

CHAP.
XXVIII.1746.
Letter
from
Madras
reports that
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais
disregards
Governor's
orders.Is placing
the plunder
of Madras
on board
his ships.And has
ransomed
the fort for
11 lakhs of
pagodas to
be paid in
two years.M. d'Es-
préménil,
and others
said to have
betaken
themselves
to
Mylapore.Letter from
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais
arrives.

Bourdonnais disregarded the orders of the Governor, whose letters he left unanswered, and that he did as he pleased. When MM. d'Espréménil, Dulaurens, and Barthélemy, questioned his arbitrary conduct, M. de la Bourdonnais—so the letter ran—browbeat them, told them that it was no concern of theirs, directed them to confine themselves to their proper business of keeping accounts, and said that he would answer to the Company for his conduct. The letter further stated that M. de la Bourdonnais had put on board his ships red-wood, piece-goods, articles of merchandise, specie, heavy pieces of ordnance, and other stores, from both the fort and the town, that he had ransomed Fort St. George to the English for 11 lakhs of pagodas, leaving them in possession of the small pieces of artillery and a quantity of powder and shot, that he had obtained from them a bond in which they promised to pay the ransom money in two years, that he himself had resolved to sail for Mascareigne, and in his hurry was doing everything irregularly, and that MM. d'Espréménil, Dulaurens and Barthélemy, irritated at his insubordinate and self-willed conduct, had betaken themselves to Mylapore.

The perusal of this communication threw M. Dupleix into a state of great anxiety. Just then, a letter from M. de la Bourdonnais, addressed to the Governor, arrived from Madras. In it he stated that he had decided, to seize all the merchandise, money, and valuables, belonging to the Company

there, to take from the Armenians only half their treasure, to take possession of half the ammunition, cannon, muskets, spears, swords, and other arms found in the fort, leaving the other half to the English, and to restore the fort to them on their executing an undertaking to pay 11 lakhs of pagodas in two years, and engaging never more to fight against the French. The anger and vexation of the Governor, on reading this letter cannot be adequately described.

Friday, 30th September 1746, or 18th Purattāsi of Akshaya.—At 7 this morning, I went to the arecanut storehouse. The Governor wrote a letter to Madras, gave it and his seal to some peons, and instructed them to post the former after having shown the latter to those at the post office.

At 8, a meeting of all the Europeans in the town—the Governor excepted—was held at the house of the Deputy Governor. It consisted of the Councillors, factors, captains of the soldiers and of the ships, priests, subordinate merchants, and others. The decision arrived at by the meeting was to the following effect:—

“We hear—so it has been represented to us—that M. de la Bourdonnais contravenes the orders of the Governor, and unlawfully favours the English at Madras. It was, in time past, decided that there should be no war in India between the English and French, but the English, disregarding this, have captured many ships on the high seas, and have

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States the
measures
which he is
taking.And terms
of ransom.Anger of
Governor
at this.He
writes a
letter to
Madras.Meeting
of all the
Europeans,
with the
exception of
Governor.Decision
arrived at
at this.Refers to
inimical
conduct
of the
English

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And the fleet
fitted out
by M. de la
Bourdonnais
to resent this.

Alleges that
in engage-
ment with
English,
this fled.

Alludes to
the gloomy
aspect of
affairs.

The prompt
and
energetic
action
taken by
M. Dupleix
to retrieve
the position.

even offered insults to the French at Pondichery and other seaport towns. The result of these irregularities on the part of the English, and of the letters written by them taunting the French, has been to induce the inhabitants of this country—from Arcot to the Nizâm's dominions—to think highly of the prowess of the English, and disparagingly of that of the French. M. de la Bourdonnais left Mascareigne with nine ships, and notwithstanding that he had a full complement of men and munitions of war on board, was making his way slowly, and with much trouble, towards Pondichery. At this time, he fell in with six English men-of-war, which had been long at sea, and were therefore by no means fit for an encounter. When the fleets engaged, M. de la Bourdonnais, instead of defeating the English, and capturing their ships, fled from them, and arrived with his fleet at Pondichery.

“For two years the French ships on their way to various ports were captured, and no others arrived from France. The treasury in the fort was depleted of money. The English acted illegally in various ways, and the prestige of the French was totally lost. Their credit was gone, and no one would advance money to the Government. But, when all looked gloomy for Pondichery, M. Dupleix brought his energies to bear, and turned the tide of misfortune. Possessed of riches, courage, an indomitable will, and a spirit which refused—even in this time of trouble—to look upon the English

otherwise than with contempt, M. Dupleix rose superior to the occasion, lavished his wealth, repaired the fort and ramparts, enlisted Mahé sepoys and others, secretly collected provisions for the army, and, to prevent the desertion of Pondichery by its inhabitants, gave employment to every one of them.

“During this anxious period, a disturbance occurred at Kârikâl which was fomented by the people of Tanjore. M. Dupleix overcame the Tanjoreans, established his power firmly in Kârikâl, and made the name of the French once more a terror to their enemies. And when a man of such consequence as the Nizâm encamped with his 70,000 horse at Trichinopoly, and sent his chief subahdar to make apologies for his unjustifiable conduct, M. Dupleix would not receive them, and seizing his litter drove the envoy out with ignominy. He pursued the Nizâm's men as far as the limits of the town of Cuddalore, and so terrified the people of Madras and Cuddalore, that they fled, neither eating by day nor sleeping by night. M. Dupleix's fame now was such that so mighty a personage as Anwar-ud-dîn Khân, the subahdar of Arcot, repaired voluntarily to Pondichery, and sought the alliance of this great, and valourous man.

“When M. de la Bourdonnais arrived at Pondichery, M. Dupleix encouraged him with his advice, placed on board his ships a great number of men with a large quantity of stores, and sent him out to

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The defeat
by him of
the
Tanjoreans
and estab-
lishment
of French
power at
Karikal.

His
treatment
of the envoy
of the
Nizam.

The effect
of this on
the people
of Madras,
etc.

The fame
which he
thus
acquired.

The
assistance
afforded
by him to
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais.

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The object
conduct of
the Dutch
at Nega-
patam
towards
the French.The flight
of English
ships from
French
fleet, and
failure to
pursue
them.The pre-
parations
for an
expedition,
made
before
return of
the fleet to
Pondi-
chery.

capture and bring in the five English ships which were reported to be hovering about. The news of the fitting out of this expedition was conveyed to the people of Negapatam, who forthwith began to tremble. So they entertained M. de la Bourdonnais at a dinner, paid 15,000 pagodas, the value of the French ships which they had purchased from the English, obtained a safe-conduct for their vessels sailing on the high seas, and treated the French with every mark of respect and civility. At that time, the five English ships approached Negapatam, and their crews, obtaining tidings of the attentions shown to the French by the Dutch, and seeing the formidable array of the French fleet, sailed away in the night. Instead of pursuing and capturing the enemy, M. de la Bourdonnais returned with his fleet to Pondichery.

"Before his arrival, however, M. Dupleix had embarked French soldiers, Coffres, Mahé Muhamadans, Carnatic sepoy, and other troops, on board the ships, native craft, and sloops lying in the roads. He moreover had ordered that horses, palanquins, powder, ball, shot, shells, liquors, sheep, fowls, pigs, vegetables, water, salt, ladders, spades, pickaxes, knives, and all other military stores, together with tents, tent-pegs, tent-ropes, rush candles, blue lights, rockets, spears, muskets, guns, and mortars, should be conveyed on board in such quantities, and in such numbers, that in any emergency, nothing might be found wanting. Seeing the preparations

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Excuse of
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais, to
avoid being
sent to
attack
Madras.The remon-
strances
of the
Governor.The
indifference
of M. de la
Bourdon-
nais.The first
expedition
of the fleet
to Madras.The repulse
of this.The speech
to M. de la
Bourdon-
nais
made by
M. Dupleix
before the
Council.

made, M. de la Bourdonnais was seized with fear lest the Governor should order him to attack Madras; so he feigned illness, and proceeding to Ozhukarai, took to his bed.

"The Governor was astonished, and wondering within himself how M. de la Bourdonnais could act in this manner, when he had made all the necessary preparations for a war, went to see him, and, in a friendly tone, remonstrated with him not once, but ten times. He employed others, also, to advise M. de la Bourdonnais on the subject. But he would not listen to any one. He only ordered his ships to go on a cruise. The eight which formed his fleet proceeded without mishap to Madras, and engaged the shipping in the roads there. The English directed the guns of the fort against the French. Charging the English with being the aggressors, the French fleet hauled off, and having made two captures, arrived with their prizes at Pondichery.

"M. Dupleix again sent for M. de la Bourdonnais, and gathering about him the Councillors and other men of rank, said as follows: 'The English have committed many illegal acts. The King of France, with the object of deposing the present King of England, and raising another to the throne, has invaded the English dominions, and conquering them all, made the French name famous for ever, has captured all the English forts, has deprived the English of their strength, has destroyed many people, and as the avenger of wrongs, is

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The speech
made by
M. Duplex
to M. de la
Bourdon-
nais before
the
Council—
cont.

now about to place on the English throne the person whom he befriended. The English on the coast of India have however employed four pirate-ships to prowl about the sea, on the plea that they belonged to their former king, and have succeeded in capturing four or five country vessels. They write to all the men of rank in this country, magnifying their achievements. Hence the glory of our King has become clouded here. We have, therefore, for the last two years been making vast preparations for war. Madras is one of the largest of the towns possessed by the English on the Indian coast. It has been in their possession for one hundred and six years, and it is a place of great strength, the reputation of which is known even to the Emperor of Delhi. We have made all the requisite preparations for capturing it within a very brief space of time: if we succeed, and plant the French flag over it, the pride of our foes the English will be humbled, and the fame of our rule will reach even the ears of the Emperor of Delhi. We have now sent proper men to Madras, and have fixed upon the sites for the encampment for our forces, the points at which the guns should be placed in position to cannonade the fort, and the spots where the walls can be scaled. We have even nominated the Councillors and executive officers, who have been ordered to set out for Madras. It only remains for you to start with the attacking force. We have arranged all else. Every detail will be carried

out by the men whom we have already sent. Accompany the expedition yourself, if you so desire, or give directions to the officers of your fleet to take part in it.'

"To this speech of the Governor, M. de la Bourdonnais replied: 'I have no orders to engage the enemy on land. You however direct me to attack a very large and powerful place, thinking to crush it as you would a mosquito beneath your heel. I do not know whether the result will be a victory, or a defeat. If we sustain a reverse, will not the Company turn round, and ask, 'Who authorized you to undertake this expedition, waste so much money, and sacrifice the lives of so many men? If, therefore, you will give me a written statement signed by you, taking all the responsibility on yourself—whether the expedition end in victory or defeat—I have no objection to accompany it.'

"M. Duplex exclaimed: 'The English have insulted the French, have captured their ships on the Indian coast, and have fired at them from their fort. To render the name of the French feared by every one in this country, and to uphold the reputation of our King, and the interests of the Company, I am now resolved to capture Madras, and to seize and deal with the English there, as they deserve. I will not leave them alone. You need not take the responsibility of the expedition on yourself. Whatever comes; whether it be weal, or woe, I, alone,

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The
reply of
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais.

Which
points out
that in
case of a
reverse the
Company
might take
those
responsible
to task.

And
states his
willingness
to accom-
pany the
expedition
on a
certain
condition.

The
resolve of
M. Duplex
to capture
Madras.

His
undertaking
to bear
the entire
responsi-
bility.

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And the
delivery to
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais of
paper to
this effect.

The
meeting
attributes
capture of
Madras
solely to
ability of
M. Dupleix.

And ques-
tions the
right of
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais to
ransom it.

All the
Europeans
wait upon
the
Governor.

Attribute to
him all
the merit
of the
capture of
Madras.

will be accountable to the Company. You have no part, or lot, in the matter.' He signed a document to this effect, and delivered it to M. de la Bourdonnais, who secured it, and went with the expedition.

Providence has blessed the efforts and the precautions taken by General Dupleix, and the English, being unable to sustain even a day's attack, have evacuated Fort St. George. Now, how does the credit of this success lie with M. de la Bourdonnais? The victory was solely due to the foresight of M. Dupleix. It is now reported that M. de la Bourdonnais has decided to restore the fort to the English, and grant them liberty, and to take with him the merchandise and gold and silver found there. He also declares that he will answer for his proceedings to the Company. What right has M. de la Bourdonnais to do anything of the kind?"

Such were the remarks made, and questions asked, by the assembly, at the Deputy Governor's house. The discussion of them lasted until 11 o'clock; and at noon all the Europeans went to the Governor's house, and made the following representation to him: "We live under the flag of the French King, and are bound to uphold his honour. The English have done us many wrongs, and have even insulted us. You have now by the capture of Madras, lowered the English pride, and have established for ever the fame of the King of France, and this will reach the ears of the Emperor of Delhi. The fall of Madras is due to your superior skill, and

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And protest
against
restitution
of Fort St.
George by
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais.

M. Dupleix
assures
them that
he will not
sanction
anything of
which they
disapprove.

And sends
by M. Para-
dis and
others a
despatch to
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais
forbidding
further
action.

forethought; and it was not possible for any one else to have achieved the success which you have. Now we hear that M. de la Bourdonnais is treating with the English for the return of Fort St. George to them. If he has restored it, we dare not show our faces in this Muhammadan kingdom. All our glory will have departed. What does he mean by making restitution of Fort St. George, which was captured only after a severe struggle, and the taking of which has greatly added to our reputation? We have come to you to protest against his proceedings."

On hearing the representation of the Europeans, M. Dupleix assured them that he would not accord his sanction to any measures of which they disapproved, and told them that he would forthwith send a letter to M. de la Bourdonnais forbidding him to proceed further. The Governor retained with him the Deputy Governor, M. Miran, M. Guilliard, M. Le Maire, M. Bruyères, and M. Paradis, and sent the remainder of the party that had waited upon him away. He then summoned the younger M. Miran, M. Auger, and M. de Bury; and having written a despatch to M. de la Bourdonnais on the lines suggested by the deputation, directed M. Paradis, M. de Bury, M. Desmarêts the greffier, and M. Bruyères, to proceed by ship to Madras. They set sail at 4 in the evening.