



rank,¹ and the neutrality which had been customary in Bengal. Everyone knows for how little personal considerations count in national quarrels, and as regards the neutrality, a nation that had not observed it in the South of India had no right to complain if its enemy infringed it in the East. The French, conscious of their weakness, fully expected this, as we see from the letters of Messrs. Renault, Bausset, and Fournier,² and Law asked himself, 'What confidence could people have in a neutrality which had only been observed out of fear of the Nawabs?'³ If the Nawab had been once well beaten by the British, Law would have accepted the position, and formed an alliance with Sirāj-uddaula, in spite of the insults the latter had been pouring upon the Europeans since his conquest of Calcutta.⁴ Law's was without doubt the wiser policy from a commercial point of view, for as long as the French could keep a footing in Bengal, however humble it might be, they might hope for better times. This might be allowed them by the Nawab, but would certainly not be permitted by the British. M. Renault, Director of Chandernagore, and Chief of the French in Bengal, was unable to agree to the strong measures proposed by Law, for though he had heard early in December, 1756, from the Surat Factory that war had been declared in Europe on the 17th May,⁵ he had no power to declare war against the British in Bengal without the consent of the Superior Council at Pondicherry, and even if he acted without this authority he would be running a great risk with the small garrison⁶ at his disposal. As the Nawab could be convinced of the loyalty of the French only by some overt act on their part against the British, it is clear that M. Renault was in a position from which it was almost impossible to extricate himself with either safety or honour. There appeared, however, one gleam of hope, and this was the fact that even after the arrival of the British squadron French ships were not only allowed to pass without molestation,⁷ but their salutes were courteously returned.⁸ It seemed as if the British wished for a neutrality.

¹ Vol. I., pp. 48, 59, 68.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 206, 229, and Vol. III., p. 244.

³ Vol. III., p. 178.

⁴ Vol. I., p. 210, and Vol. III., p. 175.

⁵ Vol. II., p. 59.

⁶ One hundred and forty-six men (Vol. III., p. 244).

⁷ Vol. II., pp. 59, 115.

⁸ Vol. III., p. 4.



It has been said that one of the pretexts of the war between the Nawab and the British had been the erection of fortifications by the latter, and that immediately after his accession he had sent orders to both French and British to desist from making fortifications and to pull down all new ones. The French, according to Holwell,¹ having completed their Fort by the erection of the remaining bastion, were able to desist immediately, and to inform the Nawab that they had made no new ones, whilst the Nawab's messengers, being well treated,² in other words bribed, made so favourable a report that he said nothing more about the matter. When Sirāj-uddaula had taken Calcutta, and there seemed every probability of the French having to fight him in their turn, Renault thought it necessary to examine into the condition of his artillery, and managed, with some difficulty, to get it into a state of efficiency. His garrison was weak, but fortunately the French East Indiaman, *Saint Contest*, had come into port, and the captain, De la Vigne Buisson, was ordered to stay and add his crew to the defenders of the Fort. In those days all sailors knew how to handle guns, and De la Vigne Buisson and his men took charge of the artillery and formed the most efficient portion of the garrison. The Nawab, after his return from Purneah, seems to have abandoned his suspicions of the French, or at any rate to have thought the lesson he had given them in his treatment of the British would prevent them from attempting any resistance to his commands, and so did not pay much attention to what they were doing. Accordingly, even before he heard from Surat that war had actually broken out, M. Renault began to clear the ground round the Fort by destroying some of the houses to the north which, like those round Fort William, were so close as to command it.³ It was probably to cover this that on the 10th December he sent news to the *Faujdar* of Hugli that a British squadron had arrived, or was about to arrive, in the river.⁴ This news must, I think, have reached him by the *Danae*, a French ship which had just arrived at Chandernagore.⁵

Such was the state of affairs when Watson and Clive came up the Hugli. From Culpee it is probable that Watson wrote to

¹ Vol. II., p. 8, and Vol. III., p. 164.

² Vol. III., p. 165.

³ Vol. I., p. 307.

⁴ Vol. II., p. 68.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.



Renault as he had done to Bisdom, but the French Chief apparently made no reply until Calcutta had been retaken and the expedition to Hugli was just about to start. He went on clearing away the houses round the Fort,¹ and, still in ignorance of the British re-capture of Calcutta,² two French deputies, Laporterie and Sinfray, were despatched, and on the 4th January³ found the British in possession of the town. They congratulated the Admiral on his success, and inquired his intentions regarding the maintenance of neutrality in Bengal.⁴ It must be here observed that though the French had positive news from Surat of the outbreak of war and its proclamation at Bombay, Watson did not receive word of this from Madras till the 12th January.⁵ He must, however, have been certain that the news was on its way, and as the French had raised the question of neutrality, he naturally presumed that the Chief and Council at Chandernagore had authority to negotiate. Accordingly, though he asserted that the French had broken the neutrality in the last war and had lately assisted the Nawab,⁶ he offered them an alliance, offensive and defensive, against the Nawab.⁷ They said this was impossible, and the Admiral replied that in that case

‘ he would be forced to try his luck.’⁸

6th January, 1757. On the 6th January the Select Committee at Calcutta heard from Mr. Surgeon Forth, who was still at Chinsurah, that Coja Wājid had received news from Surat of the public proclamation of war at Bombay, and that the French were busy fortifying Chandernagore.⁹ This is probably the first definite news received by the British, for the next day the Select Committee resolved to write to Admiral Watson asking him to arrange for a neutrality with the French; but they did not actually send their letter until the 10th, and by that time the French deputies had already taken their departure. On the 12th Admiral Watson replied somewhat angrily that he had offered the French an alliance offensive and defensive, and that he could not, consistently with his duty, modify these terms. On the other hand, he said he would commit no breach of neutrality as long as there was any danger of such action

¹ Vol. II., p. 87.

² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁴ Vol. III., p. 269.

⁵ Vol. II., p. 200.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 115.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 101.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.



being harmful to the interests of the Company.¹ In accordance with these sentiments, when on the same day he received copies of His Majesty's Declaration of War against France, he wrote to ask the Committee whether they would prefer a simple neutrality, an alliance offensive and defensive, or war with the French.² The Select Committee replied two days later that they would prefer the first.³ 14th January, 1757.

The French, on the dismissal of their first envoys by Admiral Watson, had been in a state of great uncertainty as to what they should do, and when the British on the 9th sailed by the French Factory, on their way to Hugli, without saluting their flag, it was only the sense of the weakness of their forces which prevented them from firing on the ships. Towards the end of January the Nawab asked Renault to mediate between him and the British, and thinking that if his good offices were accepted it would be possible for him to insert in the Treaty an article guaranteeing neutrality amongst the Europeans in Bengal, Renault willingly accepted the task.⁴ But, as we have seen in the last chapter, the British, after some discussion, ultimately refused the proffered mediation, and the Deputies were about to return disappointed, when the British, in accordance with their letter of the 14th to the Admiral, asked them to reopen the question of the neutrality. Law is probably perfectly correct in saying that the object of the Select Committee was to prevent a junction between the French and the Nawab; on the other hand, their present proposal may well have been an honest one, as they knew they were too weak to fight the French and the Nawab together. The deputies wrote to Chandernagore for instructions, but were ordered to return.⁵ The Nawab was close upon Chandernagore, and M. Renault thought it unwise to incense him by open negotiations with the British, whilst, on the other hand, he could not join him, as he had just received a letter, dated 28th November, 1756,⁶ from M. de Leyrit, President of the Superior Council of Pondicherry, forbidding the only course of action which could have secured the alliance of the Nawab, yet ordering Renault to fortify Chandernagore and put the town in a condition to ensure it from being taken by sudden assault. De Leyrit sent Renault only advice—no money to carry it out, and

¹ Vol. II., p. 101.² *Ibid.*, p. 103.³ *Ibid.*, p. 105.⁴ Vol. III., p. 246.⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 270.



practically no reinforcements. One does not know whether it was mere folly on De Leyrit's part, or whether it was because he had no control over the French military—still, it must strike everyone as extraordinary that the British, who in Madras were inferior in men and money, should send so strong a force under their best fighting captain to Bengal, whilst the French, with their numerical superiority, could not spare even 100 Europeans¹ to protect the source from which Pondicherry and the French islands drew great part of their provisions and the major part of their trade.²

Meanwhile, the Nawab pursued his course to Calcutta, and his army was utterly demoralized by the skirmish of the 5th February.

9th February,
1757.

Then followed the Treaty of the 9th, in which no mention was made of the French, and it was well understood that in his private letters to Watson and Clive, by asserting that he would have the same friends and enemies as the British, Sirāj-uddaula had given a kind of assent to the latter attacking Chandernagore. According to a Memoir of the time,³ the day after the Treaty was signed with the Nawab news arrived of the war between Britain and France. As we have seen, it had been known to the Select Committee and to the Admiral nearly a month earlier, but it was now first allowed to be publicly announced, and the French were forced to make a final decision. In fact, the Select Committee pressed the Admiral to attack at once. He replied that the wording of the Nawab's private letters did not justify him in doing so; that owing to the great loss of men by sickness he must be supplied with reinforcements; and, lastly, that the ships could not be moved up the river until after the spring tides. The matter was therefore dropped for the time.

As the Nawab passed Chandernagore, humbled by his defeat, he sent friendly messages to M. Renault, repaid 1 *lakh* of rupees on account of the 3 *lakhs* which he had extorted the previous year, gave the French a *parwana* granting them all the privileges enjoyed by the British, including those extorted from him by the recent Treaty, and even offered them the town of Hugli if they would ally themselves with him.⁴ They accepted the money, but either

¹ Vol. III., p. 244.

² Vol. II., p. 340.

³ 'Memoirs of the Revolution in Bengal, compiled from the Papers of Mr. Watts,' p. 27.

⁴ Vol. II., p. 301, and Vol. III., p. 229.



declined the alliance outright or merely promised to resist any attempt of the British to come up the river. Both the Dutch and the British fully believed that the French had entered into a secret alliance,¹ and the British felt that if they were ever to settle finally with the Nawab they must first crush the French. The latter, therefore, must be held in play until steps had been taken at Murshidabad to prevent the Nawab from interfering. Consequently, when on the 19th M. Renault reopened the negotiations for a neutrality, the British replied that they would consent only if the Council at Chandernagore were authorized to conclude an agreement which would be binding on the Superior Council at Pondicherry and on the French King's officers. It seems on the face of it absurd that such a condition should be suggested after two months' negotiations, yet upon examination it was found that M. Renault and his Council had no such authority. The French accused the British of having trifled with them, but for people to propose a treaty which they know they have no authority to conclude is not exactly plain dealing, though it may be good diplomacy. It was the French who first proposed a neutrality.

The reason for the Nawab's condescension to the French when passing Chandernagore was not merely pique and the desire for revenge upon the British. Either M. Renault or M. Law, with whom he entered into negotiations immediately after his arrival at Murshidabad, had informed him that Bussy with a strong force was marching upon Bengal. This information, which no doubt the French believed, was to be used later on with fatal effect against them. The Nawab wrote to Bussy for assistance.²

We must now retrace our steps a little. One of the conditions privately accepted by the Nawab at the time of the Treaty of the 9th February was that the British should be represented at his Court by a European. The man chosen was Mr. Watts. From his easy surrender of the Fort at Cossimbazar the Nawab had concluded that he must be a person of feeble character, who might be easily duped, and in his letter to Mr. Pigot speaks of him as

'a helpless, poor, and innocent man.'³

¹ Vol. II., p. 290, and Vol. III., p. 257.

² Vol. II., p. 264.

³ Vol. I., p. 196.



But Clive and the Council had formed a more correct opinion of his capacity. Sraffton writes :

‘Mr. Watts, being very well versed in the country language, and in their politics and customs, accompanied the *Soubah* to attend the fulfilling of the Treaty.’¹

The choice of Mr. Watts was evidently suggested by the Report of the Council of War, which decided the Select Committee not to renew hostilities, but to send up an Agent to effect their object by diplomacy.²

The Select Committee gave Mr. Watts full instructions as to his behaviour.

‘As many things have been omitted in this Treaty, and as some require explaining to prevent future causes of disputes and evasions,’

he was to apply to the Nawab on the following matters :

1. The privileges granted by the Emperor were to be entered in the Emperor’s books ; strict obedience to them to be publicly ordered ; the villages granted to the British by the *Farman* to be delivered to them.

2. The Article of the Mint to be explained and extended.

3. The British to be allowed to punish any of the Nawab’s officers infringing their *dastaks*, without waiting to complain to the *Darbār*.

4. Strict inquiries to be made into the losses of the Company’s servants and private Europeans, and restitution made either by the Nawab or those of his principal men who had plundered the Europeans without his knowledge. Any servants of the Company who had taken advantage of the Troubles to defraud the Company to be arrested. Mānik Chand to refund the fines he had inflicted.

5. In case restitution for private losses were refused, the Nawab to pay all debts due by the British to his people.

6. The Courts of Justice established by the Company’s Charter to be allowed by the native Government.

7. European Agents of the Company to be received politely at the *Darbār*, and without being required to make any presents to the Nawab or his officers.

8. The Nawab to erect no fortifications on the river below Calcutta.

¹ Sraffton’s ‘Reflections,’ p. 68.

² Vol. II., p. 222.



9. The Patna Factory to be reopened without payment of any present to the *Darbār*.

10. The Nawab to order his officers to restore all books, papers, and accounts belonging to the British.¹

With Mr. Watts, as his adviser and agent, went Omichand.² Ever since the expulsion of the British from Calcutta it seems that Omichand had been doing his best to provide a remedy for his own miscalculation of his influence over the Nawab. Captain Mills tells us he gave food to some of the refugees, and he very quickly entered into communications with the Secret Committee³ at Fulta by means of Coja Petrus and Abraham Jacobs. It was by his advice that they sent letters to Mānik Chand, Coja Wājīd, Jagat Seth, and Rāi Durlabh, for the favourable reception of which he prepared the way. He constantly sent information to the Committee, but when it was first rumoured that the British were returning he betook himself to Murshidabad. On the 20th January⁴ his goods in Calcutta were sequestered on suspicion of treason, and apparently, though sent down by the Nawab to Calcutta, he was himself put under confinement. On the 28th January Omichand wrote to Clive to entreat his favour.⁵ This Clive granted soon after, and the Committee seem to have released Omichand, on his good behaviour, to accompany Mr. Watts.⁶ When Mr. Watts arrived at Hugli on the 17th February he sent Omichand to see the *Faujdār*, Nandkumār.⁷ The latter informed him of all the transactions between the Nawab and the French,⁸ and was easily brought over to the British interest. On the 21st Watts arrived in camp, and had an audience with the Nawab.⁹ He immediately bribed Rājārām, the Nawab's head spy, and ascertained from him the Nawab's secret intentions,¹⁰ and also that the British could only hope to govern the Nawab through his timidity, as he had not the slightest intention of fulfilling his promises.¹¹

17th February, 1757.

¹ Vol. II., pp. 225-227.

² *Ibid.*, p. 227.

³ See Consultations of Secret Committee, India Office, *passim*.

⁴ Public Proceedings, 20th January, 1757.

⁵ Vol. II., p. 174.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁷ Nandkumār was only officiating as *Faujdār*. His object in intriguing with the British was to obtain his confirmation.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 228, and Watts' 'Memoir,' p. 29.

⁹ Watts' 'Memoir,' p. 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹¹ Vol. II., p. 253.



The errand Mr. Watts had been sent upon was a very difficult one; he had not merely to obtain the fulfilment of the Treaty, but to have it interpreted in the most generous manner possible, and also to contrive the Nawab's acceptance of several other articles which, if they had been touched on at all, were not included in the actual Treaty.¹ He found himself strongly opposed by the French, who were indebted to Jagat Seth to the extent of £70,000, so that nothing could be done at Murshidabad against their influence except

'in the mode of the Court—that is, by opposing corruption to corruption, making friends of the inammon of unrighteousness, and getting upon even grounds with those with whom we were obliged to contend.'²

Finding this the only means of doing business at Murshidabad, and being further advised thereto by Omichand, Mr. Watts seems to have had no hesitation in playing the game in the Oriental style.

18th Feb-
ruary, 1757.

On the 18th February Clive had crossed his army over the Hugli to be ready to march upon Chandernagore, if the Nawab's permission could only be obtained. This had forced Renault to act, and on the 19th he wrote, reopening the question of neutrality. His proposals were received on the 21st in Calcutta, and on the 22nd came letters from the Nawab to Watson and Clive forbidding them to attack the French, and asserting on French³ suggestion that the British were only waiting for the Rains to attack him in Murshidabad. He therefore demanded they should dismiss their ships of war. The suggestion that the rainy season would mark the recommencement of hostilities was extremely plausible, for everyone who had considered the question—Scot,⁴ Rannie,⁵ and Grant⁶—had pointed out the facility with which the country might be overrun by means of the rivers during that season. Council thereupon promised to obey the Nawab and open negotiations for a neutrality, but they wrote to Mr. Watts to impress upon the Nawab the faithlessness and untrustworthiness of the French. Whilst the Nawab was writing to the British not to interfere with the French, he was restrained from

¹ Vol. II., p. 225.

² Watts' 'Memoirs of the Revolution,' p. 27. N.B.—There are two editions of this book—1761 and 1764.

³ Vol. II., pp. 229, 236.

⁴ Plan for the conquest of Bengal (Orme MSS., vol. vi., 1487-1499).

⁵ Vol. III., p. 391.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 383.



sending a force under Mir Jafar to assist the latter only by the craft of Omichand, who explained that it was the French who were the real aggressors, and not the British; that the latter sincerely desired peace, whilst the former were calling Bussy into the country to break it. This crafty argument convinced the Nawab for the moment, and he dismissed Hakim Beg and others of the anti-British faction from his Court. This was satisfactory so far, but on the 25th February Watts wrote to Calcutta that it was impossible to rely upon the Nawab, and that it would be wise to attack Chandernagore without delay, as, influenced by Mānik Chand and Coja Wājid, the Nawab had again ordered Mir Jafar to march. This advice arrived in Calcutta on the 28th whilst the British and French were still discussing the powers of M. Renault and his Council to sign a treaty binding upon their nation. On the 4th March the Admiral declared himself dissatisfied, and refused to sign the Treaty¹ which had already been drawn up.² Clive was in despair, for the Admiral would not make a treaty with the French because M. Renault had not power to sign one, and he would not attack Chandernagore because he had not obtained the Nawab's permission. Accordingly, on the 5th March he submitted a request to the Select Committee to allow him to return to Madras, as he considered it disgraceful to negotiate with the French if the negotiations were not intended to result in peace. When the Admiral refused to sign the Treaty the French immediately wrote to that effect to the Nawab, published a manifesto, and sent away their women and children to Chinsurah.³ The Nawab ordered a force under Rāi Durlabh to march at once.

25th February, 1757.

4th-5th March, 1757.

On the 6th, as the Admiral was still immovable, it was formally debated in Council whether the British should attack Chandernagore or not,⁴ and Council decided to postpone all consideration of the Treaty until the Nawab had been appealed to again, as he had written to Clive explaining that the troops sent to Hugli were not to assist the French, but to keep order in the town, and to inform him that the Emperor's army was about to invade Bengal.

6th March, 1757.

¹ Vol. II., p. 268.

² *Ibid.*, p. 259.

³ Vol. III., p. 258. I have not been able to find a copy of the manifesto. The women, according to Clive, were nearly sixty in number (Vol. II., p. 302).

⁴ For Clive's account of this debate, see Vol. III., p. 311.



The Nawab wrote that he proposed to march to Azimabad (Patna), and asked Clive to accompany him, offering him a *lakh* of rupees a month for his expenses.¹ Only one member of the Council voted for the neutrality. This was Mr. Becher, who had been so kindly treated by the French when forced to surrender his Factory at Dacca.

At the same time, the Admiral had written on the 4th February in terms of great anger to the Nawab, using words which vividly recall Alivirdi's prophecy. He demanded that every article of the Treaty should be fulfilled in ten days,

'otherwise, remember, you must answer for the consequences; and as I have always acted the open, unreserved part in all my dealings with you, I now acquaint you that the remainder of my troops, which should have been here long since (and which I hear the Colonel told you he expected), will be at Calcutta in a few days; that in a few days more I shall despatch a vessel for more ships and more troops; and that *I will kindle such a flame in your country as all the water in the Ganges shall not be able to extinguish*. Farewell. Remember that he promises you this who never yet broke his word with you or with any man whatsoever.'²

Clive had already written on the 25th February urging Watts to procure definite permission from the Nawab, and pointing out that without this neither he nor the Admiral could with honour break the peace in Bengal.³ Whether it was the bold words used by Watson, or, as the story goes, the craft of Omichand that overcame the Nawab's resistance cannot be known. What is said to have happened is, that when asked by Sirāj-uddaula why the Admiral had refused to sign the Treaty, Omichand replied that he had been enraged at the duplicity of the French in pretending to negotiate a treaty which they had no authority to sign. When this matter was discussed in the Nawab's presence by Messrs. Watts and Law, the Nawab proposed to write again to the Admiral. Law recklessly remarked that the Admiral would not pay any attention to his letters.⁴ The Nawab's vanity was wounded, and in a fit of passion he ordered his Secretary to write to the Admiral permitting him to attack the French. The Secretary, who was in Mr. Watts' pay, wrote the letter immediately; it was

¹ Vol. II., p. 270. The Nawab had made the same offer to the Admiral on the 22nd February (Vol. II., p. 242).

² Vol. II., p. 273.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁴ Vol. III., p. 195.



brought to the Nawab, and sealed and despatched at once.¹ This fatal letter, dated the 10th March, concluded as follows:

10th March,
1757.

'You have understanding and generosity; if your enemy, with an upright heart, claims your protection, you will give him his life; but then you must be well satisfied of the innocence of his intentions; if not, whatever you think right that do.'²

M. Law says boldly that this letter was not written by the Nawab's orders,³ but the letter was actually written and bore the Nawab's seal. The words quoted referred very clearly to the reasons Omichand had given for the Admiral's refusal to sign the Treaty, and justified Admiral Watson in the action he took. He must have received it on the 11th or 12th, and on the latter day wrote to the Select Committee saying he had received a copy of His Majesty's Declaration of War, *with orders from the Admiralty to put it into execution*, and accordingly would send up his ships as soon as the state of the river permitted.^{11th-12th March, 1757.}

We have referred to the Nawab's request to Clive to join him at Patna. This gave Clive an excuse for starting, and accordingly he joined his troops on the 3rd March. On the 7th he wrote that he would assist the Nawab with pleasure; that it was dangerous to leave such enemies as the French in his rear; accordingly, it would be better to dispose of them first, and that he would wait at Chandernagore for instructions. On the 8th he wrote to Nandkumār,⁴ *Faujdar* of Hugli, to inform him that he was coming, and to ask for provisions, and on the 11th the Nawab wrote to say he had heard from Nandkumār with pleasure of his intention to visit him.⁵ This letter, as it were, corroborated that received by the Admiral.

On the 8th March the French deputies, Messrs. Fournier, 8th March, Nicholas, and Le Conte, had been sent back to Chandernagore^{1757.} with a fresh proposal, evidently intended to draw out the negotiations a little longer. There they remained until the fighting began.

About this time⁶ the British, whose weakness had been the

¹ Watts' 'Memoirs,' pp. 38, 39.

² Vol. II., p. 279.

³ Vol. III., p. 191 note. Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 70.

⁴ Nandkumār promised to withdraw his troops from Chandernagore (Vol. II., p. 280).

⁵ Vol. II., p. 280.

⁶ Between the 4th and 11th March.



original cause of their entering upon negotiations with the French, had been reinforced by troops from Bombay. These consisted of 400 men,¹ and brought up Clive's forces to 700 Europeans and 1,600 sepoys.² The *Cumberland*³ also had at last arrived in the Hugli, and, as she carried 300 soldiers, the British may well have thought that they were strong enough to meet all their enemies together; but that curious despondency which seemed to attack Clive so often on the eve of great events showed itself even now, and on the 11th he wrote to his friend Orme in Madras to send all his money to Bengal in time to be remitted to England by the September ships. He seems to have realized that he was entering on what might be a long campaign, that he could not get back to Madras, and he knew only too well how weak the British were in Southern India.⁴ If Bussy had attacked Madras or left a small force in the south and marched with the rest to Bengal he might have changed the whole course of events.

To oppose Clive there were, besides the French garrison at Chandernagore, some 10,000 men under Rāi Durlabh at Plassey, 4,000 or 5,000 men under Mānik Chand still nearer, and a strong garrison under Nandkumār at Hugli; but the latter had already been brought over to the British interest by Omichand, and though he sent 2,000 men to Chandernagore, they were of no great service to the French. At Murshidabad the French were supported by a small party carefully formed by Law.⁵ Amongst his friends he numbered Rāi Durlabh, Coja Wājīd, and Mohan Lāl. The first boasted himself the conqueror of the British at Calcutta, but his exploits at the skirmish of Chitpur had been limited to sharing in the flight, and he was now terrified at the idea of fighting Clive again. The second, Coja Wājīd, was an excessively timid man. Probably at heart he preferred the French, and certainly spoke in their favour in the *Darbar* whenever he could; but he had not forgotten his losses when the British plundered his house at Hugli, and lest worse should befall him at their hands he betrayed to Clive the correspondence between the French and the Nawab. The third, Mohan Lāl, Law describes as an extremely able man, but a thorough scoundrel. He was very ill

¹ Vol. III., p. 47.² Vol. III., p. 247.³ Vol. II., p. 310, and Watts' 'Memoir,' p. 43.⁴ Vol. II., p. 279.⁵ Vol. III., pp. 189-191.



at this time, it was supposed from poison administered by his rivals. Thus the one man upon whom the Nawab relied to confirm and support his vacillating resolution was unable at this most critical moment even to speak to his master. By a strange irony of Fate he recovered, as we shall see, only so far as to be able to do a fatal injury to Sirāj-uddaula. In the British interest there seem to have been engaged all the more reputable members of the Court, though Law¹ was probably anticipating when he placed among them Jafar Ali Khān, Khudādād Khān Lāṭi, and the Seths. As far as can be seen, these persons were disaffected to the Nawab, but it was Omichand who acted as the Agent of the British, and as long as he remained so the Seths and their friends were not likely to be very hearty in the support of the British, even though it was Ranjīt Rāi, their agent, who had negotiated the Treaty of the 9th February for the Nawab. Law, however, visited the Seths, and from some incautious expressions learned that they were already planning the setting up of another Nawab. This he confided to Sirāj-uddaula, who only laughed at his discovery.²

It was under these difficulties that Law struggled at Murshidabad to obtain the Nawab's support for the French at Chandernagore. As he says pathetically, the Seths

'managed so well that they undid in the evening all that I had effected in the morning';³

and behind the Seths was always Mr. Watts.

We must now leave Calcutta for Chandernagore. Clive's forces^{8th March,} broke up camp on the 8th March.⁴ The French were immediately informed of this, and wrote to demand an explanation of Clive's approach to their town. He replied on the 9th:

'I have no intention of acting offensively against your nation at present; whenever I have, you may be assured I shall frankly acquaint you with it.'⁵

On the 11th Clive charged the French with entertaining deserters^{11th-14th} from the British. On the 12th he encamped two miles to the westward of Chandernagore, and the next day, having determined to attack the French, sent in a summons to M. Renault to surrender. No reply was given, so on the 14th Clive read the^{March, 1757.}

¹ Vol. III, p. 191.

² *Ibid.*, p. 194.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵ Vol. II., p. 277.



Declaration of War to his troops, and began the siege by an attack on an outpost to the south-west of the Fort.¹

The Fort of Chandernagore was by no means prepared to stand a siege, though Renault had done all that was in his power, destitute as he was of men and money, and without even a qualified engineer to advise him in the matter of fortifications.² The artillery he had managed to put in order,³ and ammunition had been purchased with the *lakh* of rupees which the Nawab had paid him after his defeat by the British on the 5th February. His garrison, however, was hopelessly inadequate against a European enemy. In August, 1756, it consisted of only 85 Europeans, most of whom were foreigners, and not to be relied upon in a difficulty,⁴ and though he wrote repeatedly to Pondicherry for reinforcements,⁵ he received only 167 sepoys and 61 Europeans.⁶ The foreign element amongst the Europeans was increased by a number of deserters from the British service, who enlisted with him after the fall of Calcutta, and he was able to form a company of Grenadiers of 50, one of Artillery of 30, and one of Marine of 60. To these he added a body of volunteers drawn from the Company's servants and the European and half-caste community. After the loss of 10 men at the outpost first attacked by Clive, Renault found he had 237 soldiers (including 45 French pensioners and sick), 120 sailors, 70 half-castes and private Europeans, 100 Company's servants (merchants and ships' officers), 167 sepoys, and 100 topasses or half-caste gunners, forming a total of 794 fighting men of all ranks.⁷ The foreigners and deserters were not good material, and would give no assistance in completing the fortifications,⁸ whilst at the first sign of hostilities all the country people had deserted the colony.⁹

The insufficiency of men was made more serious by the natural

¹ Renault asserts (Vol. II., p. 302) that on the very day he made his attack Clive wrote to the Nawab that he did not intend to attack the French. The best proof that this was not so is that Law makes no mention of the Nawab receiving any such letter. Had Clive done so, Law would certainly have been acquainted with it.

² Vol. III., p. 268.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁴ Vol. I., p. 209, and Vol. III., p. 267.

⁵ Vol. I., p. 211.

⁶ Vol. III., p. 244.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 272. Watts ('Memoir,' p. 42) gives the garrison as 500 whites and 700 blacks.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 245.



but unwise wish to defend the town, which led to a great waste of time in erecting outposts and barriers in the principal streets at some distance from the Fort,¹ which might have been better expended on the Fort itself. The latter was commanded by a number of houses, many of which Renault began to pull down as early as November, 1756,² but sufficient were still left to enable the British musketeers to command the men at the guns. This was a fatal defect, for the French had omitted to strengthen the eastern curtain, which was the weakest part³ of the Fort, under the impression that, by sinking some vessels in a narrow passage below, they could effectually prevent the approach of the British warships, and so in the terrible fight against Watson's squadron the French sailors were shot down at their guns. The work of sinking these ships was begun as early as the 13th of March.⁴ The passage itself was beyond the range of the guns of the Fort, but was covered by a small battery on the bank.

Clive's attack was not very vigorous. He knew that the Admiral would bring up his ships, and that an attempt to take the place by the land force only, which was unsupplied with siege-guns, would only result in a heavy loss of life. Accordingly, he limited his efforts to driving in the outposts, which was effected on the night of the 14th. On hearing of this, Nandkumār wrote to the Nawab that the place was taken, and that the French were quite unable to resist the British. This information counter-balanced any representation that Law could make as to the necessity of the Nawab reinforcing the French in his own interests, and, though he wavered from time to time, orders to march were issued only to be immediately countermanded, and nothing was actually done to save the Fort. After the loss of the outposts, the French found themselves deserted by the 2,000 Moors who had been sent by Nandkumār.⁵ The quarrel was to be fought out by the French alone,⁶ and Clive's whole object was to deprive them of all assistance from outside, to harass

¹ Vol. III., p. 230.

² Vol. I., p. 307.

³ Vol. III., p. 232.

⁴ Vol. II., p. 285.

⁵ Other accounts say they volunteered.

⁶ I think some of the Moors must have remained with the French, for Renault's figure of 167 sepoys is very much below that given in all the English accounts—e.g., Eyre Coote (Vol. III., p. 50) says the French had 500 Europeans and 500 blacks.



them in every way, and keep them constantly on the alert, so as to prepare for the real attack by the ships.

15th March,
1757.

Though there was not sufficient water in the river for the larger vessels, the Admiral had on the 12th sent up the *Bridgewater* and *Kingfisher*, which arrived at Cowgachi, three miles below Chandernagore, on the 15th. Clive immediately informed the senior officer, Captain Toby, that the French had sunk four ships and a hulk below the Fort, and had placed a chain and boom across the passage. That night Lieutenant Bloomer cut the chain, and brought off a sloop that buoyed it up. The same day the *Tyger*

19th March,
1757.

(Captain Latham), the *Kent* (Captain Speke), and the *Salisbury* (Captain Martin) left Calcutta. On the 19th they arrived at the Prussian Octagon. In the night Lieutenant Colville with all the boats of the fleet went up above the Fort, boarded the French vessels, and towed them ashore so as to prevent their being used as fireships. Some of the French ships—e.g., Captain de la Vigne's *Saint Contest*—had already been destroyed by the French themselves, as they had not sufficient men to fight them, and did not wish them to fall into the hands of the British.

The tides were not yet favourable for the further movement of the big ships, and it was necessary to examine the passage which the French had blocked. Fortunately, this had been done very imperfectly. News of the approach of the *Bridgewater* and *Kingfisher*, or the presence of Clive's army on the shore, had prevented the French pilots from sinking two large Company's ships, which would have completed their work,¹ and the masts of those they had sunk showed above water. There is a story that the secret of the passage was betrayed to the British by Lieutenant de Terraneau,² a French officer who had lost his arm in the French service in Southern India. He had quarrelled with Renault, and on the evening of the 17th took advantage of Clive's offers of pardon to deserters who would return to their duty and of rewards to officers who would go over to him. He was the only French artillery

¹ Vol. III., p. 259.

² 'Seir Mutaqherin.' This story is corroborated on I think insufficient grounds by Malleson.

As this goes to press I have received a letter from Mr. J. A. G. Gilmour, who, being then about ten years old, lived in 1845 or 1846 next door to the son, then an old man of eighty, of this Lieutenant de Terraneau. The old gentleman was in receipt of a small pension from the East India Company.



officer, and so his desertion was a serious loss to his countrymen ; but there was no secret connected with the passage to betray, for when Lieutenant Hey was despatched on the morning of the 20th by the Admiral with a summons to Renault to surrender, he rowed between the masts of the sunken vessels, and observed that ships could pass easily if only they were well handled. Renault and the Council, misled by the small damage done to the Fort by Clive's continuous bombardment, and trusting that the passage had been effectually blocked, declined to surrender, but offered to ransom the town and Fort. The Admiral refused to accept these terms, and on the night of the 20th Mr. John Delamotte, master of the *Kent*, buoyed the passage under a heavy fire. On the 21st Admiral Pocock, who had left the *Cumberland* at Hijili, and in his eagerness to share in the fighting had come up in his barge, joined the Admiral, and hoisted his flag on the *Tyger*. On the 22nd the tides served too late in the afternoon to suit the ships, and it was therefore determined to attack early next morning. During the night lights were fixed on the masts of the sunken vessels with shades towards the Fort, so that they might act as guides to the ships without being visible to the enemy. About 5 o'clock in the morning of the 23rd March Clive stormed the French battery which commanded the river passage, and the *Tyger*, *Kent*, and *Salisbury* passed the sunken ships without the slightest difficulty. About 7 a.m. the first two placed themselves opposite the north-east¹ and south-east bastions, but the *Salisbury* was unable to take up a position where she could be of much use. The fight was, therefore, left to the *Tyger* and *Kent*, each of which had an Admiral on board. The first broadside they fired drove the French from a battery they had erected on the riverside. They regained the Fort with difficulty, and then for two hours or more there ensued a terrible cannonade between the ships and batteries. The *Kent* was so badly damaged that she was never again fit to go to sea, and the *Tyger* suffered almost as severely ; but the walls of Fort d'Orléans were in ruins, the gunners almost all killed, and the men were being shot down by Clive's musketeers from the roofs of the neighbouring houses.²

20th-23rd
March, 1757.

¹ Bastion du Pavillon.

² The enemy had forty killed and seventy wounded in the Fort. They must be allowed to have defended themselves with great spirit and resolution, and probably would not have submitted so soon if they had not suffered severely from Colonel



Close by the ruined walls Clive's soldiers were lying waiting for the signal to storm, and further defence could be only a useless waste of life. In this single day's fighting the French lost two Captains and 200 other men killed and wounded. About half-past nine Renault hoisted the white flag, and Lieutenant Brereton and Captain Eyre Coote were sent to arrange the surrender. Articles¹ were agreed upon, and were signed by the Admirals and Clive after some objection on Admiral Watson's part to Clive being associated with himself and Admiral Pocock as receiving the surrender.² Years later there was much discussion as to whether the land forces could have taken the Fort without the Admiral's assistance,³ but it is not necessary to discuss this question, as the reasons for Clive's leisurely mode of attack have already been explained.

The British forces lost fully as many men as the French. Clive had been careful not to risk the lives of his soldiers, and so the loss was confined almost entirely to the fleet.⁴ Admiral Watson not only showed great personal courage during the fight,⁵ but the attack itself was one of great daring. The rise and fall of the tide in the Hugli is very considerable, and it was observed that at ebb the lower tiers of the ships' guns were not available owing to the height of the banks.⁶ As the passage between the sunken ships had to be made at high water, it was necessary to take or at least to silence the Fort before the falling tide put the big guns of the ships out of action. A French account says that the Admiral managed to effect his purpose by the narrow margin of half an hour.⁷

On his ship, the *Kent*, the Admiral, in spite of the reckless way⁸ in which he had exposed himself, was unhurt, but all the other commissioned officers, except Lieutenant Brereton, were killed or wounded, the Captain being severely, and his son mortally, wounded by the same cannon-ball. In fact, the fire against the *Kent*

Clive's batteries and been still more galled by the fire of his men, which in truth made it almost impossible for them to stand to their guns' (Watts' 'Memoir,' p. 46).

¹ Vol. II., p. 292.

² *Ibid.*, p. 303.

³ Vol. III., pp. 312, 320, 323, and also Watts' 'Memoir,' p. 46.

⁴ The Admiral gives the following figures: The French had 40 killed and 70 wounded, the British 32 killed and 99 wounded (Vol. II., p. 312).

⁵ Vol. III., p. 115.

⁶ Vol. II., p. 131.

⁷ Vol. III., p. 265.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.



was so heavy that at one moment her crew believed her to be in flames, and were about to leave the ship when they were brought back to their duty by the reproaches of Lieutenant Brereton.¹ On the *Tyger* Admiral Pocock was wounded, and many of the officers, though the ship did not suffer quite so severely as the *Kent*. One of the officers writes that it was impossible to remember any engagement in which two ships had suffered so severely as the *Kent* and *Tyger*.² The sailors were exasperated at the fury of the defence and the leniency³ of the Admiral to the defenders after the fighting was over, because when he had summoned Renault to surrender he had, in order to spare the lives of his own men, offered to allow the French to retain their private property, and yet after so many of these had been killed he granted the French almost as easy terms as he had offered before the fight. The soldiers sent in to garrison the Fort began to beat the coolies whom they saw carrying off what they considered their rightful plunder. It was only by the payment of small sums of money that the French gentlemen succeeded in persuading them to let the coolies pass.⁴ Their rage and disappointment impelled the soldiers to plunder whenever they found a chance; the Church plate was carried off and the Treasury broken into. At last Clive found it necessary to hang⁵ two or three of the soldiers and sepoys, and then to remove his camp outside the town, so that the men might be out of reach of the *arrack*, or native liquor, which they found in the empty native houses.⁶

Whilst the Capitulation was being arranged two unfortunate events occurred which had very serious consequences for the French, as they were looked upon as breaches of the laws of warfare. The French accidentally, or as the soldiers asserted purposely, set fire to some gunpowder, the explosion of which destroyed a large quantity of valuable goods,⁷ and a number of the civilians and soldiers, including most of the deserters from the British, forced their way out of the north gate or Porte Royale, and attempted to escape to Cossimbazar.⁸ Some 40 of them succeeded in joining Law; the rest, to the number of

¹ Vol. III., p. 29. See also *Ives' Journal*, p. 129.

² Vol. III., p. 27.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 260.

⁶ Vol. II., p. 338.

⁷ Vol. III., pp. 12, 28.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 234.



about 100, were shot or captured. The former made up Law's garrison to 60 Europeans. He was also joined by 30 of the sepoys from Chandernagore, whom the British had allowed to leave the town. A little later he received a further reinforcement of an officer and 20 men from Dacca, and though his force was thinned by some desertions, he had when he left Murshidabad at least 100 Europeans and 60 sepoys.¹ His position had at first been very weak, and he had asked the Nawab to send him his flag as a protection against the attempts of Mr. Watts. It was now the turn of the latter to fear violence.

Whilst the British soldiers and sailors were grumbling, and the Dutch² wondering at the Admiral's generosity, the French were complaining of the harshness with which they were treated by Colonel Clive. The second article of the Capitulation provided that the officers of the garrison should be liberated on parole; the ninth that the French Company's servants should be permitted to go where they pleased with their clothes and linen. As the Company's servants had taken part in the defence, Clive considered them to be members of the garrison, and before he would allow them to leave the Fort he required them to give their parole not to serve against Britain during the course of the war. According to Clive's account³ they gave this promise willingly, according to their own under strong protest. They were then permitted to depart, and retired, some to their friends the Danes at Serampore,⁴ others to Calcutta; but M. Renault, his Council, and the leading Frenchmen went to Chinsurah, whither they had sent the French ladies and children before the siege. They now, without any regard to the parole they had given to Clive, began to act as if they were still the Council of Chandernagore, and to communicate officially with their up-country Factories and the native Government,⁵ and it is quite certain that they gave money and food to some of the French who had escaped from the *Porte Royale*, and also assisted the enemies of the British in various ways. As soon as Clive was aware of this he demanded that the French should surrender to their parole, and threatened if they refused to take them by force. They appealed to Mr. Bisdorn for the protection

¹ Vol. II., pp. 337, 339.

² *Ibid.*, p. 291.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

⁴ Also called Fredericknagar.

⁵ Vol. II., p. 324.



of the Dutch flag, and were drily told it was none of his business. The British sepoys surrounded the houses where the French were living, and the latter, fearing the ladies might be ill-treated by the sepoys if resistance were attempted, surrendered to the officer in command of the party. They were taken to the camp, but were allowed to go back on parole to arrange about their property.¹ As soon as this had been settled they were conducted to Calcutta, and kept in sufficiently close confinement to prevent their communicating with the Nawab or their up-country Factories.

M. Renault claimed² that as the French drew up the articles of Capitulation, they were the best qualified to define their meaning. Clive³ appealed to common-sense, for it was absurd to suppose that the British would allow their enemies when once captured to go free for the express purpose of renewing their hostility. The facts seem to prove that M. Renault took advantage of the careless good-nature of the Admiral, who signed the terms of Capitulation without any intention except to make them as easy as possible for the conquered, but that when Clive came to represent the damage done to the British by permitting the conquered to interpret the treaty as they pleased, the Admiral allowed Clive and the Select Committee to act as they thought best. They determined, therefore, to take advantage of the breaches of the Capitulation committed by the French themselves, and on the strength of these breaches and the parole they had given after the fall of the Fort, to hold them as prisoners. On the 15th June, after the army had started for Murshidabad, they were allowed the freedom of Calcutta, and on the 4th July to return to their families at Chandernagore.

Whilst the leading French gentlemen were thus confined at Calcutta, the other Frenchmen and the ladies were allowed to reside where they pleased, chiefly at Chandernagore. The French soldiers and sailors were imprisoned, as was the custom of the time, in the common jail. Some months later about fifty of them dug a hole under the wall and escaped. A few made their way to Pondicherry, the rest were killed or captured.

¹ Vol. II., p. 329.

² Vol. III., p. 278 *et seq.*

³ Vol. II., pp. 324-329.



An entry in the Bengal Public Proceedings¹ records that small rewards, not exceeding 8 or 10 rupees, were made to the families of coolies killed or wounded at Chandernagore,

‘for their encouragement to serve on the like occasions in future.’

The capture of Chandernagore was of immense importance to the British. It broke the power of the French in Bengal, and left the way clear for a final settlement with the Nawab. The marine and military stores supplied Calcutta with everything that had been destroyed when that place was lost.² Finally, it deprived Pondicherry and the French islands of both provisions and trade.³ The day the news arrived in London India stock rose 12 per cent.⁴

On the 29th March Clive was joined by the troops sent on board the *Cumberland*,⁵ but this reinforcement, though it made him stronger than he had ever been before, did not give him sufficient force to garrison both Chandernagore and Calcutta, and it was still quite possible that the French authorities in Madras would awake to the necessity of recovering Bengal before the British had firmly established themselves in the country.⁶ As the French East India Company had also given instructions to Lally⁷ not to ransom any English Settlement he might capture, but to destroy all fortifications and to send all the Europeans both civil and military to Europe, and as he had already shown his intention to carry these orders into effect, the British determined to apply the same treatment to the French at Chandernagore. Some time later Fort d’Orléans was blown up,⁸ the private houses destroyed, and the Europeans sent to the Madras Coast. The army remained in camp near Chandernagore till the 2nd May.⁹

As soon as Chandernagore was captured a small force under Lieutenant Young¹⁰ was despatched (27th March) to seize the French Factory at Balasore. It returned with the French Chief and the Company’s goods on the 24th April.¹¹

¹ 7th April, 1757.

² Vol. II., pp. 302, 307.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 303, 340, and Vol. III., p. 216.

⁴ Lloyd’s *Evening Post*, 16th-19th September, 1757.

⁵ Vol. III., p. 51.

⁶ Vol. II., pp. 309, 331.

⁷ Orme MSS., O.V., 27, pp. 20-33.

⁸ Its remains were still visible in 1858. The site is now covered by native houses.

⁹ Vol. III., p. 51.

¹⁰ Select Committee Proceedings, 28th April, 1757.

¹¹ Vol. III., p. 6.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE BREAKING OF THE TREATY.

‘The nice and important game that was to be played with the late Nabob.’—CLIVE.¹

THE Nawab was both incensed and terrified at the capture of ^{14th} March, Chandernāgore. During the siege he had alternately caressed and threatened Mr. Watts.² On the 14th March, he wrote to inform Clive that the danger from Delhi had disappeared, and that there was no necessity for him to come to Murshidabad.³ These changes of mood were reflected in the behaviour of the Nawab’s subordinates, and at one time Clive found it necessary to threaten Nandkumār and Rāi Durlabh⁴ to prevent their interference. Immediately after the British had entered the Fort a detachment had been sent under Major Killpatrick to pursue the French fugitives from Chandernagore, and this the Nawab thought was the vanguard of Clive’s army,⁵ but as the Major soon halted and then retreated his fears were gradually dissipated. Mr. Watts tells us the Nawab’s confusion during the interval had been so great that he sent endless letters to Clive,

‘who is said to have received no less than ten of them in one day, and these in very opposite styles, which the Colonel answered punctually with all the calmness and complaisance imaginable, expressing great concern at the impression which the calumnies of his enemies had made on that Prince’s mind, and assuring him of his sincere attachment so long as he adhered to the Treaty.’⁶

Now that all was over the Nawab sent Clive a warm letter of congratulation,⁷ but it was impossible for so fickle a man to adhere to any settled course. Whilst congratulating Clive he was

¹ Vol. II., p. 442.

² Scrafton’s ‘Reflections,’ p. 73.

³ Vol. II., p. 286.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 286, 288.

⁵ Vol. III., p. 200.

⁶ Watts’ ‘Memoir,’ p. 48.

⁷ Vol. II., p. 295.



secretly encouraging M. Law, to whom he sent his colours to hoist over the French Factory, and also writing to Bussy.¹ As he had heard so much of the big guns of the ships of war, and was so ignorant as to believe they could ascend the Ganges in order to attack Murshidabad itself, he ordered the channel to be blocked at Suti, where the Cossimbazar River leaves the main stream, and also at Plassey, which is on the high road from Chandernagore to Murshidabad.²

Watts now began to press upon the Nawab a new demand from the British³—viz., that the French Factories should be surrendered. The Admiral wrote several letters on the subject, but could obtain no satisfactory reply; and after his letter of the 19th April, which was couched in threatening terms,⁴ he dropped the correspondence. In fact, the Admiral, though willing enough to fight the French, whom he considered the natural enemies of Britain, and to attack them so long as they remained capable of resistance, thought that to make their affairs the pretext of obtaining further concessions from the Nawab, with whom the British had so recently concluded a peace, was hardly consistent with his honour. But those were days in which even the most honourable men were convinced of the necessity of trickery and chicanery in politics, and were therefore accustomed to give their tacit consent to actions which they would not commit themselves. Consequently the Admiral's position from this time on to the end of the conflict was one of a somewhat disgusted spectator. Clive was more persistent, more clear-headed, and, as a Company's servant, he had more interest and a heavier stake in the matter. On the 29th March he wrote to the Nawab that as long as two nations constantly at war in Europe had rival interests in Bengal, it was certain there never could be peace in that country.⁵ There was, as it were, hence-

¹ Vol. II., pp. 294, 313, 314, and Vol. III., p. 199. When the British entered Murshidabad, the Nawab's chief secretary placed his private correspondence in the hands of Clive, and so proved all that had been suspected of his connection with the French (Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 92).

² Vol. II., pp. 342, 351. See also Memorandum by Captain Wedderburn (Orme MSS., India, xi., p. 3037).

³ Vol. II., p. 304.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

⁵ Vol. II., p. 305. This argument is repeated in many of Clive's letters—e.g., Vol. II., p. 319.



forward a double quarrel with the Nawab—in reference to his dilatoriness in fulfilling the terms of the Treaty and the difficulties he made as to the further requests that Mr. Watts had been instructed to urge upon him, and in regard to his behaviour towards the French.

The Nawab fenced cleverly in his replies to Clive's letters, pointing out that the French had settled in the country with the permission of the Emperor, whose revenues would be damaged by their expulsion, and protested against his promise of friendship to the British being interpreted as an engagement to assist them against the French. Finding these excuses useless he then proposed that Clive¹ should put pressure upon M. Renault, who was his prisoner, to give him a written injunction authorizing the Nawab to surrender the French Factories and property up-country to the British on the condition that the latter would make themselves responsible for the payments due from the French to the Emperor. Clive readily accepted the condition,² but, as it was impossible for him to put pressure upon a prisoner, he offered to send up a force to seize the French Factories.³

At the *Darbār* there was all this time a bitter contest going on between the French and British parties. As both Messrs. Law⁴ and Watts⁵ confess to the fact, there is no possible doubt that both of them resorted to bribery, though both affirm as an excuse that in so corrupt a Court nothing could be done by any other means. The British Agent, having the deeper purse, was able to influence not only the leading men at Court, but also the Secretaries, and was much assisted by the foresighted cunning of Omichand, for though Law had managed to secure the spies upon whom the Nawab relied for information about the British, Omichand had won over Nandkumār, the *Faujdar* of Hugli, who being, of all the Nawab's officers, in the best position to watch the Europeans, his reassurances as to the intentions of the British were invaluable to the latter⁶ at Court. The comparative poverty of the French forced M. Law to use less reputable agents, who in reality damaged his cause, for, having nothing to lose, and caring nothing for the Nawab's interests, they urged him

¹ Vol. II., p. 316.

² *Ibid.*, p. 338.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁴ Vol. III., p. 189.

⁵ Vol. II., p. 323.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 317.



on to the most reckless actions, which discredited him in the eyes even of his own subjects.¹

13th-16th
April, 1757.

For over three weeks after the fall of Chandernagore Law managed to maintain the unequal struggle, though he had to submit to many bitter mortifications, even to that of pulling down the trifling defences he had erected at his Factory.² At last, on the 13th April, he was summoned to a final interview with the Nawab and Mr. Watts. The latter begged him to surrender to the British, offering him the most honourable terms, whilst the Nawab told him that the French were the cause of all the troubles between him and the British, and that he did not wish to embroil the country in war for the sake of a nation which had refused him assistance when he asked for it. It seems as if the Nawab had intended to arrest Law at this interview and hand him over to the British; but the timely arrival of a guard of French grenadiers made this impossible without a sanguinary struggle, and his determined and gallant bearing so impressed the vacillating Prince that he gave him permission to retreat towards Patna, in spite of the efforts of Mr. Watts and his friends to force him to march southwards, when he must have fallen into the hands of the British. Sirāj-uddaula even promised to send for him again, but Law mournfully bade him farewell.

'Rest assured, my Lord Nawab, that this is the last time we shall see each other. Remember my words. We shall never meet again. It is nearly impossible.'³

16th April,
1757.

Law left Murshidabad on the 16th April,⁴ followed by spies instructed to watch his movements and, if possible, seduce his soldiers. He was joined on the march by about forty-five sailors who had escaped from the British, and marched slowly to Bhagulpur. There, on the 2nd May, he received a message of recall from the Nawab; but he suspected the letter to be a forgery intended to entice him into the power of the British, and contented himself with sending back M. Sinfray to see what was happening at Murshidabad. On the 7th he received a letter bidding him halt at Rajmahal; but the place was dangerous, for the *Faujdar*

¹ Vol. II., p. 322.

² *Ibid.*, p. 317, and Vol. III., p. 201.

³ 'Seir Mutaqherin,' vol. ii., p. 227.

⁴ Vol. III., p. 206.



was Mīr Dāūd,¹ brother of Mīr Jāfar, whom Law already suspected of treachery to the Nawab. The same day he arrived at Patna, where he was well received by the Nawab's deputy, Rāmnaṛāin, to whom the Nawab had written to provide him with all necessaries, though he was at that very time assuring Clive² and Watson that Rāmnaṛāin had been ordered to expel him from his territories. The British were well acquainted with the Nawab's secret actions, for it was Jagat Seth whom the Nawab ordered to supply Law with money, and it was Coja Wājīd to whom Law wrote for information as to the movements of his enemies.

Before leaving Murshidabad Law had managed to instil into the Nawab's mind the idea that an attempt would be made by the malcontents in Murshidabad to attack him in his palace, and that they would be supported by the British force at Cossimbazar. There are in the Records vague references to such a plan, but the British at Cossimbazar were too weak to undertake any such enterprise; and consequently when the Nawab, having heard they had 500 men there, demanded permission to examine the Factory, he found only the usual garrison of about fifty men. This served to convince him more firmly of the friendly professions of the British, especially as, in the wish to secure the safety of these men, they gradually withdrew them, and even informed the Nawab they did not wish to refortify the Fort, allowed him to keep the cannon he had taken out of it, and finally assured him they would be satisfied if the French left the country. By a curious perversity of reasoning, this induced him to believe that the British were afraid of venturing so far inland, and in a moment of forgetfulness, or perhaps of passion, he even threatened to impale Mr. Watts if he continued to be so importunate.³

¹ Mīr Dāūd delayed, and even opened, the letters sent by the Nawab to Rāmnaṛāin and Law (Vol. III., p. 210).

² Vol. II., pp. 330, 334.

³ Watts' 'Memoir,' pp. 57-67, and Vol. II., pp. 330, 342, 349. Shortly after the Nawab's return to Murshidabad, and before the siege of Chandernagore, the Dutch thought that he had been reduced to such a state of timidity that they might themselves adopt the tone used by the British. They found themselves much mistaken. The Nawab abused their Agent, threatened to have him flogged, and though Jagat Seth and Rāi Durlabb dissuaded him from such severe measures, he had him shut up all night. Mr. Bisdorn's letter was torn into pieces, and in that condition



Shortly before he dismissed M. Law the Nawab sent for the family of Sarfarāz Khān, which had been confined at Dacca ever since the accession of Alivirdī Khān.¹ Evidently this act had some connection with the expedition planned by the British to seize Dacca in the previous January,² and this is possibly the scheme alluded to by Scrafton³ as an alternative course in case a revolution at Murshidabad failed to be possible. It is, however, characteristic of the Nawab that he should be ignorant of the dangers preparing in his own capital whilst he took precautions against danger far away.

20th April,
1757.

On the 20th April the Nawab turned the British Agent⁴ out of the Darbār, and on the 21st presented him with a dress of honour. Mr. Scrafton says that this extraordinary behaviour was due to the advice of some of his nobles, including his younger brother and Mānik Chand, who wanted him to be cut off, and so incited him to fresh excesses. Possibly it should be ascribed to the fact that Nandkumār⁵ was now tired of waiting for the fulfilment of the promises made by Omichand in the name of the British, and no longer took the trouble to deny the messages sent by the Nawab's spies, as, e.g., one from Mathurā Mal,⁶ to the effect that the British intended to attack him in his own palace, and were sending up troops to Murshidabad, which led to his giving orders to stop Captain Grant, who was on his way up to remove the money at the Factory, and his demand to search the Factory which has been already mentioned.⁷ Coja Wājid found the state of affairs at Murshidabad so dangerous that he hastily went down to Hugli.⁸

23rd April,
1757.

On the 23rd April Clive presented to the Select Committee Mr. Scrafton's letter of the 20th relating the Nawab's extraordinary behaviour to the British Agent. Mr. Scrafton also wrote on the

returned to the Dutch Chief, M. Vernet (Vol. II., p. 276). On the 2nd of April the Dutch Council wrote that, having pressed the Nawab for the restitution of the money extorted in 1756, he had threatened to bastinado them if they did not keep quiet (Vol. II., p. 315). Thus the Nawab's real sentiments towards the British, even when he pretended to be friendly, could be judged by his sudden unguarded outbursts and by his treatment of their allies, the Dutch.

¹ Vol. II., p. 331.

² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

³ Vol. III., p. 345.

⁴ Vol. II., p. 349.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 362, 375.



23rd that the Seths had proposed, through Omichand, to set up one Yār Lutf Khān as Nawab.¹ Accordingly, the Committee, seeing that trouble was imminent, recommended that Council should order the up-country Factories to be prepared to send down their goods and money, and should despatch an Agent to Cuttack to watch the movements of Bussy and the Marathas. At the same time Clive was instructed to sound the chief men at Murshidabad as to the possibility of effecting a Revolution.²

Yār Lutf Khān was one of the Nawab's up-country officers. Though in the Nawab's service, he drew a monthly allowance from the Seths in return for the protection he gave them.³ The Seths, who had been the chief means of bringing Alivirdī to the throne, were not only neglected by Sirāj-uddaula, but treated with contempt and insult, as if they were only common traders. This would not have mattered very much to them if they had not also feared that the avarice of the Nawab would cause them one day or other to be plundered by him. This danger seemed to increase from day to day as the Nawab passed from success to success, and even when he had been defeated at Calcutta in February, 1757, the danger became more imminent owing to the panic-stricken condition of his mind, in which he was ready to suspect anyone who might have power to hurt him. The Seths had advanced large sums of money to the French, and now they found that the Nawab would not assist the latter against the British. It was therefore their interest to strike a bargain with the British, and so protect themselves against any loss by the expulsion of their former clients.

It is not quite certain when they began this intrigue. Clive's earlier letters⁴ asking for their assistance had been answered in somewhat haughty terms through their Agent, Ranjit Rāi,⁵ but it was the latter who arranged the treaty of the 9th February, and, according to Mr. Watts, he had contrived to obtain from the Nawab a promise of a *lakh* of rupees for his trouble in the business.⁶ This double dealing was characteristic of the Seths'

¹ See p. clxxxiii.

² Select Committee Proceedings, 23rd April, 1757.

³ Law (Vol. III., p. 210) says the Seths had brought him to Murshidabad (Stewart, p. 521).

⁴ Vol. II., p. 124.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 381.



policy. According to M. Law, they incited the British to make the most extravagant demands from the Nawab, and then, with pretended indignation, urged the Nawab not to grant them. It is very difficult to tell how far Sirāj-uddaula did comply with the terms of the Treaty.¹ It is evident from Scrafton's letters that the demands of the British were never definitely stated, and were constantly increasing;² and it seems clear that the Nawab actually paid some 30 lakhs of rupees as compensation for their losses at Calcutta, but on the other hand the amount of the damages done to the up-country Factories was difficult to estimate exactly, and Mānik Chand was strongly believed to have secreted much of the wealth of Calcutta, for which he had never accounted to the Nawab.³ The plunder taken by the soldiers had been sold to many persons like Baijnāth,⁴ a *diwān* of the Seths, whom the British, to please the latter, politely excused. It was in reference to these accounts that the Seths were able to give the Nawab trouble. The game was, however, sometimes dangerous, and in one instance a little later on the Seths had to sacrifice their Agent, Ranjīt Rāi, who they said had forged their signature to a document purporting to be written in the Nawab's name.⁵

We must now go back a little. On the 10th April Clive wrote to the Nawab specifying the articles of the Treaty which he had not yet fulfilled. These were:

1. The return of the guns and ammunition seized at Cossimbazar and other up-country factories.
2. The grant of *parwānas* throughout the country for the currency of the Company's business.
3. The currency of the *siccās* coined at Calcutta or Alinagar.
4. The delivery of the thirty-eight villages granted by the Imperial *Farmān*.
5. The restoration of the goods seized at the Factories and *aurāngs* throughout the country.⁶

On the 11th Mr. Watts wrote that the Nawab had demanded

¹ Vol. II., pp. 308, 322, 391.

² Vol. III., pp. 342-346.

³ Vol. II., p. 333.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁵ Law says he was put to death (Vol. III., p. 208), but he was alive after Plassey (Vol. II., pp. 381, 431). It looks as if the document referred to was a letter to the English Chiefs promising them a sum of money if they would grant the Nawab peace after the fight at Chitpur, but the whole incident is very obscure. See below, p. clxxxvi.

⁶ Vol. II., p. 321.

10th-11th
April, 1757.



an acquittance for the Company's property, though he had not yet restored it, and this was all the answer which the Nawab could be persuaded to give to Clive's demands.¹ According to Mr. Watts this was because the French party constantly assured the Nawab of Bussy's speedy arrival, and thus he was encouraged to resist the British claims. He threatened them with war,² and, as I have said, on the 20th April ventured to insult the British by turning their *Wakl* out of his *Darbār*.³ This brought matters to a crisis, and forced Mr. Watts and Mr. Scrafton to the conclusion that a Revolution was absolutely necessary. Omichand accordingly proposed to the Seths that the British should assist them in overthrowing Sirāj-uddaula and placing Yār Lutf Khān on the throne.⁴ At first sight it would appear ridiculous that a person of so little importance should be chosen for such a purpose, but Omichand probably thought that the family of Alivirdī had risen from a lower position than that occupied by Yār Lutf Khān, that the latter would be pleasing to the Seths as having been in a manner their servant, and, most of all, would be grateful to Omichand as the origin and source of his good fortune. The Seths agreed without any appearance of hesitation to a Revolution, but did not definitely name the Nawab's successor. Their consent was transmitted to Mr. Watts, who, on the 26th April, wrote to Calcutta proposing the Revolution on the ground that the Nawab had no intention of carrying out the Treaty, and that he would take the earliest opportunity of attacking the British, whilst Mīr Jafar had informed him through Coja Petrus⁵ that he, Rahīm Khān, Rāi Durlabh, Bahādur Alī Khān, and others⁶ were ready to assist the British in overthrowing the Nawab.

'If you approve of this scheme, which is more feasible than the other I wrote about, he' (Mīr Jafar) 'requests you will write your proposals of what money, what land you want, or what treaties you will engage in.'⁷

¹ Vol. II., p. 334.

² *Ibid.*, p. 335.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 349, and Watts' 'Memoir,' p. 76. Scrafton ('Reflections,' p. 75) says Yār Lutf Khān made the proposal himself to Mr. Watts. If so, he must have acted with the concurrence of the Seths.

⁵ Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 66.

⁶ The 'Seir Mutaqheerīn' says, Vol. II., p. 227, that Ghasīta Begam gave the remains of her wealth to assist Mīr Jafar in order to revenge herself upon Sirāj-uddaula.

⁷ Vol. II., pp. 362, 377. This letter was apparently despatched to Calcutta by Mr. Scrafton.



Clive replied on the 28th.¹ He had some natural doubts of the suitability of Lutf Khān as candidate for the throne, and wished to avoid bloodshed as much as possible. A stronger candidate might, he thought, be found in Mīr Jafar himself. As he did not trust the soldiers already at Cossimbazar, many of them being deserters, Clive proposed, in accordance with Mr. Watts' request for reinforcements,² to send up some men from the King's regiment.

This being a critical moment, it was, as usual, seized upon by the civil authorities to harass Colonel Clive. The negotiations with the Nawab had been left to him and the Admiral, and were practically entirely in his hands, he communicating in cipher with Mr. Watts and Mr. Scrafton.³ These two gentlemen did not agree in all matters, and taking advantage of the consequent friction, the Council proposed to recall Scrafton, whose youth and eagerness suited the Colonel much better than the more cautious diplomacy of Mr. Watts. The Colonel replied very firmly,⁴ and they could not refuse his request that Scrafton should stay on at Murshidabad, but they wrote to him that Mr. Watts was the proper person to manage the business, asked that they should be kept informed of everything that was determined, and hinted that Clive might, if he wished, save the expenses incident on his keeping the troops in the field.

Meanwhile the Seths, though they had appeared to accept Omichand's proposal, had been preparing a more feasible plan of their own. Mīr Jafar, as both Watts and Clive had been informed, was really inclined to turn against the Nawab, and they proposed to him that he should take the place Omichand had offered to Yār Lutf Khān. His acquiescence came about in the following manner. It has been said that Mohan Lāl, the Nawab's chief adviser, had been ill, and that on his recovery he seemed to have lost much of his mental powers. He was no longer able to conceal his pride and vanity, and demanded that 'all the grandees and chiefs' should come and salute him. This absurd demand, in which he was

¹ Vol. II., p. 366.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 353, 355.

³ Apparently Mr. Scrafton was at Murshidabad in connection with the Cossimbazar Factory. His proposal to Clive on the 24th April (Vol. II., p. 357) was to lend Lutf Khān a hundred soldiers who, with his own men, would storm the Nawab's palace.

⁴ Vol. II., p. 367.



supported by the Nawab, broke down Mīr Jafar's much-trying patience,¹ so that he at last consented to listen to the Seths' proposals.

With his letter of the 26th April Mr. Watts sent to Clive copies^{26th April, 1757.} of letters from Nandkumār and Mathurā Mal² to the Nawab warning the Nawab against the British. Nandkumār was tired of waiting for the rewards of his treachery at the time of the siege of Chandernagore. The British had failed to obtain his confirmation as *Faujdar* of Hugli, and, knowing their power, he ascribed this failure to their want of goodwill. Mathurā Mal's letter was to the effect that the British were strengthening Cossimbazar in order to attack the Nawab suddenly in his palace. This, we know, was Scrafton's suggestion, and it had an air of probability, as Mīr Jafar had already armed his men in order to resist any attempt of the Nawab to arrest him. On receipt of the letter Sirāj-uddaula ordered Mīr Jafar to march down to Plassey. Accordingly, to quiet his suspicions Mr. Watts advised that no troops should be sent up to Murshidabad, and that the Nawab should be written to politely, no mention being made of anything but merchandise.

Mr. Watts' letter was presented by Clive to the Select Committee on the 1st May. They immediately decided to accept^{1st May, 1757.} Mīr Jafar's offers on the following grounds:

1. The Nawab's dishonesty and insolent behaviour showed that he had concluded the Treaty only to gain time.

2. His intrigues with the French—*i.e.*, with Law and Bussy—proved that it was his firm intention to break the peace at a favourable opportunity.

3. The detestation in which the Nawab was held by all classes made it certain a Revolution would take place, and therefore it would be wise to make sure of the friendship of his successor.³

Accordingly, Colonel Clive was instructed to transmit to Mr. Watts certain conditions to be offered to Mīr Jafar, which he did the next day.⁴ These conditions included all that had been obtained and demanded from Sirāj-uddaula.

Mr. Watts was still under the impression that Omichand was working in the interests of the British, but the change of plan by

¹ Vol. II., p. 410, and Vol. III., p. 211.

² Vol. II., pp. 364, 365.

³ Select Committee Proceedings, 1 May, 1757.

⁴ Vol. II., pp. 372, 373.



which Mīr Jafar, a prince over whom Omichand had no control, was substituted for Yār Lutf Khān, did not suit his wishes, and though possibly he had no intention of opposing a Revolution which he knew must take place, it became necessary for him to get what he could out of the Nawab before everything fell into the power of the Seths' protégé, Mīr Jafar, and he saw his way at the same time to obtain a certain revenge upon both the Seths and the British. Accordingly, when he found Ranjīt Rāi pressing the Nawab for the payment of the *lakh* promised him at the Peace of the 9th February, he represented to Sirāj-uddaula that if the negotiations with the British were conducted through him alone the Nawab might escape paying Ranjīt Rāi anything, either for himself or for the leading men at Calcutta. The Nawab was so pleased with this suggestion that he disgraced Ranjīt Rāi and ordered Omichand to be paid a large sum of money due to him by the State, and to have restored to him all his goods and effects that had been sequestered.¹ This trick upon their Agent was not likely to be forgiven by the Seths, and it was speedily made clear to Mr. Watts that in any treaty with the Seths and Mīr Jafar Omichand must be left out.

6th May,
1757.

When Mr. Watts received Clive's reply about the 6th May, Omichand openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the new arrangement. Meanwhile, Mr. Scrafton had gone down to Calcutta and explained matters to Clive, and had apparently urged Omichand's claims to consideration, for on the 5th May Clive wrote to Watts that Omichand's losses in the Troubles ought to be made good by a special article in the Treaty.² This letter did not reach Watts until after the Seths had decided to have nothing to do with Omichand, and had caused Watts to be informed of the way in which Omichand had tricked both Ranjīt Rāi and the British.³ Probably Omichand heard of the Seths' communication to Mr. Watts by some underhand channel, and he now determined to play an even bolder game. He therefore insisted on Mr. Watts demanding for him 5 per cent. on all the Nawab's treasure, and that Mīr Jafar should promise not to exact from the Bengal *Zamīndārs* any more than they had paid in the time of Murshid Kulī Khān, whilst to secure Rāi Durlabh to his own side Omichand agreed that he should receive one quarter of all that he himself could

¹ Vol. II., p. 381.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 377, 380.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 381.



obtain from Mir Jafar. Finding Omichand insist on his conditions,¹ Watts was convinced of his treachery, especially as he strongly dissuaded him from pressing the Nawab to pay the 20,000 gold mohurs he had promised to pay the leading Europeans for arranging the Treaty of the 9th February. Accordingly, he went with Coja Petrus to see Omar Beg, an officer already mentioned for his friendship to the British, and now the chief confidant of Mir Jafar. Mir Jafar himself, probably at the instigation of the Seths, said that he would have nothing to do with Omichand, and Omar Beg was deputed to Calcutta with proposals somewhat more favourable to the British than those they had themselves suggested. So urgent was the matter that two days later, on the 16th May, Mr. Watts sent to Calcutta a blank paper bearing Mir Jafar's seal for the Select Committee to write their own terms. ^{16th May, 1757.}

On the 17th May the Select Committee considered the question of Omichand's demands, and decided that his conduct deserved disgrace and punishment rather than a stipulation of any kind in his favour in the treaty with Mir Jafar.² They were still less inclined to grant his new demands. Clive thereupon proposed that as it would be dangerous to refuse Omichand openly he should be deceived by a trick, and that the best way to effect this would be to draw up two treaties, one containing an Article granting him the sum he demanded, and another treaty from which it should be excluded. On the morality of this device Clive expressed himself as follows to the Parliamentary Select Committee: ^{17th May, 1757.}

'When Mr. Watts had nearly accomplished the means of carrying that Revolution into execution, he acquainted him by letter that a fresh difficulty had started; that Omichand had insisted upon 5 per cent. on all the Nabob's treasures, and thirty *lack* in money, and threatened if he did not comply with that demand he would immediately acquaint Serajah Dowlah with what was going on, and Mr. Watts should be put to death. That when he received this advice he thought art and policy warrantable in defeating the purposes of such a villain, and that his Lordship himself formed the plan of the fictitious treaty to which the Committee consented. . . . That his Lordship never made any secret of it; he thinks it warrantable in such a case, and would do it again a hundred times. *He had no interested motive in doing it, and did it with a design of disappointing the expectations of a rapacious man.*'³

¹ Mr. Sykes says he threatened to betray the whole matter to the Nawab (Vol. III., p. 307).

² Vol. II., p. 383.

³ Vol. III., p. 315.



The fact that Clive was not ashamed of the action does not make it any better, but we must remember that he had always been ready to give Omichand a fair recompense for his losses by a special article in the Treaty with Mir Jafar until he attempted to extort more than he deserved by threats of treachery, and now, as Mir Jafar and Jagat Seth objected to admitting Omichand to the benefits of the conspiracy, it seemed absolutely necessary to devise some plan to deceive Omichand or else to withdraw from the conspiracy, and possibly cause Mr. Watts and the British up-country to lose their lives. With these reasons and the reflection that neither he nor the British received any pecuniary benefit from the deception of Omichand, Clive and the Select Committee quieted their consciences.

Having decided upon this course, Clive seems to have entered into it with almost boyish glee,¹ trying in every way to improve upon his first conception. Accordingly, he wrote to Watts:

Flatter Omychund greatly, tell him the Admiral, Committee, and self are infinitely obliged to him for the pains he has taken to aggrandize the Company's affairs, and that his name will be greater in England than ever it was in India. If this can be brought to bear, to give him no room for suspicion we take off 10 *lack* from the 30 demanded for himself, and add 5 *per cent.* upon the whole sum received, which will turn out the same thing.²

Clive thought that a too ready acquiescence might excite Omichand's suspicions, but that his mind would be—as it was for a time—entirely set at rest by this pretence of haggling over the terms.

The one difficulty about the scheme was to obtain Admiral Watson's signature to the false Treaty. The Admiral declined to sign it, and also refused to allow his seal to be used,³ but whether he was cognisant of the fact that his signature would be forged cannot be ascertained. The probability is that in a bluff, sailor-like way he refused to have anything to do with the matter, and told them 'they might do as they pleased.'⁴ Clive and the Select Committee put their own interpretation upon this per-

¹ Clive was only thirty-two years of age, having been born at Styche, near Market Drayton, 29th September, 1725.

² Vol. II., p. 389.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 387, and Vol. III., p. 318.

⁴ Vol. III., p. 318.



mission, and by Clive's order Mr. Lushington forged the Admiral's signature.¹ The false Treaty—upon red paper²—was shown to Omichand, and his suspicions were quieted until the danger was practically past.

As I have said, all that can be offered in defence of Clive and the Select Committee in reference to this transaction is the supposed political necessity of the situation, and the fact that none of them benefited pecuniarily in any way by their action. The only person who did so benefit was Mir Jafar. When the time came for Omichand to demand his share of the spoils he was quietly told by Mr. Scrafton that he was to have nothing. On the authority of Orme,³ it is stated that the shock was so great that he was reduced to a state of imbecility, in which he remained till his death in the following year. If M. Raymond, the translator of the 'Seir Mutaqherin,' is correct,⁴ so far from having been reduced to a state of imbecility, Omichand joined Mir Jafar in a crafty and successful scheme to deceive the British as to the amount of treasure left by Sirāj-uddaula in his Treasury. At any rate, Clive thought his presence in Murshidabad inadvisable, and suggested that he should pay a visit to a holy shrine at Malda.⁵ Possibly, there he had opportunity to meditate over his words to the Nawab:

'that he had lived under the English protection these forty years, that he never knew them once to break their agreement—to the truth of which Omychund took his oath by touching a Bramin's foot—and that if a lie could be proved in England upon anyone, they were spit upon and never trusted.'⁶

If Omichand had, as many people say, suffered from the injustice of British officials he could not with all his Oriental cunning and malice have devised a more bitter revenge upon the nation to which they belonged, than the stain which his threatened treachery brought upon the name of Clive. Had Clive and the Committee thought more of the national honour than on what was expedient

¹ Vol. II., p. 387, and Vol. III., pp. 318, 320.

² Vol. III., p. 318.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 325, note.

⁴ 'Seir Mutaqherin,' vol. ii., p. 237, note 125. The bulk of the treasure was taken into the female apartments in the palace, where the British did not think of looking for it. See also Vol. II., p. 438.

⁵ Vol. II., p. 465.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 232.



for the time, had they insisted on holding to their word, even when extorted by a villain, it is probable that Mīr Jafar and the Seths would, for their own safety, have accepted any conditions the British chose to lay down, and Mīr Jafar would have been saved all that long discussion with the Committee as to the payment of the donations he had promised, which ultimately led to his own ruin and that of his successor, Mīr Kāsim; but it seems to have been fated that whatever was done, whether right or wrong, by the foes or friends of the British, should all work together for the overthrow of the native Government.

12th-14th
May, 1757.

We must now return to the Nawab. The open accusations of the partisans of the French, the rumours which reached him by his spies of what the Europeans were openly talking about in their Factories,¹ had certainly produced some impression upon his mind. The usual good fortune of the British helped them to obviate these suspicions. About the 12th May Clive received a letter from the Marathas offering their assistance to obtain justice from the Nawab. The messenger was a man of no importance, and the Committee supposed that the letter was a forgery devised by Mānik Chand to test the intentions of the British. At the same time the latter wished for nothing less than the interference of the Marathas, and yet feared, if the letter were genuine, to excite their hostility whilst they were still on bad terms with the Nawab. It struck Clive, however, that the letter might be put to advantage, and a reply was drawn up to the effect that at present they were on good terms with the Nawab, but that if he did not fulfil his promises they intended to renew the war after the Rains. A letter of this kind could do no harm, even if it fell into the hands of the Nawab, but it might excite the suspicion of Mīr Jafar as to their loyalty to him. They therefore decided to acquaint him² with the whole affair, when a still bolder plan suggested itself to Clive—namely, to send the letter to the Nawab himself.³ Mr. Scrafton was accordingly ordered to proceed with it to Murshidabad. He arrived on the 23rd, and on the morning of the 24th had an audience with the Nawab, who was, or pretended⁴ to be, so delighted with this proof of the loyalty

¹ Vol. III., p. 251.

² Vol. II., p. 379.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

⁴ Scrafton's 'Reflections,' p. 79.



of the British that he immediately ordered Mir Jafar to return to Murshidabad.¹ This favourable impression was confirmed by Mr. Watts informing him that the British withdrew their demand to be allowed to refortify Cossimbazar,² and on the 30th Mr. Watts^{30th May, 1757.} ordered Lieutenant Cassells with the military to go down to Calcutta. He had determined to make his escape with his two companions, Messrs. Collet and Sykes, at the proper moment, and had arranged that Omichand should go down with Mr. Scrafton. The latter set out on the 30th, and after experiencing much difficulty in persuading Omichand to start,³ at last got him away and reached Calcutta, himself on the 2nd June and Omichand a little later. Omichand had played his own game up to the very last. On the 16th May, in spite of Mr. Watts' remonstrances, he went to the Nawab and informed him that he had a great secret to disclose. What it was is not known. He himself told Watts it was a lie which he had concocted to the effect that the British had concluded an alliance with Bussy against the Nawab. Watts⁴ suspected that it was the conspiracy between the British and Mir Jafar. Whatever it may have been the Nawab gave Omichand in return for this information a *parwāna* to the Raja of Burdwan for 4 *lakhs* of rupees which he still owed him, and also for the delivery of the remainder of his goods. On his way down to Calcutta Omichand gave Scrafton the slip and got away to Plassey, where he had a long interview with Rāi Durlabh, which nearly upset the whole of the arrangements. We shall refer to this a little later.

The agreement finally proposed by the Committee to Mir Jafar was to the following effect :

1. Mir Jafar to confirm all the grants and privileges allowed by Sirāj-uddaula.
2. Mir Jafar to enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with the British.
3. All Frenchmen in Bengal with their Factories and goods to be delivered up to the British. The French never to be permitted to resettle in the three Provinces.
4. The Company to receive 100 *lakhs* for the loss sustained by the destruction of Calcutta and for the expenses of the war.

¹ Vol. II., p. 393.

² Orme, 'History,' vol. ii., pp. 157-159.

³ Vol. III., p. 209.

⁴ Watts' 'Memoir,' p. 91.



5. The European inhabitants of Calcutta to receive 50 *lakhs* of rupees for their losses at the capture of that town.
6. The Hindus to receive 20 *lakhs* on the same account.
7. The Armenians 7 *lakhs*.
8. Omichand 20 *lakhs*.
9. The Company to be put in possession of all the land within the Calcutta Ditch and 600 yards all round.
10. The Company to receive the *zamindari* of the country south of Calcutta between the River and the Salt Lakes as far as Culpee.
11. The Nawab to pay the extraordinary expenses of the British troops when required by him for his own defence.
12. The Government not to erect fortifications on the river below Hugli.
13. The articles to be complied with within thirty days of Mir Jafar's being acknowledged Nawab.
14. The Company to assist Mir Jafar against all enemies as long as he complies with the Treaty.¹

19th May,
1757.

This agreement or Treaty had been drawn out and signed by the Committee on the 19th May,² and returned to Mr. Watts. Beside the terms stated in the Treaty, Mr. Watts was instructed to ask for 12 *lakhs* as a present to the Select Committee, and 40 *lakhs* for the Army and Navy. It was necessary to conclude the matter, but Mir Jafar would not give a definite answer until he had consulted Rāi Durlabh, who was the Nawab's Treasurer, and commanded a large part of the army. Rāi Durlabh arrived in Murshidabad on the 2nd June, and it was quickly evident that Omichand had filled his mind with suspicion. Watts was so disgusted that he wrote to Clive that it would be better to act alone than in

2nd June,
1757.

'connection with such a set of shuffling, lying, spiritless wretches.'³

However, Rāi Durlabh thought better of the matter,⁴ and on the 4th Mr. Watts was informed that he and Mir Jafar would agree to the terms of the Committee, but Mr. Watts dared not go openly to Mir Jafar's palace. Late at night Coja Petrus⁵ took him in a *dooley* or native sedan chair such as was used only by women and

¹ Vol. II., pp. 383-385. Article 8 was not included in the real Treaty.

² *Ibid.*, p. 449

³ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

⁴ He certainly made some agreement with Mir Jafar, either the 5 *per cent.* on the total spoil or to cheat the British as Raymond suggests, or very possibly both.

⁵ Vol. III., p. 366.



was therefore 'inviolable' to see Mīr Jafar, who at once affixed his signature to the Treaty as drafted by the Committee.¹ The document was entrusted to Omar Beg, who hurried down to Calcutta and delivered it to the Select Committee on the 11th June.

Whether it was because of Omichand's lie about Bussy or for some other reason, the Nawab determined to keep his army at Plassey, and to arrest Mīr Jafar. Unfortunately for himself, on receiving the Maratha letter, he had dismissed half his army, and the pay of the men who remained was heavily in arrears.² And now, on his attempting to arrest Mīr Jafar, the latter had the Nawab's men well beaten and driven away.³ Instead of sending a stronger force to take Mīr Jafar, he left him alone, but insulted him still further by giving the post of *Bakhshī* to another officer, Coja Hādī.

Nothing now remained for Mr. Watts to do except to watch an opportunity to escape. This he managed to effect on the evening of the 12th June,⁴ having obtained the Nawab's permission to go to Mandipur, the country seat of the Cossimbazar Factory, for a little hunting. When in the open country he and his companions Collet and Sykes dismissed their native grooms, and after an exciting ride reached Agradwip in safety, accompanied only by a Mogul servant. Thence the three dropped down in boats until they met Clive's advanced force on the 14th at Khulna.⁵

The Nawab seems to have been informed almost immediately of their flight. He had been warned of his danger on the 8th by M. Sinfray, whom Law sent down, but the information was too vague, or, what is more probable, he had feared to act upon it. Some of his advisers counselled the destruction of Mīr Jafar, and to wait for Law, to whom he wrote to come down at once to his assistance. But the Nawab had so much reason to distrust his troops that he dared not postpone fighting, or repeat his attempt to arrest Mīr Jafar. He therefore had resort to an expedient tried successfully by his grandfather when his officers were about to desert him in the middle of a battle against the Marathas. He went to see Mīr Jafar, begged him to agree to a reconciliation, and accepted his promise to be true to him.⁶

¹ Vol. II., p. 383.

² Vol. III., p. 239.

³ Vol. II., p. 411.

⁴ Watts' 'Memoir' (p. 99) says the 11th June.

⁵ Vol. III., p. 51.

⁶ Vol. II., p. 416.

12th-14th
June, 1757.



Having taken this precaution, Sirāj-uddaula, with well-simulated indignation, wrote to Clive and Watson,¹ reproaching them with having broken the Treaty, and marched slowly to join his army of 50,000 men at Plassey. Law, of course, had not been able to join the Nawab, but the latter took down with him a small party of thirty or forty Europeans under M. Sinfray to manage his artillery. Before M. Sinfray left Cossimbazar, he obtained permission to destroy the British Factory.²

At Plassey the Nawab found his army in an entrenched camp on the eastern or left bank of the Cossimbazar River. According to Eyre Coote it consisted of 20,000 horse and 40,000 foot, with a large number of elephants and guns.³

Vol. II., pp. 409, 411.

Ibid., p. 461.

³ Vol. III., p. 56.



CHAPTER XV.

PLASSEY.

'This famous battle which put Bengal and its dependencies, so to say, in the power of the English.'—LAW.¹

It will never be known whether Omichand betrayed the conspiracy to Sirāj-uddaula, or whether he or someone else disclosed it in Calcutta; but it was publicly spoken of in that town on the 5th June,² and it was known in Murshidabad on the 7th, probably by means of Mathurā Mal³ the spy, which may account for the Nawab receiving M. Sinfray the next day.⁴ Clive was very anxious about the safety of Mr. Watts and his companions, and it became necessary for him to move. He was then in camp at the French Gardens. On the 12th Major Killpatrick joined him at Chandernagore with all the military from Calcutta. Admiral Watson sent a garrison of 100 sailors to Chandernagore, and ordered the *Bridgewater* to anchor off the town of Hugli to overawe the *Faujdar*.⁵ The latter was an officer named Shaikh Amīr-ulla, whom the Nawab had appointed in spite of the British recommendation of Nandkumār. Amīr-ulla, after a feeble protest, resigned himself to obey Clive's orders and made no attempt to interfere with his march.⁶

On the 13th Clive wrote to the Nawab, recapitulating the grievances of the British, referring particularly to his treacherous correspondence with Law and Bussy, and announcing his intention of marching to Murshidabad, there to submit his complaints to the arbitration of Jagat Seth, Mohan Lāl, Mīr Jafar, Rāi Durlabh, Mīr Madan, and the other chief nobles and officers.⁷

¹ Vol. III., p. 212.

² Vol. II., pp. 398, 418.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 400, 403.

⁴ Vol. III., p. 210.

⁵ Vol. II., p. 403.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 404, 405.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 407.



13th-17th
June, 1757.

The same day Clive began his march with a force of 650 military, 100 topasses, 150 of the train (including 50 sailors commanded by Lieutenant Hayter and 7 midshipmen), 8 pieces of cannon (6-pounders), and 2,100 sepoy. The sepoy marched by land, the rest of the force went by water. The same evening they reached Nyaserai. On the 14th they arrived towards nightfall at Khulna, a *jamadār*, *havildār*, and 29 Madras sepoy having deserted on the march. Messrs. Watts, Collet, and Sykes joined them in the afternoon. On the 15th Colonel Clive appointed Captain Archibald Grant a Major, and on the 16th gave the same rank to Captain Eyre Coote. On the 17th the army reached Patli, and Major Coote was detached with 200 Europeans, 500 sepoy, and 2 field-pieces to attack Cutwa Fort, the Commandant of which had promised to come over to the British.

18th-19th
June, 1757.

Major Coote arrived at Cutwa on the 18th, and encamped opposite the Fort. On the 19th the officer in charge of the artillery informed him he could not bring the guns up the river owing to the shallowness of the water, so Coote sent a *jamadār* with a flag of truce to say he had come as a friend, but if the Commandant, whose soldiers had already fired on his men, continued to resist, he would storm the place and give no quarter. The Commandant refused to surrender, so the sepoy made a pretence of attacking the Fort in front whilst the Europeans crossed the river which lies between the Fort and town a little higher up. As soon as the British advanced the enemy deserted the Fort. This was an earthen fortification with eight round towers, and about half a mile in circumference, and was armed with fourteen guns.¹ Its importance lay in the fact that it commanded the highroad to Murshidabad, thus securing access or retreat by water, and it also contained a very large quantity of grain.²

Clive's main army arrived at Cutwa late at night, and halted the next day, much distressed by the heavy rains, which prevented the men from using their tents.

Up to this time Clive had received nothing but bare promises from Mir Jafar. He had no personal acquaintance with that Prince, and hesitated to risk the fortunes of the Company on the bare word of a man who, whatever his reasons, was a traitor to his own

¹ Vol. III., p. 53.

² *Ibid.*, p. 65.



Sovereign. Accordingly, he wrote to the Committee that he would not cross the river unless Mīr Jafar joined him, and that if he could only secure 10,000 *maunds* of grain he could, with this and what he had secured at Cutwa, hold his present position until after the Rains, when, if the Nawab did not consent to a firm peace, it would be easy to form an alliance with the Marathas, or the Raja of Birbhum, or even the *Wazir* of Delhi.¹ Clive's letter was discussed by the Committee on the 23rd June, and the members present (Messrs. Drake and Becher) boldly declared the Colonel's fears to be groundless, and that he should be instructed to force on an engagement,

'provided he thinks there is a good prospect of success.'²

This diplomatically-worded order did not reach Clive until the 27th, when, his victory being complete, he replied with dignified contempt that its contents were

'so indefinite and contradictory that I can put no other construction on it than an intent to clear yourselves at my expense, had the expedition miscarried.'³

Meantime he had with much misgiving called a Council of War ^{21st June, 1757.} on the 21st.

'The Colonel informed the Council that he found he could not depend on Meer Jaffier for anything more than his standing neuter in case we came to an action with the Nabob, that Monsieur Law with a body of French was then within three days' march of joining the Nabob (whose army, by the best intelligence he could get, consisted of about 50,000 men), and that he called us together to desire our opinions whether in these circumstances it would be prudent to come to immediate action with the Nabob, or fortify ourselves where we were, and remain till the *Monsoon*⁴ was over, and the Morattoes could be brought into the country.'⁵

With that touch of comedy which runs through all the tragic events of the reign of Sirāj-uddaula, the Council of War had been opened by a demand from Lieutenant Hayter to take precedence of the Company's Captains. On his request being disallowed he refused to vote, and withdrew from the Council.⁶ Clive gave his vote

¹ Vol. II., p. 418.

² *Ibid.*, p. 423.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 431. Another trick played by the Committee was to allow Mr. Drake to reply personally to letters addressed to the Committee collectively, with, of course, the same object—viz., to place the blame of failure on Clive's shoulders (Vol. II., p. 429).

⁴ The Rains.

⁵ Vol. III., p. 54.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 362.



against immediate action, and of the remaining members of the Council, twelve voted against and seven for it.¹ Major Coote, the first of the minority to vote, thought it necessary to give his reasons, which were—

1. That the men were in the best of spirits, and any delay would discourage them.

2. That the arrival of M. Law would strengthen the Nawab's army and councils, and would probably be followed by the desertion of the numerous Frenchmen in the British force.

3. That the army was so far from Calcutta that communications could be maintained only with difficulty, if at all.

He therefore voted for immediate action or a retreat to Calcutta. With him in the minority were all the Bengal officers except Captains Fischer and Lebeaume. The former appears to have been quite new to the country, and the latter had only just been restored to his rank after a somewhat arbitrary dismissal by Clive.² He might well hesitate to vote against the opinion of that determined commander.³ As a matter of fact, we may say that all the officers who knew the country were in favour of immediate action. Clive asserted later on that

'this was the only Council of War he ever held, and if he had abided by that Council it would have been the ruin of the East India Company.'⁴

Clive explained in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee that he had never consulted any of his notes since the battle, and this explains why he spoke as he did; for the question put before the Council of War was not whether they should fight or not, but whether they should advance before they obtained assurances of assistance from Mir Jafar. An hour after the Council Clive informed Major Coote that he would march next day.⁵ On the 22nd, early in the morning, the army set out, and reached Plassey Grove about twelve at night, where word was brought that the Nawab's vanguard of 6,000 men was within three miles of the British. The same day Clive received a letter from Mir Jafar, promising his assistance and explaining his plans.⁶

¹ Vol. III., pp. 53, 321.

² *Ibid.*, p. 344.

³ Captain Lebeaume resigned the Company's service in 1758 (Public Consultations, 21st June, 1758, letter appended).

⁴ Vol. III., p. 316.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 322.

⁶ Vol. II., p. 420.



The 23rd¹ of June was the anniversary of the King's accession to the throne, and while the ships at Calcutta were firing salutes in the King's honour,² Clive and his men were fighting a battle, the ultimate result of which was to add to his dominions the greatest dependency ever held by a European Power.

This famous fight has been so often described³ that it is impossible to add anything not already known, and the changes in the features of the country have rendered the battlefield so unlike what it was in 1757 that it is no longer possible to identify the points mentioned in the various accounts which have been left of it. The British, who held the celebrated grove, then known as the Laksha Bāgh, or grove of one hundred thousand trees,⁴ were protected from the fire of the Nawab's heavy guns by a high embankment which ran round it. It was due to this cause and the distrust which the Nawab and his army felt towards each other that the British suffered so little loss.⁵

According to a Dutch account, the Nawab's vanguard consisted of about 15,000 men, commanded by Mohan Lāl, Mīr Madan, Mānik Chand, Coja Hādī, and Naba Singh Hazārī.⁶ Jafar Ali Khān, Rāi Durlabh, and Yār Lutf Khān commanded separate detachments, and took no part in the fight.

Soon after daybreak⁷ the Nawab's vanguard advanced to the attack. The British were in four divisions under Majors Killpatrick, Grant, and Coote, and Captain Gaupp. They were stationed in front of the embankment, with the guns and sepoy on the flanks. Mīr Madan, with a body of native troops and the French, quickly occupied an eminence⁸ within two hundred yards

¹ The 'Dictionary of National Biography' gives the date as the 12th June, which corresponds to the 23rd June, N.S.

² Vol. III., p. 17.

³ It will be seen that the various accounts to be found in this Selection differ greatly in detail, especially as to the time at which the eminences in front of the British position were captured—*e.g.*, compare Clive's own accounts (Vol. II., pp. 427, 440). In general, I have followed the account given by Eyre Coote (Vol. III., p. 55).

⁴ See Bholanath Chunder's 'Travels of a Hindu,' p. 51.

⁵ Vol. III., pp. 212, 324.

⁶ Vol. II., p. 426.

⁷ Vol. III., p. 55.

⁸ Some of the descriptions mention 'eminences' and some 'tanks.' In the plains of Bengal tanks are artificial ponds, generally quadrangular in shape, and vary much



of the British, and their fire and that of the other advanced posts rendered it advisable for the latter to withdraw into the Grove. The enemy were apparently afraid to assault this position, and a cannonade on both sides followed until about two o'clock. Clive had for the moment retired to Plassey House, a small hunting lodge, to change his clothes, which were wet through by a sudden shower of rain, when suddenly the enemy, dismayed¹ by the loss of Mīr Madan and Bahādur Alī Khān, son-in-law to Mohan Lāl, began to retreat upon their entrenchments. Clive's intention had been to wait until night to make an attack on the latter,² but Major Killpatrick, thinking the moment favourable, sent word to Clive and marched out of the Grove. In a few minutes Clive was on the spot, and angrily reprimanded Major Killpatrick,³ whom he at first sent back to the Grove, but on his apologizing for his breach of orders, he permitted him to remain. It was now impossible to retire, so Clive continued the advance, and the enemy were quickly driven from the eminence near the British Camp. Here a halt seems to have been made till about 4 p.m., when the Grenadiers and a company of sepoys advanced towards another Tank and eminence close to the Nawab's entrenchments. By this time the Nawab's army was entirely demoralised. No one knew who was faithful to the Nawab and who a traitor, but it was evident to every man present that Mīr Jafar and Rāi Durlabh, who had marched round to the right of Plassey Grove but had not fired a shot, had no intention of assisting their compatriots. However, the detachment at the Tank, and the men in the entrenchments, kept up a warm but ineffectual fire. Clive, finding that the enemy would not come out of their defences, ordered his men to storm these two positions, and apparently about the same time the Nawab sent word to Sinfray and the French⁴ to retire as he was betrayed and the battle lost. Sirāj-uddaula fled on a camel⁵

in size. The earth excavated in making the tank is thrown up generally as an embankment round the tank, but sometimes in a single mound or hill. Thus 'tank' and 'eminence' may well refer to what is practically the same position.

¹ Vol. II., p. 427.

² *Ibid.*, p. 440.

³ Vol. III., p. 404.

⁴ The 'Seir Mutaqherin' says Mohan Lāl wished to continue the fight (Vol. II., p. 233).

⁵ Vol. II., p. 441.



belonging to one of his servants, and was one of the first who entered Murshidabad to announce his defeat.¹

The British had little difficulty in dispersing his followers, whom they pursued as far as Daudpur, about six miles from the field, where they halted for the night. The Nawab's army had lost about 500 men killed, three elephants, and a great number of horses, and the British took fifty-three guns. Amongst the plunder of the Camp was the Nawab's tent. On his inkstand was found a list of thirteen of his courtiers whom he had doomed to death.²

During the battle Mīr Jafar and Rāi Durlabh had not fired a shot or struck a blow. They marched their forces round to the right of Plassey Grove, but as they sent no message to Clive, he did not recognise them, and supposing that they were a party of the enemy trying to outflank him, opened fire to keep them at a safe distance.³ On the 24th Mīr Jafar, with Omar Beg, whom Clive had sent to^{24th June, 1757.} him, appeared in Clive's camp. Whether his real intention had been to join in the attack on the British in the event of Mīr Madan being victorious, or to assist Clive, he had done nothing for either party, and Mīr Jafar had grave doubts as to the reception he would be granted. When the guard turned out

‘to receive him as he passed, he started as if he thought it was all over with him; nor did his countenance brighten up till the Colonel embraced him, and saluted him *Subah* of the three provinces.’⁴

Mīr Jafar informed Clive that he was determined to carry out the terms of the Treaty concluded between him and the Council, and hastened to Murshidabad to ensure the capture of Sirāj-uddaula and prevent any commotion amongst the people or soldiery. On reaching Murshidabad, Mīr Jafar took possession of the Nawab's palace of Mansurganj,⁵ giving up his own palace of Jafarganj to his son Mīrān. Clive arrived on the 26th and^{26th-28th June, 1757.} encamped at the French Factory at Saidabad. He was about to enter the town on the 27th when the Seths warned Mr. Watts that Mīrān, Rāi Durlabh, and others had formed a plot to kill him

¹ Vol. III., p. 212, and Sraffton's 'Reflections,' p. 89.

² Sraffton's 'Reflections,' p. 95.

³ Vol. II., p. 441.

⁴ Sraffton's 'Reflections,' p. 90, and Vol. III., p. 324.

⁵ 'Seir Mutaqherin,' vol. ii., p. 237.



on his way to the palace.¹ This would have been an easy matter, for as Clive tells us,

‘The city of Muxadavad² is as extensive, populous, and rich as the City of London.’³

And

‘The inhabitants . . . must have amounted to some hundred thousands, and if they had had an inclination to have destroyed the Europeans, they might have done it with sticks and stones.’⁴

Accordingly, Clive postponed his visit until the next day, when he made his entry with a guard of 100 King’s troops, the Company’s Grenadiers, 500 sepoy, and two field-pieces, the whole army being held in readiness to march at a moment’s warning.⁵ He took up his abode at the Murad Bagh,⁶ and the same afternoon, Mirān came to conduct him to his father, who was now in the Nawab’s other palace of Hira Jhil.⁷

‘As I found he declined taking his seat on the *musnud*, I handed him to it and saluted him as Nabob, upon which his courtiers congratulated him, and paid him the usual homage.’⁸

Thus the Revolution was carried to a successful conclusion by the diplomacy of Mr. Watts and the courage and conduct of Clive.

The victory of Plassey has always been considered one of the decisive battles of history, and yet the victors lost only 4 Europeans and 14 sepoy killed, and 11 Europeans and 36 sepoy wounded; 4 European⁹ and 2 sepoy officers were wounded, and 1 sepoy officer killed.

Law belittles the victory as a military achievement, for he says:

‘Their memoirs show that, without the intervention of a miracle, it could only end to their advantage, since the greater part of the Nawab’s army was against him. . . . Fear pervaded the whole army before the action commenced. Everyone was persuaded that Sirāj-uddaula was betrayed, and no one knew whom to trust.’¹⁰

There is no doubt that, as regards actual fighting and the part

¹ Vol. II., p. 431.

² Murshidabad.

³ Vol. III., p. 314.

⁴ Vol. III., p. 324.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁶ Orme, ‘History,’ vol. ii., p. 181.

⁷ This was the palace of Sirāj-uddaulā (see Orme, ‘History,’ vol. ii., p. 159).

⁸ Vol. II., p. 437.

⁹ Lieutenants Cassels and Holst, Sergeants Delubar and Lyons.

¹⁰ Vol. III., p. 212.



played by the soldier, Plassey was, as a battle, not even to be compared with the skirmishes round Calcutta in the preceding February, but this does not detract from the example of moral courage exhibited by Clive. Behind him was the Bengal Council and Select Committee, composed of a body of men jealous, mean and cowardly; before him an army enormously superior in number. His only hope lay in the courage and discipline of his troops, the greater part of whom were foreigners, including many deserters, and in the word of a man whom he had never seen, whose action up to the very moment of battle had given little or no reason for confidence, and who, as I have said, was, whatever his justification, a traitor to one who was his relative as well as sovereign.

The effect of the victory upon Clive's position amongst the officials at Calcutta was great and instantaneous. Drake, who had assisted in all the petty mortifications inflicted upon him by the Council and Committee, and whose letters, while matters were still in suspense, had bordered upon insolence,¹ now wrote:

'I depend upon you for this, and for further friendly acts you have greatly in your power to confer on him who is with great truth and regard, etc.—ROGER DRAKE.'²

And the Admiral, who had even doubted his chances of success in this expedition,³ joined with Admiral Pocock and the Council in a letter of congratulation.⁴

'The revolution effected by your gallant conduct, and the bravery of the officers and soldiers under you is of extraordinary importance not only to the Company, but to the British nation in general; that we think it incumbent to return you and your officers our sincere thanks on behalf of His Britannick Majesty and the East India Company for your behaviour on this critical and important occasion.'⁵

Clive wrote to his friend Orme:

'I am possessed of volumes of materials for the continuance of your History, in which will appear fighting, tricks, chicanery, intrigues, politics and the Lord knows what. In short there will be a fine field for you to display your genius in, so I shall certainly call upon the Coast on my way to England.'⁶

¹ Vol. II., pp. 392, 418.

² *Ibid.*, p. 433.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 432.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 432.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 464.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE DEATH OF SIRAJ-UDDAULA.

‘A man of Siraj-uddaula’s character could nowhere find a real friend.’—
LAW.¹

THE Nawab, as we have seen, was unable to wait for M. Law, whose advice, it must be granted, would probably have been of the greatest service to him, when we consider that the fear of his arrival was one of the chief inducements mentioned by Eyre Coote for immediate action. Sinfray was probably a young man; he was little known to the Nawab and the courtiers, and, therefore, without influence, though evidently a man of great determination and courage. His behaviour at Plassey was honourable to himself and his nation, but useless to the Nawab, for the latter was surrounded by traitors.

23rd June,
1757.

When the Nawab rose on the fatal morning of the 23rd June, his natural confusion of mind was increased by the ominous events of the previous evening. Scrafton tells us that as he sat alone in his tent at Plassey his attendants crept away one by one till the place was deserted, and a plunderer entering stole the gold top of the *hukkah* he had just been smoking, and cut off some of the broadcloth of the tent. Suddenly rousing himself, he observed what had happened.

‘It shocked his soul to think that he whose frowns were death but in the morning should now be so little feared. He called for his attendants, and cried with great emotion, “Sure, they see me dead.”’²

Upon the natives of India omens have an influence hardly comprehensible by Europeans, and Sirāj-uddaula must have begun the

¹ Vol. III., p. 213.

² ‘Reflections,’ p. 86.