

by loot like the indigenous troopers and rabble infantry, but had to be paid regularly and in cash. And now in the hour of his final triumph he found his treasure-chest empty. The Emperor was starving; the recent ill-fated Patiala expedition of the Kashmiri favourite had emptied the public treasury of what little money there was in it. Najaf had secured the supreme post in the Government by swearing to the Emperor and sealing the oath with his own seal on a copy of the *Quran* which he handed to Shah Alam, that he would pay the subsistence money of the Emperor and his household move punctually than Abdul Ahad had done. Whence was he to get this money, nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of Rupees a month, besides the pay of the imperial army now entirely in Najaf's charge—amounting to over three lakhs more? His late victories in many regions,—Jaipur and Macheri, the Jat-land and the Doab,—had gained for him promises of tribute instead of cash, and these promises could be fulfilled only by the pressure of arms.

Having to attend Court as the head of the entire administration, Mirzā Najaf could not himself go out on tribute-collecting expeditions, nor safely send out his best troops from Delhi for the purpose, as the Sikh danger hung over the north like a constant cloud and the Sikhs had once been Abdul Ahad's allies. Of his four lieutenants, Afrāsiyāb occupied the middle Doab (Aligarh), Md. Shafi the upper Doab (Mirat),

Najaf Quli Mewāt and Rewāri, and Md. Beg Hamadāni was engaged in dealing with Rao Pratap Singh Narokā and the Jat Rajah and subduing the Dholpur-Bari region westwards to the as-yet-unsettled Bharatpur-Alwar-Jaipur frontier. None of them could be withdrawn from his post without running risks. Mirzā Najaf was, therefore, compelled to seek out some other instrument for achieving any new enterprise.

And one such enterprise of the greatest magnitude and urgency was soon to engross his attention. The Jaipur Rajah was the largest and richest debtor of the imperial Government. We have seen how he had promised a succession fine of 20 lakhs of Rupees and thus obtained investiture (*tikā*) from the Emperor's own hands on 19th February 1779, and how Himmat Bahadur Gosain had been left at his capital to collect this tribute. But soon afterwards came the monsoon interruption, the Patiala expedition and finally Najaf Khan's march on Delhi with all his forces for seizing the supreme power. The field thus left vacant had been promptly seized by the Jats and the Rajputs. Another invasion of Jaipur had now become necessary. But the road to the Kachhwa capital had first to be opened anew. That task was taken in hand in the middle of the year 1780, and its success was rendered easier by Najaf Quli Khan's campaign in the Narnaul-Kanud district earlier in that year.

Najaf Quli, leaving Delhi at the end of November 1779, marched against Balwant Singh the Rajah of Kanud*, who had usurped many villages in the Hānsi-Hisār district during the late eclipse of government. These belonged to Najaf Quli's jagir. The Khan, on arriving on the spot, found it beyond his power to attack the fort of Kanud, because of the lack of water for many miles around it. So, he resorted to treachery. Pretending friendship, he released the Rajah's villages recently occupied by the invaders, sent him gifts, and invited him to a friendly meeting. The Rajah's son came in response to the invitation and the Mughal general assassinated him with the thirty Rajput nobles in attendance on him. (C. 4 Dec. 1779. DC.) Najaf Quli now promptly advanced to Kanud and laid siege to the fort, after arranging for the transport of water by camels. Trained sepoy under European officers and artillery, from Begam Samru's force, joined the besiegers. Considering that most of the nobles of the State had been massacred with their prince, the fall of the place was inevitable. The Rajputs, however, made a long and desperate defence. Narnaul, from which help was expected, was looted by a detachment from the Mughal army on 5th February, and by the end of that month

* Najaf Quli's campaign.—*Ibrat*. ii. 23-24. DC. Br. Mus. Or. 25,020, ff. 7a-44b. Date of fall of Kanud, CPC. v. 1843.

the besiegers had carried the sap to the edge of the moat of Kanud. On 14th February, four hundred men of the garrison made a sortie and attacked the trenches of Mitrasen Ahir the Rajah of Rewari, inflicting a hundred casualties. A week earlier, seventeen desperadoes had issued from the fort separately, vowing to slay Najaf Quli and perish in the attempt; but the first to rush upon him was arrested. Nawal Singh Shekhawat, who was severely ill within the fort, was sent out in a *pālki* to Singhāna by mutual consent, and there died (c. 24 Feb.) The Rāni who was holding the fort in the absence of her husband, at last capitulated on 17th March and was given a few villages for her support.

§ 4. *Invasion of Shekhawati by Murtaza Khan Barech and of Jaipur by Mahbub Ali Khan, 1780.*

Immediately after the fall of Kanud, Mirzā Najaf gained a great accession of strength for his Jaipur enterprise. We have already met with Mahbub Ali Khan, the Oudh general, who had acted with the English brigade in repelling the Marathas at Rāmghāt in 1773. During the imbecile rule of Asafuddaulah he left Lucknow in disgust and came to Agra (4th March 1780) with his family and a train of six hundred soldiers, intending to go to Mecca. Such a renowned warrior was not to be thrown away. Immediately on hearing of his arrival, Najaf Khan sent him high offers for luring him into his service, with

his seal stamped on a *Qurān* as witness to his fidelity. Mahbub agreed; he was told to raise an army on his own account and pay it afterwards out of the tribute collected and spoils taken in the campaign. His name drew large crowds of military adventurers and his quota was soon completed.

Meantime, Himmāt Bahadur had not been able to realise the promised tribute at Jaipur even after a year's stay. The Jaipur Government, with a half-witted boy of fifteen on the throne, unchecked by any strong and wise minister, was pursuing a senseless capricious course.* The old diwān Khush-hālī Rām Bohrā by his shrewd diplomacy had turned aside the attack of the Rao Rajah and later that of the Mir Bakhshi. After the settlement made with the Emperor in February 1779, this minister, who had often to be absent from Jaipur on diplomatic missions, appointed Daulat Rām Haldīā (the fugitive ex-minister of Macherī) as his deputy at his master's

* Mughal invasion of Jaipur, 1780-81.—Br. Mus. Or. 25,020, ff. 35-50, 54-345. Or. 25,021, ff. 1-25, 271-284. (best) Raj. xii. 8. DY. i. 20, 31. Gw. i. 94. Mahes. Darbar, i. 7, 9, 10, 12, 19, 51 (important.) Ibrat. ii. 17-23. DC. (only the date of Murtaza's victory.)

CPC. v. 1843.—It was at first proposed that Najaf should himself lead this campaign, taking the Emperor with himself. Then Prince Akbar Shah was to take his father's place in this army, and the marching tents of the prince and the regent were pitched at Tāl Katora *en route* for Jaipur on 22 March 1780. The scheme was then abandoned, probably owing to Akbar's illness.

Court. The ungrateful Haldia quickly made his way into the imbecile young Rajah's heart and gained the regency for himself by ousting his patron, whom he accused of embezzlement. The Bohrā, on his return to Court, was called to a harsh audit and confined in Amber fort to answer a demand for lakhs of Rupees. But Daulat Rām's glory was short-lived ; early in 1780 he had to flee for his life and seek asylum with Najaf Khan in Delhi,—a tailor named Rodā-rām taking his place as the Kachhwa Rajah's guiding angel. Just then Mirzā Najaf received Himmat Bahadur's report that the Jaipur Government was hopelessly in default of payment.

A double invasion of the Jaipur kingdom in over-whelming force was now organised. Murtaza Khan Barech with his Afghan and Baluch followers was to force the northern route through the Shekhāwati country and descend on Jaipur from its north, while at the same time Mahbub Ali Khan was to follow the southern road to Jaipur, marching westwards from Agra *viā* Hindaun and Lalsot, and strike at the Kachhwa capital from its south side. Mahbub left Delhi early in May, the traitor Daulat Rām Haldīā guiding him with his local knowledge. A strong imperial division of five battalions of trained sepoy (some under European commanders) and a thousand horse with artillery, besides his own new levies, accompanied the general. When he met Himmat Bahadur at Bayānā, a



quarrel about precedence broke out between the two. The soldiers, one and all, voted for Mahbub, and he resumed the march on Jaipur leaving his angry coadjutor behind. His advance was rapid and successful; in the then disrupted condition of the Jaipur State no place resisted him or could resist him long. By making rapid marches he advanced looting the cities in the eastern and southern regions of the Jaipur State and taking many fortalices. Jhalai, Bhandarej, Basi-Toda, Lālbāri, Chatsu and Watka were among his victims, till on 20th October he arrived at the gate of the Kachhwa capital, in which the Rajah had shut himself up. At exactly the same time, his colleague Murtaza Khan had worked his way through the Shekhāwati country to Sri Madhopur, forty miles north of Jaipur.

Meantime Rajah Sawai Pratap Singh in utter helplessness had set Khushhālī Rām free and appointed him regent with supreme authority (18th October) and sent him to make peace with the Mughal Government at any cost. Mahbub Ali had quarrelled with Daulat Rām Haldīā, in spite of Najaf Khan's reprimand. On 2nd November Khushhālī Rām interviewed Mahbub Ali in his tents outside Jaipur, but his offer of tribute was rejected as inadequate and delusive. The Jaipur regent even proposed to hire 6,500 of Mahbub's troops for a daily subsidy and employ them in recovering certain mahals from the Macheri chief. The Delhi general dis-

believed his sincerity as he had received information of Khush-hali being in secret league with the Rao Rajah and of his having invited that chief to join in the defence of Jaipur. Mahbub Ali had been living all this time on plunder, constantly moving to new pastures. He next marched east from Tonk (50 miles south of Jaipur) towards Malarna (18 miles north of Ranthambhor fort) where he captured the *garhi* (probably Kirni) of Thakur Shambhu Singh (7th Nov.) and then laid siege to Malarna. His troops captured Barwada (20 m. west of Ranthambhor) on the 9th. The woful situation of the splendid heritage of Man Singh and Mirzā Rajah Jai Singh at this time is thus described in a Marathi despatch of 10th October 1780: "The Turks have seized 32 parganahs of Jaipur and set up their outpost 12 *kos* from Jaipur city. Fourteen parganahs of the jagirdars (feudal vassals) and two of the *ghanims*, [together with the 32 above] make a total of 48 parganahs lost by the Jaipur Rajah. Only four parganahs remain under him." [*Mah. Dar.* i. 19.]

But the attempt to exact the Jaipur tribute by coercion through Mahbub Ali failed. The Rajah held out within his impregnable fortress, and the invader soon exhausted the resources of the open country, and as he could not pay his troops they began to leave him rather than die of famine in that desert land. To add to Mahbub Ali's disgrace, the negotiations for the



Jaipur tribute were taken out of his hands and entrusted to Himmat Bahadur once again. Najaf Khan had been disappointed with Mahbub for his failure to secure any payment in spite of his success in the field. Jaipur agents met Himmat Bahadur, then sulking in his jagir at Vrindavan, bribed him heavily to save their Rajah and sent him off to Delhi where the Gosain gave a fee of Rs. 25,000 to Shivarām Kashmiri, the guiding angel of Najaf Khan, and through him secured an order on Mahbub to make peace with the Rajah of Jaipur, in return for a promise of 21 lakhs of Rupees. The Jaipur envoys offered two lakhs down and the balance by monthly instalments of Rs. 75,000 in future, on condition that the armies under Mahbub Ali and Murtaza Khan should be recalled and all the Jaipur territory seized by them should be relinquished. Najaf agreed except for Narnaul and Hindaun which he wanted to annex.

Mahbub Ali had been planning to force a decision by storming the fortified city of Jaipur so as to bring the defiant Rajah down on his knees, and for this purpose he asked for more troops and guns from Delhi. Mirzā Najaf knew the impossibility of the attempt and wisely forbade it. At last in February 1781, Mahbub Ali, finding it beyond his power to maintain himself longer there and being daily threatened by the mutiny of his unpaid soldiery, marched back to Dig, and leaving most of his troops in camp there,

himself went to Delhi to demand payment from Najaf Khan. The regent, as usual, was ready with promises ; but Mahbub Ali bluntly told him, "My unpaid soldiers are dispersing from their camp. If such be your wish, say so plainly, in order that these men may not perish uselessly" (3rd May.) Ten thousand Rupees were paid him next day, but it was a mere drop in the ocean of his debt to his army, for whom he had already advanced five or six lakhs from his own pocket and who had now already served for fourteen months. He again and again threatened to go away to Mecca, as he could see no possible work that he might do for Najaf in such circumstances. His soldiers used to throng at the gate of his Delhi residence and make rows for their dues. The regent by repeated entreaties promises and evasions gained time ; but the evil day could not be put off beyond 22nd June, when Mahbub finally took his *congee* for his pilgrimage to the Holy Cities of Arabia. Even then Najaf Khan told him, "Wait at Agra with my sister. I too am coming." His troops were offered employment in Murtaza Khan's contingent, but as they were no better paid than before they dispersed. Thus a fine army was broken up and a great general ruined for ever. "His levies mutinying for their arrears of pay, looted all his property, and at last Mahbub set out for Mecca as a faqir." [*Ibrat*. ii. 23.]



We shall now turn to Murtaza Khan Barech's part in this invasion of Jaipur. Early in March 1780, his nephew in coming from Narnaul was slain by the Rajputs on the way and his property looted. Mirzā Najaf ordered him to raise a force of his own on the same terms and promises as Mahbub Ali's, and sent him to penetrate into Jaipur from the north, simultaneously with the latter general's march by the south-west. Murtaza's route brought him into conflict with the Shekhawats, the bravest among the clans of Jaipur. They barred his path at a place beyond Narnaul, but after a six hours' fight with heavy slaughter on both sides, he defeated them (c. 20th July.) Advancing further west and south, he roved about in the region round Udepur (20 miles north of Sri Madhopur), in the very heart of the Shekhawat country, and tried to secure tribute from Sikar, Nawalgarh, Khetri, Singhāna and other baronies by negotiation or threat of arms. On 20th October when Mahbub Ali reached the gate of Jaipur city from the south, Murtaza Khan had made his way to Sri Madhopur, 8 miles north of Ringas railway junction and only forty miles north of Jaipur. But these forty miles he was not destined to cross, and finally he too returned to Delhi covered with debt and failure, early in March 1781. Mirzā Najaf's finely conceived strategy, though punctually carried out by these two able subordinates, in the end broke down on the rock of finance. The



delaying tactics of the Jaipur ministers succeeded, as the craven Rajah shut himself up in his capital leaving all his realm outside open to Mughal spoliation. The capture of Jaipur fort alone would have put the seal and crown on the imperial victory, but that feat was impossible as Malhar Rao Holkar had found out in January 1751.

Murtaza Khan owed Rs. 1,80,000 to his soldiers, besides having spent a large sum of his own on this expedition. Najaf Khan could now offer him only Rs. 20,000 in cash payable ten days later and the balance at the rate of Rs. 30,000 a month from the Jaipur tribute when (and if) realised. The general was sent off in April to the upper Doab to operate against the Sikhs, and two months later to the Panipat district, but here too he was no better supplied with money, and his soldiers starved as in Jaipur. "They took by force whatever they could from him, and then disbanded." [*Ibr.* ii. 23.] The history of the Jaipur tribute will be told fully in a later chapter.

§ 5. *Muhammad Shafi's campaign
against the Sikhs, 1780-1781.*

The utter discomfiture of the imperialists in the Patiala campaign of October 1779 was followed by an onrush of the exultant Sikhs into the upper Doab, where there was none to resist them. The imperial Government was paralysed for a time by the Court revolution which raised



Mirzā Najaf to the regency and naturally led to a concentration of his forces in the capital (November.) But by the end of the year things had settled down, and in January next his grand-nephew Mirzā Muhammad Shafi was sent to the Doab with a choice force of 10,000 men and a powerful artillery to guard that province and protect the crops. This general's first task was to subdue the local landlords who had used the Sikh incursion to throw off the authority of Government from within the shelter of their mudforts. Shafi advanced from his base at Mirat, *via* Barnawa, and sacked the rebel village of Sup (12 miles north-west of Barnawa) after a stiff fight, on 10th February 1780. He then held his ground, guarding the Mirat district.

At the end of the rainy season, Zābita Khan was given his *congee* from Delhi (12th October) with pressing orders to assist Shafi in the war with the Sikhs. The two generals united their forces on the 28th of the month, at Tānda, on the eastern bank of the Jamuna, 14 miles south-east of Panipat. The Cis-Satlaj Sikh sardars were instantly engaged in their mutual contests for independence and supremacy,—Amar Singh of Patiala fighting whai Desu Singh of Kaithal, whose cause Sāhib Singh Khonda supported,—or Sāhib Singh with Durr Singh and Bhāg Singh attacking Bhangā Sir of Thaneshwar and trying to wrest that fort from him (Nov. 1780.) Both sides had appealed to the imperial general for aid, and



Najaf Khan had left it to Shafi to ally himself with one of the parties and fight the other as he deemed it more profitable to the Delhi Government. On 9th November Shafi and Zābita reached Bidauli, 10 miles south-east of Karnal. Here the Sikh sardars, Sāhib Singh and his confederates, met the two generals and discussed terms for their engagement.*

The allies crossed over to the western bank of the Jamuna and halted at Kunjpura near Karnal. Here the short-tempered Shafi "behaved like a child" (as Najaf Khan told the Maratha ambassador) and imprisoned Gajpat Singh and three other Sikh chiefs in order to squeeze money out of them (c. 8 Dec.) Zābita Khan objected to this policy of coercion towards his hereditary supporters, and, angry with his colleague for his obstinacy, returned to Delhi with his own contingent (10 Dec.) Shafi was thus left alone, and taking advantage of his depleted strength, the

* The whole of this narrative of Shafi's Sikh expeditions has been constructed by piecing together the minute information supplied by Br. Mus. Or. 25,020 and 25,021 (*Akhbar*) with some small additions from DC, *Ibrat*. ii. 16-17, Muna Lal 227, DY. i. 20, 23, 28, 35, and MD. i. 45, 53. Williams, in *Calcutta Review* (1870), needs correction.

Akh. 20b, "severe battle between Desu S. and Amar S., the latter driven into Patiala fort (c. 14 Feb. 1780.)" 389a.—Internecine fighting among the Sikhs, some have seized much of Kaithal Estate, others are levying contribution in Patiala territory (c. 10 Nov. 1780.) 3a, rival sardars fight for Thaneshwar (c. 15 Sep. 1780).



Sikhs made an incursion into the Saharanpur district, now vacated by both the Mughal generals. Shafi made a forced march from Kunjpura into the Doab. The Sikh raiding bands joined together near the city of Saharanpur and offered battle in the full confidence of victory and contempt for the imperial forces. But Shafi was not Abdul Ahad; his well-served artillery and trained sepoy musketeers carried destruction into the Sikh ranks. At last the enemy broke and fled back to their homes across the Jamuna. Shafi pursued them so close that in their precipitate flight many of the Sikhs were drowned in the river. Their greatest leader Sahib Singh Khonda was among the slain.*

On the heels of the vanquished, Shafi returned to the Karnal district. On 6th April his lieutenant Mir Mansur fought a severe battle near Indri (15 miles north of Karnal) and defeated a Sikh host, slaying 150 of their men, including their commander Ratan Singh. They fell back to near Radaur (12 miles north of Indri), while the imperialists planted their outposts at

* The only authority for this battle is Muna Lal, 277. Williams, in *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 60, p. 35, tells the same story, but among other errors and exaggerated figures (such as that the Sikhs lost upwards of 5,000 men), he gives the date as 15 Aug. and the place as Mirat. It is a recorded fact that shortly after 15 Aug. the Emperor rewarded Shafi with a robe of honour, which reached him on 3rd Sep. For what service was it? Mid-August is not the time for the march of large armies.

Indri and Husainpur. Lesser encounters frequently took place. Shafi finally pushed on to Sadhaura, 23 miles east of Ambala, in the fork between the Chautang and Mārkaṇḍa rivers at the foot of the hills. Here he encamped for some time. His position soon became untenable. While the Sikhs were gathering strength, his appeals to Delhi for men money and munitions remained unheeded. Najaf Khan was a bankrupt and could not meet punctually even the monthly subsistence of the Emperor's household which was the first charge upon the Treasury. Every officer who was asked to go to Shafi's relief demanded money for equipping and feeding his troops before he would move one step. Some forces were, however, sent to guard the Doab in May. Shafi's powder and shot had been exhausted in the recent encounters and yet his supply was not replenished from Delhi except with mere promises. Similar wordy answers met his repeated demands for money to pay his starving soldiers with, till at last they began to make rows in his camp and leave it in hundreds. In fact, Shafi's force was disrupted and he had to look on in utter helplessness. The commander wrote to his chief in bitterness of spirit, "You have spoilt the business of realising money. It is therefore better to disband my force."

Many imperial captains were paid by assignments on the revenue of the upper Doab; the Sikh raids dried up this source of their income



and made it impossible for them to feed and maintain their contingents. It was, therefore, necessary to police this region effectively against the raiders. But that task could be accomplished only with the cooperation of Zabita Khan who had large landed interests there and the addition of whose family forces would give any imperial general detached to the Doab a decisive superiority over the Sikhs. Najaf Khan therefore did his best to court Zabita and send him to the upper Doab to join Shafi and promote the Emperor's cause in unison. But the concert between the two generals on which the success of the enterprise depended, was impossible. The Persian and the Ruhela were too young and too haughty to work in harness together. In addition to this temperamental obstacle, Zabita demanded money for supporting his troops, which the Delhi Government could not pay, and he was not at heart willing to crush the Sikhs who had been his sole allies in the past and might be so again in his hour of need. These internal causes ensured the failure of Najaf Khan's Sikh expedition and he had ultimately to take recourse to a compromise with them.

By the end of May 1781 Mirzā Najaf had realised the wisdom of making terms with the Sikhs through Zābita, as Shafi had proved himself an impossible agent for dealing with them. In order to release the large imperial army under Shafi for operations in another



quarter and to be free from fear about Sikh invasions in the north Delhi region and the Doab, he decided to make money concessions to the Sikhs and turn them into paid servants in the Empire's wars. He therefore released Gajpat Singh, after settling his tribute at six lakhs of Rupees. Gajpat was given his *congee* at the Delhi Court with a robe of honour and other costly gifts and the title of Maharajah (12th July 1781),—thus founding the house of Jhind. Najaf's parting words to him were, "Let the lands in Sikh possession remain with the Sikhs. Do you and they come and join our army." [DY. i. 35. DC.] The terms of this pact were that the Sikhs would not raid the imperial territory any more but serve in the Delhi army for pay when called upon, in return for their being now formally confirmed in the possession of their estates, roughly the region north of Panipat, and granted the right of levying blackmail (called *rakhi*, about two annas for every Rupee of the standard land revenue due to the State) in the region from Panipat to the walls of Delhi and the upper Doab. Najaf Khan only repeated what the Sayyid brothers had done 62 years earlier in respect of the Maratha claim to blackmail in Mughal Deccan.

In June Shafi was ordered to canton for the rainy season at Radaur. But he took post at the ford between Nakum and Tābar on the Jamuna, 8 miles south-east of that place, and finally fell



back on his base at Kunjpurā, 21 miles further south. Here he remained in a state of suspended activity till the death of Najaf Khan.

§ 6. *Revolution in Delhi Government's diplomatic policy; anti-English coalition sought to be built up by the Peshwa.*

This reversal of alliances needs explanation. Ever since his undesired seclusion in Allahabad fort, Shah Alam's heart had been growing sorer and sorer against the English. After their treaty with him in 1765 they had promised to escort him to his capital. To his demands for the fulfilment of this promise, the English generals had again and again replied that they would do so when the rainy season was over. Year followed year, but those rains seemed never to come to an end. At last the recluse of Allahabad had taken fortune into his own hands and made his way to his fathers' capital with Maratha help, unaided by a single British officer. Even the districts of Allahabad and Kora,—his own ancient and legitimate territory, which they had left to him in 1765, had been afterwards unceremoniously taken away by them and sold to the Wazir of Oudh. This Wazir, though a servant of his Government and a vassal of his empire, had been protected by British arms in defying his sovereign by refusing to pay the customary fine on succession and the annual surplus revenue of his fertile subahs, and even



to share with him the imperial jagirs in Rohilkhand which he had usurped with British aid; and he had persistently defaulted in his duty of attending his lawful sovereign's levee as a functionary bound by his office tenure.

The English Company had secured from him a grant of the diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, which legitimatized their enjoyment of the revenue of the richest provinces in India; but they had stopped paying him the tribute of 26 lakhs of Rupees a year which was the condition of that grant. At first they accounted for the default by the great famine in Bengal, and afterwards by the troubled condition of English affairs due to the wars in the Deccan. In every letter of excuse written by the English Governor, profuse protestations of loyalty to the Emperor and readiness to please him were made, but not a pice of that tribute was offered. Warren Hastings gave the soothing assurance that he had made a representation about this tribute to his masters in London, and was only waiting for their commands. The poor deluded Shah Alam did not know that the representation was for stopping the tribute altogether, but he felt all the same that he would never see English money again.

These grievous wrongs could be righted only by force, but where was that force to be found? The sovereign's one hope lay in a loyal and enterprising Peshwa, because no other



Power in India could face the English with any chance of success ; and therefore the Delhi Court turned to the Peshwa with growing wistfulness but deepening doubt. We see the movements on this diplomatic chess-board almost day to day in the despatches of the Peshwa's envoy (Hingané) at Delhi and the repetitions of them in Mahadji Sindhia's letters to the Puna Court, throughout 1780 and 1781. But immediately after the Delhi Government had attained to unity of control and accession of strength through Najaf Khan's triumph over Abdul Ahad at the close of 1779, began a period in which the star of Britain rose in unclouded majesty to the ascendant in the Indian firmament. The reverse to Cockburn at Talegaon (January 1779) was wiped off ; Goddard captured Ahmadabad on 15th Feb. 1780, Popham scaled the hitherto impregnable fortress of Gwalior on 3rd August, Goddard took Bassein on 11th December, and Camac defeated the last Maratha hope, Mahadji Sindhia, at Sipri on 16th February 1781.

These far-resounding victories destroyed the chance of every anti-English coalition in India and cowed every Indian Power hostile, in act or feeling, towards them. Mirzā Najaf Khan was not the man to underrate the military strength of the men from beyond the seas ; he had faced their bayonets at Undhuā Nālā in 1763 and he had brigaded his horse with their infantry in 1764 ; he would not drag the Emperor into a war with



such a race unless it was undertaken by an allied force so overwhelmingly strong as to make assurance of victory doubly sure.

§ 7. *Futility of the Maratha plots in the North.*

Throughout the years 1780 and 1781, down to the very signing of a treaty of peace by Mahadji Sindhia with the English (October 1781), we witness a scene of futile plotting at Delhi* which would be exquisitely comic were it not unspeakably sad to every reflective Indian. The Peshwa, hard pressed by the enemy in the Deccan, was, for his own safety, urging the Emperor to take the plunge and openly join him in the war then raging with the English,—who had swallowed Bengal and Oudh, and now taken Bundelkhand, Gwalior and the Carnatic, and were intriguing with the Rajput Rajahs for a joint drive to conquer the Jat country and Malwa, so that the capture of Delhi would be most easy to them. [Raj. xii. 5.] The Emperor, through Najaf Khan, gave repeated assurances to the Maratha envoy and promised to set out at the head of his army openly against the English “after the rainy season”; but he rightly stipulated that before he could do so the Peshwa himself or his best generals must come to Northern India

* *Dilli-yethil M. Rajkaranen*, i. (partly repeats and mostly supplements Rajwade, xii.) Also (echoes) in *Gwalior Papers*, 5 vols.



with a vast army, lest the English should anticipate them by making a forced march from Oudh territory and capturing defenceless Delhi! [Raj. xii. 7, 55, 56. *DY.* i. 14, 34, 37.]

It was a case of one drowning man clutching the neck of a still more helpless swimmer in the expectation that both would be saved thereby. Neither ally could really trust the other. Hingané very early discovered, what required no great acumen to guess, that Najaf Khan did not mean business and was only putting him off with smooth words; "he is really waiting to see which side proves stronger." [*DY.* 35.] He noticed how the imperial Court was mortally afraid of the English, especially after the capture of Gwalior, —a feat hitherto believed to be impossible and for which Najaf Khan rightly condemned the Maratha generals, asking "How could you lose such a fort?" The Maratha ambassador at Delhi, as a gentleman sent to lie abroad for the benefit of his country, had been trying to suppress every news of Maratha defeat at the hands of the English; but alas, a sort of freelance news-writer at Puna by his secret letters betrayed everything to the Delhi Court. [*DY.* i. 31 and 43.] The Mughal Government was also startled at every rumour of peace feelers having been sent out by the Peshwa to the English and roundly taxed Hingané with his master's planning to lure the Emperor into the anti-English coalition and then

to leave him in the lurch. [Raj. xii. 8. *DY.* i. 34.]

Mahadji Sindhia was for some time confident of the success of such a coalition,—with a confidence born of ignorance. He asserted again and again that the pressure on Western India by Colonel Goddard,, and later on Malwa by Camac, could be relieved and the English driven into a corner by Holkar and Sindhia from Central India and Bhonsla from Nagpur sweeping into Bengal with their countless horse and practising their light foray tactics (*qazzaqi*), which were sure of success. “The Emperor’s artillery fires slowly, the English guns fire more quickly; but this advantage of the latter would be neutralized by *qazzaqi* and even their guns would be captured”! [*DY.* i. 6 & 9.] What the Maratha moss-troopers could do by the raiding tactics so dear to the hearts of their old-style leaders was found out by the best exponent of that school of warfare, Malhar Rao Holkar, once against the Abdali and twice when opposed to English discipline. Mahadji had not yet seen the work of De Boigne and his disciplined organisation, and he naturally shared the same illusion. A vast Maratha army for this North Indian campaign was expected to be fitted out by that hereditary insolvent the Peshwa, who could not even pay his Delhi envoy’s salary, so that Hingané was driven to live in a beggarly style shameful to the foreign representative of a great Power and



even to starve; as a fellow-sufferer bitterly put it, "Owing to my indebtedness every day is an *ekādashī* or *Shiva-rātri* to me!" [DY. i. 10, 81.]

The confabulations at Delhi ultimately ended in nothing. But at one stage of them, in June 1781, Mirza Najaf very wisely decided on preparing for the great enterprise by reducing the number of his enemies; he chose to make friends with the Sikhs by recognising their possession of the lands in the Cis-Satlaj tract. By ending the state of war in that country the large imperial division under Shafi quartered near Karnal could be released and transferred to the upper Doab (at Saharanpur) and maintained there with a body of Sikh auxiliaries and the retainers of Zābita Khan, in order to suppress the local rebels and restore the imperial administration. [DY. i. 35.]

But the grand plan died of itself when the First Maratha War was practically concluded by Sindhia's making peace with the English (13th October 1781.) The result of the plotting, however, was that the two years before this peace were spent by the Delhi Government in suspense and inactivity, except for the two campaigns against Jaipur and Sarhind which we have already described.

The respite was used in marrying the Emperor's favourite son, Prince Akbar Shah, (on 2nd May 1781) with the most lavish pomp and ceremony, which involved months of pre-

paration. Only four days later, a severe blow fell on the royal family, Prince Farkhunda Bakht (Mirzā Jahān Shah), a quiet lover of books, died after a short illness, and his baby daughter followed him the same night. Great natural calamities darkened men's look into the future: on 11th June 1781 the capital was swept by an abnormally violent dust-storm; later in the year came a severe earth-quake and a meteor fall near Jhajhar. [Muna Lal 233. DC.] Before the end of the year the cause of the imperial Government became hopeless: Najaf Khan was stricken down by a disease which no doctor could cure, and after lingering in bed for months the regent passed away on 6th April. With him departed the last hope of the Mughals in India.

§ 8. *Mirza Najaf's character and achievement.*

The character of Mirzā Najaf Khan has been already critically examined in the attempt to survey his actual work in war and administration. It will, therefore, suffice if we briefly study his real place in Delhi history and appraise his success and failure in different fields and the effect of his death on the State.

Mirzā Najaf Khan Zulfiqār-ud-daulah fills a large place in the memory of the Delhi historian only because he was the last great Muslim

* Najaf's last illness and death.—DC. *Ibrat*. ii. 25-31. Muna Lal 234-237. G. Ali, iii. 150-151.



minister of the Mughal throne. He shines in the sunset hues of the dying empire by contrast with the smaller men who mismanaged the State for two years after him and finally passed the Government of Delhi on to the hands of other creeds and other races. Except in a limited sphere, he had no title to greatness if we are to judge him by his achievements. As a general, he had not the genius and originality of Najib-ud-daulah, nor the robust personal magnetism of the captains of an earlier age whose dash into the thick of the fray had often turned the doubtful tide of combat and whose comradery had cheered the hearts of hard pressed and drooping followers. But he possessed that cool leadership, that power of co-ordination and that skill in the choice of fitting instruments which were indispensable for success in the new system of war that the Europeans had introduced into India. He early realised that mobile field artillery and disciplined foot-musketeers were the decisive factors in this new warfare, and he therefore always set himself to making adequate provision for these two arms, and also to mingling them in effective proportion with the old heavy "Mughal horse." Herein lay his approach to military genius. No Indian chief before Māhādji Sindhiā engaged so many European officers.

His greatest defect was that he was no administrator. Himself illiterate, he lacked the no less unlettered Akbar's royal gift of choosing

the ablest heads for the civil departments, charging them with the basic principles of his administration and seeing that his orders were in general being carried out. Thus it happened that during his two years of unchallenged power over the Central Government, and before that in the management of his jagirs, the revenue administration went to pieces and the resources of the State were neither increased nor husbanded. The great drought and famine which began in upper India in 1780 cannot be held as the true explanation of this failure. Insolvency dogged his steps throughout life and hampered his work at every stage, in spite of his gains in tribute and spoils of war. The reason was that he had no capacity for civil administration, and helplessly left the revenue management of the country in the hands of his Kashmiri Brahman diwans, who in the opinion of the Indian world in that age were a pale reflection of their Muslim fellow-provincials in low cunning and love of speculation.

Even more fatal was his policy, born of indolence and timidity, of parcelling out the portion of the realm still obedient to the Crown among his lieutenants, each one of whom became a subahdar in his own district without the legal status, however, of that high functionary. Below these great semi-independent barons there were petty leaders of bands,—Mughalia Baluch and Afghan,—whom Najaf Khan paid by the grant of



small estates, so that the remnant of the Delhi empire was dismembered into a vast number of feudal baronies which no weaker hand could control. These sucked up the yield of the land and impoverished the Emperor and the army of national defence. This legacy of trouble bequeathed by Mirzā Najaf all but crushed Māhādji Sindhiā and certainly delayed his reconstruction of the imperial administration by four years, a delay which wrought a momentous change in India's destiny.

But the historian cannot deny that Najaf Khan was a statesman in his moderation in the hour of victory, his kindness to the mass of the people, and his unerring sense of the realities of Indian politics. He never yielded to impulse or pique, never lost his temper, never grasped at more than he could win. Above all, he had the true mark of a born leader of men, he could attract and keep to himself very able lieutenants in war, though not in the more exacting pursuits of peace. His last years cast a benign halo over his memory ; he gave a respite of peace and plenty to the capital. Hence the universal and sincere mourning at his death and the utter despair which his passing caused to the world of Delhi.



CHAPTER XXXII.

REGENCY OF SHAFI AND AFRASIYAB,
1782-84.§ 1. *Emperor's helplessness after Najaf Khan's death.*

The death of Mirzā Najaf Khan plunged the Court army and people of Delhi into utter bewilderment. Their future appeared impenetrably dark, without a single streak of hope in any corner. There was none to take his place and guard the Empire as he, and Najib-ud-daulah before him, had done. The hereditary Wazir of the empire was a nerveless voluptuary whose mental vacuity could be hardly concealed by his ineffable but superficial polish of manners. The leading Hindu vassal of the State, the heir to the legacy of Mān Singh and Mirzā Rājah Jai Singh, was an imbecile youth engaged day and night in unmanly diversions within his harem. The Ruhela race had been crushed beyond the possibility of producing another leader of men. The Jat royal house was in an even worse state of decay.

Men, therefore, naturally turned to the late commander-in-chief's lieutenants in their quest for his successor. These were four, his chosen



instruments in many an action and his recognised deputies in four different provinces: Afrāsīyāb Khan and Najaf Quli Khan (his two slaves), Mirzā Shafī Khan (his grand-nephew) and Muhammad Beg Hamadāni (the Mughalia leader.) The struggle for power among these four makes up the blood-red history of Delhi during the two years and a half that separate Mirzā Najaf's death from the Emperor's willing surrender to Māhādji Sindhiā as his Regent and commander-in-chief, (April 1782—November 1784.)

Not one of these captains was of such outstanding eminence and prestige as to exact the unquestioning obedience of the other three. To avert a return to feudal anarchy, the Gosāin Himmat Bahadur very wisely urged Shah Alam to become his own commander-in-chief, go forth at the head of the assembled troops, and win back his lost provinces. The master's own leadership would suppress the mutual jealousies of the subordinate generals and cow the rebels and revenue defaulters into obedience without any need of fighting. But Shah Alam II was not cast in the heroic mould of his ancestors; he fell in with the timid counsels of his sycophants and refused to leave the security and pleasures of his palace for the hardships and dangers of a life of campaigning. [*Ibrat*. ii. 31-32.] A successor to Najaf Khan as army chief and regent of the empire had, therefore, to be sought out.

§ 2. *Najaf Khan's four lieutenants ; their character.**

Afrāsiyāb Khan was by birth a Hindu grocer's boy whom Mirzā Najaf had captured as an orphan, converted to Islam and made his favourite slave and his adopted son in all but the name. But he had none of his master's military capacity, power over men, or passion for strenuous endeavour. He lacked even the born soldier's dauntless courage and therefore could not command the confidence of the army. The Mughalia captains refused to obey a slave ; the foreign Muhammadans despised him as India-born and Hindu of blood. His one source of strength was that portion of Mirzā Najaf's wealth which he had been able to appropriate during his late control of his indolent master's affairs. In addition, the dying Najaf had recommended him to the Emperor as his chosen successor in office and master of his troops and fiefs. For some time after Najaf Khan's death Afrāsiyāb Khan enjoyed the favour of his sister Khadija Sultān Begam, who was universally honoured for her late brother's sake. But when in a few months

* Character : *Afrasiyab*, bania boy, no soldier (Gw. v. 25) slave (*Ibr.* ii. 87, 34), bad temper (*Ibr.* 36, 78, 69, 34), demands Najaf's daughter (G. Ali 211.) *Ibr.* 41, 88. *Shafī*, Muna Lal 256, 273 276. BM. 25,021 f. 113. G. Ali 161 (temper.) *Najaf Quli*, Muna Lal 255, G. Ali 157, 209. *Ibr.* 43. *Md. Beg*, Muna Lal 271, '73, '74. *Ibr.* ASB ms. ii. 145. *Zain-ul-abidin*, Muna Lal 242. G. Ali 175.



Afrāsiyāb alienated her, he lost every outside supporter. His new rank and power completely turned his head, and his harshness of speech and violence of temper soon drove all men away from his side, and hastened his downfall.

The second favourite slave and lieutenant of Mirzā Najaf was a Persian named Najaf Quli Khan after his patron. But this officer was constantly sunk in the enjoyment of opium wine and women. His habitual indolence was broken by occasional fits of reckless fighting, but he lacked true generalship and the power of far-sighted scheming. In diplomacy and intrigue he was a mere child and became a tool in the hands of shrewder men.

The most natural successor of Mirzā Najaf would have been his nephew's son Mirzā Muhammad Shafi, who could claim the "royal blood of Persia" and with it the homage of the Irāni party. But throughout Najaf's lifetime he had filled only subordinate posts (except in the recent Sikh campaign) because of his extreme youth, so that at the time of his grand-uncle's death he had acquired neither the force nor the prestige requisite for a Mir Bakhshi. Moreover, he bore a frank unsuspecting character; but that world of intrigue treachery and violence was not a place for a simple good-natured man. The result was that during his short enjoyment of the supreme power all his plans miscarried, he bungled in dealing with his rivals, and the

uncongeniality of that atmosphere of universal crooked dealing and hypocrisy so bewildered and irritated him that he burst into frequent fits of temper which alienated his friends. His elder but less prominent brother Zain-ul-abidin Khan was made of a sterner stuff and proved a far abler actor for that stage of fraud and crime.

The most sinister figure among Mirzā Najaf's captains was Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, who combined the treachery and ferocity of the Afghan with the martial efficiency and mercenary spirit of the Turkish soldier of fortune. The small bands under Mughalia sardars long settled in India as professional soldiers ready to join the highest bidder, naturally flocked to Hamadāni on account of his known generalship and firmness of character mingled with diplomatic cunning and address, even more than for the sake of his being a brother from *vilāyet*. His nephew Ismail Beg, too, was one of the best generals of the time. But neither of them could hope for any support from Najaf Khan's Shia sister and personal retainers; they were kept at a distance as mere hirelings unfit to be leaders of the party.

§ 3. *Emperor's policy. General survey of events from 1782 to 1784.*

The history of the next two years and a half was the history of the dissolving and newly forming combinations among these four generals.



into which further complication was introduced by the selfish intrigues of the Oudh general Latāfat Ali Khan, the infinitely patient and timid secret diplomacy of the Emperor, and the cunning moves of the ex-regent Abdul Ahad Khan who for a time emerged from confinement and tried to play the supreme part in the administration once again. Finally, all these forces spent themselves by their internecine contests, three of them (Latāfat, Shafi and Afrāsiyāb) were murdered, Abdul Ahad imprisoned for life, Muhammad Beg stripped of all power, and the stage left absolutely clear at the end of 1784 for the supremacy of Māhādji Sindhiā.

Reduced as the Emperor had been for several years past to impotence, his sole concern was for money,—a regular and copious flow of it,—which could not be expected from the impoverished and mostly alienated Crownlands, nor from the tributes which his vassals were now too strong to pay willingly. At the same time, the large army assembled by Najaf Khan could not get their pay regularly even during that great chief's life time, and after his death the soldiers, with their salaries fallen still more into arrears and starving in the midst of that three years' drought, often broke out in riots, insulting and threatening their officers.

So, the Emperor put a price on the succession to the post of Najaf Khan. Afrāsiyāb thought-



well as the artillery that guarded his mansion. But her chief source of influence lay in the respect and devotion with which the entire Indian world, from the Emperor downwards, regarded her by reason of her being the sole representative and nearest blood relation of that great noble. Shortly after his death she formed the plan of giving Najaf's elder daughter (then in her eleventh year) in marriage to Mirzā Shafi, getting the post of Mir Bakhshi and the support of Najaf's old adherents for the bridegroom, and governing the State from behind the *parda* through her nominee.

Najaf Khan's extensive fiefs and the Crown-lands which he administered as Regent of the empire were held by his agents at the time of his death: the middle Doab (Aligarh and Jaleswar districts) by Afrāsiyāb Khan, Saharanpur with nominal right to the Karnal district across the Jamuna by Mirzā Muhammad Shafi, Shekhāwati and Mewāt with its centre at Kanud by Najaf Quli Khan, and the Agra-Dholpur region including the conquests from the Jats by Muhammad Beg Hamadāni. These districts now threatened to break up into four independent baronies. Besides, Mirzā Najaf's prolonged and mortal illness, followed by the confusion and fighting for the succession to his post, caused a paralysis of government for nearly a year (1782.) Every local chief and petty military fief-holder seized the lands of his neighbours and extended

his estates in defiance of law and right. Defeated rebels like the Rajah of Bharatpur came out of the refuge of their forts and began to recover their lost possessions up to the very walls of Agra city. The Sikhs and the Ruhela remnant of Najib-ud-daulah's house became even more daring than before.

But the Emperor, his administrative officers and the army were bound to starve unless these Crownlands were brought back to the management of his own collectors and the unauthorised extensions of fiefs were wrested from the hands of the usurping captains. This was a task beyond the power of Shah Alam and the attempts made by his successive regents after Najaf's death to effect it only led to mutinies and their downfall, till at last a supremely strong regent like Māhādji Sindhiā imposed his will and his master's authority on these countless rebels,—and that too after a most dangerous and all but fatal challenge to his authority in 1787-1788.

§ 4. *Afrasiyab appointed Mir Bakhshi.*
His difficulties and humiliation.

When the three days of mourning after Mirzā Najaf's death were over (9th April 1782), the Emperor called to his presence all the leading military officers of his late General and asked them to sit down in the ante-room of the Diwan-i-am and elect a new chief for themselves. They could not agree, as the Mughalia captains refused



to obey Afrāsiyāb Khan for being India-born and a slave. The Emperor next paid a visit of condolence to Najaf Khan's sister and invited her to make the choice. She named Afrāsiyāb Khan, that noble was created Regent (*Mukhtiār*) and commander-in-chief (*Mir Bakhshi*, Amir-ul-umara) with the title of Ashraf-ud-daulah. For what had now become the highest office in the State, Afrāsiyāb had to promise a heavy price, namely a fee of five lakhs of Rupees and the monthly supply of one lakh and twenty thousand for the Emperor's household expenses. He scraped together all he could and paid down Rs. 1,87,000 on 11th April, and forthwith received investiture for his office.*

But his difficulties were only beginning. If he was to make sure provision for the future, he must first recover the Crownlands from the hands of usurpers and also suppress the rebels. Ranjit Singh Jat had utilised the illness of Mirzā Najaf to win back some of the lost lands of his father and to send his raiding bands throughout the Agra district. The local governor, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni was unable to cope with the myriads of Jat horse and appealed to Delhi for reinforcement. The new Mir Bakhshi was urged to march with the Emperor

* DC. G. Ali iii. 152-154. Muna Lal 237-243. *Ibrat*. ii. 32-36. Afrasiyāb's troubles,—DY. i. 84, 71, &c. Prince Jahandar Shah,—in Hastings, *State of India*, appendix.

to his rescue. But it meant a large immediate outlay. The unpaid imperial soldiery had so long managed to live in Delhi on credit, but loans would cease as soon as they left on a distant expedition with the risk of death; their families could be left behind at the capital only by being supplied with the means of sustenance for some months in advance. Bringing the neglected cavalry and artillery up to the equipment necessary for a campaign meant heavy expenditure. And the Emperor's personal staff and camp equipage required another large advance before they could be ready to start.

Afrāsiyāb could not provide all this money. On the plea of the hot weather and the Emperor's recent attack of fever, he secured an order that Prince Jawān Bakht should accompany the expedition in stead of his father. The prince took his formal leave at Court (c. 15th May) and went into tents outside Delhi, waiting for his army to assemble. Nearly a month passed, but that army did not assemble nor showed any sign of ever assembling, because Afrāsiyāb could not raise the necessary funds. He had already exhausted his cash resources, and when he begged for a loan from Najaf Khan's sister, she gave him a sharp rebuff. So, the Emperor, realising that the expedition could not possibly start, recalled the prince (12th June.)

Afrāsiyāb's prestige suffered by this public failure within a month of his assuming the



regency, and the Emperor's heart was turned against him. And he added to the number of his enemies by calling up Najaf Khan's captains to the capital and demanding that they should bring their assigned quotas of troops to the muster, retain only as much jagir as was justified by the actual strength of their contingents, and relinquish all the excess lands to the State; for otherwise he could not meet his master's demands for money. At once a revolt against his authority broke out. The malcontents won Begam Khadija Sultan over to their side and opposed the new Mir Bakhshi. These distractions, even more than the pride of power, soured the temper of Afrāsiyāb Khan. The plotters looked up to Mirzā Muhammad Shafi (the son of Najaf Khan's nephew) as their leader. Shafi, then posted in the Karnal district, quickly patched up a truce with the Sikhs and set out for Delhi.

§ 5. *Afrasiyab counteracts Shafi's rivalry.*

At the report of his rival's approach Afrāsiyāb Khan was filled with despair. His first patron, the sister of Mirzā Najaf, had now become his enemy and he must look out for support elsewhere. He publicly renounced all his former connection with Najaf Khan's family and interests and prayed to the Emperor to be regarded as an imperial officer in future. Still further pursuing the policy of placating the Emperor, he gave up



the control of the palace fort; Najaf's battalions which had so long garrisoned it were withdrawn (29th June), and the gates were placed in charge of the Emperor's own guards 'the Red Battalion', under Ahmad Ali Khan. Rightly suspecting that Shafi's march upon the capital was due to a secret call from Shah Alam and Begam Khadija, Afrāsiyāb Khan took prompt measures for self-defence. On 16th June he left the Mir Bakhshi's official residence, where he had so long been living with Najaf's sister and family, and removed to Abdul Ahad Khan's house, then under official escheat, taking with himself that deposed old regent from his prison in Najaf's mansion. This was the first step on the path of regaining the Emperor's favour, because every one knew that Shah Alam's heart was unalterably fixed on Ahad. The next step was to restore Ahad to the regency* and his position at the right hand of the Emperor, so that Afrāsiyāb could always have the strongest friend at Court. But such a political resurrection took time. Ahad, knowing himself powerless to effect anything in that stormy world, long refused

* Taking advantage of Afrāsiyāb's difficulties, the Emperor succeeded (29 June) in making him withdraw the Mir Bakhshi's guards and gunners from the palace-fort and give up the control of it to the imperial guards (the *Lāl Pallān*) under the Emperor's own agent Ahmad Ali Kh. DY. i. 84. DC.



to take office again. Everything was in confusion in the central Government. The Exchequer was empty, the Emperor and his household were starving. As the Maratha envoy in Delhi wrote at this time, "The soldiers get no money for buying food. Even Najaf Khan's personal guards are fasting; their horses and elephants are dying for lack of fodder. Even the Begam (Khadija Sultan)'s household cannot procure their food every day; at present they have been fasting for three days." [*Or.* 25,021 f. 112-115. *DY.* i. 84.]

While Afrāsiyāb was busy weaving his web, Shafi arrived near Delhi. Hitherto his position had been irregular: he was a captain who had left his post without orders, and was trying to make an unauthorised entrance into the capital. But the unprincipled wavering character of Shah Alam came to Shafi's rescue. The Emperor rejoiced to see this internecine war among Najaf Khan's lieutenants and expected that it would weaken them all so much that in the end he would be left supreme. Encouraged by a friendly message from his sovereign, Shafi entered Delhi, visited Khadija Begam, who took him into her arms as a son, and promised to marry Najaf's daughter to him, place him at the head of the household and troops of the late commander-in-chief, and secure the Mir Bakhshi's office for him.



§ 6. *The rival generals assemble forces in Delhi city; riots threatened.*

On 14th July Shafi was formally received in audience.* But no post was given to him for a month, as he would not agree to the high price at which the Court had put the regency up to sale. The other two lieutenants of Mirzā Najaf had been summoned to the capital. One of them, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, was a partisan of Shafi, and had at a hint from Shafi, patched up a truce with the Jat Rajah and then crossed into the middle Doab for plundering Gosāin Himmat Bahadur's jagirs. This Gosāin was Afrāsiyāb's right hand man, and Afrāsiyāb's own jagir in Aligarh was now threatened with invasion. The other, Najaf Quli Khan, marched from the Jaipur border towards Delhi, apparently to join Shafi; but Afrāsiyāb intercepted him at Gurgāon (17 July), won him over by personal entreaty, and brought him to Delhi the next day. The rival forces were thus marshalled:—Afrāsiyāb, Najaf Quli and Latāfat Ali, with the helpless Abdul Ahad in one camp; Shafi, Khadija Begam and all the personal retainers of Mirzā Najaf, with the absent Muhammad Beg Hamadāni in the other. The capital was once more threatened with a civil war to be fought out in its streets. All this time the soldiers were starving and distracted, not

* DC. G. Ali iii. 154-156. Muna Lal 244-253. *Ibrat*. ii. 36-43. *DY*. i. 71.



knowing who was the lawful authority and not caring to follow any general with fidelity. "Every one wishes to make himself dominant, and great disturbance prevails." [Hingane's report, *DY.* i. 84.]

But the threatening storm did not burst at once. Two months more were to pass in alarms and excursions, plotting and counterplotting at Court, before the contest was put to the arbitrament of the sword. After long negotiations, in which the harem superintendent Nāzīr Manzūr Ali warmly backed Shafī, the Emperor decided to appoint him Mir Bakhshī, for a fee of five lakhs, on the next auspicious day, which was the first of the sacred month of Ramzān (10th August.) This was a crushing blow to Afrāsiyāb; but he promptly countered it by begging the Emperor to restore Abdul Ahad to the head of his administration. Shah Alam jumped at the prospect of getting his bosom friend back after three years of enforced separation. The appointment of a new Mir Bakhshī was put off, and instead of it Abdul Ahad was received again at Court and reappointed to all his former posts (11th August.)

Shafī was furious on meeting with this sudden reverse. "He felt that without a fight Afrāsiyāb could not be made to tread the right path; but out of respect for the throne he did not wish to engage in hostilities at the capital." [ML. 252.] With huge rival armies scowling

and growling at each other in the same city, and that city without any magistrate or police guard, a conflict could not be long averted. On 21st August, a personal altercation between Jamāl Khan of Afrāsiyāb's army and Pauli a German mercenary captain on Shafi's side, spread to their respective followers like a wildfire. They flew to arms and dragging out their artillery barricaded the streets of Delhi, facing each other along a long line from the Kashmiri gate to the Jāmi' Masjid, as well as the Tripolia and the neighbourhood of the Kābuli gate. But the Emperor sent his chief eunuch to forbid fighting and the two sides withdrew. So, Delhi knew peace again, but it was for that day only. On the 24th the rival hosts again came out and dug trenches across the city, but again went back to their quarters at the Emperor's appeal.

§ 7. *Shafi's coup of 10 Sep. 1782 ; he takes Abdul Ahad and Najaf Quli prisoner, and is appointed Mir Bakhshi and Regent.*

At last, to remove this constant threat of riot, the Emperor sent Afrāsiyāb off (3rd Sep.) to his own jagir in the Doab, which had been invaded by Muhammad Beg Hamadāni in the interests of Shafi. Najaf Quli Khan was left as his representative in Delhi. This gay toper was no match for Shafi. He provoked that general by his hostile designs, without taking adequate steps for



defeating him or even for self-defence. Najaf Quli removed from Abdul Ahad's house and occupied that of Safdar Jang in order to be close to the fort and to guide his troops more easily. But his days and nights were devoted to wine and women and he neglected every military precaution. This was Shafi's opportunity. The month of fasting ended and the Feast of Rejoicing (*Id-ul-fitr*) was celebrated on 10th September. That night* Shafi sent a strong force with artillery under Pauli to encircle the houses of Ahad and Najaf Quli, and the task was effected without opposition. By that time Najaf Quli was lying senseless with drink; his house contained only a small guard and five pieces of cannon. Waking up at dawn, he maintained a brave defence against heavy odds for a day and a night. Shafi, seated on the steps of the Jāmi' Masjid (11th), kept directing the attack and encouraging his troops by scattering handfuls of Rupees every now and then among them.

Abdul Ahad could offer no resistance. At noon some of Shafi's soldiers broke into his mansion, and, in order to preserve the sanctity of his harem the aged regent came out and made an abject surrender to Shafi, who sent him into honourable captivity again in Qamr-ud-din's

* DC. G. Ali iii. 156-160. Muna Lal 254-256. *Ibrat*. ii 43-46. DY. i. 71. Jahandar Shah in Hastings, *State of India*, appendix.

mansion. His Hindu associate, Rajah Shivarām diwān, was dishonoured and thrown into prison. Najaf Quli's bravest lieutenant Jalāl Khan Afghān was shot dead when charging through the enemy ranks, and his master's cause now became hopeless, though Sayyid Ali Khan, a battalion commandant on Shafi's side, had also fallen. So, next morning (12th Sep.) Najaf Quli went to Begam Khadija to make his surrender, and was placed under surveillance.

Thus Mirzā Muhammad Shafi was left without a rival in Delhi. On the 15th of the month (September 1782), the Emperor recognised the fact by appointing him Mir Bakhshī with the title of Nāsir-ud-daulah Zulfiqār Jang and also supreme Regent and subahdar of Agra. But a month had barely passed from this when there was another turn in the political kaleidoscope, an entirely new grouping of forces took place, and Shafi was driven out of Delhi! On becoming regent he wisely tried to make friends with his late rivals. He sent friendly letters from himself and the Begam to Afrāsiyāb Khan, who professed to be reconciled and thus secured an order on Hamadāni to vacate Afrāsiyāb's jagirs and return to his own post. But Shafi alienated Najaf Quli by transferring the jagirs of the latter to his own follower Abdul Matlab Khan. The new army chief was a rather simple downright man, incapable of suppleness or diplomatic finesse ; his



soldierly brusqueness offended the Court circle,* and the evil was aggravated by his lack of funds. Even the Emperor was at heart his enemy, especially as he failed to release all the Crown-lands in his hands. The eunuch Latāfat Ali, commanding four trained battalions of Purbia infantry, had sworn on the Qurān to be true to Shafi. He now started an intrigue at the instigation of the Emperor, and seduced Pauli and the officers of his contingent.

Meantime, Shafi had been driven to the verge of madness by his financial difficulties. Two of his battalions mutinied for their pay and planted their guns against his gate. They were pacified by a payment in part, and Shafi determined to extort funds from the Emperor, which led to an open rupture and exchange of angry words between him and his sovereign (9th October.)

§ 8. *Emperor's coup, 16th Oct.; Shafi expelled from Delhi.*

The crisis came on 16th October. Early at dawn Latāfat and Pauli marched† with their troops against Qamr-ud-din's mansion where Shafi lived. The Emperor himself rode out to the Jāmi' Masjid in order to lend his blessing

* The Emperor remarked, on 16 June 1782, "Mirza Shafi has a short temper. Let us see how he agrees with others." Br. Mus. Or. 25, 021, f. 113.

† DC. G. Ali iii. 161-165. Muna Lal 256-262. Ibrat. ii. 47-49. DY. i. 74, 75.

to the attack. Shafi wisely decided not to resist his sovereign. He fled away towards Agra, taking Abdul Ahad with him, but in his hurry forgetting Najaf Quli, who was promptly set free by Latāfat. All the artillery and material left behind were plundered, but none of the victors ventured to touch Khadija Begam, in spite of the Emperor's wrath against her. Shah Alam now dismissed Shafi from his offices and recalled Afrāsiyāb to Court. Days passed in fruitless negotiations, but Khadija Begam continued to hold out in Najaf Khan's mansion with the loyal support of her late brother's gunners under Ashur Ali Khan.

The fugitive Shafi with his own troops rode hard from Delhi to Ballabhgarh and thence to Kosi. Here he came to a halt and gained the adhesion of Muhammad Beg Hamadāni and his strong force by appealing to the memory of their late common patron and also promising to give him all the Jaipur tribute, half the artillery and other property of Mirzā Najaf still left in Shafi's hands, and six lakhs in cash or fresh jagirs. Hamadāni joined Shafi at Kosi, and here all the former captains of Najaf Khan vowed to recognise Shafi as their master. Then the two set their faces (6th November) towards Delhi, expelling the imperial collectors in Hodal district and camping on arrival at Faridabad.

The close approach of the rebel generals alarmed the Emperor. He was hustled by Latāfat and Pauli into entering his tents near



Bārapula for a march against them (12th Nov.) From Faridabad the rebels sent their envoys to him (14th) to offer their protestations of loyalty and to seek his pardon and restoration to their former offices and honours. Shah Alam entrusted his case to his favourite personal servant Kallu Khawās, entitled Muhammad Yaqub Khan, who conceived the over-cunning design of secretly corrupting Hamadāni and using him to destroy Shafi. On behalf of the Emperor, he promised the Mir Bakhshi-ship to Hamadāni if he abandoned Shafi. For confirming this pact it was agreed that Latāfat should meet and give personal assurances and oaths to Muhammad Beg.

§ 9. *Muhammad Beg Hamadāni seizes Latāfat Ali and Pauli (17th Nov. 1782.) Shafi is restored to supremacy at Delhi Court.*

This treacherous plot recoiled on the heads of its parents.* Muhammad Beg disclosed it to Shafi. On 17th November he rode out of his camp for the purpose of meeting Latāfat and then going with him to be presented to the Emperor, while Shafi went elsewhere on the pretext of hunting, but kept his ears open for the pre-concerted signal. Near Khwājah Sarāi, on the south side of the Badarpur *nāla*, Latāfat,

* DC. G. Ali iii. 166-174. Muna Lal 263-267. Ibrat. ii 50-54 and ASE ms. DY. i. 77. Jahandar Shah in Hastings, *State of India*, app.



Pauli and Yaqub met Muhammad Beg, but Hamadāni made them all prisoners by a treacherous attack at the time of shaking hands. The European alone resisted and was wounded for his pains. The small escort of the three victims fled away from superior numbers, while the main body of their comrades, left behind in the imperial camp, could do nothing after the loss of all their leaders. Muhammad Beg quickly followed up his victory; he pushed a detachment on to Delhi (now left utterly defenceless) with orders to seize the houses and property of Latāfat and Yaqub. But Shafi's brother, who was with the Begam in the city, appropriated their property before the arrival of Hamadāni's men. "A tumult like that of Doomsday raged in Delhi that night."

Afrāsiyāb was no soldier; he had been propped up by the strong arm of Pauli and the subtle brain of Latāfat, and with their fall his power at once collapsed. This second turn of the kaleidoscope brought back the old picture, only two of the bits of glass were thrown away. The wretched Shah Alam, after thus once beating his head against the bars of his cage, again lapsed into helpless submission. Muhammad Beg and Shafi wrote protesting their loyalty to him and excusing their late conduct as forced on them by their rival's treachery. The Emperor sent his eldest son to convey his pardon and blessings to them, and then returned to Delhi (24th Nov.) As he entered the fort, in the courtyard of the



Diwān-i-‘ām, Shafi, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, Abdul Ahad and Afrāsiyāb placed the poles of his open sedan chair on their shoulders and conveyed it to the door of his harem enclosure. After this parade of loyalty, they went to pay their respects to Begam Khadija Sultan. Shafi was restored to his post of army chief and the others received robes of honour and gifts.

Next day Hamadāni blinded Latāfat Ali to prevent him from creating trouble again. Pauli objected to such mutilation and was hacked to pieces. The eunuch Kallu Khawās escaped by paying a large ransom.*

§ 10. *Shafi and Prince go to regulate Agra province; their operations there (1783.)*

On 22nd December Mirzā Md. Shafi was given *congee* for Agra to undertake the pacification and administration of that province. He took Prince Sulaimān Shukoh and Najaf's sister with him. The prince entered Agra fort on 23rd January 1783. The prestige of his name and the armed strength of the Mir Bakhshi cowed most of the rebels of that part. He spent the next two months there, "enforcing order and doing justice to the people," and "that region enjoyed peace and orderly government once

* Najaf Quli had left the Emperor's side in disgust and alarm and gone back to his fief of Narnaul about 15th Nov. Hamadāni was given *congee* from Delhi on 10th Dec. 1782.