

CHAPTER LXXVI.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar III—1831—1868.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar III during the days of the British Commission—Maintenance of harmonious relations with the British officers and with the British Governments in India and in England.

We have already referred to the acute pain which Lord William Bentinck felt on realising when he visited Mysore that the action taken by him in suspending the Maharaja from power was a hasty one and that far from the latter's disposition being tyrannical or cruel His Highness was in the highest degree intelligent and sensible. The rejection of Bentinck's proposal by the Court of Directors for a partial restoration of the country to him produced no sourness in Krishnaraja Wodeyar's mind and he seems to have accepted the decision of the Court of Directors with composure, for he saw in it a prospect of obtaining back the whole of his kingdom. During the years that a Resident was allowed to continue at his court there was considerable friction between the Commissioner Cubbon and the Maharaja, attributable mainly to the discord that existed between Cubbon and the Resident J. D. Stokes. After the abolition of the Resident's post in 1843, the relations between the Maharaja and Cubbon when they were brought into direct contact with each other improved greatly and ever after they continued as friends.

It was usual for Krishnaraja Wodeyar every year on the occasion of his birthday to hold horse-races and invite a large number of his European friends both in civil as well as in military employ. On such occasions he was lavish in his hospitality and it was ever his aim both when he was in power as well as afterwards to maintain smooth social relations with the European community. On the occasion of the annual races he gave three great banquets, one on the first race day, one on his birthday and the third at the close of the fetes. The new Governors-General that arrived in India, from time to time in consideration of the continued loyal

attachment of the Maharaja to the British Crown even during the years when he had ample cause for provocation made it a point to exchange friendly letters with him whenever there arose opportunities to do so. On the 23rd August 1844 Lord Hardinge announced to the Maharaja his assumption of the post of Governor-General and conveyed the assurance that in return for His Highness' continued attachment to the British Crown his dignity and honour and the interests of his State would receive the same anxious attention as was evinced by Lord Ellenborough. In his reply the Maharaja assured the Governor-General that he would invariably be guided by the same sentiments of gratitude and attachment towards the British Government as had characterised his actions during the last 45 years.

In March 1846 on receiving intimation from the Governor-General of the victory on the banks of the Sutlej over the Sikh forces in the month of January previous, the Maharaja sent his warmest congratulations on that important event and in commemoration of it a royal salute was fired from the ramparts of the fort at Mysore. Similar salutes were fired on news reaching of further successes of the British arms. On intimation from Lord Dalhousie of his assumption of the government of India, the Maharaja in April 1848 while sending his congratulations to him reiterated that he would always make it his study as he had done during the past 49 years to maintain inviolate the esteem and friendship of the British Government to which he was bound by many personal obligations.

In February 1854 the Maharaja sent an invitation to Lord Dalhousie on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday ceremony, when he wrote: "As I flatter myself that your Lordship takes an interest in my welfare, I take the liberty of informing your Lordship that I am now about to celebrate the attainment of my sixtieth year by the performance of certain ceremonies as prescribed in our Sastras and with all the solemnity befitting such an occasion. I would not intrude on your Lordship's time and attention were it not for the circumstance that amongst us this is considered a most remarkable period and rendered still more remarkable by the fact that out of twenty of my immediate predecessors none have ever attained to

this age. Next to a gracious Providence who has been pleased to hitherto preserve and sustain me, I attribute my good fortune in this respect to the favour and protection of my benefactors the British Government, whom I consider in the light of my parents:.....”

On learning from a letter addressed to him by Dalhousie of the success gained by the British army at Sebastopol against the Russians, the Maharaja while conveying his congratulations in February 1856 stated also that in promulgating the glorious tidings contained in His Lordship's khareetha, he had ordered in accordance with the usual customs observed in India on such occasions the distribution of sugar in the streets of his capital as well as the firing of a royal salute.

Canning arrived at Calcutta on 29th February 1856 and assumed the office of the Governor-General. On this event being intimated to the Maharaja in a khareetha, the Maharaja while acknowledging it trusted that his arrival would be the precursor of greater happiness and prosperity to the States and people of India in general. On Lord Canning intimating to the Maharaja of the conclusion of peace with Russia, His Highness replied that he had on receipt of the khareetha ordered the firing of a royal salute and added: “It has given me great pleasure to learn from your Lordship's khareetha that the armies of Her Majesty have been victorious in all their engagements with the Russians in the Crimea, thereby sustaining the fame and high character they have always borne for bravery, courage and patient endurance of hardships and trials such as they encountered in the late war and also the good that would result from peace being concluded in Europe. In congratulating your Lordship and the British Government on the restoration of peace to England, it is my earnest prayer that it may always continue inviolate, that Her Majesty may live long and reign prosperously, that her subjects may enjoy every happiness, and that commerce and trade may increase and extend to all parts of the world.”

On receiving intimation from the Governor-General of the fall of Delhi during the period of the Indian Mutiny, the Maharaja in his letter dated 9th December 1857 sent his congratulations on the

event. "It gave me no small amount of grief," he added, "to have heard for some time past the treacherous deeds committed by the rebels and Bengal mutineers, and though for a time dark clouds appeared to have gathered in the horizon of that part of India, yet it was my firm conviction that the bright sun of the British would soon disperse it and its powerful arm subdue the mutineers who are still in a state of rebellion against the Government. I rejoice to learn that my expectations have been fully realised by the gratifying intelligence conveyed in your Lordship's khareetha from which I was also glad to learn that several Native States have continued firm and faithful to the British Government in these troublous times and have rendered every assistance that lay in their power." As on previous occasions when any success was achieved by the British arms, a royal salute was fired and sugar was distributed in the streets of Mysore.

In a private letter written in February 1858 to General J. S. Fraser who was Resident at the Court of Mysore more than 20 years ago, the Maharaja expressed his sentiments regarding the great mutiny in these words:—"It is gratifying to observe that the great rebellion in this country alluded to in your letter is now assuming a more settled aspect. The dark clouds that had gathered round the North-Western Provinces are gradually dispersing and the seditious movers in this rebellion are being apprehended in every village and town and dealt with retributively. My own country, I am happy to say, has continued free from contamination and I am quite certain that this happy circumstance is owing to the wise and judicious measures adopted by Sir Mark Cubbon. I will not at present dwell at length on the harrowing scenes of cruelty and blood which this rebellion has caused nor on the sacrifice of many of England's best and bravest officers in suppressing it, but I shall merely state that as my welfare and happiness are bound up in the success and power of the British Government, so has it been my regard to support that Government as my best friend and benefactor."

In November 1858 Cubbon sent a request to the Maharaja to lend the use of his country house for the purpose of removing into

it temporarily the public treasury at Mysore and the Maharaja readily did so. He also ordered as desired by Cubbon the removal to the fort of all his guns, ammunitions and tumbrils that lay scattered in the town. The Maharaja assured Cubbon that as he was a protege of the British Government he considered that his whole life and property were bound up in their own welfare and stability. Cubbon in return offered his warmest acknowledgments to the Maharaja for the ready compliance which his request had met with and added that at the earliest opportunity he would communicate to the Governor-General his sense of obligation for His Highness' cordial co-operation in providing for the public safety against the ill-disposed and bad characters assembled in the town of Mysore bent on mischief.

On receiving in December 1858 through the Commissioner of Mysore a Persian khareetha from Lord Canning with a copy of the Queen's Proclamation announcing the assumption of the direct government of the country, the Maharaja besides ordering a royal salute and the usual distribution of sugar, held a durbar in the palace at which the Proclamation was read with every demonstration of loyalty and respect before a large concourse of people of all castes and creeds. "I rejoice, my Lord," concluded the Maharaja in his letter to the Viceroy "that the opportunity is afforded me of expressing my cordial congratulations to your Lordship on Her Majesty's assuming the government of this great Empire and creating your Lordship a Viceroy for its rule. I sincerely trust that under your Lordship's wise administration of the Government, the wish so benevolently proclaimed by Her Majesty may be realised that the prosperity of the people will be her strength, their contentment her security and their gratitude her best reward."

In accordance with the promise made by him, Cubbon wrote to the Government of India in June 1860 that to no one was the Government more indebted for the preservation of tranquillity than to His Highness the Maharaja who displayed the most steadfast loyalty throughout the crisis, discountenancing everything in the shape of disaffection and taking every opportunity to proclaim his perfect confidence in the stability of the English rule. When the small

party of Europeans arrived at Mysore, the Maharaja, Cubbon further said, made manifest his satisfaction by giving them a feast and by also offering one of his palaces for their accommodation and as a stronghold for the security of the treasure. Besides, the Maharaja gave up his personal establishment of elephants to assist the 74th Highlanders in their forced march from the Nilgiris to Bellary for the protection of the Ceded Districts, a proceeding which although of no great magnitude in itself produced great moral effects throughout the country. In fact, there was nothing in the power of the Maharaja, wrote Cubbon, which he did not do to manifest his fidelity to the British Government and to discourage the unfriendly.

Lord Canning on receipt of Cubbon's letter, in his turn, sent a very appreciative reply to the Maharaja in June 1860. "I have lately received from the Commissioner of Mysore," wrote Canning, "a despatch in which the assistance received by that officer from Your Highness in preserving peace and encouraging tranquillity in the districts under his charge during the recent troubles in India is prominently brought to notice. I was well aware that from the very beginning of those troubles the fidelity and attachment to the British Government which have long marked Your Highness' acts had been conspicuous upon every opportunity. Your Highness' wise confidence in the power of England and your open manifestation of it, the consideration and kindness which you showed to British subjects, and the ready and useful assistance which you rendered to the Queen's troops have been mentioned by the Commissioner in terms of the highest praise. I beg Your Highness to accept the expression of my warm thanks for these fresh proofs of the spirit by which Your Highness is animated in your relations with the Government of India. I shall have much pleasure in making them known to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India."

In March 1861 with the permission of the Governor-General, the Maharaja deputed his Durbar Surgeon J. A. Campbell to England to convey certain presents on his behalf to Queen Victoria. These presents consisted of one necklace set with diamonds, rubies and pearls worn tight round the neck, one necklace set with diamonds,

rubies and pearls worn loose round the neck, one seven row pearl necklace, one pair of armlets set with diamonds and rubies, one lily-flower-shaped cut-ruby ring, one pair pearl and ruby bracelets, one pair ivory fly fans, one pair sandalwood fans, one richly embroidered parasol, one Afta Gherry or perpendicular parasol, one pair Morchha or fly fans, one palanquin, one pair sandalwood walkingsticks, one pair sandalwood Punkhas or fans, one pair black horses born and bred in Mysore complete with trappings, two pairs of cows born and bred in Mysore, one pair of bulls born and bred in Mysore, one pair of Guzerat-breed bulls born in Mysore and one large portrait of the Duke of Wellington painted soon after the siege of Seringapatam while he was still a young man.

On behalf of Her Majesty the Queen, Sir Charles Wood the Secretary of State acknowledged the presents in these handsome terms: "It is with sincere gratification that I inform Your Highness that I received Her Majesty's commands to acknowledge the receipt of the friendly letter and the other tokens of your goodwill which you lately forwarded by the hands of Dr. Campbell. The assurances of Your Highness' friendship are very welcome to Her Majesty who can receive no such precious gifts from the Princes and Chiefs of India as the good words which they send to her from their distant homes. From Your Highness these good words are especially gratifying. For more than sixty years you have been the faithful ally of the British Government who felt assured when trouble recently overtook them that as Your Highness was the oldest so would you be the staunchest of their friends, if evil and misguided men should seek to sow sedition in Your Highness' country. By the blessing of God the southern peninsula of India remained undisturbed, but Your Highness nevertheless was enabled to contribute to the success of the British arms by the assistance which you rendered to the passage of Her Majesty's troops towards the disturbed districts, while by your personal bearing in this critical juncture you encouraged and sustained the loyalty of your subjects and helped to preserve the tranquillity of the country. I am commanded by Her Majesty to send to Your Highness under charge of Dr. Campbell a few specimens of the manufactures of Great

Britain and other articles of which Her Majesty requests your acceptance as token of her friendship and esteem."

In May 1867 on the occasion of her birthday the Queen conferred on the Maharaja the title of 'Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India' as a mark of Her Majesty's royal favour evincing the esteem in which Her Majesty held the Maharaja and in appreciation of His Highness' service to the Indian Empire.