

CHAPTER LXXV.

Bowring's resignation of office and departure from Mysore—Opinions on some of the topics of the day—Some letters of Mrs. Bowring.

Early in the year 1870 Bowring resigned his office and departed to England. Three events of great importance not hitherto mentioned took place during his period of service in Mysore—the adoption of a son by Krishnaraja Wodeyar III in June 1865, the recognition in April 1867 by Her Majesty's Government in England of the adopted minor child as successor to the throne of the Maharaja, and the death of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III in March 1868. But these events will for the sake of continuity be described in later chapters. It is enough to state here that on the 2nd February 1870 Bowring went to Mysore to take leave of the adopted son, young Maharaja Chamaraja Wodeyar, whom he visited in class learning his ABC with his future courtiers, the young Rajbindies. In the evening the town was illuminated and all the different castes—Brahmins, Seths, Vaisyas, Lingayets and Mussalmans presented complimentary addresses to Bowring. This was followed by a dinner in the Residency when many complimentary speeches were made and the evening ended with a display of fireworks.

On Bowring's return to Bangalore addresses were presented to him at the public offices on the 7th February 1870 by the Hindus and Mussalmans of Mysore and by the people of Coorg. The address of the Hindus was presented in a handsome sandalwood box inlaid with a miniature of the young Raja Chamaraja Wodeyar. That same evening Bowring left Bangalore for Madras. An arch had been erected at the gate of the residence of the Chief Commissioner and all along the road which led from the house to the railway station garlands had been swung. It was dark as Mr. and Mrs. Bowring drove out of their residence and they were forced to drive slowly with men at the horses' heads lest they should take fright at the shouting of the people, the coloured lights and the torches. The station was crowded with a large concourse of people wishing to bid farewell to the retiring Chief Commissioner. Bowring

lived in retirement in England till 1890 when he died and during this period he wrote two books, the first named "Eastern Experiences" and the second "Haidar Ali and Tippu Sultan," the latter forming a volume of the Rulers of India series. Bowring possessed some acquaintance of the Sanskrit language which made him very popular among the people of Mysore. Besides the Bowring hospital in the C. & M. Station, Bangalore, which perpetuates his name, the flourishing town of Bowringpet on the railway line from Bangalore to Madras also bears his name in memory of the good work done by him.

A few extracts from his book "Eastern Experiences" which also contains some of his wife's letters are given below which throw light on the life of those days.

Referring to the Lal Bagh at Bangalore, Bowring wrote: "In the public garden called the Lal Bagh, the formation of which is attributed to Haidar Ali, the visitor might at first imagine himself transferred to a purely European pleasure-ground, till advancing he sees the gorgeous creepers, the wide-spreading mangoes and the graceful betel-nut trees which characterise the East. The garden is a beautiful retreat and is frequented by all classes, the natives being attracted to it mainly by the menagerie attached to it. Of late years, the Government of India have shown a laudable desire to encourage on the part of the people of the country an interest in all that humanises and refines the mind instead of treating them like an inexhaustible milch-cow."

Regarding the Mysore ryot: "There is a good deal of sturdiness in the Mysore ryot who is not slow to speak his mind if his interests are affected, presenting in this respect a remarkable contrast to the subservient and cringing Bengali."

Regarding the languages of the country: "As it is hopeless to substitute English for the language of the country, it is evidently desirable to foster as far as practicable the latter and to supersede indigenous works of an objectionable character by others in which all the features of modern civilisation and science are preserved."

Regarding the officials Bowring expressed the opinion that in the absence of any influential land-holders, the officials practically were the aristocracy and the rulers of the country and he regarded that this gave the British an immense hold over the disposition of the people.

Regarding Brahmins he expressed: "The influence of Brahmins being still paramount, it is extremely unlikely, humanly speaking, that they should of their own accord open a flood-gate which would sweep them away into the open ocean of no-caste where they would be lost amidst the myriads of their inferiors. The secular education taught in Government schools seems but to have the effect of sharpening their wits and of supplying them with ready and derisive sarcasms on the religion of Europeans. Nor is it an easy matter for the ablest missionary to contend with and vanquish the astute Brahmin of the south who by equivocation or silence can effectually baffle his adversary or by complimenting him on his learning adroitly change the subject."

Regarding the translation of legal enactments Bowring recorded that ludicrous blunders were made. "For instance, in the Kanada translation of the Christian Marriage Act made under the supervision of the Director of Public Instruction, it was found that 'a person who has received episcopal ordination' was rendered 'a person who has received independence.' 'Church' in the sense of a particular form of belief as the Protestant church was rendered 'the temple.' The Act itself was designated as an 'Act to Augment Marriages.' I have not sufficient knowledge of Canarese but a glance at some of the difficult passages when Sanskrit words are used showed that in some instances they had been sadly misapplied."

Regarding the Coffee Planters: "There is no doubt that the European planters have conferred an immense benefit upon Manjarabad and the adjoining sub-divisions where they have established themselves. The native land-holders averse to the curtailment of their own feudal powers and fearing the consequences of their agrestic labourers quitting their employ frequently regard

with a jealous eye the colonisation of their country by the interlopers. Nevertheless, many of these have won their esteem and confidence. Cases of violence calling for the intervention of Government rarely occur and the planters of Manjarabad are as a body gentleman-like and considerate and in every way entitled to the fullest support which the State can consistently give them."

Regarding the scarcity of labour in the Malnad: "In the Nagar Division the Department of Public Works is unable to carry on work satisfactorily. Even if there were an overseer for every taluk, he would be unable to command labour which is with difficulty procurable even by the Vargdars themselves. If the Tahsildars hold up their little fingers, not a single soul will come near the subordinates of the department even of the few haphazard coolies that may be available. A different system should be adopted for the Malnad, the executive engineer or engineers being placed under the Superintendent of the Division. If this is done, the Tahsildars will be the main working agency and in this way only can the department come up to what is demanded. Advances should be given to coolies from the low country as planters do who tell me that the loss at the end of the year is trifling. So great is the demand for labour owing to the coffee plantations and the high prices paid elsewhere, that a great deal of land is left uncultivated and the proprietors complain bitterly."

The Sringeri Guru in the Residency.

Mrs. Bowring in a letter to a friend in England, dated 8th December 1867, wrote: "Last week we had a most curious sight here in our compound. The great Guru or Pope of Southern India announced his intention of paying L—(Bowring) a visit. He is supposed to be an incarnation of the deity. Of course, he could not condescend to enter a Christian house. So L— had to receive him on the lawn. First came a number of natives dancing, shouting and beating tomtoms, then an elephant, then the Guru carried in a magnificent cross-palanquin which is borne so as to stop the way, he being the only person permitted to be carried in this manner. He is an old man of 78. He wore a gold tiara, an emerald necklace and silver shoes, and behind him was carried his successor, a child

of seven who is supposed to have the marks of the deity about him..... He sat on a wooden chair and L— opposite him. I was peeping through the venetians all the while. Just under the window stood six dancing girls covered with ornaments. They were very handsome and had chignons of flowers—a regular bouquet at the back of their heads.”

**Mrs. Bowring on her way to meet her husband in the evening
at his office, 6th January 1868.**

“Five o'clock. Chocolate and toast, and then away to the fort goes Mrs. C.—(Mrs. Bowring) in her easy barouche with black horses and the two running horse-boys through the pettah with its palms, temples and shops, through crowds of natives staring and salaaming, through eastern sights and smells up to the old fort, under the gateway, up the hill through the inner gates, and then pull up. Mrs. C— pretends not to see the old, mad man wrapped up in a rugged old shawl who daily tries to intercept and get something out of Mrs. C—, and the old crazy woman who has been everyday for ten years with 'her case.' Mr. C— is long in coming and a crowd has collected all staring. Some are handsome looking men, others dreadful objects with deformities. A stir! Mr. C's mysterious box and the practical bottle of sherry and the empty biscuit tin appear followed by Mr. C— himself. Soldiers present arms and then Mr. and Mrs. C— go for their evening drive.”

18th November 1868—on tour from Bangalore.

“At six o'clock in the morning we started..... The salute was fired as we passed out of the gates. A Silledar rode on before and two others followed the carriage behind. As we passed through the native town which was not yet astir, we saw the people lying asleep rolled up in blankets in the verandahs in front of their shops. As we went by a temple, an old priest rushed out and screamed out something that sounded like a curse but was, I believe, intended for a blessing.

“We were travelling in an open carriage and so cold was it that I shivered and that in Southern India. As we rode along, there were beautiful lights from the rising sun on the wild rocks,

and patches of highly cultivated land, and vultures were sweeping and careering over the landscape in search of their breakfasts. The sugarcane and rice crops looked most flourishing in the low wet land under the great tanks which have all the appearance of natural lakes. Many of these have been most carefully constructed, giving proof that the natives knew something of engineering long before English rule and public works were thought of.

“When we came in sight of a taluk (Chennapatna town) a man with a long brass horn blew a not unmusical blast to announce our approach. Then out came a troop of Silledars on prancing steeds in their picturesque dresses and joining our cavalcade entered the village, where the Amildar or magistrate at the head of the population awaited our arrival with the usual complimentary wreath of flowers, lemons etc. Then L— spoke, enquired about the crops, heard a few grievances and on we went.

“As we turned into the compound at the bungalow, the flag was hoisted, for it always travels about with us when L— goes on an official tour..... After breakfast, L— went out riding to visit two curious tombs outside the town, the priests of which turned out in fine dresses, with tomtoms and two dancing girls all bedizened with finery as is the custom when any one of note arrives at a place.”

“Exit from the compound. 19th November 1868.”

“Picture the scene, a wild road with large banyan trees on either side, with their fantastic roots and great branches stretching far and low. A native going on ahead with the eternal horn, now and again stopping to turn round and blow the cheerful blast. He was followed by two peons, one carrying L—’s gun, and then came our three selves, Captain C— on a large, ugly Australian bay horse, L— on Tsar the gray Arab and I riding Fritz, the horseboy running up by my side with his bare black legs, white knickerbockers, blue cloth jacket bound with scarlet, and scarlet turban. A little way behind, two mounted Silledars, more peons and then the bullock-coach with Marie and Rosalie.

“I enjoyed the ride so much, but was glad, after seven miles of it, to get into the palanquin, of which this was my first experience.

It is carried by twelve men who take it in turn, six at a time, changing every hundred yards. The disagreeables are the motion and the peculiar singing of the bearers, rather a dismal ditty, but I soon got to like the one and forget the other.

“On reaching the bungalow at Maddur, the priest turned out of the temple and a man with a tomtom ran on in front. But it means respect and you salaam and are grateful. Some natives were waiting on the steps with a dish of plantains and flowers, which they did to please us, poor creatures, and I was sorry that I could not speak to them. Crowds of people came with petitions, some of whom lay flat on the ground when they presented them, whining over their misfortunes or piccadillos. This man has not repaired his tank and that one has been fined for insubordination and when L— declines to interfere, they come round to where they can see me and gesticulate, until the peons come and send them off.”

Mrs. Bowring's experience of travelling in a bullock-coach from Shimoga, 18th January 1869.

“I was really sorry to say ‘Good-Bye’ and pretty Mrs. C— looked half envious as going into Bangalore from the districts is looked upon in the light of a trip to Paris or a run up to town in England. Well! off we went at last, a motely procession,—Dignity in the person of a mounted Silledar, followed by Necessity—that is, two torch-bearers in birthday suits—and Discomfort personified by three bullock-coaches. As soon as we were fairly out of the gates, I proceeded to undress and then began our troubles. The road was not good and the coach jolted and swayed to and fro in an eccentric manner, so that being at sea was nothing to it. I lit my lamp and tried to read as we crept slowly up the hills, but Oh! the descents! Three men who ran by the side of the bullocks to keep them on the road shouted, twisted their tails, poked them with sticks, the Jehu flogged and away they tore, full gallop regardless of everything. It was trying to one's nerves and the more so, as, if anything did happen, there was nothing for it but to turn out in nightgown and bare feet. After 14 hours of this misery, we reached Kadur. Half the night we travelled through

the jungles which were all on fire in parts and they lighted up the sky, while the flames roared like a waterfall. No doubt, the fires were miles off but they seemed so near that they terrified me.

“I do not think I ever enjoyed a cup of tea so much in my life as I did the one given me on arriving at Kadur.”