

CHAPTER IX.

Termination of the first Mysore War—Conclusion of peace.

Haidar's overtures for peace were not readily accepted by the Madras Government and the reason was that the Bombay Government had sent out an expedition which had taken possession of some of the forts belonging to Haidar on the Western Coast and were also giving support to a rebellion on the part of the Nair chiefs in Malabar. It was a characteristic feature of Haidar's conduct whenever he was confronted with any serious danger to ignore the minor perils and bend his whole strength to first overcome the major ones and accordingly he resolved to move westward with a body of troops. He appeared before Mangalore in 1768 and compelled its surrender. Honavar and Basavarajdoorg were also recaptured and Haidar now feeling secure in that part of the country re-ascended the Ghauts before the burst of the monsoon and reached Bednore, while the main body of his troops proceeded by easy marches to Bangalore.

The land-holders of Bednore had been tired of Haidar's exactions which they regarded as much too severe and had helped the English expedition with the supply of provisions and other conveniences. Haidar had kept himself fully informed of these acts and intentions on their part and on reaching Bednore he summoned the land-lords to meet him on the pretext of settling the revenue payable for the coming year. He then coolly announced to the assembled land-holders that he had discovered their treacherous conduct and consequently imposed on them very heavy fines.

Haidar next turned his attention to extricate himself from the Nair rebellion in Malabar and through Madanna, his governor, communicated to the Nair chiefs that the cost of maintaining his hold on the Malabar was too heavy and that if he was reimbursed all the money that had been spent, he would withdraw from their country. The Nair chiefs were delighted with the offer made and collecting the required amount of money made it over to Haidar's agent. The Mysore troops whose number was insufficient to hold the country effectually were thus cleverly relieved from a perilous

position in which they had been placed. As a result, Haidar found himself able to retrace his steps towards Bangalore with his army strengthened and his coffers overflowing, recovering at the same time his fleet at Honavar which had surrendered to the English.

In the meanwhile, after the departure of Haidar to the West Coast, the field was left open to the Madras Government and the English army was divided into two divisions, one under Colonel Smith and the other under Colonel Wood. Colonel Wood's detachment secured a number of places Dindigul, Salem, Erode and Coimbatore, while Colonel Smith after a number of operations finally marched towards Krishnagiri and captured it. He then advanced into the Mysore plateau and took Mulbagal, Kolar and Hosur.

Haidar who reached Bangalore from the West Coast on the 4th August 1768 immediately began making active preparations to attack the English army. He also found that a contingent of Morari Rao of Gutti had joined the English and was encamped at a little distance from the camp of the latter at Hoskote. On the night of the 22nd August, Haidar made a disposition to attack Morari Rao's camp and accordingly directed his cavalry to proceed there and overwhelm Morari Rao's troops. Morari Rao however was a man of quick perception and fertile resources and no sooner he found that his camp was attacked by Haidar's cavalry than he gave orders that not a man should mount but that as the best means of defence and as the most certain way of distinguishing friends from enemies each man should remain at the head of his horse and cut down without hesitation every person on horseback. While Haidar's cavalry were on their way for the attack, Morari Rao's state elephant receiving an accidental wound broke loose from his piquets and seizing the chain in its trunk wielded it to the discomfiture of the advancing cavalry. As a consequence, the cavalry was thrown back headlong over the columns of infantry which preceded them for support. The infantry ignorant of the cause of this retrograde movement on the part of the cavalry concluded that the attack had failed and retired in confusion. Haidar was enraged at what he regarded as the pussilanimity of the infantry but as the alarm had

now reached the English camp also he did not think it proper to renew the attack.

Haidar was at no time discouraged by any failure and calculating on the possibility of an attack on Bangalore, he directed the removal to the hill-fort of Savandoorg of the ladies of his harem from his palace in the fort of Bangalore as well as the treasure and the great mass of valuable articles which had been accumulated there. Having appointed for the defence of the fort a sufficient garrison under the nominal orders of his son but really under the command of his maternal uncle Ibrahim Sahib, he proceeded to Malur to prevent the junction of an English contingent under Colonel Wood with the troops of Colonel Smith. Not succeeding in this attempt, he next thought it advisable to strengthen himself by winning back the support of his brother-in-law Mir Ali Raza who, it will be remembered, had surrendered Sira to Peshwa Madhava Rao and had settled at Gurumkonda granted to him as jahagir. Haidar's wife now used all her persuasive powers to induce her brother to join her husband once more in that hour of crisis. Mir Ali Raza eventually agreed and on the approach of Haidar towards Gurumkonda, the terms of reconciliation were adjusted and these terms were ever after faithfully observed on both sides. Haidar next made offers of peace to the English but the negotiations failed as the terms proposed by the latter were considered too extravagant by Haidar.

On the failure of these negotiations, Haidar made an attempt to seize the fort of Mulbagal of which the English were in possession. There was a false alarm that Colonel Smith was advancing to the relief of this place and the Mysoreans thereupon believing the rumour to be true retreated for a time. Haidar however resumed the attack and made a desperate charge with his cavalry but was driven back. Haidar now contented himself by being here, there and everywhere harassing the enemy with his cavalry and evading pursuit, while at the same time he devastated the country destroying all supplies of food. The Madras Government finding fault with Colonel Smith for what they regarded as sluggishness on his part in devising active operations recalled him to Madras and

put Colonel Wood in command. In the meantime Haidar proceeded to besiege Hosur and Colonel Wood advanced for its relief by way of Bagalur at a distance of ten miles from Hosur. Colonel Wood meditated a night attack on Hosur and accordingly started at 10 p.m. on the 17th November 1768. He did not reach this place however till the morning of the 18th. Haidar on being apprised of Wood's march stopped his preparations of encampment until Colonel Wood's advance troops entered Hosur. He then marched towards Bagalur which had a small fort and was garrisoned by an English corps in the service of Muhammad Ali under the command of Captain Alexander. A walled town was connected with the fort and one side of it was inhabited by the agricultural, commercial and other classes. When Haidar's columns appeared, Captain Alexander finding himself unable to resist the enemy retreated towards the fort. But as the gates of the fort had been closed, he could not find a ready entrance. At the same time, the camp followers and many of the inhabitants on perceiving the enemy entering the town pressed into the pettah towards the gateway of the fort men, women and children, with camels, horses and oxen all indiscriminately mixed up and as a result, a horrible scene ensued. The heavier and the more active animals pressed forward on the weaker, until they were piled on one another in a mass of dead and dying, of which the human beings formed too large a proportion and the perils which the retreating garrison encountered in clearing this dreadful scene were not inferior to those which they sustained from the pursuing enemy. Haidar however made no attempts on the fort but captured two guns and a very large quantity of baggage and despatched them all to Bangalore. By the time Colonel Wood could arrive from Hosur, Haidar and his troops were out of sight and Colonel Wood being thus out-manuovered had to lament the loss of above two thousand human beings, an equal number of draught and carriage bullocks, two guns and nearly the whole of the stores, baggage and camp equipage of his army.

At about this time Haidar's preparations for marching below the Ghauts became complete. On his return from the West Coast Haidar had relieved Fazl-ulla Khan from the command of Bangalore and sent him to Seringapatam to collect new levies and to give

the requisite training to them for relieving the old troops who were to be employed as a field force. In November 1768 Fazl-ulla Khan was ready to start military operations and accordingly descended the Ghauts by the Gejjalhutti Pass.

Early in December 1768 Haidar felt himself strong to descend into the Baramahal by the pass of Palakodu, now a railway station on the line running from Hosur to Morapur. He had been preceded by a number of his emissaries in every direction who announced the intelligence of his having defeated and destroyed the English army and of his approaching to re-occupy his own posts in the lower country preparatory to the conquest of Madras. As a result, place after place surrendered to Haidar, says Wilks, as if a magic wand had accompanied the summons. By the end of December 1768 almost all the territorial possessions wrested by the English during Haidar's absence now again fell into his hands. Haidar continued his march destroying the country as he proceeded by fire and sword and crossing the Coleroon levied four lakhs of rupees from the Raja of Tanjore and spared his country and proceeded towards Cuddalore.

The Madras Government now became alarmed and thought it wise on their part to open negotiations with Haidar and accordingly deputed one of their military officers Major Fitzgerald to his camp. Haidar though he had regained all his lost possessions and had scored considerable success against the Madras Government adopted a moderate tone in discussing the proposals of peace with that officer and requested that a confidential officer might be sent to his camp to whom he might explain the grounds of accommodation to which he was willing to consent. The officer selected was one Captain Brooke. At the interview that took place between him and Haidar the latter expressed that from the very start he was anxious for a peaceful understanding with the English, but that Muhammad Ali who had ulterior designs of his own and who had an ascendancy in the counsels of the Madras Government had stood in the way of the termination of hostilities. The time had however come, he further said, when it was necessary for him to arrive at an understanding either with the English or with the Mahrattas who according to his intelligence were preparing to invade the Mysore

territories once more. The Mysore country served as a buffer between the Mahratta territories and those of the Company and as he could not conduct his campaign simultaneously with two enemies, he preferred, he said, the friendship of the English to that of the Mahrattas on account of the unsteady conduct of the latter, but he flatly refused to recognise Muhammad Ali as a party either in the preliminary negotiations or in the final ratification of the terms of peace. As Captain Brooke had not been invested with full powers to conclude peace, Haidar sent him back with the message that a duly authorised plenipotentiary might be sent to him. The report of this interview being communicated to the Madras Government, it was considered that Haidar's proposals did not afford a proper basis for peace and hostilities were ordered to be resumed.

Haidar now marching in the direction of Madras plundering and burning the intervening country arrived within 140 miles of Madras encountering little opposition. From here he sent off the whole band of his infantry, guns and baggage of every description, together with the great mass of his cavalry, with orders to retire to the country above the Ghauts. He then with a chosen body of 6000 cavalry and with two companies of infantry of 100 men each traversed 130 miles within three and a half days and reached St. Thomas Mount at a distance of about 5 miles from Madras on the 29th March 1769. From here he sent a letter to the Governor of Madras informing him that he was still anxious for peace and that if the Governor also was of the same mind, to depute a duly authorised envoy. The Madras Government were at this time alarmed that Haidar would burn and plunder the Madras city and accordingly viewed the proposal for peace with favour. Haidar even now refused to recognise Muhammad Ali as a party to the negotiations. Muhammad Ali on his side objected to any treaty with Haidar in which the latter was designated as Nawab, but the difficulty was surmounted by Muhammad Ali consenting to the Company negotiating the treaty in their own name for their own possessions. A treaty was accordingly concluded between the English and Haidar on the 2nd April 1769 and it provided for a mutual exchange of places and of prisoners taken except Karoor which as a former possession of Mysore was to continue in the

hands of Haidar and secondly, for mutual assistance when either of the parties was attacked by a belligerent power. Expressing his opinion on this treaty, Wilks has remarked that Haidar did not commit even a single mistake in the course of his negotiations and that whatever military errors were made were to be ascribed to his officers and not to him.

On the conclusion of peace, Haidar returned at his leisure to Kolar for the purpose of completing the arrangements consequent on the peace and from thence proceeded to Bangalore, where he gave his army some repose.