

## CHAPTER XXVII.

**Meeting of Tippu and his officers at Bannur—General Harris crosses at Sosalé instead of at Arakere—Siege of Seringapatam—Tippu's ineffective negotiations with Harris for peace.**

Foiled as he was in his attempt to obstruct and protract the enemy's march till the monsoon broke and the Kaveri filled with floods, a great gloom seems to have taken possession of Tippu's mind and he summoned a conference of all his officers on the 31st March at Bannur. At this conference every officer is said to have vowed to sacrifice his life in the Sultan's cause and the scene when parting at the end of the conference is said to have been a very pathetic one. Tippu expected that Harris would take the route to Seringapatam which Cornwallis had taken in 1792 and would cross the Kaveri at Arakere. He accordingly made all his preparations to meet an attack on the north-east side of the fort. To this end, he destroyed all supplies in the country to the north of the island, while preserving them for his own troops on the southern side. Mir Sadak was now sent to superintend the destruction of all the buildings on the esplanade on the side of the expected attack and such of those in Shahar Ganjam as had not already been destroyed.

On the 28th March General Harris left Malavalli to proceed to Seringapatam and camped at a distance of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles. He secretly entertained the idea of crossing the river Kaveri at Sosalé and in order to ascertain the feasibility of doing so, sent from his new camp a small reconnoitering party under Major Allan. This officer with his party galloped over a distance of twelve miles without attracting notice and reached Sosalé just as it was getting dark, and after ascertaining the nature of the ford returned to the camp about midnight. It was found that there were a great many inhabitants at Sosalé with all the cattle of the adjacent country. One Srinivasiah who apparently was an interpreter accompanied Major Allan on horseback and spread a rumour that the party had been sent by Tippu to inform the inhabitants to remain where they were. Assured by the results of the reconnaissance of an easy

passage for the army across the river at the ford at Sosalé, Harris started on the 29th and suddenly turning towards the south instead of marching towards the north as expected by Tippu reached Sosalé without meeting any opposition on the way to the amazement of the inhabitants of the country who regarded the party which had visited them the previous day as a friendly party. Immediately on reaching the river, as it was considered desirable to secure the passage at once, a detachment crossed the river and encamped on the other side.

On the 30th the whole of the army crossed the river leaving a small battalion in the fort at Sosalé to guard the rear. A great store of grain was found in the neighbourhood of the encampment and many bullocks and sheep were brought by the followers. On the 1st April General Harris resumed his march and encamped at Rangasamudram. Here a considerable body of Tippu's troops was found on a height at some distance apparently reconnoitering the British army. On the 2nd April the army reached Harohalli from where a number of crimson umbrellas were seen indicating the presence of a number of high officers of Tippu. On the 3rd April the army made a short march and encamped at a distance of about a mile from the island. On the advance guard coming to the ground of encampment, a very large body of Tippu's regular cavalry showed themselves in front on the south side of the Kaveri near the Chendgal ford but made no attempt whatsoever to oppose the enemy. From the ground near the advance piquet of this camp Harris was able to obtain a fine view of Seringapatam. A great many troops were found encamped on the east face of the fort and people were seen moving in all directions in the island. On the 4th the whole force marched to Nava Shahar about 5 miles south of Seringapatam. Except that a few rockets were thrown by the rocket boys of Tippu, nothing material was attempted to molest the enemy. On the 5th April the army marched and took up its ground before Seringapatam about 2 miles and a half from the south-west face of the fort causing surprise to Tippu and his officers who had expected that Harris would take up his position on the south-eastern corner of the island and had accordingly made preparations to meet the hostile army.

Before the main British army took up its position before Seringapatam on the 5th April, an incident which took place during the night previous may be mentioned. Between the camping place of the British army and the walls of Seringapatam stretched a considerable portion of broken ground interspersed with jungly bushes, with granite rocks and ruined hamlets, affording excellent cover for annoying the British lines with rockets and musketry. At the extremity of this and distant one mile from the city was a grove of betel-trees named the Sultanpet Tope, from whence rockets were thrown into the tents of the British army. On the night of the 4th April, General Baird was directed to dislodge these men. He accordingly proceeded with a body of troops at 11 o'clock in the night but after scouring the grove in all directions found that the Mysoreans had quitted the place. Their retreat rendering General Baird's further stay in the tope unnecessary, he prepared to return to the camp, an officer attached to his force undertaking to act as a guide. After some time Lieut. Lambton, one of the officers on General Baird's staff and who had an intimate knowledge of astronomy, informed his chief that the troops were moving in an opposite direction to that which was intended and were in fact marching directly towards the enemy. Baird then took out a compass from his pocket and putting a firefly upon the glass ascertained beyond doubt that Lieut. Lambton's conclusion as obtained from the position of the stars was correct and immediately the troops were faced about to the south and returned to camp.

The next day however the Mysoreans again established themselves in the Sultanpet Tope as well as in some neighbouring posts and General Harris deemed it necessary to expel them from their position. Colonel Wellesley was entrusted with this task and he marched with a body of men at 8 o'clock that night but was instantly attacked in the darkness of the night on every side with musketry and rockets. His men were dispersed retreating in disorder, several being also killed and a spent ball from the Mysorean side slightly wounded Colonel Wellesley on the knee. He became separated from his force and after much wandering in the dark found his way to the commander-in-chief's tent at midnight and reported his failure to capture the tope. On the morning of the 6th

however, General Harris again directed Colonel Wellesley to take possession of the tope and in his second attack Colonel Wellesley was entirely successful. The possession of this tope enabled the commander-in-chief to occupy a line of posts which gave complete security to his camp.

On the 14th April the Bombay army reached Seringapatam and effected a junction with the main army. Major General Floyd had been deputed by the commander-in-chief on the 6th April with a detachment to apprise General Stuart of the main army being at Seringapatam. General Stuart on receiving this information left the Coorg country on the 10th and arrived at Seringapatam on the 14th as stated already, here and there harassed on the way by Kamruddin's cavalry which followed Floyd at some distance. On the 16th the Bombay army crossed the Kaveri and took up its position on the northern bank of the river. The right of the Bombay army was now in a line with the left of the main army and the left extended towards the French Rocks.

The more active operations of the siege commenced from the 17th April. On this date a detachment of the Bombay army attacked and drove the Mysoreans from their posts near the village of Agrahara on the north side of the river. Subsequently by means of operations in other parts, several important Mysore outposts were taken and numerous batteries were erected. Tippu was now much perturbed by the relentless manner in which the commander-in-chief's grip on the fortress was tightening and a letter from him reached General Harris on the evening of the 20th April in which he desired that both for clearing up matters and for concluding a treaty a conference should be held. To this letter, Harris sent a reply enclosing draft of a preliminary treaty containing certain terms on which alone he said he could enter into any negotiations with him. These terms were in the main that Tippu was to pay 2 crores of rupees, half within 24 hours and half within six months, half of his dominions as they existed at the time of the outbreak of hostilities was to be surrendered and eight hostages, four sons of Tippu and four Sirdars, were to be sent to the British camp in security for the fulfilment of the terms of the

treaty. Harris further acquainted Tippu that unless the latter's acquiescence was signified under his seal and signature within twenty-four hours from the moment of his receiving them and the hostages and specie delivered within twenty-four hours more, the allies reserved to themselves the right of extending their demands for security even to the possession of the fort of Seringapatam till the treaty was finally concluded.

These negotiations however did not prevent the building of batteries and the completion of other siege operations. On the 27th the Mysore troops were driven back from their last exterior line of defence. A British officer who took part in the operations at this time has left a stirring record of what took place so far as he was concerned and it is worth quoting here: "On the 25th April it was our turn for the trenches and on gaining our station at sunset, we found it necessary to erect a four-gun battery of 18 pounders on the right flank of a parallel which had previously been finished. Accordingly a working party from the 73rd regiment and the Scotch brigade with some sepoy were employed the whole night and the guns being already in the trenches, the battery was opened in the morning with the usual success and continued to fire the whole of the following day. It being intended to erect the breaching battery still closer than they already were and the enemy being in possession of a four-gun stockaded redoubt and covered way which could infallibly enfilade it when finished, the engineer conceived it necessary to occupy this post or drive them from it. Accordingly it was settled that the 73rd and the Scotch brigade should perform that service before they were relieved.

"Sunset was fixed on for the time and it soon came—too soon for many a brave fellow. All was bustle and noise. General Stuart's and our batteries began a heavy fire of guns and howitzers on the garrison and the enemy returned it with double the number, together with showers of rockets. At last the signal was given and on we rushed. Scarcely had we cleared the battery, when one of our grenadier officers and a number of men fell killed and wounded. I received a smart rap on my left shoulder and thinking I was wounded, put up my right hand to feel, but much to my satisfaction

found that it was my epaulet only that was shot away. I assure you I did not stop to look for it but pushing on soon got the contested post, where I had the instant mortification to see Captain Hay of the Scotch brigade fall killed by my side and soon afterwards two Lieutenants of their grenediers and their Adjutant were wounded.

“ I was now the only officer in advance and perceived the enemy closing upon us on all sides and in great numbers, our men at the same time falling very fast. I formed the remnant of my party and some more of our officers coming up, we charged and drove the enemy from the post, but to our mortification found there was not the least cover from the fire of the fort, to which we were so near as two or three hundred yards. The enemy likewise perceived the weakness of our numbers and again advanced to attack us. All our ammunition was expended and we expected nothing less than being entirely cut off, when fortunately the flank companies and part of the battalion of the companies and part of the battalion of the 74th regiment arrived to our assistance.

“ At first they kept up a smart fire upon the enemy by subdivisions, but finding it was to no purpose and that our men fell very fast, another charge was determined on.

“ Our men and officers being entirely exhausted with fatigue and having likewise lost their shoes and stockings in the muddy bed of an aqueduct we had previously drained, the 74th regiment fresh and just come to the trenches undertook this service. Accordingly they advanced, while we kept possession of the post and with such success that they drove the enemy with great slaughter to the very gates of the garrison but with the loss of a number of men killed and many officers and men wounded. On returning they jointly occupied the place with us and we now began under cover of night to bury ourselves in the ground notwithstanding a very heavy fire of grape round and every description of shot the enemy could collect and throw in upon us from the garrison.

“ ..... We remained pretty quiet and got up a tolerable good covered way till about nine o'clock, when they began to hoist

blue lights on the walls of the garrison which threw an amazing light around, enabling things to be seen clearly even at a distance. It was awfully grand. In an instant every tongue was hush and instead of the spades and pickaxes resounding with the noise of arduous labour, every man was endeavouring to conceal himself from the penetrating eyes of the enemy.

“About 10 o'clock, three very strong columns of troops came out of the garrison apparently determined to drive us off. One column advanced to our front and occupied a strong breast-work at about 12 yards distance; another column gained our left flank and cut off our communication with the trenches; and the third passed over a bridge on our right which we had neglected to take possession of and gained a position in our rear. But fortunately there was a river between us. I believe there were few of us who expected ever to see the camp again. We had orders to defend the post and were determined to do our best.

“Colonel Wallace of the 74th regiment commanded and strictly enjoined the officers not to suffer the men to fire but to keep as snug as possible and if the enemy attempted to enter, then to keep them out with the bayonet. A very heavy fire of musketry and rockets now commenced on us from all sides and continued the whole night. But though very frequently threatened and we invited them to come on, they took care to keep out of the reach of our soldiers' bayonets. In this state we remained during the night and morning only appeared to show our situation from a desperate point of view. The enemy who had fired at us in the dark indiscriminately now plainly saw our situation and taking deliberate aim the soldiers fell very fast without the satisfaction of returning a single shot. The enemy finding that they could not provoke us to fire again, which they wished to do in order to expose us to a more superior fire, advanced to the top of the trenches and lifting up large stones dropped them in upon us, one of which struck me so forcibly on the right arm as to raise a doubt in my mind whether it was not broken. Our brave soldiers at last lost their tempers and irritated by the repeated blows from this kind of attack, jumped up and swore that if they were not allowed to fire, it could be no

harm to throw back the stones and one and all began to return them as fast as they came. Serious as our situation then was, I could not help laughing heartily.

“At last the contest ended in the usual way. A plan being previously arranged about 10 o'clock, the Scotch brigade which was on the left charged down the front, at the same time a party from camp attacked those in the rear and we advancing from the right, they were completely surrounded and received such a severe check as deterred them from advancing to their old ground. In fact they were well employed the remainder of the day in carrying off the killed and wounded, which last description of our own men now drew our attention, for we had no time to look to them before. My share of that business rested with my own company and that of the before-mentioned much-valued friend. I had two graves dug alongside the river, in one of which I laid him and in the other four of the finest soldiers in the light company. They had no parson to read the funeral ceremony but they had the blessings and sighs of their surviving comrades.....

“We now remained unmolested except by the fire from the garrison. But about four o'clock in the afternoon a violent storm of thunder, lightning and rain set in which filled the trenches, so that we were up to the middle in water and I was so cold in my wet clothes after having been scorched to death the whole day previous that I would have given the world for a glass of any kind of spirits, but that was a luxury hardly to be got in camp in our then situation.

“At last the wished for relief arrived and after being in the trenches for the space of 52 hours without the least rest, we returned to camp up to the middle in mud and water along so slippery a track that in some places we could not keep on our feet without much difficulty, and all this while marching without shoes or stockings. About two o'clock the following morning I had the pleasure once again to enter my tent and thanks to a good constitution, I do not feel myself the worse for that or any other fatigue I have experienced during the campaign.”



On the 28th Tippu sent a reply to General Harris' letter of the 22nd in which without referring to the terms mentioned by General Harris he merely stated that he was sending two vakeels to him for personal explanation on the subject. The commander-in-chief however sent back an answer referring Tippu to the terms mentioned in his previous letter as those alone on which he would treat and declining to admit any ambassadors unless accompanied by the hostages and the specie required. To this letter no answer was returned by Tippu and the active operations of the siege went on with accumulating effect.

On the 2nd May the guns on the British side kept up a severe fire and by sunset the breach was considerably enlarged. Soon after the British batteries were opened, it was noticed that a great explosion took place in the fort occasioned by the bursting of a shell in a magazine and that an immense column of smoke ascended, from the middle of which thousands of rockets flew in every direction, many of the Mysoreans thereby being killed and wounded.