

## CHAPTER XV.

**War continued—Warren Hastings' successful diplomacy—Daring heroism of Lieut. Flint at Wandiwash—Nizam Ali and the Poona ministers detached from Haidar—Tippu sent to the West Coast—Haidar's death.**

When the news of the Polilore (Pullalur) disaster reached the Supreme Government at Calcutta, Warren Hastings the Governor-General, a man of remarkable energy, foresight and statesmanship at once took action to retrieve the disaster which had overwhelmed the British in the Carnatic. Sir Eyre Coote, a general of great reputation, was selected for the command of the field army and he arrived at Madras on the 5th November 1780 with a contingent of troops and fifteen lakhs of rupees. Warren Hastings also adopted measures to detach Nizam Ali and the Mahrattas from Haidar Ali. Haidar, as a matter of fact, had received no help from his confederate friends and continued to be left to his own resources to carry on the war.

Haidar was at this time engaged in the siege of five different places commanded by English officers, of which Wandiwash was one. Wandiwash was preserved from falling into the hands of Haidar by the daring heroism of a young English officer, Lieutenant Flint by name. On the approach of Haidar's army towards Wandiwash, Sir Eyre Coote deputed Flint to that place with only one hundred men to help the Killedar who was in Muhammad Ali's service to hold the fort against Haidar's men. This Killedar however entered into secret negotiations with Haidar to surrender the place to him. Flint becoming aware of the treachery which the Killedar intended to play marched by night and hid himself during the day and thus arrived safely at Wandiwash evading a large body of the Mysore cavalry which was operating in the neighbourhood. He then, according to a narrative of the period, sent a messenger to the Killedar to apprise him of his safe arrival but the Killedar whose plans had been already settled had no place for Flint and he accordingly sent word to him not to proceed further but to return. Flint however talked affably to the Killedar's officer and while he

talked, he quietly walked forward. When he was within a visible distance of the troops lining the battlements, he sent a messenger to the Killedar to inform him that he was the bearer of a letter from the Nawab of Arcot. The Killedar replied that Lieut. Flint could approach the town with a small personal escort and see him outside the gate. Flint accordingly went to the gate with only four faithful sepoy. The Killedar was seated on a carpet and behind him stood his leading officers, fifteen swordsmen of his body-guard and a hundred sepoy. Flint had to confess that he had no letter from the Nawab of Arcot and that he had arrived under the authority of the Madras Government who were speaking on behalf of the Nawab. The Killedar is reported to have laughed derisively and directed him to return at once to the place from where he had come. Flint pleaded the dangers of the route but the Killedar remarking that they were no concern of his is said to have risen from the seat to terminate the interview but found himself immediately after in the iron grasp of Flint, his four sepoy standing by him with bayonets fixed. Flint then addressing the Killedar's entourage said that he had no intention of superseding the Killedar and that the latter could remain in command, while he was prepared to do all the work. In the meanwhile Flint's Company having observed what had occurred joined their officer and after some parley on both sides, entered the fort in an amicable manner. Flint at once proceeded to repair the fortifications and strengthen the defences. He also placed the Killedar under restraint as he showed signs of proving dangerous to him. The garrison of the fort astonished at the daring feat of the young officer loyally placed themselves under his orders and gave him every help. Flint now became commander of the fort, expert engineer, expert artilleryman and expert supply officer at one and the same time. He had no artillery men with him, but no whit deterred, he enlisted all the goldsmiths of the town as gunners and taught them their new trade. Nor was he less resourceful as a supply officer. He raised a small troop of mounted men and despatched them to interview all the headmen of the surrounding villages. With these headmen he came to an agreement whereby they agreed to deliver supplies regularly into the fortress, while Flint on his part undertook never to raid the villages.

Thus from 12th August 1780 to the 12th February 1783 is this heroic man said to have maintained his position in spite of numerous assaults to dislodge him.\*

Coote opened his campaign in the middle of January and moved down the coast to Pondicherry and Cuddalore in order to destroy the surf-boats as might be of use to the French fleet should it arrive. When February opened, Coote found himself in a parlous state at Cuddalore. His supplies were exhausted and there seemed no prospect whatever of his being able to replace them. At anchor off the town, lay the French fleet. To the north lay the coastal belt devastated by Haidar. To the south and west Haidar's troopers intercepted all foraging parties, while Haidar himself with his main army encamped at a distance of only ten miles. Haidar knew well as how best to combine the action of his army with that of the French fleet and awaited with an easy mind the surrender of Coote which he thought was inevitable in the desperate circumstances in which the British army found itself. At this anxious moment, good fortune unexpectedly smiled on Coote, as the French admiral on hearing that a British squadron was sailing towards Cuddalore from Bombay set sail and departed to Mauritius. The result was that the supplies needed for the British army began to come in very freely and the situation was saved for Coote. Three actions were fought during the year 1781 at Porto Novo, Polilore (Pullalur) and Sholinghar, though without any decisive results. A new Governor, Lord Macartney, also now arrived from England with instructions for the capture of the Dutch settlement of Negapatam and this was effected in November 1781 and thereby the Madras Government was relieved of all anxiety of molestation from hostile vessels on the Coromandal coast.

In January 1782 the English admiral Sir Edward Hughes took Trincomalee from the Dutch, thus providing a harbour in which the British fleet might find shelter at all seasons of the year instead

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\* It may be of interest to the readers to know that when Sir Eyre Coote promoted Flint to the rank of a Captain for his indomitable conduct, the Court of Directors in England cancelled the promotion with the observation that promotion should go by seniority and seniority alone.

of being obliged to seek during the winter months the security afforded at Bombay. Subsequently however, this port was wrested from the English by the French, but there arrived in Madras in October 1782 a squadron of British ships conveying some reinforcements which the Madras Government sorely needed.

In 1782 another event occurred which left Haidar entirely to his own resources to face the English with only such help as the French could give him in the circumstances in which they had been placed. It will be remembered that Warren Hastings had at the commencement of the war succeeded in winning over the Nizam of Hyderabad from the tripartite coalition against the English. The same statesman now succeeded in bringing about an estrangement between the Poona ministers and Haidar. In October 1781 Warren Hastings concluded peace with Scindia, one of the members of the Mahratta confederacy, by which that ruler agreed to endeavour to mediate a peace between the English and Haidar and also between them and the Peshwa. The nature of this treaty was soon discovered by Noor-u-deen, Haidar's Vakil at Poona and was communicated by him to his master. On Noor-u-deen requesting Nana Fadnavis for an explanation of this treaty so far as it touched Haidar, the Poona minister declared that he was in favour of accepting Scindia's mediation for the conclusion of a treaty with the English and that if Haidar was desirous of the co-operation of the Poona Government, it was open to him to obtain it by surrendering the territory north of the Thungabhadra and by abandoning his claims on the pategars south of that river. By this diplomatic success of Warren Hastings the Mysore territories now became exposed to a Mahratta invasion on the northern side. The defection of the Mahrattas from their alliance with Haidar enabled the Bombay Government to attack his possessions on the West Coast and to encounter this new situation Haidar was forced to send his son Tippu with a considerable force to that coast.

Shortly after, on account of the north-east monsoon rains the hostile armies were forced to seek shelter in cantonments and Haidar selected for the purpose an elevated place on the back of a

small stream about sixteen miles to the northward of Arcot. Haidar's health had been declining during the year and in November he was attacked with a carbuncle and died at the age of sixty on the 7th of December 1782 at a place called Narasingarayanpet near Chittoor where a small monument now marks the spot. Kirmani's account of this event is pathetic.

“Haidar on hearing that it was a deadly boil which had appeared on his neck became certain that his last hour had arrived. But without allowing fear or apprehension to take a place in his mind he remained as usual absorbed in the order and regulation of his army and kingdom. At about this time spies brought intelligence, wrongly as it appeared later, that that able officer General Coote had left this transitory world and the Nawab on hearing this intelligence sighed deeply and said that Coote was an able man and that he would have with his experience and knowledge kept on an equality with him. On reaching Narasingarayanpet, the disease assumed great malignity and completely prostrated his strength and spirits and at last he was forced to take to his bed. Immediately after, he dictated a letter to his son Tippu impressing that the latter was to make all the necessary arrangements needed for the safety of the troops where they were stationed and to return to his father's camp, exhorting at the same time not to neglect his duties even for a moment. The next day the Nawab is said to have thrown open his treasury and to have given orders for the disbursement of one month's pay as a gift to all the men of his army including all departments. On the last day of Mohurram-il-Hurram he asked his attendants what was the date of the month and they replied that it was the last day of the month Zi Huj and that night was the first of Mohurram. He then directed that water might be made ready for him to bathe and although the physician objected to his bathing, he was turned out of the tent and the Nawab bathed. Then having put on clean clothes, he repeated some prayer or invocation on his finger, rubbing his face and at the same time despatched two thousand horse to plunder and ravage the country of the pategars north of Arcot and five thousand horse towards Madras for the same purpose and to cause alarm to the people there,

He next sent for some of his officers\* and gave them strict orders for the regulation of their departments and afterwards swallowed a little broth and laid down to rest. The same night his ever victorious spirit took its flight to Paradise."

It will be no exaggeration if we say that Haidar's death at the time at which it occurred may be regarded not as a mere episode in the general history of India but as an important event which tended to establish the British Power in India sooner than it would have been otherwise possible. The English and the French were contending for supremacy and their rivalry helped many of the Indian princes to further their own ambitions. On account of the weakness that had overtaken the Mughal Court, there was really no Paramount Power to keep the turbulent chiefs and military adventurers under proper control. While the English and the French were loyal to their countries, the Indians, on the other hand, whether chiefs or ordinary adventurers played each for his own hand and ideas of patriotism or maintenance of other larger interests never seem to have crossed their minds. While in 1733 the Regulating Act passed by the Parliament in England introduced unity of rule in the Presidencies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay by placing at their head a Governor-General and subordinating Madras and Bombay to him, the Peshwas, Scindias, Holkars, Nawabs and Palegars not only fought among themselves but even when they formed a confederacy, they could not sustain it for any length of time.

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\* It is learnt from other sources that these officers were Abu Muhammad Mirde, Mir Muhammad Sadak, Tosheekhané Krishna Rao, Purnaiya and Anchegurikar Shamiah.