



more."* Here Major James Browne, who had been sent by Warren Hastings on a mission to the imperial Court, waited upon the Mir Bakhshi (on 27th Feb.) in order to prepare the ground for his visit to the Emperor.

Early next month a vast Sikh horde, on return from the middle Doab, threatened Delhi from the north, approaching so close to the capital as to assault the village of Barāri, set fire to the marts at Mālikganj and Sabzimandi, and kill some people in Mughalpurā (8th March.) At the urgent call of the Court, Shafi set out from Sikandra (15th March) for the relief of the capital. But meantime on the movement of Zain-ul-abidin and his troops from Bāghpat to Delhi, the raiders had fled away (12th March.) Shafi therefore gave up his northward march and turned against the Jat Rajah. Ranjit Singh had already made terms with Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, but Shafi refused to honour this settlement. Ranjit was willing to pay the tribute, but not to cede the jagirs of his son Randhir Singh as now demanded. Shafi therefore invaded the Jat country, marching from Agra by way of Fathpur Sikri to Sayyidpur. Making this village his base, he besieged the fort of Bayānā, three miles south of it, and took it by assault, with heavy

* DC. G. Ali iii. 175-177. Muna Lal 268. Ibrat. ii. 55-58, 61-62. These references cover the next section also. Raj. xii. 35.

slaughter, in 33 days (9th May.) Akhegarh and other Jat forts in that region were evacuated by their garrisons in terror and the whole district of Bayānā came under imperial control. A detachment from Shafi's army was meantime fighting the Macheri Rajah's troops near Firuzpur Jharka; Shafi now went to their aid and began to bombard the strong fortalice of Kanwāri Pahāri (? Pahāri-Kandla.) But soon afterwards he returned southwards for the purpose of meeting Māhādji Sindhiā on the Chambal and maturing a pact with him. Hamadāni met him on the way (10th June), and the quarrel that blazed forth between these two rival generals brought Shafi's hitherto successful work to a close.

§ 11. *Quarrel between Shafi and Hamadāni.*

It is necessary to trace the growth of this quarrel from its origin. We have seen how Muhammad Beg's faithless cunning and ruthless vigour had been the sole instrument in ridding Shafi of his only powerful enemies, Latāfat and Pauli, and restoring him to his supremacy at Court (17th Nov. 1782.) But the hour of victory was also the hour of rupture between the allies. Shafi could not fulfill the exorbitant promises of money lands and war-material by means of which he had bought his ally's support. In addition, Muhammad Beg's pride and ambition were as boundless as his violence and dishonesty. After the *coup* against Latāfat and Pauli, Hamadāni's licen-

tious soldiery were allowed to plunder the innocent imperial subjects in the villages along the road to Delhi and in the capital itself. Shafi rightly objected to it, and on his protests being unheeded he gave up speaking to his ally. Hamadāni retorted by rising in his demands and claiming (a) twelve lakhs worth of fresh jagirs, (b) half the artillery and other property of the late Mirzā Najaf and (c) the transfer to him of the entire imperial claims on Jaipur. Shafi also objected to Hamadāni making himself the mediator of the Macheri Rajah at Court and thus robbing the Mir Bakhshi of the tribute due from him. The quarrel was aggravated by Shafi's demand for a fair partition of the spoils taken in Latāfat and Pauli's camps and city residences, and all efforts to patch it up failed. Muhammad Beg therefore left Delhi on 10th December 1782 for his post on the Jaipur frontier practically in open defiance of the imperial Government.

Arrived at Agra, Hamadāni extorted a forced contribution from the traders and bankers of the city and plundered the poorer people. He next won Ranjit Singh's support for himself in the coming duel with his late partner, by fixing a reduced tribute on him and stopping the punitive operations against the Jat territory. The Macheri Rajah was already his *protege*. Thus Hamadāni threatened to set up an independent principality of his own in the Agra-Mewat province and overshadow the authority of the imperial regent

there. His army was increased out of all proportion to his rank or his means of paying it. His fame as the ablest general then living drew the Mughalia mercenaries to him as their most promising employer. Herein the greatest danger to the Emperor's lawful Government was coming to a head.

When Shafi, with Prince Sulaimān Shukoh in his leading strings, reached Agra (January 1783), Hamadāni waited on the prince. Shafi tried to conciliate him by reaffirming his past promises. So, Hamadāni went back towards Jaipur, after exacting a tribute from the Kerauli Rajah on the way.

§ 12. *Shafi intrigues with Mahadji Sindhia for help in crushing Hamadani. Sindhia visits Prince and Shafi (June 1783.)*

Shafi now set himself to weakening his formidable rival. He had already begun intrigues for seducing Muhammad Beg's captains (esp. the Mughalias), and this plan was continued with vigour. His confidants, Afrāsiyāb Khan and Gosāin Himmat Bahadur, confirmed his belief that so long as Hamadāni lived his own position as the head of the Government could not be safe. But Hamadāni could be crushed only with the help of Māhādji Sindhia,* whose fame as the

* BM. Or. 25,021, f. 91-96, 116-187 (newsletters, 2 June-10 July,) best. DC. Muna Lal 272. *Ibraf.* ii. 62-64. *DY.* i. 68, 65. *Chandra* ii. 35, 50. *Satara* i. 69.

friend of the English and the mediator of their treaty with the Peshwa had raised him to the highest place among the indigenous Powers of N. India. Shafi therefore sent Himmat Bahadur to Sindhia's camp in Malwa for contriving this alliance. The negotiations, however, took long to mature.

In order to weaken Hamadāni, Mirzā Shafi wrote in the name of the Emperor to the Jaipur Rajah forbidding him to pay his due tribute to Muhammad Beg. He also attacked Ranjit Singh, in spite of Hamadāni's appeal to save his prestige by respecting the settlement he had already made with that chieftain. The situation became intolerable in consequence of Shafi's vigorous campaign against the Jat Rajah. So, on 10th June 1783, Md. Beg came to Shafi for ending their quarrel by a personal discussion. After angry recriminations between the two, Shafi patched up a truce by promising his approval to Hamadāni's friendly policy towards the Jat and Macheri chiefs, as he was in a hurry to meet Sindhia on the appointed day.

Months before this Mirzā Shafi had appealed to Sindhia through Himmat Bahadur, "Let us once meet together for clearing our hearts towards each other. Najaf Khan was your sworn brother. He is now dead, and after him you are as a father to me. Do act as my guide." Sindhia held off for a long time as his hands were full with other business. But in June he agreed to meet



Shafi if that general left Muhammad Beg Hamadāni behind and came alone with only the prince and Najaf's sister. The Mir Bakhshi, after his meeting with Hamadāni at Nagar (15 miles west of Dig), hastened to Agra, took the prince and Najaf's sister out of it with himself, and by way of Fathpur Sikri and Kagarol reached Basai, 16 miles north-west of Dholpur (22nd June.) Muhammad Beg encamped six miles behind him. Mahadji, leaving his army engaged in the siege of Gwalior fort, came up to the south bank of the Chambal with a light escort. Shafi, stationing his camp and troops eight miles behind, advanced with a small party to the opposite bank, near Dholpur.

On 27th June, 1783, Sindhia paid his first visit to Shafi. Three days later the Maratha chief rode out to the imperialist camp and was presented to the prince by the regent. The British Resident David Anderson and his assistants were introduced by Māhādji to the prince. Major Browne, in the train of the Mir Bakhshi, was introduced by Shafi to Sindhia. Four days were passed here in cementing the alliance, through the mediation of Himmat Bahadur. Sindhia also visited Begam Khadija and offered his condolences on the death of her great brother. Shafi exchanged turbans with Māhādji, professed entire obedience to his orders, and entreated him to come to Delhi for restoring order to the confused imperial administration

and making some permanent good arrangement for the maintenance and defence of the Emperor. Māhādji, in reply, promised to go to Delhi after the rainy season, by which time he hoped to bring his Gwalior and Gohad enterprises to a happy termination. The party broke up on 1st July, Sindhia going back to his trenches before Gwalior and the imperialists to Dig (where the prince arrived on 18th July.)

§ 13. *Hamadani murders Md. Shafi,*
23 Sep. 1783.

When Mirzā Shafi invited Māhādji Sindhia and made friends with him, Hamadāni realised that the Mir Bakhshi was utterly faithless and co-operation with him was impossible. He then broke out into open independence, disobeying Shafi's orders and plundering his subah of Agra. The Mirza recalled Afrāsiyāb to his side and took counsel with him how to put down this "chief of mischief-makers". That unscrupulous intriguer deceived his employer, and under the pretence of conciliating Muhammad Beg formed a secret pact with him for murdering Shafi by treachery, because Shafi alone stood between Afrāsiyāb and the Mir Bakhshi-ship. Shafi, an open-hearted unsuspecting soldier, was easily deluded. It was reported by Afrāsiyāb that the rebellious general was ready to wait upon the prince and make a full submission, but before doing so he was asking for a friendly meeting with Shafi in order to

receive personal assurances of his safety during his visit to the imperial camp. This was agreed to by Shafi, against the advice of his friends. Muhammad Beg came up with his army and halted eight miles from the imperial camp in Dig.*

The interview was fixed for the 23rd of September. Muhammad Beg was the first to advance, from his own camp to the place of meeting, some five miles outside Dig. Shafi, on his own part, issued from the fort with a small escort, about four hours before sunset. As he mounted his horse, his turban fell down from his head. Disregarding the omen and the alarmed cries of his attendants, he changed to an elephant's back and continued the journey. On the way his spies reported that, contrary to custom, Hamadāni had arrived in full force. But the plain gallant soldier still pushed on and went up to Muhammad Beg who was seated on an elephant amidst a ring of his chief followers on five or six other elephants.

As Shafi stood up on his mount to give his embrace, Muhammad Beg seized both his hands in his own. Shafi, who was a delicate youth, could not wrest himself free; and while he was thus struggling helplessly Hamadāni's nephew

* DC. *Ibrat*. ii, 64-66. Muna Lal 274-277. G. Ali iii. 177-180. DY. i. 91. Parasnis, *Atihasik Sfuta Lekh*, ii. No. 18. Conspiracy to murder Shafi, signed agreement, see BM. 25,021 f. 30.

Ismail Beg, who was seated on another elephant, jumped on to the Mir Bakhshi's mount and plunged his dagger into the victim's bowels. Shafi's relation, Md. Amin Khan, who was seated behind him, grappled with the assassin and the two rolled down to the ground. But a servant of Muhammad Beg now finished the business of Shafi with his dagger. Md. Amin was killed, and so also was Dāud Beg Kurchi, another devoted follower of the Mir Bakhshi, who had offered fight. The main army of Hamadāni now rapidly arrived on the scene. The two sides exchanged fire for a short time, and then the outnumbered and leaderless imperialists broke and fled. Afrāsiyāb, who had arrived last, was the first in the retreat. Thus perished, in the prime of youth, Mirzā Muhammad Shafi, the last fighting army chief of the empire, a victim of the blackest treachery. The situation created by this crime is thus aptly described by the Maratha envoy, "Muhammad Shafi is dead. All Hindustan is lying bare. No sword for fighting is left in India." [DY. i. 91.]

§ 14. *Afraisiyab Khan appointed Mir Bakhshi again, Oct. 1783.*

The news of the murder of Mirzā Md. Shafi reached Delhi in forty hours, early in the morning of 25th September. Afrāsiyāb Khan's complicity in the crime was suspected but could not be proved. Moreover, there was no other

great noble in sight worthy of filling the deceased army chief's place. Above all, Shah Alam and Abdul Ahad trembled in fear lest Major Browne, the English agent in Shafi's camp, should form a collusion with Afrāsiyāb and crown Sulaimān Shukoh as his puppet with the promise of English armed support. Not a moment was therefore to be lost in securing Afrāsiyāb through his constant friend Abdul Ahad. Mirzā Najaf's old diwan Rajah Manirām and his loyal adherent Md. Quli Khan sent to the Emperor an offer of three lakhs of Rupees if he gave Shafi's posts to his brother Zain-ul-abidin. But the danger from Afrāsiyāb's defection was supreme, and he was immediately appointed Mir Bakhshi and commanded to come back to the Court with the prince as soon as he could manage to do so. [DY. i. 92, 94.]

This second regency of Afrāsiyāb Khan lasted for barely 13 months and was closed by an exactly weighed out measure of retribution falling upon him on 2nd November 1784. Nothing remarkable occurred during this interval and the affairs of the central Government drifted on in still greater confusion and weakness under his effete rule, while the star of Māhādji Sindhia rose steadily in the Indian firmament, till at the close of the year 1784 he became the foremost potentate in Northern India in the eyes of all.

After Shafi had been slain, Afrāsiyāb Khan brought back the dead chieftain's disheartened

troops to their camp and made a demonstration of grief with vows of vengeance on the murderer in the presence of Begam Khadija Sultan. Having thus cleared his character, he induced Hamadāni by a secret pact to go back quietly to his jagir of Dholpur-Bāri, paying him some money and confirming him in his possessions as well as his right to the entire tribute payable by Jaipur, and also promising to secure for him the Emperor's pardon in good time.* [DY. i. 93.]

Afrāsiyāb's first task after gaining the regency was to take over the administration of Agra from Shafi's agents and to suppress the rebels in that region. So, he marched from Dig to Agra, taking the Begam and all the camp and property of Shafi with him. At Sikandra he formally welcomed (on 18th October) the imperial letter of appointment and robe of office despatched to him from Delhi. His own servants were posted in Dig, Agra, and other places, so long held by Shafi's men. This work took time, and it was the 14th of December before he could reach Delhi with the prince. At the imperial Court the day of Afrāsiyāb's exaltation was also the day of exaltation of his patron Abdul Ahad. This senile old Kashmiri favourite was now (10th November) given the titles of Sharf-ud-daulah,

* DC. G. Ali iii. 208-211. *Ibrat*, ii. 67-79. Afrasiyab's doings and the Court occurrences from 28 Oct. to 20 Nov. in BM. Or. 25,021, f. 39-88 (news-letters.)



Umdat-ul-mulk, Madār-ul-mulk, Abdul Majid Khan Bahādur, Fath Jang (in addition to his former ones of Majd-ud-daulah, Bahrām Jang), with the *mansab* of 9,000 *zāt* 9,000 troopers *do-āspa seh-āspa*; and if we add his two *barāwardi* the total held by him was raised to 24,000 *zāt*! He took vengeance on Najaf Khan's house by imprisoning that chief's devoted servants Rajah Maniram and Mahdi Quli Khan (14 Nov.) and attaching their property.

§ 15. *Sikh raid into the Doab. Afrāsiyāb marches there (Dec. 1783) and conciliates Mirzā Zain-ul-abidin and Zābita.*

Meantime, a Sikh invasion in unusually large numbers had burst into the upper Doab.* "Owing to the famine, many petty Sikh sardars of the region round Pātiāla, numbering 30 to 35 thousand horse and foot, with their wives and children, crossed the Jamuna at Buriyā ghāt and entered the Doab for filling their stomachs. They looted the villages round Saharanpur and other cities and penetrated to Deoband.

"From this side Bhāg Singh, Bhagel Singh and other [loyal] Sikhs who enjoyed *rākhi* from the Doab, with Zābita Khan's force, two paltans and Nāhar Singh Gujar's contingent, united and marched towards Ghausgarh. But in an ensuing

* DC. G. Ali, iii. 182-185. *Ibrat*. ii. 68-69. *DY*. i. 96, 98, 124.

battle Zābita was defeated and driven back, and the raiders pushed on towards Mirat." [DY. i. 96.] They found a new ally in Zain-ul-abidin Khan, whose anger at the murder of his brother had been aggravated by Abdul Ahad's vindictive transfer of Zain's jagirs in the Mirat district to his own son-in-law Qutbuddin.

For repelling this invasion and also suppressing the local rebels who had risen during the recent anarchy, Afrāsiyāb was sent to the Doab within a week of his arrival at Delhi. Prince Sulaimān Shukoh and Najaf Quli Khan (created second Bakhshi on 5th Nov.) accompanied him. Four battalions of sepoy, a thousand Mughalia horse, and a thousand Sikh auxiliaries were added to the new Amir-ul-umara's force. They marched up to the village of Mud-barāl, 8 miles from Mirat, crushing or dispersing the rebels on their way. Zain came up from Bāghpat, intending to offer battle; but Afrāsiyāb conciliated him and induced him to visit him and Begam Khadija, under protection of the troops of the neutral Begam Samru (23rd December). Zain was next presented to the prince and the three generals vowed to act in concert in the Emperor's service. Zain's demand for the restoration of the eleven mahals in Mirat was left to the Emperor's decision. For some weeks after this the now reconciled generals halted at the Suraj Kund in Mirat town. Here Afrāsiyāb called up Zābita Khan (15th January 1784), presented him to the prince, and



made an understanding with him to hold the upper Doab against the Sikhs. Then they returned to Delhi on 28th January. [DY. i. 98, 124.]

§ 16. *Major James Browne in Delhi ; failure of his plans.*

A violent quarrel immediately broke out between the Emperor (tutored by Ahad) and his commander-in-chief. Afrāsiyāb was quite unable to pay the large fee he had promised for the succession to Muhammad Shafi, nor could he supply the monthly expenses of the Emperor's family and household (over one lakh a month). He complained that he had not been given charge of the revenue collection of all the Crownlands which his predecessor Najaf Khan had held. The Emperor insisted on keeping these in his own hands lest he should be starved. When Afrāsiyāb proposed to raise funds by taking the Emperor on a tribute-collecting expedition against the Rajah of Jaipur, the project failed for want of the money necessary for equipping it. Thus, things kept moving in a vicious circle. The tension was increased by Afrāsiyāb's fear that as soon as he would leave the capital on a distant campaign, without taking the Emperor or a prince with him as his hostage, Abdul Ahad would bring an English force from Oudh into Delhi as the Emperor's protectors and kick away Afrāsiyāb. Abdul Ahad had long held friendly corres-



pondence with Warren Hastings, and at this time that Governor-General's special envoy, Major Browne, was in Delhi* intriguing hard against the pro-Maratha party at Court and forming a coalition of nobles in favour of an English alliance. However, the Kashmiri was too weak to take sides openly against Afrāsiyāb, and the anti-English policy triumphed.

Browne had personally settled a peace between Shafi and Ranjit Singh, by which the Jat Rajah was to pay Rs. 90,000 and the Mughal general was to restore the district of Bayānā forming the jagir of prince Randhir Singh. This money had been deposited with Browne, who had brought it to Delhi for payment. But Afrāsiyāb refused to confirm the terms and demanded more money. Browne's prestige being thus lowered in public and his ally Abdul Ahad proving a broken reed, he handed this money back to Lal Singh the Bharatpur *bakhshi*.

§ 17. *Prince Jawan Bakht escapes from Delhi, April 1784.*

The Coronation anniversary over (23rd March 1784), Afrāsiyāb urged the Emperor to proceed with him to Agra and help in collecting tribute. But the necessary transport could not

* DC. *Ibrat*. ii. 67-68, 77, 80 (best and fullest.) G. Ali, iii. 186. Hastings's instructions to Browne about his mission (Forrest, Calcutta ed. iii. 1025-'28), review of his policy towards Delhi, (iii. 1087-'90.) DY. i. 104.



be got ready for want of money and the depletion of the imperial stores since Najaf's death. Afrāsiyāb ascribed this delay to Abdul Ahad's secret obstruction, and he created a scene at Court, abusing the Emperor and the princes and stinting them in their allowances. Weary of his gilded chains, the heir to the throne, Prince Jahāndār Shāh (Jawān Bakht)* slipped out of the Delhi palace in the midst of a violent dust storm on a dark night (14th April) and reached Lucknow (6th May), where he was welcomed by the Wazir and Warren Hastings. Afrāsiyāb and the Emperor in mortal fear of the possible consequences of this political move, wrote to the prince to come back at once and sent Major Browne (3rd May) to Lucknow with letters to all the three to the same effect.

We may conclude this episode by saying that no benefit resulted to the prince from this meaningless step; he soon alienated his host by his lofty and sneering tone, the English failed to secure an independent appanage for him through Sindhia, and he ended his days as a British pensioner at Benares. In fact, the prince's flight was too late. Warren Hastings had now definitely

* DC. *Ibrat*, ii. 70-76. Muna Lal 281-285. G. Ali iii. 205-207. Forrest, *Selections from the State Papers of W.H.* (London), ii. 98-118 (the Prince's own narrative, printed as appendix to W. H.'s *Memoirs Relative to the State of India*.) Forrest, *Selections Foreign D.* (Calcutta, iii. 1120-4.



decided to give up his plan of establishing British control over the Delhi Court, and realised the futility of such an attempt, though he had considered it as very promising and profitable two years earlier, when with such a pawn as Jawān Bakht in his hands he might have imitated Clive's feat of 1765.

The faithless Abdul Ahad continued to ply his sole weapon of underground intrigue by setting Afrāsiyāb's subordinates against him. Zain-ul-abidin, who was eager to avenge his brother's murder, sent five of his men to despatch Afrāsiyāb. They hid themselves in the Mir Bakhshi's office room (c. 10 April), but were detected and arrested. Afrāsiyāb believed that this plot had been inspired by Abdul Ahad. There was now an open breach between the two, and on 30th May Afrāsiyāb arrested Ahad,* attached all his property, and later sent him into captivity in Aligarh fort. The Emperor was powerless to save his friend, and henceforth became a mere tool in Afrāsiyāb's hands, without a friend or independent counsellor at Court. Another result of this stroke was that Warren Hastings finally gave up his plan of setting up

* Ahad's confinement.—PM. Or. 25,021, f. 133. *DC. Ibrat.* ii. 79. Royal journey.—BM. f. 99-192 (news-letters, 23 May-27 June.) *DC.*

This attempt on Afrasiyab's life was reported by Major Browne on 13 April. Therefore *Ibrat.*, ii. 78, is wrong in dating it 12 May.

an English party in the Delhi Government, as he had no subservient great noble left there to serve his end.

Thus purging the royal council of his last rival there and leaving his ally Najaf Quli Khan as governor of Delhi, Afrāsiyāb hustled the sickly Emperor out of his capital at the height of the hot weather (26th June) and took him to Agra, where he arrived on 6th August.

§ 18. *Afrasiyab goes to Agra with Emperor, for crushing Hamadani.*

The new commander-in-chief's aim was to crush Muhammad Beg Hamadāni who had made himself independent in the Dholpur region and was obstructing revenue collection in the Agra province.* Gosāin Himmat Bahadur, who had been Shafi's envoy with Māhādji Sindhia, was now Afrāsiyāb's chief counsellor, and kept urging his new patron to bring Sindhia to the Delhi Court and thereby effectually check all his Mughal rivals and the English intriguers. Afrāsiyāb felt that alone he could not cope with Md. Beg, a born soldier. For some months past letters had been going in the Emperor's name and in that of his Mir Bakhshi begging Māhādji to come to

* DC. Muna Lal, 286-288. G. Ali, iii. 209-211. *Ibrat*. ii. 81-83. BM. 25,021, f. 34 a (Mahadji's letter to Emp., dated c. 9 July 1784, saying he was coming with his army to serve him.) Afrasiyab had promised Hamadāni the Jaipur tribute and 3 lakhs of new jagir. (BM. 25,021 f. 30.)

Delhi, deliver his sovereign and restore the imperial administration to its former glory by undertaking the regency. Sindhia's hands were now free: he had crushed his persistent rival in North Malwa, Rānā Chhatra Singh of Gohad, by storming Gwalior fort (31 July 1783) and seizing Gohad and the Rana's person (25 Feb. 1784.) On hearing of the Emperor's projected journey to Agra, he promised to meet him immediately on his arrival at that city and settle the terms by a personal discussion. But this meeting was delayed by more than three months for reasons which we shall now relate.

Afrāsiyāb Khan, when making his pact with Md. Beg for clearing Shafi out of the way, had given him a written promise to confirm him in all his possessions and authority. Now that Afrāsiyāb had marched against him with the Emperor in his leading strings, Hamadāni boiled with indignation against the faithless man. He levied fresh troops and looted the imperial dominions in his neighbourhood with the ruthless brutality habitual to the mercenary Mughalias, rendering village after village a "lampless desolation." He stormed (10 June) the rich and populous city of Kāmā, where the Rajah's officers had risen against the oppression of his tribute-collectors; "many of the people were slain, others had their noses and ears cut off, and no kind of atrocity was left unpractised by Hamadāni." [*Ibrat*, ii. 82.] He refused to present himself before his sovereign on



his arrival at Agra, and even attacked Zulfiqār Khan, the loyal lord of Alinagar. Afrāsiyāb Khan, unable to cope with the rebel himself, besought the irresistible Māhādji Sindhia to conquer Hamadāni's jagir of Dholpur-Bāri.

Mahadji* had first proposed to leave Gwalior for the imperial camp on 2nd August. But his actual start was delayed till the 26th by the incessant rainfall from the 5th to the 19th of that month. He had only reached the first stage, seven *kos* from Gwalior, when he was brought to a standstill by the rain; his camp was flooded, two of his elephants and several horses and transport animals died, and his soldiers fell sick. His astrologers urged him to go back as he had stepped out on this journey under unlucky stars. Above all, his wife Gangā Bāi, left behind at Gwalior, reported the nearness of her confinement, and his whole family was expecting a son and heir for whose coming priests had been engaged to placate every god of heaven and spirit of the nether world. So, he returned to Gwalior, c. 5th September. Meantime he had sent his lieutenant Ambaji Ingle with his vanguard to wait on the Emperor, and this officer was received in audience on 1st September. Ambaji's report about the rough temper of

* *DC. Ibrat.* ii. 83-85 &c. *Muna Lal* 289. *G. Ali* iii. 208-209, 211. *Mahes Darbar*, ii. 74-79. *Gw.* v. 27. *Chandra* ii. 55. *Forrest*, *Cal.* iii. 1127. *Atrocities at Kama*, *BM.* 25021, *f.* 174 *B.* *Aiti Tiipanen*, v. p. 11.



Afrāsiyāb and the interminable quarrels among his followers, cooled Mahadji's eagerness to go to the Court.

§ 19. *Afrāsiyāb meets Māhādji Sindhiā at
Rupbās.*

However, he resumed his march after the Dasaharā (24th Sep.) and crossed the swollen Chambal river with some difficulty and delay. The fort of Dholpur, then held for Muhammad Beg, quickly capitulated to his incomparably superior force, and he moved about taking possession of the districts of Dholpur and Bāri, driving away Hamadāni's collectors by the terror of his might and appointing his own agents everywhere. These two districts were fertile and had a standard revenue of five or six lakhs of Rupees. Afrāsiyāb had hoped that Sindhiā would be content to act as his cat's paw, wrest these districts from Hamadāni and then hand them over to him. But when the Maratha chief refused to disgorge his gains, a rupture between the two seemed imminent. Sindhiā rightly argued that as he had come there at the Emperor's call, the regent must pay the salary of his vast force ; but Himmat Bahadur, who was the Delhi Government's agent at his Court, frankly told him that Afrāsiyāb had no money and his own troops were being ruined by his insolvency. These districts were the only assets that Mahadji could lay his hands on. A truce was, however, patched



up by the Gosain, and Sindhia agreed to release the districts. He then advanced to Rupbās, nine miles south-west of Fathpur-Sikri, which had been selected as his halting place (22nd October), and there waited for his ally to come and mature the pact.

Before this, Afrāsiyāb Khan taking with himself all his own troops and guns as well as the advanced division of Sindhia's forces (6,000 horse) under Ambaji Inglé, and leaving the Emperor and Major Browne in Agra, had set out westwards (on 23rd September) to fight Muhammad Beg and effect a junction with Sindhia. He at first talked of attacking his enemy's camp by surprise (on 17th Oct.), but was dissuaded by Ambaji, who wisely advised him to wait till his junction with Sindhia should give him an assurance of victory, as his disorderly troopers and treacherous Mughalias were no match for Hamadani's veterans. So, Afrāsiyāb halted near Khanua (eight miles south-west of Fathpur-Sikri), waiting for Sindhia's approach.

Meantime, Muhammad Beg Hamadani had been engaged in fighting the petty chiefs all along the eastern border of the Jaipur and Macheri kingdoms,—Hindaun, Bhasāwar, Bālāheri, Kama and so on. Finding that Mahadji was victoriously pushing on from the south and Afrāsiyāb was advancing from the east, to join their forces near Fathpur, he now called in all his detachments and formed an entrenched camp guarded by artillery



near Sayyidpurā, which is three miles east of Pichunā, at a point nine miles south of Bharatpur and eleven miles west of Fathpur-Sikri. This position enabled him to threaten the two roads from Khanua northwards to Bharatpur and westwards to Wer fort and the Jaipur frontier. He felt a justifiable contempt for Afrāsiyāb and begged Mahadji to stand neutral in this contest, as he was confident of defeating that "slave-child" (*ghulām bācha*) even against five-fold odds, if only unaided by the Marathas. In return, Hamadani offered to give Sindhia Agra fort and all the territory south of it after he had crushed his rival. But Mahadji was after much bigger game and rejected this petty bait; he advanced to Rupbās as promised.

On 23rd October Afrāsiyāb visited Mahadji in his camp at Rupbās, and next day the Maratha chief returned the compliment. On 26th Oct., Afrāsiyāb paid a second visit to Sindhia, who presented to him the English officers in attendance on him,—Lt. James Anderson, Clerk and Stuart. The two principals held a secret discussion for hours together on their future plans. Afrāsiyāb passionately appealed to Sindhia to regulate the crumbling imperial State; he called Mahadji his father and urged him to save him by crushing Hamadāni. At a whisper from the diplomatic Himmat Bahadur, the Mir Bakhshi now promptly gave up those two disputed districts as a present to his new mother, Sindhia's wife! Thus every-



body's face was saved, and Mahadji gladly cemented the alliance. It was agreed that the Marathas would blockade Muhammad Beg's camp, cut off its food supply and starve him into complete submission.*

Already Mahadji's diplomacy had woven a net round Hamadāni. That free-booter had made every neighbour his enemy, and they hastened to help at his overthrow, now that the great Sindhia had come to attack him. Ranjit Singh of Bharatpur had been soliciting Sindhia to restore the fort of Dig to him for a tribute, and he was now doing everything in his power to please Mahadji. Rāni Kishori again came to the great man to supplicate for Suraj Mal's house, as she had done after the fall of Dig in 1776. Jat and Rajput troops invested Hamadāni's camp from the north and west, while Mahadji and Afrāsiyāb decided to advance and complete the ring on the east and south sides. Sindhia's camp and baggage remained with him at Rupbās, but he sent (on 31st October) Rayaji Patil and Jivaji Bakhshi with his advanced division of cavalry across the Utangan to take up a position a little west of Khanua, nearer to Hamadāni's camp. It was agreed that Afrāsiyāb's cavalry and guns would advance from their base at Khanua on 2nd

* Br. Mus. Or. 25,021, f. 26-28 (news-letters). *Ibrat*, ii. *Aitī Tīpanen*, v. p. 10. DC. Sadashiv Dinkar's letter of c. 17 Nov. in *Aitī. Sfuta Lekh*, ii. No. 18.



November, join Rayaji's division and launch the offensive. Extreme scarcity raged in Hamadani's camp; many of his followers left him, several died of starvation, and he prepared for a desperate sortie rather than perish through hunger.

§ 20. *Zain-ul-abidin murders Afrasiyab,*
2 Nov. 1784.

But the fate of Afrāsiyāb Khan was not to be decided by battle*. In the pride of undivided power he had given Mirzā Najaf's family and old servants the greatest provocation imaginable by demanding the hand of that chief's maiden daughter. As she had been betrothed to Shafi shortly before that general's assassination, this proposal from her father's slave was resented as a burning insult by Shafi's brother Zain-ul-abidin Khan. Emboldened by the nearness of the formidable Maratha army, Zain matured his plan of revenge on the insolent upstart more successfully than in his first attempt of April before.

On 1st November, Afrāsiyāb Khan rode out of his camp at Khanua early in the morning with all his troops and captains, reconnoitred

* Murder of Afrasiyab.—*Atli Sfuta Lekh*, ii. No. 18. B.M. 25,021, f. 30. *Ibrat*, ii. 88-89. G. Ali iii. 211-212. Muna Lal, 290. *Chandra D.* ii. 54, Forrest (Cal. ed.) iii. 1129. Brownie's letters to G.G., 2 and 3 Nov. (I.R.O.)



Muhammad Beg's position, and returned after selecting the plain near Sayyidpurā (2½ miles west of Khanua) as the site of the decisive battle with his rival. Next day, he rode out to the place, but returned after putting the battle off to the following day. Dropping into Himmat Bahadur's tent on his way back, he dismissed most of his tired followers and himself spent an hour there playing chess and bragging of the victory to come on the morrow. Then he returned to his own tent and sent away his remaining officers, with the exception of Zain and four others who lingered sitting down on the carpet. It was now past 11 o'clock, and Afrāsiyāb, quite at ease, took his coat and turban off and called for his luncheon to be served. A Mughal retainer of Zain who had mingled with the Mir Bakhshi's servants, now handed him a petition, and as he was reading it the man stabbed him with a dagger from his shoulder down to his breast. The wounded general started up from his seat "like a half-slaughtered fowl", tottered a few steps and then fell down senseless. The assassin was cut to pieces by the servants. In the confusion following the first blow, Zain-ul-abidin rushed out of the tent and mounting a fleet horse galloped to Māhādji's camp where he reported that some one had killed Afrāsiyāb and that he had come there for safety lest he should be killed in suspicion for the crime. (2nd Nov.)



§ 21. *Mahadji Sindhia takes action after the death of Afrasiyab.*

Afrāsiyāb Khan was struck down by the hand of his assassin about 11 o'clock in the forenoon and died shortly after midday, though the fact of his death was kept concealed by his servants and false reports were issued that he was alive or even reviving. But the truth at last became known in the evening. A clamour and tumult broke out in his camp at Khanua. His soldiers rose against his financial manager Rajah Nārāyandās, lest they should lose their heavy arrears of pay with the death of their employer. The Kashmiri slipped away to the contingent of Gosain Himmat Bahadur for safety. Utter terror reigned among the leaderless officers and men of the fallen Mir Bakhshi; an immediate attack by the ruthless Hamadāni in their present distracted condition was expected by every one. But they were saved from such a fate by a strong man of action taking prompt control of the situation.

Mahadji Sindhia had not yet risen from his late sleep when Zain-ul-abidin came panting into his office-tent at Rupbas after a hard ride of five miles, and sought asylum as an innocent man in fear of a false accusation of murder. Sindhia, on hearing the news, refused to admit him to his presence and at once sent him to Mirzā Ghiyās-ud-din's tent to be kept under guard till he should be cleared by a full investigation. The Maratha chief had no certain information about Afrāsiyāb's



condition and he held no position in the hierarchy of imperial officers. For two hours after his spies kept bringing in conflicting reports about Afrāsiyāb's being dead or his having recovered consciousness. To learn the truth, Mahadji left his tent at 3 p.m. with a select body of his counsellors and captains, and rode towards the Delhi camp. On the way lay the tents of Himmat Bahadur, and here Narayandas came to him and "whispered into his ears the glad tidings of Afrāsiyāb Khan being really dead." Mahadji dismounted, held a secret talk with Himmat Bahadur, and returned to his base at Rupbās.*

Early at night he took deep counsel with his own people. The situation caused by the sudden removal of the imperial regent was no less dangerous to him than to Afrāsiyāb's men. Hamadāni might make a pact with the latter for sharing the vacant Delhi State and the two Musalman forces together might make a treacherous attack upon the Hindu interloper. Sindhia's Court had the lowest opinion of the Mughalia and Hindustani Muslims and their Kashmiri underlings, as the most heartless and selfish deceivers in the world. If such men found

* Sindhia's acts, 2-10 Nov.—BM. Or. 25,021 ff. 31-36 and *Aibi Sfula L.* ii. No. 18 (best.) *Ibrat.* ii. 88-89. *DY.* i. 117. Nothing in G. Ali or Muna Lal.



time to consolidate their power, they would certainly pack Mahadji off without the least scruple and defraud him of the subsidy and lands promised for the vast force that he had so long employed at their call. All the Maratha ministers urged Mahadji to lose no time in bringing the situation under control by asserting his own authority and awe over every one on the spot. The quaking imperialists piteously cried to him to save them from Hamadani's impending attack. So, Mahadji sent 2,000 cavalry under Ambaji Ingle to stand on guard round the imperial camp that night.

Then he wrote to his advanced division (under Rayaji Patil and Jivaji Bakhshi) to advance a mile or two nearer to Hamadani's camp and interpose between it and the Delhi force at Khanua, so as to intercept any attack by that rebel. The post west of Khanua vacated by these two Maratha generals was occupied next morning (3rd Nov.) by Mahadji himself, who marched there with a strong force, leaving his camp and baggage behind at Rupbās for the present. Thus a defensive wall was erected along the nearer side of Hamadāni's position. This measure also prevented the looting of Afrasiyab's tents and property by his own soldiery and closed the path of any treacherous intrigue between them and Hamadāni.



§ 22. *Sindhia crushes Md. Beg Hamadāni,*
c. 10 Nov. 1784.

Meantime, Hamadāni had stationed his envoy Lachhmi Ram in Sindhia's camp for interceding with him to make a peace. The night after the murder, Mahadji sent the envoy back to his master, demanding the surrender of all his artillery, elephants, horses and camels, after which he would be left free to go away anywhere with his family. In case of refusal, war was threatened: "I shall (said Sindhia) ride out and in one *ghari* finish his business." On the 3rd, after Sindhia had advanced to the west of Khanua, the envoy brought to him Hamadāni's answer, "I have 15 guns belonging to the Emperor with me. These I am prepared to surrender, but I will not give up the rest. After my death any one can take them." Nothing was, therefore, left to Sindhia but to fight.

The soldiers of Afrāsiyāb were in open mutiny in fear of losing their arrears of pay. They stopped the bier of the Mir Bakhshi when about to be sent to Fathpur Sikri for burial. But Sindhia pacified them by taking on himself the satisfaction of their claims. They next demanded that they should continue in the service of the State and enjoy their present jagirs. This also Sindhia promised to recommend to the Emperor. Then he distributed some money of his own to relieve the pressing needs of the contingents of Himmat Bahadur and Nārāyandās, and thus

brought these two forces and their artillery over to his side. It was urgently necessary to crush Hamadani without delay. That general was busy with intrigues for seducing Afrāsiyāb's officers, telling them "Afrāsiyāb is dead. Patil Bābā will now manage the empire and the Emperor's State will pass into Hindu hands. Your master is dead. For whom will you remain there now? Come over to me and I shall pay you." A plan was also formed for cutting Zain-ul-abidin out of Sindhia's camp, giving him the Mir Bakhshi's post in name, and the actual government of the empire to Hamadani and the Kashmiri managers of Afrāsiyāb, and driving Sindhia away!

Mahadji acted promptly, but with admirable vigilance tact and suppleness. Three days having been wasted in futile negotiations, he called up all his camp and baggage from Rupbās to his present advanced position (6th and 7th Nov.) and completed the cordon round Hamadani with the aid of the Macheri and Jaipur contingents which had joined him, as well as the imperial troops recently taken over into his pay. He thus secured a crushing superiority in artillery fire. His own base was at Aghapur, 5 miles south of Bharatpur, while Hamadani was as before near Sayyidpurā, some six miles further south. The cannonade was opened on 7th November under Mahadji's personal direction, as he stood in the village of Bārga, a mile south of Sayyidpurā. It was resumed next day (the 8th) with full vigour and



heavy loss on both sides. Muhammad Beg Hamadāni fought grimly, having "girt up his loins for death." But his condition was hopeless. The strict blockade had caused a famine in his camp; his Ruhelas had eaten up all their sheep goats and draught bullocks and now began to come over to Sindhia in parties as they found a way out. His Telingas, abandoning their arms, went away rather than starve or be butchered helplessly.

Then, at last, Muhammad Beg offered the complete submission on which the exasperated Sindhia was insisting. On 10th November, he rode out with a small band of horsemen to Ambaji Ingle's camp and surrendered. All the guns (forty-six in number) and other property found in his camp were attached and removed to the Maratha lines. His vanquished battalions were deprived of their flintlocks. His Ruhela mercenaries, after detention for two days, were sent away under a strong guard to beyond Dig, and there released, with orders not to go towards Agra. In the Maratha camp, Muhammad Beg and his officers were at first guarded as prisoners; but finally he was set free on conditions that made him powerless for mischief, namely, (1) to surrender all his arms and military equipment, (2) to send his family to Ujjain to be held in Sindhia's capital as hostages for his fidelity, and (3) to serve in future as a servant of Sindhia. His fiefs were taken away.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

MAHADJI SINDHIA REGENT OF DELHI

§ 1. *Emperor takes refuge with Mahadji.*

In the desolate plain of Sayyidpurā Mahadji Sindhia gave peace and safety to the helpless imperialists. What was he to do next? Every step had to be taken cautiously and after feeling the ground. The next move lay with the Emperor, and Sindhia was bound to fashion his course in accordance with the royal decision.

The news of Afrasiyab's fatal wound reached the Emperor at Agra at half past four the same afternoon, and his death was reported the next morning. The Sovereign found none who could fill the dead regent's place. Of the four lieutenants left behind by Mirzā Najaf Khan, two were dead, one was in open rebellion, and the last, Najaf Quli, was hopelessly sunk in debauchery at Delhi. The only great noble now surviving was Abdul Ahad Khan, a captive in Aligarh fort, but a man after the Emperor's own heart. Major James Browne, the English envoy with him, like William Kirkpatrick three years later, bore an inveterate hatred to Mahadji Sindhia. He now lost no time in pressing his anti-Maratha policy on the helpless distracted Shah Alam through his Persian secretary,



Sālihuḍḍin (the brother of our valued historian Faqir Khairuḍḍin), and urged him to reinstate Abdul Ahad (a friend of the English) as regent, dismiss the Marathas and govern the realm, as Oudh was being governed, under British protection. The Emperor wrote to the qiladar of Aligarh to send Ahad to his Presence. The order was carried out. The age-worn favourite, on arriving at Agra (5th November), first paid a visit to his old acquaintance Rajah Dayaram, who informed Shujādil Khan, the qiladar of Agra, and that officer at once placed Ahad in confinement again without asking for the Emperor's orders.

Shah Alam was highly offended at this disappointment and public exposure of his own impotence. He announced that he would take refuge with Mahadji Sindhia, as the only loyal subject left to him, and deputed two of his trusted personal attendants to the Maratha camp with robes of honour and letters for Sindhia, who replied (7th) through them advising the Sovereign to come to Fathpur Sikri. Next day the Maratha chief despatched 50 camels, four elephants and other transport for the Emperor's journey from Agra and promised him an escort of 5,000 horse and four battalions of sepoy's under Apa Khandé Rao. Leaving Agra on the 10th and passing the next day at Fathpur-Sikri, the Emperor reached Afrāsiyāb's camping ground at Khanuā on the 12th, and found hospitable gifts and articles for his comfort from Mahadji waiting for him there.



The fourteenth of November, being the first of the sacred month of Muharram, was fixed upon as a most auspicious day for Sindhia's presentation to his Sovereign.

Mahādji, from his camp some three miles west of the imperial halting-place, came to the audience, being welcomed in advance by the Emperor's favourite son and destined heir Prince Akbar Shah. The Maratha chief offered a tribute of 101 gold *mohars* and laid his head down on his Sovereign's feet. Shah Alam graciously patted him on the back, raised him up, gave him the royal embrace, and bade him sit down on the carpet face to face with him in consideration of Sindhia's lameness, a relic of Panipat. By oriental custom, this first audience was devoted solely to formalities.

Sindhia undertook the protection of the Emperor. So, Shah Alam on the 15th marched from Khanuā to the Maratha camp. All the Deccani and Hindustani soldiers lined the route for miles to welcome him, by Sindhia's order. After inspecting the troops and witnessing their parade, the Emperor retired to the tented quarters prepared for him between the camps of Mahādji and Ambaji Ingré.

On the 17th Shah Alam held the eagerly awaited secret conference with Sindhia which was to shape the destiny of the Delhi empire for the next two decades. He began by urging Mahādji, "You must undertake the regency of my house



and regulate my empire." Sindhia replied, "How can I administer the realm unless I hold some office in the State?" The Emperor then offered him the Mir Bakhshi-ship with the still higher post of Regent, but Sindhia begged for a few days' delay before giving his answer, as the sacred month of Muharram had commenced (on 14th November) and the first ten days of it ('*ashura*) were devoted to religious observances in honour of the death of the Prophet's grandson.

But Mahadji's hands were forced by the pressure of events. There was no wazir, no commander-in-chief, no vicegerent in that moving capital and centre of an empire's government. The Emperor was present, no doubt; but he was a man who had never led an army or transacted a single piece of business personally since his re-entry into Delhi thirteen years ago. Anarchy under a crowned shadow threatened total dissolution to the heritage of Akbar and Shah Jahan. The soldiers were grumbling for their long-standing arrears of pay and their utter failure to raise loans anywhere for their daily food; their future looked utterly gloomy; there was no lawfully constituted authority, no known commander for enforcing order in that vast assemblage of armed men, estimated at 30,000, even excluding Sindhia's own troops. Disorder might break out any day; and one, attended by murder, did break out on the 15th, when Kushhālī Rām Haldia, the Jaipur general (*bakhshi*)



and peace-envoy in this camp, was murdered by a Rajput soldier in his tent. The crime was imputed to the Macheri Rajah, whose diwān Haldia had at first been and whom he had next deserted and plundered in concert with Mirza Najaf. The Kachhwa contingent under him dispersed from the imperial camp in confusion like sheep without a shepherd. [Dy. i. 116—120. *HP.* 606. *Ibr.* ii. 92.]

§ 2. *Intrigues against Mahadji Sindhia.*

At the same time the most confused and intricate intrigues were going on for the succession to Afrāsiyāb Khan and the control of the weak Emperor. The dead Mir Bakhshi's diwān Nārāyandās and his ally the unscrupulous Gosāin Himmat Bahadur planned to bribe the Emperor with twelve lakhs of Rupees and thus induce him to create Afrāsiyāb's son, a boy of three, commander-in-chief, and then govern the realm themselves as this infant's guardians and devour the revenues of his jagirs and the Crownlands customarily administered by the Mir Bakhshi! Another widow of Afrāsiyāb, not this boy's passive mother, but an imperious Afghan lady, whose father and uncle then held the key-positions of commandant of Agra fort and chief of the imperial artillery,—sought permission to adopt a son and manage Afrāsiyāb's vast property in the name of her nominee. Major Browne was working desperately to revive Warren Hastings's



abandoned plan of turning the Emperor into an English puppet and governing the empire through some Muslim regent who would be under the dictation of the British Resident at the capital, as the Nawab of Oudh already was. Those two masters of low cunning and underground intrigue which always ends in futility, Nārāyandās and Himmat Bahadur, even imagined that they could get rid of Sindhia by throwing to him a few crumbs of territory and a few thousand Rupees worth of jewellery from Afrāsiyāb's legacy, and thus clear the path of their ambition to rule the realm as Najib-ud-daulah or Mirzā Najaf had done before! They even tried to buy Sindhia's ministers over to these views.

All this reached Mahādji's ears and he took his measures with marvellous patience, secrecy and exactness in timing his blows. He first crushed Muhammad Beg Hamadāni and removed that source of danger and distraction from his neighbourhood (c. 10 Nov.) Then, when the Emperor removed to the circuit of the Maratha camp (15 Nov.), he took over the control of the Emperor's and Afrāsiyāb's camps by posting his own disciplined battalions around them. "Without his permit none can go from one camp to the other, none can visit the Emperor, none can leave the Emperor's camp." [DY. i. 120, 117.] The Mughalia sardars, lately under Hamadāni, were similarly isolated by Maratha guards.



Sindhia held many private conferences with the Emperor, some on the problems facing that helpless Government, some on the persistent English request to recall the fugitive Prince Jawan Bakht to Delhi at the head of five trained sepoy battalions and give him a vast appanage. Above all, there was the urgent question of finding the large sums necessary for maintaining the Emperor's household and regularly paying the enormous army assembled in his name. [HP. 369. *Ibr.* ii. 99, *PRC.* i. 7.]

§ 3. *Mahadji Sindhia is created Commander-in-chief and Supreme Regent of the Empire.*

The difficulties of his position.

The money so badly needed could come only if pressure was put on the richest vassal of the State, the long-defaulting Rajah of Jaipur. So, on 30th November Sindhia with the Emperor and all the assembled troops, as well as the English envoys Anderson and Browne and their staff, made one march of ten miles from Sayyidpurā westwards to Pingora. Here, on the 1st of December, the Emperor at a public darbar appointed the Peshwa as his Deputy (*Nāib-i-Munāib*) as well as Commander-in-chief (*Bakhshi-ul-mamālik*), subject to the written condition that Mahadji Sindhia and none else should be the permanent agent of the Peshwa in discharging the actual functions of these exalted offices. The *khilats* and many kinds of rich presents bestowed



by the Emperor on the Peshwa as the adjuncts of his new office, as well as complimentary robes for the Peshwa's regent Nānā Fadnis, were made over to Sindhia for despatch to Poona.

On the 3rd of the month another march of ten miles was made to Halena, a place five miles north of Wer fort. Here next day another darbar was held at which Shah Alam conferred on Mahadji Sindhia the highest possible post in the imperial Government, namely that of Regent Plenipotentiary (*Wakil-i-mutlaq*) direct from himself, without any reference to the Peshwa. This post was so rarely filled that only three previous instances of it are known in the long annals of the Timurids, once under Akbar, once under Shah Jahan and the last time under Bahadur Shah I. As Mahadji returned to his tent after being appointed dictator of the Delhi Empire, his troops lined the entire route and fired salutes, while all the officers presented *nazars* in his tent. Thus at one stroke all the machinations of the great Maratha's puny rivals were reduced to nullity. [*Dy.* i. 133, 106. *HP.* 342, 343. *PRC.* i. 9. *Ibr.* ii. 95.]

Halena belonged to Lakhidhar Singh, a vassal of Jaipur. Its fortalice was stormed in three days. Before this, Ranjit Singh Jat and Pratāp Singh Narukā had settled their tributes with the new imperial Regent and taken leave for their homes. On the 11th of December, Mahadji advanced to Mahewā (22 miles due east of

Bandikui railway junction) and the fort of Rāngarh lying two miles to its west. This fort held out for a week, and then the garrison capitulated (18th Dec.) Envoys now came from Jaipur with proposals of tribute which were accepted, and the Emperor, led by Sindhia, moved (*c.* 28 Dec.) towards Dig, where his camp was pitched outside the fort on 3rd January, 1785. Here a two months' halt was enforced by the pressing and complicated questions of State which could no longer be left unattended to.

Mahadji Sindhia was now Regent of the Empire and Captain General of the Forces, but what he had obtained was only two sheets of paper signed by a titular Sovereign. He did not yet hold a single inch of the imperial domains beyond the ground his camp stood on. The two royal seats of Delhi and Agra were occupied by his dead predecessor's men. The royal treasuries and even the revenue records were in their possession. If Mahadji was to be the Emperor's deputy in anything more than the name, he must get possession of the royal forts, the official treasures and the land still subject to the Crown. At first he hoped that the mere order of the Sovereign would transfer these adjuncts of the Mir Bakhshi's office to him, as they had been smoothly transferred to Shafi and Afrāsiyāb or to Mirzā Najaf before them. So, he waited for some time; but at last the bitter truth dawned on his



mind that in the troubled politics of Delhi force alone could win for him what was his due by law.

By the close of the year 1784 he had run into a debt of eighty lakhs in consequence of his campaigning against the English and later in Malwa and Hindustan. His own force of 30,000 men with their powerful artillery was costing him seven lakhs of Rupees a month, and the contingents of Afrāsiyāb and Himmat Bahadur that he had now taken over added about three lakhs to his monthly army bill. The Emperor's maintenance burdened his keeper with an expenditure of one lakh and thirty thousand Rupees every month. The Regent must find this money regularly or his new dignity would vanish like smoke. As Wakil-i-mutlaq and Mir Bakhshi, Sindhia was officially entitled to occupy all the royal forts, to receive payment of the fixed tributes from the vassal princes, and to take over the revenue collection of the Crownlands. The custodians of the royal treasuries and stores also were bound to account to him for what they held on behalf of the State.

§ 4. *Mahadji Sindhia gains Dig and Agra forts, Jan.—March, 1785.*

The wealth accumulated in their days of power by Abdul Ahad, Mirzā Najaf, Latāfat Ali and Md. Shafi had all passed by successive forcible appropriations into the hands of Afrāsiyāb Khan,



the last of the Mir Bakhshis. These had been lodged in the fort of Aligarh, the stronghold of the personal jagir of the last-named chief. Rumour swelled their value to a kror and a half, though what Sindhia afterwards actually realised proved to be only forty-thousand Rupees. [HP. 446.] Afrāsiyāb Khan had three wives; the first of whom had borne him a son named Khādim Husain Khān, now three years old, whom the family diwān Narayandas was plotting to get appointed as Mir Bakhshi under the nominal guardianship of his mother, so that he himself might rule the realm as her agent. But this widow had neither any wealth in her hands, nor the spirit of ruling. The second wife was an imperious Afghan lady, who controlled all the forts, treasures and other property of the late Mir Bakhshi and was strong in the strength and position of her father Shujā-dil Khan (the custodian of Agra fort) and his two cousins Bayazid (the Chief of the imperial artillery) and Mihrbān Khan. This dowager's ambition was to set Khādim Husain aside, adopt another boy, and herself rule the family estates in his name. All the wealth of Afrasiyāb Khan was stored in Aligarh, which this lady held in conjunction with her husband's brother Jahāngir Khan. [HP. 363, 373.]

Afrāsiyāb Khan had placed the fort of Dig and the lands appertaining to it in charge of Malik Muhammad Khan. Sindhia, carrying the

Emperor with himself, arrived near the place and called upon this man through Narayandas to relinquish the fort and lands in exchange for a jagir elsewhere. The garrison (mere *sebandi* troops) on being paid their arrears (Rs. 15,000) by Mahadji, evacuated the fort on 16th January, and he occupied it by his own troops under Devji Patil [Anderson's letter. DY. i. 127. *Ibr.* ii. 96.] But he had to stop for two months at Dig because of the contumacy of Shujā-dil Khan who held Agra fort. This man refused to admit Rāyaji Patil who had arrived with a royal letter appointing him *qiladar* of it. Fighting ensued. Rayaji easily drove in the outlying piquets, established his own rule in the *city* and its markets, and opened trenches against the *fort*. His fire demolished the retaining wall of the fosse in many places. Mahadji himself, with the rest of his army and the Emperor, moved up to Rajghat on the Jamunā, about four miles north of Agra (2nd March), and the siege was then brought to a speedy conclusion.

One battalion of sepoy, under Bhawāni Singh, was included in the garrison of the fort. Their salary having been long in arrears, this commandant visited Rayaji and made a pact for coming over with his men if their dues were paid and they were enrolled in the imperial army. Other troops in the fort followed his example. Shujā-dil, deserted by his followers, had no help but to make the best terms he could.

He was promised jagirs worth Rs. 52,000 a year, and vacated the fort on 27th March. Sindhia's flag was unfurled on the second throne-city of the Mughal Emperors. The *subahdari* of Agra province was now (30th March) conferred on Mahadji, as deputy of the nominal viceroy, Prince Akbar Shah.*

§ 5. *Mahadji's attitude towards Afrasiyab's family: their duplicity and hostility.*

The next step was to gain Aligarh fort. In order to be nearer to this place, Sindhia marched up the river to Mathura (arrival 11th April.) At this holy city, and later at Chir-ghat, 20 miles north of it, he was detained for the next eight months by the long-drawn contest for Aligarh. His hope of securing this place smoothly by persuasion was doomed to a still more cruel disappointment than in the case of Agra. He had from the first treated Afrasiyab's widows and orphan with every consideration. Shortly after the murder of the Khan he had publicly declared to Narayandas, "I intend to plant Afrasiyab's son on the *masnad*, persuade the Emperor to take the boy into his favour, collect the subsidy promised to me, and then go back to the Deccan". [Or. 25,021 f. 33a. HP. 606]

This was his design till the middle of November. All his acts showed that he valued

* Capture of Agra fort.—DC. HP. 354, 359, 365, DY. i. 128, 130, *Ibr.* ii. 105. Browne's letter. PRC. i. 10-12.



his solid new conquests in Malwa more than the empty dignity of the regency of an insolvent empire. Even when the Emperor threw himself upon Mahadji's neck and entreated him to save the State by undertaking to be its helmsman, the Maratha general hesitated for a full fortnight, till the hopeless disruption around forced his hands and he at last realised that the guidance of such a realm could not be left to an infant of three, with the Kashmiri servants of his household acting vicariously for him. Such a step would complete the downfall of the imperial power and at once bring the English to Delhi as keepers of the Emperor's person and entitle them to exercise the *de facto* suzerainty of the empire of India in his name,—a policy which was then being openly pursued under Mahadji's eyes by Major Browne, the British agent accredited to the Delhi Court. But that was the very danger which the Peshwa had been urging Sindhia in letter after letter for three years past to do his best to avert.

The regency of Delhi was, therefore, forced upon Sindhia, but he manfully shouldered the burden. He had no wish to ill-treat Afrāsiyāb's family if they acted honestly by the State and delivered without concealment or theft the public property in the late Regent's keeping. Immediately after his first conference with the Emperor (on 17th November 1784), he had caused the title of Husain-ud-daulah Khādim Husain Khan

Bahādur Ghālib Jang to be bestowed on Afrāsiyāb's son. Next, from Halena (middle of December) he detached an escort to bring this child to the imperial camp with due care and honour. On his arrival, Mahadji paid a formal visit to his tent to offer condolences for his father's death (18th January 1785.) A little later on the next coronation anniversary (3rd April) the boy was raised by the Emperor at Mahadji's prayer, to the dignity of Ashraf-ud-daulah II (his father's title) and granted fiefs worth four lakhs a year. He expected that the child's guardians would, in return, deal with him in a fair and friendly manner. But they were determined to grasp at everything and cheat the infidel from the South. [DC. Ibr. ii. 96.]

§ 6. *Siege of Aligarh. Surrender on 20 Nov. 1785.*

Arrived near Agra, Mahadji called upon Afrāsiyāb's family in Aligarh to surrender that fort with the Government property in it. They outwardly professed readiness to comply and demanded another strong place and a jagir for their support, but secretly prepared for resistance.* The *qiladar* Jahangir Khan (the late Mir Bakhshi's brother) was receiving secret letters of encouragement and promises of aid from the

* Siege of Aligarh.—PRC. i. 12-19. HP. 363, 373, 381, 407, 411, 446. Ibr. ii. 105-106, 148. DY. i. 140, 141, 112. DC. G. Ali, iii. 215.



Mughal officers now under Sindhia and even from Himmat Bahadur, which stiffened his back, and he sent frantic appeals for help to the Nawab of Oudh and Sir John Cummings, the general commanding the English brigade at Anupshahar. To the Nawab Wazir he wrote, "If this strong fort on the Oudh frontier is secured by the Deccanis, it would be a standing menace to your dominions, as it would be very easy for them to raid Oudh territory from it. If you help me to keep this fort and the little territory now held by me, I shall give you half of the hoards within it accumulated by Najaf and Shafi, Afrāsiyāb and others during their lifetime. I shall also pay your military expenses. If you wish for it, I shall deliver this fort to the English and live as a mere zamindar of this tract paying you revenue." [*Ibr. DY. i. 171, 140.*]

Sir John Cummings, on his own initiative, marched from his cantonment (1 April) and took post at Atrauli, sixteen miles north-east of Aligarh, to watch the Maratha movements. He even admitted Jahangir Khan to an interview and thus backed him in his defiance of his master's authority. This unexpected and unjustifiable threat of British intervention caused the greatest alarm and perplexity to Sindhia and correspondingly emboldened his enemies on all sides. He protested to his Resident James Anderson, who secured an order from the Governor-General recalling Cummings to his own station. Cummings

withdrew to Karanbās (21st April), and thus one threatening cloud blew over.

Mahadji had at first sent Mirzā Ānwār Beg (the brother of his favourite confidant Mirzā Rahim Beg) to the Doab to see if Aligarh would be peacefully vacated; but this officer's escort, a thousand horse only, was too small even to protect him, and his fears grew tenfold when he heard of the English brigade coming to the aid of Jahangir Khan. So, he did not venture to approach even within 20 miles of that fort (early April 1785.) Meantime Agra had fallen. Sindhia now conciliated Shujā-dil Khān and his cousin Bayazid with costly gifts and sent them to Aligarh to try their influence on their kinsman Jahangir Khan. They returned unsuccessful. Next, the fear of embroilment with the British troops being then over, he detached a force of 5000 horse under Rayaji Patil to attack Aligarh. But by this time the summer was well advanced, there was a great scarcity of water for ten miles round Aligarh. In May a severe epidemic of cholera desolated the country, "men fell down dead while walking on the roads." Worst of all, Sindhia had exhausted his funds and could not discharge the heavy arrear salaries of his army; "no soldier who was not paid his dues would agree to march across the Jamuna on this campaign."

However, Rayaji at last arrived on the scene and opened the siege. Jahangir Khan boldly



assumed the offensive, as the best form of defence ; he made repeated sorties and attacked the Marathas. On 20th July he sallied forth from the walled *city* of Koil,—three miles distant from the *fort* of Aligarh,—and fell upon the Maratha army. Rayaji, after a desperate hand to hand fight, in which he lost 400 men in killed and wounded, repulsed the attack and advancing stormed Koil, from which the disheartened garrison fled away, abandoning all of their forty pieces of cannon and other war material. This city now became the besiegers' base and they advanced closer to Aligarh, running trenches towards its walls. The situation in early August is thus described in a Marathi despatch, "The fort is blockaded ; our piquets are posted one *kos* off all around it. But it is a strong place and can hold out for a long time." The exceptionally heavy and ceaseless rain of this year's monsoon troubled the besiegers worse than the summer heat had done before. The Jamuna rose in high flood, interrupting the boat traffic between Mahadji's camp and the besieging army. Jahangir Khan continued to make sallies and raid the siege trenches. Sindhia retaliated by confiscating his property and imprisoning his relatives wherever found. [*Ibr.* ii. 148.]

As the siege of Aligarh dragged on into winter and Sindhia's prestige suffered in consequence, he decided to bring the Emperor out of Delhi and try the effect of his personal appearance

before the defiant fort. So, on 12th October, he left Mathura and on 10th November met the Emperor, who had come from Delhi at his entreaty, at Banchari (five miles north of Hodal). On the 17th of that month the two together came to the camp at Chirghat, 20 miles north of Mathura, and there halted for nearly two months.

Jahangir Khan now found resistance useless. He made terms through Lachhman Rao and vacated Aligarh fort, which Sindhia's men occupied on 20th November. The spoils found there included 65 large pieces of artillery, one mortar (for throwing shells), 1,600 maunds of powder and 1,000 maunds of lead, besides a few sacks of grain,—but only Rs. 40,000 in cash and jewels (which sum was divided equally between the Emperor and his regent.)

§ 7. *Punishment of the treacherous partisans of Afrāsiyāb Khan.*

On 28th November, Jahangir Khan came to Mahadji's camp and was presented to the Emperor. The fort of Mursan was assigned to Afrāsiyāb's widows and son with a jagir worth Rs. 1,10,000 per annum. Jahangir Khan was given a jagir of half a lakh, but no fort. The total revenue of the lands now granted to this family was 2½ lakhs. It was a clear condition of the terms granted to him that he "should retain possession of all his private property, but must



give an account of all the property belonging to the late Amir-ul-umara." [Anderson, in *PRC.* i. p. 31.] It was admitted on all hands that the accumulations of four successive regents had gone to form the treasure of Afrāsiyāb and had been deposited by him in Aligarh. But now the victors found only Rs. 40,000 there. Jewels of known description which the Emperor had formerly entrusted to Najaf* and Afrāsiyāb for raising money could not be traced among these. The only answer which Jahangir Khan and the Begams gave was to profess their own ignorance and throw the entire responsibility on the late Mir Bakhshi's diwan Narayandas and lieutenant Shujā-dil Khan. [*Ibr.* ii. 151, *DY.* i. 141.] But it was proved that during the late siege of Aligarh, Jahangir Khan had been constantly smuggling out of the fort all portable valuables to Oudh territory through the trusty old servants of the house,—the maid Annāji, Saif Khan and a Hindu clerk named Bhawāni Prasād.

Sindhia was exasperated by this faithlessness ; moreover, failure to recover the Emperor's jewels exposed him to disgrace before his sovereign and the suspicion that he had himself secreted the richer spoils instead of sharing them with the Emperor. This was the very charge made against

* Anderson in his letter of 19th Dec. imagined that it was a "pretence" on the part of Shah Alam ; but the contemporary records of Najaf Khan's regency [*Br. Mus. Or.* 25, 021, *f.* 204 b] prove that it was a fact. *H.P.* 446.



the Marathas after the capture of Pathargarh 13 years earlier. Persuasion having failed, Sindhia on 17th December placed Jahangir Khan in confinement and (on the 25th) brought Afrasiyab Khan's widows under arrest from Mursan to his camp. Their persons and tents were searched by female servants, and some jewels were recovered, (which Sindhia divided with the Emperor.) The captives now delivered to Mahadji the secret letters of Narayandas and Himmat Bahadur urging Jahangir Khan to hold Aligarh and resist Sindhia to the utmost. The late Mir Bakhshi's diwan was therefore imprisoned, his family, living in Agra city, was arrested, and their property attached [c. 1 January, 1786. *DC. Ibr. ii.* 151-154.]

§ 8. *Sindhia's first dealings with the Sikhs, 1785.*

At the beginning of 1785, while Sindhia was trying to secure the peaceful possession of Agra, he had to think also of Delhi and its defence. On 19th January he got his lieutenant Ambaji Ingle appointed faujdar of the district north of the capital and collector of customs, and sent him off with a strong force and the Macheri chief to establish the new regent's authority in Delhi and protect it from the Sikhs who were expected to make a swoop upon that kingless city. Najaf Quli Khan, who was governing Delhi for Afrāsīyāb, now gave peaceful possession (11th February), and Ambaji posted his own guards at