

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME V.

THE present instalment of Ranga Pillai's Diary runs from April 1 to October 17, 1748, and embraces a period of greater general interest than the last. The text of the Madras transcript appears to contain a larger number of corrupt passages; and again, unfortunately, it has not been possible to collate these with other versions

Ranga Pillai's private life flowed on during this period without such vicissitudes as marked the previous year. His antagonism with Madame Dupleix continued unabated, as also his eagerness to find fault with her. If we may believe him, the people of Pondichery found her injustice harder to bear than the shells poured upon them by Boscawen's mortars; and the manner in which Dupleix followed her advice frequently incurs the diarist's censure. It is unfortunate that almost all the official documents relating to the administration of Dupleix have disappeared; practically none survive among the archives of Pondichery; and it is therefore difficult to judge how far Ranga Pillai's observations were inspired by jealousy. He is certainly a prejudiced witness; but there is no reason to suppose that the administration of Pondichery differed appreciably from the contemporary type of administration in Europe, though tinged with customs borrowed from the Indian Governments of that day.

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The affair which touched Ranga Pillai most closely was connected with his management of villages at Karikal. Here again materials are lacking to confirm or rebut his assertions. At that time there were two possible methods of revenue administration. One was to let the villages at a fixed rent to a tax-farmer; the other was to place them under the superintendence of one who might be trusted to bring all his collections to account. Some Karikal villages were thus placed under Ranga Pillai, who confided the management to certain agents at Karikal. They sent in their accounts and made payment accordingly to Paradis, who was then Commandant; but subsequently under pressure of inquiry they admitted that their accounts were inaccurate, and so a further demand was made upon Ranga Pillai and his partner. Their submission, after many objections, strongly suggests that they acquiesced in the justice of the demand.

He still remained Chief Dubash, although not yet formally appointed to the post. This delay in appointment was principally due to the stoppage of trade which the war with the English had occasioned. The most important functions of the office consisted in managing the merchants who supplied the cloth for the Company's investment; and that was in abeyance.

The war itself offers much more important and interesting subject-matter in the present than in the preceding volume. I have already pointed out

the dead lock that had been reached in the struggle; but the position was modified in June 1748, by the arrival of Bouvet with a French squadron on the Coast, and in August by the arrival of a powerful English expedition. Bouvet sedulously avoided any conflict with the British squadron lying at Fort St. David under the command of Admiral Griffin. He appeared off that place, deceived the English Commander into the belief that he meant to make his way to Pondichery, and then under cover of night sailed with the prevalent southerly winds for Madras, while Griffin feared to move lest he should be driven to leeward of Pondichery and so permit supplies being thrown in there. He was sharply blamed for his failure to bring the French to action, as indeed he had expected to be. 'I acquaint your lordship more fully with this,' he wrote to Anson, 'lest the impertinence of some people should raise clamour, as it has been the custom to condemn all who see French ships and do not take them.'¹ Bouvet too was attacked for not falling upon the English when their crews were ashore, and two of their men-of-war were rudderless; but he emerges with more credit than his rival from the inquiry. His principal business was to carry supplies to Dupleix, who was so short of money that he was on the point of sending his plate to the mint.² The

¹ Griffin to Anson, August 15, 1748. *Br. Mus. Add. MSS.* 15, 955, f. 306.

² Nazelle, *Dupleix et la Défense de Pondichéry*, p. 288. Cf. *infra*, p. 69.

relief he brought materially assisted Dupleix in maintaining his position until the arrival of the news of peace. And, whereas Dupleix alleged that he would have had to deal with only four English vessels,¹ Griffin had six men-of-war and two Company's ships, mounting 382 guns, as against Bouvet's 318, altogether apart from the two rudderless ships.² Bouvet was to all appearances justified in his decision to avoid action.

Altogether apart of that, his appearance on the Coast gave Dupleix an opportunity for which he had long been waiting. An attack upon Fort St. David was useless so long as the fort was covered by the English squadron; but, when that had been lured to the northward and leeward of the place, nothing hindered the attack. Dupleix perceived this at once. On June 15/26 Ranga Pillai mentions his preparations.³ On the evening of the next day the French marched under Mainville to attack Cuddalore. The place certainly offered an easy prey. It was situated at some distance from the fort and separated from it by a river, which increased the difficulty of sending reinforcements thither. Ranga Pillai had not been consulted about the project; Dupleix seems to have relied upon the reports of Madame's spies; and so his dubash dwells at malicious length on

¹ Dupleix to the Company, January 15, 1749 (Nazelle, *op. cit.*, p. 289).

² *Narrative of the Transactions of the British Squadrons in the East Indies*, p. 67.

³ *Infra*, p. 73.

the reports received of Mainville's success, followed almost immediately by news of his utter failure. He should certainly have succeeded. The defences of the place were miserable. Clive states that on the north and south the town was quite open.¹ That is an exaggeration; but the crumbling walls were defended by two companies only, with less than a hundred peons, and very little ammunition.² Orme relates that Lawrence lured Mainville into attacking the place by pretending to withdraw the garrison; and Malleson takes occasion to reprehend Lawrence's conduct. Orme got his information from Clive³; but the version must be dismissed as inaccurate. Neither gun nor man was moved to or from Cuddalore, although orders had been issued for the ammunition to be moved into the fort.⁴ This was the extent of Lawrence's ruse. Panic caused the French failure. The night was very dark. The assailants came unawares upon the town. They were alarmed at a sudden outburst of fire all round the walls—that outburst being itself the result of panic—supposed the town to be packed with troops, and fled in disorder. This failure in attack is scarcely creditable to French arms; while the success of the defence was due rather to good fortune than to skill or valour.

¹ Clive ap. Orme MSS. *India*, i, 141.

² Letter of Hyde Parker, January 17, 1749. *Misc. Ltrs. Recd.*, 1749-50, No. 7 (India Office).

³ Orme MSS. *ut supra*.

⁴ Hyde Parker's letter.

About this time, the principal Dutch settlement, Negapatam, was almost as large and important as Pondichery or Madras. Throughout the War of the Austrian Succession, Dutch sympathies had lain rather with the English than with the French. Although the Governor of Pulicat, de Jong, had refused asylum to Mrs. Morse and other English women when La Bourdonnais attacked Madras, Mersen, his superior, had welcomed English refugees at Negapatam, had sheltered an English sloop beneath his guns, and had taken charge of English treasure to save it from French hands. When French troops invaded the Netherlands in 1747, the Dutch joined the English and the Imperialists; and orders were despatched to the officials of the Dutch East India Company to assist the English against the French. This decision was communicated to the Fort St. David Council in April 1748¹; and the Dutch immediately set to work to put Negapatam in a posture of defence.² Later on, when the English besieged Pondichery, the Dutch sent a detachment of troops to help in the siege. They were commanded by Captain Roussel, who had formerly been in the service of the French East India Company, and who, ten years later, was to command the unfortunate expedition with which the Dutch hoped to conquer the predominance of Bengal.

¹ Mersen, etc., to Floyer, etc., April 17/28, 1748; *Letters to Fort St. David*, ii, pp. 37-38.

² *Infra*, pp. 28-29.

Meanwhile the English had been preparing an expedition to avenge the capture of Madras and restore the Company's prestige on the Coromandel Coast. On receipt of that news, the Company had at once petitioned Newcastle for the assistance of His Majesty's forces.¹ In June and July 1747, orders were issued for the equipment of a squadron of nine men-of-war, which were to carry a company of Royal artillery and twelve independent companies of foot specially raised for the occasion. In the following November the fleet sailed under Boscawen. It reached the Cape in the months of March and April, and then sailed to attack Mauritius. That project appeared too hazardous to be undertaken; so Boscawen proceeded with what speed he could to the Coromandel Coast, in order if possible to reduce Pondichery before the monsoon rains should set in in mid-October. He arrived off Fort St. David at the end of July, being preceded by false reports at Pondichery of the repulse of his forces and the loss of ships.

His coming had been long expected. So early as the previous March he had been looked for from day to day.² Accordingly Dupleix had had ample leisure in which to complete the plan of his defence. Moreover all through the months previous to the siege,

¹ Secret Committee to Newcastle, April 24, 1747. *P.R.O. Colonial*, 77-18.

² Hallybarton to Paupa Braminy, March 2, 1748, *Orme MSS. Various*, 71.

he was expecting the arrival of the strong squadrons which had been fitted out at L'Orient and Br est, but which had been scattered or destroyed by the vigilant English fleets. Meanwhile he had been busily completing the fortifications; and in July Paradis came up from Karikal to take the military command, the question of his rank having been settled by his appointment to be one of the Supreme Council, which conferred on him the power of commanding military officers of any rank.

Even when Boscawen had arrived, there were prodigious delays in beginning operations, due, so he declared, to the total absence of preparations before his arrival. He marched on August 8/19, and on the 11th/22nd encountered a party of French sepoy, who were driven from their entrenchments; on the 13th/24th he attacked the French fort at Ariyankuppam¹ which was not taken until August 19/30; and it was not until August 30/September 10 that the English broke ground before Pondichery. They had wasted a month of precious time. Moreover when the attack was thus begun, the besiegers took up the worst possible position that could have been chosen, north-west of the town, where their trenches could not be cleared of water, and where the troops were worn out by harassing marches to convoy all the stores that had to be brought up from the ships to the camp. Ranga Pillai's comment,

¹ In regard to topographical detail, the reader is recommended to examine the plans in Nazelle's *Duplex et la D fense de Pondich ry*.

that God must have put it into their minds to take up such a position, plainly indicates how astonishing and complete the error was.

It is needless to relate here the whole story of the siege. The heavy batteries of the English did not open fire until September 9/20. Even then the French fire was and remained superior. The attack culminated in a fierce cannonade from both sea and land on September 27/October 8; but as this failed to produce any perceptible effect, as the monsoon rains were at hand, and sickness was prevalent in the English camp, Boscawen embarked his stores on October 2/13 and withdrew two days later. Boscawen commanded at the beginning of the siege 2,400 British infantry, 1,000 seamen, and 150 artillery men. Of these by the end of the siege he had lost 164 killed or died of disease, 137 wounded, 38 missing and 812 sick—close on a third of his whole force¹.

In Pondichery itself, one of the most curious incidents was the destruction of the Iswaran Temple. This lay close beside the Jesuit Church, and the fathers had long been endeavouring to secure its removal. They had failed hitherto; but the previous volumes of the Diary record several incidents to which the continual bickering over this subject had given rise. But when the minds of the inhabitants were engrossed with the English

¹ See the official returns in the P.R.O., *Admiralty*, -160.

attacks, and a considerable number of the chief caste-people had sought refuge elsewhere, the Jesuits thought the time had come for ending what they regarded as no less than a public scandal; and Dupleix was brought to share their views, not improbably by Madame's persuasion. Much of what Ranga Pillai writes on this subject is very just, especially his version of what Dupleix ought to have done if he wished to have the temple removed.¹ This affair was coupled with a similar attempt to remove a mosque that stood near the Capuchins' Church; but this was checked by the active discontent excited thereby among the Muhammadan sepoys of Abd-ul-rahman. But these incidents furnish good examples of the religious policy which the more intolerant of the Roman Catholic priesthood succeeded in imposing upon French colonial administrators, and which formed one of the most ominous aspects of French colonial policy under the old *régime*.

The state of mind prevalent in Pondichery during the siege is well reflected in the Diary. At first there was absolute confidence that the English would never venture to attack the place. Then when their plans were known and the siege had become certain, this confidence was succeeded by a general state of alarm, during which a considerable number of inhabitants, including some of Chanda Sahib's

¹ See pp. 311-312 *infra*.

relations, quitted the place, and Dupleix had much trouble in preventing a general exodus. The shells too which the English threw into the town, at first from their bomb-ketch and later on from a battery of mortars to the westward of the place, created much fear. Ranga Pillai's description of these shells makes curious reading—their rise into the air reminds him of a man climbing a ladder; and their slow flight, of a fat man making his way through a crowd. But the area of the town was too great for the English shells to do very much damage or produce a panic. People soon grew used to them and lost much of their fear. Indeed the English round-shot seems to have been more alarming than the shells, owing to the lack of previous warning and the abruptness of the destruction that they accomplished. On the whole, the principal feature of Boscawen's bombardment would appear to be its insufficiency; he needed many more and much larger guns to accomplish what he aimed at.

The eminently successful defence which Dupleix put up was from all points of view enormously beneficial to the French position in the Carnatic; and it added not a little to the general belief in Dupleix' good fortune. Ranga Pillai plainly, though unjustly, attributes the defence of the place to its Governor's luck rather than to the prudence and foresight of his measures; and the reputation thus confirmed was a considerable element in the more dazzling successes which Dupleix was to secure in

the next few years, in just the same way as Clive's reputation for good fortune served him so well in facilitating his exploits. Dupleix, Ranga Pillai assures us more than once, might tear his cloth but would be certain to find a use for the pieces. In more solemn tones, the diarist considers him possessed of 'the nectar of help, otherwise called . . . the favour of God.'

Boscawen's failure before Pondichery, shortly followed by the news that the preliminaries of peace had been agreed upon at Aix-la-Chapelle, closed the first phase of the Anglo-French struggle. Both parties were left with embittered feelings and unreconciled differences. The trade-rivalry, which had made the English directors appeal to Government for help to crush their rivals, was obviously about to re-open; and the French would evidently enjoy all the subtle advantages which success in war bestows upon the nation which has waged it. Besides, the English had to endure the humiliation of having lost their principal settlement, of having failed to take Pondichery, and of having recovered Madras only in exchange for conquests made upon the other side of the globe; and the French, especially Dupleix, nursed the painful memory of heavy financial loss inflicted by the naval operations of the English squadrons under Barnett and Griffin. The peace, so far as rested with the French and English in India, was likely to be but a temporary affair; and the events which furnished

the pretext for war in India while peace was still maintained in Europe were already casting their shadows forward. The present volume indeed suggests that the six months covered by it witnessed a definite step in the slow evolution of Dupleix' policy. At the outset he was still intent upon the projected exchange of Madras for the districts of Villianallur and Valudavur, adjoining the Pondichery limits; his old friend, Imam Sahib, was supposed to be arranging this with the aged Nizam-ul-mulk. Then in June came the news of the latter's death and the accession of his son, Nasir Jang. Imam Sahib claimed to be deep in the confidence of the new subahdar; and grants of the villages in question were freely promised. At this time Dupleix was anxious to emulate the fame which Dumas had won in Europe in consequence of the honours paid him by Safdar Ali. He gave Ranga Pillai a draft of a letter which he wished to have sent to him as from Nasir Jang, with a list of presents copied *verbatim* from the list which the Abbé Guyon had published of the presents offered to Dumas. But he had also grown impatient of the delays of Oriental Courts. This affair of the village-grants had been mooted months before, and he adds a threat that unless the villages are speedily granted, he may take them by force. Further signs of his impatience are afforded by his treatment of Avay Sahib, Imam Sahib's wakil. The wakil was charged to obtain at Pondichery what was needful for the

approaching marriage of Imam Sahib's daughter at Arcot. These things were to be paid for out of the loan which Imam Sahib had long before made to the French; but the Pondichery finances were unequal to its repayment, even in part; and this seems to have led to something very like a breach between Dupleix and the man who had acted as principal agent for the French at the Nizam's Court, and consequently with that Court itself; complimentary letters might still be exchanged, as on the occasion of Boscawen's retreat from before Pondichery; but Nasir Jang henceforward held but a small place in Dupleix' plans for the future. He was, it may be supposed, disgusted with the ineffective duplicity of Nasir Jang and his servants.

For the moment too he seems to have thought much the same of Chanda Sahib. In the previous volume, we have recorded a curious and interesting correspondence regarding his release from confinement at Satara;¹ but though a whole year had elapsed, the situation was still uncertain. His coming was constantly reported, yet he never came. When Boscawen formed his siege, Dupleix was still watching anxiously for the appearance of that bright array of pennons and banners by which the march of an Oriental army was betokened; but Chanda Sahib was still delaying on the northern bank of the Kistna, and Pondichery was saved by the endurance

¹ See Vol. IV, pp. 124, etc.

of its defenders and the mistakes of its enemies, instead of by the advent of a great army friendly to the French. The effects of this delay are evident enough in the treatment which Dupleix accorded to the Navait families resident in Pondichery. In May and June, before Bouvet had brought the bitterly-needed supplies of money, Dupleix, having turned to them for a financial aid which he believed they could well offer, had found them to all seeming forgetful of their past friendliness; and in the first moment of keen annoyance he seems to have resolved to break with them altogether. They may pay what they owe the French and depart. This severity of mood was modified by the fallacious news of Chanda Sahib's coming; but when the English shells proved too much for the nerves of his guests, he let them go elsewhere, detaining Chanda Sahib's son as a hostage. Evidently the traditional view of the constant and close friendship between Dupleix and the Navaits left much out of account. Dupleix' policy was not nearly so consistent or far-seeing as has been alleged. He was indeed prepared, so early as 1745¹, to lend money in order to assist Chanda Sahib to become Nawab. It was a policy in which not only he and his Council, but the Company also, saw considerable advantages.² But those advantages were nothing more than might reasonably be asked by a trading company from a favourable

¹ Pondichery to the Company, Jan. 11, 1746 (P.R. No. 7).

² Company to Pondichery [February 1747?] (P.R. No. 7).

Nawab. They did not include the predominant share in the power of the Government, which fell to the French in the Carnatic and to the English in Bengal, not in consequence of any deep-laid plans, but simply because the Nawabs were unable of their own power to maintain themselves in their respective provinces. In the Carnatic the Moghul organization seems never to have recovered from the effects of the great Maratha Raid in 1740-41. The years intervening between that event and 1748 had brought with them murders and anarchy. The death of the Nizam at once released the disruptive forces which had still been held in check by the terror of his name. Murtaza Ali, who, as the Madras Council afterwards observed, had had the address to murder two nawabs and escape all punishment therefor, began at once to collect troops, to form designs against Anwar-ud-din at Arcot, and possibly to enter into negotiations with Chanda Sahib.¹ Another movement indicative of the growing unrest was that of the Hindu principalities of the South, Tanjore and Mysore, who are reported to have planned the restoration of Hindu rule at Trichinopoly. And all this, daily reported to Dupleix, bred in him contempt for the state-craft of these princes and nobles, distrust of their good faith, and a dim consciousness of the results that might be expected from active and vigorous intervention, if it should seem worth while. But Dupleix did not

¹ See for instance, p. 126 *infra*.

yet discern precisely in what way it would be worth while.

His private thoughts still were, and for some years continued to be principally occupied with the problem of repairing his fortune, shattered by the operations of the English squadron early in the war. Some of the means he employed, usual enough in those days, though sounding oddly in times when administrative purity has long been established as the general rule, are revealed by Ranga Pillai's naïve pages. Dupleix complains that he is making nothing, that he made nothing out of Madras, that the dubash is neglecting his master's interests. He grows very indignant when people say they gave 4,000 pagodas for a post for which they had promised but 2,000 rupees and paid only 1,600, and when people revive an old affair in which he had accepted a third of the late dubash's fortune for decreeing it to the dubash's brother.¹ He even seems to have taken advantage of the price of grain during the siege to make an extra profit.² So for the moment the diarist leaves him, covered with glory by his defence of the city against the English, groping towards the policy which was to make him for a brief while the foremost man in Southern India, and calculating how many more years of dusturi and trade he needs to restore him to France with a comfortable fortune.

¹ See pp. 136, 144, 149 and 160 *infra*. ² p. 395 *infra*.