

CHAPTER VII.

Savanoor Nawab Punished—Nizam Conciliated—Haidar's reverses at the hands of the Mahrattas and conclusion of peace—Chikballapur Palegar's surrender—Subjugation of Malabar—Death of Immadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar and succession of Nanjaraj Wodeyar—Madhava Rao's invasion of Mysore—Mission of Appaji Rao to Poona and conclusion of peace.

By the annexation of Sira and its dependencies the frontiers of Mysore were carried to the river Thungabhadra, and by the conquest of Bednore and Soonda which followed later, they stretched far to the north-west of that river. Haidar's intention was now to attach to his interest the Pathan Nawabs of Savanoor, Kadapa, Kurnool and thereby to form a defensive cordon along his northern frontier against the Mahrattas. The Nawab of Savanoor, Abdul Hakim Khan, however did not give ear to Haidar's advances in this direction and accordingly Fazl-ulla Khan was directed to invade the Savanoor territory to punish the Nawab for his siding with the Bednore Rani. Shortly after, Haidar also joined Fazl-ulla Khan with a body of troops from Bednore and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Nawab pursuing him to the very gates of Savanoor. Abdul Hakim Khan was left no alternative but to submit unconditionally to all the demands of Haidar and to purchase peace by paying a crore of rupees. As he had no ready cash to pay the whole of this amount, he was forced to make up the deficiency by handing over to Haidar elephants, camels, tents of velvet, bechobas embroidered with gold, Burhampur cloths of great value and arms, all accumulated at immense expense by his predecessors.

Haidar now turned his attention to conciliate the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Peshwa at Poona for the acceptance of the Subha of Sira at the hands of Basalat Jung and for its forcible dispossession from the Mahrattas. Haidar accordingly despatched a vakeel by name Appaji Rao to Hyderabad with gifts exceeding in value the amount paid to Basalat Jung. Nizam Ali who had other things at the time to occupy his attention was easily appeased,

In the same manner Haidar sent a vakeel Mehdi Ali Khan to the Mahratta court at Poona. Madhava Rao, the third in succession, was the Peshwa at the time. He was a capable person and in spite of all the diplomacy of Haidar's agent was not conciliated, as he regarded the annexation of Sira by Haidar as a direct affront to the Mahratta prestige.

It now therefore became necessary for Haidar to prepare himself against a Mahratta invasion. Instead of waiting on the defensive till the invasion actually took place, Haidar himself took the offensive and occupied Dharwar and other places belonging to the Mahrattas. Gopal Rao of Miraj who was directed by Madhava Rao to oppose Haidar's advance was unable to do so. Madhava Rao however, shortly after, advanced with the main body of his army and inflicted a severe defeat on Haidar at Rattihalli situated to the south of Savanoor. To such a stress was Haidar now reduced that he was obliged to flee with a few cavalry to the woods of Bednore. Though Madhava Rao's advance was for a short time checked by the rainy season, he soon crossed the Thungabhadra and pursued so vigorously that Haidar hemmed in on all sides by the Mahrattas was forced to despatch his family and treasure to Seringapatam and to sue for peace. In February 1766 peace was accordingly concluded and Haidar engaged himself to restore all the districts and places which he had wrested from Morari Rao, to relinquish all claims on Abdul Hakim Khan and the country of Savanoor and to pay thirty-two lakhs of rupees. Haidar's occupation of Sira was tacitly admitted, as no reference was made to it by either party in the peace negotiations. Similarly all discussions relating to the pategars of Chitaldrug, Rayadoorg, Harapanhalli and other places were studiously avoided.

During this unfavourable aspect of Haidar's affairs to the west, the whole of his recent acquisitions in the east were in a flame of rebellion. His brother-in-law Mir Ali Raza, commonly called Mir Sahib, was therefore sent with a respectable force to Sira and after the establishment of Haidar's authority there was directed to proceed against the pategar of Chikballapur who had taken refuge in the hill-fort of Nandidoorg. Mir Ali Raza cut off all supplies to

the hill-fort and the palegar thereby being reduced to sore straits was forced to surrender. The palegar with his family was first sent to Bangalore and thence to Coimbatore. At this time, another force under Fazl-ulla Khan was employed in restoring order and levying contributions farther to the south.

The reverses that Haidar sustained from the Mahrattas far from creating any despondency in his mind stimulated him to seek fresh conquests elsewhere. Ali Raja, the Mapilla chief of Cannanore approached Haidar at about this time for help against his enemies and Haidar foresaw an opportunity to bring Malabar under his subjection. Accordingly in the beginning of 1766 he descended the Ghauts and marched to Malabar.

The Nairs, as the inhabitants of Malabar are called, formed a brave and formidable military class and Wilks' interesting description of them may be quoted. "The Nairs who form the military class of Malabar are, perhaps, not exceeded by any nation on earth in their high spirit of independence and military honour; but like all persons stimulated by that spirit without discipline, their efforts are uncertain, capricious and desultory. The military dress of a Nair is a pair of short drawers and his peculiar weapon is an instrument with a thin but very broad blade hooked towards the edge like a bill-hook or gardeners knife and about the length of a Roman sword, which the weapon of the chiefs often exactly resembles. The inseparable companion of the Nair whenever he quits his dwelling on business, for pleasure or for war, has no scabbard and is usually grasped by the right hand as an ornamental appendage in peace and for destruction in war. When the Nair employs his musket or his bow, the weapon which has been described is fixed in an instant by means of a catch in the waist-belt with the flat part of the blade diagonally across his back and is disengaged as quickly whenever he drops his musket in the wood or slings it across his shoulders for the purpose of running to close encounter with his terrible instrument."

Haidar found it extraordinarily difficult to overcome the opposition of the Nairs. His army had not before been pitched against

so brave or so formidable an enemy. Their concealed fire from the woods could neither be returned with effect nor could the troops of Haidar be prevailed on to enter the thickets and act individually against them. In every movement through the forests with which the country abounded, bands of Nairs rushed by surprise upon the columns of march and after making dreadful havoc, in a moment became again invisible. Haidar, however, using all the resources of his extraordinary mind overcame the resistance of the Nairs and continuing his march through the territories of the five women chiefs approached Calicut. Mana Vikrama Raja, the Zamorin of the place, contemplating resistance of no avail and learning of the generous treatment accorded to the pategar of Rayadoorg made up his mind to submit to Haidar and on the 11th April 1766 proceeded under a safe conduct to the latter's camp for the purpose of negotiating terms of peace and was there received with all marks of distinction. The Raja agreed to be a tributary chief under Haidar and to pay a contribution of twelve lakhs of rupees.

Haidar with his army then moved forward towards Calicut. Fearing deception on the part of the Zamorin to fulfil the terms of the peace, Haidar took care to send a column by a circuitous route to seize the fort of Calicut. The garrison at Calicut concluded from this movement that their Raja was a prisoner and evacuated the place. The Zamorin concluded from this action on the part of Haidar that the latter had no intention of ratifying the peace terms, while at the same time Haidar put pressure on the Raja and his ministers for the payment of the stipulated contribution which either from design or from inability was not readily forthcoming. The Raja and his ministers were in the circumstances placed under restraint and torture was also applied to the ministers for the exaction of the amount. The Zamorin fearing a similar treatment barricaded himself in the house in which he resided and setting fire to it perished in the flames in spite of all attempts made by Haidar to rescue him. It is stated that when the doors were opened and the Zamorin was found dead, many of his adherents voluntarily threw themselves into the flames and perished. Haidar then took possession of Calicut, appointed one Madanna as governor of the place with instructions to repair the fort and to

store provisions. As the monsoon rains were due to begin about this time, Haidar moved on with the army towards the open country near Coimbatore which he reached with some difficulty, on the way receiving the submission of the Rajas of Cochin and Palaghat.

The Nairs, however, whose warlike spirit was re-awakened after the departure of Haidar and disgusted also by the harsh measures which Madanna initiated to increase his resources rose in rebellion and caused much havoc among the men of Mysore. On intelligence reaching Haidar, he returned to Malabar shortly after the rains ceased and establishing his quarters at Manjeri sent out several detachments in search of the insurgents on whom terrible sufferings were inflicted. Such of the Nairs as fell into his hands in the early part of the operations were mercilessly hanged or killed in other ways. As however the number of prisoners increased considerably, Haidar conceived the idea of transporting them into the plains of Mysore where the population was sparse. No less than 15000 persons were compelled to leave their homes and march to the places selected for them. The arrangements for their food and lodging were very defective and diseases also broke out, with the result that hardly two hundred men were able to reach their destination. Haidar next proclaimed an amnesty to such of the remaining inhabitants as would immediately submit to him. Thereupon considerable numbers of those who had taken refuge in the woods returned to their homes and a sort of calm was established.

On returning to Coimbatore, Haidar heard vague reports of a combination against him of the Mahratras and Nizam Ali supported by an English force. He therefore thought it prudent to return to Seringapatam which he did in the beginning of the year 1767. Immadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar had died in the previous year and his eldest son Nanjaraj Wodeyar about eighteen years of age was now formally installed on the throne. Haidar observed the usual marks of obeisance and loyalty but after some time discovered that the mind of Nanjaraj was of a mould which would not quietly accommodate itself to his dictation. The taluks which had been allotted to the amount of three lakhs of pagodas for the personal maintenance of

the Raja and of his court were resumed and all the valuables and the cash in the palace removed, leaving only the ornaments worn by the ladies of the palace on their persons. A new and reduced arrangement of the household was enforced which left none but Haidar's adherents within the palace gates.

It will be remembered that on the occasion of the peace concluded with the Mahrattas by Haidar after his defeat at Rattihalli, no reference was made by either of the parties to the annexation of Sira by Haidar. Peshwa Madhava Rao who was an able and energetic ruler bided his time and found his opportunity when Nanjaraj Wodeyar sent secret proposals to him for help to re-establish his authority. Haidar aware of these intrigues and also of the strength of the Mahratta army sent Mobhat Khan, elder brother of Muhammad Ali, who had taken service under him to Poona to conciliate Madhava Rao but the mission was a failure. Madhava Rao who was determined to crush Haidar for the insult offered to the Mahratta power by the dispossession of Sira started with a large army to invade Mysore.

Haidar thought it prudent to remain at Seringapatam and act on the defensive. He however issued the most peremptory orders to all his officers to break down the embankments of the reservoirs of water on the line of the Mahratta army, to poison the wells with milk-hedge, to burn all the forage, to bury the grain, to drive the cattle to the woods and leave to the Mahrattas neither forage, water nor food. These measures of defence however were not of much avail against an overwhelming mass of the Mahratta army. This army instead of moving in regular columns whose routes and intentions could be foreseen and counteracted covered the whole face of the country like a cloud of locust. In spite of the peremptory orders issued by Haidar, the Mahratta army was able to find forage, grain and water on their march and pushed on to Rayadoorg and then marching along the bank of the Hugree river which exhibited only a bed of sand at the time but where water could be obtained by digging shallow pits, Madhava Rao at last reached Sira. The Mahrattas generally in their expeditions were accompanied by rowing bands of Pindaries who were ruthless both in their depreda-

tions as well as in their exactions. They had acquired a reputation for thieving, cheating and roguery of all kinds. They were entertained by some of the rulers of the time to plunder and lay waste the territories of their enemies and to serve as guides. These people were given no fixed pay but when the troops halted, they brought hay and wood to the camp and subsisted on the proceeds of their sale. In times of active service, they obtained permission from the commander of the army to plunder and lay waste the country and it was a common saying of those days that even owls and bats were afraid of the country ravaged by these people.

Mir Ali Raza commanded the garrison at Sira. He defended the fort for a number of days and finally finding that resistance was hopeless, surrendered it to Madhava Rao who treated him honourably and re-granted to him Gurumkonda, 150 miles eastward of Sira and now in the Nizam's dominions which was formerly a jahagir of his ancestors. This unexpected defection of Mir Ali Raza and the approach of Nizam Ali with an English contingent as an ally of the Mahrattas induced Haidar to send fresh proposals for peace to Madhava Rao. The latter however refused to receive any ambassador who was not invested with full powers to settle the peace terms and whose person itself was not a guarantee for the fulfilment of the terms concluded. Thereupon Appaji Rao who was a clever and witty diplomat was selected by Haidar and sent to the camp of the Peshwa.

According to Wilks, Appaji Rao was received by Madhava Rao in the great tent of audience in a full durbar consisting of all his officers of State and chiefs of the army numbering about four hundred persons. After the inspection of his powers, he was referred for details to the Putwardhan and to explain to him the business of his mission, Madhava Rao himself seeming to be occupied with other concerns. The envoy was not discouraged by these indications of indifference but commenced to explain his mission without a moment's hesitation. With some show of eloquence, Appaji Rao expatiated in a pathetic strain on the miseries of war and on the moral obligations of those to whom Providence had confided the destinies of nations to confer on their

people the blessings of peace. He then proceeded in a clear and business-like strain of arguments to represent that Haidar considered every cause of dispute to have been settled by the peace of Bednore and that he was not aware of any deviation from his engagements which could justify the present occasion. The Putwardhan replied that the peace of Bednore was concluded with the Raja, that since it had become notorious that the Raja was a prisoner and that Haidar had usurped all authority and that the liberation of the Raja and his restoration to his legitimate authority were essential towards establishing the previous relations of the parties. A general murmur of approbation throughout the assembly announced that this argument was considered unanswerable. Appaji Rao then in a tone of repentant humility acknowledged that the Raja was virtually a pageant Raja in the hands of Haidar, but immediately added with an unperturbed gravity of countenance, having in mind the displacement by the Peshwas of the authority of the successors of Sivaji that the arrangement was not an invention of their own but a distant and respectful imitation of the conduct of their betters and if those eminent authorities led the way in the moral doctrines they inculcated, others would unquestionably be ready to follow so laudable an example. Madhava Rao is then said to have hung down his head and that the whole assembly to have refrained with difficulty from a burst of laughter. After this repartee, the ground became clear for actual business. The preliminary points were soon understood and in a private audience to which he was admitted on the following day, the retreat of the Mahratta host was purchased for thirty-five lakhs of rupees, half of which was paid late in the month of March. Madhava Rao had obtained possession of all the districts of Mysore to the south-eastward of Sira and the treaty provided for the immediate restoration of the whole, with the single exception of the fort and district of Kolar which was to remain in pledge for the payment of the remaining sum of seventeen and a half lakhs of rupees. Finally Madhava Rao left for Poona on the 11th of May 1768.