wished to attack and possess himself of Negapatam, but, yielding to the suggestions of the commander of the troops carried on his transports, the army was, after some negotiation with Hyder Ali, landed south of Porto Novo, and proceeded to the attack of Cuddalore, which fell on the 4th April. The garrison<sup>1</sup> was totally inadequate for defence of the extensive works of the place, and no real attempt seems to have been made to hold it. Innes Munro says, ‘ it capitulated by orders from the Presidency ’. Wilks writes that, ‘ on leaving Cuddalore in the preceding year, he (Coote) abstained from the effectual demolition of that weak place, in the hope that the naval superiority of the English would preserve its great convenience to his own operations without risking its being seized and strengthened as an important depôt for the French. The precaution even of mining the place appears to have been omitted ; and, although two ships had been dispatched from Madras with a reinforcement, it capitulated on the 8th April ’ (*sic*), ‘ before their arrival without even the show of

<sup>1</sup> Six companies of the 12th Carnatic Battalion, 562 strong : 100 Topasses and 25 Europeans under Captain Hughes of the 12th Carnatic Battalion.

resistance, the whole garrison of this *extensive* town not having exceeded four hundred sepoys and five artillery men'.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of March 1782 Hughes sailed again for Trincomalee with a reinforcement and a supply of military stores; and on the 30th he was joined at sea by the *Sultan*, 74, and *Magnanime*, 64, sent from England, but the crews of these ships were found to have been much reduced by scurvy. The importance of covering the arrival at an appointed rendezvous of a convoy, expected from home under Sir Richard Bickerton, induced Hughes to keep on his course, neither shunning nor seeking an encounter with the enemy. Suffren knew of the approaching convoy and that it was of equal importance to him to cut it off as it was to the English to preserve it, and he put to sea hoping to intercept it. On the 9th April the two fleets came in sight of one another, when Hughes kept on his course for Trincomalee, and on the 12th the French, crowding all sail in pursuit, came up with his rearmost ships.

On the same day Rodney and de Grasse met in the West Indies.

Hughes' fleet consisted of eleven ships mounting 732 guns, and the French of twelve numbering 770. Suffren in the *Héros*, with *L'Orient*, engaged Hughes' flagship, the *Superb*, and the action was largely one between *Héros*, *L'Orient*, and *Brillant* on one side, and *Superb* and *Monmouth* on the other; the British losses amounted to 137 killed and 430 wounded. Both fleets were exhausted and temporarily crippled, and remained at anchor two miles apart, in the open sea, for a week, carrying out repairs. On the 19th Hughes moved to Trincomalee—when 1,462 sick and wounded were landed from the fleet—and Suffren to Batticaloa further to the south.

The English were obliged to remain inactive for six weeks, while Suffren was in no condition immediately to assume the offensive, being short of men, provisions, spars, and rigging. On the 3rd June he sailed for Tranquebar, moving thence to Cuddalore. Hughes remained at Trincomalee until the 23rd June, when he went to Negapatam, off which place the French fleet made its appearance on the 5th July. Suffren was well acquainted with the sickly condition of the British fleet, and was, moreover, aware that the English were expecting a strong reinforcement of troops coming from England under convoy; he had therefore determined to avail himself of the present opportunity to attempt the capture of Negapatam, and thus obtain possession of the key to the Tanjore country.

<sup>1</sup> Wilks, vol. ii, p. 384.

On the French fleet making its appearance, the British squadron at once weighed anchor and stood towards the enemy, Hughes sailing in a southerly direction to gain the wind—the south-west monsoon was now blowing. At 11 a.m. on the 6th July the opposing vessels became engaged, the two squadrons being practically equal in numbers and gun-power, since one of Suffren's ships had been on the day previous dismasted in a squall, and had failed to repair her injuries in time to take part in the action. The British fleet bore down upon the French and engaged ship against ship, and an action ensued which, as Mahan tells us,<sup>1</sup> 'was the only one of the five fought by Suffren on the coast of India, in which the English admiral was the assailant. There can be found in it no indication of military conceptions, of tactical combinations; but, on the other hand, Hughes is continually showing the aptitudes, habits of thought, and foresight of the skilful seaman, as well as a courage beyond all proof'. The battle was stubbornly contested, but the rear ships did not come to as close action as those ahead of them; if the French commander was the better tactician, his subordinates were inferior as seamen to their opponents, and again was Suffren badly supported by his captains, of whom, after the action, two were deprived of their commands and one was sent home in disgrace. The action had no definite results, and both fleets drew off, stood in shore, and anchored at sunset.

The loss of the British was 77 killed and 233 wounded, that of the French was very much greater, the *Brillant* alone losing 47 killed and 136 wounded—nearly a third the usual crew of a sixty-four, and Suffren's ships were greatly undermanned—and the total casualties of the French amounting to 178 killed and 601 wounded; Hughes' flag-captain was among our killed.

The British losses were thus distributed:

<i>Superb</i>	.	.	.	7 killed,	19 wounded.
<i>Hero</i>	.	.	.	12 „	23 „
<i>Magnanime</i>	.	.	.	2 „	17 „
<i>Monmouth</i>	.	.	.		12 „
<i>Monarca</i>	.	.	.	8 „	46 „
<i>Burford</i>	.	.	.	7 „	34 „
<i>Eagle</i>	.	.	.	4 „	9 „
<i>Exeter</i>	.	.	.	11 „	24 „
<i>Sultan</i>	.	.	.	16 „	21 „
<i>Worcester</i>	.	.	.	1 „	9 „
<i>Isis</i>	.	.	.	9 „	19 „

<sup>1</sup> *Influence of Sea-Power upon History*, p. 449.

Captain Jenkinson, 98th Foot, was killed on the *Burford*, and Captain Abbott, of the Company's troops, on the *Monarca*.

It was now that Suffren's extraordinary energy permitted him to obtain a substantial advantage over his British rival. On the day after the action Suffren sailed to Cuddalore to refit. Here he found nothing, but he stripped his frigates to re-mast his warships, and his prizes to repair his frigates ; he sent to Malacca for spars ; tore down houses on shore for timber to mend his hulls ; and inspired his working parties by his constant presence among them. As a result he was ready for sea long before Hughes, and, sailing south on the 1st August, picked up off Point de Galle on the 21st a reinforcement of two ships of the line, the *Illustre*, 74, and the *Michel*, 60, with a convoy of supplies and 600 troops, and, sailing for Trincomalee, arrived there on the 25th.

Equal energy had not been displayed by Hughes ; it was not until a fortnight after the action—on the 20th—that he reached Madras with his fleet, and here, stores of all kinds being abundant, he effected a leisurely refit. He did not put to sea again until the 20th August, although he must have known that Trincomalee was in danger, and he did not arrive off this port until the 2nd September, to find that it had fallen into the hands of the enemy, that a sufficient garrison had been installed, the guns and landing parties re-embarked, and that all remaining for him to do was to endeavour to draw Suffren so far from his port that if disabled in action he should not be in a position to return to it.

Innes Munro tells us that Lord Macartney had formed a plan for making Trincomalee a permanent possession of the English Government,

' which had it not been frustrated by the activity of Suffren would have proved the masterpiece of the Madras Governor. In pursuance of this plan Lieutenant Colonel Fullarton, an officer of most extended capacity and singular military talents, which seemed more the effect of natural endowment than military experience, embarked with Sir Edward Hughes for the purpose of commanding the garrison of Trincomalee, and also of negotiating an alliance with the King of Candy, a chief emperor of the island of Ceylon, who was at this time much disgusted with the Dutch tyranny, and might have been easily brought over to our interests, had the talents and address of Colonel Fullarton had an opportunity for exertion. The accomplishment of this important scheme would have rendered the support of the war a matter of singular advantage, for had the Company studied their

interests properly, they should have aimed at this as their chief acquisition upon their first settlement in India.’<sup>1</sup>

It must be admitted that Hughes had not left the garrison of Trincomalee altogether to their fate. While he was refitting at Madras he had dispatched the *Monmouth* and *Sceptre* with supplies and stores to Trincomalee, and these ships also carried a reinforcement for the garrison of about 200 men of the 42nd and 98th Regiments under Captain Hay MacDowell of the former corps. This officer being senior to Captain Bonnevaux assumed command. Of Bonnevaux, Sir Thomas Munro wrote :

‘ as he has quarrelled with all his officers and neglected the fortifications and everything else, *except the making of money*, he is to be removed ; and the care of this important place, for the relief of which they have risked two line of battle ships, is to be entrusted to Captain Hay MacDowell.’<sup>2</sup>

The *Monmouth* and *Sceptre* rejoined Hughes on the 12th August, having been chased the whole way by the French.

On his arrival at Trincomalee, MacDowell had found both forts, but especially the lower one, in so weak a state of defence, that the labour of months would have been needed to make it tenable ; while the stores and ammunition were injudiciously distributed, the powder being stored in one fort and the shot lodged in the other. Hardly had the new commander commenced to remedy these evils when Suffren was upon him. On the 26th the French admiral anchored in Back Bay, landed 2,500 Europeans under Baron d’Agoult, and at once invested the place. Three days later the batteries opened and the guns of the defence were silenced by the night of the 29th. On the 30th the garrison was summoned, and so eager was Suffren to obtain possession of Trincomalee that he granted unhesitatingly the terms MacDowell asked, and the place accordingly capitulated.

When on the 2nd September the approach of Hughes’ fleet was signalled, all preparations were hastened, and the French squadron came out of port on the morning of the 3rd and followed the English. These had twelve sail of the line to fourteen ; on the one side were 3 seventy-fours, 1 seventy, 1 sixty-eight, 6 sixty-fours, and 1 fifty, while the French had 4 seventy-fours, 7 sixty-fours, 1 sixty, and 2 fifties, besides a 36-gun ship, now called the *Consolante*, but formerly the British East Indiaman *Elizabeth*.

Hughes, as Suffren admitted, ‘ fled in good order,’ his fleet well

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> Gleig, vol. i, p. 57.

aligned and closed up. Suffren's eagerness to engage, and the unequal speed of his fleet units, coupled with a difficult evolution attempted at the last moment, caused the French, when, at 2 p.m., and twenty-five miles south-east of Trincomalee they came up with the British, to engage in two disordered groups. In the battle which ensued the bulk of the fighting fell upon the *Héros*, flagship, *Illustre*, and *Ajax*. 'The French ships in the battle did not support each other; they were so grouped as to mask their own fire and needlessly increase the target offered to the enemy'.<sup>1</sup> Two of the French ships were dismasted<sup>2</sup> and one seriously damaged, while the casualties in Suffren's fleet amounted to 82 killed and 253 wounded. The British losses were not appreciably smaller, viz. 51 killed—including three ships' captains, Lumley, *Isis*, Watt, *Sultan*, and Wood, *Worcester*—283 wounded, but Hughes' squadron was also much battered, there were many shot-holes 'so very low down in the bottom as not to be come at to be effectually stopped', while all had suffered aloft. These conditions, and the approach of darkness, brought the battle to an end. Suffren returned to Trincomalee and Hughes to Madras, but the break-up of the south-west monsoon caused naval operations to be temporarily suspended on the Coromandel coast, and in the middle of October Hughes sailed for Bombay, where he was joined in December by a reinforcement of five ships of the line under Sir Richard Bickerton.

The following 'State of the French Fleet on the 28th September 1782', is endorsed 'from a paper of Captain Hay McDowell delivered by him to the Admiral, received 4th October 1782'.

List of the French Fleet when they arrived at Trincomalee  
after the engagement, September 1782.

			<i>Killed.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>
<i>Le Héros</i>	74	M. de Suffren: totally dismasted and obliged to take 100 men from the <i>Consolante</i> .	140	250
<i>L'Illustre</i>	74	M. le Compte de Bruxière: joined 22nd August totally dismasted.	150	240
<i>L'Orient</i>	74	M. de la Pallière gone home: in coming to anchor struck upon a rock and is entirely lost.		
<i>L'Hannibal</i>	74	M. de Tremouline, dismissed: very little in action.		
<i>Le Vengeur</i>	64	M. Querverville: lost her mizen mast and much damaged in the hull.	40	60

<sup>1</sup> Mahan, p. 455.

<sup>2</sup> One of these was the flagship.



		<i>Killed. Wounded.</i>	
<i>L'Ajax</i>	64	M. Beaumont, lost her fore and mizen top gallant masts and a good deal shattered.	30 40
<i>Brillant</i>	64	M. Thirsausin : suffered a good deal in her hull and rigging.	25 50
<i>La Flammande</i>	64	M. Salvert : not much in the action.	
<i>La Bizarre</i>	64	M. L'Allandile, dismissed : not much in the action, her masts taken out for the <i>Héros</i> .	
<i>Le Sévère</i>	64	M. Marville, not in the action.	
<i>L'Artésien</i>	64	M. le Marquis de St. Felix, gone home : not much engaged.	
<i>Le Sphinx</i>	64	M. le Compte de Chillaud : not much engaged.	2 6
<i>Le St. Michel</i>	60	M. de Pas : not engaged, not being able to open her lower ports : joined 22nd August.	2
<i>Le Petit Hannibal</i>	56	Not engaged, captain dismissed.	
<i>La Consolante</i>	48	M. de Pain, killed in the action : very much shattered, her masts taken out and she is laid up in the Harbour : joined 22nd August.	25 40
		Total of killed and wounded	414 686

Frigates.

<i>La Bellone</i>	36	M. Joyeuse.
<i>La Fine</i>	44	M. St. George.
<i>Le Subtile</i>	32	Gone to the Mauritius.
<i>La Fortune</i>	16.	
<i>La Pulverseur</i>		Fire-ship.
<i>Le Lizard</i>		Cutter—taken by the <i>Sultan</i> , Captain Mitchell, 3rd October.

In December Suffren was back on the Coromandel coast, but returned to Trincomalee in February 1783. Here in March he was joined by three ships of the line from France—2 seventy-fours and 1 sixty-four, but these scarcely did more than make good the losses sustained during the winter by the wreck of *L'Orient*, 74, off Trincomalee, and of the *Bizarre*, 64, off Cuddalore.

Under the convoy of these fresh arrivals came General Coote's old antagonist, the Count de Bussy, with 2,500 men who were at once sent to Cuddalore : 'de Bussy,' says Mahan, 'once the brilliant fellow-worker with Duplex, was now a gouty invalid of sixty-four'.

Returning to Trincomalee Suffren fell in, on the 11th April 1783,

with Hughes returning to Madras from Bombay, but no fight ensued. On the 10th June he heard that de Bussy was shut up in Cuddalore and blockaded by the British fleet, and at once leaving port he sighted the English squadron on the 13th anchored off Porto Novo to the south of Cuddalore. Hughes had now eighteen ships of the line, one of them of eighty guns, to Suffren's fifteen, and, not caring to accept battle at anchor, the English admiral put to sea, remaining outside until the 20th manœuvring for the weather-gage. In the meantime, Suffren slipped into port, embarked 1,200 men to make good the gaps in his gun crews, and weighed again on the 18th.

Suffren aimed at an action which should drive his opponent from the neighbourhood of Cuddalore, and in this he was wholly successful. His order of battle was more orderly than in some of his former encounters with Hughes, and the action was general, though the rear ships were less closely engaged than were those in the centre and in the van. The course of the fleets carried the ships to the north, and when the action closed they were well to the north of Cuddalore. No ship was captured by either side, and no vessel suffered any very material damage, while the casualties again were tolerably evenly distributed, the British having 99 killed and 434 wounded, the French numbers being 102 and 386.

But while Suffren returned to Cuddalore on the 23rd, Hughes went back to Madras, anchoring there on the 25th. The military situation was thus completely changed, the British communications by land had long been interrupted, and without the protection afforded by the fleet it was no longer possible to obtain supplies by sea. 'My mind is on the rack without a moment's rest since the departure of the fleet,' wrote Stuart, then in command, 'considering the character of M. de Suffren and the infinite superiority on the part of the French now that we are left to ourselves'.

'The battle of June 20th 1783, off Cuddalore, was the last of the maritime wars of 1778. It was fought, actually, exactly five months after the preliminaries of peace had been signed. Although the relative force of the two fleets remained unchanged, it was a French victory both tactically and strategically: tactically, because the inferior fleet held its ground, and remained in possession of the field; strategically, because it decided the object immediately at stake, the fate of Cuddalore, and with it, momentarily at least, the issue of the campaign. It was, however, the triumph of one commander in chief over another; of the greater man over the lesser. . . This is not the place, nor is there room for enlargement upon the merits of Suffren; upon the difficulties he surmounted and the genius he showed. He was a great sea-captain,

Hughes was not ; and with poorer instruments, both in men and ships, the former overcame the latter.'<sup>1</sup>

Mahan is of opinion that Suffren was a very great man. He speaks of his 'heroic constancy, his fearlessness of responsibility as of danger, the rapidity of his action'; as the 'genius whose unerring intuition led him to break through the traditions of his service and assert for the navy that principal part which befits it, that offensive action which secures the control of the sea by the destruction of the enemy's fleet'.

It is pleasant to think that in regard to him our seamen experienced that 'stern joy which warriors feel in foemen worthy of their steel'. When he sailed for France from Trincomalee in October 1783 he was received with acclamation in every port he visited.

'What especially gratified him was the homage of the English captains. It might well be so ; none had so closely established a right to his esteem as a warrior. On no occasion when Hughes and Suffren met, save the last, did the English number over twelve ships ; but six English captains had laid down their lives, obstinately opposing his efforts. While he was at the Cape, a division of nine of Hughes's ships, returning from the war, anchored in the harbour. Their captains called eagerly upon the admiral, the stout Commodore King of the *Exeter* at their head. "The good Dutchmen have received me as their saviour," wrote Suffren, "but among the tributes which have most flattered me, none has given me more pleasure than the esteem and consideration testified by the English who are here".'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clowes, vol. iii, p. 564. None of Suffren's ships had more than three-fourths of their regular crews, and half the ships' companies consisted of soldiers and sepoys.

<sup>2</sup> *Influence of Sea-Power upon History*, pp. 465 and 466.

*Note.*—From the MS. 'Abstract of Correspondence between Madras and Bengal,' preserved at West Park, there seems no doubt that Coote's operations on land were seriously retarded and impeded by the demands made by the fleet on Madras for powder and grain. In regard to the latter it seems clear that Hughes supplied himself by the simple though arbitrary method of seizing the country ships conveying grain to Madras from other parts, but he expected Madras to meet his demands for gunpowder. Thus in May 1782 we read ; 'Fleet in want of 100,000 barrels of powder . . . will send 1,000 barrels powder to the Admiral.' Then in August again there is an entry in a letter to Bengal ; 'relying on you for supplies we have spared the Admiral 120,000 lbs. of powder and 284 Europeans to go as Marines,' so that it would appear that on the whole the Navy was better served by, or in despite of, the Madras government than was the Army.

Hughes, not less than Coote, seems to have experienced Macartney's interference : there is extant a letter of 27 March 1782 from Madras from the Admiral to Captain Thomas Mackenzie, H.M.S. *Active*, calling that officer severely to account for proposing to proceed with his ship to Bengal on 'the application of the President and Council of this place', and roundly declaring that 'neither the Governor-General and his Council, nor any other Presidency of the Company's, shall meddle in the command of his Majesty's ships serving under me'.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### GENERAL STUART'S OPERATIONS DURING SIR EYRE'S ABSENCE: RETURN TO MADRAS OF GENERAL COOTE

IN the manuscript books of 'Orders, General and Others, of Fort St. George', for 1774-98, preserved in the Library of the *Royal United Service Institution* in Whitehall, the following statement occurs: 'Sir Hector Munro resigns the Company's Service and the Command of the Forces on the Madras Establishment, dated 28th September 1782; Major-General Stuart appointed in his place'; and this seems a good opportunity to determine what British troops were already in the country, or were now upon the point of arrival, to play a part in the further operations of the Carnatic War, with the conduct of which Major-General Stuart was now entrusted, consequent on the breakdown of the health of Lieut.-General Sir Eyre Coote.

During almost the whole of the war the only British regiment at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief, besides the Company's own admirable corps of European Infantry, was the 73rd, Lord Macleod's regiment, which had reached India early in 1780, and had accompanied Coote throughout his operations. Then we have seen that in March 1781 the British Government had sent to India a squadron under Commodore Johnstone, escorting transports containing reinforcements under General Medows; these troops were, as then numbered, the 78th, the 2nd Battalion 42nd, the 98th, and the 100th Regiments. Of these the majority, as in time they reached Bombay, remained on the Malabar coast, in the first instance because Colonel Humberstone<sup>1</sup> of the 100th, the senior officer, deemed it unwise to continue the voyage to Madras in view of French naval activity, and afterwards because, as belated transports arrived, the same officer detained the troops in order to make diversions on the Malabar coast in favour of the general cause. These operations had a certain measure of local success, but they did not on the whole meet with the approval of the Commander-in-Chief, who was himself

<sup>1</sup> He seems to have been styled both Humberstone Mackenzie and Humberstone.

greatly in need of reinforcements for prosecuting operations which appeared to him likely to be more fruitful of results.

All the reinforcements, therefore, which were available for Coote's campaign of 1782 were the 78th, a weak and sickly battalion, and some 450 at most of the 98th Regiment,<sup>1</sup> of which the majority were embarked on board the fleet to serve as marines.

The requests from India for reinforcements, particularly of English Cavalry, had been loud and insistent. Hyder Ali's cavalry numbered at least twenty-five thousand, included among which was a body of French dragoons and Hussars; while the English Company maintained no cavalry establishment whatever except a small European troop, and such cavalry as they had in the field were a few hundreds of horsemen borrowed from the Nawab of Arcot, unpaid, undrilled, and undisciplined. Coote had repeatedly pointed out the urgent need of cavalry. In his despatch on his victory at Porto Novo he wrote: 'From the want of a corps of cavalry on our side equal in number to the service required, we were, with victory decidedly declared, obliged to halt just beyond the enemy's grounds, not being able to take advantage of so distinguished a day; for with a corps of cavalry the enemy's guns, stores, etc., would to a certainty have fallen into our hands'.

Again, after the battle of Arnee he wrote: 'There was nothing wanting to have enabled me on this occasion to ruin and disperse Hyder's army, but a respectable body of cavalry. One thing is certain, that had I such a corps we should have captured the greater part, if not the whole, of his cannon.'

Under the urgent demands made upon them, a Court of Directors applied to the Crown for the loan of a cavalry regiment, and, in accordance with the usual practice at that date, it was determined to raise a regiment for service in India. In September 1781 a warrant was issued to Colonel Sir John Burgoyne, Bt., of the 14th Light Dragoons, a cousin of the General Burgoyne who surrendered at Saratoga in 1777, to raise such a corps, and the regiment, numbered the 23rd Light Dragoons, was composed largely of drafts from the 8th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 20th, and 21st Dragoons, and was officered mainly from the 15th, 16th, 20th, and 21st Dragoons. Its major was John Floyd, then of the 21st, who, as a boy of twelve, had charged at Emsdorff with Elliott's Light Horse.

<sup>1</sup> I find, however, a note in the MS. 'Abstract of Correspondence between Madras and Bengal,' preserved at West Park, under date of 13th May 1782—'Major Douglas and Capt. Kelsal with remainder of 98th Regiment.'

On the 6th February 1782 Sir Richard Bickerton sailed from Spithead in command of the *Cumberland*, 74, *Defence*, 74, *Sceptre*, 64, *Africa*, 64, *Inflexible*, 64, and the *Juno* and *Medea* frigates, convoying sixteen Indiamen having on board the 23rd Light Dragoons, 423 strong, under Colonel Sir John Burgoyne, Bart., the 101st Foot, 1,171 strong under Lieut.-Colonel Adams, the 102nd Foot, 1,169 of all ranks, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Bruce, the 15th Hanoverians, 459 strong, under Lieut.-Colonel Reinbold, and the following drafts, viz. 44 men for the 73rd, 46 for the 78th, 3 for the 98th, 2 for the 100th, and 500 recruits for the Company's Europeans, making a grand total of 3,817. Four ships of the line and one of fifty guns were also detailed to accompany Sir Richard Bickerton's squadron to a certain degree of latitude.<sup>1</sup>

The *Sceptre* and *Medea*, having become separated from the other ships of the fleet, steered direct for Madras, capturing on their way a French transport, having on board ninety men of the Regiment of Pondicherry and a large quantity of military stores. Leaving the prize in charge of the *Medea*, the *Sceptre* continued her voyage and reached Madras at the end of July, the *Medea* arriving two or three weeks later. The convoy and transports seem to have failed to keep together during at any rate the latter part of the voyage to Madras, for while the *Major*, Indiaman, with Lieut.-Colonel Adams and 215 of the 101st arrived at Madras on the 7th September, prior to Coote's departure for Bengal, the ships containing the 23rd Light Dragoons did not reach that port until the 19th and 20th October, and the troops were prevented landing until nearly a week later by reason of the tempestuous weather.

The monsoon had been ushered in on the 15th October with a storm of sudden and unusual violence. Some weeks prior to the outbreak a vast number of trading vessels had assembled from all parts of the coast in Madras roads laden with rice for the Madras market—a supply sorely needed for the army and the native population. Macartney was incapable of so heroic a measure as seizing these cargoes at a fixed price, but characteristically laid an embargo on their being landed until the consignees had reduced the rates at which they proposed to sell; but in the storm so many of these trading vessels were wrecked, that the six *months'* supply, carried for the Madras population by the rice-fleet, was at once reduced to a six

<sup>1</sup> For much of the above I am indebted to Colonel Biddulph's *The Nineteenth and their Times*.

weeks' allowance of grain. When the storm broke the Admiral was giving an entertainment on board the flagship, and was obliged, like the rest of the men-of-war, to slip his cable and carry his guests out to sea. The flagship was dismasted and nearly foundered, and the Admiral transferred his flag to the *Sultan*. 'The shore for several miles was covered with wrecks and with the bodies of the dead and dying.'<sup>1</sup>

'In the night the *Hertford*, the *Free Trade*, the *Shannon*, the *Nancy*, the *Essex* and a Moorman's ship were all drove on shore. The *Free Mason* foundered at her anchors; and near one hundred snows and donies (country boats) were entirely lost. It is impossible to describe a scene of such horror and distress! The howling of the wind, the roaring of the surf, with the cries of the drowning people, and the beach for some miles strewed with wrecks and dead bodies.'<sup>2</sup>

The British fleet under Admiral Hughes had kept the sea during the monsoon of 1781, the ships were much in need of repair, and the port of Trincomalee was now no longer available, and in the opinion of the Admiral it was absolutely necessary that he should go to Bombay to refit. Lord Macartney, apprehensive lest the French fleet should winter at Trincomalee, and be thus at hand to co-operate with the expected force under Bussy, and to intercept grain supplies from Bengal upon which Macartney now wholly depended for averting famine from Madras, persistently urged the Admiral to risk the fleet for the purpose of covering an attempt on Cuddalore, and thus deciding the war before the arrival of the new French commander. Sir Edward Hughes was not, however, to be persuaded, and sailed for Bombay a few days prior to the arrival of Sir Richard Bickerton, who, having landed the troops, at once followed him to the western coast, Lord Macartney solacing himself for this double desertion by forwarding the following protest to the Directors at home: 'The Admiral's persisting in that determination presents to us an awful and humiliating prospect; the British squadron retiring to the other side of the peninsula, and leaving your possessions here threatened with famine, and those to the southward actually attacked by a French squadron which had been worsted in four actions and avowedly more damaged in the three last than the British squadron.'<sup>3</sup>

It was under these somewhat depressing circumstances that the troops were landed at Fort St. George; a correspondent of Hicky's

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*.

<sup>2</sup> *India Gazette* of 9th November 1782.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the heroic measures taken to try and send grain from Bengal to Madras are described in *The Lives of the Lindsays*, vol. iii, p. 199 et seq.

*Gazette* describes their appearance in the following terms: 'the soldiers are remarkably heavy, and are esteemed as fine a body of men as ever came to India'; elsewhere the 23rd Light Dragoons are styled 'this sightly corps'; while another writer declares that 'Burgoyne's men when mounted will be as fine a body of cavalry as ever went into the field'. Unfortunately, however, no horses fit to carry British dragoons were procurable in Madras; there were no horse-transporters available by which remounts might have been sent by sea from Bengal, and no Bengal troops to spare who might have escorted them by land; so that it was not until June 1783 that the regiment was finally mounted and ready for field service.

'However pleasing,' writes Innes Munro,<sup>1</sup> 'the sight of such a reinforcement to the army might have been when in camp, yet, at the present alarming juncture of general distress, no circumstance could be more unfortunate or lamentable in its consequences; for the Settlement was now so destitute of provisions that famine, with all her train of horrors, seemed ready to overwhelm us; and the public distress at this gloomy period was not a little heightened by the unceasing contentions which agitated the government of Fort St. George. The allowances of the army upon the arrival of these troops, were immediately retrenched to a very small ratio of grain; and such was the necessity of the times that orders were issued for near ten thousand miserable wretches to be at once struck off from the domestic army list, who were thus doomed to peril of famine upon the desolated plains.'

The British army cantoned for the rainy season in the neighbourhood of Madras,<sup>2</sup> the French in Cuddalore and its vicinity; while Hyder Ali selected for the same purpose elevated ground about sixteen miles northward of Arcot.

After the departure of Sir Eyre Coote from Madras, Lord Macartney assumed the direction of the ensuing campaign, assigning only its execution to the Provincial Commander-in-Chief, who seems to have expected that he would have been allowed as free a hand as had been accorded to Coote. Macartney repeatedly called upon Stuart to submit a plan of operations for the approval of the Madras government; and while the plans of the Governor implied the disbanding or at least the dispersion of the army, General Stuart maintained with inflexible firmness that the army should be kept as much together as possible near the Presidency, without sending detachments to the southward

<sup>1</sup> p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> Those curious in such matters will find full details of the quarterings in the Order Books noted at the head of this chapter.



or anywhere else, that thus it might be ready for action on the arrival of the proper season.<sup>1</sup>

On the 30th November the European Infantry belonging to the Bengal Presidency embarked for Calcutta on the *Warren Hastings* and *Kent*, Indiamen, when the following General Order was published by Major-General Stuart :

'General Stuart desires the Commanding Officer of the Bengal European Infantry to acquaint them that nothing but the urgency of the public service in Bengal where their presence becomes necessary could have led to their being separated from the present service here, and knowing the sentiments of the Commander in Chief in India he can venture to join his own name to that of Sir Eyre Coote in returning his thanks to that brave corps for the eminent services they have done since the commencement of the War, and to assure them that he will take every occasion in his Power to be of use to them both as a Corps and individually.'

Shortly after this an event occurred which to some must have seemed to presage a conclusion to the war which had so long endured. The health of Hyder Ali had for some time past been declining, and on the 7th December he died of cancer at Chittore. He had for long been an inveterate enemy of the English in India, he was cruel and ruthless in the attainment of that upon which he had set his heart—the aggrandizement of the empire he had founded. He had early realized that the English was the only power in India that he had reason to dread, that its rise threatened his own security, and it was for this that he had fought us so long and so fiercely, only to appreciate at the last that he was engaged in a hopeless struggle. Hyder Ali was a great leader, a man of huge strength and unflinching courage, a bold rider and an unrivalled marksman. He could neither read nor write, but conducted personally the whole business of his state, choosing well his subordinates, and being as generous in rewarding loyal service as he was harsh in punishing those who displeased him. His last message to his son and successor Tippoo was :

'I have gained nothing by the war with the English. . . . If you, through fear of disturbances in your own kingdom, repair thither without having previously concluded peace with the English, they will certainly follow you and carry the war into your country. On this account, therefore, it is better first to make peace on whatever terms you can procure, and then go to your own country.'

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of the War in Asia*, p. 382.

On hearing of the death of Hyder Ali, Macartney urged Stuart to take the field, before Tippoo, who was at the time engaged on the Malabar coast in operations against Humberstone, could return; but Stuart seems at first to have discredited the report—he declared that he ‘did not believe that Hyder was dead, and if he were, the army would be ready for every action in proper time’. Later it was learnt that there was a conspiracy afoot in the Mysore camp to set aside Tippoo, the elder son by a concubine, in favour of the younger son, Abdul Karim, the child of a royal princess, and Stuart was again besought to move forward and take advantage of the dissensions in the Mysore forces. To this Stuart replied that ‘he was astonished that there should be so little reflection as to talk of undertakings against the enemy in the actual state of the Army and of the country’.

The result was that Tippoo joined the army at Chuckramatore in South Arcot on the 2nd January 1783, and a golden opportunity was lost, for Tippoo had succeeded to the full treasury and powerful army of his father.

On the 5th January 1783 the army was formed into two lines: the first was under Lieut.-Colonel Reinbold of the 15th Hanoverians and consisted of three brigades.

The 1st Brigade, Lieut.-Colonel James Stuart, 78th Foot, contained H.M.’s 73rd, 78th, and 101st Regiments, a detachment of the 15th Hanoverians, and the Madras European Regiment.<sup>1</sup>

The 2nd Brigade, Major Edmonstone, Bengal Army, contained the 12th and 25th Regiments of Bengal Sepoys and the 8th Carnatic Battalion.

The 3rd Brigade, Major Blane, Bengal Army, contained the 13th Regiment of Bengal Sepoys, the Trichinopoly Detachment, and the 16th Carnatic Battalion.

The Second Line, under Colonel Pearse of the Bengal Artillery, consisted of the 4th and 5th Brigades.

The 4th Brigade, Lieut.-Colonel Kelly, Madras Army, contained the 24th Regiment of Bengal Sepoys, the 14th, 18th, and 21st Carnatic Battalions.

The 5th Brigade, Lieut.-Colonel Elphinstone, H.M.’s 73rd Regiment, contained the 26th Regiment of Bengal Sepoys, the 4th, 15th, and 20th Carnatic Battalions.

<sup>1</sup> The Madras European Regiment was transferred to the 2nd Line by an order of the 7th February, and the 14th Carnatic Battalion on the 12th March took the place at Vellore of the 5th Battalion which then joined the Army.

There were four regiments of Native cavalry under Lieut.-Colonel Dugal Campbell, now recovered from his fall ; and the artillery consisted of the battering train, twelve 12-pounders and thirty 6-pounders, distributed among the several brigades. Besides these there were the Bengal and Madras Parks, each containing two 18-pounders, four 6-pounders, and two howitzers. The total number of guns in the force is given by Innes Munro at seventy. The Commander-in-Chief's Body-guard was composed of the troop of European cavalry, three troops of native cavalry, and a company of marksmen.

The relations between Lord Macartney and General Stuart, never very cordial, had now become greatly strained. Macartney had early assumed the direction of the campaign, and Stuart, not content with expressing his disapproval of the amateur's scheme of operations, denied that the Governor had any authority over the King's troops. In this connection Stuart's own position was a peculiar one. While on the King's half-pay list in 1775, his services had been lent to the Company, who conferred on him the rank of Brigadier-General. In October 1781 the Crown gave him the commission of Major-General in India, and three months later this commission was antedated to 1777. His position, however, differed from that of other General Officers in that he was not borne on the strength of any regiment, and his status in England was only that of a half-pay colonel.<sup>1</sup>

Already in December Stuart had withdrawn the garrison of Masulipatam for service elsewhere, without consulting the Madras government, and a paper war was being waged in consequence with an energy which, directed into other channels, might have gone far to decide the campaign in the Carnatic. Both Lord Macartney and General Stuart were men of unbending character, and much time was wasted in unseemly squabbles.

Lord Macartney's plan involved the dispatch of two battalions of sepoy and a detachment from the 102nd Regiment, under the command of Major-General Jones,<sup>2</sup> to join a body of black troops collected about Ellore ; this detachment was thereafter known as ' the Northern Army '. The Governor further proposed the demolition of the forts of Vellore, Wandewash, and Carangoly, the preservation of which had always been urged by Coote. Stuart was persuaded to acquiesce in the desirability of destroying the forts of Carangoly and Wandewash and marched from Madras on the 4th February for the purpose of

<sup>1</sup> *The Nineteenth and their Times*, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Of the 102nd Foot.

carrying out this measure. Carangoly was reached on the 6th, and here the greater part of the baggage was left in order that the army might move, lightly equipped, on Wandewash. This fort had been mined and was blown up immediately on Stuart's arrival, but the mine connected with the magazine, containing more than 200 barrels of gunpowder, was prematurely exploded, and upwards of forty soldiers were killed and injured.

The news of the capture of Bednore by the Bombay troops under General Matthews now reached Tippoo, though intelligence did not get through to Stuart for some days later, and Tippoo at once marched off with the greater part of his troops to oppose and defeat, Matthews, leaving, however, a large body to co-operate with the French. The army of the Allies was encamped within twelve miles of Wandewash, and Stuart determined to offer battle, still further increasing his mobility by leaving such camp equipage and baggage as could be spared in the town of Wandewash, and taking three days' provisions with him. The confederates, however, declined action, and Stuart returned to Wandewash closely followed by large bodies of the enemy's cavalry and rocket men, who killed and wounded close on two hundred of the rearguard.

On the 15th February Stuart issued at Wandewash the following order :

' It is supposed that the enemy who would not stand to fight, will endeavour in a cowardly manner to annoy the army in its next march ; perhaps they may throw some distant cannon shot and rockets as usual. The General will give five pagodas for every rocket boy taken by the flanking parties.'

The remainder of the month of February was occupied in completing the demolition of Carangoly and Wandewash.

General Stuart's next object was to throw a supply of provisions into the fort of Vellore. Whilst the army was on the march to perform this duty, news was received of the capture of Bednore by General Matthews, and that Tippoo, having destroyed the fortifications of Arcot, had marched to the Malabar coast. On arrival at Vellore on the 3rd March it was found that Arcot was really abandoned, and the return to Madras was made by that route, when Arcot was found to be a ruined city, and the Presidency was regained on the 20th. The want of a sufficient supply of provisions, and the necessity for guarding against the arrival on the coast of de Bussy, prevented Stuart from following Tippoo's main army.

The relations between Stuart and Macartney had now reached a pass when it seemed impossible that they could much longer work together, but indeed, though it must be admitted that General Stuart was not only unequal to the military situation, but was also of a difficult, arbitrary, and insubordinate disposition, yet it is not easy to see how any commander could have worked in harmony with men so perverse in spirit as were those who composed the Madras Council. They quarrelled among themselves; they evaded or disobeyed the orders of their Directors in London and of the Supreme Council in Calcutta; they interfered in military matters without having formed any opinion of how the army could be employed to the best advantage—some desiring that the army should march to the north, some to the south, and others again to the west. Each party in the Council assailed the others with notes and minutes, and Stuart was constantly engaged in drawing up long and strongly worded complaints against all whose authority in any way infringed upon his own, and accused Macartney of exercising a personal hostility against him. From both sides long-winded complaints were sent to the Court of Directors at home and to the Supreme Government in Bengal, and from the wording of one letter from the Madras Council it would seem that they harboured fears lest Stuart, having already deposed one governor, might serve Macartney the same way and appoint himself a Dictator.

To such a condition had dissension come that the Select Committee at Madras excluded General Stuart—a member of Council—from all discussions not wholly of a military character. Stuart brought this to the notice of Sir Eyre Coote, who submitted the question for decision to the Supreme Council, by whom it was laid down that 'every act was illegal which was passed by the Select Committee in every instance in which he (General Stuart) was excluded'. Not content with issuing orders in regard to military movements direct to officers detached from the main army, and deciding that Stuart's authority extended only to matters of discipline, and that intended operations must first have the approval of the Madras Council, Lord Macartney finally went too far and drew down upon himself and his Committee one of those scathing rebukes which nobody knew better than Hastings to administer, and which was by no means the last which Lord Macartney was to receive from the Governor-General.

The Madras Government were less concerned with bringing the war to a triumphant issue than with making peace at any price, and they accordingly sent an envoy to negotiate with Tippoo, asking at the

same time that the Supreme Government should delegate to them full and special powers for concluding peace.

In a letter dated Fort William, the 11th March, the Supreme Council wrote to the President and Select Committee of Fort St. George :

‘ You desire our consent and approbation of a treaty to be concluded by you with Tippoo Sahib, on the terms of that which has been made respecting his father with the Mahrattas, and you request that we communicate to you our sentiments on the propriety of your waiving so much of the clause relative to his immediate and entire evacuation of the Carnatic as may relate to the small posts and districts of Paducota and Holepady, or other small posts and districts of little value and importance, but convenient to and bordering upon the dominions of Tippoo Sahib, in case a treaty could not otherwise be concluded with him. If you had not been pleased in the same letter to inform us of your having invested a native servant from Tanjore with written instructions to solicit a communication with any of Tippoo’s agents, we should have supposed, from your preceding request for full and special powers to conclude a peace with Tippoo, that he had secretly solicited you for peace, and that he was ready to break off all connection with our natural enemies and to evacuate the Carnatic, if we assented to his retaining some small post in that country upon the confines of his dominions. Your anxiety to obtain peace is laudable, and upon this point our wishes must be united, however we may differ about the most successful means for obtaining so desirable an object.’

The Madras Council were then reminded of the instructions which had before, from 1781 onwards, been given them in regard to any negotiations with Tippoo’s father, and of the favourable opportunities which had been lost for ejecting the Mysore prince from the Carnatic, and Hastings expressed surprise that Macartney should now seek to yield all to Tippoo that Hyder was sentenced to resign by the terms of the Treaty of Salbai.

‘ It avails the interests of Great Britain in India but little that your President, in a long minute on the 11th February last, appears sensible of the happy opportunity which had been lost for the recovery of the Carnatic, and the expulsion of our natural enemies ; records of laborious altercation, stinging invective and mutual complaint are no satisfaction to the public in compensation for a neglect that may cost millions, and upon a field where immense sums had been expended to maintain our footing.

‘ Uninformed of what General Stuart may have to produce in his vindication against such heavy accusations, our regret is not lessened for the public misfortune, nor can we prevent ourselves from lamenting that the charge, if well founded, should fall upon an officer whom you have invested with the command of the army and the whole conduct of your military operations.’

Then, after reminding the Madras Government of the impropriety and impolicy of the steps it had been proposed to take for the establishment of peace with Tippoo, and of the effect which the news of these might have upon the Mahrattas, Lord Macartney and his colleagues are directly enjoined ' to avoid any infraction of the article of the treaty relating to the Carnatic '.

The letter sent from the Supreme Council at Calcutta to the Government of Madras on the 24th March contained even plainer speaking and instructions more explicit than did that from which extracts have been given, and the whole tenor of the communication was calculated to penetrate the most pachydermatous self-conceit; but it had apparently no effect on Lord Macartney and his Council.

' In reply to our desire of an unambiguous explanation on a subject of such public concern, you favour us with a collected mass of complaints and invectives against this Government, against the Nabob of Arcot, and his Ministers, against the Commander in Chief of all the forces in India, against the Commander in Chief of His Majesty's fleet, against your own Provincial Commander in Chief, and again against this Government; after filling up the catalogue of your repeated distresses and accusations, and to show your surprise at the explanation we required, you wish to know " whether the difficulties and impediments which you have thus described are not sufficient to have the tendency of breaking the spirit and weakening the exertions of our Government?" Had you been pleased in so general a charge of impeachment against your colleagues in the public service to take cognisance of the co-operative support which was till late withheld from you by the Presidency of Bombay, your description of the universal misconduct of the Managers of the Public Affairs in India (the President and Select Committee of Fort St. George excepted) would have been complete.

' When persons in your situation venture thus gravely and upon record to criminate a superior Government, and officers of the highest rank of the State, whose services have not only saved the dominions of the India Company, but added to the military honours of Great Britain, a dispassionate reader of the accusations which you thus pronounce as Censors of the State could only admire your temerity. The motives of your conduct would appear too glaring to attract any approbation. Those who are conscious of real merit in their own services seldom labour to strip away the reputation of others. Honours thus abstracted suit not the detractors, nor can they for a moment cover their mismanagement. No artifice of reasoning, no perversion of distorted quotations, no insinuations of delinquency, no stings covered with compliment, no mechanism of the arts of colouring or sophistry can strip Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Hughes, nor Lieutenant-General Sir Eyre Coote, of having in repeated and well-fought days

defeated the powerful invaders of the Carnatic on the ocean and in the field.'

The Madras government was sternly reproved for venturing 'to impeach with undistinguished indecency' great officers of State; was directed to discontinue 'signing such injurious representations'; the Supreme Government congratulated itself that Lord Macartney and his colleagues did not possess 'those powers for negotiation which you state to have been withheld from you'. The letter went on: 'Your management from the time of Sir Eyre Coote's departure from the coast, and at a crisis the most favourable for recovering the Carnatic, and when you had the unparticipated conduct of the war, with an increased army and the most liberal supplies, your management at such a period when your efforts have only produced the destruction of three of your own forts,<sup>1</sup> warrants us in our conviction of not only the expediency but necessity of the powers which Sir Eyre Coote has all along considered as essential to his department.'

There can be no doubt that at this time Warren Hastings was seriously considering the expediency of suspending Lord Macartney, as before he had suspended his predecessor, Mr. Whitehill.

But long before this Sir Eyre Coote himself, though his health was very far from being restored, as also the Governor-General, had begun to contemplate the return to the Carnatic of the Commander-in-Chief. The General maintained a regular correspondence with Stuart, with whom he seems to have been on terms of very real friendship, and was kept fully acquainted with all the difficulties and disagreements which had arisen between Macartney and his Provincial Commander-in-Chief. Coote does not appear to have been in sufficiently good health to attend many sittings of the Supreme Council in the latter part of 1782, but he constantly communicated to Hastings and other members the views he had formed on the events passing at Madras; and the first suggestion that Coote should return to Fort St. George, should his health permit of his doing so, appears in a letter written by the Supreme Council to the General on the 18th November 1782, and which runs as follows:

'We have this moment been honoured by the receipt of your letters of the 15th and 17th inst. On reading your first letter we immediately passed our resolutions upon it for communicating to you the measures we had already adopted for enforcing a powerful attack upon Hyder Ali's dominions from the Malabar Coast, and for supplying the Presidency of Fort St. George with every aid which they required from us for the subsistence of their army and defence of the Carnatic, which

<sup>1</sup> Negapatam, Carangoly, and Wandewash.



we should not have delayed imparting to you till this time had we thought the state of your health would have admitted it. On these subjects we shall have the honour to write to you in a separate letter, but we lose not a moment in expressing our very great alarm at the information conveyed to us by your last letter and its enclosure from General Stuart.

'We see with the utmost concern, both from this and from a letter which we have received from General Stuart under date the 30th September, that a difference of the most dangerous tendency already subsists between that Government and their Provincial Commander in Chief, and that one and both have so essentially deviated from your particular and positive recommendations for keeping the army united, a point which under all circumstances appears to us of the most necessary importance if it was possible by any means to have subsisted the men. The mutinous conduct of the troops on this occasion, and the general dissatisfaction which seems to prevail among them, independent of the efforts of the enemy, threaten the very existence of the Presidency of Fort St. George, and alarm us with such dreadful apprehensions for the safety of the Carnatic that we see no possible means of salvation to the country, unless you shall be able to return there to resume the immediate command of the army; indeed, we are so sensible of the powerful influence which your presence will have over the troops, from their entire confidence and sincere attachment to your person, that we take upon us earnestly to entreat you to proceed to Fort St. George as soon as possible for this purpose.

'We are conscious that if the state of your health can possibly admit of your complying with this request you will be as ready to attempt it as we are anxious to recommend it, and thereby add, if possible, to the eminent and distinguished services which you have already rendered to your Sovereign, the nation, and particularly the East India Company.'

It would seem, however, that Sir Eyre Coote was still too ill so soon to undertake the hardships of active service, for in a letter from Warren Hastings to Lord Shelburne written on the 12th December of this year, he says :

'Sir Eyre Coote is with us, but his constitution is so broken that I fear for his existence. Yet infirm as he is, he is our only resource, and his presence would yet retrieve the miserable state of the Carnatic, even though he should be deprived of the power of motion. He is willing and sometimes impetuous in his resolution to return thither.'

With the advent of the New Year, however, the General's health must have undergone some considerable improvement, for Hastings, writing on the 1st February to his friend, Major Scott, said :

'We have availed ourselves of the Company's orders of the 11th April 1781, to invest Sir Eyre Coote with an absolute command

of the forces and the war in the Carnatic. His unexampled zeal and past exertions warrant this; their<sup>1</sup> inactivity requires it. On his departure they disbanded the army, dismissed or separated all its followers, and when Hyder died, they could not assemble it.<sup>2</sup> What an advantage lost! If Sir Eyre arrives safe, our success is morally certain. We shall give him ten lacs.'

On the 6th idem, Hastings writing again to Scott, returned to the subject of Sir Eyre Coote's approaching departure from Calcutta, and said of him:

'His zeal and spirit are without example. His constitution is irrevocably gone; yet he has enough left to bear him through one campaign, which I trust will be a short one, and may God grant him life to enjoy at home the reputation, rewards and honours that are due to his virtues. I am resolved to give him all the support of this Government, though I am certain that he will quarrel with me the moment we are separated. I will forgive his private failings while his public merit entitle him to my respect.'

Macartney too had been informed that the Commander-in-Chief was returning to the coast to take the conduct of the war into his own able hands. On the 11th March the Supreme Council wrote:

'Sir Eyre Coote will bring you any further instructions we may have to send. We are sorry to be obliged to add that whether we look to the service in the field, or even the success of your negotiations upon the Coast, we must now place our chief hopes in his presence there at the head of the army.'

Coote had already written to Stuart:

'I have determined to revisit you, and shall embark on the *Medea* frigate as soon after her arrival as may be possible, and I hope, and expect, on reaching Madras, to find the Army amply equipped and ready in full force.'

The mere announcement of the probable return of the Commander-in-Chief, invested with full powers impossible to question, seems to have caused Macartney to be almost beside himself. He had found a new source of disagreement in the position of the senior officers of the King's Service, of whom so many were now employed on the coast, and he tried to deprive any of those who had obtained the local or brevet rank of general from exercising command or even from obtaining any employment in the field; and he actually endeavoured to induce Stuart to leave five officers behind who were thus situated

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the Madras Government.

<sup>2</sup> Hastings here seems rather to overstate the case.

when the army was preparing to move to Cuddalore. Nor was this all ; the Madras Government sent peremptory orders to Stuart to hasten his march in order that the army should be as far away as possible at the date of Coote's arrival at Fort St. George, and passed a resolution that the last-named should not have the command. Macartney's imperious and unreasonable spirit led him to greater lengths ; he knew the powers given to Coote, and that he would certainly enforce the orders of the Supreme Government, and Macartney, determined to resist, sounded Stuart to find if by any means he could be induced to take his side. Stuart had many faults, but disloyalty to Coote was not one of them ; and on being asked by the Governor of Madras whether he and the army would enforce the orders of the Supreme Council, if given, Macartney received the crushing reply from the Provincial Commander-in-Chief—' With the greatest alacrity, my lord ! '

From that moment it was determined to remove the army from the vicinity of Madras, and the attack on the French at Cuddalore was the pretext, although the preparations were not in forwardness, and the army was obliged, from want of cattle, to move in three divisions at the risk of being attacked and defeated in detail.

Warren Hastings had done all that he could to make smooth the path of the man he had now twice chosen to bring victory to British arms in the Carnatic ; as has been seen, he had arranged that Coote should have the fullest powers, a large supply of ready money, and all the support which the Supreme Government could afford him ; but he did even more than this. Warren Hastings indited a very touching letter to a member of the Madras Select Committee, Mr. Alexander Davidson, one of his personal friends, which deserves to be quoted in full as evidence of the kindness of heart of the great Governor-General, and of all that he was prepared to do for one who, like himself, was willing to sacrifice everything for the State.

' DEAR SIR,

' I address myself to you upon a subject in which I am exceedingly interested, because you are the only person capable by situation of affording me the assistance which I require, and from whom I can at the same time confidently solicit it.

' Sir Eyre Coote, notwithstanding his very broken constitution, has declared his resolution of returning to the Coast, and will take his passage in the *Medea* frigate immediately after her arrival. In this determination he has been in a great measure influenced by his know-

ledge of the wishes of this Government ; and I fear much against those of his own family. I, for my own part, consider him as the only instrument capable of cementing the present crisis to the security of the Carnatic and the exclusion of our European enemies on the event of the dispersion or departure of the army of Mysore. This may prove the easy work of a few months if the General is allowed the full and undisturbed direction of all the military operations, and such aids as your Government can afford him. We shall renew our solicitations for that effect, and I have no doubt of your acquiescence in them. But I will own to you, that my fears for his success arise from another cause, which will not bear an ostensible discussion. I have read with infinite concern the letters which were addressed to him by the Select Committee in the course of the late campaign. The language of these, and more especially their implied sentiments, were often such as must have affected him severely, and the more so because of his inability, from the incessant calls of duty, and the debility of his constitution, to enter into a train of discussion in reply to them.

‘ His temper, which is naturally too subject to irritation, has acquired an increased sensibility from the distempers which oppress him ; and if, under the weight of these, he will again adventure upon so arduous and so fatiguing a service, he merits at least the return of personal attention and tenderness. He cannot bear the provocations of official letters written in the spirit of reproach and hostility. I have studied him, and find him capable of the most connected and perfect exercise of his understanding when his spirits are composed. But if they are agitated, and a slight cause will agitate them, it weakens his recollection, and sometimes throws him into sudden and dangerous fits of sickness.

‘ I cannot prescribe to you as a member of Government either the style or subjects of your public correspondence, because I must suppose that every letter, and every act of your Government, is dictated by a sense of unimpassioned duty. Yet allow me, my dear Sir, to recommend and request without other explanation, that you will, as much as it may be in your power, prevent any correspondence of such a nature as that to which I have alluded, and be the conciliator between him and the Committee. I know not how far you might consider it as incompatible with the obligations of personal connection, but so far as you may, with consistency of character, I would wish to engage your support of the General in his operations. I am sure that, in expressing this wish, I desire nothing which the strictest principle of honour may not avow, and that it is conformable to what I have known of your general character, which I have ever believed to be mild, reasonable and conciliating.

‘ It is unnecessary to add my motive for the uncommon solicitude which I show on this occasion. I might perhaps with equal propriety and truth, declare that I have an interest in it equal at least to any private concern of my own ; but I will assure you that I shall receive and remember your compliance with my wishes in the instances to

which I have applied them as a personal obligation requiring from me an equal return.

'I wish you to consider this as a confidential letter. That, however, must depend on your option. I have the honour to be, with a very sincere esteem, dear Sir, your most obedient and faithful Servant.

'WARREN HASTINGS.'

The *Medea* frigate was not, however, available for conveying the Commander-in-Chief to Madras, time was passing, and finally on the 20th March 1783 Sir Eyre Coote left Calcutta on his way down the Hooghly to embark on the East India Company's armed ship *Resolution*, Captain Wemyss.<sup>1</sup> He was accompanied by Lady Coote and by some of his 'family', as a general's personal staff was then called, including Colonel Owen, his Military Secretary, Mr. Thomas Graham, Persian Interpreter, Mr. George Tyler, Assistant Secretary, and the Rev. Westrow Hulse, Chaplain. Mr. Stables, the junior Member of Council, also accompanied him down the river. The voyage was likely to be an anxious one, for, our fleets being engaged elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> the French were then and for some time afterwards masters of the Bay of Bengal, and the *Harweke*, Indiaman, outward bound, had recently been chased into shoal water, near Saugur Island at the entrance of the Hooghly, by two of the enemy's ships of war. Sir Elijah Impey, who had been recalled to England to answer certain charges made against him in the House of Commons, was then waiting to proceed home in the *Worcester*, but was compelled to remain on in Calcutta until December of this year in order to escape all possible risk of capture by the enemy. Such considerations proved no deterrent to Sir Eyre Coote, who sought the earliest possible opportunity of going whither duty called him, and he left, 'carrying with him the prayers and good wishes of the entire community'.

The following was the last letter he wrote to Warren Hastings :<sup>3</sup>

'*Resolution*, off Kedgerree,  
' March 23, 1783.

'MY DEAR SIR,

'I have received your letter and its enclosures and you may easily judge how much satisfaction the perusal of them gave me. Our affairs would long ago have worn a different face could I have prevailed

<sup>1</sup> The *Resolution* would seem in 1778 to have been the property of a Captain Joseph Price, who fitted her and another vessel out as 40-gun ships, joined Admiral Vernon's squadron and helped to capture Pondicherry; see Grier, *Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife*, p. 349 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes did not return to the Coast from Bombay till the 13th April.

<sup>3</sup> British Museum, Add. MSS., 29158, folio 438.

upon General Goddard and the Bombay Government to pursue the measures I so strictly recommended and which General Matthews with much spirit and conduct has already ascertained the good effects of to us; however, I trust I shall have it in my power ere long to congratulate you upon the termination of all our difficulties, at least I may venture to assure myself no want of exertion on either side can prevent it.

‘I could have wished to carry with me the final sentiments of the Board upon the several points lately under consideration, but having reached thus far on my way, I mean to push forward without delay, although many things material to me are not arrived, particularly my horses which left Calcutta several days before I did myself.

‘I can’t say I am worse in health than when I took my leave of you, but I have not yet found much benefit from the change of air. I wish to God I may have strength to weather this business through, though I apprehend much less difficulty from the enemy than from the opposition I may meet with from the Noble President and his Committee.

‘I desired Mr. Graham to speak to you upon the subjects of the letters I am to address to the Nizam, the Peishwa, and Medagee Scindia, or any other of the country Powers to whom it may be necessary for me to write in order to have them correspond with those they are to receive from you.

‘Adieu, my dear Sir; Lady Coote joins me in best wishes to you and Mrs. Hastings, and I am ever your very sincere friend and affectionate humble servant,

‘EYRE COOTE.’

And so this great soldier set forth upon the last of his many campaigns—neither oblivious of the risks he was running nor without hope of a happy issue. To a friend he remarked, when embarking, that he had ‘one foot in the grave and the other at the edge of it’; while to another he is reported to have said that he was ‘wishing most anxiously to retain life long enough to take Mr. Bussy a second time’.

## CHAPTER XIX

APRIL 1783—JANUARY 1784

THE first intimation that all was not well with the *Resolution* and her precious freight was conveyed to Fort William in a letter written by Colonel Owen on the 24th April at Madras, addressed to Hastings, which was considered at a meeting of the Bengal Council held on the 7th May. The letter runs as follows :

‘ Feeling how anxious you must be for information relative to the arrival and state of health of Sir Eyre Coote, permit me to communicate to you the particulars of his late voyage, though the accounts I am able to give you of the General’s health are, unfortunately for us all, such as impresses us with the most poignant grief, and will, I am sure, be to you a most trying recital.

‘ Our outset began most prosperously, and we were at midnight on the 14th instant in latitude  $12^{\circ}40'$  distant from the land a degree, expecting next day to reach Madras, when at about a league under our lee we perceived four large ships steering the same course we did. We put about and were more distant from them at the break of day, but found they were enemies—two line-of-battle and two frigates. The *Resolution’s* best going was by the wind, close to it ; we kept standing to the southward, appeared to go full as well as any of the chasers, nay gained on them considerably, when the wind increased. For the four following days, it being full moon, the night as clear as the day, the chase was most indefatigably pursued ; fresh breezes were in the day, calms in the night ; in the former we had, in spite of their number, the apparent heels of them, but in the calms the frigates by making use of their sweeps and tow-boats always re-gained their distance ; during the whole chase the four ships were never nearer us than one league, nor further distant than five, till the last day when we ran two of them out of sight, and the two best sailers, *La Tendant* and *Coventry*,<sup>1</sup> hull down ; this was about 15 leagues from Trincomalee, when on the night of the 18th they gave it up, and I believe steered for their port.

‘ We made immediately the shortest cut to this place and arrived here this morning at dawn. That the *Resolution* should outstrip the four prime picked sailers of the French squadron, for such they were, is astonishing, and would have ended most advantageously for us, for we drew off the enemy’s attention from the Europe fleet, just arriving, which they must otherwise have fallen in with, also with the Bengal

<sup>1</sup> The *Coventry*, frigate, Captain Wolsely, had been taken in January by the French.

ships steering for the Presidency of Madras, had not our chase and the consequences of it fell most severely on our valuable friend. On the third day, big with the fate of the Service, wrapt up with his Country's cause, and feeling I believe his own consequence and the benefit the enemy would reap if they captured him, his family also on board and a thousand other points crowded on his shattered frame, the trial proved too great and the General dropt on deck struck with a paralytic stroke; from that day he has been as ill as mortality is capable of enduring; however, thank God, we have got him on shore, better than could have been expected, and I have hopes that he may yet recover the use of his right side, and be otherwise reinstated. The Faculty have to-day great hopes from his being sensible of pain and other happy symptoms.'

The General was brought on shore and taken to his house in the Fort,<sup>1</sup> and on the same day, the 24th, a letter from the President and Council of Fort St. George was brought to him; this had apparently been drafted in anticipation of his arrival and was to have been delivered to him immediately on his return to Madras from Bengal. It is perhaps fortunate that he was too ill to be made acquainted with its purport and the terms in which it was communicated.

It began by congratulating the Commander-in-Chief on his arrival at the Presidency and by expressing confidence in his ability to overcome the forces of the French—'we trust', it ran, 'that we shall have the pleasure soon of saying that Sir Eyre Coote has twice expelled the French from the Coast of Coromandel'. The signatories then went on to require that the General should make a point of attending all their meetings, informing him that while they would be glad to hear his recommendations and opinions they proposed to exercise their own judgment on all matters. They revived the old contentions raised a year ago, and insolently said 'lest the recommendations' (of the Supreme Government) 'of the 11th March 1782 . . . should lead you into any mistake as to the authority you possess, we think it necessary to declare to you that the whole executive power, civil and military, is lodged in the Governor and Council'. The letter contained such remarks, to the man who had come a second time and at the risk of his life to save the Presidency, as—'we hold you amenable to our orders . . . we give you express notice that we shall hold it unwarrantable in you to do any act, except in such matters as the Regulations of 1774 and 1778 allow, without our participation, or such others as time may not allow you to consult us about'. Certain

<sup>1</sup> Love in *Vestiges of Old Madras* says that neither this house nor that formerly occupied by Coote on Choultry Plain have been identified.



instructions followed directing Sir Eyre to ensure that the Nawab's officials were not interfered with, and this remarkable document closed with the following paragraph :

' With the purpose of avoiding differences also as to the disposal of the troops sent by His Majesty to the assistance of the India Company and paid from its Treasury, we think it proper likewise to enclose to you a Minute of our President of the 10th December last, and of which Minute we have unanimously adopted the sentiments, and we trust that this early notice will prevent any attempt to dispose of His Majesty's troops otherwise than as we shall see most conducive to the welfare of the Company and of the State.'

This letter is signed by Macartney, Anthony Sadliér, and Alexander Davidson, but, bearing in mind the history of obstruction of the past two years, it is safe to assume that the hand that wrote it was the hand of Macartney.

In the meantime the Council had learnt that the Commander-in-Chief was lying at death's door, and seem to have been in some degree ashamed of the precipitancy with which they had sought to fling this letter in his face ; and on the 25th it was resolved in Committee that ' the Secretary should wait on Colonel Owen, the principal Aide-de-Camp, and inform him that we had addressed a letter to Sir Eyre Coote to be delivered him on his arrival from Bengal, but as he was at present too much indisposed to attend to business and the letter contained matter of very serious import, it should be kept back until Colonel Owen should be of opinion that it might be delivered with propriety '.

Macartney and his colleagues had, however, no intention of straining such feelings of consideration too far, as the following extracts from the Minute of the Select Committee show ; these are dated the 26th April and are as under :

' The President observes to the Committee that Sir Eyre Coote is at length arrived, and he understands has brought with him both despatches and treasure, but as yet we have received nothing from him. . . . It is proper we should enquire if any despatches for us from the Governor General and Council are arrived with Sir Eyre Coote, that we may know their views and intention and regulate our conduct by them. It is still more necessary that we should know if Sir Eyre Coote has brought with him any treasure for the Public Service, because we stand greatly in need of it at this critical juncture. . . . General Stuart in every letter calls loudly for money, and declares there ought to be 120,000 Pagodas in the money tumbril with the Army in the present service.'

An inquiry was addressed on the 27th to Sir Eyre Coote's assistant secretary, Mr. George Tyler, who promised that the General should be informed of the above so soon as his health permitted, but at 4.30 p.m. on the same day Sir Eyre Coote breathed his last.

His death was at once reported by Colonel Owen to Hastings, and it seems probable that the letter went in the same ship as that which carried the earlier announcement of the illness which had attacked him on the *Resolution*—and Colonel Owen did not fail to enclose to the Governor-General a copy of the amazing letter which the Madras Council had handed in on the General's arrival from Bengal.

Colonel Owen wrote to Hastings :

'The Communication of what I am most cruelly necessitated to relate will fill you with extreme distress. Your Good and Great General, Sir Eyre Coote, is no more. Worn down by severe illness and fatigue both of body and mind, a very Martyr to the Public Cause, he this afternoon resigned his breath, thank God seemingly without pain ; and his last two days were remarkably placid and serene.

'The shock our Country's interests will sustain by this most severe of blows is too evident. I feel the powers of this subject so forcibly, and am at present so unequal to dwelling on it, that I intreat your Indulgence for not being more particular in the recital. The Army, the State, the British World, as well as his Family and Connections, have suffered a most irreparable loss, but no one can be more materially or truly affected by it than your ever devoted and obliged obedient Servant,

'ARTHUR OWEN.

'Thinking it of the utmost consequence that your Honble. Supreme Board should be acquainted as early as possible with the above melancholy intelligence, I applied to Sir Edward Hughes for this despatch by sea. The funeral will be to-morrow afternoon, and I shall on the following morning deliver over to Government here the five Lacs of Rupees which came on the *Resolution* consigned to Sir Eyre Coote.

'A. O.'

On the next day accordingly, the 28th, Sir Eyre Coote was interred in St. Mary's Church with all the honours due to his distinguished rank and the great services which he had rendered to the State.

St. Mary's is the oldest Protestant Church in Madras, and there is indeed no older masonry structure in Fort St. George ; it was completed and dedicated in 1678, and has undergone many vicissitudes during the stormy times that Fort St. George has passed through, having been used as a barrack and a granary, while its steeple has on

occasion been occupied as a look-out post. Here in February 1752 Clive's marriage took place, but previous to the burial of Sir Eyre Coote, the only other man therein interred was the unfortunate Governor, George, Lord Pigot.

When the news of the death of the Commander-in-Chief reached Fort William, the first and natural impulse of the Governor-General and his Council was to do such honour to his memory as was in their power. At the Council meeting it was resolved that

'the first object of these despatches, and that which forces itself almost exclusively on the attention of the Board is the irreparable loss which they have sustained by the death of the late Commander-in-Chief.

'Agreed to order that sixty minute guns be fired in Fort William, and at every principal station of the army, in honour of his memory, that number corresponding the nearest with the apparent age of the late Commander-in-Chief.'

Having paid their last tribute to a valued colleague, they turned upon and rent those contentious scribblers in Madras who had tried to carry their quarrels to his death chamber.

'You inform us,' so ran the letter from Bengal to Madras, 'that from the moment of his (Sir Eyre Coote's) arrival he was too ill to have any personal application made to him, yet we are astonished to receive from Colonel Owen the copy of a letter which, while at the point of death, you thought it proper to address him, under date the 24th ultimo, concerning the restriction of his power in military affairs, and which without any occasion for it by him is conceived in such terms of disrespect, and we may say insult, that had the gentlemen of his family who received it been so indiscreet as to have communicated it to him, if (as was not the case) he could have been made sensible of its contents, we are persuaded that it must have hastened his end, for to a person of his delicate and irritable feelings even in health such a production, which no occasion demanded and so was consequently unexpected, could not fail to provoke discussion, and which with whatever view it was written must have been prejudiced and perhaps fatal to the public service.

'We shall make no further comments upon this letter, but we think the nature of it so extraordinary, and the delivery of it so ill-timed, that we shall deem it incumbent on us to transmit it to the Honble. the Court of Directors by the next despatch and submit it to their justice.'

The Supreme Council informed the President and Council at Madras that certain instructions, which were on record, had been given to the late Sir Eyre Coote, but in view of his demise there seemed no object in forwarding any copy of them—'not knowing any purpose it could answer but perhaps to furnish new grounds for those discussions,

which from the consistent tenor of your letters appear to be agreeable to you, although we must confess we find them wholly unprofitable to the Public.

‘ We have already given orders for the delivery of the treasure which was consigned to the late Sir Eyre to your directions. We were induced by the special desire of the General to make the consignment of the treasure intended for the use of the Army directly to him, that he might be able at all times to command and dispose of it as the exigencies of the Service conducted under his own eye should require it. We had also a further motive from finding that Sir Eyre Coote had been under the necessity of pledging his own private credit for the loan of one lakh of pagodas from the Admiral, at a time when the necessities of the troops were so great they could not have marched to the relief of Vellore without this casual supply, and that although Sir Eyre Coote promised that it should be repaid out of the next remittance from us it remained still due at the time of his departure from Bengal. . . .’

The matters of the loan from the Admiral and of the five lakhs of rupees were to occasion much trouble to Lady Coote and to Colonel Owen. Admiral Sir Edward Hughes actually made a demand upon Lady Coote for the repayment of the loan of a lakh of pagodas early on the morning after the General’s death, and followed this up by a threat of prosecution, through Mr. Arthur Cuthbert, the Agent for the Fleet,<sup>1</sup> if his claim was not immediately settled. The money could of course only come out of the treasure brought with and consigned to Sir Eyre Coote; this treasure the Madras Government was peremptorily demanding from Colonel Owen; and he was unwilling to give it up unless the Admiral’s debt could first be liquidated out of it, a measure of simple and honourable finance which the President and Council of Fort St. George seemed unable to countenance or consider; and the grave in St. Mary’s Church could scarcely have been closed when an unseemly wrangle ensued about the public debt which the late Commander-in-Chief had incurred, and concerning the money out of which it ought at once to have been repaid.

The following is an extract from the Minutes of the Madras Select Committee dated 28th April 1783 :

‘ In consequence of the melancholy event of the death of Lieutenant General Sir Eyre Coote, who is said to have brought with him from Bengal a supply of treasure for the public service on the Coast, the Committee think it proper and necessary to make immediate Enquiry

<sup>1</sup> Cuthbert came to India with Admiral Watson in 1754, was for some time a free merchant, and in 1771 became Agent for the Squadron; see Love, vol. iii, p. 77.

concerning the said Treasure, in order that it may be sent as soon as possible to the army, which is now seven months in arrears, and General Stuart has requested in the most urgent terms a supply of 120,000 pagodas previous to the army continuing its march towards the enemy at Cuddalore.'

Colonel Owen seems to have considered that he could satisfy the Committee best by a personal explanation; he accordingly attended at the Council Chamber, and the result of his communication was therefore entered upon the Minutes as follows:

'Colonel Owen represents to the Committee that Gold, to the value of five Lacks of Rupees, had been put on board the *Resolution*; that seeing by the Bill of Lading that it was consigned to Sir Eyre Coote or his assigns, and the General not being able to give orders himself on the Subject, it was landed by his (Colonel Owen's) order and is now under his charge; that he this morning received a letter from Mr. Arthur Cuthbert (which he now lays before the Committee) demanding payment out of this money of a Lack of Pagodas lent to Sir Eyre Coote on his Bond by the Admiral in August last, and threatening an immediate prosecution if the demand should not be complied with.'

At this stage of the proceedings it appears to have occurred to Colonel Owen that the matter might be happily and more speedily settled if the presence of the Admiral could be arranged, and he accordingly went in search of Sir Edward Hughes and returned in his company to the Council Chamber, when the account of all that followed was set down in the Minutes as under:

'The President relates what had passed to Sir Edward Hughes, and reads from the Records the transaction relative to the bond as above stated, and observes to Sir Edward Hughes that Rupees five lacks which came in the *Resolution*, and entrusted to the charge of Sir Eyre Coote, are the property of the Company, have their mark and seal, and were extremely wanted for the Army to enable it to proceed in the present important expedition; that the security of Sir Eyre Coote is undoubtedly good, but that any counter security that this government can give shall be given in addition to it.

'The Admiral in answer informs the Council that the money was advanced by Mr. Cuthbert by order (out of public money) at a time when the army was much distressed; that Sir Eyre Coote assured him it should be repaid out of the first money that should arrive from Bengal; and that Mr. Graham has furnished him with an extract of a letter from the Governor-General and Council to this Government directing that the amount of the bond should be paid out of the very first consignment of treasure from them.

'The Committee then inform the Admiral that no such Order has been received; that they recollect their Secretary being applied to

upon the subject, and his answer that he does not recollect seeing it in any letter from Bengal to the Military Department. The Civil Secretary being sent for and questioned on the subject makes the same declaration.'

Both Colonel Owen and the Madras Council then wrote to the Supreme Government—the former for instructions, the latter to complain.

Colonel Owen, writing on the 29th, pointed out the indecency of the conduct both of the Admiral and of the President and Council, who, before the funeral had even taken place, had demanded, the one, repayment of his loan, the other, the surrender of the treasure carried by the *Resolution*; and stated that he, Colonel Owen, had declined moving in either matter, 'on mere principles of propriety', until the obsequies were over. He then reminded Hastings of the circumstances under which the debt to the Admiral had been incurred—'in a time of the greatest distress, when the General could not move the army to the relief of Vellore in August last for want of funds'; that Bengal, in a letter to the late General in September, had authorized repayment out of the first remittance to come to hand, and 'from that date to the present hour Government here has put off paying the Admiral's demand'.

From what follows in Owen's letter, he seems to have feared that if he surrendered the five lakhs to the Madras Government, there was no security that the debt would even then be made good.

'Government here', he writes, 'offered Sir Edward Hughes yesterday bills on Bengal for the amount of his debt . . . but the Admiral refused the bills or any security: nothing will do but cash, which under my present predicament I cannot be authorised to pay him. He has in the most peremptory manner, informed me within this hour that he will sue Sir Eyre Coote's estate to-morrow, adding that he had given the order and would not be trifled with by Lord Macartney. . . . Sir Eyre Coote's estate will be in the most disagreeable predicament till you relieve it, for the Admiral will not only sue for the money, but it seems, till he is satisfied, he can also take out letters of Administration as a principal creditor on the Estate, or enter Caveat on Lady Coote's taking out powers of administration, which from the purport of the will, her Ladyship means to do, being the principal Legatee, consequently having a large claim on the Estate.'

The letter from the Madras Council was shorter, complaining of Colonel Owen's action in refusing the surrender of the treasure, deprecating the entrusting of money to persons other than those locally responsible for the pecuniary concerns of the southern Presi-

dency, asking that the necessary orders be given to Colonel Owen, and winding up: 'as we understand there is treasure belonging to the Company expected in the *San Carlos*, likewise consigned to Sir Eyre Coote, we request that you will be pleased to send us an order to the Captain of that vessel to deliver it to the Company's representatives here'.

Realizing that no reply could be received from Bengal for some days, the exasperated President and Council of Fort St. George determined on making another attempt to obtain the money of which the army stood so greatly in need, while equally resolved not to settle the Admiral's claim out of any part of it. On the 2nd May then, they wrote again to Colonel Owen requiring him to deliver up the treasure without delay, and adding that they did not require him to enter into the matter, 'but either comply with this requisition or signify your refusal'.

Colonel Owen's reply was as plain as could be wished, though it was probably given at greater length than the Madras authorities desired; if, he said, they would satisfy the Admiral's demands on the late General's estate, he would be very happy to deliver over the five lakhs of rupees to them, 'but do refuse doing so on any other terms'.

The Madras Government, at their wits' end for money to satisfy the persistent calls from Major-General Stuart, now consulted their Attorney-General, Mr. Benjamin Sullivan, as to the best means of inducing Owen to part with the money, but Sullivan wisely dissuaded them from taking any legal steps in the matter; and all they could do was to send alternate appeals and threats to Colonel Owen and fresh statements of their case to Fort William.

On the 10th May the *San Carlos* came in with four more great chests of gold of the value of five lakhs of rupees consigned, as were the first, to Sir Eyre Coote. Owen received the consignment and sent it to the Mint to be coined into pagodas; within a week he had repaid Sir Edward Hughes his loan, and by the end of the month he had sent the whole balance into the Treasury. At the same time he handed the following letter to the President and Council for their perusal and consideration; it is signed by all the members of the Supreme Council and is dated Fort William, 7th May 1783:

'We have received your letters of the 27th and 29th ultimo by Captain Dyer of His Majesty's Cutter, the *Lizard*. We read with the deepest affliction the melancholy accounts which you give us of the death of Sir Eyre Coote, the late Commander-in-Chief of the Forces

in India ; but our concern if possible would be heightened by the circumstances which have followed concerning the demand made upon Lady Coote, in the first moments of her affliction, for payment of the Bond granted by the deceased General to Admiral Sir Edward Hughes for the loan of one Lack of Pagodas borrowed of him for the Public Service. That not a moment may be lost in satisfying this claim, We have written positive instructions to the President and Council of Fort St. George to discharge it out of the consignment of treasure which was landed from the *Resolution*, and we hereby direct that on the receipt hereof, you immediately deliver up to the order of the said Right Honble. President and Council, not only the full amount of the said consignment, but likewise the further consignment made to the late Sir Eyre Coote on board the *San Carlos*, if it shall be in your possession.'

The Madras Government at the same time received a letter of similar purport directing 'the instant payment of the said Bond to the Admiral, with such interest as may be due upon it', and the incident was finally closed with a tart reply from the President and Council of Fort St. George, saying the loan had been repaid 'about ten days since', and complaining once more that the Admiral had refused their Bills on Bengal and had stood out for cash ; for, as they wailed, 'we have lost all credit with the Admiral, and he has repeatedly assured us that he never would lend this Government one half-penny !'

At the risk of being tedious it has been thought as well to give the details of this affair at length, for it shows in a clear light the extraordinary hand-to-mouth methods whereby the military operations of those days were financed, the inimical relations existing between the Bengal and Madras Governments, and the deep distrust with which the latter was regarded by those in high places whose duty it was temporarily to serve it.

Lady Coote seems at first to have been quite overwhelmed by the grievous loss she had sustained, while no doubt equally shocked and troubled by the sordid and wholly preventable squabbles which arose over the deathbed and open grave of her husband. For many weeks she appears to have been quite unable to engage in any correspondence, and the Rev. Westrow Hulse, the Chaplain, seems at first to have been the medium she employed in writing to Warren Hastings.

In a letter <sup>1</sup> dated 20th May 1783 he writes by desire of Lady Coote to recommend to the protection of the Governor-General a young nephew of the late General, a Mr. Chidley Coote, lately arrived in

<sup>1</sup> British Museum, Add. MSS. 29159, folio 197.



India as an Assistant Surgeon, and then proceeds: 'I shall not trouble you with particularizing the feelings of this family in our late melancholy situation—You, I am sure, must have most sincerely sympathized with us. I wish I could say there was any prospect of Lady Coote's being reconciled to her severe loss; that must be, I fear, a work of years. She feels too sensibly for Time as yet to have its usual effect in blunting ye edge of affliction. Give me leave, Sir, to repeat that it is by her Ladyship's command that I have undertaken a task which she would be much more capable of executing than myself, otherwise I should have begun by apologizing for presuming to commend to your notice the nephew of Sir Eyre Coote.'

On the 18th June Lady Coote was able herself to write<sup>1</sup> from the Choultry Plain, having presumably re-occupied the General's former house:

'Though I have hitherto been unable to address you upon the subjects of such a nature,' she begins, 'I beg you will believe me not the less sensible of your ready and powerful interference in respect to the embarrassment occasioned by Sir Eyre Coote's publick debt to the Admiral.

'The extraordinary and harsh manner in which both that gentleman and the Select Committee continued to urge a point which their own unaccommodating dispositions had put it out of my power to settle as speedily as I wished, proved no small aggravation of distress, already but too severe! and could anything heighten my sensibility for those honourable proofs of real regard and attention which I find have been paid to the General's memory by yourself, Sir, and the Supreme Board, and through your example by the Settlement at large, it would be this striking difference of procedure upon the very spot and by the very people who owed so much to the unremitting exertions of his zeal and abilities.

'I wish my painful recollections could stop even here, but circumstances too strongly convince me that had any proper effort been made to spare us the Chace we were abandoned to, I might still have been happy and the Publick had yet reaped the benefit of Sir Eyre's services.'

Lady Coote then asks the Governor-General's help towards returning home; she would prefer a ship of whose captain she knows something, and suggests that possibly the *Worcester*, Captain Cooke, or the *General Coote*,<sup>2</sup> the commander of which, Captain Hoare, has offered his services, might be put at her disposal; and she closes her letter

<sup>1</sup> Add. MSS. 29160, folio 1.

<sup>2</sup> The name was preserved among the ships of the Company's fleet. Between 1823 and 1826, among the vessels built for the Indian Marine, was the *Coote*, sloop of war, 18 guns and of 420 tons.

by recommending to the good offices of Warren Hastings the 'family' of the late General, which was now dispersing and some of the members of which were about to return to Bengal.

On the 18th and 19th July Lady Coote wrote to the Earl of Shelburne and to the Right Honourable Thomas Townsend, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, forwarding certain despatches which Sir Eyre Coote had drawn up just before leaving Bengal, but which had remained uncompleted, and notifying his death to these two Ministers with whom the late Commander-in-Chief had conducted a close correspondence. The letter to Lord Shelburne was the longer of the two, and in it Lady Coote briefly recapitulated the main events of the past eight months; Sir Eyre's broken health and return to Bengal; and she particularly ascribed his breakdown in the previous autumn to his disappointment about the proposed reduction of Cuddalore, due to 'an unfortunate failure of the necessary supplies and co-operation which were to have been given by this Government and by His Majesty's Squadron.' In Bengal, she said, he did recover some degree of strength, and the need which seemed to arise for his return to the coast, 'absorbed all considerations of self in his public feelings, and he was further induced to give way to them in thorough confidence of every support from the Supreme Board, which it should be requisite and they were most ready to give to his operations here.'

She then described the voyage in the *Resolution*, the chase, the anxiety of the General—due not to any personal considerations of safety, but to his knowledge of the situation on the coast and his assurance that he alone was able effectually to right it, and to his fear lest some disaster had befallen the British fleet from finding these waters in full possession of Suffren's squadrons.

'The sincere and universal concern expressed by all ranks of people at his arrival in that situation, as well as the feeling tribute of praise and regret which is daily given to his Memory, and the voluntary Honor of a Public Mourning throughout Bengal, are full proofs of the high estimation in which he was held, both as an individual and as a most disinterested Benefactor to these Countries. . . Confident I am,' concluded the writer, 'when the Circumstances under which Sir Eyre Coote carried on the War here; when his patient endurance of distresses, his resources, and unremitting perseverance, under the continual and uncommon obstacles he had to overcome, shall be fully known, it will be found that no Military Character, or Military Successes, have been more amply deserving of Honor and Distinction.'

To Townsend Lady Coote wrote at less length, asking him to refer



LADY COOTE



for particulars of Sir Eyre's last voyage and death to Lord Shelburne, and adding :

' Allow me also to mark as his peculiar claim that he fell—not by the chance of war, in gaining one signal advantage which has been the lot of several, but from the Fatigue of many Victories ; from a long and laborious struggle against every oppressive circumstance which could impede his progress ; and from returning repeatedly to the severe duties of his charge with all the animation which could attend the fullest health, when those about him had scarce a hope left that he could survive the effort.'

The next letter is of a more intimate character, being written, on the 12th August, to her sister-in-law (the wife of Charles Henry Coote, Dean of Kilfenora in Ireland), and is given in full :

' MY DEAR MADAM,

' It is from a very miserable being you receive this Address ! possibly you may be already prepared for its Contents, from having heard of the heavy Calamity which has fallen upon me, has fallen indeed upon us all since my regrets for the loss of everything dear and valuable to myself in Sir Eyre Coote are accompanied by those of every well-wisher to the Publick ; the Interests of which have been as deeply wounded as my feelings by his Death !—

' I have already given you some account of his successes but it was not in my power to describe the thousandth part of the Obstacles he has had to overcome, the Interferences to combat against, or the distresses of Poverty and Famine to sustain which have so greatly enhanced the value of his Services, in preserving these Possessions to the Nation.

' Through a series of them, his unremitting perseverance carried him, tho' he had the mortification of seeing the first signal Victory he gained, and every succeeding one, prevented by such untoward circumstances, from proving as decisive in its Effects, as it was in Action—

' At length, notwithstanding the junction of a French Force with our Native Enemy, and altho' no diversion had yet been made, on the other side of India, his able Dispositions had been such as to bring, in October last, the decision of the War to the Event of one Blow—

' The Reduction of Cuddalore—where the French had established themselves, supported as well by the supplies as by the presence of Hyder, who had encamped with his whole Force in their neighbourhood—

' This Plan had been so well arranged and was to have been executed at so critical a point of time, that no Accidents could have prevented its success, but those which he imagined himself in so important a business, to be thoroughly secured against, a most unfortunate failure of the supplies and co-operation which were to have been given him—

' Overcome by the disappointment, which to his feeling Mind, fell much more heavily than the fatigues he had suffered, no other chance

for Life remained, than a change of Scene, and Climate; He was obliged to embark immediately for Bengal, where I received him after an absence of two most painful years, in such an enfeebled state, as left me but very little hope of his recovery!

‘ However, a respite from Labour, and the cares and attentions which he had then leisure to submit to, for the benefit of his health, produced happier effects than could have been expected; and might have perfectly restored him, had the proceedings here during his absence, been such as he could have approved. But he had scarce acquired some degree of strength when every circumstance most strongly required his presence, and as his publick feelings superseded every consideration of Self, instead of the happy prospects of home and peace, which we had lately indulged, he looked to nothing but the further benefit of the Service, and determined to proceed to Madras as soon as a Passage should be rendered practicable, by the expectation of Sir Edward Hughes’ return from Bombay, during whose absence the French Fleet had overspread the Bay in such manner, as to render it highly improper to make the attempt.

‘ On the 20th of March we embarked from Calcutta in the full security of finding nothing but friends upon our arrival here. The Voyage was favourable, and without having met anything to alarm us, we found ourselves on the Evening of the 14th April about one degree distant from the Land, and expected to be in the Roads the next Morning; my worthy General at that time as well, and in as good spirits, as I had seen him since his return to Bengal consequently with every prospect before him of carrying through the important service he meditated.

‘ But at Midnight we fell in with four Sail steering the same Course we did, and tho’ barely suspicious of Enemies in that spot, the Ship was put about, and by break of Day had increased our distance from them. Then, however, the Chace began, in such manner as to convince us they were not Friends.

‘ The Vessel we were in, was esteem’d one of the best Sailers in India, and whensoever we had Wind, she evidently gained upon her Pursuers, tho’ four picked Ships of the French Squadron, but as every Night was calm, and so clear a Moonlight as to prevent all possibility of concealment, the Sweeps of the Frigates, and the Boats of the Line of Battle Ships always brought them nearly to the same point by break of day. And thus were we surrounded and harassed, till the Evening of the 18th when by the help of a favourable breeze, and the throwing over board a part of the Cargo at a critical moment, we ran the Enemy out of sight, at about fifteen leagues distant from their own Harbour of Trincomalee.

‘ The feelings of Sir Eyre, during those two days and nights of this miserable, and seemingly unavailing struggle, all which time we were obliged to make directly from our Port, are not to be described or expressed. Knowing that everything depended on his presence here, conscious of the benefits which must accrue to the Enemy from

capturing his Person ; the keen sense he had of such a reverse to Himself ; his apprehension that some accident had happen'd to Sir Edward Hughes' Fleet, to leave the Seas so near to Madras, as fifty or sixty Miles, in full possession of Mr. Sufrein, at that late season, all these painful feelings bore heavily upon him, nor was there any comfort to set in opposition but the slender hope of escaping by superior swiftness !

' On the 17th of April, the third day of the Chace as he was earnestly watchful of their motions upon deck, where his anxiety continually led him, he sunk down seemingly in a fainting fit—Upon his recovery from it, he warned us not to flatter ourselves on his behalf ; symptoms he had never experienced before, convinced him the seizure was mortal ! that he had lost his right side (where too surely the stroke had fallen), and all was over !

' Every assistance which could be given on board a Ship, for his own Surgeon<sup>1</sup> was with him, was employed ; but after an unquiet sleep of a few hours, he fell into a short convulsion, which completed the calamity, and left him the power of articulating only a few words ; tho' the Mind seemed fully occupied within itself, and animated his countenance with such a variety of expressions all of them peaceful, or pleasurable, that one might almost read his thoughts—He also retained enough of outward Observation to discern his Friends, and knew, and distinguished Me to the last !

' The Ship had been carried so far Southward, that we did not regain Madras till the 24th, Sir Eyre continuing all that time much in the same state, and giving us hopes, that could we get on shore, the use of Electricity might rouse, and restore him. Eased of a part of my Misery by seeing him safely landed, and buoyed up with the prospect of relief from remedies which could not be obtained at Sea, I felt the first Evening half in Heaven ! But, Alas ! the disease had either fallen fatally at first, or gained too much ground to admit of recovery, tho' he weaken'd so gradually, that I had indulged my hopes even to the Morning of the 27th—the dreadful day, which shut up all my Earthly Prospects ! Then—the feeble pulse ; the sunk eye—the cold extremities—too plainly indicated what a few hours must produce !

' The kind friends about me wished me to withdraw from a sight so agonizing to Affection like mine ! But they knew me not, if they imagined I would either quit him while Life remained, or loosen the hold I kept over my bursting heart, so long as to serve him was yet in my power ! I received his last Breath, and closed his Eyes ! And never surely did Death appear under a milder Aspect ! The Mind awake to the last hour, and the same calm and placid contentment, the same inward peace and satisfaction, manifested in the Countenance—Without a Struggle the Scene closed ! A Scene most worthy of Himself !

<sup>1</sup> This appears, from a letter of Lady Coote to Hastings, to have been a Dr. Laird : see Add. MSS. 2960, folio 344.

worthy of a Life so filled as his has been with services to the Publick and Benefits to Individuals !

‘ I say nothing of my sufferings in consequence of this Event. They are not to be measured even by the worth of their Object ! And I was bound to him, my Dear Sister, by many Bands—Love, Friendship—Similarity of Sentiment, the most jealous zeal for his Honour—the warmest ambition for his Reputation ! what hope have I then of subduing the tenderness of such an attachment, an attachment of twenty years continuance during which I can look back, to so many noble Actions, but know not a single blemish, which either as a Publick, or a Private Man could be thrown upon him—

‘ The Purest Patriotism—the strictest Integrity—the most disinterested Zeal, the warmest Exertions of Ability, he gave to his Sovereign, and his Country. Truth, Candour, Gratitude, Benevolence, and the kindest sympathy to his Friends ! Feel for me ! for the loss of such animated Sensibilities as these excited ; and the cheerless Evening of Life to which I now look forward !

‘ Let me, however, with my good Brother, advert to his present Happiness, for as far as the Assurance of that can alleviate the Pang of Separation, we possess it, in its fullest extent, not only from the Virtues of his Life, but the still stronger test of a conscience free from reproach, at an awful hour, when even our frailties must appear to us without disguise or palliation.

‘ Let me also hope, that a Nation so faithfully and successfully served, which so largely benefitted by the Prime of his Life, and has seen the Close of it hasten’d, by a repetition of Labours and Victories on its Behalf, will feel the worth of such a Citizen ; and give to his Memory, the Honours which they can no longer bestow in any other way !—When it is recollected that the Warfare here, was clogged with every circumstance that could render it disagreeable, as well as difficult, to carry through, that his feelings a thousand times revolted against the treatment he experienced and yet gave way to the exigencies of the times, which pleaded for his Stay ; that continual ill health was not capable of checking his Ardour ; nay, that he rose, I may say, from the Grave one day, and within the next eight, performed a March of 100 Miles, relieved the important Post of Vellore, and had two Actions with Hyder’s whole Army, in both of which, he obliged him to fly with precipitation, and much loss : that he had at length brought the decision of the War to one blow, and was prevented from striking it, by a failure of assistance, which he relied on ; that the disappointment had nearly proved fatal to him ; and that even after a circumstance so discouraging, and so wounding to his feelings, he was again returning, tho’ with a Constitution wholly broken, to head the Army, and renew the Effort which was to terminate the War :

‘ When all these particulars, my Dear Madam, are adverted to, I believe it will be allowed that Examples of the same self-devoting Zeal for the Publick Welfare, are very rarely to be met with—Add too, that as a Private Man he had the Blessings of Affectionate Friends, an



Independent Fortune, the Retreat he loved ; All opening their Arms to receive him, would he have listened to, as he warmly felt, their pleadings !—

‘ Forgive my running on to this length ; tho’ the sad privilege of Sorrow, I should have scrupled to indulge myself in it, did I not know the sincerity of your friendship, and that I could measure by my own the Interest you take in everything belonging to the Family of which we make a part—Be so good to assure the Dean, that so far from considering those ties as dissolved, by the Calamity I have met with, it only leads my attentions more strongly, to every one, who was connected with, or dear to the General ; and that my best Services may be depended upon, in every instance, as well as in discharging the trusts of the Administration which those motives induced me to enter upon here !

‘ Allow me also my Dear Sister, to trouble you with my best remembrances to Charles, to Mrs. H. Bathurst, and to Eyre ; whom I must be permitted to consider, as more peculiarly my own. And assure yourself, that I shall always be highly gratified by the continuance of your attentions, and regard, and that I am very sincerely

Your Affectionate  
and Obedient Servant  
SUSANNA COOTE—

‘ Self is now of so little consequence to me that I had forgot to mention my expectation of quitting this Country in January, and that I may, perhaps, reach England in June.’

Warren Hastings seems to have been kindness itself to the widow of his late colleague and gave her every assistance in his power.

On the 6th August Lady Coote had again written to him about a ship, in which to journey home and on board which she proposed to take the General’s body for re-interment in England, having learnt that Captain Cooke’s ship could not be employed and that Captain Hoare had died. Lady Coote had received, as she informed the Governor-General, repeated and pressing offers of service from Sir Edward Hughes who appears to have contemplated putting a ship of war at her disposal ; but on Lady Coote asking for the *Medea* frigate, in which Sir Eyre had voyaged to Bengal in the previous autumn, she was told it could not be allowed as the Admiral ‘ destined it to take despatches home.’ Subject then to the approval of Hastings, ‘ the Ship I have engaged ’, she announces, ‘ is the *Belmont*, Captain Gamage, and am promised she shall be despatched from hence as soon as possible.’

Hastings threw no difficulties in the way, and the grant of the *Belmont* for her passage home was announced to Lady Coote in a letter

from Mr. Stables, and acknowledged by her on the 20th September. 'The Circumstance itself I feel very sensibly as a relief from the embarrassment I must otherwise have experienced. But the manner in which this indulgence to the widow of your late Commander-in-Chief was conferred and accompanied will live in my memory, Sir, as long as that remains, and do honour to your own feelings to a much later period.'

To Sir Eyre Coote's colleagues on the Supreme Board Lady Coote had already sent some presents in remembrance of the deceased, and to Warren Hastings, Wheler, Macpherson, and Stables she wrote :

'Will you permit me to offer to your acceptance these Memorials of a friend who was sincerely attached to you, both as a partner in your public trusts and from feelings of personal regard. You have already given me such honourable testimonies of your own regrets for his loss that, trifling as what I now present to you might otherwise appear, I am persuaded the recollection they bring of a head blanched in the service of his country and a heart warmed with every social affection will give them the full value I wish.'<sup>1</sup>

The *India Gazette* of the 27th December 1783 contains the announcement :

'In a few days the *Belmont*, Captain Gamage, will sail for Madras and thence will proceed to Europe. That ship touches at Madras to take Lady Coote and the Rev. Mr. Hulse to England.'

Lady Coote remained in Madras until the beginning of 1784, when a letter<sup>2</sup> from the Reverend Westrow Hulse to Warren Hastings, written from Fort St. George on the 4th February, announces her approaching departure ; in this he takes leave of Mr. Hastings, thanks him for his kindness, speaks of 'that living pattern of excellence, Lady Coote', and announces that she proposes 'embarking tomorrow on ye *Belmont*'.

The *India Gazette* of the 28th February published the following :

'On the 6th instant the *Belmont*, Captain Gamage, sailed for England. Lady Coote is gone home on that ship . . . The body of our good old General, Sir Eyre Coote, was taken up from the place of its interment, and put into a leaden coffin, and carried on board the *Belmont* for England. There cannot be a doubt his generous countrymen will pay all due honours to so illustrious and worthy a character by erecting a monument to his memory and by perpetuating on the

<sup>1</sup> These letters from Lady Coote are at the British Museum, Add. MSS. 29160.

<sup>2</sup> British Museum Add. MSS. 29162, folio 102.

sculptured stone the remembrance of the many splendid victories he obtained over the enemies of his country in this part of the world, and by which he secured to it what may now justly be called the brightest remaining gem in his monarch's crown. This worthy veteran breathed his last in the country in which he won his fame, but where he sacrificed his constitution, and where he can never cease to be remembered without the aid of either monuments or inscriptions while his countrymen possess a foot of land in India.'

## CHAPTER XX

1784

THE first intimation of the death of the Commander-in-Chief no doubt reached England overland, and appears to have been confirmed by despatches conveyed in the *Medea*, frigate, which arrived early in 1784.

On Wednesday 25th August the *Belmont* reached Plymouth, and a few days later—in order no doubt to do fitting honour to the deceased General—the body was transferred to H.M.S. *Bombay Castle*, 74 guns, at that time the guard-ship at Plymouth. In the Captain's Log<sup>1</sup> are the following entries :

'Tuesday, August 31. Wind S.S.E. Moderate and cloudy. Employed cleaning the ship. Received the Corpse of General Sir Eyre Coote, K.B., from the East Indies.'

'Thursday, September 2. Wind West. Moderate and fine weather. At 8 a.m. fired a gun and made the signal for all boats to attend the landing the Corpse of General Sir Eyre Coote. Fired Twenty Minute Guns.'

The barge conveying the body was attended by Colonel Owen and by Captain Sawyer, second in command of the port, and was towed and escorted by boats from all the line-of-battle ships at Plymouth to the jetty head in the dockyard, where it was received by Rear-Admiral Milbank, commanding at Plymouth, by officials of both Services, and by members of the late General's family.<sup>2</sup> The Marine Division of the garrison formed a lane to the dockgates through which the procession passed, the drums beating a point of war, Colours flying, and the band playing a solemn dirge. Beyond the gates the hearse was met by two companies of Royal Artillery, the 39th, and 40th Regiments, forming divisions six abreast, the Grenadier and

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, Admiralty, Captains' Logs, 119.

<sup>2</sup> Among these was Lieut.-General Boyd, of the Artillery, Sir Eyre's uncle, who was awarded the K.B. vacant by Coote's decease. He had commanded the artillery at the siege of Gibraltar, and was responsible for the use of the red-hot shot.

Light Infantry Companies moving in front. The procession then proceeded through the Three Towns by the glacis to the gate of the Citadel, where the Lieutenant-Governor, Campbell, received the body with every mark of respect, while the guns thundered out from the ramparts. The Artillery and the two regiments now formed up on the parade before the Governor's House; the Grenadiers and Light Infantry, in four divisions, escorted the coffin to the Chapel, the troops presenting arms, the drums beating and the bands playing; nineteen minute-guns were fired during the ceremony, and the Body was deposited in the Chapel with great solemnity and respect.

Here the coffin remained until the 7th, when it was taken to West Park; 'the immense concourse of people assembled as the procession passed through Plymouth, Exeter, &c. evinced, by a perfect sympathy of solemn decorum and respect, their acknowledged consequence of the General's character, recollection of his services, and regret at his loss'; and so at last and in such manner this tried soldier came home from the war. The actual funeral took place on the 14th September, on which day the body was interred in the Parish Church of Rockbourne, when the Rev. Mr. Westrow Hulse, the deceased's chaplain, preached 'a most pathetic sermon' which was afterwards printed.

There can be no doubt that at West Park, where Sir Eyre Coote had made his home and to which, at brief intervals, he had returned, he was much liked and respected; that his friends and his humbler neighbours were proud of his achievements, recognized his worth, and that among those who knew him best he was not regarded as the avaricious, grasping, money-loving soldier of fortune whom some biographers and historians have portrayed, but as one who was always generous, kind and free, loyal to his friends and ever ready to acknowledge the good qualities even of those who had injured or thwarted him.

The following lines addressed to Lady Coote, signed 'T. D.' and dated 'Fordingbridge 1784', serve in some measure to show in what estimation he was held by his neighbours:

Weep on, fair mourner, o'er Coote's sacred dust;  
 Thy tears become thee, and thy grief is just.  
 See with like sorrow Britain hangs her head,  
 And mourns in him her former glories fled.  
 No more their wonted charms her fields retain,  
 A gloomy horror clouds each darksome plain,  
 Even distant realms are partners in her woe,  
 And furthest *India* feels the deadly blow.

*India*—who lately saw Coote foremost stand  
 And o'er her kingdom stretch his saving hand,  
 Saw how his soul by public virtue fired,  
 To curb ambition's impious rage aspired ;  
 Saw him victorious range the well-fought field,  
 And mighty Hyder taught at length to yield ;  
 Saw the fierce Tyrant seized with wild affright,  
 And owe his safety to inglorious flight—  
 While the brave British troops with loud acclaim,  
 Raise to the skies their conquering leader's name.

But the proud victor's meed, the Laurel Crown,  
 Formed not the only part of Coote's renown,  
 Each mild, each peaceful virtue was his care.  
 Free from the rage and splendid guilt of war,  
 With joy he flew from the camp's deafening noise  
 To calm retirement and domestic joys.  
 There in the shade that intercourse he shared  
 Which friendship cherished and love endeared ;  
 Polite, obliging, affable, and free  
 From distant pride and dull formality.  
 Now did his raptured tongue with rapture dwell  
 On every sportive thought and mirthful tale.  
 He too was pleased to tread the path humane  
 Where Charity led up her gentle train.  
 A generous kindness ever warmed his breast  
 To feed the poor and succour the distressed.  
 To the sad orphan timely aid to bring  
 And teach the mournful widow's heart to sing,  
 Whilst all around confessed that Heaven designed  
 In blessing him with wealth to bless Mankind.

Such, such was Coote, who now released from care,  
 And all those toils and pain that Mortals share,  
 Enjoys the prize to virtuous action given  
 And tastes with Angels all the joys of Heaven.

At this time the London press was but scantily represented, and not much interest was taken in the affairs of India ; but the *Annual Register* for 1783 contains on p. 105 what may be considered a very striking testimony to the military qualities of the deceased :

' It would be unnecessary to dwell much upon the military character and abilities of this great Commander. Independent of the former brilliant actions of his life, the two last years of it afford abundant matter to place both in the most exalted point of view. Whoever

reflects upon the deplorable and fallen state of the British affairs on the coast of Coromandel when Sir Eyre Coote arrived at Madras in the year 1780, and considers the very inferior force, consisting only of infantry, with which he maintained so successful and glorious a war, against the greatest commander and the most formidable armies that ever India produced, will be satisfied that a recital of these acts is the highest eulogium that could be offered to his memory, and will not hesitate to acknowledge that he should hold a conspicuous place among those generals, whose inherent abilities have most eminently supplied the deficiency of force in war.'

At this period of the rule of the Honourable East India Company it does not appear to have been the custom, either at home or in India, either in the Court of Directors or in their different governments in the East, to pass formal resolutions of regret or eulogy upon the death of a Company's servant, however eminent he might have been, however great the services he might have rendered. The Government of Fort St. George wrote home to their masters on the death of Sir Eyre Coote :

' We condole with you on this melancholy event which has deprived your Army of a zealous and intrepid leader whose eminent services cannot fail to render his memory dear to his immediate Employers as well as to his country.'

Hastings and his colleagues paid a very graceful tribute to the Memory of the Commander-in-Chief and lauded him as 'the very sheet anchor of executive service'; and in a letter from the Governor-General and Council of Bengal to the Court of Directors, dated Fort William 20th October 1783, they wrote :

'The long tried and glorious services of Sir Eyre Coote which have justly merited and received the highest and most flattering honors that a subject can aspire to, in the thanks of his King (and) the sincere applause of his country, place his military character above the necessity of our testimony to transmit it to posterity; but in candor we are obliged to declare that his military order and zeal were unshaken to the last, and that he died a martyr in the cause of his country.'

Soon after the news of Sir Eyre Coote's death reached England there was a meeting of the Court of Directors, and when the clerk had finished reading the various items of intelligence to hand from the different presidencies, it is recorded, in the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* of the 24th November 1783, that

'Governor Johnstone rose, and in a manner which affected every man present, lamented the loss the Company and the Nation had sus-

tained in so gallant a man as Sir Eyre Coote, and the other brave and worthy officers who had fallen in support of the national interests in India ; but the exertions, the spirit and the perseverance of the dead, whom he sincerely lamented, and of the living who he hoped would be rewarded, would live in the historic page when the miserable attempts of faction and party to decry such characters were no longer remembered.'

In a letter which, on the 28th January 1784, the Directors wrote to Bengal, they appear to have been too much concerned with replying to the remarks of Hastings on the Court's animadversions on his conduct relative to Cheyte Singh, and too much disturbed at the prospect of the threatened examination by Parliament into the Company's affairs, to do more than add a very few words of regret at Coote's death to those of approbation which they expressed as to the energy with which the operations in the Carnatic had been conducted :

'It is', they wrote, 'to the abilities of our late Commander-in-Chief, whose loss we sincerely lament, aided by your vigilance and support, we owe the preservation of that country, as the powerful irruptions of Hyder had disabled our Governor and Council of Fort St. George from defending the possessions of our Ally, the Nabob of Arcot.'

But if the Court of Directors, and the Governments that served them, were not conspicuously articulate in recording their regret for the loss of a great public servant and a loyal colleague, they were neither slow nor illiberal in the measures they proposed to put in hand for the preservation of his memory.

If we may accept the statement of Mr. G. F. Grand,<sup>1</sup> who lived in India at this time, Warren Hastings entertained a really remarkable scheme for perpetuating the memory of one with whom he had often disagreed, but of whose great merits as a soldier he was under no misapprehension :

'Mr. Hastings,' writes Grand, 'who appreciated the value of his (Coote's) activity, readiness, and support at the critical juncture in which the Government was placed, wished to eternize his memory by having brought to Calcutta and having fixed in the square, the immense column with the Lion's image on the top, which was discovered in one of the provinces (Hajeepore, Subah Bahar), of the district which I then superintended. He was pleased to suggest to me of removing it upon truckles to the borders of the Gunduck, to have

<sup>1</sup> *Narrative of the Life of a Gentleman long resident in India*, Calcutta Historical Society's Reprint, p. 104.



it floated down that river upon rafts of timber, and next the Ganges ; but the idea was abandoned, from the consideration of the expense, the trouble, and lastly the danger attending its being damaged by the removal.

' This pillar went by the name of Rajah Beemsing's *lattee* (*id est* walking stick) ; and the only tradition which I could ever obtain, was that it had been there erected in commemoration of an Hindoo Prince, of the greatest power of body and command of territory. This information, coupled with the geographical description given by Major Reynell, of the situation of Porus' dominion, left no doubt on my mind it was for him this monument had been intended. There were marks, like letters, hewn on the stone, but they proved perfect hieroglyphics, as the cleverest Pundits of the district of Tirhoot declared their incapacity to decypher the meaning.'<sup>1</sup>

A Court of Directors was held on the 28th April 1784, when

' it was resolved unanimously that it be recommended to the General Court to erect a monument in Westminster Abbey to perpetuate the memory of Sir Eyre Coote and to record his glorious and important services to the Nation and to the East India Company. Unanimously resolved also to erect a statue to the Memory of Sir Eyre Coote in the General Court Room.'

For the execution of these Memorials the Court of Directors of the East India Company secured the services of Thomas Banks, the leading sculptor of that day, and the marble statue of Sir Eyre Coote, represented in full uniform, was first set up in the Court Room of the Old East India House in Leadenhall Street, being ultimately removed to the India Office, where, on one of the two grand staircases, it now occupies a place beside other statues of Cornwallis, Wellesley, and Wellington. The Coote Monument in Westminster Abbey is to be found in the North Transept, and thirty-five years later there was here placed a bust of Warren Hastings, Coote's great colleague and loyal supporter. The Monument is on a large scale and of white marble throughout, and it represents Victory hanging a medallion portrait of Coote to a palm-tree, beneath which sits a native of India overwhelmed with grief. There are three Standards behind the palm-tree and trophies of Eastern arms in the foreground. The inscription, which was composed by Robert Orme, the great Indian historian, runs as follows :

<sup>1</sup> Archdeacon Firminger, in a note on the above, in the Calcutta reprint of this narrative, suggests this is the Lion Pillar of Asoka, known as the Bakhra Pillar at Kolhua. (For the whole of the above I have to thank the well-known writer, Sydney C. Grier.—H. W.)

*Life of Sir Eyre Coote*

This Monument is erected by  
the East India Company  
as a Memorial of the military talents of  
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR EYRE COOTE, K.B.  
Commander in Chief of the British Forces in India  
who  
by the Success of his Arms in the years MDCCLX and MDCCLXI  
expelled the French from the Coast of Coromandel.  
In MDCCLXXXI to MDCCLXXXII  
he again took the field in the Carnatic  
in opposition to the united strength of the French and Hyder Ally,  
and in several engagements defeated the numerous forces of the latter.  
But death interrupted his career of Glory  
on the XXVII of April MDCCLXXXIII  
in the fifty-eighth year of his age.

Had the General lived it was the intention of His Majesty to have raised him to the dignity of a Viscount in the Peerage of Ireland.

After the death of Sir Eyre Coote the war in the Carnatic made no satisfactory progress. Bussy had reached Cuddalore on the 10th April 1783, but it was not until the end of the first week in June that General Stuart, pursuing his leisurely way, took up a position some two miles to the south of the fort, but omitted to seize the Bound Hedge, which Bussy occupied on the following day. At Cuddalore Stuart was joined by a detachment of the 16th Hanoverians who had arrived by sea, and his army now numbered something over 11,000; but since the garrison of Cuddalore was at least equal in strength any complete investment of the place was impracticable. On the 12th Stuart attacked the French advanced works and was successful, obliging the French to retire into the fortress, but the British losses were exceedingly heavy.

On the same evening the French fleet, under Suffren, appeared and was attacked a week later by Hughes; but the resulting action, though bloody, was indecisive, and Hughes fell back on Madras, while Suffren threw reinforcements into Cuddalore. These reinforcements enabled Bussy to make a sally, which he did in three columns on the morning of the 25th, but only one of the columns attacked with any vigour and the onset was repulsed with small loss to the British and heavy casualties among the French, included in the

prisoners being the Chevalier d'Amas, Colonel of the Regiment of Aquitaine, who led the attack.

The situation of the besiegers now became critical; their numbers had been seriously diminished, the command of the sea had been for a time lost, and it was perhaps fortunate for General Stuart and for the cause he was supporting, that at this juncture news from home brought the hostilities to a close.

Peace had for some time past been in the air. Even at the date when the reduction of Cuddalore had been decided upon, many people in Madras were

'flattering themselves with sanguine hopes of seeing the war speedily brought to a conclusion, a Mr. Paul Benfield, a gentleman whose means of intelligence were known to be both extensive and expeditious, publicly declared, from motives the most benevolent, that he had just received overland from England certain information that Great Britain had finally concluded a peace with all the belligerent Powers in Europe, and that a frigate was now upon her way with these glad tidings to our settlements in the East.'<sup>1</sup>

The first intelligence of the conclusion of peace was, it is stated, sent by a private individual in London to one in Madras, and carried the *Gazette* of the 24th January 1783, travelling via Constantinople, Aleppo, Bussorah and Bombay. Lord Macartney and M. de Bussy accepted the authenticity of this news, which reached the army on the 28th June, and Messrs. Sadleir and Staunton, the latter Lord Macartney's secretary, were at once sent to Cuddalore to conclude a suspension of hostilities. Peace was finally confirmed in the Treaty of Versailles signed in September of this year.

Early in July Stuart, under orders from Madras, made over his command to the next senior officer, and proceeded to Fort St. George, where the long wrangle between him and the Governor came to a head. The General was placed under arrest, was dismissed the Company's service under an order dated Fort St. George 17th September 1783, and, being then forcibly embarked on the *Fortitude* packet, was sent home.

The authorities in India had now only to deal with Tippoo, against whom war was also declared by the Mahrattas. Our troops suffered some initial reverses in Tanjore and Malabar, but later Colonel Fullarton, who had been considerably reinforced, led a successful expedition into Mysore and was actually threatening Seringapatam

<sup>1</sup> Innes Munro, p. 317.

when, in March 1784, Macartney and the Madras Council induced Tippoo to sign a treaty of peace—one which met with the strong disapproval of the Governor-General, and which, since hostilities again broke out with Tippoo in May 1790, can hardly be regarded as being much better than an armed truce.

Having got rid of Stuart thus arbitrarily and successfully,<sup>1</sup> Macartney now conferred the appointment of Commander-in-Chief upon Sir John Burgoyne, but that officer held the view that while the Madras Council could dispose as they pleased of the command of the Company's troops, Stuart could only be deprived by the King's order of the command of His Majesty's troops. On this Colonel Lang was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army with the rank of Lieutenant-General, but Burgoyne thereupon took command of the King's troops and was supported by all the King's officers then in Madras.

This miserable quarrel, at a time of real public crisis, was protracted till December, when Burgoyne was placed by the Select Committee under arrest for 'disobedience of orders and inciting to mutiny and sedition'; and one of the first duties imposed on Sir John Dalling on his arrival from home to take up the appointment of Commander-in-Chief at Fort St. George, was to sit as President on the Court Martial convened upon Burgoyne, who was 'fully and honourably acquitted'.

The state of affairs induced by Macartney's overbearing disposition and love of quarrelling<sup>2</sup> is revealed by the correspondence which the much tried Burgoyne addressed to him on one occasion during his arrest. The Madras Government had unctuously remarked on their 'moderation and consistency'. As to their 'consistency' Burgoyne cordially agreed:

'for there is hardly one person', he declared, 'whose misfortune it has been to have any transactions with you since the Right Honble the President's arrival, who has not had reason to curse the hour his ill stars doomed him to have any connections with his Lordship. His Highness the Nabob, the Supreme Board, the late gallant and much revered Commander-in-Chief, Sir Eyre Coote, Sir Edward Hughes, General Stuart, myself, many others, both in public and private

<sup>1</sup> Amir-ul-Amara, the Nawab's younger son, reminiscent of Stuart's arrest of Pigot, is said to have remarked; 'Sometime General Stuart catch one Lord: now one Lord catch General Stuart!'

<sup>2</sup> Lady Louisa Stuart, Macartney's sister-in-law, wrote of him: 'there is but one thing he wants—feeling.' See *Gleanings from an Old Portfolio*.

stations, are proofs undeniable that your consistency is one uniform and general plan of tyranny and oppression.'

Burgoyne died in Madras shortly after the promulgation of the finding of his court-martial, but there seems no doubt that it was his intention to have called Lord Macartney to account: he wrote to him 'the time must come, and you know it, when ample justice must be done me, and when, divested of the plumes of government, you must answer for your conduct.'

In June 1785 Lord Macartney resigned the Governorship of Madras, and early in January of the following year reached England, where he found General Stuart waiting for him. A duel was arranged and took place near London in May, when Stuart, having but one leg, was propped against a tree and shot Macartney in the right shoulder; but that the General hoped to have killed his former enemy seems clear from his remarking that he was not satisfied, and that if not then permitted a second shot, he must defer it to another occasion. The seconds would not hear of any continuation of the duel and the parties left the ground.

Stuart was appointed Colonel of the 31st Foot in 1792 and died in the year following. Macartney filled many other appointments; but it was when Governor of the Cape of Good Hope in 1797 that he made something of the nature of a belated *amende* to all those soldiers with whom in his time he had ever been so ready to quarrel, to thwart and to over-ride. Speaking to Sir David Baird he said: 'Had I known as much of you military Gentlemen, when I was in India, as I have learned since, we never should have had any difference.'<sup>1</sup>

Lady Coote survived her husband nearly thirty years; she resided chiefly at West Park till the year 1810 when she handed over the house and estate to her late husband's nephew, the son of his brother Charles, the Dean—Lieut.-General Sir Eyre Coote, G.C.B., late Governor of Jamaica. Lady Coote died in 1812, when, among the obituary notices of a publication of that period, we read:

'August 5th. In Berners Street, Dame Susanna, widow of the late Sir Eyre Coote, K.B.'

With the death of his chief and patron, the good fortune of Colonel Owen, which had raised him in a very brief period of time from a disappointed candidate for the Fort Adjutancy at Madras to the rank of Colonel in the East Indies, seems to have deserted him, and

<sup>1</sup> Theodore Hook's *Life of Sir David Baird*, vol. i, p. 154.

his military career appears, to all intents and purposes, to have come to an end. He seems to have remained in England for some time after his return with the body of Sir Eyre Coote, but early in 1786 he became anxious to return to India, provided he could do so in some capacity such as that to which he considered his rank, services, and experience gave him a claim. Among the papers at West Park are two letters written by Colonel Owen to Lord Sydney in April and July of that year. In the first of these he points out that Generals Sloper, Dalling, and Stibbert and two other senior officers are on the way home, and that were he to proceed now to Bengal he would actually be next in command to Lord Cornwallis; while in the second he proposes travelling to India overland, arriving there a few weeks after Lord Cornwallis, and examining *en route* 'all our possible enemies' ports and forces, both on the Malabar and Choromandel coasts.'

Nothing seems to have come of these proposals, no doubt because, as he admits, the East India Company did not concur, holding that 'the Commission I served with all last war was a brevet and that my commission ceased at Sir Eyre Coote's death.'

Colonel Arthur Owen 'was a younger brother of Sir John Owen, Bt. of Orierton, and eventually succeeded to the baronetcy, but the entail of the fine estate was cut off by his nephew in favour of the sister. The title became extinct, and was renewed in favour of the sister's husband.'<sup>1</sup> Colonel Owen died in 1817.

The Reverend Mr. Westrow Hulse died on the 23rd April 1787, being at the time Chaplain to the Prince of Wales. The papers of the day relate that: 'he was the son of Sir Edward H. Hulse, Bt.'<sup>2</sup> He accompanied Sir Eyre Coote on his last voyage to the East Indies, being appointed Chaplain to the Company. He was seized with the epidemical disorder of that climate not many months before his return to England which was in July 1784, and never recovered from it.'

In forming, and still more in expressing, an opinion about any man who in the past has held high station, one must notice the views which were voiced about his actions and upon his character by those who, whether in subordinate or superior positions, were his contemporaries; then it is necessary, and is indeed of far greater importance, to observe the effect which his measures produced upon the particular

<sup>1</sup> See *Naval and Military Magazine*, vol. i, note to p. 422.

<sup>2</sup> The seat of the Hulses was Breamore, not far from West Park.

circumstances with which he was called upon to deal, having regard to any disadvantages under which he may have laboured in the due attainment of his ends ; and finally, with the exercise of the usual wisdom after the event, and having permitted time sufficient to elapse to allow us to see all things in their true perspective, we may perhaps sum up and state what manner of man this seems to us to have been who helped to raise and to hold together the foundations of our Empire in the East.

In different chapters of this book mention has been made of the opinions which some of Sir Eyre Coote's colleagues expressed about him, and these opinions have not perhaps been uniformly flattering ; and, when we consider the opinions of men like du Pré, Vansittart, Macartney—to name some of the most prominent of them—we may perhaps hazard the view that the General was not one of those who suffered fools gladly—by a fool meaning the man who attempts to interfere in a matter of which he has no knowledge, natural or acquired. That under the strain of such interference Sir Eyre was irritable is probably incontestable : Vasserot, in a letter written to Vansittart during the siege of Pondicherry, says of Coote—‘ Il est d'un humeur de chien et plus comme cela contre moi que contre personne d'autre. Je suis toujours la soufle douleur (sic) quant il a à se plaindre de Madras.’

Robert Orme, the historian, seems to have been on terms of considerable friendship with Eyre Coote, the soldier, and the only fault—if fault it be—which the former has to find with the latter, was that Coote was ‘ too eager for power ’. This was at the time of the trouble with du Pré, and if Coote then was ‘ too eager for power ’, it was a desire in which he was upheld by the Court of Directors when he returned home. Orme had undoubtedly a high opinion of Coote as a soldier ; when he was engaged upon his great *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, he submitted many questions, and possibly the proof sheets, to Coote for verification and perusal ; and the General, writing to him from West Park on the 13th November 1777, said to him, ‘ Many a military man besides myself can thank Providence for the success which has attended his labours ; but there are very few indeed whose lot it has been to have them recorded by such an able and judicious pen as Mr. Orme's.’

It is to be noticed that although Orme lived until 1801, his *History* proceeds no further than the recital of the close of the Campaign of Wandewash and Pondicherry. Mr. S. C. Hill tells us that ‘ the

decisive reason why Orme laid down his pen was the disgraceful conduct of many of the successors of Saunders, Pigot, Lawrence, and Coote. He had lived among Heroes in an Age of Iron, and had told their story in language which did honour both to himself and them; it was not fitting that he should describe how lesser men thought that in the misery of the country they had found an Age of Gold.'

One of the attributes of a great leader Coote possessed in a very high degree, and that was the extraordinary hold which he had over his officers and men. In his last campaign in the Carnatic his troops were badly supplied, their pay was months in arrear, they undertook their operations often at the very height of the hot season, but there was never any disaffection, still less mutiny, among those stalwarts who followed Coote; while in other commands, in Madura and Palamcottah, during the latter end of 1781 and early in 1782, the sepoys are reported as 'showing alarming symptoms of discontent', and on one occasion they actually imprisoned their officers; while at Negapatam a battalion serving under Sir Hector Munro became so 'disorderly and violent' that the disbandment of the battalion was recommended though not actually carried out.

When Colonel Pearse's Bengal Detachment first joined the army there were many disputes between the Bengal and Madras troops, there was something like an epidemic of duelling among the officers of the army, and the relations between the King's and the Company's forces were not always so harmonious as was desirable in the interests of the service in which all were engaged. All this was put a stop to by the judicious measures adopted by Sir Eyre Coote, and some of those who served under him have borne testimony to the perfect good feeling which later existed between the different units of which the main army was composed.

Innes Munro calls Coote 'the soldiers' friend'; Lieut.-Colonel Scott describes him as being 'most dear to the soldiers he commanded for his personal bravery, his great liberality, and his affectionate regard for their honour and interests. Other generals,' he wrote, 'have been approved, but Sir Eyre Coote was the beloved of the British Army in India.'

Burke made the amount of Coote's field allowances a separate charge against Warren Hastings; but Colonel Scott implies that out of these field allowances the General was expected to pay the spies whom he employed to obtain information of the movements of the enemy; the faithful ran great risks of life and of cruel mutilation,



and demanded and received high rates of remuneration, equally with the faithless who were already in the pay of Hyder and went unmolested to and fro.

‘In Sir Eyre Coote’s campaigns with Hyder Ally it should be observed that he had to encounter greater difficulties than either Lords Cornwallis or Harris in succeeding campaigns, owing to the want of a regular commissariat, as also from the want of a sufficient cavalry to follow up the victories he obtained ; likewise the great scarcity of rice owing to the famine, and the infamous conduct of the Nawab of Arcot and his servants, who, at the capture of Seringapatam, were proved from documents found there, to have been in league with Tippoo and Hyder.’<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Mark Wilks, from whose *Historical Sketches of the South of India* so much assistance has been drawn, had been military secretary to Clive and had doubtless seen much of Coote, and in more than one place in his book has he given us an estimate of the worth of Sir Eyre as a military commander. His early opinion of him is thus worded :

‘Nature had given to Colonel Coote all that Nature can confer in the formation of a soldier ; and the regular study of every branch of his profession, and experience in most of them, had formed an accomplished officer. A bodily frame of unusual vigour and activity, and mental energy always awake, were restrained from excessive action by a patience and temper which never allowed the spirit of enterprise to outmarch the dictates of prudence. Daring valour and cool reflection strove for the mastery in the composition of this great man. The conception and execution of his designs equally commanded the confidence of his officers ; and a master at once of human nature and of the science of war, his rigid discipline was tempered with an unaffected kindness and consideration for the wants, and even the prejudices, of the European soldiers, and rendered him the idol of the native troops.’

Later, Wilks discovers that ‘the temper evinced by him (Coote) exhibited mournful evidence of his having outlived some of the most attractive qualities of his earlier character’, yet still, at his death, the historian describes the General as ‘the nearest imaginable approach to perfection as a soldier.’

In the campaign of Wandewash and Pondicherry Sir Eyre Coote showed sound strategy, while in that of 1781-2 his energies were mainly expended in the protection of convoys, conveying supplies to his garrisons in the Carnatic, and his operations were almost wholly tactical. In this field, in the movements of actual battle, General

<sup>1</sup> *East India Military Calendar*, vol. ii, footnote to p. 26.

Coote shone out supreme. He had an extraordinary *flair* for detecting the weak point in his enemy's position ; his stroke was well planned and aimed with deadly accuracy ; and he usually contrived either to attain his opponent's flank or rear by an echelon movement—the risk of which was diminished by the extraordinary ability he displayed in handling troops on the field in the close formations of those days—or to draw his enemy from his position and make him fight on ground of the British Commander's own selection. His army was always hugely outnumbered, but he was never out-manceuvred ; and the men he commanded were not in any way disturbed when they found themselves, as they so often did, surrounded by a ring of foes, for they knew well that the man who led them remained ever serene, resolute and undismayed, and they were confident that whether he was in health, *or at the point of death*, the purpose he had formed would be carried out to its successful consummation.

There are two matters the initiative for which has usually been ascribed to other commanders, though it must in justice be accorded to Coote. It has always been held that the two-deep line was fashioned and fought by Wellington in India, before he so successfully adapted it to the conditions of continental warfare in Spain ; but the credit for this epoch-making innovation is Coote's, and not Wellington's, and a reference to the orders and despatches of the former prove that in his army the formation was always two ranks, and that he realized and often availed himself of the increased fire-power afforded by the deployed line.

Again it has been stated that it was Sir Charles Napier who, in his despatch after Meeanee, first 'mentioned' the private soldier ; a reference again to Coote's despatches prove that it was he, more than half a century before Napier's campaign in Scinde, who recognized how greatly dependent a commander must be for success and fame upon the valour of the men in the ranks, and with Coote the 'reward' followed upon the 'mention' of the private or sepoy with a promptitude which we in modern times are only now beginning to imitate.

Twenty years separated the victories of Wandewash and Pondicherry from those of Porto Novo, Pollilore, and Sholinghur ; but the same success attended each campaign, and the man who had driven the French from India returned to save the southern possessions of the English from even greater dangers. General Sir Eyre Coote is conspicuous among those who made British India, and the great services he rendered have scarcely received sufficient recognition at

the hands of his countrymen ; few know anything of his campaigns, and many remember him only in connection with the story of his portrait by Home in the Madras Exchange, of which picture it is said that no Indian soldier ever entered the Hall without saluting it. But what a tribute that is to the trust which he inspired in the hard-fighting army he led, to the affection all ranks felt for him ; and without which even he, great captain as he was, could hardly have triumphed over the genius and the vast resources of Hyder, over the difficulties he met with in the field, and over the half-hearted support rendered him by his colleagues in the Council Chamber.

## APPENDIX A

### SIR EYRE COOTE'S EIGHT MOST IMPORTANT DESPATCHES

- I. The Events leading up to and concluding with the Battle of Wandewash, 22nd January 1760.
- II. The Siege and Capture of Pondicherry, 15th January 1761.
- III. An Appreciation of the Situation in the Carnatic, and a Description of the state of the British Forces in December 1780.
- IV. Despatch on the Battle of Porto Novo, 1st July 1781.
- V. Despatch on the Battle of Pollilore, 27th August 1781.
- VI. Despatch on the Battle of Sholinghur, 27th September 1781.
- VII. Despatch on the Action of Arnee, 2nd June 1782.
- VIII. Last Despatch from Madras.

#### I

#### THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO AND CONCLUDING WITH THE BATTLE OF WANDEWASH, 22ND JANUARY 1760

From the *London Gazette* of the 23rd September 1760.

*Despatch from Colonel Coote, Commanding His Majesty's Forces in the East Indies, to the Right Honourable Mr. Secretary Pitt.*

Arcot Village, 13th February 1760.

SIR,

I have the honour to acquaint you of the situation of our affairs on the coast of Coromandel since my arrival, and of our happy successes. Soon after I arrived, the Governor and Council of Madras being informed that General Lally had sent a detachment of his army to the southward, and that that party had taken Syringham, and threatened Trichenopoly with a siege, it was therefore thought adviseable, that I should take the field with the army, and by that means endeavour to draw the enemy from the southward. Accordingly, on the 25th November 1759, I took the field, and, on the 27th, invested Wondivash, and erected batteries; and having made a breach by the 30th, took the place, and made the garrison (which consisted of five subaltern officers, sixty-three private men, and eight hundred

seapoys) prisoners of war. There were in the garrison forty-nine pieces of cannon, and a great quantity of ammunition. December the 3rd, I invested Carangoly. On the 6th, I opened a two gun battery, and on the 7th another, and began to carry on approaches. On the 10th, being near the crest of the Glacis, and having dismounted all their guns but four, Colonel O'Kennely, who commanded, sent out a flag of truce, and, on account of his gallant defence, I granted him the following terms: That the Europeans should have leave to march out with their arms, two rounds per man, drums beating, and six days provisions; the sepoys to be disarmed, and turned about their business. The garrison consisted of one hundred Europeans (officers included), five hundred seapoys, and nine guns. Having intelligence that Brigadier General Bussy was arrived at Arcot from the northward, with three hundred Europeans, and a large black army, and that the army, which lay at Chittiput, was to join him, and that the forces from the southward were on their march towards Arcot, I therefore thought it adviseable to cross the Palla, and encamp the army opposite to Arcot, having the Palla between us. Three thousand Moratta horse about this time joined the enemy, which put me to the greatest distress for want of provisions, as they plundered all the country.

On the 27th, Lieutenant General Lally arrived at Arcot, and took the command. January the 9th the enemy were all in motion. On the 10th, General Lally marched with all his army towards Wondivash, and I moved with our army along the bank of the river, in order to observe their motions, and cover our own country. On the 12th I received a letter from the commanding officer at Conjeveram, that 500 of the enemy's Europeans, and a large body of horse, had entered the town; and that the rest of their army lay at Jangolam, three miles distance from it: I therefore put the army in motion, and endeavoured, by a forced march, to save that place, which was very weak (but of consequence to us) and happily arrived there the 13th before daylight. The enemy quitting the place, their army moved towards Wondivash. The 15th I crossed the Palla with all the army, and on the 17th arrived at Outremalour, about fourteen miles from Wondivash, which place I found M. Lally had invested, and begun to raise batteries. The 21st I went with all the cavalry to reconnoitre, having received a letter from the commanding officer of the garrison, that a breach was made; I therefore determined to engage the enemy the next morning. Accordingly, I sent orders back to the army to join me at Trimborough, nine miles from Wondivash, where I had taken post with the cavalry. On the 22nd, the army marched, at six o'clock in the morning, agreeable to the orders I had given out the day before for that purpose. About seven o'clock our advanced guard of horse, and that of the enemy, began to fire at each other; upon which I ordered Capt. Baron de Vasserot, who commanded the cavalry, to form them in order of battle; he was supported by five companies of Seapoys; and, at the same time,

I ordered up two pieces of cannon ; and advancing myself with two companies of seapoys, obliged the enemy to retire to their main body of horse, which consisted of 200 Europeans, and 3,000 Morattas, on their left. Upon the whole of our cavalry's advancing, that of the enemy retired in pretty good order, till our cannon began to play, which was extremely well served, and obliged them to retire precipitately. I then ordered the Major of Brigade to the Army, which was about three quarters of a mile in the rear, with orders for them to form the line of battle, but not to advance till I had joined them. Soon after, having taken possession of a tank, which the enemy's cavalry had occupied, I returned to the line, which by that time was formed according to my orders. After reviewing the whole, and finding the men in great spirits, and eager to engage, I ordered the army to move forward.

About nine o'clock we arrived at the post we had driven the enemy from, which was about two miles from their camp, and halted in their view, near half an hour ; during which time, I went very near to them, and reconnoitred their situation. Upon finding they were strongly posted, and our flanks exposed to the enemy's cavalry, which was vastly superior to ours, I ordered the army to march by the right, in order to gain the advantage of a hill three miles from us, and about two miles from Wondivash Fort ; and the horse, which was then in the front, to wheel to the right and left, and form behind the second line, in order to make the rear guard and cover the baggage. By this motion, I covered my right flank with the hill, and had some villages in my rear, where I then ordered the baggage to. This obliged the enemy to alter their disposition. During all this time we cannonaded each other, and skirmished with their advanced posts, and Moratta Horse : the latter disappeared about eleven o'clock. The enemy, after making their second disposition, moved towards us about the distance of three quarters of a mile, under cover of a bank. The cannonading then began to be smart on both sides ; and upon seeing the enemy coming briskly up, I ordered the army to march forward. At 12 o'clock the enemy's European cavalry pushed with a great deal of resolution, in order to force our left, and come round upon our rear. Immediately I ordered up some companies of Seapoys, and two pieces of cannon, which were to sustain our cavalry, who had been ordered to oppose them. Upon the cannon and Seapoys flanking them, they broke. The cavalry then had orders to charge, who drove them above a mile from our left upon the rear of their own army. We continued all this while advancing towards each other, the enemy's flank being very well covered by a tank. It was one o'clock when we arrived within reach of musquetry, when a shot from us striking one of their tumbrils, it blew up. I then immediately ordered Major Brereton to wheel Col. Draper's regiment to the left, and charge their left flank, which was executed with great order, and much honour to that corps. Seeing that regiment likely to suffer from a body of black troops, together with their marines, who were under cover, and fired

very briskly upon them; and, at the same time, finding they had reinforced their left with a piquet from Lally's regiment, I ordered the grenadier company of Draper's, which was on the right of the second line, to support their own regiment; and having likewise two pieces of cannon playing upon the enemy's flank, completed the rout of that wing, who abandoned their cannon, and fell upon their own center, which was by this time, together with their right, closely engaged with our left. I then ordered up Major Monson, with the rest of the second line, and placed him so as to be able to support any part of our line, at the same time flanking the enemy. About two o'clock their whole army gave way, and ran towards their own camp; but finding we pursued them, quitted it, and left us entire masters of the field, together with all their cannon, except three small pieces, which they carried off. The number of cannon taken is as follows: one 32, one 24, three 20, two 18, one 14, two 3, and two 2 pounders, iron. Three 6, four 4, one 3, and two 2 pounders, brass. In all 22 pieces. Round shot 3,204. Grape 110. Besides tumbrils, and all other implements belonging to the train. The prisoners we have taken are Brigadier Gen. Bussy, Le Chevalier Godeville, Quarter-Master General. Of Lally's regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Murphy, two Captains, two Lieutenants. Of the Lorraine regiment, one Captain, one Lieutenant. Of the India battalion, two Lieutenants, two Ensigns. Of the Marines, Le Chevalier de Poete, Knight of Malta, who is since dead of his wounds. All the above gentlemen were wounded, but M. Bussy, and an Ensign of the India battalion. The French reckon they had 800 killed and wounded, 200 of which we buried in the field. We have taken above 200 wounded prisoners, besides 40 not wounded. Our loss is as follows: Of Colonel Draper's regiment, Ensign Collins killed, and seventeen private. Wounded, Major Brereton and Lieut. Brown (since dead of their wounds), Captain Knuttal, ensigns Halfpenny, Thompson, and Horler, and fifty-six private. Of my regiment, killed, Ensign Stuart, and thirteen private. Wounded, Lieutenants Fraser and Tyd, Ensign Heron, and thirty-six private. The Honourable Company's troops, killed, Ensign Evans, and 18 private. Wounded, Cornet Kuhn, and twenty-nine private. Among our black troops, about seventy killed and wounded. The enemy's army, commanded by Lieutenant Gen. Lally, consisted of two thousand two hundred Europeans, including artillery and cavalry; three hundred cofferies, and between nine and ten thousand black troops. Twenty pieces of cannon in the field, and five in their batteries against the fort, where they blew up a large magazine of powder upon their retreat. Our army amounted to seventeen hundred Europeans, including artillery and cavalry; three thousand five hundred black troops; fourteen pieces of cannon, and one howitz. The enemy collected themselves under the walls of Chittiput, about eighteen miles from the field of battle, and the next day marched to Gingey. Our cavalry being greatly fatigued, put it out of my power of pursuing the enemy as far as I could have wished. During the whole engage-

ment, and ever since I have had the honour of commanding the army, the officers and men have shown the greatest spirit ; nor can I say too much for the behaviour of the artillery.

The next day I sent out a detachment of cavalry to harrass the enemy. January 26, Finding that General Lally had retired with his broken troops to Pondicherry, I sent Capt. de Vasserot, with 1000 horse, and 300 seapoys, towards Pondicherry, to destroy the French country, and marched the army to besiege Chittiput ; and on the 28th at night, erected a two-gun battery, and got in one 24 and one 20 pounder, and played upon them from an eight inch howitz. The next day, after making a breach, Le Chevalier de Tilly, with his garrison, surrendered prisoners of war. The garrison consisted of four officers, fifty-four private, and three hundred seapoys, with seventy-three Europeans wounded in the hospital. I found in the fort, nine guns, and a good quantity of ammunition. Having intelligence of a party of the enemy going from Arcot to Gingey, I sent Captain Smith with a detachment to intercept them. On the 30th, marched the army towards Arcot (the capital of the Province) in order to besiege it. This day Capt. Smith joined me, having taken the party I had sent him after, which consisted of ten Europeans, fifty seapoys, and two brass 8 pounders ; and soon after he took a Captain of the Lorraine regiment, and three French Commissaries. On the first of February, I set out from the army for Arcot, leaving orders with Major Monson to throw a few shells into Timmery, and to summons the garrison. February 2. The army marched and encamped within two miles of Arcot. Major Monson reported to me this day, that the garrison of Timmery had surrendered prisoners of war. There were in it, six guns, one serjeant, twenty Europeans, and sixty seapoys. February 5. I opened batteries against the fort of Arcot, viz. One of five 18 pounders, and another of two 18 and one 24 pounders. On the 6th began to carry on approaches to the South West and West Towers of the fort ; and having, by the 10th, got within sixty yards of the Crest of the Glacis, the garrison surrendered prisoners of war. It consisted of three Captains, eight subalterns, 236 private, and between 2 and 300 seapoys. There were in it, four mortars, twenty-two pieces of cannon, and a great quantity of all kinds of military stores. We had, during the siege, seven non-commissioned and private killed ; and Ensign MacMahon (who acted as Engineer) and 16 wounded.

I have the honour to be, &c.,  
EYRE COOTE.



## II

THE SIEGE AND CAPTURE OF PONDICHERRY,  
15TH JANUARY 1761

From the *London Gazette* of the 20th July 1761.

*Despatch from Colonel Coote, Commanding His Majesty's Forces in the East Indies, to the Right Honourable Mr. Secretary Pitt.*

Head Quarters at Oulgaret, Feb. 3, 1761.

SIR,

In my last, per the *Shaftsbury* Indiaman, I had the Honour to transmit to you an Account of my Proceedings with the Army to the 15th of last October. On the 23d, Admiral Steevens sailed from Trincamaley to refit the Squadron, leaving five Sail of the Line, under the command of Captain Haldane, to continue the Blockade of Pondicherry by Sea, which Place began to be greatly distressed for Want of Provisions. On the 9th of November, I ordered a Ricochet Battery for four Pieces of Cannon to be erected to the Northward, at about 1400 Yards from the Town, more with a Design to harrass the Enemy, than any Damage we could think of doing to the Works at so great a Distance. On the 10th, we began to land our Stores, and to prepare every Thing for the carrying on the Siege with Vigour. The Rains being over by the 26th, I imagined the Distress of the Enemy might be much augmented, and Garrison Duty rendered very fatiguing, if some Batteries were erected on different Quarters of the Town: I therefore gave Directions to the Engineers to pitch on proper Places, at such Distances, and in such Situations, that the Shot from them might enfilade the Works of the Garrison, and our Men and Guns not exposed to any certain Fire of the Enemy. Accordingly, the following Batteries were traced out, one (called the Prince of Wales's) for four Guns, near the Beach on the North Side, to enfilade the Great Street, which runs North and South through the White Town: One for four Guns and two Mortars, to the North-west Quarter, at 1000 Yards Distance, to enfilade the North Face of a large Counter-guard, before the North-west Bastion, called the Duke of Cumberland's: A third, called Prince Edward's, for two Guns, to the Southward, at 1200 Yards Distance, to enfilade the Streets from South to North, so as to cross the Fire from the Northern Battery; And a fourth to the South-west, called Prince William's, for two Guns and one Mortar, at 1100 yards Distance, in order to destroy the Guns in St. Thomas's Redoubt, and to ruin the Vessels and Boats near it. On the 8th, at Midnight, they were all opened together, and continued firing till Day-light. On the 9th, the Enemy kept up a warm Fire on our Batteries, without doing much Damage to them.

This Day one Gunner and a Subedar of Seapoys were killed. On the 25th Admiral Steevens, with four Ships of the Line, arrived off Pondicherry, having parted Company with Admiral Cornish and his Division on the 16th Instant in blowing Weather. On the 29th, a Battery, called the Hanover, was begun, for ten Guns and three Mortars, to the Northward, at 450 Yards Distance from the Town, against the North-west Counterguard and Curtain.

On the 1st January, we had a very violent Storm of Wind and Rain : It began at Eight o'Clock in the Evening, and lasted till between Three and Four the next Morning. I gave Directions for the Repairing our Batteries, which the Storm had almost ruined, and the putting every Thing into the best Order our present Situation would admit. On the 4th we had the agreeable Sight of Admiral Steevens in the *Norfolk*, who had had the good Fortune to weather out the Storm, without suffering the least Damage. On the 5th I attacked a Post of very great Consequence to the Enemy, in which were 4 Twenty-eight Pounders, called St. Thomas's Redoubt, and carried it without any Loss. At Day-light on the 6th, 300 of the Enemy's Grenadiers retook it, owing to the Officer, commanding the Redoubt, not being able to keep his seapoys together. This Day Admiral Cornish in the *Lenox*, with the *York* and *Weymouth*, arrived ; and, as most of the Ships, which had been disabled, were now refitted, the Blockade of Pondicherry was as compleat as ever. On the 12th the Hanover Battery, being repaired, kept up a very brisk Fire, and greatly damaged the Counterguard and Bastion, and made a Breach in the Curtain. On the 13th, in the Evening, I ordered a Working Party of 700 Europeans, and 400 Lascars, with the Pioneers Company, under the Command of a Major, to the Northward, where the Engineers had traced out a Battery for 11 Guns and 3 Mortars. At eight o'Clock they began a Trench for introducing Gabions of four Feet high, which were to form the interior Facing of the Battery. At the same Time a Parallel was begun, 90 Yards in the Rear, of 250 Yards long, and an Approach of 400 Yards in Length. Notwithstanding the Moon shone very bright, and the Battery within 500 Yards of the Walls, every thing went on without the least Disturbance from the Enemy. By Morning six Embrasures were in a Condition to receive Guns, and the rest far advanced. This was called the Royal Battery. On the 14th the Hanover Battery kept up a constant Fire the whole Day, which entirely ruined the West Face and Flank of the North-West Bastion. On the 15th the Royal Battery was opened, which, by Eight o'Clock in the Morning, silenced the Fire of the Enemy, and gave us an Opportunity of beginning a Trench, to contain our Royal Mortars, and three Guns, for the more speedy Demolition of the Demi-Bastion and Ravelin of Madras-Gate. This Evening Colonel Durre, of the Royal Artillery, the Chief of the Jesuits, and two Civilians, were sent out by M. Lally, with Proposals for the delivering up the Garrison, a Copy of which I have the Honour to inclose you, and my Answer thereto. Also a Copy of the several Articles delivered me

by the Chief of the Jesuits, on Behalf of the French East-India Company, to which I made no Reply. On the 16th, at Eight o'Clock in the Morning, the Grenadiers of my Regiment took Possession of the Villenour-Gate; and, in the Evening, those of Draper's of the Citadel. The Commissaries were immediately ordered to take an Account of all the Military Stores found in the Garrison, and Returns to be given in, of the Numbers of Officers, Non-commissioned and Private, of the different Corps, at the Time the Place surrendered, as well as the Number of Inhabitants; all of which I have now the Honour to transmit to you, as well as a Plan of the Garrison, with the Works carried, and intended to be carried on, against it.

It is with the greatest Pleasure I acquaint you, that during the whole Time of the Blockade, a perfect Harmony subsisted between the Navy and Army, and all possible Assistance given me by Admiral Steevens. I should likewise do great Injustice to Captain Haldane, if I omitted to mention his Attention and Assiduity for the publick Service, during his having the Command of the Ships left on the Coast by Mr. Steevens, and of his doing every Thing that could be wished or expected from a good and gallant Officer.

I have the Honour to be, &c.,

EYRE COOTE.

*Translation of Mr. Lally's Proposals for the  
Delivery of the Garrison.*

The taking of Chandernagore, contrary to the Faith of Treaties, and of that Neutrality which has always subsisted between all European Nations, and namely between the two Nations in this part of India; and that immediately after a signal Service which the French Nation had rendered the English, not only in taking no Part against them with the Nabob of Bengal, but in receiving them in their Settlements, to give them Time to recover from their first Losses (as appears by the Letters of thanks from Mr. Pigot himself, and from the Council of Madras to that of Pondicherry) added to the formal Refusal of fulfilling the Conditions of a Cartel, agreed upon between our respective Masters, though it was at first accepted by Mr. Pigot, and the Commissaries were named on both Sides to go to Sadrass to settle amicably the Difficulties which might occur in its Execution, put it out of my Power with Respect to my Court to make or propose to Mr. Coote any Capitulation for the Town of Pondicherry.

The King's Troops, and those of the Company, surrender themselves, for Want of Provisions, Prisoners of War of His Britannick Majesty, upon the Terms of the Cartel, which I reclaim equally for all the Inhabitants of Pondicherry, as well as for the Exercise of the Roman Religion, the Religious Houses, Hospitals, Chaplains, Surgeons, Servants, &c. referring myself to the Decision of our two Courts for Reparation proportioned to the Violation of so solemn a Treaty.

Accordingly Mr. Coote may take Possession To-morrow Morning at

Eight o'Clock of the Gate of Villenour ; and after To-morrow at the same Hour of that of Fort St. Louis ; and as he has the Power in his own Hands, he will dictate such ulterior Dispositions to be made, as he shall judge proper.

I demand, merely from a Principle of Justice and Humanity, that the Mother and Sisters of Rezasaiib be permitted to seek an Asylum where they pleased, or that they remain Prisoners among the English, and be not delivered up into Mahomet Ally Caun's Hands, which are still red with the Blood of the Husband and Father, that he has spilt, to the Shame indeed of those who gave them up to him ; but not less to the Shame of the Commander of the English Army, who should not have allowed such a Piece of Barbarity to be committed in his Camp.

As I am tied up by the Cartel in the Declaration which I make to Mr. Coote, I consent that the Gentlemen of the Council of Pondicherry, may make their own Representations to him, with regard to what may more immediately concern their own private Interests, as well as the Interest of the Inhabitants of the Colony.

Done at Fort Louis off Pondicherry, the 15th Day of January, 1761.

Signed, LALLY.

To Colonel Coote, Commander in Chief  
of His Britannick Majesty's Forces  
before Pondicherry.

A true Copy.

Francis Rowland, Secretary.

*Colonel Coote's Answer to M. Lally's Proposals.*

The Particulars of the Capture of Chandernagore having been long since transmitted to His Britannick Majesty, by the Officer to whom that Place surrendered, Colonel Coote cannot take Cognizance of what passed on that Occasion ; nor can he admit the same as any Way relative to the Surrender of Pondicherry.

The Disputes which have arisen concerning the Cartel concluded between their Britannick and most Christian Majesties, being as yet undecided, Colonel Coote has it not in his Power to admit, That the Troops of his most Christian Majesty, and those of the French East India Company, shall be deemed Prisoners of War to His Britannick Majesty, upon the Terms of that Cartel ; but requires that they surrender themselves Prisoners of War to be used as he shall think consistent with the Interests of the King His Master. And Colonel Coote will shew all such Indulgences as are agreeable to Humanity.

Colonel Coote will send the Grenadiers of his Regiment, between the Hours of Eight and Nine o'Clock To-morrow Morning, to take Possession of the Villenour Gate ; and the next Morning, between the same Hours, he will also take Possession of the Gate of Fort St. Lewis.

The Mother and Sisters of Raza Saib shall be escorted to Madras, where proper Care shall be taken for their Safety ; and they shall not,

on any Account, be delivered into the Hands of Nabob Mahomed Ally Cawn.

Given at the Head Quarters at the Camp before Pondicherry, this 15th Day of January, 1761.

Signed, EYRE COOTE.

To Arthur Lally, Esq; Lieutenant General and Commander in Chief of his most Christian Majesty's Forces in India, at Pondicherry.

A true Copy.

Francis Rowland, Secretary.

*Articles proposed to Colonel Coote by the Chief of the Jesuits; to which no Answer was returned.*

The superior Council of Pondicherry, authorized by the Count de Lally, Lieutenant General of the Armies of his most Christian Majesty, and his Commissary in India, to treat for the said Town and its Inhabitants, present the following Articles to Colonel Coote, Commander of His Britannick Majesty's Troops on the Coast of Coromandel.

Article I.

Upon the Reduction of the Place, its Inhabitants shall not in anywise be injured; their Houses shall be preserved, and they shall retain all their Effects and Merchandize, with Liberty of Choice to convey them where-ever they shall think proper, or to continue their Dwelling in the said Town, as new Subjects of His Britannick Majesty; and they shall be treated as the old Subjects have usually been treated; accordingly, those who have heretofore had Possessions or Advantages, shall not be deprived of them.

Article II.

They shall be maintained in the Exercise of the Roman Catholick Religion, in the same Manner as has been practised under the French Government. The Churches and the Houses of the Ecclesiasticks and Religious Persons shall be preserved, together with every Thing thereunto belonging, whether they be situated without or within the Town. The Missionaries shall have Liberty of passing from Place to Place, and shall find, under the English Flag, the same Protection as under the French Flag.

Article III.

Not only the Buildings and Houses, belonging to private Persons, whether Laymen, Ecclesiasticks, or Religious Persons, shall be left in the Condition they are, but also the Buildings belonging to the Company, as well as the Fort, the Warehouses, and the Walls of the Town, with all the Fortifications, until the Date of these last, that is to say, every Thing of this Kind, belonging to the Company, shall be decided by the two respective Courts.

## Article IV.

The Papers of the Registry and Notary Office, on which depend the Fortunes of the Inhabitants, shall be sent to France, without any Obstacle, by such Conveyance as they shall think fit, who are now charged with them, and in whose Possession they shall, in the mean Time, remain.

## Article V.

The Treatment, herein before stipulated by the first Article, for the Inhabitants of Pondicherry, shall be extended to all the Members of the Council, Company's Agents, Officers settled in the said Town, and all others, who have been, or now are, in Service of the Company; and so in like Manner to the Merchants, whether Armenians, or of any other Nation, settled heretofore in Pondicherry for their Trade.

## Article VI.

The Creoles, or Natives of Mauritius and of Bourbon, amounting in Number to Forty-one, including five Officers, as well those who are in health, as those who have been wounded, or are Invalids, having served as Volunteers, and not being Soldiers, should have the Liberty of returning to their Home by the first good Opportunity they may find.

## Article VII.

Safe-Guards shall be granted to prevent Disorder.

## Article VIII.

All the foregoing Articles shall be executed agreeable to good Faith.  
A true Copy. FRANCIS ROWLAND, Secretary.

*Return of Brass and Iron Ordnance, Carriages, Powder, Shot, and Small Arms, found on the Works of Pondicherry, Town, Citadel, and Artillery Park.*

Brass Ordnance, . . . . .	81	serviceable,	2	unserviceable.
Iron Ditto, . . . . .	436	Ditto,	48	Ditto.
Brass Howitzers, . . . . .	13	Ditto.		
Iron Ditto, . . . . .	2	Ditto.		
Brass Mortars, . . . . .	82	Ditto.		
Iron Ditto, . . . . .	7	Ditto.		
Carriages of different Sorts . . . . .	326	Ditto,	58	Ditto.
Mortar Beds, Wood, . . . . .	46	Ditto.		
Ditto, Iron, . . . . .	7	Ditto.		
Double Headed Shot . . . . .				182
Lead Shot of different Nature . . . . .				60264
Shells and Hand Grenadoes . . . . .				22599
Grape Shot . . . . .				1095
Powder in Barrels of 200 lb. each, 207 Barrels . . . . .				serviceable.
Ditto in Barrels of 100 lb. each, 1488½ Barrels . . . . .				serviceable.
Total of Powder, . . . . .				lb. 230580
Barrels unserviceable, . . . . .				56

Powder in Cartridges of different Nature,	lb.	40330
Exclusive of Small Arms Ammunition.		
Ammunition fixed for	{	
Wall Pieces,		2907
Muskets,		368640
Carbines,		98980
Pistols,		46830
Gingalls,		20700
Muskets new with Bayonets,		1550
Ditto new without Bayonets		325
Ditto with Locks, mostly bad,		2351
Ditto unserviceable, between	7 &	8000
English Wall Pieces, good,		18
Ditto, bad,		8
French Wall Pieces, good,		190
Gingall Pieces, old,		73
Carbines,		35
Fuzees long, new		120
Ditto, old,		50
Ditto short,		30
Pistols, new Pairs,		600
Ditto, old Pairs,		310
Hangers, new		3206
Sabres, new,		1000
Broad Swords and Sabres mixed,		195
Bayonets, new,		3000
Ditto, old,		500
Pole Axes,		1200
Cartouch Boxes, new,		3000
Ditto, old,		2000
Flints about 20 hogsheads.		
Musket Balls, 6 Barrels.		
Ditto, 80 Kegs.		
Iron Ramrods about		12000
Copper Drums,		15
Wood Ditto,		17
Espontoons, old,		28
Cartridge Boxes of different Sizes,		20860
A small Quantity of fixed Ammunition.		
Ladles of different Sizes,		265
Spunges ditto, mostly old,		430
Lead Aprons of different Sizes,		360
Wad-hooks, ditto,		50
Grates for heating Shot,		2
With a large Quantity of Musket Slings, Buff Belts, Armourers, Smiths, and Carpenters' Tools, Locks, and other Lumber.		

Pondicherry, January 27, 1761.

(Signed) Charles Milton, Military Commissary General.  
E. Chandler, Commissary of Artillery.

*Exact State of the Troops of his most Christian Majesty under the Command of Lieutenant General Lally in Pondicherry, which surrendered at Discretion (to Colonel Eyre Coote, commanding in Chief His Britannick Majesty's Land Forces, laying Siege to that Place) the 15th Day of January, 1761, Prisoners of War.*

## KING'S TROOPS.

## Artillery.

Commissioned Officers, 1 Lieutenant Colonel, 1 Major, 1 Captain, 1 First Lieutenant. Staff Officers, 1 Surgeon Major, 2 Secretaries. 3 Artificers, 6 Miners, 1 Volunteer. Non-Commissioned Officers, 1 Serjeant Major, 11 Serjeants. Rank and File, 8 Corporals, 4 Lance Corporals, 42 Gunners.

## Lorrain Regiment.

Commissioned Officers, 1 Lieutenant Colonel, 16 Captains, 13 First Lieutenants, 3 Second Lieutenants. Staff Officers. 1 Chaplain, 1 Adjutant, 1 Surgeon Major, 2 Secretaries. Non-Commissioned Officers. 1 Serjeant Major, 28 Serjeants, 1 Drum Major, 7 Drummers. Rank and File. 43 Corporals, 31 Lance Corporals, 178 Private.

## Lally's Regiment.

Commissioned Officers. 1 Lieutenant General, 13 Captains, 14 First Lieutenants. Staff Officers. 1 Quarter Master, 1 Surgeon Major. Non-Commissioned Officers. 1 Serjeant Major, 20 Serjeants, 1 Drum Major, 10 Drummers. Rank and File. 139 Private, 29 Invalids.

## Marines.

Commissioned Officers. 7 Captains, 6 First Lieutenants, 2 Second Lieutenants. Staff Officers. 1 Adjutant, 1 Secretary. Non-Commissioned Officers and Rank and File, 278.

## COMPANY'S TROOPS.

## Artillery.

Commissioned Officers. 2 Captains, 5 First Lieutenants, 2 Second Lieutenants, 4 Ensigns. Staff Officers. 1 Adjutant, 1 Commissary, 2 Assistants, 9 Volunteers. Non-Commissioned Officers. 1 Serjeant Major, 10 Serjeants, 1 Drum Major, 5 Drummers. Rank and File. 6 Corporals, 45 Gunners.

## Cavalry.

Commissioned Officers. 1 Captain, 2 First Lieutenants. Rank and File. 12 Private.

## Volunteers of Bourbon.

Commissioned Officers. 1 Captain, 1 Second Lieutenant, 3 Ensigns. Staff Officers. 1 Adjutant. Non-Commissioned Officers. 1 Serjeant Major, 2 Serjeants, 1 Drummer. Rank and File. 4 Corporals, 2 Lance Corporals, 24 Private.



Battalion of India.

Commissioned Officers. 1 Major, 12 Captains, 11 First Lieutenants, 10 Second Lieutenants, 10 Ensigns. Staff Officers. 1 Chaplain, 1 Adjutant, 1 Surgeon Major, 2 Secretaries. Non-Commissioned Officers. 1 Serjeant Major, 17 Serjeants, 1 Drum Major, 10 Drummers. Rank and File. 15 Corporals, 99 Private.

Invalids.

Commissioned Officers. 1 Major. Staff Officers. 1 Adjutant, 1 Captain of the Ports, 3 Secretaries. Non-Commissioned Officers, 1 Serjeant Major, 22 Serjeants, 1 Drummer. Rank and File. 15 Corporals, 79 Private.

Total of Commissioned Officers, Staff Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.

KING'S TROOPS.

Artillery . . . . .	83
Lorrain Regiment . . . . .	327
Lally's Regiment . . . . .	230
Marines . . . . .	295

COMPANY'S TROOPS.

Artillery . . . . .	94
Cavalry . . . . .	15
Volunteers of Bourbon . . . . .	40
Battalion of India . . . . .	192
Invalids . . . . .	124

Total . . . . .	1400
Supernumerary Commissioned and Extraordinary Staff . . . . .	37

Total of the Troops . . . . .	1437
Civil List, including Governor, Council, and Inhabitants. . . . .	381

Grand Total of those Returns . . . . . 1818

People since found out, not included in the above Lists.

Surgeons, &c. of Hospitals . . . . .	39
Attendants to ditto . . . . .	9
Invalids of the German Brigade . . . . .	29
Men discharged, and remain in the Town . . . . .	173
Provost People . . . . .	4

Total . . . . .	254
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## III

AN APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION IN THE CARNATIC,  
AND A DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH  
FORCES IN DECEMBER 1780

*To the Governor-General and Members of Council,  
Fort William.*

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honor to enclose you copies of my letters of the 6th and 11th instant.

I am sorry that their contents should convey to you such unfavourable accounts of the state of affairs here, and I am still more so to inform you that the further I look into them the greater do I find their distraction, and the greater of course the difficulty of applying remedies.

In short, no regular plan for the management of the Military Department has been either laid down or adopted, and so little attention has been paid to that first and most essential point, their own safety and security in the garrison of Fort St. George, which after the defeat of Lieutenant-Colonel Baillie's detachment and the consequent retreat of the army from Conjeveram, they had every reason to apprehend might be besieged in the course of twenty-four hours, that I am almost confident had Hyder Ally followed his successes at that time to the gates of Madras, he would have been in possession of that important fortress. He has, however, to my great satisfaction lost the opportunity, and I think the measures I am now pursuing to provide against all accidents will render any future attempt, fortune may put in his power, ineffectual.

For the prosecution of these very necessary arrangements, and for strengthening by such means as are within my reach, my very small and enfeebled army, I am favored by the setting in of the monsoon, which has commenced with such heavy rains as I have hardly ever been witness to on this coast. This has obliged me for the present to throw the troops into cantonments, but in which I have used all possible address, by choosing the most contiguous places to the former encampment for that purpose, and by still occupying what were then the advanced posts, which I have strengthened so as to render them formidable against any sudden surprize. The main body I have formed into three grand divisions on Choultry Plain, that I might not, by drawing any part into cantonments, give birth to an idea so unfavorable to our interests as that I had deserted the field. I reside myself with one of those grand divisions, that I may be in readiness to embrace any opportunity that may offer of obtaining an advantage over the enemy.

I cannot pretend to say what changes, whilst the season obliges me

to remain inactive, may be produced either by time or my own exertions, but it is necessary I should tell you that were I not obstructed by the weather, and ever so willing to enter upon action, my force is neither sufficient nor in so prepared a state as to be equal to the undertaking of attacking Hyder in the very formidable posts which he now occupies. Besides there are other very material reasons which render it for the present altogether impossible. The deficiency of tents is mentioned in my last letter. I am now having some made of such materials as are procurable. The field artillery requisite for the service is not in readiness, of which there needs no other testimony than barely my mentioning that at this moment carriages and tumbrils are making for it. This circumstance evinces how little that very essential branch of the Military Department has been regarded. The draft cattle, besides being deficient in numbers, are in so weakly a condition that twenty yoke of them but two days ago, with the greatest difficulty, dragged a twelve-pounder through the streets of the garrison. What then is to be expected of them in the unequal grounds and bad roads which must be met with in the course of a campaign. It is impossible to say when or how I may be able to remedy this worst of evils, as my enquiries hitherto for a supply of draft bullocks have neither produced present nor promised me hopes of future success, and last of all are the inconveniences which arise respecting provisions. My last letter acquaints you with their scarcity, and that there were none to be had beyond five miles of this place, and what little could be drawn from that small circle I may safely say is already pretty well exhausted. Moreover, what articles it does furnish are of a kind more calculated for the use of the European inhabitants, to whom they prove but a scanty supply for one day's expense, than as stores for the general subsistence of an army. It is evident then that whenever I may march, I must carry every article of provision for the use of the troops from hence : and as I could not either in prudence, or from a knowledge of the length of time to which my operations may be extended, limit myself on that score, the quantity (for which supposing I either had or could procure sufficient carriage, of which there is not now enough to convey six days' provisions), would be so considerable that against the very large bodies of horse which would harass me on all sides, my little army would scarcely prove an adequate guard. Had I but four thousand cavalry to assist in this necessary part of duty, I shall apprehend nothing. As it is, until I am sufficiently prepared to act offensively, all I can promise myself is, that I shall most certainly engage the enemy should he move this way. I am at present taking means to procure a body of cavalry, in which, should I succeed, I shall esteem myself fortunate, notwithstanding the heavy additional expense it may subject the Company to. Favored by the season, I am now preparing to send off under a strong escort a small supply of provisions for the garrison of Chingleput.

Having stated to you pretty fully my own situation, I shall now give you some account of Hyder's. He has taken up his residence in

Arcot, where he is now employed in completing his artillery park, and in putting the place in the best state of defence possible. The Polygars of the countries he has possessed himself of, as well as the officers of the Nabob who were there for the business of the collections, are all attending at his Darbar, and he has uniformly confirmed them in their respective employments. He has sent strong detachments from his army to occupy every station of any kind of consequence betwixt us and him, and which he has also fortified. He has likewise sent considerable bodies to cut off our communication with, and to prevent supplies from going into, the forts in which we have still garrisons, and which I am sorry to say are very ill-prepared for resistance: for exclusive of their having but a small stock of provisions, they are scandalously deficient in the military stores necessary for their defence. In some there are guns understood to be for that purpose, but without carriages to mount them. Whilst in making these observations I reflect blame on this Government in general, I must in justice to the person at the head of the military say that, upon reading his reports and representations, I find that he has not been wanting in attention to what was his proper share.

Intelligence has lately arrived from Pondicherry which informs us of the people there having raised two new corps which they call Hyder's, and from which, at this present time, parties are stationed on the high roads, who collect duties on grain and all other necessaries of life going into Cuddalore. Whilst they are thus employed by land, they are not inactive also by sea, on which they have got a number of armed boats which take and plunder the small craft which go along the coast to and from this place to the southward with merchandize and provisions: and so very injurious have their operations of late proved to the trading part of the community, that at the earnest solicitations of the gentlemen of the Council, and being myself satisfied of its public utility I have taken upon me to detain the *Tanner* schooner, Captain Sherman, which is to be properly armed, and to go up and down the coast and destroy all boats which he may find either employed or which he may suspect, to be engaged as mentioned above.

I have also at the particular request of the gentlemen of the Council agreed to detain the *Intelligence* schooner, Captain Murray, who is gone to the Straits of Malacca to give information to our China ships of the French cruisers that have appeared on the coast, that they may be on their guard, and to bring us back any intelligence he may get relative to the French ships. The step, besides its being of importance to the real interests of the Company, was judged absolutely necessary, as some accounts which have been received in the settlement inform of more frigates than those which have appeared on the Malabar Coast being fitted out from the Mauritius, and which there is therefore reason to suspect may be gone to the Straits.

Judging it also a matter of the utmost consequence that our Bombay Administration, the Admiral and Brigadier-General Goddard should be made particularly acquainted with the situation of affairs here,

and considering the little safety there now is in sending letters by land, and likewise the impropriety there would be in trusting matters of such importance entirely to so precarious and dangerous a channel of conveyance, I have sent round the *Indus* schooner, Captain Jones, with my several despatches to them, and desired she may be returned here as soon as possible. On the subject of these despatches it is only necessary I should inform you that I have in general terms recommended to them to unite in distressing the possessions of Hyder in any way that may be in their power.

I hope all these transactions will meet your approbation. I cannot, however, help expressing my regret at depriving you, even for a time, of the use of vessels which are of such real service, and so much wanted as pilots in the Bengal river. I trust, however, as the present season was unfavorable for their return, and as they could not in all probability have completed their voyage back in less than six weeks, perhaps two months, that in the end, as they will leave this coast at a time when they may go in a few days, it will make no great difference.

We are further informed of many new buildings erecting at Pondicherry, of its increasing daily in the number of its inhabitants, and of many people having resorted to it from under our own protection as a place of security—in short, that it bids fair to be soon a very flourishing city. Very large quantities of grain which Hyder collects from the country are now laying up at Karringaley, which place we very impolitically neither defended nor destroyed, and which from its vicinity to Pondicherry, and the little probability that Hyder should think of it for his own use as a granary, I have a strong suspicion that it must be intended for the French on their arrival, which event he daily expects.

For your better information on the state of the provisions in the garrison of Fort St. George, I inclose you a copy of an estimate which I desire might be formed for the proper complement of men, &c., for six months, which, everything considered, cannot be deemed too long a time to be previously provided.

I likewise enclose you an abstract estimate of the military expenses of this establishment for one month, agreeable to which I must depend upon you for my future supplies. I have to this estimate annexed a memorandum of the monthly expense of the civil establishment for your information, in case you should see it convenient at any time to assist the wants of that department.

I must now conclude this letter with informing you of my having had several conferences with Nabob Walla Jah, but which I am sorry to say have afforded me no hopes of assistance from him: on the contrary, he pleads inability in every way and looks entirely to the Company for the support both of his cause and credit. His influence in the country seems to be completely overturned, nor can I find that he has a single adherent or even friend left in it. I confess I am somewhat astonished at so very rapid a revolution in his affairs and cannot help suspecting that his second son the Aumur has contributed to

hasten his present distresses. But what surprizes me most is that I have not yet been able to procure through his means any good information regarding either the strength or movements of the enemy.

I have the honour to be, &c.,  
(sgd.) EYRE COOTE.

Head Quarters,  
Choultry Plain,  
The 19th November, 1780.

## IV

DESPATCH ON THE BATTLE OF PORTO NOVO, 1ST JULY 1781

*To the Hon'ble Charles Smith, President, &c., &c., Members  
of the Select Committee, Fort St. George.*

GENTLEMEN,

The hurry of business consequent to the engagement with the enemy on the 1st instant has hitherto prevented me from transmitting you a circumstantial account of the occurrences of that day. I therefore take this opportunity to inform you of such matter as seems to me material, from date the 29th ultimo.

Owing to unavoidable delays in landing the necessary provisions from the vessels at Porto Novo, I found it impracticable to move the army till the 30th ultimo: the necessary orders were given for marching at 3 o'clock that morning, but a heavy fall of rain on the night preceding hindered me from commencing my march as proposed. Our field equipage was rendered so heavy by the rain that our miserable bullocks were not able to carry their loads. This occasioned a further delay of another day. One extra day's rice was landed, and the march at length commenced on the 1st instant at 5 in the morning.

From every information received, it was clear that the enemy had united their whole force (Tippu Saib's detachment excepted), and from their position taken up between us and Cuddalore meant to try the issue of a general engagement. The ground they occupied, naturally strong and commanding, was rendered much more formidable by most of the spots that would admit of it to advantage being strengthened with front and flanking batteries erected with judgement and dispatch by Hyder Ally's corps appropriated for such services. Large bodies of cavalry, who had from our arrival at Porto Novo hovered round our camp, rendered it impracticable for even a single hircarrah to return with any intelligence to be depended on, of either the strength or position of the enemy's batteries. Our grand guard and other outposts were absolutely the boundary and limited extent of our knowledge respecting the enemy.

The protection of our baggage and numerous followers required a very considerable proportion of our small army to prevent any

insult during our march in that quarter, and the forming this most necessary detachment considerably weakened our force in line, which could ill-afford a single man from the grand object of engaging and forcing the numerous army of Hyder Ally, situated as described. However, two regiments of cavalry, a battalion of sepoys with three six, and four three-pounders, the baggage guard consisting of about one hundred and fifty sepoys, the few polygars we have, and our small Mahratta corps, were ordered for their protection: their road lay on the right between our army and the sea.

By seven in the morning the line had drawn out of our ground of encampment near Porto Novo marching from the right. The country soon opened an extensive plain, and as the enemy's cavalry appeared there in force, I formed in two lines, and proceeded on my march in order of battle. We had not advanced above one mile before the enemy's batteries were clearly discovered as to position: they lay exactly on our intended road of march. I halted the army for near an hour: it was necessary to explore, if possible, the ground on our right, in hopes of its admitting to advance from that point, by which we should avoid the enemy's direct fire from their batteries, and have a chance by gaining the left of their posts, to turn or other ways command them. The principal force of their army was drawn up in the rear of their works, extending further on the plain than either the eye or horizon could command, with large bodies of cavalry in every direction, and their rockets were thrown in numbers to impede and harass our movements. During this interval of unavoidable inaction, thoroughly to examine their position, we were obliged to suffer a warm cannonade. Their guns were well served and did execution, we could not afford to throw away any shot to answer them, having occasion for every round we had for more decisive service.

I determined on the movement to the right, and proceeded about 9 o'clock, the two lines marching parallel to one another in that direction, consequently it only required their facing to the front to re-assume at any time their original order. Two battalions with eight field pieces were ordered to form a third face, the flanks of this corps joining both lines on the left to keep some batteries in check from that quarter, which opened while we were performing the above movement.

A practicable road was found on the right, made by Hyder, meant for other purposes than our approach. The road alluded to was made by Hyder for the purpose of drawing his guns to a large redoubt about half a mile from the sea. The work was far advanced, and required but another day to complete it: through it we proceeded towards his field: his guns, which were under cover, and his artillery uncovered in line, galled us considerably as we advanced, but a quick and forward movement seemed absolutely necessary.

On passing the road mentioned, I was obliged to file off and reduce my front, but as soon as the ground permitted, formed in order as before, a thick caldera hedge covering my right. Some sand hills

contiguous to this pass lay luckily situated, were unoccupied, and contributed very materially to favor my plan of operations.

The minute was critical. I had gained the flank of the enemy's batteries, waited with impatience under a heavy fire of cannon, till I had ascertained that the heights in my rear were possessed by the second line, then instantly moved on with the first, as far as order and an advancing fire of artillery on our side would permit.

I have the pleasure of acquainting you that the disposition promptly resolved on succeeded, for there was no time for aught but decided dispatch. Hesitation in the situation of our affairs would have been little better than a defeat, having no resource but four days' provisions carried on the soldiers' backs. The guns in their batteries were soon drawn off, and retired to their line, where our attack was very warmly disputed till 4 o'clock. The bravery of our troops at length carried the point, and the first line forced the enemy's infantry, artillery, and their cavalry to give way, obliging them to seek for safety by a retreat. Just as they went off, their principal force of infantry, who were from the situation of the ground under tolerable cover, gave a general discharge of musquetry, but too distant to do considerable execution. The second line obstinately disputed, and with success, an attack meditated on my rear by many battalions of infantry with their guns, and a very large body of cavalry. The different efforts made to force and charge the rear corps of the second line were all repulsed, the heights disputed, carried, and kept possession of, by which the advancing corps were left at liberty to push the enemy in front advantageously. The possessing the heights also prevented their proceeding towards the sea to attempt our baggage, it was from thence covered in perfect security and unmolested.

I was joined by the corps in my rear at midnight. It took some time to bury our dead on the enemy's ground of encampment: every possible attention was paid also on the field to our wounded men.

That night the army pursued the road the enemy had retired by, crossed the strong pass or nulla of Paravendur without any molestation and took up our ground on the north-western side of it, near to the village of Mootypollam, thereby securing a material point towards completing my march to Cuddalore.

From authentic information the enemy's force was nearly as follows: Artillery, 47 pieces, very well served: 620 Europeans: 1,100 topasses, and others in European dress: cavalry 40,000: 23 battalions of sepoys, strength 18,400: irregular footmen armed with matchlocks, pikes, and rockets, one hundred and twenty thousand: the above were in Hyder's own pay: besides lascars—pioneers and artificers not included—these bodies were numerous: also the fighting men of the Nabob of Sanoor, Raja Redra, Raja Arpanelly, Raja Terrimerry, and the different polygars, who have joined Hyder since he entered the Carnatic: his guns were principally worked by Europeans and Native artillery who had formerly been in the Nabob's service, and it is reckoned that there were embodied in his infantry from two thousand



eight hundred to three thousand of our sepoys made prisoners in Colonel Baillie's action, and at other places since the commencement of the war. These accounts are taken from an intelligent Portuguese officer who came over to us in the beginning of the action. They are also corroborated from other channels of intelligence.

The behaviour of the whole army on this most interesting day was uniformly steady and worthy of the highest commendation. I was well seconded by Major-General Munro, who commanded the first line: his spirited and active conduct contributed greatly to our success. Brigadier-General Stuart, who commanded the second line and had orders to defend the heights, performed that service much to my satisfaction. In short every individual of our little army seemed to feel the critical situation of our national concerns dependant on this country: our falling interests required uncommon exertions to support them, and to the honor and credit of this army every nerve was exerted to the very extent of possibility: the only difficulty was to restrain the ardour of the troops within prudential bounds: eager to advance it became particularly necessary to guard against accidental disorder, situated as we were, with multitudes of cavalry against us, on the watch to take advantage of hurried or confused movements.

From the want of a corps of cavalry on our side equal in number to the service required, we were with victory decidedly declared obliged to halt just beyond the enemy's ground not being able to take advantage of so distinguished a day, for with a corps of cavalry, the enemy's guns, stores, &c., would to a certainty have fallen into our hands: their strong fine cattle drew their guns off on a trot, nor was it possible for fatigued infantry to prevent this distressing sight to us. The spirited behaviour of our sepoy corps did them the greatest credit, no Europeans could be steadier: they were emulous of being foremost on every service it was necessary to undertake.

Considering the trying situation this army is in, destitute of most of the common resources for carrying on service: weak draft and hardly any carriage cattle (our guns in the face of the enemy's heaviest fire were through deep sand obliged to be drawn a full mile by the soldiers): no provisions but from day to day: pay considerably in arrears: the principal part of the Carnatic and its capital in the possession of the enemy: our armies in different parts of India having also unfortunately received checks: an enemy in great force to deal with, whose rapid success has strengthened his cause with the natives to an alarming degree: no proper force of cavalry on our side, and not half carriage sufficient for our wounded and sick: these things considered, I think I may venture to say that fairly to beat Hyder on his chosen fortified ground was as much as could be expected.

You will receive enclosed the return of our killed and wounded. I am happy to remark that our loss has been inconsiderable when compared to the business of the day.

From the best information possible to obtain of the enemy's loss, it amounts to about three thousand men. Meer Saib, Second-in-

Command, died soon after the action of the wounds he received : and a number of their leading men are reported to be killed and wounded.

My movement to Chillumbrum and Porto Novo has been also attended with the following material advantages. The Tanjore, Trichinopoly, and other southern countries are freed from the enemy's depredations, and Trichinopoly from an immediate siege, which Hyder had decided to undertake. Provided money is found by Government to pay our troops, and they are enabled to move, properly relieved from those absolute stated wants already recited, it may by degrees be possible to immerge from our present difficulties : but without the greatest exertions from Government to obviate the insurmountable difficulties this army labors under, no decisive military measures for recovering the country can be carried into execution, nor can any severe blow or check the enemy may receive be followed to advantage : it must be evident to every one that if Hyder Ali, buoyed up with former success, had not come down to seek us, I could not have moved the army to follow him : and this is a situation so trying to the responsible Military Commander that an officer of character shudders at the idea of being placed in such a predicament.

I halted the army the 2nd and 3rd instant near Mootypollam, and on the 4th, as my four days' provisions would have been expended, marched to this place.

Notwithstanding the great force Hyder has with him, Tippu Saib invested Wandiwash on the 30th ultimo, taking possession of the Pettah. The enemy's troops before the place are five rosollars of infantry, ten thousand cavalry, as many more irregulars armed, in all full thirty thousand men, with thirteen pieces of battering cannon. I have accounts, but not such as can be absolutely depended on, that in consequence of the action of the 1st, Hyder has given orders to withdraw the attack. I have been preparing, since my arrival here, in the best manner I am able, to move to its relief if necessary.

Advice is just now received that the Admiral sailed this day from Porto Novo for the southward.

Permit me to request you will be pleased to forward copies of these despatches to the Supreme Council for their information.

I have the honour to be, &c.,

(sgd.) EYRE COOTE.

Camp near Cuddalore,

The 6th July 1781.

P.S.—By the last information respecting the situation of the enemy's encampment their army lay on the northern banks of the River Velar, about 7 coss distant from hence.

*Return of the killed, wounded and missing in the action of 1st July 1781, near Porto Novo, between the Troops of His Majesty and the Company under His Excellency Lieut.-General Sir Eyre Coote, K.B. and Commander-in-Chief, &c., and the Army of Hyder Ally.*

EUROPEAN CORPS.

- His Majesty's 1st Btn. 73rd Regt. : Killed 6 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Drumr., 6 Rank & File.  
European Troop : Killed 3 Horses : Wounded 5 Rank & File & 3 Horses.  
Bengal Artillery : Killed 1 Rank & File : Wounded 2 Serjeants, 1 Fifer.  
Coast Do. : Killed 1 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Fifer, 6 Rank & File : Missing 1 Rank & File.  
Bengal Inftry : Killed 1 Serjeant, 5 Rank & File : Wounded 4 Rank & File.  
Coast Do. Killed Lieut. & Qr. Master Frans. Baillie, 2 Serjeants, 1 Rank & File. Wounded Ensign Charles Thewles, 5 Rank & File.

NATIVE CORPS.

- Body Gd. of Cavalry. Killed. 1 Rank & File & 1 Horse : Wounded 1 Havildar, 1 Trumpeter, 1 Rank & File.  
Artillery attachd. to the Cavalry : Killed 1 Rank & File : Wounded 4 Rank & File, 2 Horses.  
4 Regimts. Do. Killed 1 Jemidar, 2 Rank & File, 15 Horses : Wounded 1 Havildr., 2 Rank & File, 9 Horses.  
Infantry attachd. to the Cavalry : Killed 1 Rank & File : Wounded 4 Rank & File : Missing 2 Rank & File.  
Native Artillery from Tanjore : Missing 1 Rank & File.  
Trichny. Detachmt. : Killed 6 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Subedar, 22 Rank & File ; Missing 5 Rank & File.  
2nd Btn. Sepoys : Killed 1 Havildar, 8 Rank & File : Wounded Ensigns John Weston & Darrell Carey, 3 Havildars, 1 Drummer, 10 Rank & File.  
4th Do. Killed 10 Rank & File : Wounded 4 Havildars, 21 Rank & File : Missing 1 Rank & File.  
9th Do. Killed 3 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Havildar, 1 Puckally, 7 Rank & File.  
14th Do. Killed 4 Rank & File : Wounded Lieut. & Adj. Joseph Little, 1 Subedar, 1 Jemidar, 28 Rank & File : Missing 7 Rank & File.  
15th Do. Killed 1 Jemidar, 4 Rank & File : Wounded Ensign Patr. Dallas, 1 Drummer, 4 Rank & File.  
16th Do. Killed 1 European Drummer, 3 Rank & File : Wounded Ensign Jno. Haynes, 2 Subedars, 2 Havildars, 20 Rank & File : Missing 1 Rank & File.  
17th Do. Killed 3 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Havildar, 11 Rank & File.

18th Do. Killed 4 Rank & File : Wounded 12 Rank & File : Missing 1 Rank & File.

20th Do. Killed 2 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Havildar, 1 Drummer, 6 Rank & File.

21st Do. Wounded 2 Rank & File.

Co. of Circar Grenadiers : Killed 1 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Rank & File.

Lascars attached to the Bengal Artillery : Killed 5 Lascars : Wounded 16 Lascars : Missing 10 Lascars.

Lascars attached to the Coast Artillery : Killed 5 Lascars : Wounded 7 Lascars.

ABSTRACT.

*Europeans.*

Killed : 1 Lieutenant, 18 Non Commd. Rank & File : Wounded :  
1 Lieutenant, 5 Ensigns, 31 Non Commd. Rank & File :  
Missing 1 Rank & File.

*Total*

*Natives.*

Killed : 2 Jemidars, 1 Havildr., 53 Rank & File, 8 Artillery Lascars	64
Wounded : 4 Subedars, 1 Jemidar, 14 Havildars, 3 Drummers, 155 Rank & File, 28 Artillery Lascars	202
Missing : 18 Rank & File, 10 Artillery Lascars	28

Natives	294
Europeans	57

351

N.B. 1 Volunteer of Bengal Detachmt. died through fatigue : 19 Horses killed and 14 wounded not included in the above.

(Signed) HENRY MALCOLM.  
Adj. General.

NOTE : the Lieutenant killed was Baillie, Quartermaster 2nd Btn. 2nd Regiment, while those wounded were Lieut. Little, Ensigns Thewles, Weston, Carey, Dallas and Haynes.

V

DESPATCH ON THE BATTLE OF POLLILORE,  
27TH AUGUST 1781

*To the Governor and Council of Fort St. George.*

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

Having received information on the 24th ultimo that Hyder Ally with his whole army was encamped at or near the village of Polliloor, 17 miles south-west from our encampment at Trippassore, I determined as soon as the fort of Trippassore was rendered proof against surprise,

and a convoy had arrived from Pondamallee with six days' provisions for the fighting men of the army, to march against the enemy, and endeavour if possible to bring him to action. For this purpose four of the five 18-pounders were sent into Trippassore, the other remaining with the army to supply the place of a brass 18-pounder that burst at the siege.

Orders were also given for the heavy stores, and all the baggage that could be dispensed with a few days, to be left behind, that the army might move as light as possible. On the 26th the army marched by the right and arrived at Perambakum, 9 miles south-west from Trippassore, without seeing anything of the enemy except a few of their advanced pickets, who on our approach fell back, throwing some rockets at the advanced guard, but at too great a distance to do execution. As the line was coming up to the ground, I took the advanced and my own guard to an eminence  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles S.S.W. from Perambakum in order to reconnoitre the enemy's situation. In going to this eminence I marched over the ground on which Lieutenant-Colonel Baillie's detachment had repulsed Tippoo Saib on the 6th September 1780, and here I found the marks of Lallah's encampment whose corps had retired this morning on the approach of our army. From the eminence I plainly perceived Tippoo Saib's encampment on the plain stretching along the avenue south of Tucollam, a fortified pagoda W.S.W.  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Perambakum which had been demolished by Hyder Ally a few days before. Tippoo Saib was then striking his tents, and his line soon after marched off towards Polliloor.

On the 27th at break of day the army marched again by the right. Two regiments of cavalry, the 8th Coast battalion with its field pieces, and my guard with their galloping six pounders forming the advanced guard under Lieutenant-Colonel Brown, the luggage protected by the Mogul horse, a battalion Rajah of the Nabob's sepoy, and the men belonging to the Vencatagherry Rajah on the right flank, and two regiments of cavalry, and a battalion of sepoy under Major MacGowan forming the rear guard. The army marched by files ready told off for forming two lines, the 1st line commanded by General Munro composed of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Brigades under Colonels Crawford, Pearse, and Major Edmondson. The 2nd line following, commanded by General Stuart composed of the 4th and 5th brigades under Lieutenant-Colonel Owen, and Captain Davies, who in the absence of Lieutenant-Colonel Brown commanded the 5th brigade. In the above-mentioned order the army proceeded five miles on its march which brought it nearly opposite the ruined pagoda at Tucollam, and on the ground which Tippoo Saib had occupied the day before. About a mile further on, the army entered the great Conjeveram avenue of banyan trees, and had proceeded about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile up this road when report was brought to me at the head of the line by Captain Powny from the advanced guard that the enemy appeared in force on our front and to the left. This was about 9 o'clock. A very strong land wind had sprung up which blew full in our faces accompanied by a dust that obscured

every distant object. The enemy's elephants with the standards, and their train drawn by large white oxen were plainly perceived with the naked eye, whenever the wind and dust abated, at the distance of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles. Immediately opposite to, and stretching along our right there was a plain interspersed with thick bushes, or brushwood, here and there intersected by water courses. On our left flank was also a plain, the very spot on which the fate of the detachment under Lieutenant-Colonel Baillie had been determined on the 10th September 1780, intersected by much deeper nullahs or water courses than the other.

At the further extremity of this plain, to our front about a mile, and distant from the left of the avenue about 1,000 yards, stood the ruined village of Polliloor with two small pagodas, or swamy houses in it.

About 600 yards on the left of the advanced guard was a thick tope with a water course running close by one of its angles, and 450 yards beyond this tope, and in much the same direction another dismantled village. The vast importance a post at the tope might be of in the future operations of the day immediately appeared to me, that I ordered the battalion with the advanced guard, Captain Walker's, to take possession of it with its guns. Soon after the battalion had taken post there, the enemy began to fire from two or three guns which seemed to be at the distance of 500 yards from the tope, and as fast as they could bring others up, from three or four more, when I gave orders for a Bengal regiment to be ready to support the battalion in the tope, and in the meantime to shelter itself in the nullah behind the bank I was standing on, advancing their two guns only, with four companies to cover them, to the edge of the water course Captain Walker's guns were playing from.

Things were in this situation when I returned to the first line which had been ordered to form to the right on a supposition that as the enemy had made their appearance in front it would be necessary to present a front in that direction to oppose them, but on account of the jungles and ravines that obstructed, the line could not form to advantage at right angles to the avenue as intended. This was not known until the wind and dust was somewhat lessened, by which the situation of the ground became more visible. The leading corps of the first line at length formed more obliquely to the right, and had not remained many minutes in that position when eight or nine pieces of cannon, which were supposed, and afterwards proved, to be Tippoo Saib's, began to open from a distant tope, and took the line nearly in flank. This obliged me to change its position still more to the right, and draw up behind a jungle. The enemy's elevated guns commanded the line over the jungle, but without doing much execution. The iron 18-pounders and almost all the artillery of the 2nd brigade had opened and checked the enemy's fire considerably before this movement took place, but as the corps alluded to were obliged to draw off and march in their intervals to complete the movement, the fire from the tope

recommenced for a time, and was as brisk as before. I reconnoitred the above-mentioned jungle, and finding it not impenetrable ordered the leading corps of the first line to push through it. Some of them had room to march in battalion, and the rest were obliged to pass through in column, the whole, however, after they began to advance soon passed it, and were drawn up in order of battle on the other side, on a fine plain between the jungle and the tope the enemy's guns were in. As soon as it was perceived that some of the battalions of the 2nd brigade were got through, and that an 18-pounder was mounted on the back of the tank, the enemy in this quarter drew off their guns and retired to at least the distance of one mile and a half.

During these movements of the first line, the second having arrived at that part of the avenue opposite the post at the tope on the left, I ordered Brigadier-General Stuart to support it immediately with a brigade, and also to detach from the second line two battalions to reinforce the baggage guard, report having been made me that the enemy's horse in large bodies were preparing to attack the baggage. The leading brigade of the second line was Lieutenant-Colonel Owen's which General Stuart ordered instantly to the tope. The corps of this brigade were only two battalions, about 800 men together : the stronger battalions of that brigade were at this time on other services, viz., the Bengal 24th regiment had originally the duty of the baggage guard, and the 2nd Carnatic battalion was left in garrison at Trippassore. The post at the tope was much galled from a heavy fire from the enemy's artillery. The 8th battalion, and part of a Bengal regiment of sepoy which I had ordered there from the head of the line at first, with four 6-pounders, possessed the front of it, and were under tolerable cover in the ravines and hollow ways near it. Lieutenant-Colonel Owen on his arrival at the tope ordered the two corps that were with him to be disposed of as follows : the 14th battalion with its two 6-pounders and a howitzer to extend to the right of it where tolerable shelter was found for the men, and where seven pieces of ordnance now opposed the enemy's front fire of artillery. The Circar battalions with their field pieces were ordered to take up strong ground to the left of the tope from the angle of which there ran a bank of a dry tank about 350 yards in a southern direction. This bank the enemy lined with Polygars armed with matchlocks, firelocks, and pikes : they galled our people in the tope which made it necessary to dislodge the enemy from thence. The Circar battalion was ordered to advance and perform this service, and effected it, but in a very irregular and confused manner. Beyond the bank of this tank was a dismantled village to which the Polygars retired, and from which the Circar battalion, the only corps at that spot, was ordered to dislodge them. The battalion instead of advancing in any kind of order, fell immediately into a state of mixed confusion, and notwithstanding the greatest coolness and bravery of Captain Bridges who commanded them, joined to every assistance from the other European officers serving, there was not a possibility of reducing the sepoy to order. A number of them during their confusion

suffered from the enemy's cannon and small arms, but the idea of this corps advancing was immediately laid aside. They were ordered to get into and remain in the tope.

General Stuart had ordered the 20th battalion of sepoys, Captain Muirhead, to reinforce the corps with Lieutenant-Colonel Owen. This battalion marched up at the instant, and immediately took up the ground and post with true military steadiness, driving the enemy before them, and possessing themselves of the village in front.

A very warm cannonade continued from all directions on the post at the tope which was answered and kept in check by our field pieces there under the command of Captain Donald Mackay, advertng as much as possible not to expend our ammunition except when necessity made it absolutely necessary. It appeared to me from the beginning that the enemy's force were, and would be, employed to dispute the post. I fixed in the first instant of the attack that the left of my line should be formed and advanced from it, meaning to keep it securely possessed in my rear. The day was now perfectly clear, and it became every minute more obvious that the enemy's main force was directed against the troops in this quarter: the enemy's line of guns was extended so far to their right that they began to outflank our left, their fire in front was superior in numbers to ours, and by every disposition of their horse and foot it appeared that this post was the object they meant to press. Lieutenant-Colonel Owen's report to me also purported that the enemy was in full force opposite to him. My orders in return were, to maintain the post at all events, adding I would make a movement with the whole line to support them on the left. General Stuart, and all the corps of the second line but one, being detached to different situations, was ordered with the remaining battalion himself to the tope where almost immediately on his arrival both he and Lieutenant-Colonel Brown were wounded, together with other officers, also many men of the corps stationed there, and a number of draught and ammunition bullocks were knocked down.

I detached Colonel Pearse's Brigade from the first line to further strengthen the corps on the left, and they passed the ravines and hollow ways in the rear of the post at the tope, and to the left withal. Lieutenant-Colonel Owen's corps being in possession of the right, left, and front of the tope, he explained to Colonel Pearse that the post was occupied by as many troops as there was occasion, or room, for: that if Colonel Pearse moved on his brigade still further to the left, from a water-course they were then sheltered in, the line in that quarter would be complete to advance whenever orders from me authorized it, or the two lines were ready to co-operate.

Colonel Pearse immediately made the movement to the left, and advanced his brigade to advantageous ground still further than on a line with the front of the post. The enemy's horse made their appearance on the left flank which obliged him occasionally to wheel back the 9th battalion to present a front to them that way, they now and then made a show of attacking the baggage which was stationed



on the opposite side of the avenue, but the fire of some field pieces turned upon them from the back of the tope constantly obliged them to retire, and at length they gave over the attempt.

The fire from Colonel Pearse's quarter was, during the general cannonade of the afternoon, of great importance: they had frequent opportunities of directing it towards the flag elephants whose standards were seen over the rising ground where Hyder Ally himself was posted. The shot fell frequently amongst them.

After the 3rd brigade under Colonel Pearse had moved to the left the remainder of the first line continued marching by files to the left until it also arrived at the avenue, and then struck down further to the left until there was room for the whole to form in the avenue. As soon as the corps were formed and an iron 18-pounder run upon the bank of a tank, a post which I pointed out for it, there commenced the hottest fire from all parts on our side that was seen throughout the day. The enemy perhaps considered this as a preparation for the whole to advance upon them, as they were soon after seen limbering up, and drawing off their guns.

If this was their idea, they had not judged erroneously, for I had given orders to the 2nd brigade under Major Edmondson to advance and take possession of the pagodas and village of Pollilore directly in front of this brigade which I perceived covered the enemy's left flank, and would of course enfilade their whole line when occupied by us. The full possession of this village was the signal for the remainder of the first line to advance, viz. the European brigade under Colonel Crawford. The 2nd brigade soon effected what was ordered, meeting with no other opposition than from the scattered fire of some battalions of Hyder Ally's regular infantry who had lined the mud walls of the houses. This opposition continued but a few minutes, and in the meantime, the infantry of my own guard, who had accompanied the 2nd brigade on this service, ran their galloping 6-pounders to a convenient spot on the right of the nearest pagoda, and did considerable execution amongst the above-mentioned battalions as they were going off. Presently a 12 and 6 pounder were brought up and began playing upon the remains of the enemy's line which was retreating with great precipitation across some paddy fields laying behind the village, and extending along the high grounds the enemy had been in possession of all the morning. The loss the enemy sustained on this occasion must have been considerable, and had they not drawn off their guns, from that part some time before, they would in consequence have fallen into our hands.

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon Colonel Pearse had been joined on the left by the 4th Carnatic battalion from the baggage, and at 5 o'clock Colonel Pearse joined Lieutenant-Colonel Owen in front of the tope where the 8th, 15th, and 20th battalions were also ready to advance, leaving the 14th Carnatic, and the Circar battalions at the post with their guns to cover the rear, and remain there to protect disabled guns, carriages, &c., which had not bullocks to draw them on.

At about 5 o'clock I repaired myself to the left in order to see in what mode I could best advance with my whole force against the enemy, and on viewing the state of matters in that quarter, gave orders that the corps with Colonel Pearse and Lieutenant-Colonel Owen should advance in line as fast as bad ground and the advancing fire of our artillery would permit, which was immediately executed with proper steadiness. I had left orders that the first line should advance, co-operate, and if possible outflank the enemy's left, but the intersection of bad ground, and deep paddy fields rendered it utterly impracticable to execute the movement. The cannon could not move on with despatch.

The centre of the enemy's army with a number of cannon were opposed to the advancing corps, but as soon as their progressive movement was discovered by Hyder Ally, his guns were limbered up, and the whole of his army went off in great confusion, retiring that night to a considerable distance beyond Conjeveram, and the next day taking the route to Arcot, leaving a flying camp of cavalry about 4 miles in our front to observe our motions for the night. Our corps on the left advanced beyond the heights on which Hyder Ally's army had been drawn up, and were ordered to lay on their arms for the night in that direction.

The rest of the army encamped on the ground the enemy first drew up on, and the baggage soon after joined us without any loss whatever. The enemy's loss here must have been considerable as appeared by numbers of dead horses on the field. The men that fall they in general make a point of carrying off.

On advancing Colonel Pearse's Brigade next morning about a mile nearer Conjeveram, the enemy's camp of cavalry broke up, and precipitately retired to their main army.

The fatigue the army had undergone the preceding day rendered it absolutely necessary to refresh them by every possible means. We were also this day employed in burying the dead, and paying proper attention to our wounded officers and men, arranging our stores, and collecting large quantities of shot, of which we collected many more than were expended.

The remains of Colonel Baillie's detachment, which afforded the most melancholy scene, were gathered together, and decently interred.

On the 29th in the morning I was reduced to the necessity of returning to Trippasore, not having a single day's provisions left for the fighting men, and the allowed followers of the army not having had any rice for two days before.

Had not Hyder Ally from a principle of superstition, which we know regulates in a great measure the actions of the natives, chose to have met me at the ground on which he had formerly been successful, I could not have moved one mile further to the westward in quest of him, but must have been, for want of provisions, reduced to the necessity of returning without an action: the generality of the natives would have imagined that fear of his arms, and not the real cause was

the motive. The consequences of such a conclusion are too dangerous to our interests and too apparent not to make one shudder to appear in a responsible light under such alarming disadvantages.

From the best information I have been able to collect, the enemy's force on the day of action in the field was above 150,000 men with 80 pieces of cannon. Their loss near 2,000.

Hyder Ally's army was strongly posted. His troops covered in hollow ways, and ranged just behind the summit of the rising ground in our front, would not stand when pushed. Their loss consequently not so considerable as it would have been had they waited the decision of the day from our musketry, but this they in general avoid, always drawing off their guns, and retiring before we can bring them to close action.

Our effective force on the 27th was about 11,000 Europeans and Natives included.

The circumstance of the Circar battalion of sepoy's excepted, the whole army exerted themselves in a manner that redounds the highest credit of them, and gave me the greatest satisfaction. Inclosed is a list of the killed and wounded on the day of the action, by which you will find the numbers are—

Europeans killed	28	Natives killed	105
Do. wounded	25	Do. wounded	207
Do. missing	..	Do. missing	58

(signed) EYRE COOTE.

Terrioor Camp near Tripasore,  
September 2nd, 1781.

*Return of the Killed, Wounded and Missing in the Action of the 27 August 1781, near Pollilore, between the Troops of His Majesty and the Company under His Excellency Lieut.-General Sir Eyre Coote, K.B., Commander-in-Chief, and the Army of Hyder Ally.*

Killed, Captain Hislop, Aide-de-Camp to the Commander in Chief.

Wounded, Brigadier General James Stuart.

European Cavalry : Killed 2 Horses.

Native do. : Killed 1 Horse : Wounded 1 Jemidar, 1 Trooper, 1 Trumpeter, 2 Horses.

*Artillery.*

Europeans : Killed 3 Non-Commnd., 7 Rank & File : Wounded Lieut. Herbert, 1 Non-Commnd. 16 Rank & File.

Natives : Killed 2 Rank & File, 20 Lascars : Wounded 2 Rank & File, 32 Lascars : Killed 1 Horse : Missing 27 Lascars.

*Infantry 1st Brigade.*

Europeans : Killed 5 Non-Commnd., 7 Rank and File : Wounded 4 Non-Commnd. 24 Rank & File.

(Native Corps.)

*2nd Brigade* : Killed 1 Jemidar, 16 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Sergt.  
1 Jemidar, 37 Rank & File : Missing 8 Rank & File.

(Native Corps.)

*3rd Brigade* : Killed Mr. Saml. Ranken. Asst. Surg. : 3 Drummers,  
23 Rank & File : Wounded Ensign Thomas Gould, 2 Serjeants,  
1 Commandant, 3 Subedars, 3 Drummers & 59 Rank & File :  
Missing 6 Rank & File.

(Native Corps.)

*4th Brigade* : Killed 1 Subedar, 1 Jemidr., 13 Rank & File : Wounded,  
Capt. Thomas Bridges, Ensign Roger Hazlewood, 2 Subedrs.,  
5 Jemidrs., 36 Rank and File : Missing 16 Rank & File.

(Native Corps.)

*5th Brigade*. Killed 20 Rank & File : Wounded Lieut. Colonel George  
Brown, Ensign Willm. Watson, 1 Subedar, 1 Jemidar, 16 Rank &  
File : Missing 1 Rank & File.

Native Corps. { Company of Marksmen : Killed 1 Rank and File.  
Do. of Circar Grenadiers : Wounded 1 Rank &  
File.  
Sepoy Pioneers : Killed 4 Rank & File : Wounded  
2 Rank & File.

Officers since dead of their wounds :

Lieut. Colonel George Brown.

Ensigns Wm. Watson, Thomas Gould, Roger Hazlewood.

(signed) HENRY MALCOLM.  
Adjt. General.

ABSTRACT.

	<i>Killed.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>	<i>Missing.</i>
<i>Europeans.</i>	1 Captain	1 Brigadier General	
	1 Asst. Surgeon	1 Lieut. Colonel	
	22 Non-Commisds. Rank & File	1 Captain	None.
		1 Lieutenant	
		3 Ensigns	
	48 Non-Commisds. Rank & File		
<i>Natives.</i>	1 Subedar	1 Commandant	31 Rank & File.
	2 Jemidars	6 Subedars	27 Lascars.
	82 Rank & File	8 Jemidars	
	20 Lascars	160 Rank & File	
		32 Lascars	
	Horses : Killed 4		
	Wounded 1		
			5

N.B. 65 Draught and 82 Carriage Bullocks killed.  
28 Draught Bullocks wounded.

The Bengal Bullocks being found by Contract and not returned are not included above.

(signed) HENRY MALCOLM.  
Adj. General.

Head Quarters

Camp at Velout.

8. Sept. 1781.

NOTE: the Officers killed were Captain Hislop and Asst. Surgeon Ranken; died of wounds, Lt. Col. Brown, Ensigns Gould, Watson, and Hazlewood; wounded, Brig. Gen. Stuart, Captain Bridges, Lieut. Herbert—the latter very slightly.

VI

DESPATCH ON THE BATTLE OF SHOLINGHUR,

27TH SEPTEMBER 1781

*To the Right Honorable Lord Macartney, K.B., President,  
and Members of the Select Committee.*

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

I did myself the honor of addressing a short letter to you on the 27th ultimo with an account of the action fought that day by the army under my command against the troops of Hyder Ally consisting of his whole force assembled together from all quarters on that occasion. Permit me now to enter into a more minute detail of our situation and proceedings on the day of the action, and of occurrences previous to it. The badness of our carts, carriage bullocks, and conveyances of all kinds for the provision of the army, impeded my prosecuting my march from Poloor till the 26th ultimo in the afternoon. I left the four 18-pounders in that garrison, and took up ground that night about 7 miles further advanced on the Arcot road. A very tempestuous rain falling that night made it impossible to pursue our march early next morning. The camp equipage required drying before it could be rendered carriageable, our intelligence also was vague, and uncertain: the exact position of Hyder Ally's army was unknown. Some accounts seemingly depended on were, that he had detached a very large proportion of his force wide of our line of march on our left, and towards our rear. Other intelligence was that his whole army was collected together about 8 miles further on our intended road. On the morning of the 27th ultimo I went myself with a detachment of cavalry to an advantageous reconnoitring ground in front. Beyond where I advanced there was situated a long ridge of rocks possessed by the enemy. I ordered the 2nd brigade to march light from camp, joined them myself as soon as they moved out, and dislodged the enemy from the ridge of rocks. The brigade passing through an opening between

them, filed off afterwards by their right, and drew up with this strong post in their rear. Hyder Ally's whole army was thence clearly discovered in a southern direction the nearest part of his camp distant about three miles. A body of cavalry, encamped near, struck their tents on the appearance of the 2nd brigade, and on a few shot from an 18-pounder being thrown amongst them went off, suffering, I believe, some loss.

Orders were immediately despatched for the army to join me as soon as possible. Our camp was struck and troops in motion very expeditiously. Baggage and followers guarded by two battalions and four 6-pounders, the rear being covered on their right by hills which in a great measure ensured the enemy's not being able to take advantage of this most unwieldy mass of incumbrance: they were conducted without any loss to an eligible spot between the hills favourable to the purpose, and there remained secure during the decisive business of the afternoon.

The army, when joined, told off for action ready for forming two lines, but marching by files in one, advanced to the right nearly two miles, which brought our centre when faced to the front opposite to the enemy's principal force distant about that space. Hyder Ally's army appeared drawn out and formed with regularity in front of their encampment, a certain proportion of their tents not then struck, but totally unincumbered from every kind of baggage. During the time our army was taking up ground opposite the enemy's encampment, I advanced with a small force of cavalry midway between the two lines, more thoroughly to reconnoitre the ground, and saw their cannon posted in the intervals, also advanced to all situations where small rocks, or little eminences in their front gave them either additional advantage or security. From appearances the enemy did not seem to imagine I meant to attack them immediately in the position they had chosen: they waited, though ready prepared for the onset or attack, my taking up ground of encampment near them, or for the contingency of my proceeding forward on my march.

In their case their situation made it optional to them whether they chose to stand, or by filing off by other roads than that by which we were advancing, change their position nearer to Arcot or Vellore, before it was possible for us to gain that distance.

The impeding our march even for a few hours, without fighting, in the state we were in for provisions, was then an object of the first consequence. If resolved to attack, the ground our army had to pass was strong and advantageous to the enemy, and their large bodies of cavalry had the most pointed orders to make one general effort to take advantage of any confusion in our lines in case we advanced towards them. I had ordered the 2nd brigade, which filed to the right, not to proceed further than with their right to a hill that seemed by distance to admit of our army forming complete between it and a lesser hill on our left: our rear also secured by strong chains of rocks. Thus situated my object was to induce the enemy to change their situation,

presuming it probable I should be able to take advantage of their first movement. The forcing them to alter the disposition of their numerous army was most likely to create confusion amongst them, and our handful of troops, not exceeding in the field that day, 1,500 Europeans, and 10,000 Black troops, were easily manœuvred to profit by their change of arrangement if attempted, as far as the bad ground in front and our inadequate force of cavalry could permit. The 2nd brigade advanced further to the right than ordered, which separated the corps from the Europeans on their left. The enemy's battalions on their right, left, and centre, at this instant opened a distant cannonade, when thinking the minute too interesting to suffer their posted guns to annoy us while we were performing anything but a progressive movement, I sent orders for the 2nd brigade to advance, incline obliquely to the left, and rejoin the European brigade, ordering also the whole line to the front, and to advance in as good order as possible towards the enemy. The corps with the greatest steadiness moved on to the attack. The enemy's artillery were badly pointed, but their extensive line so much outflanked us on all sides, that separate armies, as it were, of very large bodies of cavalry, with numerous corps of infantry and guns, appeared in every direction. The ground as before described would not admit of pushing their infantry in different positions without the utmost danger of breaking our line in too many places, especially as the enemy's chosen cavalry charged with resolution hitherto unexhibited by them. The bodies of Sanoorpatam horse charged the 13th regiment of Bengal sepoys, and the 17th Carnatic battalion of Major Byrn's brigade. They came on resolutely, but suffered severely, both by grape, and round, from the artillery in that quarter, also from the small arms of those battalions, who with the greatest steadiness reserved their fire until the horses were in many places close to their very bayonets.

At the same moment Hyder Ally's select corps of stable horse, with others, charged in column the 18th and 21st Carnatic battalions of Lieutenant-Colonel Owen's brigade. An unavoidable and considerable interval from the situation of the ground had taken place between the two battalions at this juncture, but the steady coolness with which, even in their divided situation, they received the rapid movement of the cavalry was highly conspicuous. The enemy were much galled from the guns of this brigade, and when they pushed at the exposed flanks of the two before mentioned corps, were so warmly handled from the wings of those battalions next them, that they thought the safer route was through the interval to the rear, did great execution amongst them in that direction. The two leading standards of this body of horse were here taken.

The enemy perceiving that our army continued advancing, also that the different efforts of their horse had been totally defeated, began to draw off their nearest guns: their strength, as before explained, from ground gave them an opportunity of remaining on their field perhaps longer than they otherwise would have done. While we

were entangled with difficulties in front, their guns and infantry had every advantage of retiring.

They availed themselves of this unavoidable minute of check in our movements, and their force in front retired precipitately.

One 6-pounder was here taken from the enemy. I ordered the first line under Colonel Crawford to follow them, the 2nd brigade under Major Edmondson of that line, and cavalry on the right of it, brought up their artillery before the enemy were out of reach, and warmly cannonaded their flying rear corps, but by this time night coming on, the pursuit was obliged to be given over. I could not answer for the consequence of dividing my small force beyond the reach of an immediate co-operation of the whole, if necessary.

I have received repeated information from Colonel Pearse that the left of the second line was hard pressed : that the field pieces attached to some of the battalions under his command were in want of ammunition. A positive separate army was on his left flank, also another very considerable force under Tippoo Saib with twelve guns in the rear of this line.

This last mentioned corps pointed to the baggage. For these reasons I ordered that the second line should not follow the first, but change their front, thereby opposing in full force the enemy on their left, keeping up also the necessary communication with the battalions, &c., with the baggage.

They were in this position, ready by filing off from their right to follow and rejoin the first line if absolutely necessary. The enemy on perceiving this movement immediately drew off, Tippoo Saib's party in the rear of all, giving up the idea of attacking the baggage. Many of the guns of the second line after they had changed their front, did considerable execution on the enemy's cavalry and infantry before they could get out of reach.

About 8 at night I ordered the baggage to join Colonel Pearse : that effected, that the corps under his command should join the first line. The junction was completed by midnight, and the army encamped for the night on the high ground the enemy had occupied.

Receiving information the following day that Bomrauze and the Calastry Rajah had taken the opportunity of leaving Hyder Ally immediately after the action, I marched the army on the 28th through the pass of Sholingur, hoping that taking up a contiguous situation to Bomrauze Pollam I should be able to draw supplies of grain from thence. By this movement I was also considerably nearer Vellore.

What adds much to the pleasing success and happy consequences of the day, is that our loss has been very inconsiderable. One European officer killed, and 83 Europeans, sepoy, and lascars killed and wounded as per accompanying return.

The enemy's force amounted, by the most accurate accounts obtained, to 150,000 men, with 70 pieces of cannon. Their loss was above 2,000, amongst whom a number of their best horse fell. Hyder retired immediately after the action to Cauverypauk, and our intelli-



gence is that at present his army is encamped between Cauverypauk and Arcot.

I am at a loss for words to do justice to the behaviour of the whole army on the late occasion. The dispatch used in drawing out of our encampment complete under the disadvantage of having our stores and baggage to attend to, and striking any camp in this country at a moment's warning followed by an immediate march, must necessarily create a scene of confusion, enabled me so late in the day to make my march time enough to bring the enemy to action: nothing could exceed the approved firmness and intrepidity of our troops on these very trying occasions: opposed to attack a well-posted line of infantry, with a numerous train of artillery covered by large bodies of cavalry. The most active zeal and cool deliberate military steadiness was successfully exerted, and, to the honour of the British arms, the enemy assaulted and repelled in all quarters.

The 21st battalion of sepoy's received my thanks in general orders on account of taking one of the enemy's standards. I have ordered that a Jemidar be added to the establishment of that corps for that purpose of carrying it: and I cannot help mentioning the almost unexampled bravery of an individual who took the other standard. There was no cavalry of ours acting with the second line in the movement of the column of Hyder's own Horse charging the flanks of the 18th and 21st Battalions. A single Hussar who belongs to Colonel Owen, by name Mr. Finch, pushed at the leading standard of the enemy, cut the standard bearer to pieces, also cut down another man who attempted to cover it, brought off the standard, his wounded prisoner and horse, and this heroic act was attempted and executed amongst a crowd of enemies and under a heavy fire of our artillery and small arms on them at this time. I have ordered him a gold medal as a testimony of his approved bravery, and as he is out of the line of any military promotion, not being a public servant of the Company's, I recommend that he should be rewarded by an annuity of £20 a year for life, to be paid by the Company, either in India or Europe wherever the man may be resident.

I found it necessary, on the 2nd instant, to move the army into this Pollam to expedite the receipt of provisions. Hitherto we have been supplied but from day to day. I hope in a few days to have grain enough in hand, to enable me to relieve the exigencies of the garrison at Vellore—also to insure such a stock in store that I may be enabled to move the army from hence, which at present for want of rice, cannot be attempted.

I have the honour to be, &c.,  
(signed) EYRE COOTE.

Camp Attamuncherry,  
6th October 1781.

*Return of the Killed, Wounded and Missing in the action of the 27th September 1781, near Shollingur, between the Troops of His Majesty, and the Company, under His Excellency Lieut.-General Sir Eyre Coote, K.B., Commander-in-Chief, and the Army of Hyder Ally.*

Native Cavalry : Killed 1 Trooper 1 Horse : Wounded 1 Havildar 1 Horse : Missing 3 Rank & File of Infantry attached to the Cavalry, 3 Horses.

Artillery : Europeans : Killed 1 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Non-Commd. 4 Rank & File. Natives : Killed 1 Lascar : Wounded 1 Syrang 1 Golandauz 1 Lascar.

Infantry Brigade Europeans : Killed . . . Wounded . . .

2nd Brigade, Native Corps : Killed 3 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Jemidar 6 Rank & File.

3rd Brigade. Native Corps : Killed 1 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Jemidr. 11 Rank & File : Missing 2 Rank & File.

4th Brigade. Native Corps : Killed 1 Subedar 5 Rank & File : Wounded 10 Rank & File : Missing 1 Drummer, 4 Rank & File.

5th Brigade. Native Corps : Killed Ensign Deacon, 8 Rank & File : Wounded 1 Subedar 15 Rank & File.

ABSTRACT.

<i>Killed.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>	<i>Missing.</i>
1 Ensign (Deacon)	5 Rank & File	None.
1 Rank & File		
1 Subedar	1 Subedar	1 Drummer
19 Rank & File	2 Jemidars	8 Rank & File.
1 Lascar.	43 Rank & File.	
	1 Syrang.	
	1 Golandauz.	
	8 Lascars.	

Horses : Killed 1 : Wounded 2 : Taken by the enemy 3—6.

N.B. Killed 14 Draught and 15 Carriage Bullocks.

HENRY MALCOLM.  
Adj. General.

Headquarters Camp at Shollingur,  
29 September 1781.

## VII

## DESPATCH ON THE ACTION OF ARNEE, 2ND JUNE 1782

*To the Right Hon'ble George Lord Macartney, K.B.,  
President and Governor, &c., Select Committee, Fort  
St. George.*

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

I had the honour of informing you on the 3rd instant of the victory gained over the force of Hyder Ally Cawn on the 2nd, of which I shall now do myself the pleasure of giving you a more circumstantial account, conformably to the sentiments which I expressed in my letter of the 1st instant. On the 2nd, in the morning, I marched towards Arni, satisfied that, as the original movement in that direction had drawn Hyder from his position with the French at the Red Hills, it was the most certain method of bringing him to an action. The consequence verified the justness of my ideas, for about 8 o'clock in the morning and just as the advanced guard had reached the ground on which I intended to encamp contiguous to the fort, a very brisk though distant cannonade opened upon our rear, and before it was possible for me to extricate ourselves from the disagreeable situation in which the line then was by the baggage being on the flank towards the enemy and in a hollow with commanding ground all round, a heavy fire had opened upon us from every quarter in front, whilst they endeavoured to annoy our rear by a fire from the fort. I immediately ordered the baggage to be halted in the best situation which could be found in an open plain, and stationed with it for its protection five battalions of sepoys, the whole of the cavalry corps, and all my own body-guard, excepting the European troop. I then ordered the army to move out in two lines and to advance towards that part of the rising ground on which the enemy appeared in greatest force, and so soon as we got upon ground that would admit of it to form in one line and to advance upon the enemy. Owing to a great extent of wet paddy fields which the first line had to cross before this manœuvre could be completed, I saw that a considerable time must elapse, and that the enemy might gain possession of a village which was so central as to command every part of our line and also the baggage. To obviate this danger the second line under Colonel Lang, being more favourably situated, I ordered it immediately to advance and to form in the rear of that post and to throw into the village some pieces of cannon as well to check the progress of the enemy who were coming down in large bodies, both of cavalry and infantry, as to cover the first line in crossing the paddy fields. It had the desired effect, as it not only checked their fire but obliged them to retire. By the time the first line had crossed the paddy fields and formed on the left of the second, I received a message from Lieutenant-

Colonel Elphinstone, who commanded the rear guard with which by my orders he had occupied a favourable post on the banks of a tank, for covering the assemblage of the baggage, to acquaint me that it appeared to him the enemy's main strength in infantry and guns were inclining to the right as if with an intention to force his party, whilst a large body of cavalry were standing by in seeming readiness to fall upon the baggage, and that if they persevered in what he had conceived to be their intention, it would be impossible for him effectually to secure the baggage against assault. This rendered an alteration in my original disposition necessary. I therefore ordered the first line to pass in the rear of the second and to form on its right, and the rear guard under Colonel Elphinstone to join and to form on the right of the first line, and then the whole to advance in line of battle. These movements were performed by the different corps with the greatest celerity and correctness, and we advanced with spirit and eagerness. The enemy no sooner observed us in motion towards them than they retreated. We continued advancing for upwards of two miles; when, perceiving large bodies of cavalry with some infantry and guns passing to the right and left of our line for the evident purpose of getting to our rear to attack the baggage, I sent orders for it to be brought up under the cover of our line, which being then in possession of the heights originally occupied by the enemy, I ordered it to halt for that purpose. The enemy, believing we had given up the pursuit, took possession of the ground of encampment which we had marched from in the morning, and which was more commanding than that we halted upon. From thence they renewed the cannonade with very little effect, and which we returned only as we found them advance their cannon so as to do certain execution. Two heavy guns which were so situated as to enfilade our left wing were the only ones which did us any material injury. After having halted for upwards of an hour, the baggage had come near enough to admit of our again advancing, which we accordingly did and with great rapidity, although the enemy were above a mile ahead of us and retreated as you may suppose with but little regularity. In the course of three miles, we came pretty close upon part of their rear composed of regular infantry in crossing a small river, of which as they had gained the opposite bank and made a show of resistance I ordered a fire to be opened upon them. Upon observing more attentively it was perceived that they had halted to cover the crossing of some of their guns or tumbrils then in the bed of the river. Being at this time advanced considerably beyond the ground of encampment we had left in the morning, I sent orders for the baggage to assemble at a place contiguous thereto which had been reconnoitred for it the preceding day, and for the cavalry as soon as they could be dispensed with to join me. In the interim I ordered the grenadiers of the 73rd under the Hon'ble Captain Lindsay supported by the other European corps and a Bengal regiment of sepoy's under Major Blaine to push across the river and to drive the enemy from the

opposite bank, which was performed with great alacrity and spirit by the whole of the corps, and with the most exemplary ardour by the grenadiers of the 73rd who led the attack, and who received a scattered fire of musketry from the enemy as they approached. They gave way on all sides and left us in possession of one gun, a long brass six-pounder, five tumbrils full of ammunition, and two carts of shot. The corps continued the pursuit with great eagerness until they had gone upwards of a mile beyond the river, but could not come up with the enemy. However, they pressed them so close that it is out of doubt could even half our small body of cavalry been employed that day with the line, or had it been possible for them after receipt of my orders to have joined me in time, not only more guns would have been taken but the whole or greatest part of Lally's corps have fallen into our hands. When the cavalry did join, the enemy had so dispersed and had got to so great a distance, that no attempt could be made upon them with the smallest prospect of success. Whilst these services were performed by the most forward corps of the first line, the remainder thereof continued on the banks of the river ready to support them, if necessary, and the second line was halted on the ground of encampment to cover the approach of the baggage and to support the guard with it, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Owen, if required. Towards the rear of our left wing the enemy attempted to annoy the baggage by a distant cannonade from some heavy guns, but without effect: a very formidable body of cavalry came at the same time with an apparent resolution to make a desperate charge upon the rear and to break in upon the baggage, but a brisk and well directed fire from the cavalry guns effectually checked their progress, and totally frustrated their views, although no country (being open and extensive) could be more favourable for horse to act upon. The whole baggage having been thus protected and secured and the advanced corps having returned from the pursuit between five and six in the evening, the army was all encamped before dark on the same ground it had marched from in the morning. Considering that the first movement of the army commenced at four in the morning and that its most laborious operations were performed during an intensely hot day, and with the most unparalleled courage and cheerfulness, the praise due to every rank in it, both officers and men, is far beyond what can be expressed,—at least such is the sense I entertain of their exertions as to place their merit infinitely above the reach of any encomiums of mine. I have in general orders paid them the tribute of my hearty thanks and applause, and I am happy in this opportunity of recommending them as highly deserving of every attention or indulgence in the power of your Government to bestow on them. What renders our success on this occasion the more pleasing is the smallness of our loss, which you will observe by the enclosed return of killed and wounded is as follows: Europeans killed, 3 non-commissioned rank and file: wounded, 2 lieutenants, 1 cornet, 6 non-commissioned rank and file. Natives, killed 10, wounded 44.

Killed 6 horses, wounded 1. In all Europeans and natives killed, wounded, and died of fatigue 74, horses 7. The excessive heat of the weather was most felt by His Majesty's 78th Regiment, the officer, the Hon'ble Lieutenant Temple, and the 7 rank and file returned as above to have died of fatigue, belonged to it. Its effective strength now in the field is not one-third of what it was when it marched from St. Thomé on the 25th of April last. The other European corps, both infantry and artillery, have suffered severely from sickness, the consequence of hard duty and the inclemency of the weather. The enemy's loss I have not been able to obtain any certain account of, but I do not conceive it could have been considerable. We captured between thirty and forty horses of all kinds. It has been my misfortune ever since I took the field, on the event of every success, to have cause to lament my inability to pursue the advantages open from victory for want of a sufficiency of provisions. On the present occasion, had I possessed the means of subsistence, I could not only have driven Hyder up the Ghauts, but most probably have got hold of his grand magazine of Arni which would most assuredly have so far ended the war as to have checked his immediately returning in force to the Carnatic, whilst it would have given to this army that very support which at this moment maintains his. The subsequent movements of this army have been communicated to you down to the 6th in my letter from Weyopondle. On the 7th, in the morning, I marched to Trivatore where from the informations given me I had reason to expect to find some grain, but was disappointed. I halted on the 8th to refresh both our people and cattle. The latter from fatigue and want of forage have suffered severely. I shall send you a return of casualties in the carriage department as soon as the reports of the musters I have ordered are delivered to me. On the 8th, in the evening, a most unfortunate accident happened to our grand guard owing to a young officer who commanded it having more spirit than conduct. I shall send you the particulars in my next. I marched from Trivatore to this place on the 9th and found the Europeans falling down so fast and in such numbers that two or three days' halt had become absolutely necessary to give them time to recover, and to check the progress of a sickness which threatened to be universal.

I have the honour to be, &c.,

(sd) EYRE COOTE.

Camp Wandewash

The 11th June 1782.

VIII

LAST DESPATCH FROM MADRAS

*To the Right Hon'ble Charles Jenkinson, Esqr. His Majesty's Secretary at War, War Office, London.*

SIR,

I have had the honor to receive your Letters of the 21st & 31st May & 4th June 1781, likewise one of the January 5/82, informing me of his Majesty's having been graciously pleased to sign fresh Commissions, appointing General Stuart and Sir John Burgoyne, Major Generals in the East Indies Only, from the 9th of May 1777.

I cannot express the grateful Sense of Obligation, with which I am impressed, by the Approbation His Majesty has been graciously pleased to signify thro' you, of my Conduct. It has been equally my Wish & Ambition, to gain & deserve Marks of his Royal Favour; and the very honourable Notice he has distinguished me with, on the present Occasion, inspires me with fresh Spirits, and operates as a powerfull Co-adjutator, to those Endeavours, which I have been most strenuously exerting towards the Support of the Honor of the British Arms, and the Interests of the English Nation, in the Eastern World.

I observe what you mention of your having transmitted Copy of my Letter to the Earl of Hillsborough, that He, and the rest of the King's Ministers, might be informed of the present State of affairs in India, & of my Sentiments thereupon.

You also acquaint me, that I should receive a Letter from his Lordship, to explain to me, what was intended relative to my Rank in the Supreme Council at Bengal. No such Letter has ever reached me, but I have been fully informed of the Alteration, that has taken place, by the Article on that Head, inserted in the late Act of Parliament.

The Hurry incident to constant Marching and the Duties of the Field, put it altogether out of my power, on the present occasion to enter into the Particulars of the Various Operations of the Army, and the Transactions at this Presidency since my last Despatch by the *Swallow*, whereof Duplicate accompanies this.

Suffice it to say, that, altho' I am conscious of having done every thing, which it was possible for me to accomplish, with an Army neither paid, nor equipp'd to act with effect, our Difficulties and Dangers are considerably increased; and to that Degree which gives me reason to fear for the Safety of the whole.

Amidst the Noise and Hurry of a Camp, I have endeavoured to

furnish The Earl of Hillsborough his Majesty's Secretary of State, with such Information and Materials, as may enable him to form a pretty clear Judgement on the actual Situation of our Affairs here. It is with Concern I lament, that the System of Government adopted and pursued by the Company's Servants at the Presidency, has tended most materially to add to our Embarrassments. Had not my Operations been Checked & impeded by a Want of a Sufficiency of Carriage for Provisions, Hyder Ally Cawn would not now have been, as he is, an Inhabitant of the Carnatic; notwithstanding the Countenance his Ambitious Views had received, by the arrival of the French in the Month of February last. It is to that support alone, he now looks for their Accomplishment; and provided I can only effect the Object, which the Army is now proceeding upon, the Capture of the French Force at Cuddalore, I think this Year's Campaign may yet terminate greatly to the Advantage of our Interests in General.

Altho' I consider the Enterprize as hazardous, certain as I am, that Hyder will strain every nerve to oppose us, nevertheless I have not a doubt of our Success, provided our provisions and Military Stores, which are going by Sea, under Convoy of the *Medea* Frigate, arrive safe and in Time—Any accident happening, of a Nature tending to effect them, in either of these respects must frustrate the Expedition. I need not therefore say, with how much Anxiety I look to their Safety, and to their movements along the Coast, keeping Pace with those of the Army—I will not allow myself to suppose, that the Issue will be otherwise than favourable, as, should the Contrary happen, the Misfortune will in its Consequence fall heavy upon us indeed.

You will observe, by the Return of his Majesty's Troops, which goes in a separate Letter, how much they are dispersed, and how very small a Number of them there is, at present, in the Army I have the honour to Command. The whole being, under 400 Men there are at this Moment nominally in India, five King's Regiments. The Returns will show the State and Situation of the whole.

I entirely concur in Opinion with Major General Morris, as to the preference to be given to Highlanders because of their Temperance, but the fatal Effects which the Climate has had upon the 78th Regiment, furnishes strong and recent Proof, how little their Constitutions are adapted to the Service in this Country. Several Circumstances incident to the Season of the Year at which it took the Field, no doubt contributed to heighten the Losses it sustained, but I have ever observed, in the whole Course of my services in India, that the sufferings of the Highlanders have been greater in proportion, than of the Men of any other Countries.

I shall for the present conclude with assuring you, that, altho' my Health & Constitution are greatly impaired, I shall persevere through every Difficulty and Distress—whether arising from the Nature of the Service itself, or from Misconduct in those whose Province it is to co-operate with me—towards the support of our Interests.



I would do Injustice to the Exertions of the Governor General & Council, did I omit this Opportunity of declaring, that they have, in every Instance, been strenuous in giving me that Support, which promised most to promote the Success of my Operations. If they have failed in producing the desired effect, blame cannot be ascribed to them.

The Preliminaries of a Treaty of Peace, between us and the Mar-rattahs, were in the middle of May last, concluded and agreed upon by Mahadee Scindia on the part of the Marrattah State, and by Mr. David Anderson on the part of our Government.

We are in hourly Expectation of receiving the Ratification from Poona. Hyder Ally Cawn will spare no Means to defeat it, and render it ineffectual and as the Prime Minister Nana Phermaass is strongly in his Interest, it is impossible to say, how far he may be able, thro' his Influence, to Counteract it—Hyder Ally Cawn is included a Party in the Treaty, but he denies its having any Right of Obligation upon his Conduct, as he had not been previously consulted, and his Consent to the Conditions relative to Himself obtained.

My Despatches to my Lord Hillsborough contain the fullest Information on this Subject. To these I must beg leave to refer, and shall only here add, that if we succeed in destroying the French Force at Cuddalore, which is reported to be from 1000 to 1200 effective Europeans besides 3 or 400 Sepoys, I am almost positively certain, as it will cut off the immediate Chain of Communication between them and Hyder, that he will renew his Intercourse towards an Accommodation with us.

Preparations are making at Bombay for a powerful Attack upon Hyder's Possessions on the Malabar Coast—If it can be carried into execution, which want of Funds, for the Outfit of the Expedition leaves yet a Matter in doubt, Hyder must I think retire to the protection of his own Countries. In such Event, whatever may be the Fate of the present undertaking, the French without his Countenance & Support, must be exposed to the most trying Inconveniences, unless they can find means to supply themselves by Sea,—which they can have little Chance of doing, whilst our Fleet remains upon the Coast, and continues as at present, to command the Bay.

Our resources in every Quarter are upon the decline, whilst our Arrears, due to the Military belonging to the different Establishments, amount, by the best and latest Information I have been able to obtain, to upwards of Seventy Lacks of Rupees, of which, there is owing to this little Army alone nearly forty Lacks, all of which has accumulated since I took the command; a Circumstance which furnishes the strongest Testimony of the great Care and Attention, that must have been paid to the Troops, to keep them together and so obedient to their Duty, in carrying on a most harrassing Service, whilst so largely in Arrears.

I trust that before the Departure of the *Rodney* Packet, by which Conveyance this goes, I shall have the pleasure to acquaint You with

the Reduction of Cuddalore, & of the consequent Annihilation of the French Land Force on this Coast.

I have the honour to be with respect,  
Sir

Your most Obedient & most Humble Servt.

Camp near  
Chingliput  
the 31st Augt. 1782.

EYRE COOTE.

On Board the *Hertford* Indiaman  
Madras Roads 24th Sepr. 1782.

P.S.

I have ever since the 8th Instant been Confined to my Bed with a Bilious Fever, which attack'd me when with the Army near Pondicherry, from which it is with real Concern, I am now to acquaint you that it was under the Necessity of falling back, because of the Delay in the Arrival of the Vessels, without Provisions and Military Stores—I am sorry also to acquaint you of Trincamalay being in Possession of the French.

It is reported to have fallen on the 2nd Instant, but in what Manner we have yet no certain Accounts. Our Intelligence, through the Channell of the Danes, says, by Capitulation. My Orders were to defend it to the last—Sir Edward Hughes had an Action with the French Squadron on the 3rd off Trincamalay. The Conflict was severe, but the French suffered most.

Our Fleet, however, was obliged to Return to Madras Roads, where it arrived the 9th and is now Refitting.

I must depend upon the Despatches from Sir Edward Hughes, and the Government of Fort St. George, to the Administration, and to the Company, for the necessary Information of all particulars, Subsequent to the Date of my Letter to my Lord Hillsborough, respecting the now Situation of our Affairs, as my present weak State incapacitates from writing you with more Explicity.

By the Recommendation of the Faculty in two or three days I am to proceed to Bengal for the Benefit of a Change of Air, whereby should my Health be Reestablished, I intend returning to the Service here, after the Monsoon.

E. C.

## APPENDIX B

JOHN COMPANY'S HANOVERIANS: THE 15<sup>TH</sup>  
AND 16<sup>TH</sup> HANOVERIAN REGIMENTS

At the close of the eighteenth century England was not only at war with her American colonies, but was embroiled at the same time with France, Spain and Holland, and it was a matter of very considerable difficulty to find troops to carry on the war and to cover every point which was threatened. In India the death of Hyder Ali had not terminated or even checked the hostilities which for long past and with doubtful success had been carried on with the Mysore State. The treaty of Salbai had, it is true, reduced the number of enemies with which the East India Company had been contending, but Tippoo Sahib was proving himself to be as implacable an enemy to the English as had been his father, and the authorities in Calcutta and in Leadenhall Street were at their wits' end to find European troops to stay and stiffen their locally raised forces. It is true that certain regiments had been raised in England for service in India and had been dispatched to Madras; the 73rd Highlanders had been in India since 1780, early in the year following the 78th, 98th and 100th had been sent thither under General Medows, while in the spring of 1782 the 101st and 102nd, each 1400 strong, were disembarked at Fort St. George.

These reinforcements did not seem to the Directors of the East India Company likely to meet their requirements, and they appear to have been endeavouring, but without success, to recruit troops in Germany for service in Hindustan. In their need the representatives in London of the Company now made application to the King for the services of some of his Electoral troops, and sanction being obtained the following agreement was drawn up.

## THE HANOVERIAN REGIMENTS.

The Company of English Merchants trading to the East Indies, meeting with many difficulties in their endeavours to raise in Germany a Corps of Troops for augmenting and strengthening their Forces actually employed for the protection of their Possessions and Establishments in Asia, have thereupon made application to His Majesty for a Corps of his Electoral Troops to be sent over to the East Indies to be there employed in their Service. And His Majesty, considering that in this request the interest and honor of His Crown are under the present circumstances no less concerned than the Security and the Interest of the Company, which require that these possessions and establishments should be effectually supported and secured against the attempts of an enemy, with whom the Crown and the Nation

may be engaged in War in that part of the World, has so far complied with the Company's request as to permit a Corps of two thousand men to be raised in his name as Elector, at the Company's expence, for their Service.

And it is in consequence of this His Majesty's gracious Permission. that Articles of Agreement have been drawn up and settled between His Majesty's Minister for the affairs of the Electorate, John Frederik Charles de Alvensleben, and His Majesty's Electoral Lieutenant General and Adjutant General, William de Freytag, on the part of His Majesty, and John Caillaud Esquire, Brigadier General in the Company's Service, on the part of the said Company, being duly authorized and empowered thereto between whom it has been agreed and concluded, that,

## 1.

Not only the expenses of levying the said Corps of two thousand men, but likewise of their pay, cloathing, subsistence and transporting to the place of destination etc. etc. be at the charge of and made good by the East India Company, And,

## 2.

That the Company duly sensible of and thankful for this His Majesty's most gracious condescension, engage and bind themselves strictly to perform the said articles, and to give the necessary instructions and orders to their Governors, Commanders and others employed in the management of their affairs, as well in Asia, as here, to conform, as much as may be incumbent on them, to those Articles, and to see them duly, punctually and faithfully executed.

## 3.

Which articles arranged under their several heads, and properly authenticated, containing and fully expressing what has been granted and demanded on the part of His Majesty, and accepted and promised on the part of the Company, are with their references annexed to this definitive agreement and Treaty, of which they make part, and by which they stand reciprocally accepted, ratified and confirmed.

Of which Treaty, thus concerted and concluded, two original Transcripts have been made for the use of each of the two contracting parties, signed and sealed by us, His Majesty's Minister for affairs of the Electorate of Hanover, and Lieutenant General William de Freytag, and by us, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Company of English Merchants trading to the East Indies.

London this 7th day of September 1781.

(signed) JEAN FREDERICK CHARLES  
DE ALVENSLEBEN.

WILLIAM VON FREYTAG.

(signed) LAU. SULIVAN  
WM. JAMES.

Present. His Majesty having at the Sollicitation of the  
 His Excellency East India Company been graciously pleased to  
 Baron Alvensleben, permit a Regiment of two thousand men to be  
 Lieut. General raised in his Electoral Dominions, to be employed  
 Freytag, in the Service of the said Company for the  
 John Caillaud. defence of their Settlements on the Continent in  
 the East Indies. And having in consequence  
 thereof appointed His Minister for the Electoral affairs, Baron Alvens-  
 leben, and His Electoral Adjutant General, Lieutenant General  
 Freytag, to settle all the particulars of and Agreement for that purpose  
 with Brigadier General John Caillaud, nominated and appointed for  
 such purpose by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the East  
 India Company, the Parties aforementioned pursuant to their respec-  
 tive instructions did accordingly meet on the 27th and 29th day of  
 May in the year 1781. At which meeting the annexed Preliminary  
 articles as specified under their several heads were unanimously  
 agreed to.

(signed) George Best, Secr.

#### GENERAL ARTICLES OF THE AGREEMENT.

1. The Regiment is to remain in the Service of the East India Company for the term of seven years from the date of their arrival in the East Indies ; and two years before the expiration of that time, notice must be given to His Majesty in case the Company shall think it necessary to have the Regiment in pay any longer as that will require a new Agreement.
2. In case the Regiment, or the whole complement of the Regiment, cannot be raised, then the Company shall take such numbers of recruits as may have been raised for that purpose, and pay all expences incurred on that account.
3. No deductions whatever are to be made out of the money which is agreed upon to be paid according to the particular Articles.
4. The Regiment is to be put equally on the same footing as His Majesty's Troops in the East Indies, with regard to pay, rank, duty, and in every other Respect, nothing excepted.
5. His Majesty not intending to profit in the least by granting the Regiment for the service of the Company, it is on the other hand agreed, that the Company shall pay all expences whatever incurred on that account.

#### ARTICLES RELATIVE TO THE RAISING AND FORMING THE REGIMENT.

1. The Regiment is to consist of two Battalions, each Battalion of ten Companies, viz. 8 Fuzileer Companies, 1 Grenadier Company, and 1 Company of Light Infantry ; the Complement of each Company 100 Men.

## Staff of each Battalion.

- 1 Lieutenant Colonel.
- 1 Major.
- 1 Lt. Captain or Captain Lieutenant.
- 1 Adjutant Major, Rank of Lieutenant.
- 1 Adjutant, Rank of Ensign.
- 1 Judge, Rank of Lieutenant.
- 1 Chaplain.
- 1 Surgeon.
- 2 Cadets.
- 5 Surgeon Mates like Serjeants.
- 1 Drum Major like Serjeant.
- 4 Musicians—as Lance Corporals.
- 1 Armourer.
- 1 Provost—as private.

## Each Company to consist of

- 1 Captain.
- 2 Lieutenants.
- 1 Ensign.
- 3 Serjeants.
- 1 Corporal.
- 1 Clerk.
- 3 Corporals.
- 2 Drummers.
- 12 Lance Corporals.
- 74 Privates.

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 100

## For the Service of the Artillery per Battalion.

- 1 Serjeant.
  - 2 Corporals.
  - 12 Cannoneers.
2. It being customary with the German Troops to have two Pieces of Cannon 3 or 6-pounders attached to each Battalion, the Company will send orders that these be provided out of their Magazines, and they are to remain attached to the Battalion, independent of the Corps of Artillery during the time of Service, at the expiration of which they are to be returned.
  3. The Levy money for every man, non commissioned officers included, is fixed at five pounds sterling. The Standard of the Men is to be the same as for the Marching Regiments in England.

## ARTICLES RELATING TO SUBSISTENCE MONEY, PAY AND ALLOWANCES.

1. The Subsistence money for the Staff of the first Battalion (the Private and Musicians only excepted) also the Subsistence for the Men for the Service of the Artillery of the whole Regiment,

and likewise for all Officers, non commissioned officers and Drummers of the first Battalion, is to commence from the first of July 1781. But with regard to the subsistence for the Privates, a certificate is to be produced, ascertaining the number of men raised in the month of July, and signed by the two Commissioners appointed by His Majesty for that purpose, Baron Münchhausen, Privy Councillor of the War Office at Hanover, and Major General Baron Busche ; on the receipt of which the Subsistence money for the men actually raised, is to be paid for the whole month of July, and thus it is to continue the following months, till a report be made of the whole being completed.

2. In the like manner the Company shall re-imburse all expenses incurred on account of Subsistence of such recruits as may have been actually made in the month of June.
3. As soon as the first Battalion shall have passed in review before the Officer appointed by the Company for that purpose, the full English pay for that Battalion shall commence.
4. The Stoppages are to be regulated as with the King's Troops ; but their distribution to be made according to the Hanoverian Method.
5. The two Cadets per Battalion are to receive the same Pay and Allowance as those sent out by the Company.
6. And whereas the Regiment, from the day of its arrival, is in every respect to be equally on the same footing as His Majesty's Troops in the East Indies, all papers relative thereunto, and stating the extra Allowances in Garrison, as well as those called Batta, are to be transcribed and annexed to these Articles as Part thereof.
7. The aforementioned Batta being intended to answer all exigencies when in the Field, no Allowance is to be made with regard to loss of Baggage.
8. A Commissary from the Company is to be allowed from time to time to muster the Battalion, agreeable to the orders that may be issued for that Purpose.
9. The Effective men of the Regiment are to be paid according to the Monthly Return given in to the Paymaster, and no profits allowed to the Officers from vacancies.

ARTICLES CONCERNING THE CLOATHING AND EQUIPMENT OF THE REGIMENT.

1. A uniform is made up here as a pattern of the rest ; and if they can be furnished cheaper in Germany, the difference to be allowed to the Company. All firearms, Swords and Belts, Grenadier Caps, and all Accoutrements, as specified in the List enclosed, Drums, Colours etc. to be paid by the Company according to the Accounts which will be produced thereof.

2. The Camp Equipage is furnished by the Company in the East Indies, yet as it is thought necessary to take on board,
- 1 Officer's Tent.
  - 8 Private Tents and
  - 1 Bell Tent per Ship
- these are to be provided for before the embarkation at the expense of the Company, for which purpose the Accounts thereof are likewise to be produced.

## ARTICLES CONCERNING THE TRANSPORT OF THE REGIMENT.

1. All officers are to be allowed a free passage, and the Privates are to be put on the same Establishment as His Majesty's Troops; wherefore a Copy of the Papers regulating the said Establishment, is to be annexed to these Articles.
2. The Passage for two Women per Company is to be granted, but no Children to be carried over.
3. The Company will hereafter provide for the return of the Regiment. The Passage for Officers that return by Command or Permission of His Majesty, as likewise the transport of non-commissioned officers and Privates that may have served their time, must be at the Company's Expense.

## ARTICLES PROVIDING FOR SICK, WOUNDED, AND INVALIDS.

1. With regard to the care of wounded and sick men or hospitals, Medicines etc. particular Articles agreeable to the exigencies of the Service are to be drawn up. These not having yet been adjusted with regard to the King's Troops in the East Indies, it is agreed that His Majesty's Electoral Troops shall be put upon the same footing as his British Troops in that Country.
2. Officers obliged to return on Account of Wounds or Illness, with proper Certificates, are to have a free passage granted by the Company and to receive one year's pay gratification on their return. In case the Wounds have rendered them invalids, they are to be allowed half pay for Life, according to their rank in the Service, provided an Oath, prescribed by the deed of Settlement with Lord Clive, be made by a
 

Lieutenant Colonel that he is not worth	. £3000
a Major . . . . .	. £2500
a Captain . . . . .	. £2000
a Lieutenant . . . . .	. £1000
an Ensign . . . . .	. £750
3. Invalids in the Service shall be put upon the Establishment of the Invalids in the East Indies during the time of the Capitulation; at the expiration of which the Company is to grant them a free passage; and on their arrival in England they are to receive four months full pay, to return to their Country, where they



will be entitled to a pension to be paid every Six months, amounting to about 4 pence 3 farthings, a day, upon a proper Certificate being produced that they are alive.

ARTICLE RELATING TO NEW CLOATHING.

The Regiment is to be new Clothed once a year like His Majesty's Troops; and the Transport of the Cloathing to be at the Company's expence, from the time of shipping at Hambro' or any other place.

ARTICLES CONCERNING THE COMMAND OF THE REGIMENT AND ITS JURISDICTION.

1. With regard to the Command of this Corps, the Regiment is in every Respect to be on an equal footing with His Majesty's Troops. The promotion of Commissioned Officers depending entirely upon His Majesty's Will and Pleasure.
2. And with regard to the Military Jurisdiction, a particular regulation thereof is approved, and annexed to these Articles.

(signed) JEAN FREDERICK CHARLES  
DE ALVENSLEBEN. LAU. SULIVAN.  
WILLIAM VON FREYTAG. WM. JAMES.

REGULATIONS

CONCERNING THE TWO BATTALIONS OF OUR ELECTORAL TROOPS DURING THE TIME OF THEIR SERVICE IN THE EAST INDIES.

I.

The two Battalions are to be governed by their own martial Law, and in the manner prescribed by our Ordonnances in the Electorate under their Commanding Officers.

2.

In the meantime we confer to the Commanding Officer in Field or Garrison the Power of Cognizance in misdemeanors relative to the Service in Field or Garrison, viz. upon Guards, Pickets, Command etc. with regard to Commissioned as well as non commissioned officers and privates, in all cases where the Fact is so clear as not to require a great formality of Trial, and which only amount to a short Arrest with respect to Commissioned Officers, and comparatively to the usual Punishments for non commissioned Officers and Privates.

3.

Our British commanding Officer in the East Indies, must however, in the above mentioned cases, inflict no other Punishment than what is usual and customary amongst our Electoral Troops.

4.

Should a crime in Field or Garrison Service be committed, which deserves a hard Corporal Punishment, or Punishment of Death, and a judicial examination and inquisition be required, then the British Commanding General, or Officer, may put the delinquent under Arrest, but he must deliver him up to the Commanding Officer of our Electoral Troops, in order to proceed against him according to the Precepts of their Martial Law ; and the Sentence, before it be carried into execution, is to be laid before the Commanding General, or Commanding Officer, who, in case the sentence should be found inadequate to the Crime, or it should be deemed necessary to aggravate the Punishment on account of particular circumstances occurring, has a right to order a Court Martial to be held on that Subject—of all which Transactions hereafter a Report is to be made to us.

5.

Supposing the Possibility that the Commanding Officers on both sides could not agree upon the Subject ; then a Report of it is to be made to Us and the case referred to Our further Pleasure.

6.

In order that all misunderstandings or disputes which may happen between Non Commissioned Officers and Privates of the two different Nations, may be adjusted in the shortest manner, and in order that a mutual confidence and good harmony may always subsist, the Commanders on both sides are to appoint two officers for the purpose of enquiring into such disputes, who are either to settle the affair themselves, or, if necessary, to make a Report thereof to their respective Commanders.

7.

In General, Our Electoral Troops serving in the East Indies, are to enjoy the same privileges, in every respect, which are allowed to our British Troops there on Service.

(signed) GEORGE R.

(signed) J. F. C. ALVENSLEBEN.

Both regiments wore red uniforms with green facings and silver lace ; the shoulder straps of the 15th were green, those of the 16th red. The men wore knee-breeches of the same colour as the uniform coats, with gaiters and three-cornered hats with a pompom, of the same colour as the facings, on the left. The Colours are nowhere definitely described but were probably, as in the case of other regiments of the Hanoverian Army, the Electoral Colour white and the regimental Colour green—the same as the facings.

It will be apparent from the foregoing that the original intention was to raise a regiment of two battalions. This idea seems, however, to have been early abandoned and two single-battalion regiments were raised and numbered respectively as the 15th and 16th. The reason

for this numbering is not quite clear, for at the time that these regiments were created the junior regiment in the Hanoverian army seems to have been No. 13, a corps the two battalions of which dated from 1748 and 1758 respectively.

Major General von der Busche, then Inspector General of Infantry, and Privy Councillor von Münchhausen, were appointed members of a Committee specially created to carry out all arrangements connected with the raising of these regiments, and the town of Hameln was selected as the recruiting depôt. Officers and non-commissioned officers of the Electoral Army were invited to transfer for service in India, and these came forward so freely that the required number was very quickly obtained. In regard, however, to the rank and file King George III appears to have been by no means desirous that his subjects should be, even temporarily, expatriated, and it was directed that transfers among the men should as far as possible be confined to those who were not of Hanoverian birth. As regards recruits it was also apparently the intention that men of other German states should preferably be enlisted; but owing to the haste with which the enlistment for these regiments was conducted and the number of recruits who eagerly presented themselves, the foreigners actually accepted were scarcely more numerous than the Hanoverians. The standard set was a high one: only fit, well developed men were enlisted, not less than 5 ft. 6½ in. in height, and between the ages of 16 and 40; the period of engagement was for eight years, seven of which were to be passed in India, thus allowing one year for the voyage out and home.

The officer appointed to the command of the 15th Regiment and, as the senior officer, to assume charge of both, was Lieutenant Colonel C. L. Reinbold, who was transferred from the 12th Infantry Regiment; while to the command of the 16th was detailed Major August von Wangenheim, who came with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel from the 9th Light Dragoons. The junior officers came from different regiments and in nearly all cases were given a step in rank on transfer. Of the 170 officers who during the ten years that the regiment served in the East passed through its commissioned ranks, 69 never returned to Europe, and of these something less than half a dozen met their deaths at the hands of the enemy. Of those who lived to come home twelve ended their days as generals of the Hanoverian army, while many of the others served after their return either in the Hanoverian army or in the German Legion.

Towards the end of September 1781—that is to say, at the end of not more than three months from the date of the receipt of the order—the 15th Regiment was in so forward a condition as regards training, uniform, and equipment, that it moved in three divisions to Stade, where ships sent by the East India Company were lying ready for its conveyance to England. When mustered on the 14th September by Captain Petchell at Hameln the effective strength of the 15th Hanoverian Regiment had been as follows: 48 officers, 89 non-commissioned officers, 24 drummers and fifers, and 873 privates, making a total of

1,034 of all ranks. For these three transports only had been provided—the *Nottingham*, the *Polly*, and the *Ann and Amelia*; the *Nottingham* carried the Headquarters of the 15th, thirteen officers, 151 of other ranks, and 4 women; the *Polly*, twelve officers and 223 sergeants, rank and file; while on the *Ann and Amelia* were thirteen officers, 170 other ranks, and 6 women; the remainder appear to have been left at Stade.

Convoyed by the *Belle Poule*, then lately captured from the French, the transports sailed from Stade, but on leaving the mouth of the Elbe they ran into a gale, and the *Polly*, putting back, was caught in the ice off Ritzbüttel and was unable to resume her voyage until the spring. In the meantime the other two transports reached England where the greater part of the winter was spent, and there finally embarked at Portsmouth on the 3rd February 1782—27 officers, 38 non-commissioned officers, 11 drummers and fifers and 360 privates, while a 'State' dated the 9th September of this year shows that there were:

Left behind in Germany on the <i>Polly</i> :	12	officers	and	223	other ranks.
Left behind at Portsmouth :	9	„	„	289	„ „
Died up to 3rd February 1782 :				65	„ „
Dead since 3rd February 1782 :	1	„	„	92	„ „
Remained on board the <i>Ann and Amelia</i> :	13	„	„	170	„ „

In the meantime the formation of the 16th Regiment was being proceeded with, and in March 1782 the remainder of the 15th, and in the beginning of June the whole of the 16th, were embarked at Stade for England, where both remained until the 11th September when they sailed under convoy of Lord Howe's fleet intended for the relief of Gibraltar. Off the coast of Portugal they parted company, and the transports containing the Hanoverians pursued their voyage to India escorted by a single man of war. The following seems to have been the disposal of the troops on the transports :

#### 15th Regiment.

In the *General Coote* : Captain Schultze, Lieut. von Brockes, Ensigns Martin, von Brincken and von Linsingen, 1 armourer, 4 sergeants, 3 corporals, 2 drummers, 94 privates, 3 women.

In the *Europa* : Captains von Horn and Best, Lieuts. de Roques and von Harling, Ensigns Best and Breymann, 2 Surgeon's Mates, 3 sergeants, 6 corporals, 3 drummers, 90 privates, 50 recruits, 3 women.

In the *Duke of Athol* : Captain von Bösewiel, Ensign Olbers, 3 sergeants, 2 corporals, 1 drummer, 40 privates, 3 women.

#### 16th Regiment.

In the *Winterton* : Lieut. Colonel Wangenheim, Captains von Hardenberg and Müller, Lieuts. Voss, du Plat and Klingsöhr, Ensign Compe, Lieut. and Qr. Mr. Clüver, Ensign and Adjt.

- Schlegel, Surgeon Schmidt, 1 Cadet, 11 sergeants, 6 corporals, 4 musicians, 1 drum-major, 4 drummers, 171 privates, 5 women.
- In the *Montague*: Major von Kruse, Captain von Reden, Lieuts. Bergmann, von Schultzen and von Roden, Ensigns Wernicke and von Dachenhausen, Lieut. and Adj. von Bothmer, Judge Schieve, 1 Surgeon's Mate, 8 sergeants, 6 corporals, 1 armourer, 4 drummers, 169 privates, 5 women.
- In the *Rodney*: Captains Brunsich and von Drechsel, Lieuts. Hüpeden, von Kauffmanns, Schowart and Kuhnhard, Ensigns Isenbart and von Arentschild, Chaplain Winckelmann, 1 Cadet, 9 sergeants, 6 corporals, 4 drummers, 162 privates, 4 women.
- In the *General Goddard*: Captain Dröge, Lieuts. von Brandt, von der Wense, and von Schulte, Ensigns von Wintzleben and Hassberg, 1 Surgeon's Mate, 10 sergeants, 8 corporals, 3 drummers, 142 privates, 4 women.
- In the *General Coote*: Captain von Zelle, Lieuts. Klussmann and von Behr, Ensign Breymann, 1 Surgeon's Mate, 5 sergeants, 3 corporals, 2 drummers, 82 privates, 5 women.
- In the *Europa*: Captain von Lixfeldt, 1 Surgeon's Mate, 1 sergeant, 1 drummer, 23 privates.
- In the *Duke of Athol*: Captain von Westernhagen, Lieuts. Nolte and Suerssen, Ensign Gerber, 1 Surgeon's Mate, 5 sergeants, 2 corporals, 2 drummers, 83 privates and 3 women.
- Total of the 15th Regiment with this fleet was thus 317 all ranks and 9 women, and of the 16th Regiment 988 all ranks and 26 women.

Ensign Chevallier of the 16th appears to have proceeded with the Head-quarters of the 15th—probably by reason of his approaching transfer, since he was later appointed adjutant of the 15th Regiment.

The greater part of the residue of the 15th appear, as its components arrived in England, to have either remained in Portsmouth on the ships in which they had voyaged from Stade or to have been quartered temporarily at Forton; but on the 5th June 1782 a large party sailed for the East in the *Brilliant*, Indiaman, under Captain von Plato, who seems to have had with him nearly 250 non-commissioned officers and men, and probably the following officers: Lieuts. von Hoesch, Madelung, Fahrenkohl, and von Pentz, Ensigns Riesenberg and Ahrends. The *Brilliant* was not a lucky ship, for she ran aground off the island of Johanna in the Mozambique Channel, and although all the officers and most of the men were saved and those who reached the shore were well treated by the local chief, Captain von Plato, Lieuts. Madelung and Fahrenkohl died of hardship and exposure. Then when the survivors, obtaining possession of a craft, set sail for Bombay, their ship sprang a leak, a storm drove them far out of their course, and they suffered terribly from the giving out of their store of water and provisions. Another officer and several men died during this voyage, and finally, at the end of 1783 or early in 1784, only 3 officers and 44 of other ranks managed to rejoin a detachment of their regiment

then serving under Major von Kruse at Tellicherry on the coast of Malabar.

The first party of the 15th Regiment reached Madras on the 11th September 1782, having taken part *en route* in a naval action between the British fleet under Admiral Hughes and that of France under Suffren, and as other transports came in the men were disembarked, and either occupied the barracks in Fort St. George or camped in the neighbourhood until the arrival in April 1783 of the remainder of the 15th and of the whole of the 16th Regiment, which latter corps had enjoyed a tolerably uneventful voyage—marred at the close by the blowing up in port on the 16th April of the transport *Duke of Athol*, whereby a sergeant and 5 men of the 16th lost their lives.

Two companies of the 15th had already been sent to join the British army under General Stuart before Cuddalore, and in June six more companies from the two regiments proceeded thither under Lieut.-Colonel von Wangenheim—making a total of 43 officers and some 800 other ranks distributed in 8 companies. On the 7th the French had moved out towards Stuart and commenced to entrench a position which on the 13th it was decided to attack. A sharp fight ensued in which the Hanoverians came to push of bayonet with the enemy, and though the issue was for some time in doubt, the French were finally driven from the position, lost several guns, and fell back into Cuddalore.

The losses among the Hanoverians were heavy, amounting to one-third of their officers and 25 per cent. of the non-commissioned officers and men: Major Varenius, Captain Brunsich, Lieut. Klussmann, Ensign Müller and 64 men were killed, while Captain von Westernhagen died some four weeks later of his wounds: Captains von Scharnhorst, Dröge, and von Zelle, Lieuts. Brauns, von Hinüber, Nolte and Hüpeden, Ensigns Best, Chevallier, Wernecke, Isenbart and Gerber and 137 other ranks were wounded. Trenches were now opened by land against Cuddalore, in the waters off which port both fleets were manœuvring. Suffren embarked 1,200 men of the garrison to complete his crews and fight the British, and when Hughes withdrew after an indecisive action, the French admiral at once put 2,000 men on shore to help de Bussy in Cuddalore.

On the 25th June the French attacked our siege works but were beaten off, leaving in our hands the Chevalier d'Amas. The siege did not, however, progress; the French were equal, if not superior in numbers to the besiegers, and Suffren held command of the sea; and it is probable that Stuart must shortly have withdrawn had not the news of the peace of Versailles now happily reached him, and enabled him to detach troops to the south where Colonel Fullarton was holding his own against the forces of Mysore.

The Hanoverians were now very sickly, many men were down with dysentery, and while the bulk of the army took ship for Madras, two small detachments of the 15th and 16th marched separately southwards, being finally united at Trichinopoly under Major Offency into a small battalion. In a comparatively rare book, bearing the handy

title of 'A View of the English Interests in India, and an Account of the Military Operations in the Southern Parts of the Peninsula during the Campaigns of 1782, 1783, and 1784,' by Colonel Fullarton, mention will be found of the services of Major Offeney's detachment. The book contains also an 'Order of Battle' dated 25 September 1783, in which the Hanoverians are shown as forming part of the 1st Brigade under Lieut.-Colonel Elphinstone, with the 78th, 101st, 102nd, and Madras Europeans: their strength is given as 414.

This small body served under Fullarton in the Polygar country, was present at the capture early in November of the fort of Polyghautcherry, and here and in the ensuing operations about Tanjore Lieuts. von Wersabe and du Plat specially distinguished themselves. Another detachment, composed of 300 men from both regiments, did equally good service under Major von Kruse in the Mangalore and Cannanore country.

In 1785 the regiments of the Hanoverian Army were re-numbered and the 15th and 16th serving in India became the 14th and 15th; this was later in the same year followed by a change in command of both corps. For some little time past there appears to have been a certain amount of friction between the two commanding officers, of whom Colonel Reinbold was the senior. In September Colonel von Wangenheim proceeded home on leave and laid his complaints before the electoral authorities, with the result that both commanding officers were recalled, Reinbold being succeeded in May 1787 by Lieut.-Colonel L. von Wangenheim from the 2nd Regiment of Horse, while the command of the 16th (now 15th) Regiment was conferred upon Major Offeney.

From August 1785 until the spring of 1787 the head-quarters of both Corps seem to have remained at or about Arcot, great difficulties being experienced in maintaining their establishments; in 1787, however, when they returned to Madras a draft of 400 men reached them from home under Major von Spangenberg from the 12th Regiment, with whom also sailed the new colonel of the 14th in relief of Reinbold. Another draft of 200 recruits with 2 officers and 12 non-commissioned officers was also dispatched at the end of the same year. In all some 2,800 Hanoverian troops had by this time been sent to India.

Colonel Reinbold now left India to return home via China, but died at Canton on the 11th November 1787.

The two regiments, now again at approximately full strength, remained in Madras, forming part of the 5th Brigade under Colonel L. von Wangenheim, until the autumn of 1788, when some trouble threatening in the Northern Circars, the 15th Regiment, or some 600 men from it, was sent thither under Major Offeney, seeing no fighting and passing the rainy season in Guntoor.

By the autumn of 1789 the term of service of the men of the two regiments was nearly expired, but in view of the second Mysore War which broke out in this year the East India Company was naturally

very anxious that their engagement should be extended. To this, however, Colonel von Wangenheim did not see his way to agree, in the absence of any instructions from home ; and the men being absolved from military duty pending reference as to their disposal, discipline very greatly suffered. All available troops had taken the field against Tippoo, and the duties at Fort St. George became so heavy that many of the Hanoverians were re-engaged for periods of six weeks at a time at special rates of pay. Von Wangenheim was placed in a situation of some difficulty, for on the one side he was urged by the Company and by Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, to permit his time-expired men to enter into a fresh engagement for three years, while on the other side he did not feel justified in acceding to these wishes—shared though they seem to have been by all his subordinates in the two regiments—until he should have heard how the matter was regarded by George, King and Elector.

From the 7th June 1790, however, von Wangenheim permitted those men whose period of engagement had expired to re-engage for six months, and to renew for further periods of equal length until the decision of the King should be received. The result of this was that the Hanoverians were prevented from sharing in the campaign of 1791-92 ending in the peace made under the walls of Seringapatam. Only in December 1790 were orders received from home directing that von Wangenheim should permit a fresh engagement to be entered into with the East India Company of from one to three years' duration ; and in consultation with Lord Cornwallis it was arranged that the 14th Regiment should remain for a further twelve months in India, being completed to establishment from the 15th Hanoverians ; while the cadres of this latter, with the invalids of both corps and such men as had no wish to re-engage, were to be sent home.

The invalids were now collected from Arnee and Chingleput and were concentrated in Madras, and between the middle of January and the end of April 1791 the 15th Regiment embarked on seven transports for Europe. The strength of the 15th was 37 officers, 82 non-commissioned officers and 139 men, and of invalids of both corps 46 non-commissioned officers and 131 of other ranks, making a total embarking strength, including 20 women, of 455.

The 14th with the accessions it had received was now one of the strongest corps in India, being over 850 in number, and was stationed half in Madras and the remainder in Fort St. George. One company was later sent to Poonamallee.

The 14th remained in Madras until the beginning of 1792 when it was embarked for Europe and landed at Stade, the last to leave India being a party under Colonel von Wangenheim with Captains von Weyhe and von Hinüber, which sailed in March and reached Stade in the middle of November. The total strength of the 14th on leaving India was 614 of all ranks. 177 men who still had a year of their engagement to complete were permitted to volunteer for British regiments serving in India, and many of those who had completed



their service elected to take their discharge in the country. The 14th seems to have been disbanded on return to Hanover, the men forming the nucleus of a new 14th Regiment raised in 1793, and which served against the troops of the French Republic in the Netherlands in 1794-5. The new 14th was a Light Infantry Corps, wore a light green uniform with yellow facings, and carried no Colours; in 1802 it was re-numbered the 12th.

The following is the nominal roll of the officers who were borne on the strength of the 15th and 16th Hanoverians during their service in India. They are taken from Captain von dem Knesebeck's book, but a comparison with the embarkation and other returns, from which quotation has already been made, seems to show that he is not always correct in the regiments to which he assigns certain of the officers. The officers were no doubt frequently interchanged or transferred, while the final amalgamation of the two corps—or what amounted to such—in 1791, probably made it even more difficult to decide the regiment to which each had belonged. The number opposite a name in brackets shows the regiment to which the original officers belonged on first proceeding to India, so far as can be traced.

*15th Hanoverian Regiment.*

Colonel C. L. Reinbold : died in China on return from India.	(15th)
Colonel L. von Wangenheim.	
Major von Kruse : retired on pension and died in France on return from India.	(16th)
„ von Spangenberg.	
Captain von Horn : retired on pension, his health having broken down.	(15th)
„ von Bösewiel.	(15th)
„ Dröge : died in India.	(16th)
„ Best : died in India.	(15th)
„ Brunsich : killed at Cuddalore.	(16th)
„ von Scharnhorst : invalided.	
„ Meissner : died in India.	(15th)
„ König : died in India.	
„ Müller : died in India.	(16th)
„ Bergmann : died in India.	(16th)
„ von Honstedt.	
„ Hüpeden.	(16th)
„ von Schlütter : died on the way home.	
„ von Arentschild.	(16th)
„ von Weyhe : died on the way home.	
„ von Reden.	(15th)
„ von Zastrow : invalided.	
„ von Hinüber.	
„ Reinbold.	
„ Thiemann : pensioned on account of loss of sight : Qr.Mr.	
„ Klingsöhr.	(16th)

Lieut.	Hoesch : died in India.	
"	Fahrenkohl : died at Johanna.	
"	Brauns : died in India.	
"	Falkenberg : retired.	
"	von Goeben : retired.	
"	de Meaumont : retired.	
"	von Harling : retired on pension.	(15th)
"	Schrader : died before sailing for India.	
"	von Schultzen : retired on pension.	(16th)
"	von Behr : died in India.	(16th)
"	von Roden : retired on pension.	
"	Suerssen : retired.	(16th)
"	Peters : died in Rio de Janeiro.	
"	Riesenberg : died in India.	
"	Olbers : died in India.	(15th)
"	von Brincken : died in India.	(15th)
"	Schlegel : died in India.	
"	Gerber.	(16th)
"	Best.	(15th)
"	von Linsingen : pensioned, went mad.	(15th)
"	Breymann.	(15th)
"	Ahrends : died in India.	
"	Offeney.	
"	Wacker : retired on pension.	
"	Beym : died on the way home.	
"	Laudon : retired on pension.	
"	Bruel.	
"	Owen : died in India.	
"	von Dachenhausen.	(16th)
"	Westphal : retired on pension.	
"	von Hartwig.	
"	von Haerlem.	
"	de Vaux.	
"	Baring.	
"	Diepenbroick.	
"	Riesenberg.	
"	Frederking : died in India.	
"	Cordemann : died in India.	
"	Büttner.	
"	Hennigs : retired on pension.	
"	von Quernheim.	
"	Vietinghoff : killed in a duel.	
"	Kotzebue.	
"	Barckhausen.	
Ensign	Compe : died on the way home.	(16th)
"	Lübbers : retired.	
"	Müller : killed at Cuddalore.	(15th)
"	Schultze : died in India.	

Ensign Meyenberg :	died in India.	
„ Thiedemann :	died in India.	
„ Engelmann :	retired on pension.	
„ Kuntze :	died in India.	
„ Rumann :	drowned.	
„ Falcke.		
„ von Ulmenstein.		
„ Deslen :	dismissed the service by sentence of a Court Martial.	
„ Meister.		
„ Bösewiell.		
„ von Bahring.		
„ Baring.		
„ Wiedau.		
„ von Heldrit.		
„ von Diepenbroick.		
„ Breymann.		
„ Strube.		
„ Wiesener.		
<i>16th Hanoverian Regiment.</i>		
Lieut.-Colonel A. von Wangenheim :	recalled.	(16th)
Major Varenius :	killed at Cuddalore.	(15th)
„ Offeney.		
Captain von Plato :	died at Johanna.	(15th)
„ Schultze :	died in India.	(15th)
„ von Zelle.		(16th)
„ von Hardenberg :	retired.	(16th)
„ von Lixfeldt.		(16th)
„ von Westernhagen :	died of wounds received at Cuddalore.	(16th)
„ von Reden :	retired on pension.	
„ von Drechsel :	retired on pension.	(16th)
„ Nolte :	retired on pension.	(16th)
„ Brauns :	died in India.	
„ Voss :	died in India.	(16th)
„ Wersabe :	died in India.	
„ du Plat.		(16th)
„ Isenbart.		(16th)
„ von der Wense.		(16th)
„ von Pentz :	died in India.	
„ Scheidemann.		
„ Jordan :	died in India.	
„ de Rocques :	died in India.	(15th)
„ von Kauffmanns.		(16th)
„ Clüver :	died on the way home : Qr.Mr.	(16th)
„ Kuhnhard.		(16th)
Lieut. Madelung :	died at Johanna.	(15th)
„ von Brandt :	died in India.	(16th)

Lieut.	Klussmann : killed at Cuddalore.	(16th)
"	von Bothmer : died in India : embarked as adjt.	(16th)
"	von Bülow : died on the voyage to India.	(15th)
"	von Brockes : died in India.	(15th)
"	von Schlepegrell : returned home.	
"	Linde : died in India.	
"	Casten.	
"	Schowitz : died in India.	(16th)
"	von Schulte : pensioned, went mad.	(16th)
"	Wernicke.	(16th)
"	Leonhart.	
"	Müller.	
"	Isenbart.	
"	Breymann : died in India.	(16th)
"	von Dachenhausen : died in India.	(16th)
"	Martin.	(15th)
"	Chevallier : retired on pension.	(16th)
"	Hassberg : died in India.	(16th)
"	von Wintzleben.	(16th)
"	von Arentschild : retired.	
"	von Berger : died in India.	
"	von Brandis.	
"	von Dachenhausen : died in India.	
"	de Tessier.	
"	Loewen : died in India.	
"	Engel.	
"	Rey.	
"	Piccard : died on the way home.	
"	Bernhardi.	
"	von Windheim.	
"	Rumann : died in India.	
"	Pape.	
"	Kuhls : died in India.	
"	Viercke.	
"	Müller.	
Ensign	Cordemann : died on the voyage to India.	
"	Mey : died in India.	
"	Ziegener : died in India.	
"	Beimel : died in India.	
"	Friese.	
"	Chüden.	
"	Mächel : retired.	
"	Hoeff.	
"	Hinrichs.	
"	Bruno : died in India.	
"	Eisenlohr : died in India.	
"	Hahn.	
"	Kahn : died in India.	

Ensign von Plato.  
 „ Breymann.  
 „ Brauns.  
 „ Hemme.

NOTE.—This account has been mainly compiled from Knesebeck's *Geschichte der Churhannoverschen Truppen in Gibraltar, Minorca und Ostindien*, Reitzenstein's *Übersicht der Geschichte der Hannoverschen Armee*, from some papers in possession of Sir Eyre Coote, from copies of embarkation returns kindly made for me by Mr. Dodswell, Keeper of the Records at Madras, and from certain Inspection and other reports in the Public Record Office.—H. W.

## APPENDIX C

### HYDER ALI AND HIS PRISONERS

THE letters which are here given are preserved at West Park, and are from some of those who were held prisoners by Hyder Ali during Lieut.-General Sir Eyre Coote's campaign in the Carnatic.

The first is from Bangalore and dated 27th May 1781; it is signed 'D. McNeill', but to whom addressed is not stated: apparently to Mr. Charles Smith, then officiating Governor of Madras.

'A Sepoy having communicated to me his intention to Desert from this Place, I take the opportunity of writing to you and beg leave to express the infinite pleasure it gave me to hear from Capt. Lucas who pass'd from Arcot to Seringapatam in January, that you were then Gov. of Madras, and it was no small satisfaction to see every Englishman here rejoice at the information. It likewise gave us much pleasure to hear that a Court Martial was sitting upon Genl. Stewart, for as we have no doubt of his being acquitted, we have a great deal to expect from an officer of his abilities and experience. Great pains is taken to conceal from us the operations of our Army, however from what we have already seen we have everything to hope and but little to fear. There are 24 of us here confined in chains, which to me is not so grievous as being deprived of so good an opportunity to improve myself in my profession under the Generals who serve in the present War.

'To give you a short account of the unfortunate action of the 10th Sept. The Grenadiers of General Munro's army march'd with good order and expedition to Colonel Baillie's camp, where they arrived at daybreak on the 9th and at 8 o'clock that night the whole march'd by divisions towards Conjeveram; about 10 o'clock 3 guns were fired by the rear-guard which gave Colonel B. reason to believe they were attacked. He therefore ordered the line to the right about and to form on the rear, but as the enemy did not appear in force, we

soon moved into the road, from whence Capt. Rumley was detached with his battalion of Grenadiers to spike 2 guns which opened on our left, but he was prevented effecting it by a Nullah that ran between them and our Line ; this and the preceding manœuvre occasioned some disorder, which was probably Colonel B's reason for taking the unfortunate resolution to halt at night. At daybreak we marched, and soon after observed Tippusaib's army moving on our left ; about 6 o'clock they opened 3 guns upon us and the Detachment immediately halted in a hollow way, whilst 2 Battalions of Sepoy Grenadiers and Marksmen were ordered to take and carry off these guns which were discovered to be unsupported. They were abandoned before our Sepoys got within 200 yards of them, but why they were not spiked there is no person here can account for, nor for the precipitate and scandalous retreat of the Grenadiers and Marksmen. About this time Hyder's Grand Army appeared upon our Right, and a Body of Cavalry came down as if to charge us, but they all wheeled off at 150 and 200 yards. Hyder soon brought 14 or 16 guns to bear upon our right, and about half their numbers of Tippusaib's upon our left : we kept up a distant but unequal cannonade for about an hour and a half, when our guns being nearly silenced by a scarcity of ammunition, and a number of artillerymen being killed, the enemy began to advance upon us, which having their fears about them they did but slowly, and we were ordered to lay down in our ranks in hopes of General Munro coming to our assistance.

' At last it was thought necessary to support one of the Battalions in the rear by the example of a Company of European Grenadiers.

' Colonel Fletcher ordered Captain Ferrier's, to which I belong'd, from the Front for this purpose. The Sepoys seeing them move, and not being properly prepared for it, followed in disorder ; we immediately halted and used every endeavour to restore order, but to no purpose.

' The other Sepoys, pannick struck by laying under a heavy cannonade, seeing them run, thought all was lost, they threw down their arms and ran towards a small Jungle. We were immediately joined by all the Europeans upon a rising ground which was defended, whilst the Horse cut in amongst the Sepoys. They were soon, Horse and Foot, in a disordered multitude within 15 yards, but could not break in upon us.

' The men were firm and seemed determined to make a noble end of the business which was so ill begun. But Colonel Baillie, seeing we could not long stand it, stept forward with a white handkerchief, commanded us to order our arms and call for quarter ; he was immediately taken and the horsemen made signs to lay down our arms, which we had no sooner done when they cut in amongst us and seven eighths of the whole were killed and wounded.

' I beg you will make my compts. to Mrs. Smith, for whose health and happiness I have the best and sincerest wishes ; I hope I shall have the pleasure to see you before you leave India, but should I not,

I must be satisfied with a belief that you will not forget me, but continue the favors which you have always been so good as to confer on me. I am Dr. Sir,

yours etc. etc.

'Bangalore,  
'May 27th 81.'

D. McNEILL.'

*From the same to the same :*

DEAR SIR,

'I expected Mr. (illeg.) to leave this some time ago and then sent him a letter which I suppose you will receive with this. Our Situation and Circumstances are the same now that they then were, nor have I anything more to say at present than that I sincerely wish you may have the honour in your Government to give the Ambitious invader so Decisive a blow that he will thereafter be a more Contemptible than a formidable enemy.

'There is nothing could give us so much pleasure as to hear from the Carnatick. If you will be so good as to let me know how our affairs go on and what expectations we may have, you will infinitely oblige me. Our Servants go out twice daily for Water, at which times a person would have a good opportunity of sending in a letter. If this is an improper request I hope you will excuse it. Mr. (illeg.) will give you a better description of this Fort etc than I can; he has been less guarded and more conversant with the Sepoys. Indeed the Accounts we have are by no means clear and if I gave any I should wish to be depended on; as I cannot give such a one you must excuse me. Be so kind to make my compliments and best wishes acceptable to Mrs. Smith, I am

'Dear Sir, your obliged and very obedient humble Servant

'D. McN.'

'Bangalore,  
'July 2nd 81.'

*Extract of a letter from Lieut. James Dalrymple to Lieut. Douglas.*

'Mr. Melvil and I were hurried away from Arnee the 1st April and arrived here the 21st April, where we found in chains the following Gentlemen: Captains Jones and Gowdie; Lieuts. Muat, Forbes, Campbell, Smith, Read, McNeile and Haliburton; Ensigns Forbes, Innis, Corner, White, Mackay, Lang, Frank, Dring and Nash; Messrs. Leatham, Gorey, Hodges and Cuthbert; Doctors Rain and Ogilvie. All the rest are at Seringapatam and also in chains. Baillie was put in chains and handcuffed before he left Arcot, and has all along been much worse treated than any of us. Our allowance per day is one joint of mutton, one sear of rice and nine cash each. Seventy four Non. comd. officers and private are in chains in the Pettah. This goes by a Sepoy who means to desert to Vellore.

'Bangalore  
'June 20th 1781.'

The following letter has no signature or address :

' I shall only trouble you with 63 letters which were intrusted to my charge by the poor unfortunate gentlemen in the Prison at Bangalore from whence I came, a list of their names I here inclose you. My sincere regard for the service of my Nation hath induced me to bring them tho' at the hazard of my Life, all which Letters you will please to deliver as you think best.

Prisoners in the Fort of Bangalore		
Captains :	Jones and Gowdie . . . . .	2
Lieutenants :	Melvil, Muat, Smith, Campbell, Forbes, Dalrymple, Read, McNeill and Haliburton . . . . .	9
Ensigns :	Forbes, Corner, White, Mackay, Innis, Lang, Franks, Cuthbert, Gouy, Hodges, Nash, Dring and Lathom . . . . .	13
Doctors :	Rain and Ogilby . . . . .	2
		26

In the Pettah of Bungalow, Serjeants, Private men etc, 74

' All in great distress for necessaries of life. The private men for want of linen are under the necessity of covering themselves with mats and sheepskins.

' 28th May 1781.

' Colonel Baillie and other Captains and Officers, as well as private men, are sent to Seringapatam, who as well as those in this place are all in irons and very closely confined.'

NOTE.—The officers mentioned in these letters belonged to Regiments as under :

73rd Regiment : Lieut. Melville ; Volunteers Hodges and Cuthbert.

Madras European Regiment : Colonel Baillie ; Lieuts. McNeill, Haliburton, Nash and Dring ; Volunteers Gorey and Latham.

Company's Artillery : Captain Jones ; Lieut. Smith.

Sepoy Grenadiers : Captain Gowdie ; Ensign Mackay.

Sepoy Marksmen : Lieut. Muat.

1st Carnatic Battalion : Captain Lucas ; Lieut. Campbell ; Ensigns Innis, Corner and Lang.<sup>1</sup>

2nd Carnatic Battalion : Lieut. Dalrymple ; Ensigns Mackay and Frank.

7th Carnatic Battalion : Ensign White.

2nd Circar Battalion : Lieut. Forbes ; Ensign Forbes.

Staff : Lieut. Read, A.D.C.

<sup>1</sup> A son of Colonel Ross Lang, the defender of Vellore.



APPENDIX D

SOME LETTERS FROM COLONEL LANG AT VELLORE  
TO SIR EYRE COOTE AND LORD MACARTNEY

*To Lord Macartney.*

MY LORD,

I have by a private letter been made acquainted with your arrival at Madras and succeeding to the Government on which I hope you will accept my congratulations.

I think it my duty as commanding the principal garrison in the Carnatic to give you the earliest information of our situation here which is by no means agreeable at present, and I hope that you will think with me that it now becomes a matter of your most serious attention.

Our Sepoys are five months in arrears and we have sunk our garrison stock of grain very considerable. The enemy is too strong in this valley that we are no longer able to attempt sending out for cattle, and a total stop put to grain coming in and daily applications from my people who have Families for grain. I am forced to serve the officers provisions as well as the men, and I shall be obliged to make an allowance of grain to their Servants which I have hitherto avoided. We have here near 800 draught and carriage bullocks for the Army which I have ever looked on as a Treasure, they were very fine but lately much fallen off for want of food, as we were not able to protect them a proper distance and the weather extremely hot that everything was burned up, however I am trying to bring them up again and should our meat run short I know of no shift but killing some of them for the Garrison. There is three Polygars to the northward of this place that have stood out against Hyder, and should he come to the country I am well assured that there is still plenty of grain in their country, but it requires money and a force to bring it. Rice is to be had here 12 seers for a pagoda, in time of peace the price was from 26 to 32 for a rupee. I am sorry to find by private letters from my friends that I am superseded by Lieut. Col. Horn of the Artillery, more particularly at this time than any other as the service of every man is much more required. I will not trouble your Lordship by saying much on the subject at present, I will only request you will inquire into my conduct and character from Sir Eyre Coote and the gentlemen of the Council and I only hope for your interest and protection as you find me deserving. I beg leave to assure you that nothing shall make me lax in my duty to my Honourable Employers, but under Col. Horn I never will serve.

Vellore, 5th July 1781.

*To Lieut.-General Sir Eyre Coote.*

SIR,

I had the honour to address you the 8th in which I told you I had offers of service from the Pollygars in the Kallagat. As I dont choose to mention their names for fear of my letter falling into the hands of Hyder, I will only tell you that they desire to be put in their former possessions when our Army goes into the Mysore Country, and they will stop all supplys of provisions going to Hyder and send it to the Army when it draws nearer to this; their situation puts it in their power as they lie north and northwest of this place. I request to know what answer I may give them. There is a total stop put to everything coming in here since the Army returned to Trippasore and there is immense quantities of provisions going past daily, and we have not a force sufficient to interrupt it. The Nabob's Sepoys would not even go out and take the provisions when it was shewn them, and I gave them leave to go to the woods to the north of this where they are protected by the Thombaw Pollam Pollygar, whom I mentioned in my letter of the 8th.

By accounts I have from Chittour there is no great quantity of grain in the Fort, a great deal has been carried from that Country to Arcot lately, and it is impossible to judge what quantity that country can supply till you are joined by the Pollygars and they all wish for the approach of the army. As to Arcot I have not heard from that for some days, but I expect people every hour, had you been able to proceed after the action of the 27th past, you would not have had much trouble, there was nothing but confusion and fear in the place. The wall round Wallajah Pettah is destroyed.

Vellore 12th Sept. 1781.

*To Lieut.-General Sir Eyre Coote.*

I have been favoured with yours of the 15th and happy to find you are going to put the army in motion again, however, I think it a duty I owe to my Employers, myself, and the officers and men under my command to make the situation of the Garrison known to you, as the season is advancing fast. We can only subsist here till the 15th of October and have a few days provisions left, to enable us to attempt an escape to some place of safety or to save us till we can have an answer from Hyder granting us such terms as he may think fit. I hope you will pardon my being so plain, but I think it absolutely necessary least (sic) any unforeseen delays should happen, that I may hereafter be able to convince my people that I have taken the necessary precaution of acquainting you how matters stand with us. Should it turn out that I am forced to (or find it most prudent) to quit the garrison, there is no route at present that appears to me to promise the least success but the northward and I must be favoured by the Army. I must also have money, and even admit that I have sufficient of money, I am very doubtfull of the behaviour of the Sepoys on account

of their attachment to their families as they are most Vellore people and their families all here. I request an immediate answer and hope that you will give me full instructions as it is out of my power to know how the Pollygars are affected. We have not had the least intercourse with Bomrauze's country or any part towards Trippity since the fall of Arcot.

The Nabob's Sepoys that went to Tombaw Pollam are all made prisoners or dispersed owing to the infamous behaviour of the man that commanded them, his name is Mahomet Silliman and I am told he has had the assurance to write to you. The Pollygar has escaped with all his people and I make no doubt will attempt to get to the Army ; if he does, he will tell you the truth ; his Pollam is destroyed.

Vellore, 22nd September 1781.

P.S. Since writing I have received a thousand pagodas from Madras.

*To Lord Macartney.*

MY LORD,

After the assurance I have from your Lordship of being relieved by the Army, I am sorry that it could not be effected, however it now becomes absolutely necessary that I should make my situation known to you, and for which purpose I enclose a copy of my letter of this date to Sir Eyre Coote, by which you will find I cannot maintain this garrison longer than the 15th of next month. I therefore request that immediate instructions may be sent me. I take the liberty of saying that I dont think that my people will move without their families and it is morally impossible to take them were we to attempt escaping with the garrison ; for my part I dont see the smallest prospect of our being saved in any respect but by the Army. I request your Lordship will be pleased to lay this and the copy of my letter to Sir Eyre Coote before the Right Honourable the President and Select Committee.

Vellore, 22nd September 1781.

My Lord,

Since writing I have been favoured with your letter of the 31st of August and a thousand pagodas. I am sorry to find my letters have miscarried, as I acknowledged the receipt of all the money that has been sent. I shall do myself the honour to write tomorrow.

Vellore, 22nd Sept. 1781.

*To Lord Macartney.*

MY LORD,

I had the honour to receive your letter of the 31st August just as I was closing my letter to your Lordship the 22nd inst. I am sorry to find my letters had not reached you acknowledging the receipt of the money, but I hope ere this they are come to your hands as I have an account of their being safe in camp the 6th inst. Since your arrival we have received in all five thousand pagodas and it has been of

infinite service, but had I not raised otherwise I cannot say what the consequences might have been and still we are five months arrears to the Sepoys. No certain account of the Army being in motion, but for some days past Hyder's horse have been burning to the northward of Arcot, which looks as if it was moving this way, but the army falling back after the action of the 27th past, struck such a damp in the Pollygars that we are worse supplied with little necessaries for the relief of our people than ever.

I gave the Nabob's Sepoys that I struck off the Garrison allowance leave to go into the Pollygar country for sake of getting rice to live on, but by the infamous behaviour of the man that commanded them they have been mostly made prisoners or cut to pieces by Hyder's people.

Vellore, 25 Sept. 1781.

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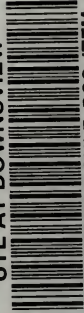
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