INDIAN RECORDS SERIES

BENGAL IN 1756-1757

A SELECTION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PAPERS
DEALING WITH THE AFFAIRS OF THE
BRITISH IN BENGAL DURING THE
REIGN OF SIRAJ-UDDAULA

EDITED
WITH NOTES AND AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION
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'THREE FRENCHMEN IN BENGAL'

VOL. I

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE series of which the present volumes form a first instalment is in some measure an outcome of a suggestion made to the Government of India by the Royal Asiatic Society in June, 1900. The Society then pointed out the service which would be rendered to Oriental learning by the issue of a series of volumes bearing upon the history of India, particularly in ancient and medieval times, such as texts or translations of works by native writers, indexes, monographs, dictionaries of proper names, maps, and other materials for historical research. The suggestion was favourably received by the Government of India, and, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, arrangements have been made for the publication, under the auspices of the Royal Asiatic Society, of an 'Indian Texts Series' on the lines indicated. Several volumes are already in hand, and will be issued in due course.

When adopting the proposal thus made to them, the Government of India decided to extend its scope by preparing a companion series to deal with the more modern history of India. This is to comprise selections, notes, or compilations from the records of the Indian Government, or of the India Office in London, and will be known as the 'Indian Records Series.' The volumes now published will be followed by others on 'The History of Fort William, Calcutta,' containing papers selected by the late Dr. C. R. Wilson; 'The Reports of Streynsham Master on his Tours in Bengal and Madras, 1676-1680,' edited by Sir Richard Temple, Bart., C.I.E.; 'Papers Relating to the Administration of Lord Clive,' by Mr. G. W. Forrest, C.I.E.; and 'The History of Fort St. George and other Public Buildings at Madras,' by Colonel H. D. Love, R.E.

It is only necessary to add that the various editors have full discretion as to the treatment of their subjects, and are therefore alone responsible alike for what is included and what is omitted.

June, 1905.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

SELECTION OF PAPERS—VOL. I.

MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

CORRIGENDA.

Page 15, line 15, *for* Brisdom *read* Bisdom.
Page 96, line 19, *for* Beecher *read* Becher.
Page 110, note 2, *refers to* Mrs. Piearce's Bridge, *and not to* Griffith's House.
Page 192, line 1, *for* Kilpatrick *read* Killpatrick.
Page 204, line 24, *for* Furnier *read* Fournier.
Page 227, line 21, *for* Clenforts *read* Clonfert.
Page 228, lines 11 and 15, *for* 573 *read* 595.
Page 229, line 13, *for* 1753 *read* 1756.
Page 257, *delete* note 1.
Page 266, line 37, *delete* Probably means.
Page 273, line 38, *for* pp. 306, 307 *read* pp. 307, 308.
Page 276, line 31, *for* Home Series Misc. 24 *read* Home Series Misc 82.

PREFACE.

THE object of this Selection of Papers is to throw as much light as possible upon the Revolution by which the power of the Muhammadan Government was broken up, and the way prepared for British domination, in Bengal.

For this purpose I have myself examined not only the Records in Calcutta, but those in London, Paris, and the Hague. The publication of an admirable Press List of their Records by the Government of Madras made a personal examination of these documents unnecessary; and a few Records from Pondicherry, which I have included, were sent me by the French authorities. The Right Honourable the Earl of Powis most kindly gave me access to the family papers used by Malcolm in his 'Life of Robert, Lord Clive.' Their great value lies in the fact that many of them are private letters, in which Clive freely expressed his feelings to friends or relatives. They are, I think, necessary to the full appreciation of his many-sided character; and if they detract in any degree from its heroic aspect, they at any rate make him more human, and so the student is better able to understand the part played in the events of the time by his colleagues, Drake and Watson, whom History has relegated to an inferior position, or men like Watts and Scrafton, who worthily filled subordinate yet necessary parts, but are now almost forgotten.

In making this Selection my two chief difficulties were the absence of documentary evidence upon certain points, and the superabundance of information upon others. The former has been partially overcome by the discovery amongst the Dutch Records of copies of letters from the Council of Fort William, the originals of which have disappeared.[1] As regards the latter difficulty, I have

[1] Amongst these is the Council's declaration of war against the Nawab after the recapture of Calcutta, Vol. II., p. 83.

excluded all those papers and portions of papers which I consider of little importance or which seem to have no distinctive historical bearing. I may mention that in the middle of the eighteenth century communication between England and India was so tedious that an exchange of letters generally occupied a whole year; consequently, the despatches, or 'general letters,' of the East India Company to its Settlements, as also the replies from those Settlements, are lengthy documents dealing with a multitude of different subjects, more especially those connected with commerce. This has forced me to omit long passages from these letters, but as references are given in the 'Contents' to the sources from which I have taken my originals, the student can if he pleases refer to them himself without much trouble.

The documents selected from the French and Dutch Records have never, I believe, been published, though I think it is certain that Colonel Malleson must have had access to many of the former. The difference of tone in the Records of the two nations marks very clearly the fact that the Dutch were our allies and the French our enemies, and, in truth, some of the French papers have been included not because of their historical value as accurate accounts of what really happened, but as written records of the rumours and beliefs prevalent at the time amongst the people of the land; for action is based rather upon belief than upon fact, and, without knowing what the people and the Native Government thought of the British, it is not possible to understand clearly either why Siraj-uddaula behaved as he did, or why the inhabitants of Bengal were absolutely apathetic to events which handed over the government of their country to a race so different from their own. I translated all the French documents and a few of the Dutch myself. Translations of the remainder were sent me by Dr. Colenbrander.

As regards the Indian Government Records, amongst which we have to include the Orme Manuscripts, there is decidedly less novelty. Some important papers were published by Malcolm; others more recently by Colonel Temple and that delightful writer, Dr. Busteed, in whose pages, as in those of the Rev. H. B. Hyde and the late Dr. C. R. Wilson, there are many suggestions as to possible sources of information. A very large number of papers was

published over a hundred years ago by Holwell, Verelst, Vansittart, Ives, Watts, and Scrafton, and also in the Reports of the Parliamentary Select Committees on Indian Affairs, not to mention the newspapers, magazines, and Government Gazettes. About twelve years ago my predecessor, Mr. G. W. Forrest, C.I.E., caused a large collection of papers from the Madras Records (covering the whole period during which Clive was in India) to be printed in the Government Central Press at Calcutta. This rendered it unnecessary to make fresh copies of several of the Records included in this Selection, and so saved much time and trouble. These have, of course, been compared in every instance with originals in London or Madras.

I ought to add that the idea of including extracts from the magazines and newspapers of the period (Appendix II.) was suggested by Mr. T. R. Munro's discovery of some lists of the Black Hole victims in the *Scots Magazine*.

The question of the most suitable spelling of Indian words and names of persons and places has been one of much difficulty. To modernize them entirely would have altered the whole complexion of the old Records. I have tried, therefore, merely to observe something like uniformity in each particular document, and have given in the introduction and index the correct spelling according to the accepted system of transliteration for the various languages to which the words and names belong. I presume no apology is necessary for alterations in the punctuation, though even here I have left the old punctuation in all cases where an alteration was not absolutely necessary to make the meaning intelligible.

To the Selection is prefixed an Historical Introduction based mainly upon the documents now published, but partly upon the works of contemporary writers like Orme, Ives, Holwell, Scrafton, Watts, and Ghulam Husain Khan. In this Introduction I have dealt in greatest detail with points which, I believe, have not been cleared up by earlier writers, or in regard to which I think previous conclusions need some modification. At the same time, as I know well that neither official records nor contemporary writers are always absolutely trustworthy, I have tried to avoid all criticism of the statements and opinions of my predecessors.

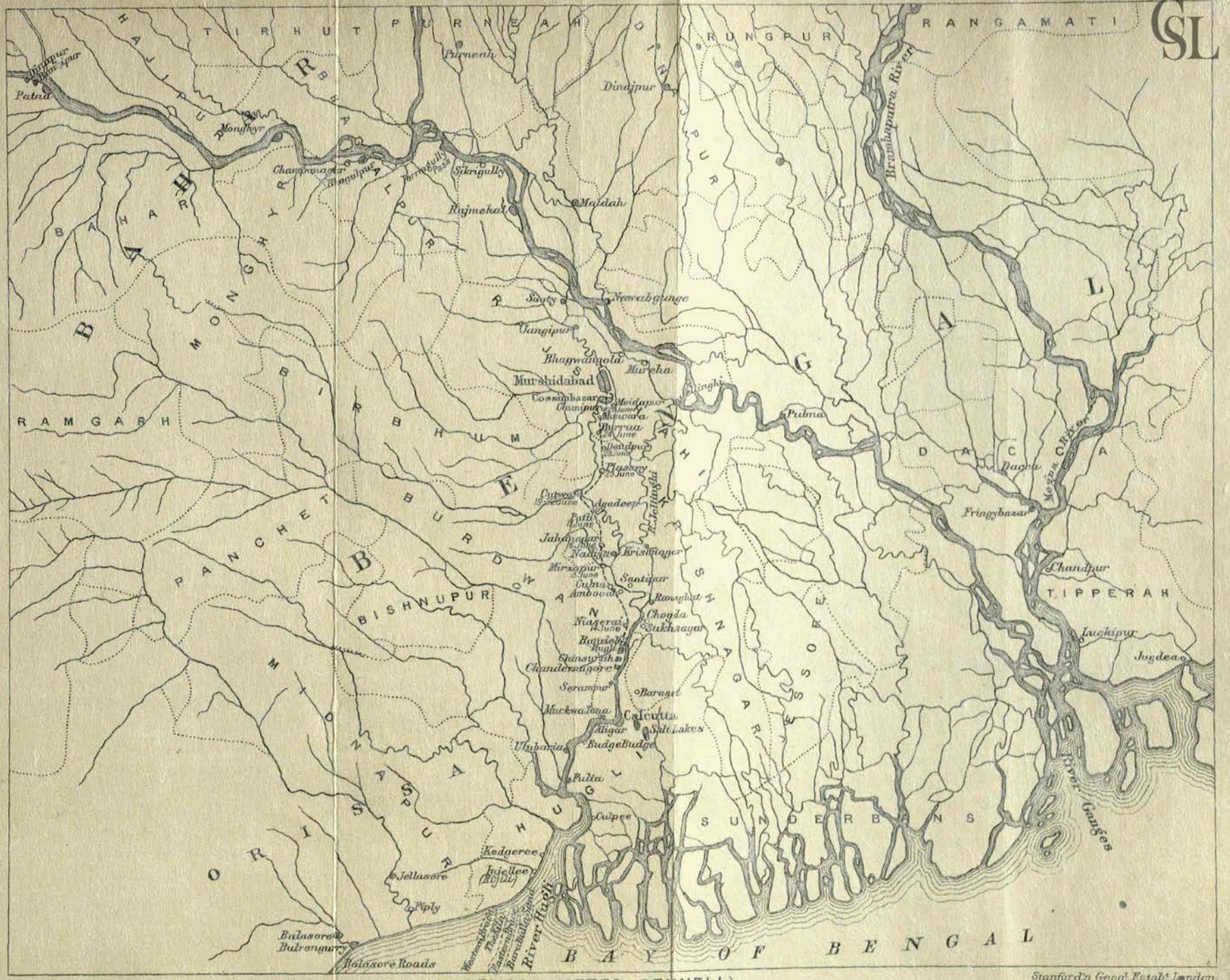
The illustrations which will be found in this work have been

taken from various well-known sources, with the exception of the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Watts and the picture of Mr. Watts concluding the Treaty with Mir Jafar and his son Miran. These have been photographed from pictures in the possession of Mr. E. H. Watts of Hanslope Park, Buckinghamshire, and are now for the first time presented to the public.

Amongst the many persons from whom I have received much valuable assistance I wish more particularly to offer my thanks to Lieutenant-Colonel D. G. Crawford, I.M.S., M. Henri Omont and M. Charles de la Roncière of the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, Dr. Colenbrander of the State Archives at the Hague, Mr. J. A. Herbert of the British Museum, and Messrs. A. N. Wollaston, C.I.E., William Foster, and F. W. Thomas of the India Office. Prof. Blumhardt has very kindly assisted me in identifying many almost unrecognisable names of persons and places.

The very laborious task of correcting the proofs and comparing them with the original documents has been performed by Miss Hughes of the Royal Asiatic Society, to whom I am much indebted for the care and pains she has bestowed upon a piece of work the difficulty of which can be appreciated only by the few persons who have had to deal with similar papers.

S. C. H.



BENGAL (AFTER RENNELL).

Stanford's Geogl. Estabt, London.

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE KINGDOM OF BENGAL.

'The Paradise of India.'—J. Law.[1]

The kingdom of Bengal, a province subject to the Emperors of Delhi, comprised in the middle of the eighteenth century the three districts of Bengal Proper, Bahar, and Orissa, and occupied the lower valleys of the Himalayas and the deltas of the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers. It was governed by Nawabs or deputies of the Emperor, sometimes appointed from Delhi, but more often merely confirmed by their nominal master in an office which they had seized by force, and which they strove to make hereditary. For five hundred years these Nawabs had been, by race if not by birth, foreigners to Bengal. They were Afghans,[2] Moghuls, or Persians.

Without entering into detail, it is sufficient to say that the British on their arrival in Bengal found it inhabited by a people the great bulk of whom were Hindus, governed by a Muhammadan minority. The Nawabs, relying as they did for their supremacy on a foreign soldiery, considered it wise to hold their warlike followers in check by the employment of up-country Hindus in many of the high offices of State, both civil and military, and in the government of subordinate divisions of the kingdom. These Hindus were especially influential in matters of finance, for the commerce of the province was almost entirely in the hands of great merchants, most of whom were up-country Hindus, like Omichand and the Seths, though a few were Armenians, like Coja Wājid and Aga Manuel. Most of the leading men in the country then were foreigners, and

[1] Vol. III., p. 160, note.

[2] Afghan and Pathan are used synonymously.—*Wilson*.

the real Bengalis were seldom of sufficient importance to be mentioned by native historians, though in the 'Records' of the East India Company occur the names of such men as Govind Rām Mitra and Raja Naba Krishna, the founders of families which have risen to wealth and influence under British rule.

We know very little of Bengal and its inhabitants previous to the Muhammadan invasion in A.D. 1200, but certain minor districts were long left in the hands of the Hindu nobles, and in the pages of Scrafton and Holwell we find descriptions of parts of Bengal which retained even in 1750 many traces of the primitive Hindu manners and government. But these were exceptions, and the Bengali nation had become a subject race absorbed in the ordinary concerns of life, and apathetic to all affairs of State and government. Temperate and abstemious, charitable, ready to sacrifice their lives for the preservation of their religious purity, their women chaste and affectionate, they were

'almost strangers to many of those passions that form the pleasure and pain of our lives. Love—at least, all the violent tumults of it—is unknown to the Gentoos' (Hindus) 'by their marrying so young. . . . Ambition is effectually restrained by their religion, which has by insurmountable barriers confined every individual to a limited sphere, and all those follies arising from debauchery are completely curbed by their abstaining from all intoxicating liquors. But from hence also they are strangers to that vigor of mind and all the virtues grafted on those passions which animate our more active spirits. . . . Their temperance and the enervating heat of the climate starves all the natural passions, and leaves them only avarice, which preys most on the narrowest minds.'[1]

It may seem strange that a people so gentle, peaceful, and apparently docile, should have changed so slightly under five hundred years of Muhammadan rule, but this absence of change is easily explicable by the existence of the institution which we call 'caste.' This, with its multitudinous subdivisions, broke up the Hindus into a number of groups, the individuals of which were bound for life to the sphere in which they were born, and the same principle which made a country like Bengal, in which the soldier caste was almost extinct, submit without effort to an invader, was the means of preserving uninfluenced the trades, manufactures, and occupations of the other castes;

[1] Scrafton's 'Reflections on the Government, etc., of Indostan,' p. 16.

'for while the son can follow no other trade than that of his father, the manufactures can be lost only by exterminating the people.'[1]

It is easy to see also that this indifference of the mass of the people towards the Government would be a serious drawback to a weak Government in the event of conflict with external forces, and would become a source of very great danger if, by misgovernment, indifference were changed into dislike. The accounts of Muhammadan rule by Muhammadan writers do not, I must own, show any signs of such misgovernment as would impel an Oriental race to revolt—in fact, I think every student of social history will confess that the condition of the peasantry in Bengal in the middle of the eighteenth century compared not unfavourably with that of the same class in France or Germany—but it would seem as if there was at this time a revival of Hindu feeling coincident with the gradual weakening of the Muhammadan power throughout India as a whole and more particularly in Bengal. Thus, we find that the partisans of the British were almost all Hindus or protégés of the Hindus, and M. Law tells us that the Hindu *Zamīndārs* of Bahar would have replaced Sirāj-uddaula by a Hindu ruler if it had not been for the influence of the Seths. The disaffection of the Hindu Rajas to the Muhammadan Government had been noticed by other observers—*e.g.*, Colonel Scot wrote to his friend Mr. Noble in 1754 that

'the *Jentue*' (Hindu) 'rajahs and inhabitants were much disaffected to the Moor' (Muhammadan) 'Government, and secretly wished for a change and opportunity of throwing off their tyrannical yoke.'[2]

The fact that the commerce and manufactures of the country were almost entirely in the hands of the Hindus naturally brought them into close connection with the European merchants, who had settled in the country for the purpose of trade, and so produced a kind of tacit alliance based mainly upon their material interests.

The story of the settlement of the Europeans in Bengal has been told by many writers, and it is therefore unnecessary to go back to an earlier date than the year 1700, when the British were already settled at Calcutta or Fort William, the French at Chander-

[1] Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 9. [2] Vol. III., p. 328.

nagore or Fort d'Orléans, and the Dutch at Chinsurah or Fort Gustavus. These Settlements were wealthy and flourishing, and to the natives, who were unacquainted with the science of fortification, they appeared strong and well able to defend themselves against any attack by the native Government. It can therefore be easily understood how there gradually grew up in the minds of the Bengali Hindus an idea that if the worst came to the worst they might find in the presence of these foreigners a means of escape from the ills by which they were oppressed.

The chief events which took place in Bengal from the beginning of the eighteenth century were as follows:

1701-1725. In the year 1701 a Brahman convert to Muhammadanism named Murshid Kulī Khān[1] was appointed *Dīwān*, or financial representative of the Emperor of Delhi in Bengal. He quarrelled with the Governor, Nawab Azīm-ushshān,[2] and transferred his office from Dacca (the capital of the province) to the town of Muksadabad, which, in 1704, he renamed after himself Murshidabad, though he did not receive the double office of Governor and *Dīwān* till the year 1713. His influence at Murshidabad was speedily felt by the Europeans. As early as 1706 he exacted 25,000 rupees from the British in return for permission to establish a Factory at Cossimbazar, so as to facilitate the coining of their bullion at the Royal Mint in Murshidabad. By 1713 his jealousy and exactions had grown so troublesome that the British sent an embassy under Mr. Surman to Delhi to obtain a new *Farmān* or Patent[3] from the Emperor. This was granted in the
1717. year 1717, and was produced in triumph at Murshidabad; but Murshid Kulī Khān chose to interpret it in a sense much less liberal than that taken by the British, and the latter thought it prudent to feign contentment with his wishes, for at any rate, even with the modifications he proposed, it legalized their position, and also gave them immense advantages over their commercial rivals, the French and Dutch.

Murshid Kulī Khān was the author of many financial reforms, which greatly increased the Emperor's revenues in Bengal; but his rule was a heavy one, especially to the Hindus. It is said

[1] Better known amongst the natives as Jafar Khān or Jafar Khān Nāsirī.

[2] Second son of Bahādur Shāh, Emperor of Delhi —*Beale*.

[3] Vol. III., p. 375.

that he destroyed all the Hindu temples in Murshidabad and for four miles round to provide materials for his tomb at Katra.[1] On the other hand, it was during his reign that the great financial house of Jagat Seth rose to the pinnacle of its wealth and greatness. This family was founded by a Jain[2] merchant named Mānik Chand, who died in 1732, but who had apparently handed over the management of his business in Bengal to his nephew, Fath Chand. In 1713, when Murshid Kulī Khān was made Governor of Bengal, Fath Chand was appointed Imperial Banker, and given the title of 'Jagat Seth,' or 'Merchant of the World.' He died in 1744, and left his business to his grandsons, Seth Mahtāb Rai and Maharaja Swarūp Chand, whom we shall find figuring largely in the history of the Revolution.[3] In the English accounts no distinction is made between Fath Chand's grandsons, and they are generally referred to simply as 'Jagat Seth,' or the Seths. The importance of the firm at Murshidabad was very great.

'Juggutseat is in a manner the Government's banker; about two-thirds of the revenues are paid into his house, and the Government give their draught on him in the same manner as a merchant on the Bank, and by what I can learn the Seats (*Seths*) make yearly by this business about 40 lacks.'[4]

Murshid Kulī Khān died in 1725, and was succeeded by his son-in-law, Shujā Khān, a noble of Turkoman origin, whose family came originally from Khorassan in Persia. 1725-1739.

Amongst the favourites of Shujā Khān were two brothers, Hājī Ahmad and Alīvirdī Khān, sons of Mirzā Muhammad, a Turkoman, and

'husband of a lady who, being herself of the Afshar tribe, was allied to Shuja Khan.'[5]

It is said they entered his service in an almost menial capacity, the elder as his pipe-bearer, the younger, a man of more martial character, in an inferior military position; but the Hājī's[6] ability

[1] In the town of Murshidabad.

[2] The Jains are a Hindu sect contemporary in origin with the Buddhists, and resembling them in many of their tenets.

[3] Hunter, 'Statistical Account of Bengal,' vol. ix., pp. 252-258.

[4] 'An account of the Seats in 1757 from Mr. Scrafton' (Orme MSS., India, vol. xviii., pp. 5441-5443).

[5] 'Seir Mutaqherin,' vol. i., p. 298, edition of 1902.

[6] Hājī means properly one who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and thus it is often used as a title.

was so great that he speedily became the Nawab's confidential adviser, and so completely were the brothers trusted by that Prince that in 1729 Alīvirdī was made Governor of the frontier province of Patna or Bahar. In the same year was born Mirzā Muhammad, better known as Sirāj-uddaula. He was the son of Alīvirdī's youngest and favourite nephew, Zain-uddīn, and the coincidence of his birth with the auspicious appointment to the government of Patna is said to have been the origin of the extraordinary fondness which his grandfather always showed towards him.

1739-1741. Shujā Khān, whose reign was long looked back to as one of peace and good government, died in 1739, leaving to his son and successor, Sarfarāz Khān, a dangerous legacy in his two favourites, Hājī Ahmad and Alīvirdī Khān. It cannot be said with any certainty when these two men first cast ambitious eyes upon the throne, but as early as 1736,[1] by the interest of the great bankers, the Seths, the Hājī had obtained from the Emperor at Delhi a *farmān* appointing Alīvirdī Nawab of Patna in his own right. It is probable that Shujā Khān would have taken steps to check the growing ambition of the brothers, but his death intervened, and Sarfarāz Khān, who, it is said,

'indulged in excessive debauchery even to that degree as to disorder his faculties, soon rendered himself odious to his people, and lost the affections of those who might have supported him,'[2]

took no steps to secure himself from the growing danger. He also gave great offence to the Seths, the nature of which is variously stated as an attack upon the honour of their women[3] and as a quarrel about money.[4] This quarrel resulted in a firm alliance between the brothers and the Seths. As long as Hājī Ahmad remained at Murshidabad Alīvirdī was afraid to take action, and accordingly Sarfarāz Khān was cleverly duped into dismissing him, the Seths representing that the Hājī, being destitute of military skill and even of courage, could be of no assistance to his brother. Alīvirdī now immediately marched upon Murshidabad, protesting that he was loyal to his Prince, and sought only for justice upon his brother's enemies. Deceived by these pretences, Sarfarāz Khān made no effort until too late to raise an

[1] Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 33. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 33. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.
[4] Hunter, 'Statistical Account of Bengal,' vol. ix., p. 256.

army, and then his hasty levies were easily defeated by Alīvirdī at Gheriah in January, 1741.[1] Sarfarāz Khān, who

'scorned to give way to the rebels,'[2]

was killed on the field of battle, and Alīvirdī, entering Murshidabad as a conqueror,

'soon showed he wanted only a just title to make him worthy of this high station. Contrary to the general practice, he shed no blood after this action, contenting himself with putting Suffraz Caun's children under gentle confinement.'[3]

This reluctance to shed blood unnecessarily is characteristic of Alīvirdī, and must be placed in the balance against his treachery to the family of his benefactor, Shujā Khān. It descended to his daughter, Amīna Begam, whose advice to her son, Sirāj-uddaula, was always on the side of mercy.[4]

Though he had gained the throne with ease, Alīvirdī was not 1741-1756
destined to enjoy a peaceful reign. In the year following his accession the Marathas invaded the country to enforce their claim, sanctioned by the Emperors of Delhi, to the payment of the *chauth*, or fourth part of the revenues, and the unhappy Bengalis had now to suffer at the hands of their co-religionists all the innumerable miseries of a foreign invasion. Alīvirdī, with dauntless courage, consummate military skill, and the most unscrupulous treachery, defended his provinces through ten long years of varying fortune, until the mutual exhaustion of both parties compelled him to grant, and the Marathas to accept, in 1751, the cession of Orissa, and an annual payment of 12 *lakhs* of rupees in lieu of all their claims. Alīvirdī had already, in 1750, compounded with Mansūr Alī Khān, *Wazīr* of the Emperor, for an annual payment of 52 *lakhs* of rupees in return for a *farmān* confirming him as Nawab of Bengal. Apparently he never paid this tribute.

From this time until his death Alīvirdī reigned in peace, disturbed only by palace intrigues and the unruliness of his favourite, Sirāj-uddaula, who, impatient for the succession, had even gone so far

[1] Broome, Captain Arthur, 'History of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Army,' p. 40. Beale gives the date as the 29th April, 1740.

[2] Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 35.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 36. [4] Vol. I., pp. lxi., 20; Vol. II., p. 3.

as to rebel against his grandfather in the year 1750. Alīvirdī was only too eager to forgive the young man. His fondness for him originated in superstition, and partook of dotage. The naturally evil effects of the education then given in Bengal to the children of Muhammadan nobles[1] was intensified in the case of Sirāj-uddaula by his grandfather's folly,[2] with the result that he indulged himself in every caprice,

'making no distinction between vice and virtue, and paying no regard to the nearest relations, he carried defilement wherever he went, and, like a man alienated in his mind, he made the houses of men and women of distinction the scenes of his profligacy, without minding either rank or station. In a little time he became as detested as Pharao, and people on meeting him by chance used to say, "God save us from him."'[3]

These are the words of the native historian Ghulām Husain Khān, one of his own relatives,[4] and the belief that he had disordered his intellect by his excesses was generally held by all observers,[5] and is the best excuse for the crimes which he committed.

His grandfather was not blind to his favourite's character, and said,

'in full company, that as soon as himself should be dead, and Siraj-uddaula should succeed him, the Hatmen' (*i.e.*, Europeans) 'would possess themselves of all the shores of India.'[6]

He therefore thought it wise to take precautions against that habit which of all is most dangerous to a tyrant—namely, intemperance, and during his last illness exacted from Sirāj-uddaula an oath on the Koran to abstain from drink. To this promise Sirāj-uddaula is said to have rigidly adhered, but it was too late—his mind was already affected.[7]

It is curious to remember that the oath on the Koran, which seems to have been the sole bond that Sirāj-uddaula respected,

[1] Scrafton's 'Reflections,' pp. 19, 20.

[2] 'Seir Mutaqherin,' vol. ii., pp. 66, 88.

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 122.

[4] In the 'Seir Mutaqherin,' Ghulām Husain is said to have been son of a sister of Sirāj-uddaula's father, and, therefore, his cousin. In the *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1801, 'Characters,' p. 28, it is stated that his maternal grandfather was son to the aunt of Alīvirdī Khān.

[5] Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 50.

[6] 'Seir Mutaqherin,' vol. ii., p. 163.

[7] Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 50.

was to prove, in his hour of danger, only a broken reed when he exacted it from Mīr Jafar, a man much more honourable than himself.

A long series of deaths prepared the way for Sirāj-uddaula's accession to the throne. His father, Zain-uddīn,[1] was killed by Afghan mercenaries in 1747, and Alīvirdī's elder brother, Hājī Ahmad, perished at the same time. In 1752 Alīvirdī publicly declared Sirāj-uddaula his heir,[2] in spite of the claims of his two uncles, Nawāzish Muhammad, known as the Chota Nawab, and Sayyid Ahmad, Governor of Purneah. Nawāzish Muhammad had been wild in his youth, but had sobered down with age. He was immensely rich and charitable, and the darling of the people. He was, however, unambitious, and his whole interest in life centred in the person of Fazl Kulī Khān, Sirāj-uddaula's younger brother, whom he had adopted. The sudden death of this young Prince broke his uncle's heart, and he died in 1755,[3] though not until he had weakly assented to the murder by Sirāj-uddaula of his Minister, Hasan Kulī Khān, a man of great influence and ability, who was the life and soul of the party opposed to Sirāj-uddaula ever since Alīvirdī had declared him his successor. With Hasan Kulī Khān perished his brother, Husain-uddīn. Shocked and terrified by these murders, Sirāj-uddaula's other uncle thought it wise to retire to his government of Purneah. He did so, and died soon after his brother.[4] 1752.

Sirāj-uddaula was now free from all possible rivals, except Murād-uddaula, the infant son of Fazl Kulī Khān, who had been adopted by Ghasīta Begam, the wealthy widow of his uncle, Nawāzish Muhammad, and his cousin, Shaukat Jang, who had succeeded Sayyid Ahmad as Governor of Purneah, and who enjoyed, quite undeservedly, much popularity in the country. Neither of these was a very formidable rival, but their union might be dangerous, and Sirāj-uddaula's own reputation was so evil that the wish became father to the thought, and whilst some, like the British, went so far as to consider his accession an impossibility,[5] the

[1] See family table, Vol. III., p. 378. [2] Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 48.

[3] 17th December, 1755. 'Seir Mutaqherin,' ii., 127. The French (Vol. I., pp. 174, 175) say he was poisoned, but Ghulām Husain Khān asserts that he died of dropsy.

[4] 26th January, 1756. 'Seir Mutaqherin,' ii., 150.

[5] Vol. I., p. 207.

other Europeans all expected at any rate a disputed accession.[1] Alīvirdī set himself to prevent this from happening. The most dangerous of Sirāj-uddaula's enemies—Hasan Kulī Khān—had been removed, and to ensure his accession all that remained was to provide him with strong supporters. The most influential people at Court were the Court Bankers, the Seths, who were devoted to Alīvirdī, and who might be relied upon to support Sirāj-uddaula, Mīr Jafar Alī Khān, who had married Alīvirdī's half-sister, and was *Bakhshī—i.e.*, Paymaster and Commander-in-Chief of the Army—and the *Dīwān*, Rāi Durlabh, a Hindu, who, though he had no reputation for courage, also held a command in the army. Rāi Durlabh was secured by presents, and Mīr Jafar readily swore on the Koran to stand by Sirāj-uddaula. Mīr Jafar was a man of great influence, and reputed to be honest and loyal. He had distinguished himself at an early date, even before the accession of Alīvirdī, by capturing, in 1733-1734, the fort of Banki-bazar from the servants of the Ostend Company after a most gallant defence.[2] In the wars with the Marathas he is said in one battle to have killed no less than ten of the enemy with his own hands, and to have saved the army of Alīvirdī from annihilation.

Having made sure of these important personages in favour of his grandson, Alīvirdī felt that he had done everything necessary, even though all attempts to reconcile Sirāj-uddaula with his aunt Ghasīta Begam were in vain. Whilst still labouring at this hopeless task Alīvirdī Khān died of dropsy on April 10, 1756,[3] at the age of eighty-two, and was buried in the garden of Khush Bāgh, near Murshidabad. Orme thus describes the great Nawab:

10th April, 1756.

'His public character is sufficiently delineated by his actions; his private life was very different from the usual manners of a Mahometan prince in Indostan; for he was always extremely temperate, had no pleasures, kept no Seraglio, and always lived the husband of one wife.'[4]

We must here pause for a moment to refer to the relations which existed between Alīvirdī and the Europeans in Bengal. On the whole, his conduct to them had been rather strict than

[1] Vol. I., pp. 1, 75; Vol. II., p. 57; Vol. III., p. 163.
[2] Stewart, 'History of Bengal, p. 426.
[3] Or 9th April. See Vol. I., pp. 118, 248.
[4] Orme MSS., O.V., 66, p. 96.

unjust. During the wars with the Marathas he allowed the Europeans to strengthen their fortifications, and the British in particular to begin, in 1744, the great Ditch which protected the northern half of Calcutta. On the other hand, in 1744-1745, he exacted large sums of money—three *lakhs* and a half from the British alone[1]—on the plea of the expense to which he was put in these wars. He strongly objected to any exhibition of independence on their part, and any reference to the rights they enjoyed under the royal *Farmān*.

'He knew well how to say at the proper moment that he was both King and *Wazir*.'[2]

Though he had allowed them to fortify their Settlements against the Marathas, he had no intention of allowing them to acquire sufficient strength for purposes of resistance to himself, and to all requests for permission to increase their fortifications he replied:

'You are merchants, what need have you of a fortress? Being under my protection, you have no enemies to fear.'[3]

The reason of his jealousy was that he was well informed of what was happening in Southern India, of the interference of the English and French in the politics of the country, which had reduced the native Princes to the position of puppets, and, lastly, of the capture of Angria's stronghold at Gheria. He was determined that there should be no such interference with the affairs of his own province, and yet he had no wish to drive out of the country a class of people who did so much for trade and commerce, though their presence filled his mind with a premonition of coming evil. This is shown by two speeches ascribed to him.

'He used to compare the Europeans to a hive of bees, of whose honey you might reap the benefit, but that if you disturbed their hive they would sting you to death.'[4]

On another occasion, when his General, Mustafā Khān, supported by his nephew, Sayyid Ahmad, represented the ease with which the Europeans might be deprived of their immense wealth, he exclaimed:

[1] Vol. III., p. 289.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 160.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 161.
[4] Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 52.

'My child, Mustapha Khan is a soldier, and wishes us to be constantly in need of his service, but how come you to join in his request? What have the English done against me that I should use them ill? It is now difficult to extinguish fire on land; but should the sea be in flames, who can put them out? Never listen to such advice as his, for the result would probably be fatal.'[1]

These warnings were prophetic, and, in conformity with his secret dread, Alivirdī was extremely cautious in his treatment of the Europeans,

'always observing this policy not to demand it' (*i.e.*, money) 'of them all at the same time, as he wisely judged their union only could make them formidable.'[2]

At the same time he was capable of very vigorous action, and
1749. when in 1749 Commodore Griffin seized the goods of an Armenian merchant, and the latter appealed to him for redress, he placed guards upon the British Factories, and stopped their trade for several months until they were forced to submit to his terms.[3]

In one way or another there was continual friction, the British asserting that there had never been a period of three years during which they had not been forced to submit to extortions of various kinds, and always complaining that they were not allowed the full enjoyment of the privileges granted by the *Farmān* of Farrukhsiyar in 1717, though Bengal

'by its investments has been hitherto, notwithstanding all the interruptions of the Nabobs, the most beneficial part of the Company's estate.'[4]

On the other hand, the Nawab maintained that the British not only enjoyed all privileges consistent with the welfare of the Province, but greatly abused these privileges, to the detriment of the Government and the native traders.

'The injustice to the Moors consists in that, being by their courtesy permitted to live here as merchants, to protect and judge what natives were their servants, and to trade custom free, we under that pretence protected all the Nabob's subjects that claimed our protection, though they were neither our servants nor our merchants, and gave our *dustucks* or passes to numbers of natives to trade custom free, to the great prejudice of the Nabob's revenue; nay, more, we

[1] Stewart, p. 491, and 'Seir Mutaqherin,' vol. ii., p. 163.
[2] Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 46.
[3] Vol. III., p. 289. [4] Vol. I., p. 199.

levied large duties upon goods brought into our districts from the very people that permitted us to trade custom free, and by numbers of their impositions (framed to raise the Company's revenue), some of which were ruinous to ourselves, such as taxes on marriages, provisions, transferring land property, etc., caused eternal clamour and complaints against us at Court.'[1]

It is evident that all the materials for a quarrel were ready long before the accession of Sirāj-uddaula. It may even be said that the British, fretting at the petty restrictions to which they were subjected, were not unwilling to see it break out. Orme writes:

'The Nabob coming down with all His Excellency's cannon to Hughley, and with an intent to bully all the Settlements out of a large sum of money; Clive, 'twould be a good deed to swinge the old dog. I don't speak at random when I say that the Company must think seriously of it, or 'twill not be worth their while to trade in Bengal.'[2]

This, then, was the condition of affairs between Alīvirdī and the British. The French and Dutch had not even the protection of the *Farmān*, which gave, as it were, a legal standpoint for the pretensions of the British. Their trading privileges were much inferior, but they suffered equally from the extortions of the native rulers. The Dutch had made it their settled policy to limit themselves entirely to trade; they were in no position to defend themselves, and their ultimate resort was a threat to leave the country. The French were not in a much better position, but the Chiefs of their Settlements were able men, and well liked by the natives, and their achievements in Southern India gave them a certain appearance, if not the reality, of strength.

Such was the critical moment in which Alīvirdī Khān died, leaving the fortunes of his family in the hands of two young men, of whom their own relative writes:

'It having been decreed by Providence that the guilty race of Aly Verdy Khan should be deprived of an Empire that had cost so much toil in rearing, of course it was in its designs that the three provinces of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa should be found to have for masters two young men equally proud, equally incapable, and equally cruel, Seradj-ed-doulah and Shaocat-djung.'[3]

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[1] Vol. III., p. 384.

[2] Letter from Orme to Clive, 25 August, 1752, Orme MSS., O.V., 19, pp. 1, 2.

[3] 'Seir Mutaqherin,' vol. ii., p. 189.

CHAPTER II.

THE EUROPEAN SETTLEMENTS IN BENGAL.

'Bengal is a kingdom in Asia, very rich, on the gulf of the same name, traversed by the Ganges. . . . The French, English, and Dutch have had Settlements in it for many years.'—*Revolutions in Bengal.*[1]

In 1756 the chief European Settlements in Bengal were those of the English, French, and Dutch, that of the Danes at Serampore being new and of little importance, whilst the Prussian Company had no Settlement, their business being transacted by an Agent, whose headquarters were at the Octagon to the south of the French territory. The Portuguese traded simply as natives at their ancient Settlement of Bandel, to the north of Hugli. At Hugli itself there was a Fort, and the Governor or *Faujdār* was the native official with whom the Europeans had the closest relations.

The three chief Settlements consisted each of a native or Black Town, and a European or White Town. In the centre of the latter was the Factory or Trading House, which was surrounded by a quadrangular enclosure, the walls of which were constructed to carry guns. At each corner was a bastion to flank the walls or curtains. These feeble buildings were dignified by the name of forts. The Towns outside the Factories had practically no fortifications, though at Chandernagore there were the remains of an old ditch, which had once marked the bounds of the Settlement, and the northern part of Calcutta was protected by what was called the Maratha Ditch, dug by the native inhabitants of the town in 1743-1744 as a protection against possible Maratha raids. The original intention was to carry this completely round the Town from Chitpur or Bagh Bazar on the north, where there was a small redoubt, to Surman's Gardens on the south, so as to form with the river Ganges a kind of island easily defensible against

743-1744.

[1] Vol. III., p. 215.

irregular forces. But the Maratha scare had speedily died away, and not only had the Ditch been only half completed, but no care had been taken to keep clear the portion that had been finished, so that it was partially choked with mud, and was fordable at almost any point in its course. Accordingly, not only were the Settlements around the Factories exposed to any assailant, but the forts themselves were so closely surrounded by European houses built to a greater height, and often with walls as strong, if not stronger, than those of the forts themselves, that the latter were also incapable of defence. The European houses were handsome buildings, large and lofty, with wide covered verandahs, and standing in large gardens or compounds, so that to the native eye they were suited rather for the palaces of nobles than for the dwellings of mere merchants. Besides these fine town houses, the leading inhabitants were accustomed to recreate themselves not only in the beautiful gardens belonging to the various East India Companies, but also in gardens of their own, which they established some little distance away in the country.[1] In fact, the Europeans lived with an ostentation of wealth and comfort which completely dazzled the eyes of the natives, who, accustomed under a despotic Government to conceal all signs of wealth, could not imagine that this show of riches was not evidence of the possession of further hoards. Like London to Blücher, so Calcutta, Chandernagore, and Chinsura appeared to the native soldiery only as magnificent towns to plunder.

Besides their three chief Settlements, the English, French, and Dutch had Factory houses at Cossimbazar, near the capital town of Murshidabad; at Dacca, the ancient capital of Bengal; at Balasore, the capital of Orissa; and at Jagdea or Luckipore,[2] at the mouth of the Ganges. At Patna also, the capital of Bahar, the three nations had had Factories, but the English had recently abandoned theirs. None of these were fortified except the English Factory at Cossimbazar;[3] the rest were mere country houses

[1] *e.g.*, Mr. Holwell and Mr. Pearkes had gardens on the banks of the Ganges in the part of Calcutta now known as Garden Reach (Vol. II., pp. 73, 76), and Mr. Kelsall to the north of Calcutta in Chitpur (Vol. III., p. 294).

[2] These towns are at some distance from each other, but apparently were managed in each case by a single staff.

[3] Fortified in 1742-1743 (see Orme MSS., India, vol. iv., p. 4137) for a defence against the Marathas.

standing in walled enclosures, which are called in India "compounds." Thus the Council of Dacca writes:

'The Factory is little better than a common house, surrounded with a thin brick wall, one half of it not above nine foot high.'[1]

The garrisons of the British up-country Factories in no case exceeded fifty Europeans; the French Factories had even smaller numbers,[2] and the Dutch seem to have employed chiefly native *barkandāzes* or gunmen.[3]

It is evident, therefore, that the up-country Factories were entirely at the mercy of the local Government, and in all quarrels between the natives and Europeans it was the custom of Government to surround these Factories and stop their trade until the Europeans submitted to pay the fine, which was the inevitable result of any show of independence on their part.[4]

Before 1756 there had been no serious conflicts between the natives and Europeans, except the destruction of the Portuguese Settlement at Hugli in 1632,[5] the expulsion of the British from Hugli in 1685, and the expulsion of the Emdeners from their little Fort at Bankibazar in 1733-1734.[6] The three Forts which now guarded their Settlements had never been attacked, and were reputed absolutely safe against assault by a native army. We may therefore examine a little more closely into what is known about them, always bearing in mind that each of the three nations was under the delusion that the forts of the other two were in good repair, and strongly held by European garrisons of from three hundred to a thousand men.

Of Fort Gustavus the Dutch Council writes on the 22nd January, 1757:

'We have on the 16th instant sent in a written protest against the action of the Vice-Admiral, and must now patiently await what is further in store for us, as, not being able to offer any resistance worth mentioning, for our palisades, that have to serve as a kind of rampart, are as little proof against a cannonade as the canvass of a tent, and our entire military force consists of 78 men, about one-third of whom are in the hospital, all the seamen being below and the other military on the Patna expedition, whilst all our native servants have run away from fear of the English, so that if matters came to such a pass

[1] Vol. I., p. 35. [2] Vol. III., p. 418. [3] Vol. I., p. 14.
[4] Vol. III., p. 219. [5] Stewart, p. 241. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 314.

we should have to man and aim the guns ourselves—in short, to perform and do all the work for which assistance is required.'[1]

And, again, on the 2nd April:

'Our fort . . . would not be able to withstand the onslaught of the enemy for as many hours as the French have days.'[2]

In the whole of Bengal the Civil Establishment of the Dutch was only thirty-five officials. They had also four military officers and a surgeon.[3]

At the same time, the Dutch had very great trading interests in the country. They claimed the premier rank amongst the Europeans at the *Darbār* or Court of Murshidabad, and they had the expensive but honourable privilege of laying down the buoys in the River Hugli.[4] These were the Dutch claims and their means of enforcing respect for them. Accordingly, one is not surprised to find that neither the Dutch nor any other European nation possessed the right of having a European representative at Court, and that when their native agent or *Wakīl* pressed their claims too strongly, Sirāj-uddaula dared on occasion threaten not only him but his masters with a flogging for their insolence.[5]

Turning next to the French, the statement of the French Factories in Bengal on the 23rd January, 1756,[6] shows that the European garrison of Chandernagore consisted, including officers, of 112 men. If we deduct the native clerks from the Establishment of 642, we find that the total force which can be assumed capable of bearing arms was 376 Europeans and Portuguese. With this garrison, if one may dignify the defenders by that name, the French had to defend a Fort which Mr. Renault, the Governor, describes as follows:

'Fort d'Orléans, situated almost in the middle' (of the Settlement), 'and surrounded by houses which command it, was a square of 100 fathoms, built of bricks, flanked by four bastions of 16 guns, without outworks, ramparts, or glacis. The south curtain, which was about 4 feet thick, raised only to the *cordon*, was provided only with a platform for three guns; but the rest of this curtain, as well as that of the north, was only a wall of earth and brick, a foot

[1] Vol. II., p. 82.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 315.
[3] Vol. III., p. 410.
[4] Vol. II., pp. 257, 287.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 315.
[6] Vol. III., p. 418.

and a half thick and eighteen feet high; and warehouses lined the east curtain which faces the Ganges, and which we were still working at. All this side had no ditch, and that which surrounded the other sides was dry, about four feet deep, and, properly speaking, nothing but a ravine. The fortifications of the Fort up to the *cordon* were eighteen feet high, and the houses which commanded it from the edge of the counterscarp within musket range had a height of 30 feet.'[1]

This is Renault's description of Fort d'Orléans when he had spent several months in trying to make it as defensible as possible.

Whilst the natives of the country were under the impression that the French were the masters of inexhaustible wealth, Renault could not obtain money for the Company's annual trade investment, much less for unproductive expenditure, such as that for fortifications. The French East India Company was in debt to native merchants at Chandernagore to the extent of 26 or 27 *lakhs*, of which 7 *lakhs* were due to the Seths alone.[2] It was only the personal credit of Renault which enabled him to obtain cargoes for the French East India ships, and when the *Saint-Contest* brought him 300,000 rupees, the whole sum was swallowed up by the fine which the Nawab imposed upon the French in 1756 as a punishment for not assisting him in his attack on Calcutta.[3]

So great was the poverty of the French, and so great their indebtedness to the rich merchants, Jagat Seth and Coja Wājīd, that when they came to quarrel with the English their chief hope of assistance from the native Government lay in the belief that their native creditors would not willingly see them ruined. On the other hand, they had a great resource in the personal character of their Chiefs. M. Renault's credit with the native merchants has just been referred to. M. Courtin, the Chief of Dacca, seems to have been on exceedingly good terms with the Nawab's Deputy, Dasarath Khān, and M. Jean Law at Saidabad (Cossimbazar) was almost a favourite of Sirāj-uddaula, to whom he made a practice of paying court at a time when other Europeans treated him with neglect, if not with actual disrespect.[4]

Lastly, we come to the British at Calcutta, of which town Orme writes:

'The river Ganges forms a crescent between two points, the one called Perring's Garden, the other Surman's Garden. The distance between these,

[1] Vol. III., p. 267. [2] Vol. II., p. 438. [3] Vol. III., p. 253. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 163.

measuring along the bank of the river, is about three miles and a half. In the deepest part of this crescent, about the middle between the two points, is situated Fort William, a building which many an old house in this country exceeds in its defences. It is situated a few paces from the riverside, on the banks of which runs a Line of guns the whole length of the Fort from north to south, and this is the only formidable part, as it is capable of annoying ships in the river. The ends of this Line are joined to the two bastions of the Fort nearest the river by a garden wall and a gate in each, which would resist one shot of a six-pounder, but which would be forced by the second. Opposite to the two bastions mentioned are two others inland to the eastward, but within thirty yards to the north and forty yards to the south the bastions are commanded by large houses. To the eastward inland the top of the Church[1] commands the whole of both the northern and eastern ramparts. Northward and southward for the length of a mile, and to the eastward about a quarter of a mile, stand all the English houses, mostly separated from each other by large enclosures. Where the English habitations end to the northward commence those of the principal black merchants, which reach quite up to Perring's Garden. To the southward down to Surman's Garden the houses, belonging to a lower class of the natives, are less conspicuous. Twelve years ago a ditch had been dug, beginning at Perring's, and carried inland of the town in a crescent, with an intent to end at Surman's, but only four miles of it are finished.'[2]

Orme omits to mention that in the eastern curtain of the Fort several large openings had been broken for the purpose of obtaining light and air, and that between the two southern bastions a huge warehouse had been erected, preventing the flanking fire of these bastions, and with walls too weak to carry guns. In the southern curtain doors had been cut leading into the new warehouse, and thus the whole eastern and southern faces of the Fort were rendered practically defenceless against a determined attack.[3]

As regards the garrison of Fort William, this ought to have consisted of four companies of foot and a company of artillery, in all 500 men; but the latest return we have, which is dated 29th February, 1756,[4] shows the number of European officers and soldiers to have been only 260. As the garrison was supposed to supply the up-country Factories, and to provide convoys for treasure sent up-country, there ought to have been over 200 more Euro-

[1] Captain Fenwick, who was absent in England at the time of the siege, wrote to Mr. Orme that the roof of the Church not only commanded the whole of the Fort, but all the adjacent houses. He advised that it should be fortified (Orme MSS., India, vol. vi., pp. 1569-1589).

[2] Vol. III., p. 126.

[3] Vol. II., p. 25, and Vol. III., p. 387.

[4] Vol. III., p. 408.

peans available; but the mortality amongst the European soldiery was very great, and the constant fighting with the French in Madras had caused the authorities at Fort St. George[1] to detain all the European recruits sent for Bengal since 1752.[2] Consequently we find that when the military force at Calcutta came to be reviewed just before the siege it was found to number only 180 foot, of whom not above 45 were Europeans, and 35 European artillery. With the addition of militia and volunteers the fighting force in Fort William was 515 men,[3] a smaller number than the garrison of Fort d'Orléans when it was besieged in March, 1757.

Not only were the British exceedingly weak from a military point of view, but they had the misfortune of being commanded by the most incompetent of leaders. The chief military officer, Captain-Commandant George Minchin, may be most briefly dismissed in Holwell's scathing words:

'Touching the military capacity of our Commandant, I am a stranger. I can only say we are unhappy in his keeping it to himself, if he had any; as neither I, nor I believe anyone else, was witness to any part of his conduct that spoke or bore the appearance of his being the commanding military officer in the garrison.'[4]

And Holwell justly remarks:

'Troops . . . are hardly ever known to do their duty, unless where they have an opinion of as well as love for their commanders.'[5]

In a garrison made up largely of civilians this would not have been of much importance if the Governor had been a man of character and ability, but unfortunately Mr. Roger Drake, who had held that position by seniority since 1752, though he had never been formally confirmed by the Court of Directors, was a man totally unfitted to meet a critical emergency. He was only thirty-four years of age. His uncertain official position weakened his authority with both natives and Europeans in Calcutta, and his unfortunate domestic arrangements exposed him to many indignities, and drove him for company to men of inferior position.[6] Consequently much of the influence which should have belonged

[1] Madras.
[2] Vol. I., p. 134.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 137.
[4] Vol. II., p. 26.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Vol. I., pp. 276, 277.

to the Governor of Calcutta was in the hands of subordinate members of Council. The chief of these were Messrs. Manningham and Frankland, whose sole object seems to have been their own enrichment without any regard to the interests of the Company or the rights of the native Government,[1] and Mr. John Zephaniah Holwell,[2] an ex-surgeon, who was now *Zamīndār* or native Magistrate of Calcutta. Mr. Holwell appears to have been the only member of Council who had any real knowledge of the natives of the country, and his reforms in the administration of the law in Calcutta had endeared him to them, though they had rendered him unpopular with many of the Europeans whose gains were interfered with. To these, perhaps, should be added Mr. Watts, the Second in Council, who was Chief at Cossimbazar, and who should have been well acquainted with the attitude of the native Government, but at this time he seems to have had very little idea of the danger in which the Europeans stood, and his carelessness is in some degree responsible for the misfortunes which befell Calcutta.

These, then, were the position and the resources of the Europeans in Bengal at the accession of Sirāj-uddaula. It remains only to say a few words about two personages who were the intermediaries between them and the native Government — namely, Coja Wājid the Armenian, and Omichand the Jain merchant. The former, who was known amongst the natives by the title of *Fakhr-uttūjjār*, or the 'Chief of Merchants,' was a very rich trader, who lived at Hugli in a house close to the Muhammadan Fort.[3] He had dealings with the French and Dutch, and was employed by the Nawab in his negotiations with the Chiefs of these nations. At first, at any rate, he was inclined to favour the French in their quarrels with the British; but he was an extremely timid man, and after his property at Hugli had been plundered by the British,[4] he gradually changed sides, and it was by his means that the British were informed of the Nawab's intrigues with the French Chiefs Law and Bussy.[5] At this time he was not unsuspected of inciting Sirāj-uddaula against the British.[6]

[1] Vol. I., p. 269.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 85, 93, 266.
[3] Vol. III., p. 36.
[4] Vol. II., p. 125.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 264, 313, 314, 355, 364, 365, 369, 370.
[6] Vol. I., p. 140.

Omichand was an inhabitant of Calcutta. Babu Sāradā Charan Mitra[1] tells us his proper name was Amīr Chand, that he was a Panjabi by race and a Sikh by religion. He had a brother, Golāb Chand, and a nephew, Dayāl Chand, and a near relative—some say a brother-in-law[2]—Hazārī Mal, in Calcutta. Apparently he started business in Calcutta as an agent of Vaishnava Dās Seth and his brother, Mānik Chand Seth, of Barabazar. Omichand, though he lived in Calcutta, was a great favourite with Alīvirdī Khān, whose protection he secured by judicious presents of rare or curious objects—*e.g.*, on one occasion a Persian cat.[3] Drake asserts that he was offered the Nawabship of Purneah in 1754, and shortly before the attack on Calcutta he received a *parwāna* granting him the same privileges as Jagat Seth.[4] On the other hand, he had for many years acted as the Agent of the English in regard to the annual investment or purchase of Indian goods in Bengal, and this office had been recently taken from him. Mr. Noble, in his letter to the Council of Fort St. George,[5] says plainly that he had been very badly treated by some of the gentlemen in Bengal,

'who have generally sacrificed the Company's welfare and nation's honour and glory to their private piques and interest.'

However, whether he had been treated justly or unjustly, he was considered to be a man of very vindictive temper—

'You know Omychund can never forgive'[6]—

and when he was injured in both pride and pocket by being no longer

'the acting person between the Company and the Government,'[7]

the suggestion that he instigated the Nawab[8] to attack Calcutta, so that he might prove his importance to the British by stepping

[1] 'Sahityasamhita,' vol. i., No. 1, pp. 9-15.
[2] Vol. I., p. 142.
[3] Vol. II., p. 63.
[4] Vol. I., p. 141. This is important to notice, as it marks the beginning of the rivalry between Omichand and the Seths, which we shall have to notice later on.
[5] Vol. III., p. 328.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[7] Vol. II., p. 148.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

in as their saviour at the last moment, met with ready credence. Whether he intended to ruin or save the British can never be known, as Drake put him in prison as soon as the Nawab approached Calcutta, and thereby so enraged him that he not only refused to write a letter to the Nawab in favour of the British, but even sent his servants to inform the Nawab of the easiest way to introduce his forces into the town.[1]

[1] Vol. III., p. 363.

CHAPTER III.

THE QUARREL BETWEEN THE NAWAB AND THE BRITISH.

'One of those State mysteries that die with their authors.'—SCRAFTON.[1]

17th December, 1755. NAWĀZISH MUHAMMAD KHĀN died in December, 1755. As has been said already, he was extremely rich, and had no heir; but his property was in the hands of his widow, Ghasīta Begam, the eldest daughter of Alīvirdī, and his *nāib* or *diwān*, Rāj Ballabh,[2] who was probably a native of Dacca, and had had the management of the fleet of boats stationed at that town to hold in check the pirates of the Sundarbans before Nawāzish Muhammad made him his *dīwān*.[3] Rāj Ballabh was now at Murshidabad, and as, owing to the last illness of Alīvirdī, Sirāj-uddaula was in practical possession of the government, Sirāj-uddaula called upon him for an account of his uncle's affairs, so as to ascertain how far his estate was indebted to Government for the revenues of Dacca. Failing to give a satisfactory account, Rāj Ballabh was imprisoned, or at any rate placed under strict surveillance,[4] until Sirāj-uddaula should be in a position to force him to compliance. What happened next is not quite clear. Two explanations, however, suggest themselves. One is that Rāj Ballabh, to get out of the difficulty and yet save his property, proposed to Sirāj-uddaula to trick the English into sheltering his son, Krishna Dās, and then to seize upon their property as punishment for the offence.[5] This seems to be corroborated by the fact that he was very quickly released, and that after the capture of Calcutta his son, Krishna Dās, was complimented with a dress of honour. The other explanation is that

[1] 'Reflections,' p. 52. [2] 'A Bengali of Jehangirnagar.' Seir Mutaqherin, II. 253.
[3] 'Seir Mutaqherin.' [4] Vol. III., p. 353. [5] Vol. I., p. 279.

SIRAJ-UDDAULA.

Rāj Ballabh was set free at Amīna Begam's request[1] simply because Sirāj-uddaula was busy with other absorbing matters, and, being enraged at the way he had been treated, declared himself a partisan of Ghasīta Begam and her protégé, Murād-uddaula.[2] Whilst *dīwān* of Nawāzish Muhammad at Dacca, Rāj Ballabh had had a great deal to do with the British. He had been useful to them and might be so again, and now he instructed Krishna Dās to travel down by boat with his women and valuables to the shrine of Jagannath in Orissa. As the wife of Krishna Dās was expecting her confinement Rāj Ballabh obtained from Mr. Watts,[3] the English Chief at Cossimbazar, a letter recommending his son's admission to Calcutta until his wife was able to proceed on her journey. This letter was given by Mr. Watts to Rāj Ballabh without consulting any of his Council.[4] Krishna Dās arrived at Calcutta on the 13th March,[5] and presenting his credentials to Mr. Manningham, who was acting for the Governor during his absence[6] on a short health trip to Balasore, he was admitted into the town, and took up his abode in a house belonging to Omichand.[7] This, of course, could not happen without the Nawab's spies reporting the fact to him, and it naturally excited his suspicions as to the motives of the British in sheltering the family of a man reputed to be under his displeasure. His feelings towards the British were by no means friendly. They had never asked his assistance in their affairs at Court,[8] and he considered they had treated him with discourtesy when he wished to visit their Factories or houses,[9] and had sworn to have revenge for this slight.[10] His spies now reported that they were plotting with Ghasīta Begam and Shaukat Jang, Nawab of Purneah, though Mr. Surgeon Forth asserts that this rumour was entirely based upon visits paid by a certain Corporal Bailey to doctor the horses of Aga Baba, a son of the Nawab Sarfarāz Khān, who was living at Murshidabad under Ghasīta Begam's protection.[11]

13th March, 1756.

At this time both French and English were expecting the

[1] Vol. II., p. 3.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Vol. I., 120.
[4] Vol. I., p. 163.
[5] Or 16 March. Vol. I., p. 120, and Vol. II., p. 4.
[6] From 9th to 21st March. Vol. I., p. 120, and Vol. II., p. 136.
[7] Vol. I., p. 120.
[8] Vol. III., p. 162.
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] Vol. II., p. 62.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

outbreak of war in Europe, and feeling certain that there would be disturbances in Murshidabad on Alīvirdī's death, which would so weaken the hands of Government that if either nation found itself strong enough to attack the other it need have no hesitation in breaking the neutrality which their fear of Alīvirdī had hitherto caused the Europeans to observe towards each other in Bengal, they began without any concealment to repair and strengthen their fortifications.[1] To excuse their action, however, they accused each other of preparing to resist the Government, and the French asserted[2] that the British were expecting the arrival of a strong military force for this purpose. Misled by the French and the reports of his spies, Sirāj-uddaula, a short time before his grandfather's death, charged the British in *Darbār* with this intention. Mr. Forth and the British Agent were repeatedly questioned by Alīvirdī, and convinced him that the report was false, but Sirāj-uddaula was not satisfied.[3] However, for the moment Alīvirdī's illness was too serious to allow consideration for other matters, and to add to his difficulties Sirāj-uddaula now heard that the *Wazīr*[4] of the Emperor was about to invade Bengal to enforce the payment of the tribute which Aliverdi had in the year 1750 promised to the Emperor, but which he had never remitted to Delhi. He contented himself therefore with ordering his spies—especially the chief of his Intelligence Department, Rājārām, *Nāib* of Midnapore—to keep a watch on the doings of the British in Calcutta. Mr. Watts heard of these orders, and was also informed that there was a good deal of talk amongst the military party of the great wealth of Calcutta and the ease with which the Nawab might make himself master of it.[5] He did not attach much importance to such reports, still he mentioned them in his letter to Mr. Drake, and advised him to dismiss Krishna Dās as soon as possible.[6] Drake accordingly gave orders that a careful watch should be kept upon the town, all spies arrested, and, later on, that all letters should be brought to him for examination;[7] but in spite of the recommendation of Mr. Watts,

[1] Vol. I., pp. 124, 214. [2] Vol. II., p. 7. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 66.
[4] Some accounts say it was the *Wazir*, Ghāzī-uddīn, others Shujā-uddaula, son of Mansūr Alī Khān, Nawab of Oudh. Vol. I., p. 174.
[5] Vol. I., p. 127. [6] Vol. II., p. 6, and Vol. III., p. 332.
[7] Vol. I., p. 128, and Vol. II., p. 6.

which was supported by Messrs. Manningham and Holwell, he did not dismiss Krishna Dās.[1] This foolish conduct afterwards gave rise to the unfounded suspicion that some of the most influential people in Calcutta had received bribes to protect the latter.[2]

Meanwhile the old Nawab Alīvirdī died, and almost before he was buried[3] Sirāj-uddaula assumed the reins of government. 10th April, 1756. His first step was to secure himself against his aunt, Ghasīta Begam, who had retired with her wealth to her palace of Moti Jhil. This building, which was almost entirely surrounded by water, was strong enough for defence, and Ghasīta Begam had with her her lover, Nazīr Alī, and a number of troops; but by the persuasion of her mother, the widow of Alīvirdī, she surrendered without any resistance, on condition that her wealth should be untouched and her lover's life assured. Nazīr Alī was immediately banished, Ghasīta Begam ordered to retire to the Harem, and her wealth carried into the Nawab's Treasury.[4] This happened about ten days after Alīvirdī's death,[5] and immediately all opposition to the Nawab was at an end. Sirāj-uddaula had still, however, to settle with the Begam's supposed allies, the Nawab of Purneah, Shaukat Jang, and the English. He had also the always present dread of an attack from the side of Oudh. The latter was the less difficult to deal with, as the *Wazīr* hardly dared to advance towards Bengal for fear lest his own dominions should be invaded.[6] Accordingly it was easy to buy him off with a generous bribe from Ghasīta Begam's fortune,[7] in return for which he swore friendship with Sirāj-uddaula.

Sirāj-uddaula now considered himself strong enough to reorganize his Court. He dismissed his grandfather's officers, appointed Mohan Lāl (his household *Dīwān*) head *Dīwān* or Prime Minister, and Mīr Madan, whom Stewart describes as a person of mean origin, but who was a brave and capable officer, he made General of the Household Troops.[8] Mīr Jafar, whose support had placed him on the throne, apparently retained the emoluments of

[1] Vol. II., p. 5.
[2] Vol. I., pp. 207, 279, and Vol. III., p. 368.
[3] Vol. I., p. 304.
[4] Vol. III., pp. 217, 218.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 394.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 218.
[7] Vol. I., p. 175, and Vol. III., p. 218.
[8] Stewart, p. 498. The 'Seir Mutaqherin,' II., 186, says he was made *Bakhshi*, but this is evidently a mistranslation.

the post of *Bakhshī*, or Paymaster of the Army, and Rāi Durlabh, the other *Dīwān*, also held a high military command. The army, which had been levied before the death of Alīvirdī to resist the *Wazīr* and Shujā-uddaula, was next ordered to march towards Purneah, Shaukat Jang having not yet recognised Sirāj-uddaula's accession. On the 16th of May[1] Sirāj-uddaula set out from Murshidabad, but before doing so, in order to let the Europeans know that he was not oblivious of what he was pleased to call their misdoings, he sent word to the French and English to pull down all the fortifications they had erected since the beginning of his predecessor's illness.[2]

16th May, 1756.

This message appears to have been the Nawab's first official intimation to the Europeans of his accession, and though it is said that he was displeased with the British for not sending him a complimentary present on that occasion,[3] it seems that they, whilst waiting for a formal announcement before doing so, actually did write him a complimentary letter,[4] which was well received—

'Presently, after the death of the old Nabob, President Drake wrote Serajah Dowlah a letter of congratulation on his accession, and desired his favour and protection to the English Company, which was received very kindly, and promises given our *vackeel* that he would show the English greater marks of friendship and esteem than his grandfather had done'[5]—

and a little later they sent him a small present, which he refused to accept.[6] Neither the Dutch nor the French made him such a present, for we find that after the capture of Calcutta, the amount of this *nazarānah* or complimentary present was included in the sums which he extorted from them as the price of permission to retain their fortifications.[7] The French, ably advised by M. Jean Law, their Chief at Cossimbazar, treated the Nawab's messenger with great courtesy, and as they had either completed all that they wished to do, or were able to persuade the messenger to report that they had done nothing improper, the Nawab, who received their reply at Rajmahal about the 20th May, was pleased to express his approbation of their conduct.[8]

20th May, 1756.

It was by no means the same case with the British. It has been mentioned that the Nawab had ordered his head

[1] Vol. I., p. 6. [2] Vol. III., p. 165. [3] Vol. I., p. 278.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 120. [5] Vol. III., p. 290. [6] Vol. I., p. 4.
[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 55. [8] Vol. II., p. 8, and Vol. III., p. 165.

spy, Rājārām, to keep watch upon their doings in Calcutta. Rājārām sent to that town his own brother, Narāyan Dās, with a *parwāna* or letter, of the contents of which we know nothing for certain, but which is said to have been addressed to Mr. Drake, and to have contained a demand from the Nawab for the surrender of Krishna Dās, his family, and his wealth. When he reached Hugli Narāyan Dās appears to have heard that spies found in Calcutta had been arrested and punished, so on the 14th or 15th April[1] he entered the town secretly—in disguise according to Omichand—and went to Omichand's house. That the bearer of a royal letter should go to Omichand's house was natural enough, Omichand being the leading native merchant in Calcutta, a *persona grata* at Court, and, I believe, also connected by marriage with Rājārām; but that he should enter Calcutta secretly and in disguise was quite unnecessary, whatever orders might have been issued for the treatment of spies. Mr. Drake was absent for the evening at Baraset,[2] so Omichand took him to Messrs. Holwell and Pearkes, telling them what the Nawab's letter contained, and asking them to receive it. They very properly refused, and early next morning they reported the matter to Mr. Drake before the meeting of Council. Whilst Messrs. Drake, Manningham, and Holwell were discussing the matter, word was brought that Omichand and Narāyan Dās were present at the Factory and waiting for admission. Omichand was at this time very much in Mr. Drake's disfavour, and the latter hurriedly came to the conclusion that it was a trick of Omichand—Krishna Dās living in one of his houses—to get Krishna Dās' property into his own hands.[3] Accordingly, as Mr. Drake had authority to exclude undesirable persons, it was decided to refuse to receive Narāyan Dās' letter, and to expel him from the town, and servants were sent to see this order immediately carried out.[4] Extraordinary, however, as had been the behaviour of Narāyan Dās, supposing he had really come from the Nawab, there was a chance that his official position and his relationship to Rājārām might enable him to do the British a bad turn at Court. This, which ought to have been thought of earlier, only occurred to their minds after Narāyan Dās had left Calcutta, and all that could then be done was to send word to

[1] Vol. I., p. 120, and Vol. II., pp. 6, 137. See also Vol. III., pp. 393, 394.
[2] Vol. II., p. 6. [3] Vol. I., p. 121. [4] *Ibid.*, and Vol. II., p. 7.

Mr. Watts at Cossimbazar. Mr. Watts promptly explained matters to his friends at Court, and to all appearance the matter passed off smoothly. Drake tells us that he also informed Mr. Watts that if the Nawab insisted he would surrender Krishna Dās, but not his women.[1] Encouraged by his apparent success in managing the Nawab's messengers, Mr. Drake took upon himself the responsibility of replying alone to the envoy who brought the order to demolish the fortifications, though his was a public message, openly delivered, and to be dealt with only by Council.

10th-12th May, 1756.

It arrived about the 10th-12th May,[2] and Drake sent the Nawab a reply, which has been lost, and the contents of which were known to no one at Calcutta save himself, and possibly Mr. Cooke, Secretary to the Council. At any rate, Mr. Cooke asserted that the reply then sent was not the same as that which Mr. Drake asserted he had sent when the matter came before Council two or three days later.[3] No other copies of this letter are known to exist, and we are therefore at a loss to explain why the Nawab took so much exception to Mr. Drake's reply. According to Mr. Drake, it was to the effect that the British had traded in Bengal for over a century, and had always been obedient to the Nawabs; that they hoped the Nawab would not listen to the false assertions of their enemies as to their building new fortifications; and that, owing to the

20th May, 1756.

probability of war breaking out between Britain and France, they were repairing the old fortifications upon the riverside. This letter was received by the Nawab at Rajmahal on the same day as the reply from the French, and threw him into a violent fit of passion. He leapt from his seat, crying out:

'Who shall dare to think of commencing hostilities in my country, or presume to imagine I have not power to protect them?'[4]

Even supposing the Nawab to have been touched in his vanity at the mere supposition that he was less able to maintain order than his predecessor, this letter seems hardly of a nature to justify such violent conduct as immediately followed. We must suppose, therefore, that either the letter actually sent contained a different message or that something else had occurred to enrage the Nawab, and it is certain that matters had not gone at Rajmahal in a way to please him. In the first place, when he arrived at Rajmahal

[1] Vol. II., p. 138.
[2] Vol. III., p. 394.
[3] Vol. II., p. 147, and Vol. III., p. 394.
[4] Vol. II., p. 15; Vol. III., p. 165.

his army was discontented, as the soldiers believed they would have to fight against the Royal troops, whom they heard had been sent to assist Shaukat Jang,[1] and his generals represented that the Rains would soon begin, and that therefore it was not wise to commence a campaign in Purneah, where the roads would become impassable in the course of a few weeks. Whilst he was hesitating what to do, he received a message from Shaukat Jang acknowledging him as his Nawab and master, but excusing himself from paying him a visit owing to the difficulty of travelling at that season of the year. It is said that the envoys from Shaukat Jang obtained the acceptance of this qualified submission by betraying to the Nawab their correspondence[2]—there is no evidence of there having been any correspondence—with the British. It is quite possible, however, that to divert the Nawab's anger they pretended that the British had been the instigators of Shaukat Jang's resistance. At the same time Narāyan Dās, whose expulsion by Mr. Drake had been hitherto forgotten, obtained an opportunity of making a complaint of ill-treatment,[3] and the Nawab was speedily convinced that not only had Mr. Drake sent him an impertinent written answer, but that he had verbally insulted him, and also ill-treated his messengers.[4] According to M. Law his first resolve was to expel all the Europeans or *Feringhees* from the country,[5] but if it was so it soon changed into a settled purpose of chastising the British alone. Shaukat Jang was forgotten, and orders issued for an immediate return to Murshidabad and the attack of the British Fort at Cossimbazar.[6]

The above is a bare account drawn from existing documents of the series of events which preceded the war, but as so much dis-

[1] Vol. I., p. 124, and Vol. II., p. 163.

[2] Vol. III., p. 164. Possibly the assertion that the British had corresponded with Shaukat Jang was simply a part of the general plot to bring the Nawab into conflict with that nation of foreigners which seemed most likely to be able to oppose him successfully.

[3] Vol. II., p. 161, and Vol. III., p. 332.

[4] Vol. I., pp. 95, 116, 230; Vol. II., p. 144; Vol. III., p. 165. M. Vernet, the Dutch Chief at Cossimbazar, says the Nawab 'received some intelligence concerning the conduct of the English at Calcutta which was not published here' (Vol. I., p. 6).

[5] Vol. III., p. 165. M. Vernet wrote that the Nawab had promised if he captured Calcutta to expel all Europeans from the country (Vol. I., p. 11).

[6] In the 'Seir Mutaqherin' it is stated that the Nawab did not hear of the protection given to Krishna Dās until he arrived at Rajmahal; but the author of that book, Ghulām Husain Khān, was not at Murshidabad at this time, and it is quite certain that Sirāj-uddaula knew of it a long time previously.

cussion arose afterwards it may be as well to say something more about the 'causes of the war'; and for the purpose of clearness we may distinguish between (1) the general causes, (2) the reasons or motives of the Nawab, and (3) the pretexts alleged by the Nawab.

1. The general causes have already been referred to. They were the discontent of the Hindus towards the Muhammadan Government, and what I may perhaps best describe as that incompatibility of temper between Europeans and Orientals which seems to prevent them from living together in peace on anything like terms of equality. I have already mentioned that the Hindus were quietly looking round for a possible deliverer, and also that the Europeans had for some years interfered in native politics in other parts of India, at first merely to secure their commercial position, though later on perhaps with ideas of conquest. Alīvirdī had noticed this, and Mr. Forth writes:

'If the reports[1] are to be credited, it was the advise of the old Nabob to his son to reduce the power of the three nations, but more particularly ours: for what with our conquests on the Coast,[2] and the libertys granted us in Bengal by our *phurmaund*, he was so apprehensive that at last we should demand after his death all those branches of trade cut off from us by him and former Nabobs, which our *phurmaund* gave us a right to, and, if not granted, might involve his son in troubles by bringing our forces into the country, and the consequence might be a conquest of it to the ruin of his family, and that he thought a timely severity would prevent it. Some will have it that his advise to his son was to turn the English entirely out of his country, but trace the character of this man from the earliest accounts we have of him, we shall find that he was too wise, too good a politician—his whole conduct shows it—ever to advise his grandson to such measures as to hurt his country and lessen his revenues by so false and imprudent a step, well knowing the advantage of trade, especially that part carried on by the English, superior to all the Europeans joined together.'[3]

M. Law[4] would have it that the suspicions of Alīvirdī were directed as much against the French as against the British, but Alīvirdī was shrewd enough to know that, whatever had happened in Southern India, in Bengal it was the British and not the French who were dangerous to him, since their power was based on a firm commercial footing and the grants made by the Emperor, which they could enforce in exact proportion with the weakness of the local Government. It was this consideration also and no other

[1] Vol. I., p. 211. [2] Madras. [3] Vol. II., p. 66. [4] Vol. III., p. 161.

which attracted the Hindus towards the British. Alīvirdī therefore saw that if their power could be lessened, the French or any other nation might be reckoned with at leisure.

Thus amongst the general causes of hostility between the native Government and the Europeans there were particular reasons why this hostility should find its first object in the British.

2. As to the particular reasons which animated Sirāj-uddaula against the British, the most important were his vanity and his avarice.[1] I have mentioned how he had considered himself insulted by the behaviour of the British when he wished to visit one of their Factories. This supposed insult, it is clear, was aggravated by popular rumour, for M. Law[2] describes his exclusion from the British Factories and country houses as habitual. On the other hand, as Mr. Forth says, the British trade exceeded that of all the other nations; Calcutta was the largest and handsomest of the European Settlements; the ostentatious mode of living indulged in by the British caused the rumours of their wealth to be exaggerated, and they had never, previous to his accession, made Sirāj-uddaula any presents as the French had done.

3. Lastly, we come to the pretexts put forward by the Nawab for attacking the British. These he states himself in his letters to Coja Wājid and to Mr. Pigot, Governor of Madras. They are:[3]

(*a*) That the British had made fortifications contrary to the established laws of the country.

(*b*) That they had abused the privileges of trade granted them by their *Farmān*.

(*c*) That they had protected his subjects when he had demanded their surrender to give account of their employments.

The last of these pretexts he emphasizes strongly in his letter to Mr. Pigot,[4] in which also he shows a strong personal animosity against Mr. Drake.

'It was not my intention to remove the mercantile business of the Company belonging to you from out of the *subah*[5] of Bengal, but Roger Drake, your *gomasta*,[6] was a very wicked and unruly man, and began to give protection to

[1] M. Renault says: 'He took hold of the first pretext to satisfy his hatred for the English and his cupidity, without any regard to the difference which this conduct might make in his revenues' (Vol. I., p. 209).

[2] Vol. III., p. 162. [3] Vol. I., p. 4. [4] Vol. I., p. 196.

[5] Province. [6] Factor.

persons who had accounts with the *Patcha*[1] in his *Koatey*.[2] Notwithstanding all my admonitions, yet he did not desist from his shameless actions.'

At the same time he declared[3]

'unless the English consent to fill up their Ditch, raze their fortifications, and trade upon the same terms they did in the time of Nabob Jaffeir Cawn,[4] I will not hear anything in their behalf, and will expel them totally out of my country.'

In other words, though he made no direct demand for money,[5] he insisted that the British should give up all the privileges granted them by the Emperor's *Farmān* of the year 1717, and revert to the position of the Armenians and Portuguese, whose trade was at the mercy not only of the Nawabs of the different provinces, but of every petty local official. This declaration brings into prominence that incompatibility of temper between European and Oriental which I have spoken of, the European claiming the protection of the law for the individual against the Sovereign, the Oriental insisting that the sole law should be the Sovereign's will. The quarrel was evidently one that could be settled only by force.

A word, however, must be said about the Nawab's pretexts for war. As regards the fortifications, it is quite clear that the British had exceeded their rights, for Colonel Scot in 1754 had planned a small fort or redoubt at Perrin's Garden in the extreme north of the Black Town of Calcutta, and this had been built before or during Alīvirdī's illness. The British had also begun to clear out the Maratha Ditch, and to repair the fortifications close to Fort William as soon as they heard of the probability of war between France and England,[6] and this they had done without asking permission from anyone. A certain Mr. Kelsall had also repaired an

[1] Emperor. [2] Factory. [3] Vol. I., p. 3.

[4] Nawab Murshid Kulī Khān.

[5] Up to the very last moment the British expected that the Nawab would conclude the affair by a demand for money (Vol. I., pp. 4, 48, 58, 61, 103, 126, 134). Rāi Durlabh actually demanded 20 *lakhs* from Messrs. Watts and Collet when they were his prisoners (Vol. I., p. 103).

[6] Both Mr. Drake and Mr. Holwell (Vol. I., p. 124, and Vol. II., p. 8, note) refer to the repairs of the fortifications as commencing after the receipt of the packet by the *Delaware*, conveying the Court's orders to prepare for a war with France. As this packet arrived only late in May—it was despatched from Madras on the 11th of May—and shortly before the attack on Cossimbazar, it is clear that they had forgotten the repairs begun in March, or earlier, during Alīvirdī's last illness.

Octagon or summer-house to the north of the Maratha Ditch, which the Nawab's spies had taken to be a fort, as Government was accustomed to test shot there.

As regards the abuse of trade privileges, it must be confessed that the British had used the *dastaks* or passes for goods free of custom in a way never contemplated by the *Farmān*. These had been intended merely for the goods of the Company, which were allowed to pass through the country free of custom in return for a payment of 3,000 rupees *per annum;* but the British had issued them to cover not only the private trade of their own servants, but the trade of native merchants whom they favoured. Mr. Drake asserts that he had greatly lessened this malpractice, but it still existed.[1]

The protection given to the servants of the native Government is somewhat difficult to understand. The only case on record is that of Krishna Dās,[2] the circumstances of which have been detailed above. On the one hand the British had no right to shelter the servants of Government from the authorities in their own country; on the other hand, whilst the accession of Sirāj-uddaula was doubtful, they might be justified in running some risk in the case of a man to whom kindness might be a useful speculation.

It will be seen, therefore, that Sirāj-uddaula had a show of reason in all the pretexts he alleged for his attack on the British; but where he displayed his folly was in resorting to such violent means for reducing to submission a useful people whom his grandfather had always been able to manage by much milder measures, and in publicly exhibiting his own contempt for law and order by claiming the right to abrogate the *Farmān* granted by his own master, the Emperor of Delhi.[3]

Seeing his mad behaviour, the people of the country were delighted, and thought he was marching straight to ruin.

'They hugged themselves in the expectation that the English would defeat the Nabob and deliver them from his tyranny and oppression.'[4]

[1] Vol. II., p. 148.

[2] At the time of the siege of Calcutta the natives of Bengal generally asserted that the protection of Krishna Dās was the sole cause of the war (Vol. III., p. 339).

[3] Letter from Council, Fort St. George, Vol. I., p. 199; Letter from Mr. Pigot to the Nawab, Vol. I., p. 241; and Admiral Watson's Letter, Vol. II., p. 70.

[4] Vol. III., p. 78.