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INTRODUCTION.

The two years and a half, from July, 1757, to December, 1759, covered by the present volume of the Diary, mark the rise of French hopes that the Seven Years War would end for them with even more success than the War of the Austrian Succession had done; but along with these hopes goes portent after portent of the ruin that really was in store. The one large gap which we find, that from September 17, 1758, to January 23, 1759, was principally occupied with Lally's siege of Madras and its complete failure; the other gap of any size, from February 28 to April 11, 1759, was occupied by no outstanding incident. On the whole then, with the exception noted, the Diary gives the reader a fairly complete and continuous narrative of what took place at Pondichery and of the rumours which reached it from without; and the contrast between the confidence with which the diarist begins his story and the troubled anxiety of his closing pages forms a fair measure of the transformation which had taken place in the national fortunes and the decay of Pondichery.

The diarist himself was growing old. He was not thought equal to the exertion of taking an inventory of the captured goods at

Cuddalore ; he often remains at home, either from actual ill-health or in pique at the neglect with which the governor de Leyrit treats him ; and he records the death of one who must have been the principal surviving link with the days of his boyhood, his maternal aunt, who died at the great age of 83, having survived her sister nearly 47 years. Nevertheless at first he was confident of the good future in store both for the French and himself. The French flag is destined to replace the English wherever it flies in India, he declares on the faith of his family astrologer early in the present volume, as indeed he had often done before ; Pondichery is destined to increased prosperity from its fiftieth year, he says a little later ; Madras will have soon ceased to exist ; even the failure of Lally's siege still left him hopeful ; the English had suffered enough for one year by the loss of Fort St. David. One of the councillors, Guillard, ironically asks whether his astrologer had foretold also the capture of Masulipatam by the English under Forde ; and in answer Ranga Pillai declares that good days are coming with victories in all directions. Even in May, 1759, when things were beginning to look black indeed, he comforts himself with the prospect of performing his father's anniversary in the following year with

great pomp in the fortified town which he has been promised as the killah of his jaghir. Were not the predictions right in at least six or seven cases out of ten ?

Meanwhile there were signs that the French government had not forgotten their Indian dependencies. In September, 1757, Soupire arrived with some forces and the news that others were on their way under the Count de Lally. Soupire immediately took the field, and the English were at the time too weak to offer any opposition to him. Then, after many rumours of his approach, Lally himself arrived, with a squadron which did not sail away as soon as it had landed the troops and treasure it had brought, as had done more than one of its predecessors. Lally captured Fort St. David with an ease which was thought significant of the ease with which he would shortly capture Fort St. George. He signalised his success by a triumphal entry into Pondichery on June 9. To Ranga Pillai was assigned the charge of assembling the chief Indian inhabitants of the place to greet the general with the appropriate nazars. These, we learn, were to be presented according to the rate customary on New Year's Day. Besides the Indian notables, camels, standards, the *naubat*, and dancing-girls, were summoned to take part in the procession, and the whole

population, rich and poor, was turned out to make an impressive array of spectators, under a warning that those who neglected the order would find themselves imprisoned in the Choultry. Ranga Pillai himself was presented to Lally by the Count de Montmorency. On the next day, those who had not been of sufficient importance to be allowed to present their nazars to Lally on his way into the town, were gathered together to present them in the Fort. We find a long list of them, and they included every person of note along with representatives of all the chief castes of the place.

This festivity marked the highest point of French success in this war. Never again did their prospects look so fair. For one thing the squadron could not be induced to remain on the Coast. Twice Ranga Pillai records reports of considerable naval successes—once on August 5, 1758, and again a year later, in September, 1759; but these flattering stories were but perversions of the real state of the case. On both occasions the French fleet had had the worst of it; after each action it chose to retire to refit at the French Islands; and after the second its retreat proved to be final, for it never returned to Indian waters, not finding itself in a position to cope with the vessels of Pocock and Stevens. It was undoubtedly badly led. D'Aché, the commander,

was one of those naval officers who, like Peyton on the other side in the previous war, lacked the moral courage to risk his fleet. Nor did he get on well with Lally. The gossip of Pondichery had it that the two men were jealous one of the other; and that the old rivalry of Dupleix and La Bourdonnais was being renewed. There is no doubt that Lally wished to subordinate the action of the fleet to the success of his operations ashore; while it is equally certain that d'Aché insisted on his independence of the land commander. And if Lally disapproved of anyone's conduct, he did not hesitate to express his feelings in direct, uncourtly, even brutal language. There are letters written by him to Coote at a later date in which he vents his dislike and contempt of certain persons under his command in the crudest words that startle even those accustomed to penetrate below the polite exterior of that age.

Meanwhile rumours flew thick in Pondichery. Now it was that the Nawâb of Bengal had satisfactorily poisoned Colonel Clive together with most of the Englishmen who had helped to capture Chandernagore and overthrow Siraj-ud-daula; now it was some great and overwhelming victory which the French had obtained in Europe or some other dimly apprehended quarter of the globe; now it was

some nearer, though quite as unreal success, such as the legend which ran round of the complete defeat and death of Caillaud endeavouring to raise the siege of Madras, filled up with surprisingly circumstantial detail of how M. Aumont had shot the other with his pistol and then plundered his body of his ring and money. In time of war men are naturally keenly strung and ready enough to believe any stories that consort with their hopes. These did, and were accordingly believed for a season; but they contrasted sharply with the actual progress of events; and the position of affairs was evidently going from bad to worse. Nowhere could this have been more obvious than in the town itself. Ranga Pillai gives us a terrible picture of the disorder that prevailed and increased. Not that we should take all his details, especially those of which he does not profess himself an eye-witness, too literally. Some of them are merely "common form," which he introduces whenever he wishes to convey an idea of disorder and confusion. But even putting those aside, we see that the discipline of the troops and the maintenance of order in Pondichery steadily decayed. Quite early in the present volume we find him recording the complaints of the conduct of the troops in the neighbourhood of the town, and narrating a specific instance of persons being

molested by the guard on their way back into the place. It is not unlikely that in this case Vinâyakan and his followers, who were the persons concerned, had broken a rule of the garrison; and in any case they were certainly unwise in attempting to re-enter the city by night in war-time without having made arrangements when they set out. But matters became much worse when the soldiers could not get their pay; and when the royal troops arrived in the autumn of 1757, it appears that they were under no better discipline than the forces of the Company. Thus on January 13, 1758, we read that women were afraid to stir out on account of the excesses of the King's troops. In the following August, a party of sailors from the King's fleet were seeking Savarirâyan to take vengeance on him for some affront that he had, or was thought to have, offered to them. In April, 1759, soldiers were forcing money from those who wanted to pass the gates, alleging the failure of the Company to provide them with pay. Ranga Pillai not unnaturally felt that the ordered world, with which he had so long been familiar, was slipping away from him, and records in words that recall the language of the political writers of an earlier age his fears of an approaching anarchy, in which

force alone would prevail and all caste rules be forgotten.

From the French point of view the great difficulty was the lack of money. Lally had brought out with him a small supply of silver; but not nearly enough to meet the demands that were being constantly made upon the government of Pondichery. The Company seems to have believed that the revenues of the French territories would suffice to meet all charges if only they were administered properly. This belief shows how they had adopted the ideas of Dupleix too late for them to be applied. Dupleix had constantly been assuring his masters that India would provide plenty of money for the conduct of war; and to some extent it was true enough, so long as there was no break of military success. The weak point of the scheme was that military failure would involve financial ruin. The revenues on which Dupleix had counted disappeared with the successes of Clive in the Carnatic and of Lawrence before Trichinopoly; nor even in the restricted region that remained within French control was it at all easy to set up an efficient financial organization. It may be remembered that Godeheu had leased the lands out to the diarist for five years on an increasing rental. It is very doubtful whether Ranga Pillai would have succeeded in

fulfilling his contract even had he been left to manage affairs as he pleased; but he was not allowed to do so. Many persons in Pondichery wished to have a share in the profits. The military commandants interfered in the collections, and so did the persons whom Ranga Pillai had been induced to take as sureties for the renters whom he appointed to the various divisions of the country. The inevitable result was that his remittances fell far short of the instalments which he had agreed to pay; and there was no one in Pondichery who could say with confidence whether this was his fault or not. It was the case on a smaller scale of Muhammad Riza Khân in Bengal at a later time. Leyrit's dubâsh told his master that Ranga Pillai was embezzling the collections; several Europeans in the settlement told him the same; and he certainly was not in a position to decide whether they were telling the truth or not. The inspectors whom he sent out into the districts to report on the state of the collections were on the whole unfavourable to the lessee; and the result was that the diarist was deprived of his lease, and heavy demands were made on him for moneys which he apparently had no means of paying. In the previous volume I printed a letter addressed to Boyelleau explaining the circumstances in which he had

failed to get in the revenues; and in the present volume will be found another letter of the same nature addressed to Soupire in which the old *courtier* renews his complaints and explanations.

At one time he certainly looked forward to a triumph over his enemies as great as that which his family had formerly secured over M. Hébert. He was assured from France that Godeheu continued to take an active interest in his fortunes; while at Pondichery itself we find him visiting and visited by de Montmorency who had been specially charged by the Company with the inspection of its financial affairs. Even more encouraging than this, he was favoured with a special private interview with Lally himself, who came under cover of night to Boyelleau's house and listened to what the diarist had to say. But Lally was clearly much more concerned to find subjects of accusation against his enemy de Leyrit than to enter into the question of absolute justice. He could not enter into the complicated accounts which the diarist had prepared, but demanded instead an account of what Leyrit and the rest owed to him. Let him but have that, he declared, and he would settle the business.

Meanwhile all these disputes brought no money into the French treasury. All kinds of

expedients were tried. Interest-bearing notes were issued—parchment money, as Ranga Pillai contemptuously describes them—in the hope that their currency would enable the affairs of Government to be carried on. But they were soon at a heavy discount, as indeed was to be expected. The credit of the council stood but low; and Pondichery was not accustomed to fiduciary issues. The only persons who wanted notes were those who owed money to the Company, and they bought them cheap in order to pay off their debts or secure credit on the Company's books for their face-value.

This almost desperate expedient was followed by a forced loan, levied on the Indian inhabitants of the place. This like the other was an unheard-of thing. No European government on the Coast had ever before ventured on such a measure. Unprecedented in itself, it was hateful also by the method of its enforcement. Every kind of threat was used to compel payment of the assessments. The peaceful inhabitants of Pondichery were harassed almost into riot. Never really wealthy, the place had decayed lamentably since the prosperous times which Ranga Pillai was so fond of recalling; and there were few rich merchants left. Consequently the great burden of the impost fell upon the poor. At

one time it had even been resolved to make the dancing-girls contribute to it, to Ranga Pillai's indescribable horror. La Selle, the Company's servant placed in charge of the collection, clearly thought that there was still a good deal of money in the town, and strove to screw up the amount to the highest possible point, while Ranga Pillai thought that a good many of his manoeuvres were designed to procure private and corrupt gains for himself. Such suspicions were as natural at the time as those which had been directed against the diarist himself in connection with the land revenue collections.

While all this was going forward on the public stage, rumours of private dissensions were spread abroad. From the first the commander of the King's troops had agreed but ill with the Company's government. On Soupire's arrival we have indications of troubles almost at once. Soupire was annoyed at finding that few preparations had been made to enable him to take the field on his arrival. By round-about ways stories of quarrels between Soupire and de Leyrit reached the diarist's ears; Soupire was asserted to have threatened de Leyrit with accusations of embezzlement; while de Leyrit is said to have consulted the commander of the Company's troops regarding the degree of support

he would receive from them in the event of Soupire's seeking to displace him by force. Soupire even refused to sit down with de Leyrit at a feast given at the latter's house in honour of his name-day. How far all this gossip is to be taken at its face-value does not appear; but two things are quite clear. One is that much of it is by no means unlikely and can easily be paralleled by known occurrences in similar circumstances. The other is that the circulation of such stories must have done much harm to the government of the French settlement and disposed men to disregard its orders.

But matters became even worse when Lally arrived to replace Soupire. Soupire was quick-tempered; but Lally was passionate. Accustomed to the order and discipline of Europe, he was constantly infuriated by the haphazard ways of India. What Orme calls the vivacity of his character gave rise to many legends that flew round Pondichery. He was supposed to keep his pistols double-shotted against Tamils who intruded on him unasked; and he was constantly offending the Company's servants by his casual treatment of them. Indeed he had brought out with him the worst opinion of their characters, and this cannot have been modified by what Soupire had to tell him. Even on the morrow

of his arrival he is said to have threatened de Leyrit because the supply of specie for the payment of the troops was delayed. He declared that he would be no respecter of persons. In the following September, he is alleged to have offered de Leyrit such insults as (it was currently said) could only be wiped out by blood—as indeed they were to be. A little later de Leyrit was consulting his friends how best to resist Lally's designs against their Indian servants. These and similar details fill in the outline given in the correspondence of the time, with some exaggeration but on the whole substantial truth. Lally, hot-headed and utterly tactless, accustomed to command and not to persuade, when brought into contact with men of petty character but great pretensions, tried to scold them into activity but only succeeded in heating them into opposition, none the less hampering because it was secret and underhand.

In these circumstances it was impossible for the French armies successfully to face the English in the field. Unpaid, discontented, and so ill-disciplined, they marched to battle sullenly, and lost trust alike in themselves and in their leader. To maintain the struggle, the French needed to co-operate and husband their resources to the utmost; but that was what they failed altogether to accomplish.

And when to this was added the failure of their fleet to hold the seas against the English squadron, with the resulting discouragement, lack of supplies, and improbability of getting any, prospects of success were evidently fading into the distant back-ground. All who could leave Pondichery did so. For those who, with the diarist, remained, the future must have seemed almost as black as in fact it was to prove.