

## CHAPTER XX.

### **Third War with the English—Lord Cornwallis takes command and marches to Bangalore—Description of the Army.**

As our readers may be already aware, the Mysore Kingdom reached the zenith of its power and glory about the time of Haidar's death. Among the old Hindu rulers, Yadu Raja the doughty founder of the present ruling family of Mysore, Raja Wodeyar the puissant king who freed himself from the overlordship of the Vijayanagar viceroy by the acquisition of Seringapatam, Ranadhira Kanthirava Narasimharaja Wodeyar the intrepid hero who boldly confronted and turned back the Bijapur General Ranadulla Khan, Chikka Devaraja Wodeyar the statesman-king who by his diplomacy won the friendship of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb had all contributed largely not only to the enlargement of the territories of Mysore but also had raised the kingdom to a position which inspired fear in the heart of its enemies and caused envy among its neighbours. Haidar Ali who became the Sarvadhikari and ruler of Mysore successfully turned back the hostile Mahrattas and also held his own against the English in the two wars he waged against them, left Mysore at the time of his death at its highest glory. Tippu, on the other hand, though possessing considerable physical courage was much wanting in the qualities of a statesman and in those of winning over men to his side. As a consequence, not only internal revolts arose but also insurrections in the conquered countries and hostile alliances were formed against him by his neighbours.

We have seen that Haidar had coveted Malabar and other parts of the Western Coast but had been prevented from accomplishing his designs in full on account of his preoccupations in other parts of the country. Among the chiefs that had tendered their submission to Haidar was the Raja of Cochin whose territory abutted on that of the Travancore Raja. To resist an invasion by the Zamorin of Calicut, the Cochin Raja had sought in 1761 the help of Travancore and as a reward for the services rendered,

Cochin had assigned a tract of land on which fortifications had been erected for the defence of the northern boundaries of Travancore in the shape of a wall twenty feet thick and twelve feet high with stone batteries and bastions at intervals all along the frontier. This wall was protected by a deep ditch with bamboos and thorny shrubs planted close to the wall on the side of the ditch. These defences were generally known as the "Travancore lines" and were intended to resist attacks from Malabar. Haidar at the time of his invasion of Malabar had realised the advantage of annexing Travancore to Mysore but as he had to reckon with the Dutch who were at Cranganore, he had deferred the idea for the time being. After the conclusion of peace with the Mahrattas, Tippu feeling himself free saw like his father the advantage of having command of the entire Western Coast, as thereby he would have ready facilities for the importation of munitions of war. Tippu now found a pretext against the Travancore Raja on the ground that he had built the defences on the territory of his feudatory the Cochin Raja and that the former had besides given shelter to a number of his rebel subjects who had fled from Malabar to his territory. In 1789 Tippu attacked the Travancore wall and though sustaining repulse in the beginning ultimately succeeded in demolishing it and ravaging the Travancore territories. The monsoon however having shortly set in, Tippu found it extremely difficult to continue his military operations and hearing also that the English were assembling an army at Trichnopoly for the defence of their ally the Raja of Travancore, he retreated to Palaghat and fixed his quarters there for the time being.

Lord Cornwallis was now both Governor-General and Commander-in-chief of India at this time. He is described as firm, just, courteous, considerate and most equable in temper. In a letter to his son Lord Brome which he wrote on the occasion of his being elected a Knight of the Garter he said—"You will have heard that soon after I left England, I was elected Knight of Garter and very likely laughed at me for wishing to wear a blue riband over my fat belly..... I can assure you upon my honour that I neither asked for it nor wished for it. The reasonable object of ambition to a man is to have his name transmitted to posterity for

eminent services rendered to his country and to mankind. Nobody asks or cares to know whether Hampden, Marlborough, Pelham or Wolfe were Knights of the Garter." Among a number of abuses which Cornwallis sternly put down after he assumed charge of the English affairs in India was the jobbery which prevailed at the time of sending out young men from England with letters of introduction for finding employment for them. Among the most importunate was the Prince of Wales himself who had recommended a person for appointment as Judge of the city of Benares in place of a Mahomedan incumbent who was quite efficient in his duties. Cornwallis showed himself no respecter of persons and he boldly informed the prince accordingly. It was with such a man that it fell to the lot of Tippu to come into opposition.

Lord Cornwallis on hearing of the quarrel between Tippu and the Raja of Travancore intimated to the Madras Government his readiness to bring about amicable relations between them by means of negotiations and adjured the Madras Government to stand firmly by their ally. The plan of operations was to carry the struggle into the heart of the Mysore territories, entering from the south by the Gejjelhutti Pass. At the time that Meadows the Commander-in-chief of Madras opened his campaign Tippu had concentrated the bulk of his forces about Seringapatam and was free to move to any point he wished and the campaign of 1790 closed in a manner unsatisfactory to the British. No vital blow had been dealt at Tippu and while Meadows had failed to carry the war into Mysore, Tippu had successfully invaded the Carnatic and had done much injury to the interests of the Company, though it must be said that some successes had been gained on the Western Coast by the Bombay army under General Abercrombie.

In these circumstances, Cornwallis considered that it was essential that he should assume the command of the army and direct the campaign himself. In a minute which he recorded on the 5th November 1790 he wrote:—"Although I am not vain enough to suppose that the military operations would be conducted more ably or with more success by myself than by General Meadows, yet from the station which I hold in this country and the

friendly intercourse which I have had the good fortune to maintain both with the Nizam and the Peshwa, I conceive it to be possible that my presence in the scene of action would be considered by our allies as a pledge of our sincerity and of our confident hopes of success against the common enemy and by that means operate as an encouragement to them to continue their exertions and abide by their stipulations." Indeed, so long ago as February 1790 in a minute circulated to his Council, Cornwallis had said that in the critical situation in which the Company's affairs were found, he looked upon it as a duty which he owed to his country to lay aside all considerations of his own personal ease or responsibility or even of what the existing laws might specifically authorise and to proceed to Madras to take charge of the civil and military affairs of the Presidency. In the meanwhile, having received information from England of General Meadows' appointment as Governor of Madras also, Lord Cornwallis refrained from further action in the hope that Meadows with his increased powers would be able to give a new turn to the operations of the war. Being however disappointed in this hope, Cornwallis proceeded to Madras and assumed command of the army at the end of January 1791.

In his plan of campaign Lord Cornwallis avoided the mistake of the dispersal of the force which had brought about the destruction of the detachments under Baillie, Braithwaite and Mathews in previous campaigns and had rendered nugatory all the efforts of Meadows in the preceding year. In selecting his line of advance, Cornwallis chose the most direct route to Seringapatam via Vellore and Bangalore. By adopting this route he shortened considerably the lines of communication, while he placed himself within easy reach of his allies, the Nizam and the Mahrattas.

Lord Cornwallis began his first march on the 5th of February 1791 and the whole of the British army was concentrated at Vellore by the 11th. Here demonstrations were made as if to ascend the table-land of Mysore through the Amboor Pass. Before this concentration took place, Colonel Reade the head of the Intelligence Department had won over to the side of the British a number of

palegars who had suffered at the hands of Haidar and Tippu and who had taken refuge in the territories of the Nawab of Arcot including the palegars of Kangundi Palya, Chikballapur, Punganoor, Madanapalli and Anekal. These palegars were assured of protection and despatched to their respective places to recover their possessions on condition that they should collect and forward to the English army forage and provisions. Colonel Reade had also by secretly sending clever spies and able munshis or writers dressed as merchants into the Mysore country obtained sketches of the topography of the country.

Tippu who was at Pondicherry negotiating for a contingent of 6000 French troops for his help on hearing of the march of Cornwallis left that place and proceeded rapidly by the passes of Changama and Pallicode with the intention of opposing the British army. Cornwallis however while pretending to ascend by the Amboor Pass out-manoevred Tippu by taking the easy pass of Mugli near Venkatagiri. In four days with a circuit of fifty-one miles he completely surmounted every impediment and occupied the summit of the pass before it was possible for Tippu to intercept the ascent of the invading army. In four days more the battering train and various other equipments including sixty-seven elephants and provisions for 45 days were on the table-land of Mysore at a distance of 90 miles from Bangalore without having fired a shot. On the march to Bangalore, no incidents worthy of note occurred and no opposition was encountered. The villages on the way were generally walled round and further protected by a cavalier turret and a corps proceeding in advance furnished safeguards to these villages. Tippu's harem had been lodged in Bangalore and as the British army approached towards that place, it became necessary for him to remove the harem to a place of safety. On the evening of the 5th March 1791 the British army was encamped at a distance of about six miles from where the Mysore army was.

Lord Cornwallis' army consisted of about 22,300 combatants and the number of camp followers, male and female, was about 1,30,000 persons at about 6 followers to one fighting man. The number of transport was about 80,000 and in addition there were

also a number of camels and ponies. There were also about a hundred elephants, each elephant having two keepers. Every two camels had one and every horse two attendants, one as a groom and the other to provide grass. Every sepoy took with him his wife and family including a number of needy relations. The coolies also in practice enjoyed the same privileges, though they were not supposed to have it. There was also generally a bazaar attached to the army in which every trade was represented and every conceivable commodity was obtainable.

To get a glimpse of the life of British officers and men in the field, we may refer to a book written by Captain Innes Munro. One Major Mango is described as being seated in his tent in a comfortable chair at a large table bearing two nicely-shaded candles in camp near Madras. The weight of the tent was such as to form a complete load for a powerful camel or part of a load for an elephant. The tent was furnished by the Company with two lascars to carry out any necessary repairs. Among Major Mango's furniture were several chairs and a most comfortable bed complete with mattress, bolster and pillow. Round the walls of the tent were placed six or seven trunks with table equipage. His stock of linen at least 24 suits, some dozens of wine, brandy and gin, tea and sugar and biscuits. In the rear was a smaller tent to accommodate his servants and hold the residue of his baggage.

At some moment the Dubash or steward is stated to have looked in and told Major Mango that the coolies whom he had hired for the campaign had presented themselves to demand one month's wages in advance. Major Mango told the Dubash to order the coolies to wait, an order which implied nothing more serious than sitting still and doing nothing was readily obeyed. After such delay as befitted his dignity, Major Mango got up from the table and left the tent. As he emerged therefrom, he heard the strident voice of the Dubash abusing the coolies for their temerity in coming to dun their master. Major Mango was by no means deceived, for he knew full well that the coolies were there at the instigation of the Dubash. The latter was the keeper of the purse to his master and paid all the servants, taking care to

deduct a percentage for himself. Knowing of the risks of war, he was determined to secure his share of the coolies' wages in good time. Therefore there was no other course open to Major Mango than to order the Dubash to settle up with the coolies which was speedily done. During the campaign Major Mango like other field officers took not less than 40 servants inclusive of coolies into the field with him with free rations for the former.

"Whenever a start was to be made the next morning, Major Mango retires" says Innes Munro "early to bed, giving orders for the heavy baggage to be packed over-night for loading up on the morrow. The camp followers in the meantime are settling down, lighting fires in every alley and street of the camp and making communication a matter of the utmost difficulty. Moreover, their total disregard for sanitation soon produces a condition of affairs which is best left to the imagination. Major Mango's coolies take up their position in the main thoroughfare behind their master's tent. If 'Master' likes his coolies to be within reach, the coolies have very good reason for wishing to be near 'Master' and we shall presently see why. About midnight Major Mango is wakened by a most unpleasant sound, the sound of heavy rain. He has hardly time to realise the extent of his approaching misfortune before he hears the pattering of many running feet and a babel of voices approaching the door. The next instant without a 'by-your-leave' or 'with-your-leave,' some twenty to thirty coolies hurl themselves into the tent relying on the unwritten law under which coolies can claim the shelter of their employer's tent in wet weather; and Major Mango had to keep his temper and bear his affliction as best he could, for fear that the coolies would run away and leave him helpless the next morning.

"With the first streak of light, the coolies leave the tent and are busily employed in cooking their morning meal. The smoke from so much damp fuel hangs over the camp like a pall. Major Mango is up betimes and is soon dressed, for the march is to begin at 4 a.m. in the hope of reaching the next camping ground before the sun has attained its full power. While Major Mango breakfasts comfortably outside his tent, the latter is struck by the lascars and

coolies and packed ready for loading. As the time for parade approaches, Major Mango tells the Dubash and the cook to pack some cold lunch for him and to take care to march with his belongings and tent as far forward in the baggage column as they can, so that lunch and tent may be ready for him as soon as possible after the new camping ground is reached. Having seen most of his property loaded up, Major Mango strolls off to his battalion parade ground, where he will find his syce grass-cutter and pony waiting for him. Major Mango is followed by his boy who carries a brandy flask, an earthenware jug of water and, last but not least, a folding stool to avoid soiling his breeches by sitting on the ground whenever there arose any occasion to sit.

“At this time the camp followers and their families have been shouting to one another in their efforts to collect together before the march begins. To the clamour thus created may be added the squalling of innumerable babies which are being tied on to any form of available transport and the bellowings, babblings and screamings of many thousand transport animals as bullocks, camels and country-bred ponies are loaded up. In the midst of this pandemonium ride the divisional baggage officers, each accompanied by twenty mounted orderlies. All carry long whips which are by no means for show but which were mercilessly plied in the case of all laggards who lagged behind.

“The army moves in three columns on the left flank. Being the flank next to the enemy march the infantry and the field artillery on a road specially made for them. An interval of hundred yards or more separates them from the column on their right which consists of the siege artillery, its ammunition waggons and the heavy transport vehicles. The siege artillery guns like the field guns are drawn by bullocks on a scale of one bullock for every pound weight of metal in the ball. To this heavy column the main road is allotted. To the right of the siege artillery comes the third column composed of the smaller store carts and private baggage carts. For this column another specially constructed road has been provided. Further to the right again march the bazaars, the transport animals and all the vast array of the camp followers,



This immense multitude covers a space of several square miles, on the outer flank of which are to be found such of the cavalry as can be spared from other duties. The uniform of sepoy consists of a blue turban bound round with tape of the same colour as the regimental facings. From one corner of the turban hangs a coloured tassel. The jacket is of some thin scarlet material, whilst the cotton shorts are cut off half way down the thigh, the remainder of the leg being left bare. Sandals are worn and not boots or shoes. The equipment consists of cross-belts which support the back, ammunition pouches and bayonet.

“When the march comes to an end, the tents as they come up at the head of the baggage column are rapidly erected. The camping ground is situated near a conveniently situated tank. Major Mango on arrival immediately sends to the tank to get his drinking-water before the countless camp followers and animals have washed, swum and wallowed in it and the water has in consequence become muddy. Long after Major Mango had eaten his dinner and gone to bed, the weary rear-guard tramp to their lines driving before them the last stragglers of the baggage column. Midnight sounds from many a guard-tent gong before the whole camp is at rest.”