

INTRODUCTION TO VOL. I.

THE salient events referred to in this volume are the grant to the French by the Nawâb of Arcot of permission to establish a coinage of their own; the negotiations for the acquisition of, and the subsequent purchase and occupation of Kârikâl; the invasion of Nâdir Shâh, and the fall of Delhi; the irruption of the Mahrattas, and their depredations; the arrival of M. Dupleix as Governor, in succession to M. Dumas; the capture of Trichinopoly and Chandâ Sâhib by the Mahrattas; the murders of Şafdar Alî Khân, Nawâb of Arcot, and later on, of his son, and consequent disturbances; the advance southwards of the Nizâm with a large force to put an end to the growing anarchy; the conclusion of peace between him and the Mahrattas, and the cession to him of Trichinopoly; the death of Kanakarâya Mudali, the chief dubâsh, and rival of Ranga Pillai; hostile naval demonstrations and acts by the English; and the quarrel of the family of Kanakarâya Mudali regarding the estate left by him.

There are many matters of less importance, but which at the same time seem to be of considerable interest. To these, however, it does not appear necessary to specifically refer.

The portrait of Ranga Pillai facing the title page, is a copy of an oil painting 2' 8" × 2' 1" which is in the house that he used to occupy. Through

the courtesy of the representatives of the family, who still reside in the building where their ancestor died, I have been permitted to have this photographed; and the work of reproduction has been carried out by the Graphic Art Society of Geneva. The painting is undoubtedly an old one, and does not altogether seem to be the production of a native artist. It was removed from its frame, and carefully examined, but without success, to ascertain whether it bore any name, or marks. There is a pretty story as regards its history, which, however, is supported by no actual evidence. This has been obtained from the leading member of the family, and seems worthy of mention. It runs as follows: There was, in the days of the prosperity of Ranga Pillai, a time of scarcity in Pondichery, and a French merchant, whose name, or supposed name, is not ascertainable, had imported a shipload of rice, from which he hoped to make a large profit. But before it came to hand a very marked fall took place in the price of this commodity, and the unlucky trader found himself face to face with the certainty of a very heavy loss. On placing his circumstances before Ranga Pillai, who seems to have been a friend of his, he without more ado, purchased the whole cargo for himself, at a price which gave the owner a fair profit. The grateful merchant cast about for some way of making a lasting acknowledgment of the kindness done to him, and happening to be an artist of some capacity, decided to paint a portrait of his friend, and give

him a surprise with regard to it. This he did by removing, with the connivance of the servants, and during the absence of their master, a mirror in the sleeping chamber, and substituting for it the picture. When Ranga Pillai returned home—so the tale goes—he partially undressed before retiring for the night, and happening to glance at what he believed to be the mirror was startled to find himself faithfully represented therein, so far as regards face and form were concerned, but in a dress totally different from that which he was wearing. A closer examination revealed the kindly trick that had been played upon him, and his delight is said to have been so great that he straightway loaded the author of it with costly gifts.

A careful examination of the diary reveals not the remotest allusion to this picture. It is just possible that there might have been some in the portion of it which is missing, but I am inclined to fear that this tale—which one cannot help wishing could be held beyond cavil to be true—is a bit of oriental romance.

J. F. P.