

CHAPTER XXV.

Lord Mornington's proposal to Tippu to send an agent to his court and his reply.

Lord Mornington arrived in Calcutta from Madras in May 1798 and took charge of his high office from Sir John Shore. The latter had begun his career as an officer of the East India Company and on assuming the office of the Governor-General showed himself always ready to carry out the mandates of his masters which were pre-eminently based on the maxims of the counter. His policy as far as it related to the rulers of the Indian States was one of *laissez-faire* or non-intervention with their concerns and his attention was much fixed on securing large dividends to the share-holders of the Company. Lord Mornington's mind was of a far different mould and he was under no obligation to the East India Company. He is regarded with Clive and Hastings as one of the great trio who mainly secured for the British people their Indian Empire. In 1793 Mornington was appointed a Member of the Board of Control and ever after he made it a point to acquire a close acquaintance with Indian subjects. He was 38 years of age when he arrived in India and was in the full vigour of his manhood. His younger brother Arthur Wellesley who became known to history later as the great Duke of Wellington was already in India as commander of a British regiment having arrived in the previous year.

Shortly after Lord Mornington took charge of his office, he found inserted in a Calcutta newspaper of the 8th June 1798 a copy of Malartic's proclamation to which reference has already been made. On the 18th of June a copy of this same proclamation was officially received by Mornington from Lord Macartney who at that time was Governor of the Cape Colony. Two days later, Mornington wrote to the Governors of Madras and Bombay sending them a copy each of Malartic's proclamation and inviting them to make preparations for war. In October following he also received information from the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors who were in communication with the ministry in England that a very large armament of ships with troops and military stores had sailed

from Toulon on the 19th May their destination being unknown, that it was likely that they were intended for India either by way of the Red Sea or by way of Bussora, that the British Government were sending a large body of seasoned and well-disciplined troops to strengthen those already available in India and that if Tippu's designs should prove to be such as the proclamation represented, his attack should not be awaited but war was to be anticipated and carried into the Mysore country.

Mornington's letter to the Madras Government to be ready for war caused them much alarm and a vehement protest was made against any premature attack on the Mysore Ruler on the ground that the troops in Madras were in a disabled condition on account of lack of sufficient supplies and draught cattle as well as the low state of their finances. Mornington however was made of sterner stuff and would not sit quiet folding his hands under what in his opinion was a menacing situation threatening the very existence of the British in India. In a minute which he recorded on 12th August 1798 he reviewed all the facts of the case as they appeared to him and remarked—"This therefore is not the case of an injury to be repaired but of the public safety to be secured against the present and the future designs of an irreconcilable, desperate and treacherous enemy. Against an enemy of this description no effectual security can be obtained otherwise than by such a reduction of his power as shall not only defeat his actual preparations but establish a permanent restraint on his future means of offence." He however at the same time saw the unwisdom of immediately embarking on a war with Tippu and accordingly issued suitable orders for the remodelling of the troops and for other measures being undertaken which would bring success to them in their hostilities against their enemy.

At the same time Mornington took note of the political situation in India as it affected the British interests. A rumour had reached India at the time that Bonaparte with a large French army had landed and taken possession of Egypt with the object of invading India. The French influence had also become predominant both at the court of the Nizam as well as in that of Dowlat

Rao Scindia. The Nizam far from being an independent ruler had become a tributary to the Mahrattas after his defeat and capitulation at Kurdla due mainly to the policy of Sir John Shore who had withheld all help from him. There was a French contingent of 14,000 men at the Nizam's court and the officers of the contingent had possession of a considerable portion of the Nizam's territories adjoining the Carnatic from the revenues of which they paid themselves the cost they incurred. The Mahratta Government of Poona had also become largely incapable of affording such aid to the British on account of internal feuds which had practically placed all power in the hands of Dowlat Rao Scindia. By gaining this influence over the Government of the young Peshwa Baji Rao, Dowlat Rao had enabled himself to extend his power up to the northern frontier of Tippu's dominions. It was doubtful whether Scindia's interests coincided with those of the British at this time. There was also at his court a body of infantry raised, disciplined and commanded by French officers, making it doubtful as to the exact line of conduct Scindia would pursue in case of a war between Tippu and the British. There was also considerable apprehension in the country that Zaman Shah, King of Afghanistan, was making preparations for an immediate invasion of India.

After the defeat of the Nizam at Kurdla, the Mahrattas had compelled him to send back to the Company's territories the British battalions stationed at his capital. The Nizam however subsequently taking advantage of the weakness of the Mahratta Government at Poona had recalled the British battalions to his territories. Lord Mornington entered into a fresh treaty with him on 1st September 1798 by which the Nizam agreed to the increase of British force by four more battalions and to the disbandment of the French corps. When Lord Mornington assumed the Governor-Generalship, he found that though Dowlat Rao Scindia possessed great influence and power over the other Mahratta chiefs, the same had by no means been consolidated. A formidable rebellion prevailed in his territories north of the Narmada encouraged by his uncle Mahadaji Scindia. The confusion in the southern parts of the Mahratta Empire due to the contest for the possession of power at Poona had not also subsided. Scindia however was not uninterested in the

expected invasion of India by Zaman Shah, as the first effects of such an invasion would have been felt by him and his safety therefore lay in his friendship with the British Government. In these circumstances Lord Mornington rightly calculated that in his war with Tippu he need apprehend no danger from the Mahrattas. About this time Mornington also received information of the battle of the Nile in which the French fleet had been totally destroyed by Nelson.

By about the beginning of November 1798 the British army became concentrated and ready for the field and Lord Mornington now assumed an open tone. In a letter addressed by him to Tippu on the 8th November occur these sentences :—“.....In no age or country were the baneful and insidious arts of intrigue cultivated with such success as are at present by the French nation. I wish that no impression had been produced on your discerning mind by that dangerous people, but my situation enables me to know that these people have reached your presence and have endeavoured to pervert the wisdom of your councils and to instigate you to war against those who have given you no provocation. It is impossible that you should suppose me to be ignorant of the intercourse which subsists between you and the French, whom you know to be the inveterate enemies of the Company and to be now engaged in an unjust war with the British nation. You cannot imagine me to be indifferent to the transactions which have passed between you and the enemies of my country.Adverting to your reputation for wisdom and discernment, it was natural for me to be extremely slow to believe the various accounts transmitted to me of your military preparations. But whatever my reluctance to credit such reports might be, prudence required both of me and of the Company's allies that we should adopt certain measures of precaution and self-defence and these have accordingly been taken, as you will no doubt have observed. The British Government and the allies wishing nevertheless to live in peace and friendship with all their neighbours, entertaining no projects of ambition nor any views in the least incompatible with their respective engagements and looking to no other objects than the permanent security and tranquillity of their own dominions and subjects will always be

ready, as they now are, to afford you every demonstration of their pacific disposition. The Peshwa and His Highness the Nizam concur with me in the observations which I have offered to you in this letter and which in the name of the Company and of the allies I recommend to your most earnest consideration. But as I am also desirous of communicating to you on behalf of the Company and their allies a plan calculated to promote the mutual security and welfare of all parties, I propose to depute to you for this purpose Major Doveton who is well-known to you and who will explain to you more fully and particularly the sole means which appear to myself and the allies of the Company to be effectual for the salutary purpose of removing all existing distrust and suspicion and of establishing peace and good understanding on the most durable foundations. You will, I doubt not, let me know at what time and place it will be convenient to you to receive Major Doveton and as soon as your friendly letter shall reach me, I will direct him to proceed to your presence."

Tippu however put off sending a reply to Mornington's letter till the 18th December and on that date he acknowledged the letter and at the same time congratulated the British on the success of the battle of the Aboukir Bay in Egypt. "In this Sircar," added Tippu, "there is a mercantile tribe who employ themselves in trading by sea and land. Their agents purchased a two-masted vessel and having loaded her with rice departed with a view to traffic. It happened that she went to the Maritius, from whence forty persons French and of a dark colour, of whom ten or twelve were artificers and the rest servants, paying the hire of the ship came here in search of employment. Such as chose to take service were entertained and the remainder departed beyond the confines of this Sircar and the French who are full of vice and deceit have perhaps taken advantage of the departure of the ship to put about reports with the view to ruffle the minds of both Sircars. It is the wish of my heart and my constant endeavour to observe and maintain the articles of the agreement of peace and to perpetuate and strengthen the basis of friendship and union with the Sircar of the Company Bahadur and with the Sircars of the Maharaja Sahib Sreemanta Peshwa Bahadur and His Highness the Nawab Asuph

Jah Bahadur. I am resident at home, at times taking the air and at others amusing myself with hunting at a spot which is used as a pleasure-ground. In this case the allusion to war in your friendly letters has given me the greatest surprise. It was further written by your friendly pen that your Lordship is desirous of communicating to me on behalf of the Company and their allies a plan calculated to promote the mutual security and welfare of all parties. Your Lordship proposes to depute to me for this purpose Major Doveton who formerly waited upon me and who will explain to me more fully and particularly the sole means which appear to your Lordship and the allies to be effectual for the salutary purpose of removing all distrust and suspicion and establishing peace and good understanding on the most durable foundations and that therefore your Lordship may trust that I shall let you know at what time and place it will be convenient to me to receive Major Doveton....”

Before the above reply of Tippu could reach Mornington, the latter had left Calcutta on the 25th December 1798 and arrived at Madras on the 31st of the same month. After the perusal of Tippu's reply on the 9th January 1799 when it reached him, Mornington again wrote to him recapitulating all the acts of hostility on Tippu's part and again pressing him to accept an envoy. On the 26th of the same month, the Governor-General also forwarded to the Mysore Ruler a letter addressed to him by Sultan Selim of Turkey, dated 20th September 1798, and received through the British ambassador at Constantinople informing Tippu of the unprovoked attack of the French on Egypt and their defeat at the battle of the Nile and counselling him to develop his friendship with the English who had helped the Turkish Government in the defence of Egypt. Early in February, Tippu acknowledged both these letters in the following terms: “I have been much gratified by the agreeable receipt of your Lordship's two friendly letters, the first brought by a camelman and the last by harkars and understood their contents. The letter of the Turkish Sultan in station like Jumsheid, with angles as his guards, with troops numerous as the stars, the Sun illumining the world of the heaven of Empire and dominion, the luminary giving splendour to the universe of the firmament of glory and power, the Sultan of the sea and the land,

the King of Roum, be his empire and power perpetual addressed to me which reached you through the British envoy and which you transmitted has arrived. Being frequently disposed to make excursions and hunting, I am accordingly proceeding upon a hunting excursion. You will be pleased to despatch Major Doveton slightly attended, about whose coming your friendly pen has repeatedly written.....”

This letter reached Mornington on the 13th February 1799. But two days before on the 11th February the British troops from their camp near Vellore had begun their march on the Mysore territory with General Harris as their commander-in-chief.