

CHAP.
XXVI.
—
1746.

Observer
that though
the
opportunity
is a good
one, there
being no
war with
the Dutch
it cannot be
availed of.

Governor
asks diarist
news about
Madras.

Diarist
before
replying
seeks to
ascertain
his views.

And
describes
the alarm
of the
people of
Madras at
prospect of
attack.

same by land? This, no doubt, is a good opportunity. The Company has nowhere places like these. If we were at war with the Dutch—as we are with the English—and if a chance such as this offered, we could possess ourselves of them. But as we are not, we cannot assent to his demand.” I exclaimed: “Do you mean then, that your reply to Mir Ghulâm Husain’s letter is that you will not consent to his proposal?” “Yes,” he replied, “That is what I intend to write to him.”

He asked me then what news there was about Madras? I thought that I ought not to give him an answer in a hurry, and without making myself fully acquainted with his views. I therefore said: “Sir, even prior to the departure of the expedition, and when our ships had not yet arrived, the circumstance that you went to Ozhukarai to dine, and drove to Mortândi Châvadi, created in the minds of the English the apprehension that you meditated an advance on Madras, or Fort St. David. Those at the former, believing that they would be attacked, closed the gates of the fort and city, bade the inhabitants of the latter seek places of refuge elsewhere, and busied themselves day and night, without a moment’s rest, in getting their cannon ready; content if they saved their fort, and careless as to the fate of the town. They trembled with fear at the thought of the impending danger, which benumbed all their faculties, and filled them with terror. Ten or twelve times did the people of Fort St. David and

Cuddalore, similarly alarmed, flee from their homes, betaking themselves to Porto Novo, and by their numbers raising that village to the position of a city.”

The Governor replied: “Although Madras was at one time in such a great state of alarm, it was M. de la Bourdonnais who relieved it from this by sending his squadron to attack it.” When I understood what his views were, I suited my answers to them. I do not give in detail his questions and my answers. I record only a brief outline of them.

I remarked to the Governor: “People speak in a highly uncomplimentary way of the expedition against Madras, recently undertaken by the French. Their remarks are to the following effect: ‘The French came to Madras to give battle to the English, but no sooner did they feel the weight of the fire of their enemy’s ships and fort, than they took to flight. This is typical of the French nation, who to outward appearance are valiant, but when a crisis actually arises have no power of endurance. Why on earth have they assailed us, and returned with dishonour? But for this undertaking, they would have maintained at least a semblance of power. It will go hard with them in future. You will see how Pondichery will be harassed. Hereafter, every day will be one of disaster to it.’ It is in contemptuous terms such as these that the prowess of the French is spoken of.

At Arcot, in Mysore and in all the cities on the coast, the Governor of Pondichery has

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Governor
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M. de la
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nais who
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Diarist
suits his
conversa-
tion to
views of
Governor.

Informs
him of the
remarks of
the English
regarding
recent
attempt of
French on
Madras.

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Alludes to the high reputation borne by the Governor at Arcot and elsewhere.

unanimously been regarded as an administrator of transcendent ability, who, in spite of an empty exchequer, and commercial inactivity arising from the non-arrival of the trade-ships, carried on the affairs of that settlement without a shadow of embarrassment, and who with a view to infuse fear into the hearts of his enemies, and deter them from approaching this town, has maintained here a force of Mahé sepoys, and kept ready to hand a supply of powder, ball, and other munitions of war. The combination in him of tact, resource, heroism, military sagacity, and reserve, render him without an equal, and place him far above his fellow men. All ask themselves whether one of this stamp, who eagerly desired an opportunity of avenging himself upon the English for their taunts and jeers, would now that he had been reinforced with men, money, and ships, fail to capture Madras and Fort St. David. They are, without exception, of opinion that the English can have no longer a hold on this coast. It seems as though M. de la Bourdonnais, by his recent demonstration before Madras, from which he retired after firing a few cannon shot, undertook to ruin the reputation which you have acquired. They say that it was an unwise measure, and entailed loss of honour."

Mentions the expectations entertained that he would capture Madras and Fort St. David.

And the opinion as to the intentions of M. de la Bourdonnais in making the recent demonstration.

Reply of the Governor.

I spoke in these flattering terms of the excellence of his administration. Thereupon he exclaimed: "Ah, Rangappa! I need not mention to you with what zeal and care I have been working. Do you not

know how, when I once set out to drive to Ozhukarai, the people of Fort St. David and Cuddalore fled from their homes, and how Madras was thereby thrown into a state of utter alarm? M. de la Bourdonnais, an utterly petty-minded man, and one entirely regardless of the blow which the honour of the French has sustained, informed me that the orders given to him were to fight at sea, and not on land. I thereupon read to him several communications showing all the evil deeds that the English had perpetrated, and impressed upon him that these occurrences could not have been within the knowledge of the authorities in France when they issued their orders to him. I even suggested to him that should they become cognisant of the actual state of affairs, they might take him to task for not co-operating with me. I also assigned other reasons, in the hope of persuading him to act in concert with me. At last, he said that he would accompany the expedition, but required that he should be furnished with an order from the Council. I then asked him whether I had made all the preparations which I had, without consulting him, and had a long conversation with him on the subject. He is, however, an artful man. Although he was a party to the arrangement, he has made me alone bear the whole expense, and has thus impoverished, and ruined me. On his arrival, he was but a pauper, bringing nothing with him but the woollen coat which he wore. Did you not then see him with your own eyes? You are a

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States what took place between him and M. de la Bourdonnais.

How he pressed him to act in concert with him.

And how M. de la Bourdonnais consented on condition that the Council gave a written order.

Comments of Governor on his conduct.

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Blames
King's
Ministers.
Diarist
observes
that M.
Orry is
responsible.

Governor
replies.

shrewd man, and there is scarcely anything of which you are not aware. The Ministers of the King of France are the cause of all this."

I observed: "Their predecessors acted differently. It is the present Controller-General M. Orry, who is accountable for this mismanagement."

"Not he, but his brother" was the Governor's reply.

I then remarked: "It is true that it is traceable primarily to M. de Fulvy, who is a receiver of bribes. But the functionary directly responsible, and whom he influences, is the Controller-General: the blame, therefore, lies at the door of the latter."

He admitted the truth of what I said, and continued: "For his misdeeds at Mascareigne, M. de la Bourdonnais was recalled, and was about to be rewarded with a rope about his neck, when he effected his escape by propitiating M. de Fulvy with abundant gifts."

I replied: "Even now complaints are preferred by the inhabitants of Mascareigne and Mauritius against his acts of injustice, but they pass unnoticed on account of the bribes lavished on M. de Fulvy. M. de la Bourdonnais no doubt owes his present appointment as Admiral to the same venality."

The Governor exclaimed: "Your words indicate an accurate knowledge of facts. There is nothing concerning either the state of affairs in Europe, or the proceedings conducted by me here, or the measures taken by M. de la Bourdonnais, with which

Diarist
maintains
that M.
Orry is to
blame.

Governor
remarks
that M. de
la Bour-
donnais
previously
escaped,
by bribery,
punishment
for his
misdeeds.

Diarist
attributes
to same
cause the
continued
inattention
to com-
plaints
against
him, as
also his
promotion.

Governor
exclaims
that diarist
knows
everything.

you are not acquainted. But people here, and the Muhammadan nobles outside Pondicherry, can have no knowledge of these matters, and might consequently impute the delay in the expedition against Madras to me. You should therefore disabuse their minds of any such impression, and enlighten them as to the actual facts."

I replied: "Surely this is not a matter regarding which they require any thing said to them. Your fame has spread far and wide—from Golconda in the north, down to Arcot, Mysore and Negapatam. The courage with which, when unprovided with ships, you upheld the prestige of Pondichery, your determination to take Madras, and the expected success of your plans, are the themes of songs which have been composed, and are being sung."

"Who has caused these to be sung," asked he.

"They are sung in public," I replied.

"Sung in this town?"

"Yes, in this very town; by the people."

He burst into a laugh, and then exclaimed:—

"My desire is that the fame of the French should reach the Court of Delhi, and that it should be known far and wide that they are a brave and heroic nation, and have, for an act which tarnished their honour, rooted the English out of this land. My further wish is that this should serve as a lesson to others, and bring home to their minds that the French are not a people which will with impunity brook being crossed. But that dog, M. de la Bourdonnais, thwarts all my designs."

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But
observes
that others
do not, and
desires
him to
enlighten
them.

Diarist
suggests
that this is
unneces-
sary, as
fame of
Governor
is the
theme of
popular
songs.

Conversa-
tion on his
point.

Governor
laughing,
states his
desire
that the
reputation
of the
French
should be
known far
and wide.

Abuses
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais.

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Diarist
replies.

I replied: "The public are ignorant of the venality of the Ministers, to which M. de la Bourdonnais is indebted for his appointment, and to which is to be attributed the decline of the reputation of the French. The rumour goes in Arcot and elsewhere that the Governor of Pondichery is a brave officer, and able ruler, that he is much incensed against the English for a slight which they have cast on the French, and that as a force of ships has reached him from France he will no longer suffer them to retain possession of Madras, Fort St. David, and Cuddalore. It is therefore manifest that, if Madras remains uncaptured, the name of the French will suffer. There is, of course, nothing unknown to you, and you should forgive me, if through ignorance I have said anything wrong."

Urges that
name of
French will
suffer if
Madras be
not taken.

I also touched on other matters tending to provoke him further.

He replied: "You say only what is true, Rangappa. But what can I do? I am making all possible efforts."

"M. de la Bourdonnais cannot disregard the order issued by the Council" said I.

He replied: "When M. de la Bourdonnais was told that an order of the Council would be given to him, he pleaded illness, and said that he would set out on the expedition as soon as he felt better. I thereupon suggested to him that during his absence on account of ill-health, he might depute some other suitable officer for the command. His answer to

Mentions
action of
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais when
told that
the order
demanded
by him
would be
given.

this was that it was a business the execution of which rendered his presence indispensable. Nevertheless, I have not abandoned the undertaking. I will—come what may—see to the capture of Madras."

I added: "If this be not done your reputation, which extends far and wide—even to Delhi—will suffer."

Agreeing with me that the result would be as I indicated, he said to me: "You must, in your conversation with the Muhammadans and Hindus, mention what my views are, how enthusiastic I am over the affair, and how basely M. de la Bourdonnais throws impediments in the way of the execution of my plans."

I answered: "Even now these matters form a common subject for discussion, and I will certainly introduce them in the course of my conversations with others."

The Governor then remarked: "All this has been an enormous drain on my resources. You should make my concerns as profitable as possible. You can manage that. There have been losses at sea for the last two years; there is a lull in trade and business, expenses are running high, and day after day additional items involving large outlay are pouring in. Such being the circumstances in which I am placed, you must give this matter your constant and unremitting attention."

I exclaimed: "I am ever at your service, and will do as you bid me. My acts will speak for themselves."

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And says
that he will
see that
Madras is
captured.

Reply of
diarist.

Governor
indicates
to him the
line which
he should
adopt when
conversing
with other
natives.

He
promises
compliance.

Governor
remarking
that
expenditure
incurred
has
seriously
affected his
resources,
begs diarist
to see
carefully
to his
concerns.

He prom-
ises to do so.

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M. Mathieu
brings
translation
of letter
from
Mylapore.Governor
comments
on its
contents.And
says
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais has
brought
disgrace
and
dishonour
on the
French
name.Diarist
remarks
that if
Madras is
not
captured
Pondichery
had
better be
abandoned.

As we were thus talking together, M. Mathieu brought the translation of the palmyra-leaf letter addressed to Chinna Mudali from Mylapore—the particulars of which have already been given. It was read to me. The Governor turning to me observed: "It is just as you told me; the Muhammadan, Hindu, and European gentry, with one accord, speak disparagingly of us. Look at this! Did M. de la Bourdonnais, who planned the expedition, capture even a single ship in the roads there? It would have been far more creditable had it not been sent at all. His behaviour has now brought infamy upon us. This de la Bourdonnais—because the Ministers did not specifically state in their orders to him that he should take my advice, and act in consultation with me—this dog de la Bourdonnais has done a deed, the only results of which are ignominy and contempt. He failed to take Madras, which was in reality a work of no more than half an Indian hour, and did not even capture the single ship that was there. His action has been like child's play, and has brought disgrace and dishonour on our name."

I said: "I already told you that this was a matter in which our honour was seriously involved; that Madras must without fail be captured, and that if there was default in this, the French had better abandon Pondichery, and return home."

He replied: "You are right. In view of the respect in which our name has been held in this country, it is far better, if Madras is not to be

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Governor
agrees;
observing
that only
motive
actuating
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais is
greed of
money.Diarist
continues
his
flatteries.

taken, that we should do this. But little does M. de la Bourdonnais care what befalls the good name of France. The only motive by which he is actuated is greed of money. He obtains from Madras bales upon bales of chintz, and coarse and other kinds of cloths. I have now put a stop to the importation of these goods."

He dwelt upon this subject for about four Indian hours. I all along continued to express views in consonance with his inclinations, praising him unreservedly wherever I could.

M. d'Espréménil then arrived. The translation was shown to him, and he also perused it. It was subsequently despatched to M. de la Bourdonnais by the Governor's mace-bearer. Half an Indian hour afterwards, M. Paradis came, and the Governor, accompanied by these two gentlemen, then repaired to the house of M. de la Bourdonnais.

The Muhammadan gentlemen who recently arrived from Madras informed me that as soon as the eight French ships arrived off Madras, the Governor, Mr. Morse, sent his wife with all his treasure to Pulicat, that this circumstance had so much terrified the citizens of Madras that the wealthy had deserted their homes, that the English who remained were paralysed with fear, that if at this juncture 500 soldiers had landed from the ships, the fort would have fallen into the possession of the French; that they had imprudently missed this opportunity, that the English had since recovered

M. d'Espré-
ménil and
Paradis
arrive and
accompany
Governor to
M. de la
Bourdon-
nais.Muham-
madans
from
Madras
describe
the panic
there
caused
by the
expedition.And states
that a very
small force
could then
have
captured
fort.