

CHAPTER XXX.

Retrospect of Indian Affairs from 1785.—Lord Cornwallis Governor-General.—Declaratory Bill.—War with Tippoo.—Retreat of Cornwallis in 1790.—Capture of Seringapatam in 1791.—Peace with Tippoo.—The French West India Islands.—Retrospect of Discoveries in the Pacific.—Otaheite.—New Zealand.—New South Wales.—Canada.—Military and Naval Establishments of Great Britain.—France declares War.

It is desirable at this point, when our country was about to enter upon a war which developed events of unexampled interest, to take a brief view of some circumstances which may explain her position, without interruption to the progress of the general narrative of her history.

Let us first take up the thread of Indian affairs at the point at which we left them at the close of the administration of Hastings in 1785.

The India bill of Mr. Pitt, while it gave the Governor-General of Calcutta supreme authority over the other two Presidencies, restricted him from commencing hostilities against any native prince, or from taking certain proceedings likely to lead to hostilities, without the express permission of the Court of Directors. In 1786 lord Cornwallis was appointed Governor-General; and he having objected that the limited powers of that officer prevented his efficiency, a measure was carried which gave greater authority to the Governor-General to act, in cases of emergency, without the concurrence of the Supreme Council of Calcutta. For the first year and a-half of lord Cornwallis's administration, he was enabled to give his uninterrupted attention to administrative improvements in matters of finance especially. At the end of 1787, his tranquillity was somewhat disturbed. He writes, "The great warlike preparations of Tippoo, and the reports transmitted me by sir Arch. Campbell that he meditated an attack upon me, and that he would be assisted by the French, made me tremble for my plans of economy and reform. The storm is, however, blown over."* At this period the Governor-General was not very well prepared for warlike operations. The appearance of the native troops, he said, gave him the greatest satisfaction; but "the Company's European

* Cornwallis's "Correspondence," vol. i. p. 316.

troops are such miserable wretches that I am ashamed to acknowledge them for countrymen: out of the six battalions I do not think that I could complete one that would be fit for service." In the temporary apprehension of a war with France in 1787, the British government desired to send four regiments to India in the Company's ships. The alarm soon came to an end; but the government at home did not think it safe to leave the defence of India solely to sepoys and to the Company's inefficient European troops. The Board of Control resolved, therefore, to send out four regiments at the charge of the Company for transport and maintenance; and the Company as stoutly refused to bear the charge. Mr. Pitt, on the 25th of February, 1788, brought in a Bill "for removing any doubt respecting the power of the commissioners for the affairs of India, to direct that the expense of raising, transporting, and maintaining such troops as may be judged necessary for the security of the British territories and possessions of the East Indies, should be defrayed out of the revenues arising from the said territories and possessions." This proposition gave rise to animated debates in both Houses. It was contended that there would be an end to the East India Company and all their property if such a Bill were passed. Mr. Fox declared that the Declaratory Bill was "an insidious attempt to assume the same powers that his Bill would have given to his Board of Commissioners, but in a manner less open and much more dangerous to the Constitution." The real bearing of the question was expressed in a pleasantry of sir James Johnstone: "The present dispute was a matrimonial quarrel between lord Control and lady Leadenhall. He considered himself as a justice of peace before whom the parties had come to make up their differences: he was always disposed to side against power, and should give in favour of the lady. He saw no reason why lord Control should be allowed to rob lady Leadenhall of her pin-money."* The Bill was passed.

At the beginning of February, 1790, earl Cornwallis wrote to his brother, the bishop of Lichfield and Coventry,—"The unprovoked attack which Tippoo has made upon our ally the Rajah of Travancore has, much against my inclination, forced us into a war. . . . It is a melancholy task to write this, and to see all the effects of my economy, and the regulation of the finances which cost me so much labour, destroyed in a few months."† On the 29th of December, 1789, Tippoo had stormed the lines of our ally. No one of the native princes was so formidable as Tippoo. His

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxvii. col. 109.

† "Correspondence," vol. i. p. 494.

dominions of Mysore were very extensive, and were fully populated by Hindoos and Mohammedans. Many places were strongly fortified. His cavalry were those that had swept the Carnatic in 1780, as "a whirlwind;" his artillery was formidable, consisting of heavy ordnance drawn by elephants. To assist in carrying on the contest against this unscrupulous despot, Cornwallis concluded alliances with the Peishwa of the Mahrattas, and the Nizam of the Deccan. General Meadows commanded the British army in the Carnatic, and general Abercrombie the army formed in the presidency of Bengal. Tippoo was compelled to return to his capital of Seringapatam; but nothing decisive against his power was effected in 1790. On the 29th of January, 1791, lord Cornwallis assumed the command of the army, and moved from Vellore towards Vellore, with the intention of penetrating to the heart of Tippoo's dominions. On the 5th of March he invested Bangalore, about two hundred miles from Madras. On the march thither, some shameful acts of pillage had been committed, which, in a General Order, lord Cornwallis described as "shocking and disgraceful outrages"—as "scenes of horror, which, if they should be suffered to continue, must defeat all our hopes of success, and blast the British name, with infamy." They were repressed by prompt measures of severity towards the marauders. Bangalore was taken by storm on the 21st of March. The army then moved forward; and on the 13th of May took up a position at Arikera on the banks of the Caveri, within nine miles of Seringapatam. Having crossed the river, Cornwallis attacked Tippoo on the 15th, and obtained a victory, driving the Mysoreans to seek refuge under the guns of their capital. The city was within view; but Cornwallis was not strong enough to besiege it. The expected contingent of the Mahrattas had not arrived. Abercrombie was at Periapatam, with ample stores of provisions; whilst the army of Cornwallis was suffering severe privations. They could not effect a junction, although Cornwallis, in the hope of doing so, had moved up the Caveri to Caniambaddy. In a private letter to his brother, the Governor-General describes the causes of the retreat which he was now compelled to make: "I wish to tell you that my health has not suffered, although my spirits are almost worn out, and that if I cannot soon overcome Tippoo, I think the plagues and the mortifications of this most difficult war will overcome me. You will have heard that after beating Tippoo's army, and driving him into the island of Seringapatam, I was obliged,—by the famine which prevailed amongst our followers, and especially the bullock-drivers, by the sudden and astonishing mortality amongst our

cattle, owing to the scarcity of forage and a contagious distemper which unhappily attacked them when they were too weak to resist it, and by the unexpected obstacles to my forming a junction with general Abercrombie, in time to attempt the enterprize before the rising of the river,—to destroy my battering guns and to relinquish the attack of Seringapatam until the conclusion of the rains. Had the numerous Mahratta army, which joined me on the 26th of May unexpectedly and without my having received the smallest previous notice, arrived a fortnight sooner, our success would have been complete, and that event which Mr. Francis and Mr. Hippsley seem so much to apprehend—the destruction of Tippoo's power—would have actually taken place. It is, however, much crippled; and if he should not propose during the present rains such terms as the Allies can reasonably accept, I trust we shall take such precautions as will render our next move to Seringapatam effectual.*

The next move to Seringapatam was effectual. Reinforcements had been sent out from England; and during the autumn all the lines of communication for another march upon the capital of Tippoo had been opened. Some of the strong hill forts, especially Severndroog and Octradroog, had been stormed and taken by the troops under general Meadows. On the 25th of January, Cornwallis, with 22,000 men, had united his force to the troops of the Nizam and the Mahrattas, and commenced his march from Severndroog. On the 5th of February he encamped about six miles northward of Seringapatam. The Mysorean army was encamped under its walls. It amounted to 5000 horse and 40,000 foot. The city was defended by three strong lines of works and redoubts, in which 300 pieces of artillery were planted. Cornwallis reconnoitred these lines on the morning of the 6th, and determined to storm them that night, with his own army, without communicating his plan to his allies. At eight o'clock the British moved in three columns to the attack, one column being led by Cornwallis himself. The moon was shining brilliantly; but the sun of the next day was declining before the firing ceased, and the whole line of forts to the north of the Caveri were in possession of the British forces. Tippoo retired within the walls of his capital. Preparations for the siege went vigorously on; but negotiations for peace were at the same time proceeding. The British commander, assured of his triumph, demanded that Tippoo should cede the half of his dominions; should pay a sum amounting to £3,000,000; should release all his prisoners; and should deliver his two sons as hostages. The sultan as-

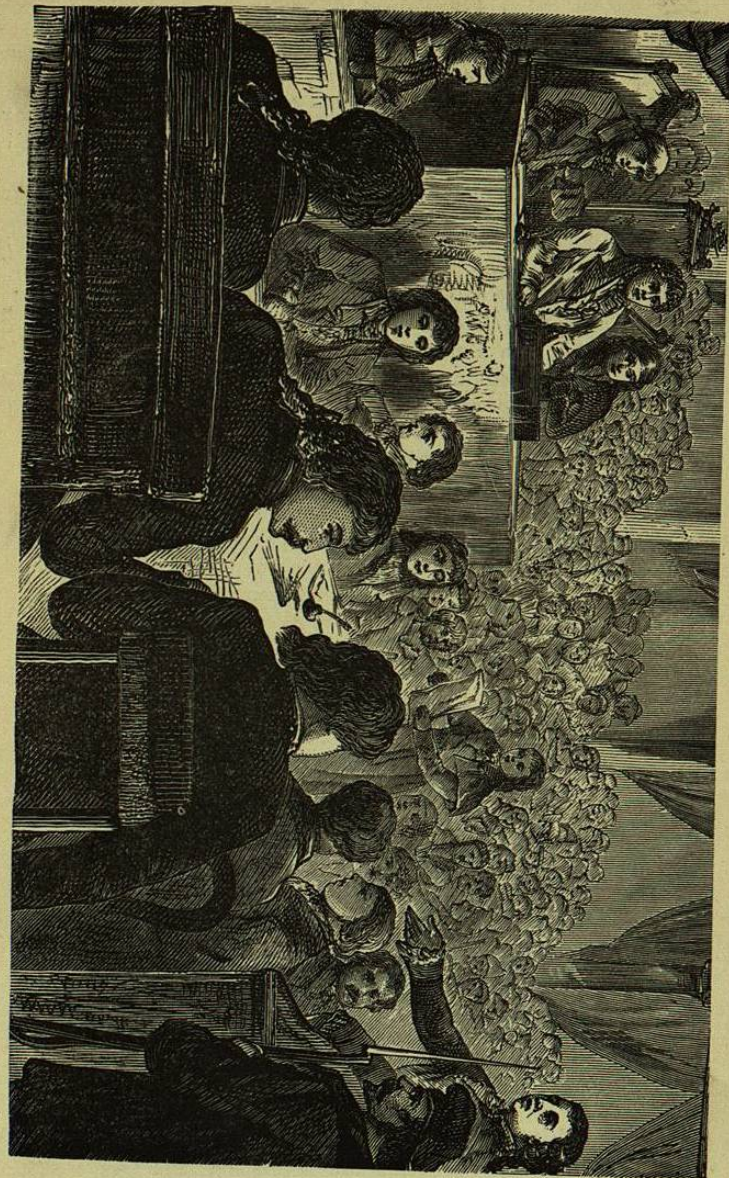
* Cornwallis's "Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 98.

sembled his officers in the great mosque, and adjured them, by the sacred contents of the koran, whether he should accept these hard terms. They all held that no reliance could be placed upon the troops, and that submission was inevitable. On the 23rd of February the preliminaries of peace were signed; and on the 25th the two sons of Tippoo were surrendered to lord Cornwallis. Mr. Ross, the editor of the Cornwallis Correspondence, says that he often heard the details of the scene from his father, general Ross, who was present: "The coolness and self-possession of the two boys, the eldest only ten years old, were most striking; and the more than paternal kindness of lord Cornwallis not only impressed his own European and native attendants with admiration, but produced in the minds of Tippoo's Vakeels, and the other Mysorean spectators, feelings of regard which were never effaced." The definitive treaty of peace was signed on the 19th of March. The ceded territories were divided in equal portions between the Company, the Nizam, and the Mahrattas. On the 4th of May, Cornwallis wrote to his brother, "Our peace will no doubt be very popular in England. I see every day more reason to be satisfied with it. No termination of the war could, in my opinion, have been attended with more solid advantages to our interest; and the deference which was paid to us on the occasion, both by friends and enemies, has placed the British name and consequence in a light never before known in India." *

The subjection of Tippoo was most opportune. In all probability Cornwallis, who was blamed by some for not insisting upon harder terms, anticipated the probability that the French Revolution would involve England in war, and therefore he made peace whilst it was in his power. When the war broke out he hurried to Madras. But his presence was unnecessary. Pondicherry had already been taken by sir John Brathwaite; and the French had no longer a footing in India. The agents of the republic were nevertheless active; but they were unable, for several years, to move "Citizen Tippoo" into a course of open hostility.

In the decisive interview with lord Loughborough, on the 20th of January, 1793, Mr. Pitt said that the sooner the war was begun the better,—“that we might possess ourselves of the French islands.” The French islands offered a paltry prize to be gained by such a tremendous risk. The west India islands in the possession of the French since the peace of 1763, were Tobago, a small territory with an unhealthy climate; St. Lucia, even more unhealthy; Martinique, an important possession; and Guadaloupe

* "Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 166.



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and its dependencies. The great island of Hispaniola, or San Domingo, partly French and partly Spanish, was not a colony with which any nation would have been glad to meddle in its then disturbed condition. The imports into the island from France are stated to have amounted in 1789 to three millions sterling, and its exports to six millions, this commerce employing three hundred thousand tons of shipping, and thirty thousand seamen.* An insurrection of the slaves took place in 1791, the seeds of which were sown by the French Revolution. The French planters and Creoles had talked of Liberty and Equality, and put on the tri-coloured cockade. They scorned the Mulattoes, who, in 1790, engaged in a fruitless revolt. The negroes rose against their masters in August, 1791. This fair country went through scenes of bloody insurrection, and was plunged into a terrible anarchy, which worked itself, in course of time, under the leadership of remarkable men of the despised race, into a Black republic. The massacres of 1791 were the impulses of vengeance for long suffering. They were urged in the British Parliament as a reason for maintaining the Slave Trade; and the insurrection, which had become more formidable as it proceeded, created alarm even amongst the English abolitionists. †

At this time, when the approaching war with France led the government of Mr. Pitt to look to the necessity of defending our own colonial possessions, and to the hope of adding to their number by naval enterprizes, there was little solicitude about those vast regions in the Pacific, which the Spaniards and Portuguese had left undiscovered, but on which the standard of England was planted early in the reign of George III. The results of the Voyages of Discovery of Byron, Wallis, Carteret, and Cook, were feebly and imperfectly followed up. Any system of colonization that could be permanently useful was not thought of. In most cases no system was attempted. The regions of unbounded extent and inexhaustible wealth which were nominally attached to the British crown, derived small advantage from British civilization. The condition of the Australian possessions, seventy years ago, as contrasted with their present greatness, is one of the marvels of our history, which it is impossible to contemplate without patriotic emotion—without a feeling of the mighty destinies that were involved in the Divine protection of the Anglo-Saxon race—in the growth of a community which, having built up its own civilization

* Speech of Mr. Ballie, "Parliamentary History," vol. xxix. col. 1073.

† "Wilberforce Correspondence," vol. i. p. 89.

upon principles of rational liberty, went forth "to make new nations" of freemen, who would have ties of consanguinity; speaking the same language, and bound together by the same principles of government as the parent state. Continents and islands, compared with which, in extent of territory, Britain is but a speck in the ocean, have thus been conquered in the noblest of victories, the victories of peace. But the last generation little understood the value of the great nations they were founding. They had a dim sense of some material advantage that might be derived from the displacement of aborigines of the lowest type of savage life, but a dread of the ferocity of higher races, that in their fierce barbarism appeared incapable of being amalgamated with European habits and modes of thought.

The discoveries which have been attended with political and social consequences of which it is difficult to speak without apparent exaggeration, were originally impelled by the pure ardour of scientific inquiry. In August, 1768, Lieutenant James Cook was sent out in the ship *Endeavour*, by order of the British government, and at the request of the Royal Society, to find an appropriate spot in the South Seas, to make observations upon the expected transit of Venus over the sun's disc, in June, 1769. Otaheite, the chief island of the Pacific, had been discovered by Wallis in 1767, and had been called "King George the Third's Island." Bougainville, a French navigator, had visited it before the time when Cook established an observatory for the transit on the northern cape of the island. The observations were made; and during a residence of three months the naturalists who had accompanied the expedition investigated the productions of the country, rich with the cocoa-nut, the sugar-cane, and the banana, and especially with the bread-fruit tree—that wonderful gift of heaven to a fertile climate, which might enable a happy race to subsist without all the manifold labours that are requisite to produce bread from corn. The natives, it was said, laughed when they were told of our tedious processes of ploughing, sowing, harrowing, reaping, threshing, grinding, and baking.* Cook, when he left Otaheite, discovered the group which he called "Society Islands," in honour of the learned body at whose instance he was sent out. But in that, his first voyage, he explored the coasts of a country which had been discovered by Tasman, a Dutch navigator, in 1642. From that time to 1769, no one had landed upon those two islands, now so familiar to us as New Zealand. Long

* Boswell's Johnson, May 7, 1773.

neglected, this fine country had no regular settlement till 1840 when it became an accredited colony of the British government—a land henceforth to be inhabited by a great off-shoot of the Anglo-Saxon stock, with all the manifold blessings of the religion, the knowledge, the industry, of our own nation, whose process of civilization, under Roman colonizers, was far less rapid. The New Zealander himself, thirty years ago a clever cannibal, has already been absorbed into British citizenship, by the all-dominant superiority of higher intellect and purer morals. But this great good has been accomplished by treating the New Zealander as an accountable being, with rights not to be taken from him by the rapacity of the conquest. He has been dealt with as the proprietor of the soil; and the territory of the settlers has been purchased and not seized. The New Zealanders, by far the highest in capacity of the barbarous tribes, have, in their brief colonization of twenty years, manifested the possibility of raising a native race to an appreciation of the value of what constitutes civilization, by imparting to them the blessings on which we pride ourselves as Christians and freemen.

The Dutchmen had discovered New Holland; but they left it unexplored. Cook minutely surveyed the Eastern Coast, which he called New South Wales. The naturalists of the expedition, Mr. Joseph Banks and Dr. Solander, found many curious plants in an inlet of this coast, which they denominated "Botany Bay." What a word of terror was "Botany Bay," when, in 1792, there were only sixty-seven free settlers in New South Wales. When the American colonies became independent, and even before their independence, they refused to receive "those unfortunate individuals who were convicted of such smaller felonies as are too frequent in a country where, from the freedom of the government, no strict police can be established."* There was a very summary remedy for the higher offences, such as stealing in a dwelling-house above the value of five shillings—death. The capital punishment system grew somewhat odious, and the system of the hulks was more generally adopted. At last it was recollected that Captain Cook had found a convenient place to which criminals, not worthy of Tyburn, might be banished; and so, from 1787 to 1792, about five thousand convicts had been sent to New South Wales and Norfolk Island. In the first years of the colony these wretched creatures were literally slaves—employed in clearing woods to gain a spot for cultivation; half-starved—with no hope of escape, with the sea before them, and a boundless waste behind. The "Botany Bay

* Sinclair, "History of the Revenue," vol. ii. p. 102.

Eclogues" of Southey, written in 1794, open with this lament of a female convict:—

"Once more to daily toil; once more to wear
The livery of shame, once more to search
With miserable task this savage shore."

Contrast the felon of Sydney Cove with the prosperous merchants and artisans of Sydney;—contrast the miserable outcast flying for his life to the deserts of the kangaroo, with the flock master reckoning his thousands of sheep on the fertile plains which he calls his own;—contrast England paying millions for the transport of convicts, with England receiving new impulses to her industry from the Australian gold fields. The most extravagant dreams in 1793 of the believers in the probable results of commercial and colonizing enterprize, never could picture any change approaching that gradual result of British energy, "which converted a transmarine gaol into one of the greatest communities of free men on the earth."*

The very remote possibility of founding a great empire in Australia when the flag of England was first hoisted on the shores of Sydney Cove in 1788, could offer no prospect of compensation for the loss of our American colonies. Canada, at the time when war with France was imminent, was not wholly to be relied upon for loyalty to her conquerors, with her mixed French population; and with her proximity to the United States, whose people, if not her government, were rather too much enamoured of the ideal liberty of the French Republic to open their eyes to its aggressions. Britain must rely upon herself alone. She would persist in submitting to hard bargains with mercenary despotisms to make them fight for their own existence; but she would mainly have to depend upon her own right arm. Her military establishment was not equal to any sudden emergency. "It certainly was impolitic," says Sir John Sinclair, "reducing the peace establishment of this country so low as it was in 1793, when from the state of France it was evident that all Europe was likely to get into a convulsed state."† The military expenditure of that year was under two millions. The expected rupture with Spain in 1790, and with Russia in 1791, had occasioned great activity in the English dockyards; and an improved plan of providing imperishable stores in the magazines had enabled ships to be quickly equipped for service. The British fleet, at the commencement of 1793, included 115 ships of the line, car-

* "Quarterly Review," vol. cvii. p. 1.

† "History of the Revenue," vol. ii. p. 195.

rying 8718 guns. The ships of the French line were 76, carrying 6002 guns.* The British navy, at the commencement of 1793, comprised 411 vessels of all rates, of which only 135 were in commission.† "At no previous period had France possessed so powerful a navy," says Mr. James. The English fleet was not so readily manned as the French fleet. The appeals to republican enthusiasm to fit out privateers were more stimulating than the sober addresses to the loyalty of our mercantile classes. On the 31st of December the French Minister of Marine addressed a letter to the friends of liberty in the sea-ports:—"The government of England is arming. . . . The king and his parliament intend to make war against us. Will the English republicans suffer it? Already these free men show their discontent, and the repugnance which they have to bear arms against their brothers the French. Well! we will fly to their succour; we will make a descent on the island; we will lodge there fifty thousand caps of liberty; we will plant there the sacred tree; and we will stretch out our arms to our republican brethren. The tyranny of their government shall soon be destroyed." M. Chauvelin returned to Paris with the same wild notions of the amount of disaffection. He judged, as foreigners are too apt to judge, that our freedom of writing and speaking—the safety-valves of the political machine—indicated violence and revolt. The war was probably inevitable; but the French Convention took the initiative in declaring war. On the 11th of February, a message from the king was delivered to the two Houses, in which it was stated that "the Assembly now exercising the powers of government in France have, without previous notice, directed acts of hostility to be committed against the persons and property of his majesty's subjects, in breach of the law of nations, and of the most positive stipulations of treaty; and have since, on the most groundless pretensions, declared war against his majesty and the United Provinces."

* James's "Naval History," vol. i. p. 91.

† See Tables to James's "History," No. 1.