

CHAPTER XXX.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV.

Part played by Mysore in the German War.

We have seen that on the occasion of the visit of His late Majesty King George V (then Prince of Wales) in January 1906 to Mysore, the Maharaja expressed a hope that the Mysore Imperial Service troops may some day have an opportunity of showing their spirit by being associated in the fight for the defence of the empire whenever it might come. Such a contingency arose in 1914 when the great German War was launched and almost all the important countries of the world were ranged on one side or the other. This war lasted for a little over four years and caused the greatest havoc that the world has witnessed. For the first time in the history of India the Indian troops conveyed to France stood face to face with a highly organised European enemy and successfully resisted them in their own continent. The troops of Native States who had on account of long-established peace in India come to be looked upon as fit only for pompous parades and ceremonial shows quickly proved their mettle when the opportunity they longed for presented itself.

In August 1914 the Maharaja intimated to the Viceroy that he felt that at that time of danger, it was the duty of all the feudatory States and also of the people of the British Empire as a whole to stand shoulder to shoulder for the defence of the empire and offered the services of the Mysore troops as well as a sum of Rs. 50 lakhs to the Indian War Fund. This offer of men and money created a profound impression all over India and England. At a meeting of the Indian Legislative Council, Lord Hardinge the Viceroy commended this striking and patriotic offer by His Highness whose loyalty, generosity and liberal views, he said, were so well-known. The Marquess of Crewe, the then Secretary of State for India, speaking in the House of Lords referred in appreciative terms to the splendid offer, as he called, of the Maharaja of Mysore.

The Mysore regiment consisting of 29 officers, 444 non-commissioned officers and men with 526 horses, 49 mules and 132 followers left Bangalore on the 13th October 1914 under the command of Regimentdar B. Chamaraja Urs. Major M. H. Henderson accompanied the regiment as special service officer and Colonel J. Desaraja Urs as the representative of the Durbar. Fifteen draughts of reinforcements aggregating 3 officers, 426 other ranks and 49 followers were despatched to the field subsequently from time to time. The Mysore Transport Corps was mobilised for active service in 1915. Six detachments of the corps consisting of 12 officers, 321 ranks, 49 followers, with 210 carts, 468 bullocks, 7 mules and 35 ponies were despatched in September 1916 under the command of Furzulla Khan. To keep the corps up to strength, nine draughts of reinforcements consisting of four officers, 133 ranks and 37 followers with bullocks were also sent.

To meet the local and Imperial demands in regard to man power, a Central Recruitment Committee was constituted in the State. A director of recruiting was appointed and district recruiting agencies were organised. Though the difficulties to be surmounted were great, nearly the whole of the required number of recruits 5000 were secured before the termination of the war.

Early in 1915 a separate fund was also started for providing the Mysore troops at the front with articles of comfort and also to relieve want and distress among the members of their families left behind. The idea emanated from the Yuvaraja who was a Member of the State Council at this time in charge, among others, of the military portfolio and who evinced keen interest in all matters connected with the war. Arrangements were also made for awarding speedily special pensions and gratuities to those disabled in service and to the families of those who lost their lives, for securing fresh recruits for the army, for enlisting the aid of the public and for various other matters. All this work meant of course, constant thought and involved also heavy strain, which the Yuvaraja willingly faced. As an encouragement to the men at the front, a spirited message conveying the best wishes of His Highness the Maharaja, the Royal family and of the people of

Mysore was printed and copies were sent for distribution among all officers, men and followers at the front: "At this hour of supreme struggle of the British Empire and its Allies," said the message, "you enjoy the great honour of forming a part, however small, of the magnificent army which is fighting for the cause of liberty and righteousness. We have heard with keen pleasure and pride of your heroic conduct in the field and of your brilliant successes. We have no doubt that whatever the duty assigned to you, you will do it in such a way as will add fresh lustre to the country and uphold the high traditions of Mysore for loyalty and devotion to the Crown of England. Day by day and minute by minute, you are present in our thoughts and our prayers. Those dear to you whom you have left behind are our sacred charge until you return victorious. Remember always in whatever you do that the fair name and honour of Mysore are in your keeping and that, to an Indian, honour is dearer and far more precious than life. Have firm faith in Providence and in the justness of our cause and by the grace of Almighty God you shall be safe and successful."

The Mysore Imperial Service Regiment had three engagements with the enemy in the Suez Canal Zone in November 1915 and took part in the attack on Gaza in Palestine in November 1917. They did excellent work both in the battle of Gaza and in the subsequent pursuit. In the latter half of 1918 the regiment was placed in the firing line and in the last action of Aleppo on 26th October 1918 the regiment suffered serious casualties. In addition to the excellent work carried out by them in active operations against enemy outposts, they were also employed on the arduous task of constructing strong field works for the defence of the Suez Canal and in guarding important and valuable points in the lines of communications. In every case they carried out the tasks allotted to them to the entire satisfaction of General Sir John Maxwell, Commander-in-Chief, Egyptian Expeditionary Force, as was reported by him to the Commander-in-Chief in India. In the victory of Gaza and subsequent pursuit of the enemy the Mysore Lancers were often under heavy fire. But there was not a single instance of shirking or alarm and it was acknowledged that they

had acquitted themselves as if they had been old and tried soldiers. In December 1917 the Commander-in-Chief of the army in Palestine on the completion of the operations resulting in the capture of Beersheba and Gaza specially commended the good work done by the Mysore Lancers. In a despatch from General Sir Edmund Allenby, dated the 31st October 1918, dealing with the operations which resulted in the destruction of the Turkish army, the liberation of Palestine and Syria and the occupation of Damascus and Aleppo, special reference was made to the work of the Mysore Lancers in the field. Dealing with the capture of Haifa, General Allenby stated that two miles from the Haifa, Rhode, in the passes between the spur of Mount Carmel on the left and the marshy banks of river Kishon on the right, the fifth Cavalry Division reaching this point on the 23rd September was shelled from the slopes of Mount Carmel and found the road and the river crossings defended by numerous machine guns. While Mysore Lancers cleared the rocky slopes of Mount Carmel, the Jodhpur Lancers charged through the defile and riding over the enemy machine guns galloped into the town, where a number of Turks were speared in the streets and a large number of prisoners taken.

The Mysore Imperial Service Transport Corps which was sent to Mesopotamia for active service turned out much useful work. Landing at Basra early in October 1916, they were at first employed on convoy work on the lines of communication. The Corps was subsequently concentrated for work at Shaik Saad and beyond and early in 1917 was employed in clearing the battle fields of Samiaya and Hai. The Corps was unfortunate in losing their Commandant Furzulla Khan who died in hospital in July 1917.

Where all acquitted themselves with distinguished gallantry, it is difficult to make a selection of individual heroes. However, a few names may be mentioned. Commandant A. T. Thyagaraj of the Transport Corps was specially mentioned in the despatches for gallantry and devotion to duty and was awarded the title of 'Captain' by His Highness the Maharaja. Jamadar Abdül Gaffar

Khan of the Imperial Lancers while serving in Egypt showed great coolness and gallantry under very heavy fire while leading on the 25th October 1918 his squadron in a charge against a strongly held enemy position. He rallied his squadron after his British officer had been killed and continued in action though the squadron had suffered heavy casualties. Risaldar A Lingaraj Urs was a young hero who was killed in action at Aleppo on the 26th October 1918 during the final phase of the operations in Palestine. On a previous occasion this hero did a daring feat. On the 23rd November 1915 a squadron of the Mysore Lancers operating 15 miles east of Cantarah obtained touch with a force of sixty Turks on camels, the advance guard of a raiding party 200 strong. These were pursued for seven miles, with the result that 7 were killed, twelve were captured and many others wounded. Amongst the dead was a famous Bedouin leader. He was killed after a hand-to-hand fight by Lingaraj Urs and the latter was awarded the Indian Order of Merit for this act of gallantry. The significance of the gallant deed done by Lingaraj Urs lay in the fact that after the Bedouin leader's death, the attempts on the Suez canal entirely ceased.

Risaldar Subbaraja Urs was another young hero whose gallantry was rewarded by the grant of the Indian Distinguished Service medal. During an attack on the ferry-post Ismalia on 2nd February 1915, the patrol was commanded by Subbaraja Urs and this patrol came suddenly upon the enemy who were entrenched and advanced close to them mistaking them for their own men. The enemy immediately opened fire and the patrol had to retire from the enemy's entrenchments under a heavy fire. Sowar Ram Singh of the Bhavnagar Lancers had the misfortune to have his horse hit in the leg, with the result that the horse fell and the rider also over the horse's head. Subbaraja Urs who was some fifty yards in front of the sowar at the time had his attention called to the mishap. He immediately returned to the place where Ram Singh had fallen, took him on his own horse about 400 yards till they were behind a hill. Subbaraja Urs returned to India in February 1920 and in the following month was appointed Commandant of the Imperial Service Lancers.

Mir Turab Ali was another hero who rose to the position of Risaldar by his military prowess. He enlisted himself as a sowar in the Imperial Service Lancers in 1903, when he was about 18 years old. Turab Ali's intelligence and energy gave him opportunities to secure rapidly higher and higher positions and he left for active service to Egypt in October 1914. On arrival, he was detailed to undergo machine-gun training and scarcely had he been a week old at this course, when his skill was put to the proof during an attack on a Turkish redoubt at Bebel-Mahadat. By the time Turab Ali fired 300 rounds out of his machine-gun, the gun got jammed. But the fire was so effective that such of the defenders as did not fall hastily retreated. Turab Ali got his commission as Jamadar in January 1915 and was placed in charge of a machine-gun section and he was ever present with his section in every engagement in which his regiment took part and specially distinguished himself in the attack upon Gaza. He was for some

Risaldar B. P. Krishne Urs was yet another young hero who is entitled to all honour. He left for active service with his regiment in 1914. He greatly distinguished himself in meeting the attack of the Turks on the Suez Canal in 1915, when with about forty men he captured eighty camels and took forty Turks as prisoners along with much booty. In the beginning of 1916 he joined the staff of General Archibald Murray and served on it for nine months, during which time he had the opportunity of meeting His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and accompanying him on his visits to various camps. In 1917 he followed the regiment in its march from Suez to Gaza, where he was sent to gain experience in trench warfare. In an action on the 26th October 1918 in the Suez Canal Zone, Krishne Urs showed great gallantry while leading his squadron in a charge against a strongly held army position under very heavy fire. He was severely wounded in the hand and chest but continued to lead his squadron until exhaustion compelled him to fall out. His splendid example inspired all ranks. He was awarded the Military Cross by the British Government, the title of 'Captain' by the Maharaja and the 'White Eagle of Serbia' by the King of Serbia.

time appointed instructor of the 15th machine-guns squadron and he trained and made ready for the field two sub-sections of the Bikanir Camel Corps and Jodhpur Imperial Service Lancers. Turab Ali accompanied the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade to Jericho and took part in several engagements, his name being mentioned in despatches for gallantry and devotion to duty. Turab Ali also took a conspicuous part in the capture of Haifa. Under a heavy fire of machine-gun and artillery he led an attack upon a hillock capturing a Turkish officer, four machine-guns and other booty. One of these guns was brought to India by the regiment as a war trophy. For these distinguished services Turab Ali was awarded the Indian Order of Merit and the Maharaja promoted him to the position of a Risaldar.

Sirdar Bahadur B. Chamaraja Urs left for Egypt in October 1914 in command of the Mysore Imperial Service Lancers. His military career began in March 1890 as Jamadar, Local Service Regiment. He rapidly rose from position to position and in May 1905 was permanently appointed Commandant of the Imperial Service troops. He was presented valuable Khillats by His Highness the Maharaja in open durbar in recognition of his services in connection with the visit of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales and Princess of Wales in 1906. Relating to his services in Egypt, Major-General W. A. Watson, Commanding Line of Communication Defences, writing to Chamaraja Urs on 27th March 1916 said:—"From the moment when the brigade was concentrated at Deolali seventeen months ago, it was evident to me that your regiment was imbued with a splendid military spirit and it was clear that your own character and influence was the cause. You have never hesitated to enforce discipline or feared to inflict punishment and the result has been that your men have reached a high standard of efficiency. They have behaved admirably, sometimes under trying circumstances, both in the camp and in the field. Their success in the action at Bel-el-Jafir on the 23rd November 1915 must have been a great satisfaction to you. I congratulate you on being commander of a regiment of which you may justly feel proud." Chamaraja Urs was present in the action around Gaza in Palestine in November 1917

and showed remarkable bravery and steadiness in leading the men under his command during the attack which ultimately ended in victory. On the 7th February 1918 Brigadier-General C. R. Harbard, Commanding Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade, in writing to the Inspector-General, Imperial Service troops in India, said: "Regimentdar B. Chamaraja Urs (Sirdar Bahadur) having been ordered to return to India, I feel that I cannot let him vacate the command of Mysore Lancers in the field without placing on record my appreciation of the services this officer has rendered, which I trust may be brought to the notice of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore. A strict disciplinarian and possessing a strong innate sense of justice, Chamaraja Urs has always maintained the right spirit in his men and by his personal example has taught them to undertake any duty, however monotonous and irksome it may have been, with cheerfulness and alacrity. The British officers who have been connected with the regiment since it came on service have all remarked upon the nice tone that prevailed in this regiment and what a pleasure it was to work with them. I attribute this tone in a large measure to the influence of Chamaraja Urs. Instead of resenting the presence of Special Service officers, he has always shown himself grateful for their assistance, and the good name that the Mysore Lancers have won for themselves during their stay in Egypt is largely due to the good relations that have always existed between this officer and through him with the other officers of the regiment."

On returning to India, he was appointed Chief Commandant in 1919. For his distinguished military services he was appointed to the order of British India in June 1916. His Highness the Maharaja honoured him with the first class Medal of the Gandabherunda Order and the position of Lt.-Col. in the Mysore army. He also received the foreign decoration of the White Eagle of Serbia from His Majesty the King of Serbia.

Last but not least comes the honoured name of Col. Desaraja Urs who, as has already been stated, went to Egypt as the representative of the Durbar and whose ardent military spirit is remembered even now with pride by the people of Mysore. As a

testimony to his innate military instincts, it may be stated that he preferred service in the military department, though he could have easily entered any of the civil departments on higher emoluments. He was appointed attaché in the Mysore Military Department in August 1884. After a short period of service, his fighting instinct asserted itself and resigning the State Service in June 1885 joined the British Military Department as Jamadar, 3rd Madras Light Cavalry. He soon obtained an opportunity for active service. From September 1886 to October 1887 he was in the field in Burma during the Burmese War which resulted in the capture of King Thebaw and the annexation of his country. On the 14th December 1887 his services were lent to the Mysore State by the Madras Government, when he was appointed assistant to the Military Secretary and aid-de-camp to His Highness the Maharaja. In December 1890 he resigned the Madras Service and was appointed Commandant, Imperial Service Regiment, in March 1894 and in August 1897 he rose to the responsible position of Chief Commandant, Mysore State troops, which he held continuously for a period of 22 years.

From October 1914 to January 1916 he served in Egypt during the Great War and his name was mentioned in the despatches of General Maxwell, Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Egypt. In August 1917 in appreciation of the services rendered by him during the war, His Majesty the King-Emperor awarded him the honorary rank of Lt.-Col. in the British army and in June 1918 His Highness the Maharaja decorated him with a first class medal of the Gandabherunda Order.

Apart from the work in connection with the arrangements for field service, the Durbar undertook with alacrity much other work of a miscellaneous character at the request of the Government of India. With a view to conserve all the tanning bark grown for the tanning of hides urgently required for army purposes, skin tanning was prohibited about the close of the year 1917 and a special police establishment was maintained to prevent any evasion of the rules. The great loss unavoidably caused to the people in consequence of their inability to work up a valuable raw material was cheerfully

borne by them in aid of the war. Some 19,000 army blankets were supplied to the Indian Munitions Board. One lakh and fifty thousand cubic feet of rosewood were supplied by the State Forest Department to the gun-carriage factory at Jubbalpore and 30,000 teak metre gauge sleepers for railway construction in Mesapotamia; and lastly, about 20,000 acres of plantation and Kaval lands were leased to the British Grass Farm for raising grass.

The Government of India offered to refund to the Durbar the cost of mobilising their troops for active service amounting in all to Rs. 11 lakhs. But His Highness while greatly appreciating the offer, preferred that the cost of mobilisation should form part of the contributions made by the Durbar in aid of the war. In April 1918 His Highness made a further gift of Rs. 10 lakhs for war purposes and also contributed Rs. 20 lakhs towards the War Loan. In June 1918 His Highness issued a stirring message to his subjects calling upon them to join the army in larger numbers and to contribute liberally to the War Loan. The war, however, came to an end in November 1918 by the Germans suing for peace.