

CHAPTER LXIII.

Appointment of an Enquiry Committee by Lord William Bentinck and its conclusions—Bentinck's regret for his action.

Shortly after the assumption of the administration of Mysore by the Company's Government, Bentinck appointed a committee to enquire into the origin, the progress and suppression and the consequences of the insurrection. This committee consisted of four European officers, namely, Major-General Thomas Hawker, W. Morison, J. M. Macleod and Lt.-Col. (afterwards Sir) Mark Cubbon. An elaborate enquiry then took place which consisted of the examination of a number of witnesses as well as of a large number of relevant documents and the Committee's report was submitted to the Governor-General on the 12th December 1833 embodying a brief narrative of the revolt together with their conclusions. This report, it may be stated, for the impartiality of its tone affords an instance of a model political document which may be read with interest even now.

The Committee first drew attention to the fact that the Kingdom of Mysore before the fall of Tippu had an extensive area including also the territory within the present boundaries of the State. The authority of the Hindu sovereigns before the time of Haidar had not extended over nearly the whole of the present territory of Mysore, although it had stretched to a considerable extent beyond its limits in one direction. The territory comprised within the present State of Mysore was divided during the period of the Mahomedan rulers among a number of separate Hindu principalities, and the feelings and habits which hence arose among the inhabitants of a nature adverse to the authority of a new government comprising the whole and the consequence was that this feeling was far from being extinguished by the rule of either Haidar or Tippu. It should also be recollected, the Committee said, that before the British conquest Mysore was a completely independent kingdom and its armies brought into the country not only very

large quantities of plunder but also gave by its expenditure employment to large bodies of people, not only to those in the immediate service of the State but to those also who met its demands for stores of every kind as well as materials of war, creating thereby considerable demand for manufactures. During Purnaiya's time the change in the political status of Mysore was not appreciably felt, because not only there had not been time for the full development of its effects but also because they were counter-balanced temporarily by the presence of British troops distributed in different parts of the country. By the time the Raja assumed power there had been enough time for the full operation of the causes referred to, especially by the reduction of the British forces and at this time other causes also combined to create disturbances in the country.

The Committee also noted that the fall of revenue during the Raja's rule was not entirely due to misgovernment attributed to him and that it was to a large extent due to causes beyond the control of the Raja's Government. A general fall of prices of agricultural produce had taken place outside the State of Mysore also. The revenues of Bellary and Kadapa districts in the Presidency of Madras bordering on Mysore and resembling it more than any other part of the Company's territories did had fallen off also greatly during the same period. In the opinion of the Committee, the general fall of prices giving rise thereby to a decline in the State revenue was due partly to an extension of cultivation in some quarters in consequence of the general peace maintained by the ascendancy of British Power, partly to a decrease of effective demand from the want of occupation to the same extent as formerly for classes of people not agricultural, and partly by a diminution in the quantity of the precious metals in India or at least a diminished supply of them accompanied by an increase in the transactions in which they were made use of. The presence of a large body of British troops in the days of Purnaiya had the effect of keeping the turbulent in awe. But when these troops were withdrawn, a colour was given to the news spread by the instigators of the rebellion that the British Government would not support the authority of the Raja.

The Committee's report also referred to the effect produced on the country by the accumulation by Purnaiya of more than two crores of rupees said to have been handed over to the Maharaja when the former retired from his office. As we have already stated, this accumulation of a large quantity of wealth had no basis and only passed current from mouth to mouth. As a matter of fact, the amount handed over by Purnaiya to the Raja was only a little over seven lakhs of pagodas, omitting the sums remitted in his favour by the Maharaja. We have already stated that when Munro questioned Cole, the latter could only state that he had seen the sum entered in a paper in the hand-writing of Anantaramappa, son of Purnaiya. Nobody had seen this huge sum of two crores and ten lakhs of rupees delivered over to the Raja by Purnaiya, nor when the examination of accounts took place at the time the treasury was surrendered to the Raja was any allusion or reference made to this gigantic sum. One of the witnesses examined by the Committee was Babu Rao and he could only say that at the time of the fall of Seringapatam there was sandal to a great amount at the place between four and five thousand candies at the rate of 40-42 Bahaduri pagodas per candy. He also stated that Purnaiya employed him in preparing the accounts of 'Ayeen' or ordinary revenue and he could not say whether he gave in the 'Sivayi' or extra revenue accounts. He also stated that Purnaiya had told him that he had delivered over to the Raja after a full examination of the accounts a sum of 26 lakhs of pagodas and that he had not kept back a single Cash. How loosely this witness spoke before the Committee is also evidenced by his statement that Purnaiya again delivered over to the Raja 30 lakhs of Bahaduri pagodas and 7 lakhs of canteroi pagodas, this amount together with the sums above mentioned totalling, according to this witness, to 72 lakhs of canteroi pagodas. The 'Sivayi Jemma' of which amount the witness had no knowledge consisted, as has been already stated, of items such as unclaimed property, amounts realised by the sale of women who had forsaken their husbands, fines collected, amounts realised by the sale of stray cattle, nuzerana or presents, the value of grain belonging to the lapsed jahagirs, embezzled money recovered, unauthorised appropriations of money and bribes taken. In a

State which had lost its political independence and the limits of which had become very much contracted, is it too much to say that Purnaiya even though he administered the country for a little over a decade could not have collected in the shape of extra revenue so large a sum as two crores and ten lakhs of rupees, even accepting that there were some items of such revenue. As a matter of fact, it can be easily seen that nuzerana and lapsed jahagirs must have become non-existent after Mysore became a dependent State of comparatively small dimensions and the other items from their very nature could not have yielded any very appreciable amounts. Even the sandal revenue at the rate mentioned by Babu Rao could only have yielded about 7 lakhs of rupees. It did not however fall within the province of the enquiry Committee to verify the correctness of Babu Rao's statements by going into this side issue. It was easy for Munro to have investigated the matter but he did not choose to do so, evidently not seriously placing faith in the real existence of this huge sum. The Committee also recorded their opinion that the disturbances would have been easily quelled at the time they broke out, if the family of Tarikere pategars and the Nagar Pretender had not joined in the revolt and sustained it by their personal energy and hereditary influence and largely also by the employment of outsiders of the military class recruited in the Nizam's dominions and in the Company's territories.

The report of the Committee also dwelt at some length on the Sharat system and its attendant evils. While laying emphasis on the discontent that existed in the country on account of this system, at the same time the Committee remarked that it was necessary to be cautious in drawing a conclusion with respect to the degree in which the collections actually made by the amildars were oppressive in their amount. The fact of the assembling of the ryots in cootum and their complaining that the taxes were too burden some to be borne proved of itself, in their opinion, little or nothing upon this point. At the very time that the insurrection broke out in Mysore, the ryots had in the British district of Canara also assembled in the same manner and made similar complaints where the public

demand was found on full enquiry to be decidedly moderate, lighter indeed, than in any other district of Madras. It was also a peculiar coincidence, the Committee said, that the proceedings of the ryots in Canara had been instigated by intrigues on the part of public servants as in Mysore. The Committee expressed strong doubts whether the demands made on the people of Mysore for or in the name of the Government were such in their amount as compared with the means of the people to pay them as to be considered particularly heavy in the Madras territories. Although it had been stated to the Committee that the population of the State had decreased, they expressed that in their belief it was very far from being so. The Committee while attributing the disturbances primarily to the discontent that prevailed among the agricultural classes stated that "the case of the Raja of Mysore was not that of a prince who being precluded by a subsidiary treaty from indulging views of political ambition had addicted himself to the gratification of avarice and mercilessly oppressed his people by exorbitant exactions of revenue in order to heap up riches for himself."

As regards the lines of conduct pursued by the two Residents Cole and Casamaijor, the Committee's remarks were in these words:—"As some of the witnesses have stated that complaints of the malpractices of the district officers when due attention could not be obtained to them from the Raja's Government were received and inquired into by a former Resident but that the present Resident (Casamaijor) would not receive such representations, we think it only an act of justice to Mr. Casamaijor to observe that in the line of conduct which he pursued in this respect he seems to have been guided by positive instructions from the superior authority. We cannot, however, here refrain from taking the liberty to remark that a system which expressly enjoined that the advice and counsel of the British Government should only be apparent to the public eye when coming directly in aid and support of the native authorities and that the representative of that Government should 'abstain from the public reception of complaints from the subjects of Mysore and from the avowed support of those whose grievances might become known to him appears to us, whatever

reasons of policy there might be for adopting it, to have been anything but calculated to promote the popularity of the British name."

Lord William Bentinck on reading the report of the Committee of enquiry and after a visit paid to the Raja at Mysore in April 1834 felt doubts as to the legality and justice of depriving His Highness of the administration of the country. Accordingly on the 14th April 1834 in a despatch to the Court of Directors in England he proposed that a portion of the State, namely, Manjarabad, Mysore and Ashtagram divisions should be at once restored to the Raja and the rest of the territories to be kept in the hands of the Company as a guarantee for the fulfilment of the military obligations resting on the Raja as per terms of the Subsidiary Treaty of July 1799. The treaty warranted, he said, the assumption of the country only when there was insecurity for the payment of the subsidy but the assumption had actually been made on what was called the Raja's misgovernment and that the subsidy did not appear to have been at any time in immediate jeopardy. Again, the treaty authorised the Company's Government to assume only such part or parts of the country as would secure the stability of the subsidy without allowing it to fall into arrears, while the whole had been assumed. With regard to the justice of the case, Bentinck in plain language expressed that it would have been more fair towards the Raja had a more distinct and positive warning been given to him before actually assuming the administration of the country. Bentinck further said that the Raja was in the highest degree intelligent and sensible and that his disposition was the reverse of tyrannical or cruel and that he had little doubt that from the manner in which His Highness had conducted himself in his then adverse circumstances he would not neglect to bring his good qualities into active operation. The authorities in England took a long time to arrive at a decision on this proposal and it was not till September 1835 that they communicated their adverse decision in a despatch addressed to Lord Auckland who had by that time succeeded Bentinck. Lord Auckland in a letter to the Raja dated 28th March 1836 intimated that the Directors had expressed the opinion that the interests of the Raja as well as those of the Company's Government would be best

consulted by maintaining the administration in British hands until such salutary safeguards could be matured and confirmed for the stable government of the State of Mysore. This decision of the Court of Directors although cruel to Krishnaraja Wodeyar at the time may now be regarded as a blessing in disguise inasmuch as it prevented the fragmentation of the State and helped to preserve its integrity.