EUROPEAN FREEBOOTERS IN MOGHUL INDIA
Freebooter. n. A pirate or buccaneer, an adventurer who makes a business of plundering

*Cassell's New English Dictionary*
European Freebooters in Moghul India

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PART ONE

The Pathfinders

[1]

Generally speaking the Europeans who came to India in the eighteenth century were all adventurers, although not all of them were military.

The frenzy of conditions that accompanied the breakdown of the Moghul Empire made India a free-for-all Eldorado, an unlimited treasury ripe for plunder. In England, men intrigued and bribed their way to obtain very junior posts in the East India Company in the hope of sharing in the spoils of a vast sub-continent. Thus Clive, who went to India as a writer at a salary of £5 a year, was able, seven years later, to declare himself "the wealthiest of His Majesty's subjects."

But Clive had become a successful soldier and had made his immense fortune by engineering palace revolutions. Others less spectacular made great fortunes out of private trade, often to the detriment of the Company, whose servants they were; and several made even greater riches from bribes, tax-collecting, extortion through intimidation, rack-rentings, and money-lending. Thus the achievements of a Company officer named Colonel Hannay, who was lent to the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh in 1778. To support his forces he was assigned the districts of Baraitch and Gorakhpur, which he entirely depopulated by his exactions in three years, when he departed with a fortune of £300,000. Thus again the extraordinary enterprise in Madras of Paul Benfield, an engineer in the Company's service, who not content with holding the whole of Madras in pawn so entangled the Nawab of the Carnatic that he was forced to raid the neighbouring states in order to raise
money to satisfy Benfield’s claims of interest. Nor must we over-
look the ingenuity of the Governor of Madras, Sir Thomas Rumbold, who began his term of office by inviting the same Nawab
to a christening party and extorting from him as the price of the
invitation no less than fifteen lakhs of rupees.

The burden of all this high finance fell on the shoulders of
the peasantry. Never had the people known such oppression and
exploitation; the horrors of invasions and civil wars were limited
and temporary; but the Company servants introduced a cold and
steady form of exploitation that drained the life blood from the
land, as relentlessly as a famine of long duration.

In view of such general behaviour it is difficult to single out
the independent military adventurers, that is to say the European
mercenaries who sold their swords to the highest bidders, for
special censure. Indeed in comparison with the average Com-
pany official, the adventurer sometimes appears in a favourable
light. George Thomas is a more attractive figure than Paul Ben-
field; and de Boigne was more honourable than Clive.

[2]

The careers of the European military adventurers in the eighteenth
century would have been impossible anywhere except India, and
they testify to the general anarchy in that unhappy land, which
later made the British conquest possible.

The Moghuls were not native to India. Their Empire had been
founded in 1526 by Zahir ud din Mohammed, surnamed Babur
(the Lion), fifth in direct descent from Timur the Earthshaker.
Babur, like his dreadful ancestor, was not even a Mongol but a
Barlas Turk; his empire, which at his death extended from the
Oxus to the Bengal frontier, and from the Himalayas down to
Gwalior, was obtained by military conquest. Its weakness was
clearly demonstrated by his son, Humayun, who was driven out
of his father’s recent conquests by the Afghans, and after spend-
ing sixteen years in exile only recovered his capital with the help
of Persian troops a few months before he died.

At the succession of Akbar, the economic, social and political
condition of India was feudal, roughly corresponding to the condition of Europe in the early days of the Holy Roman Empire. The political framework of the country was exceedingly loose. The whole of the South was under the dominion of hereditary Hindu chiefs who had almost no contact with Delhi; the Deccan was divided up among independent Muslim rulers; the Hindu Rajputs were still supreme over the greater part of Central India; and the provincial governors and Moghul nobles in the North were only too ready to throw off the yoke of the Delhi government and to establish themselves as independent rulers. As with the Holy Roman Emperor, the central government at Delhi could only continue to exercise its authority over the distant provinces by possessing an overwhelmingly strong military force at its command. Obedience depended upon ability to exact a swift retribution, and a weakening of the central power led to instant rebellions. The central power was despotic, all authority being concentrated in the hands of one man. Thus the stability of the Empire was dependent on the character and ability of the reigning despot. In history there are many examples of empires flourishing under the rule of one man and rapidly crumbling in the reign of his successor. The Moghul Empire is one of the best of these examples.

In the fifty years of Akbar’s reign his empire was firmly established over Afghanistan and the whole of Northern and Central India. But Akbar was not only a conqueror but an expert civil administrator, and his system of government lasted until the eighteenth century. Realising that the whole structure of the Empire was based on village economy, he tried to give stability and protection to the peasants. There were countless villages scattered all over the country, and each one was an independent economic unit, in which all land was held in common, and the produce of all was shared equally among the members of the community, each according to his needs. The surplus was set aside for the payment of taxes to the state, in return for public service such as irrigation and protection. For centuries the taxes were paid in kind, but with the expansion of the Moghul Empire in the sixteenth century the use of coined money became more general, and many of the villages began to dispose of their surplus products as
commodities in order to pay their taxes in cash. This led to the development in the towns of a merchant class, which acted as brokers for the villages.

Akbar ordered his provincial governors to pay particular attention to irrigation; for he remembered the terrible famine of 1556, in which thousands perished, and in which mothers sold their children as slaves for little more than a rupee each, and men and women ate one another. Towards the end of his reign, in 1596, another great famine occurred, showing that the provincial governors were neglecting their jobs, and Akbar made the first serious attempt to organise famine relief measures.

In order to protect the communal property of the villages he created a regular police force, and a judicial administration responsible to the Central Government. To check the systematic plundering of the peasants by predatory officials, he enforced a standardised revenue system, by which he claimed one third of the average yield of produce over a period of ten years. By this system both parties benefited: the state collected an average of forty-five and a half millions of rupees a year in land revenue, and, as the contemporary writer Abul Fazl remarked with a certain degree of truth, “Men’s minds were quieted, and cultivation increased, and the path of fraud and falsehood was closed.”

Akbar understood that the basic weakness of his dynasty was that it was not supported by a united nation. His great ambition, therefore, was to bring about the unification of the empire; to try to weld together all the conflicting forces of race, religion and caste into a nation bound by common ties and loyalty to his House. With this end in view he adopted a most liberal policy of religious toleration, abolishing the poll-tax on non-Mohammedans. He married a Hindu princess, appointed his brother-in-law as Governor of the Punjab, and appointed as his chief minister a competent Hindu named Toda Mall. But in 1579, he launched his most daring experiment in religious unity. He assumed spiritual as well as temporal power, and claimed the sole right to interpret the divine commands. He proceeded to forbid the use of the name Mohammed in public prayers, and before the orthodox had recovered from this outrage, proclaimed in 1582 a new religion altogether, a kind of pot pourri of them all, which he
called the *Din Ilahi*, or Divine Faith. As Akbar was the only genuine enthusiast for the new religion, the experiment failed, and he was compelled to abandon it. With it went the last hope of a lasting Moghul dominion.

The same need to create national unity was apparent to his great-grandson, Aurangzeb, who was proclaimed Emperor in 1658, in the middle of a terrible famine. But while Akbar had used the instrument of religious toleration, Aurangzeb chose that of religious persecution. He tried to revive the dynamic force of Islam to bring together the different races and creeds into a loyal whole. In the pursuit of this ideal he revived the insulting poll-tax on non-Mohammedans, and drove out of office all the Hindu captains and administrators. He then provoked a rebellion of the Rajputs, who had been loyal to the Empire since their reconciliation with Akbar, and his oppression caused serious risings of the Hindu peasantry. Within a short period he had succeeded in alienating all the Hindu states which had been a source of strength to his predecessors; and while his generals carried fire and sword through Rajputana, the Rajputs raided Malwa, where they pulled the beards of the *mullahs* of Islam, defiled the mosques and burnt the Koran. Thus in a few years Aurangzeb succeeded in awakening all the religious prejudices and hatreds which had lain dormant for a century; and these, allied with the increased economic discontent caused by administrative corruption and inefficiency, and aggravated by the poll-tax, created a force which struck at the structure of the Empire.

By no means daunted, Aurangzeb set out to reduce the Hindu states of the Deccan and Southern India. The general effect of his aggression, accompanied as it was by religious persecution, was to promote unity among his enemies, and the slow, clumsy Moghul army, like a moving city with its women, merchants, shopkeepers, servants, cooks and other camp followers amounting to ten times the number of the fighting men, soon found its way blocked by a military confederacy of the Marathas, under their Rajah, Shivaji. Against this confederacy, Aurangzeb struggled for the last twenty-five years of his life, capturing fortress after fortress, but failing either to subdue or to make open battle with his elusive enemy. The country was wasted, the Imperial
treasury exhausted, the soldiers mutinied when their pay fell into arrears, and the flanks of the Moghul army were continuously harassed by Maratha horsemen. Eventually Aurangzeb, an aged man, was obliged to give up the struggle. Hotly pursued by Maratha cavalry, he retreated to Ahmednagar in the bitterness of defeat. His policy had failed and had only served to create a force which was to bring the Empire crashing down on the heads of his successors. In 1707, weary of life but hopeful of heaven, Aurangzeb died in his camp at Ahmednagar; and with him perished the House of Timur.

[3]

The Marathas are a race of hardy peasants, inhabiting the country bounded on the west by the ocean, on the north by the Narbada, on the east by the Warda, and on the south by the Krishna rivers. Their chiefs in the early days were the heads of villages (Patels) or district officials (desmukhs, despandes), who were all Sudras, of the same caste as their people. They were sturdily independent, and there were few social distinctions among them. Their spiritual leaders, Eknath and Tukaram, had both bitterly attacked the Brahman hierarchy and the caste system, with the result that the conditions for national unity were already present when the Moghul armies began to threaten their independence and beliefs.

The neighbouring rulers, notably the Muslim kings of Bijapur, had early discovered the Maratha aptitude for service as light cavalry, and many Marathas flourished in their service. One of these was Shahji of the Bosla family. To cover the expenses of his horsemen he had received a tract of hilly country round Poona. This jagir was greatly expanded by his turbulent son, the famous Shivaji, at the expense of Bijapur, and after annexing further territory and hearing of the death of his father, Shivaji assumed the title of Rajah, and began to coin money, one of the most decisive marks of independent sovereignty. Aurangzeb's jealous attacks on the independent Muslim states of Bijapur and Golconda further strengthened Shivaji, so that when hostilities with
the Moghuls actually began, his rule was already firmly established over a large area of Maharashtra and a slice of Mysore, and he commanded an army of over 30,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry.

In the Maratha army as in the Moghul armies, infantry was a despised arm of war, suitable only for garrison duties and fatigues. The issue of battle was decided solely by cavalry action. But the Maratha cavalry was very different from that of the Moghul. The Moghul knight before taking the field donned a coat of wadding, that would resist a sword, and over that a chain or plate armour; he was mounted on a large and showy horse, with a huge saddle and ample housings of cloth and velvet, from which streamers of different coloured satin hung down on each side. The horse's neck, and all the harness, were loaded with chains, bells and ornaments; and as his men-at-arms imitated his example as far as their means would admit, the result was a heavy cavalry, slow in movement and in getting ready for action, admirable for charges and processions, but not capable of any long exertion.

The Maratha horseman was in striking contrast. He was very lightly dressed, often bare to the waist, and being accustomed to hard work and hard fare he was capable of great endurance. His horse, his own property, was small, strong and active, and taught to bound forward or stop or wheel round when at full speed, on the slightest pressure from its rider's leg. He was armed with a sword and a matchlock, and carried a bamboo spear, fourteen feet long, his national weapon, which he used with extraordinary skill. He had no baggage, except for a pad for a saddle with a blanket folded over it, slept on the ground with his spear stuck by him and his bridle tied to his arm, ready to leap on his horse at the slightest alarm.

The Maratha cavalry never stood up to the charge of a heavy Moghul squadron; they dispersed at once and galloped off singly to the nearest hills or broken ground, where they reformed in places where it was unsafe for small parties to attack them. When their tired and discouraged pursuers retreated, they would hang loosely on their flanks and rear, killing off stragglers with their spears, galloping up swiftly to fire their matchlocks at the mass
of retreating troops, and, sometimes if there was an opening charge in on them. They were expert at cutting off Moghul convoys, being informed by the peasants of their passage, and as each man had a share of the loot they did so with gusto and relish. Their guerrilla tactics, under Shivaji and his successors wore the Moghuls out. "If an ordinary detachment was sent to check them, they repelled or destroyed it. If a great effort was made, they vanished; and perhaps did not again appear till they had plundered some distant town, and left time for their pursuers to weary themselves by forced marches in a wrong direction. They now treated the power of the emperor with derision."  

A succession of puppet emperors succeeded Aurangzeb. They were unable to cope with the anarchy that Aurangzeb’s bigoted policy had left them. The Sikhs and the Rajputs were in open and formidable rebellion; pirates swarmed the seas and river mouths; public works had broken down resulting in famine and general misery; and bands of desperate brigands roamed Hindustan raiding villages and travellers.

South of the Narbada, the Marathas encroached upon the Moghul dominions until all the provinces of the Empire south of Delhi were either in their possession or paying tribute to them.

In spite of their conquests and predominant position, the Marathas at this time had no imperial ambitions. They wanted the profits of government without the responsibility. Their predatory cavalry scoured the Deccan and Southern India levying chauth, a tribute of twenty-five per cent of the revenue of a state. It was a very profitable form of blackmail: pay up and we’ll leave you in peace; don’t pay and we’ll destroy you. Most states paid up.

The Maratha government was centred at Poona. The nominal head under the Rajah was a sort of chancellor with the title of Pratinidhi; but there was also a council of state called the Asht pardin, of which the President bore the title of Peshwa. As the Maratha power began to expand in every direction practical control of the Government was seized by the Peshwa, Baji Ram. After the conquest of Malwa and Orissa in 1751, the Peshwa overthrew the Rajah’s government and established at Poona a

1 History of India, Elphinstone.
dynasty of hereditary Peshwas, or presidents of the Maratha Confederacy.

Among the principal officers appointed by the Peshwa, Baji Rao, to conduct the invasion of the rich province of Malwa, were a goatherd named Malharji Holkar and a village patel named Ranoji Sindhia. They so distinguished themselves in the campaign that the Peshwa, busy with other affairs, parcelled out Malwa, granting the southern portion to Malharji Holkar and the northern to Ranoji Sindhia. Ranoji fixed his capital at Ujjain, where he died leaving five sons; Madhava Rao, better known to history as Madhoji, was the youngest and also illegitimate.

The Peshwa, Baji Rao, now began to have imperial ambitions and to dream of driving the Mohammandans out of Hindustan and of re-establishing a Hindu Empire. With this purpose in mind he threatened Delhi, defeated a Moghul army sent against him, and obtained from its commander a convention ceding to the Marathas all territory from the Narbada to the Chambal as well as a payment of fifty lakhs of rupees. But before this convention could be confirmed by the Emperor, Bahadur Shah, the Empire was finally shattered by a foreign invasion.

In 1739, Nadir Shah, an adventurer who had made himself King of Persia, and had made extensive conquests in Central Asia and Afghanistan, found himself with an empty treasury and a savage army for which immediate employment was essential. He therefore looked with interest at the rapidly decaying Moghul Empire. On the pretext of having been slighted by Delhi, he seized the northern approaches and invaded the Punjab, and was within a hundred miles of Delhi before Bahadur Shah and his generals were fully aware of the danger. When at last the Moghul army, lukewarm and badly led, was brought into action, it was easily routed by the invader, who, trailing Bahadur Shah with him, entered Delhi. After sacking the capital and the country within his reach, Nadir Shah returned to Persia with the famous Peacock Throne of the Moghuls and sufficient treasure to enable him to remit the entire revenue of Persia for three years. After this, for all practical purposes the Moghul Empire had ceased to exist.

After Nadir Shah's departure those who had survived his visit
in Delhi remained in a sort of stupor. Much of the city was deserted and part of it destroyed, and the whole of it infected by the stench of the bodies that lay unburied in the streets. The army was destroyed, the treasury emptied, and there was little hope of gathering immediate revenue as the only provinces that had not been laid waste by the Maratha had now been destroyed by Nadir’s army. It was some time before the court came out of its coma, but eventually the Emperor Bahadur Shah climbed on to a makeshift throne and some attempt at government was made. Then followed a chronic feud between the two great parties of immigrant nobles who contended for the wreck of the Empire. The Persian party, headed by Safdar Jang, the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh, became the mortal enemy of the Turkman, or Turani party, headed by a nephew of the Nizam, called Ghazi-ud-din.

The Marathas were as thunderstruck by Nadir’s swift invasion as the Moghuls. Baji Rao’s first thought was to establish a general league for the defence of India. “Our domestic quarrels,” he wrote, “are now insignificant: there is but one enemy in Hindustan... Hindus and Mussulmans, the whole power of the Deccan, must assemble.” But this noble ideal of unity did not survive the departure of the Persians; hardly had Nadir crossed the frontier on his way home than Baji Rao launched an attack on Hyderabad, which was repulsed. His death in 1740 left such a tangle of confusion and dissension at Poona that Delhi got a much needed breathing space.

He was succeeded by his son, Balaji Rao, in spite of the powerful opposition of Raghuji Bonsla, the Maratha chief of Berar, and of Damaji Gaekwar of Baroda. The result was civil war among the Marathas; which however, did not prevent Raghuji from threatening Bengal and levying heavy chauth on its Nawab. Balaji Rao emerged triumphant.

In 1747, Indian leaders of all parties were delighted to hear that Nadir Shah of Persia had been murdered by a number of his outraged subjects, thus removing the general fear that when he had spent the proceeds of his last invasion he would return. His Afghan mercenaries led by Ahmed Khan, the hereditary chief of the Abdali tribe, were forced to retreat to Kandahar, where Ahmed Shah was crowned king of all their tribal territory west of
the Indus. For superstitious reasons he then changed his tribal name from Abdali to Durani.

He watched with sorrow the convulsions of the Mohammedan power in India, and decided to strike a blow for the Faith and at the same time pick up anything worthwhile on the way. His zeal was not appreciated by the Turkman rulers of Delhi, and his invasion of the Punjab was repulsed by a Moghul army under the Heir-Apparent, Prince Ahmad, although the Wazir, the Emperor's favourite, was killed by a Muslim cannon ball while saying his prayers. Bahadur Shah died of grief or paralysis, and was succeeded by his son, who bore the same name as the Durani King.

In 1751, while the Moghuls with the help of the Marathas were plundering the Rohillas, Ahmed Shah Durani descended on the Punjab for the second time, and took complete possession of it. The following year, the Moghul court, for fear of further invasion, ceded the Punjab and Kashmir to the Durani.

The Durani thus bought off, as they thought, was forgotten. The Marathas continued with their dynastic squabbles, the collection of chauth, and the attacks on Hyderabad and Mysore, and the Moghul nobles fought each other in the streets for power in Delhi. At last with the help of the Marathas, Ghazi-ud-din, the leader of the Turkman party obtained control of the Moghul government, took the Emperor prisoner, put out his eyes and those of his mother, and proclaimed a Moghul princeling as his successor, Alamgir II. The intrepid Ghazi-ud-din then marched to the Punjab, captured Lahore and seized the person of the Durani governor. As might have been expected the Durani king at once avenged the outrage. Marching through the Punjab without opposition, he sacked and plundered Delhi and other cities, including the holy city of Mathura, where an Afghan detachment surprised the Hindu inhabitants at a religious festival and massacred them. Having drained Delhi of whatever had been left by Nadir Shah, Ahmed Shah returned to his own dominions, leaving a Pathan noble, Najib Khan, to protect his interests and those of Alamgir II from Ghazi-ud-din. Of course, as soon as Ahmed Shah had left, Ghazi-ud-din called for his Maratha allies and besieged Delhi. The Emperor took the precaution of sending the

Having installed Ghazi-ud-din in Delhi, the Maratha army under Ragoba, the Peshwa's brother, drove out the Duranis from the Punjab, seized Lahore and occupied the whole country under a Maratha governor. The Marathas now openly talked of conquering Oudh and of establishing their dominion over all Hindustan. But retribution was at hand.

In September, 1759, Ahmed Shah Durani began his fourth invasion, and advanced rapidly through the Punjab on Delhi. Ghazi-ud-din in a panic proceeded at once to murder the Emperor and to install another puppet; but the Crown Prince, Ali Gauhar, now making a nuisance of himself in Bengal, on hearing of the death of his father proclaimed himself the Emperor Shah Alam, and was shortly afterwards recognised as such by the Marathas, who deposed Ghazi-ud-din's puppet.

After surprising and cutting to pieces a Maratha force under Dattaji Sindhia, Ahmed Shah took Delhi, left a garrison there and fell back on Anupshahr, sallying forth early in the next year to defeat Dattaji Sindhia again and to destroy an army under Holkar.

Meanwhile, at Poona the Peshwa was organising a Maratha Grand Army against the Duranis. This army was unlike the army of light cavalry that had baffled Aurangzeb. The Maratha horse was now a compact body of 20,000 supported by a train of artillery and a division of 10,000 infantry, disposed in battalions and field batteries. The later division was under a Muslim soldier of fortune, named Ibrahim Gardi: he had learnt French discipline under Bussy, whose bodyguard he had formerly commanded at Hyderabad. The command was given to the Peshwa's cousin, Sheodasheo Rao, commonly called the Bhao, who had recently distinguished himself in the Deccan.

As the Bhao advanced north from Poona his army was swollen by the contingents of the other Maratha chiefs. Holkar joined it in Malwa; the Gaekwar led his men from Gujerat; Madhoji Sindhia, his brother Dattaji having been killed by the Afghans, rode in with his nephew; the Rajput chiefs contributed; and the Jat leader, Suraj Mall joined in with 20,000 picked men.
Differences of opinion arose among the leaders, Holkar and Suraj Mall, wishing to follow the usual Maratha tactics of ravaging the country, cutting off convoys, rather than to risk fighting on a large scale, until the enemy was exhausted or dispersed in search of forage and food. But the Bhao, intoxicated with pride and confidence in his vast army, was a great believer in the new scientific war which he had seen operated by the French-trained battalions of the Nizam. Holkar and Suraj Mall were, he said unpleasantly, a couple of goatherds and unfit to advise in warfare. As the Bhao was supported by the Peshwa’s son, Visvas Rao, he prevailed and the army moved on to Delhi, which it captured from the Durani garrison without much difficulty. It is typical of the Maratha way of life at that time that the Bhao’s first act was to melt down the silver with which, after so much spoilation, the ceiling of the audience hall was still decorated.

In the meantime at Anupshahar, Ahmed Shah was organising his army. He had 28,000 heavy cavalry, supported by a similar number of light Rohilla horse, and about 38,000 Hindustani infantry armed with pikes and matchlocks, and about eighty heavy guns. After protracted negotiations with both sides, the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh, Shuja-ud-doula elected to join the Durani king, but gave him doubtful support.

At last in 1760, when the rains were over, both sides began to take action. The Bhao marched up the Jumna and cut up an Afghan outpost at Kunjpura under the very nose of Ahmed Shah. The latter, furious, threw his main army across the swollen river and after a brisk engagement at Sonpat drove the Marathas to take shelter under the walls of Panipat, some miles to the north of Delhi.

Here the Bhao was reminded of the wisdom of the advice previously given by Suraj Mall and Holkar. Indeed the former had already marched away with his Jats, disgusted by the Bhao’s openly declared ambition to make Visvas Rao emperor of Hindustan. Having lost control of the open country, the Marathas began to suffer from want of supplies and forage. The two armies faced each other across the Jumna for two months, while the Mohammedan light horse ravaged the country, destroying Maratha foraging parties, and depriving the enemy of the means of subsistence.
After the Marathas had entirely eaten up and consumed the town of Panipat, they lost patience, and at daybreak on January 6th, 1761, having smeared their faces with turmeric to show they meant to fight to the death, they left their defences and advanced on the Durani lines. The Bhao was in the centre with the household troops; Holkar and Madhoji Sindhia commanded the cavalry on the right, and Ibrahim Gardi and his infantry battalions formed the left.

Ahmed Shah formed a similar line, keeping his best divisions of heavy cavalry under Afghan generals in reserve, while he himself directed the battle from the rear.

The brunt of the Durani attack fell on Ibrahim Gardi's division, which amply proved the value of trained infantry. The Gardi beat off the charges of the Persian cavalry, and turned on the Rohillas with such effect that he disposed of 8,000 of them in quick time, and held the field for three hours. The Afghan general Wali Khan in command of a regiment of heavy cavalry on the right wing, had his line shattered by a Maratha charge led by the Bhao in person. The Nawab of Oudh was paralysed, and neither fought nor fled, and for a time the Duranis were in desperate straits. Najib Khan came to the rescue withdrawing the troops behind earthworks, from which he kept off the attacks of Sindhia's horse by a constant fire of rockets. At noon Ahmed Shah well aware of the crisis led his reserve cavalry in a charge to support his wavering centre. At the same time he sent orders to his two wings to fall on the flanks of the Maratha army. The fighting was obstinate and fierce for two hours, and then the famished and exhausted Marathas began to give way. The Bhao galloped from the field, followed by Holkar. Visvas was killed on his elephant, and an indiscriminate slaughter of the fleeing Marathas followed. Those who surrendered were butchered on the spot, and those who dispersed were overtaken by the pursuing horse or killed by the peasants for the sake of their personal possessions. Among the fugitives was Janardhan Balaji, afterwards to be famous as the Nana Farnavis, and young Madhoji Sindhia, hotly pursued by a gigantic Afghan trooper. His horse fell in a ditch, and the Afghan dismounting gave him a blow on the knee, which crippled him for life, spat in his face, stripped
him of his clothes and ornaments, and then rode off with his victim's horse doing no further harm. The stricken Maratha was found by a Mohammedan water-carrier named Rana Khan, who carried him on the back of his bullock to a place of safety. Madhoji never forgot the kindness, and later Rana Khan rose to be a successful and trusted general in Sindhia's service.

Other chiefs were not so fortunate. Madhoji's nephew, the head of the Sindhia clan, was beheaded the next day with many other captives, leaving Madhoji the sole remaining male in the family. A headless body found near the battle was generally believed to be that of the Bhao, and the gallant Ibrahim Gardi, taken prisoner, was allowed to die of his wounds in prison.

The Maratha defeat was total. Nearly all the great chiefs were killed or wounded, and three-fourths of the grand army destroyed. Grief and despondency spread over the whole people, most of whom had someone to mourn, and all felt the destruction of the army as a death-blow to their national greatness. The Peshwa never recovered from the shock. He retreated to Poona, and died a few months later.

Ahmed Shah Durani returned home without attempting to profit by his victory, leaving Najib Khan supreme in Delhi. The Durani King did not again interfere in the affairs of India. A new military confederacy was forming in the Punjab—the Sikh Kalsa—which was to become a wall against which invaders from the North hurled themselves in vain.

With amazing resilience, the Marathas soon recovered. Within ten years of Panipat they had control of the Emperor Shah Alam, whom they installed in Delhi under their protection, after he had fled from the English. But now the power of the Peshwaship was weakened, and the Maratha armies that were to dominate India for the next thirty years were largely the private armies of individual Maratha princes, officered and disciplined by Europeans. The greatest of these princes was Madhoji Sindhia.

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The Sikhs were originally a sect of Hindu puritans and not a
separate race. Their founder, Nanak, believed in universal toleration. There was one God, he thought, who should be worshipped, but the forms of that worship were immaterial, for He appreciated both Hindu and Mohammedan forms of devotion. His followers, who were mainly recruited from the Jats, were expected to live in harmony and peace with all mankind.

But the way of the peacemaker is never easy, and his example is often thought offensive by violent and sinful man. As the sect grew in numbers during the sixteenth century, the more it excited the odium of the more bigoted and warlike Mohammedans. In 1606 their fifth spiritual leader or Guru, Arjan, was charged with aiding the rebellion of Prince Khusru against the Emperor Jehangir and was put to death. Incensed by this act of tyranny, his son and successor Har Govind and his flock changed from inoffensive quietists into fanatical warriors, rose in armed rebellion and were with some difficulty expelled from the Lahore region and forced to take refuge in the hills. Har Govind’s grandson, the Guru Govind, not only confirmed the Sikhs martial habits, but conceived the idea of forming them into a religious and military commonwealth, and like an Indian Lycurgus established a system of laws to achieve that end. To increase the numbers of his society, he abolished all distinctions of caste among its members, admitting all converts, whether Mohammedan or Hindu, Brahman or Untouchable, to a perfect equality. As with the Spartans, every male was to be a vowed soldier from his birth or initiation, was always to carry steel in some form about his person, to wear blue clothes, allow his hair and beard to grow, and neither to clip nor remove the hairs on any other part of his body. They continued to revere the Hindu gods, and forbade the slaughter of cows; but all other prohibitions relating to food and drink were abolished, as were the old religious ceremonies. By observing these laws over the generations a separate and distinct nation was created.

Govind, whose father Teg Bahadur, the ninth Guru, had been tortured to death in the hope of making him a Muslim, lost no time in rising in rebellion; but his followers in spite of their zeal were not numerous enough to achieve a lasting success, and after a long struggle Guru Govind saw his strongholds taken, his
mother and his children slaughtered, and his followers slain, mutilated or dispersed. He became insane and was murdered by a private enemy.

But the internal disturbances of the Moghuls prevented a sustained persecution, and their intermittent severities only exalted the fanatical fury of their victims. Under their next leader Banda, they overran the east of the Punjab, and ravaged the Moghul dominions as far as Saharapur. Burning with revenge they destroyed mosques and butchered the mullahs, sacked towns and massacred the inhabitants, and even dug up the bodies of their dead enemies to throw to the birds and beasts of prey. Then they retired to their fastnesses which were then on the upper course of the Sutlej river between Ludhiana and the mountains, only to emerge from time to time wasting the country of their enemies as far as Delhi itself. In 1708 the Moghul government mounted a big offensive against the Sikhs but with only limited success. In 1767 their depredations in the Punjab provoked the personal intervention of Ahmed Shah Durani, with only temporary effect. They grew in numbers and power until by the end of the century, they repelled an Afghan invasion and dominated the Punjab. Their great leader, Ranjit Singh, introduced modern military organisation and created such armies that even the fierce Afghan warriors fled from them in disorder.

Thus thanks to the Sikhs the tide of invasion from the North, which had afflicted India throughout the centuries, was finally kept out. But the Sikh wall had also political effects on Delhi politics by preventing the constant immigration of individual adventurers from Turkestan and Persia, which had provided the Moghul Empire with some of its bravest generals and best statesmen. There were now only about six such powerful characters left in Hindustan, and when they died there were no more to replace them.

[5]

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the European merchant companies were already well established, and were en-
croaching more and more on the sovereign rights of the Empire. Portuguese prestige had declined since Portugal had become a dependency of Spain, but Goa and other possessions had been retained. Holland had established in the teeth of Portuguese opposition her supremacy in the East Indies, the Spice Islands, and had formed several settlements on the mainland. The French East India Company was well entrenched at Pondicheri in the Carnatic, and at Chandernagore in Bengal; and the English Company was in possession of Surat and Bombay in the West, of Madras, Fort St. David and Devi Kottai in the Carnatic, and of Calcutta in Bengal.

At first the Europeans came as humble traders, but the decline of Moghul power and administration obliged them to fortify their settlements and to raise military forces to defend them. Fort St. George was erected as early as 1641 to protect the settlement at Madras, but there was no large-scale fortification of the settlements on the West coast before the acquisition of Bombay in 1668. The natural advantages of Bombay attracted many settlers from the ravaged mainland, and it grew rapidly into a prosperous city. Unfortunately for the same reasons it also attracted the predatory notice of the Marathas and of the Sidi, as the Moghul admiral was called. For the best part of the year the latter roved coastal waters as a pirate, but during the stormy monsoon period he had formed the habit of visiting Bombay, which he found a convenient base for his bloodthirsty raids on the Maratha villages on the mainland; and Shivaji had long contemplated seizing the island as a means of putting an end to the Sidi’s monsoon amusements. The speedy fortification of Bombay, however, proved sufficient to deter both: Shivaji adopted towards the Company a friendly attitude which lasted until his death, and the Sidi was told to go and amuse himself elsewhere.

In Bengal, during the Company’s foolish war with Aurangzeb, the Company’s affairs were administered by a certain Job Charnock, a bold and eccentric man who took pleasure in defying European and Indian conventions alike. During the hostilities he seized Chutanuti, which he held against the Moghul forces until the end of the war, when the Nawab of Bengal in his folly gave the English permission not only to enlarge the settlement into
Calcutta, but to build Fort William to protect it.

Madras was the first British possession to develop into a sovereign state. By 1658 it was completely fortified, and in 1687 it received a royal charter and became a municipality with the privilege of hanging European and Indian malefactors in its own right, a privilege which it exercised to the full. Too remote to be easily reached by the Moghul armies and too strong to be reduced by the small local rajahs or seriously interfered with by the corrupt and unsupported Nawab of the Carnatic, Madras flourished, the only danger to it being the growth of French influence in the Carnatic.

French enterprise had been encouraged by the preoccupation of the Dutch and English companies with the attempt by Spain and Austria to secure a share in the prosperous Indian trade. By the time England and Holland had destroyed the Ostend Company, Fort St. Louis had been built at Pondicheri, the other settlements fortified, and the deserted but strategically important islands of Mauritius and Bourbon seized by the French East India Company.

For some time the English and French in India in spite of mutual dislike tolerated each other, until the rapidity of Moghul decay precipitated the clash. In 1740 while the Delhi Government was still reeling from the effects of Nadir Shah’s invasion, the Marathas overran the Carnatic, advancing to the gates of Madras and Pondicheri, before withdrawing heavy with plunder. The authority of the Nawab of the Carnatic was shattered, and the general disorder led both the French and the English to form hopes of establishing their own sovereignty over as much of the country as each one was able to grasp. In 1744 the War of the Austrian Succession brought hostilities into the open, and the French under Dupleix and La Bourdonnais captured Madras. The English complained to the Nawab, who was induced to despatch an army to expel the French from Madras. The Nawab’s army in its mediaeval array was easily defeated by a handful of Frenchmen, thus demonstrating for the first time in India the superiority of modern cannon, muskets and bayonets skilfully directed over numbers. The Nawab at once made peace.

In 1748 a large English expedition laid siege to Pondicheri;
but the siege was called off as a result of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle which ended the war in Europe and restored Madras to the English. Although officially at peace the two Companies pursued the war by proxy, using Indian princes to further their ambitions. Thus the French supported Chandra Sahib, who, in 1749, with the help of French troops defeated and slew the Nawab, and succeeded him. He liberally rewarded his French friends, even going so far as to appoint a disreputable relative of Madame Dupleix governor of San Thome, on the outskirts of Madras. Two years later Dupleix himself was appointed, by the pro-French Nizam, Nawab of the Carnatic with Chandra Sahib as his deputy, thus forcing the English actively to intervene. Clive with the help of a Maratha force captured Arcot, deflected a French attack on Madras, relieved Trichinopoly then being attacked by Chandra Sahib, who finally surrendered on being promised his life and was promptly beheaded. Dupleix was recalled to France, and Godeheu sent out to negotiate a peace with the English.

Godeheu's Peace did not last for long. On the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, Clive stormed and captured Chandernagore, the French possession in Bengal, and then by a series of palace revolutions made the Company supreme in Bengal. In 1760 Eyre Coote defeated the French in the Carnatic at Wandewash, and early the following year in spite of hurricanes and a spirited resistance by Lally Tollendal, who was later beheaded as a reward, seized Pondicherry and demolished the fortifications. Although Pondicherry was subsequently returned to France, its capture completed the downfall of direct French power in India. With the French defeated, the Dutch expelled from Chinsura and the Portuguese harmlessly contained in Goa, there was no European rival left to challenge the ambitions of the East India Company. But the number of French officers and adventurers in the service of Indian princes was and remained a source of anxiety to the English.
In those days Europe was technically far ahead of India and, indeed, of the whole of Asia. This was especially evident in military development. The comparatively small English and French armies, drilled in up-to-date tactics, supplied with good muskets and bayonets, supported by modern canon, such as the Swedish gun that could fire six balls a minute, had repeatedly showed their superiority over the larger, undisciplined Indian armies with their swords, matchlocks and spears, inferior artillery and gunners, and the vast confusing mass of camp followers who not merely created confusion and scarcity but also actually impeded action. The French at Madras and the English at Plassey and at Buxar had provided object lessons to the Indian princes on how modern armies should be organised and directed. The main lesson was the development of disciplined infantry as the principal arm of war, relegating cavalry to an auxiliary role. This was a revolutionary change in Asia, where for centuries battles had been decided by cavalry charges, and the infantry, despised and undisciplined, considered fit only for garrison duties.

Some Indian princes adapted themselves to the change in military technique more quickly than others, but during the closing decades of the century all were competing in recruiting European troops, officers and engineers. One of the first of these was Salabat Jang, the Nizam of Hyderabad, who in 1751 became bold enough to invade Maratha territory, his army supported by a subsidiary force of 500 Europeans and 5,000 trained infantry under a French officer, de Bussy. The Peshwa’s armies were defeated in three engagements, and the triumphant Nizam advanced to within twenty miles of Poona before making peace.

Charles Joseph Patissier, Marquis de Bussy Castelnau, fortunately recorded in history merely as M. de Bussy, does not strictly speaking fall into the category of military adventurers. He was an officer of the Royal French Army seconded to the Nizam of Hyderabad in pursuit of French policy in the Carnatic. He raised and trained considerable forces for the Nizam, was made a nobleman of the Moghul Empire, largely dominated the Court of Hyderabad in the French interest, and was considered a standing
menace by the English long after the collapse of French power. He did what he could to prevent that collapse, and had he been in command the decisive French defeat at Wandewash might have been avoided. Lally, the younger, ignored his advice and lost the battle, in which de Bussy, disgusted with Lally's handling of the campaign, was taken prisoner. In 1778, England having declared war again on France, the French made another attempt to regain their lost power in India by supporting by sea and land the anti-English activities of Haider Ali, the resourceful adventurer who had made himself Sultan of Mysore, and, after his death, his son Tipu. The French admiral Suffrein after beating off the English fleet landed de Bussy with some of his trained troops on the Carnatic coast at Cuddalore, which was immediately attacked by an English force under General Stuart. De Bussy inflicted a sharp defeat on Stuart, driving him off with heavy losses. One of de Bussy's officers taken prisoner in the battle was Jean Baptiste Jules Bernadotte, later to become one of Napoleon's marshals and King Charles XIV of Sweden. In 1783 after the Treaty of Versailles, the Madras Government sent envoys to de Bussy to propose peace, but the Frenchman refused to abandon Tipu and it was some months before a general peace was signed.

A few months later, in January 1785, de Bussy loaded with honours and worthy of his fame died at Pondicheri.

The Nizam was fortunate in obtaining the services of de Bussy; other princes were not always so well served by the Europeans they engaged. The supply of adventurers was even greater than the demand for them. In their choice the princes did not always show great discernment. Every man is the heir to his nation's achievement, and it was sufficient for a man to be a Frenchman, or a Dutchman or an Englishman to be credited with military ability and up to date technique. A few showing genuine talent rose to great heights and made their mark on history; countless others flitted across the screen, some of them contributing to local victories of no general importance, changing masters frequently according to their immediate interests, serving when nothing better offered as non-commissioned officers and privates in the Indian armies, sinking at last into obscure graves, unnoticed by contemporary chroniclers.
Of the few whose names are remembered the Frenchman René Médoc is important not so much for his achievement but because like Sombre he was one of the first to achieve anything. He seems to have arrived in India about 1751 as a private in the army sent to reinforce the French forces in the Carnatic at the beginning of the Seven Years' War. It is not unlikely that he became acquainted with Sombre, then also serving at Pondicherry as a private. However that may be, they both followed a similar course in deserting the defeated French forces in the Carnatic and in making their way North. They met in 1761 at Monghyr in Bengal, where the Nawab Mir Kassim was assembling an army in an attempt to re-assert his authority and to reduce the English Company to its proper proportions. In this army Sombre was given the command of two battalions, and Médoc on his arrival became one of his officers. Their association lasted until the battle of Buxar. Mir Kassim and his allies the Emperor Shah Alam and the Nawab of Oudh were routed and the British obtained supreme control of Bengal and of the person of the Emperor. There is no evidence that he took any part in the massacre of the English prisoners at Patna by Sombre on the orders of Mir Kassim.

After Buxar, Médoc speedily made his way to Delhi, where he gained the favour of the all-powerful minister Najaf Khan, who was then campaigning against the unruly Jats. Médoc was commissioned to raise a corps of five battalions of infantry, 500 cavalry and 20 guns. Among the French officers he engaged at that time was the Chevalier Dudrene. Médoc with his new corps accompanied Najaf Khan in an invasion of Jat territory. In the resulting battle of Barsana, although the Jats were at last defeated, the Moghul army and Médoc were checked for a time by the concentrated artillery fire directed at them by Médoc's oldrade-in-arms, Sombre, who commanded the infantry on the other side.

The dominant characteristics of Médoc were a rash impetuosity in action and a chronic restlessness in peace. Shortly after the battle of Barsana, he left the service of Najaf Khan and entered that of the Jat Rana of Gohad, who was constantly having trouble both with the Marathas and the Rohillas. Here his impetuosity
led to disaster. Leading his freebooters through the defiles of Biana in the wild Mewatti district, he was ambushed by a large party of Rohillas, during a heavy rain storm. Twelve of his European officers were killed, his force destroyed and all his guns and baggage captured. Médoc himself drove his horse through the thickest part of the jungle, and hotly pursued at last found refuge in the fortified town of Fatehpur, whence he made his way to Agra. Nothing daunted he now set about recruiting another force, training it and casting new guns. Before long he had created a compact disciplined corps of over a thousand disciplined and well-trained men, with a train of artillery and a number of European officers. But Médoc was now over fifty, an age when the excitement of a hard and dangerous life begins to pall and the adventurer begins to think of home and comfort. Accordingly in 1782, Médoc sold his newly raised corps for a considerable sum to the Rana of Gohad, who gave the command to the Scotsman, Sangster.

Médoc packed his fortune and took ship for France, where he assumed the title of Nawab, a novelty at the Court of Louis XVI, and, gaily entering the pastimes of a degenerate and doomed aristocracy, foolishly got himself killed in a duel.

One of the officers engaged by Médoc before he sold his newly raised corps was an extraordinary and eccentric Irishman named Thomas Legge. He was born in Danagadee in the north of Ireland, his father being a shipowner profitably engaged in transporting emigrants from that poverty-stricken land to America. He was a wild and restless youth, and caused his family much anxiety by refusing to settle down in the family business. He was considered a problem. He solved the problem in his own way by running away to sea, joining as an ordinary seaman the crew of the British war sloop, “Swallow”, bound for Madras. Like other seamen at that time, including Perron and George Thomas, he deserted his ship at Madras, where he arrived in 1775, and set off to roam about that dangerous and disorderly country alone,
without arms and supporting himself by begging at the roadside. In this somewhat unconventional way he reached Sind, where he seems to have stayed for some years before continuing his vagabond career by tramping to Multan, and then across the desert to Jaipur. Finding no satisfaction in Rajputana he entered the newly acquired territory of the Jat Rana of Gohad, and there met Médoc, whom he charmed into engaging him as an officer in the corps he was then raising. After Médoc’s retirement in 1782, he came under the command of Sangster, who taught him the art of casting and using cannon. He had not long to acquire this valuable knowledge; the Rana who had taken advantage of the war between the Marathas and the English to seize Gwalior from Sindhia had now, after the Treaty of Salbai, been forced to surrender to Sindhia and to give it back. Médoc’s force was disbanded; Sangster entered Sindhia’s service under de Boigne, and Tom Legge disdaining easy journeys took his new knowledge with him to Afghanistan, settling in Kabul, where he received three rupees a day for supervising the casting of the King’s cannon.

His stay in Kabul proved very pleasant, his open manners and native charm making him very popular with the Afghans, so popular that when his restless spirit urged him to move he had to do so by stealth. This time he went further North, crossing the Hindu Kush into Badakshan, where he acquired a “wife”, with whom he lived for some years. But it was impossible for him to settle. He next went to Bokhara, casting cannon for the Emir until the spirit moved him to go to Herat and thence to Kandahar. Altogether he spent twenty years roving about Central Asia, making cannon for almost every potentate between the Indus and the Caspian. At last he decided that he had wandered enough and that it was time he made a permanent home somewhere. He went South again, and after a very long and difficult journey beset with dangers of all kinds reached Jaipur again. Here he married the daughter of a Portuguese doctor employed by the Rajah, and on the strength of his new family connections was given the command of a battalion of the Jaipur army. Unhappily his first battle in his new command was also his last. Storming a rebel fort he received two wounds, one from a spear and the other from a
musket, which refused to respond to the treatment of his father-in-law and other talent. He decided to seek medical advice from the army doctors at the nearest British camp. This was commanded by a Colonel Tod, to whom we are indebted for most of our knowledge about Legge. While the latter lay in the military hospital, Tod spent hours by his bedside fascinated by the patient's adventures and opinions. He was impressed by the man's benevolence and charm, and by the amount of odd learning that he seemed to have picked up during his wanderings. He was interested in medicine, alchemy and divination, had an inexhaustible fund of Central Asian legends and like many of his countrymen was not above amusing himself by telling a tall story. He claimed to have discovered somewhere in the Hindu Kho the veritable Garden of Eden, deep in the heart of a mountain. The entrance was a cave guarded by an angel with flaming wings, and the favoured visitor when once permitted to pass into the interior would come upon a magnificent garden, filled with luscious fruit, with heaps of gold bricks at one end and silver bricks at the other.

He was proud of his nationality and retained his northern Irish brogue, in which his Scottish doctor thought he could detect a trace of a Scottish accent. But on being asked if he came from Scotland he replied: "You may take me for a Spaniard or a Portuguese, or what you please, Sir, but I tell you nothing but the truth, your honour, when I say I'm an Irishman." Mollified he then made the admission that his mother was "a Mackintosh."

His wounds did not heal and turned gangrenous, and it became clear to all including himself that he was slowly dying. He expressed a wish to return to Jaipur, and left the camp in a litter; but on the way he came across an isolated Mohammedan tomb. He promptly dismissed the litter and his attendants, took off his clothes, entered the tomb and declared himself a Fakir. In this holy but unhygienic state he was found by the wife of General Filoze, who did what she could to look after him for the short time that was left. He died in 1808, one of the least important but one of the more endearing of all the adventurers.
An adventurer of a different type from Legge and one who left his mark on Indian history was Michel Joachim Marie Raymond, who, for some reason, preferred to be called François de Raymond.

He was born at Serignac in Gascony in 1755. At the age of twenty he was commissioned as a sub-lieutenant in a French battalion commanded by the Chevalier de Lasse in the service of the Sultan Haider Ali of Mysore. He attracted the favourable notice of the French authorities in Pondichéri, and eight years later was commissioned captain in the French army and appointed aide-de-camp to General de Bussy. On de Bussy’s death three years later, Raymond entered the service of the Nizam Ali Khan of Hyderbad, for whom he raised a small force of 300 men, hiring the muskets with which they were armed from a French merchant at the rate of eight annas a month for each musket. As the years passed this force was augmented to 5,000 men and Raymond received Rs. 5,000 a month.

In 1790 the Nizam was induced to join the British and the Marathas in declaring war on Tipu of Mysore. This must have presented a serious problem of conscience for Raymond, who, like Perron, was a fervent Jacobin, as indeed was the Sultan himself at that time. Nevertheless Raymond obeying orders took part in the war against “Citizen Tipu”, as the Sultan then preferred to be known, and so pleased the counter-revolutionary Nizam that his force was further increased to over 11,000 men, well trained and so regularly paid that soldiers were tempted to desert the Company armies to enter his service.

Raymond was now a power in the state, and as such was a source of much anxiety to the British, who, failing to persuade their ally the Nizam to replace the French officers in his service with English ones, bullied him into accepting as a counterpoise to Raymond, the services of an Englishman named Finglass and an American named Boyd, who both raised battalions independently of Raymond.

As might be expected it was not long before the Nizam and the Marathas, allies against Tipu, fell out. Both had benefited in
territory at the expense of Mysore, but the Maratha chiefs were insatiable and at the instigation of the Nana Farnavis the Peshwa now claimed an enormous sum from the Nizam as arrears of tribute. The Nizam Ali Khan, confident in Raymond’s battalions, angrily and insultingly rejected this insolent claim, and both sides took the field to decide the matter.

The Peshwa was supported by the Maratha chiefs. Daulat Rao Sindhia, who had just succeeded his uncle, contributed de Boigne’s First Brigade under Perron, Michael Filoze’s six battalions, Hessing’s four battalions and a large force of cavalry; Tukoji Holkar, still smarting from his defeat at Lakhairi but unwilling to miss any chance of plunder, sent Dudre nec with four newly raised battalions; and the Bonsla and Gaekwar and other princes sent their contingents. Altogether the Peshwa took the field with over 140,000 men.

The Nizam marched to meet him with 110,000 men, which included Raymond’s brigades of 11,000 men and the battalions of Boyd and Finglass.

The opposing armies met near Karda. It was largely a battle between disciplined infantry, between two French generals, Perron and Raymond. The Nizam’s cavalry drove in the Maratha centre until Perron skilfully manoeuvred his guns on to a hill, from which he opened such a destructive fire of grapeshot that the Muslim horse fled, leaving Raymond’s infantry exposed to the full attack. Raymond, ably supported by Boyd and Finglass, stood firm, beating off cavalry attacks and checking the advance of Perron’s infantry with grape and sustained musket fire.

The issue was doubtful; indeed, Raymond had the advantage; but it was decided by the Nizam in the most idiotic way since Anthony deserted his fleet at Actium to sail after Cleopatra. The Nizam had brought his women along with him as if to a picnic. This, as can be imagined was a mistake; for his favourite wife became so terrified by the noise of battle that the imbecile Nizam at a loss ordered Raymond’s brigade to retire to his camp so that secure in such protection she might be pacified.

Raymond resisted this order frequently repeated until sunset, when the harassed Nizam became so imperative that there was no choice except to obey. Hardly had he begun to make an order-
ly withdrawal than the order was countermanded; then is was renewed and again countermanded, and then again renewed so that Raymond and his men were completely bewildered, and at last gave up in despair and bivouaced on the field of battle. In the meantime Perron was creeping up in the dark on the Nizam’s camp, and as soon as he was within range opened an intense fire with guns and rockets on the startled Nizam’s troops who, already demoralised by the Nizam’s behaviour, turned and fled, abandoning their guns and baggage, and joined the Nizam and his favourite wife, the cause of the disaster, in the small fort of Karda. Raymond bravely defended the fort for four days, but when Perron began to bombard it with heavy guns, the Nizam sued for peace. He had to pay an indemnity of three million pounds, cede a large tract of territory, and, what was probably the easiest of all the conditions, send his chief minister as a hostage to Poona.

Raymond, however, emerged from this defeat with increased renown and credit. His position in Hyderabad was even stronger because the Nizam, resentful of British neutrality in the late conflict, became distinctly anti-British in his attitude. Boyd and Finglass were definitely suspect, and he would no doubt have dismissed them had he not been suddenly faced with a most serious rebellion by his son and heir, Ali Jah. There was so much support for the rebellion among the nobles and people that Raymond had considerable difficulty in suppressing it. Eventually, however, he succeeded in capturing Ali Jah, who not trusting his father’s mercy, committed suicide, and was succeeded as heir by Sikander Jah, who admired Raymond in everything except that he belonged to France, which had just murdered its king and queen.

Sikander Jah was wise in flattering Raymond, who now held such a predominant position in Hyderabad that on the death of the Nizam he could have secured the appointment of anyone he pleased as his successor. But Raymond was a true Jacobin, and was anxious to follow the policies of the French Revolutionary Government then at war with Britain. It is known that after the rebellion, he was anxious to secure as a reward for suppressing it the district round Karpa, which would have enabled him to support any French expeditionary force landing on the Coromandal coast. Encouraged by the Nizam’s bitterness against the
Company, he became openly hostile to the Company's representatives in Hyderabad, and even contemplated an attack on the British Resident's camp, from which he was deterred significantly enough by Boyd and Finglass who paraded their troops in front of it. However he managed to get the Nizam to dismiss Boyd, who entered the Peshwa's service, in which he rose to the command of the regular infantry brigade.

But Raymond's republicanism did not prevent him living in splendid state, enjoying every luxury and elegance within his reach. He was in absolute command of 14,000 disciplined infantry, a large number of guns and 600 cavalry, for the maintenance of which he had most extensive territorial assignments as well as a princely salary. But his interests were not restricted to military or political affairs; he took a wide interest in Indian culture, and in 1789 published under the name of Hadji Mustapha a French translation of the Siyar-ul-Matakhirin of Ghulam Husain Khan Tiba Tibai. His natural courtesy and conciliatory demeanour made him an excellent negotiator and diplomat, and although he could be crafty in the pursuit of his schemes he was always faithful to his Jacobin principles, refusing to employ French royalists in his army and even writing to rebuke Michael Filoze for arresting the Nana Farnavis "contrary to the Rights of Man." His brigades fought under the French republican tricolour and the Cap of Liberty was engraved on their buttons. He was in constant touch with the French Government and with Tipu of Mysore, and longed to contribute to the restoration of French power in India. He had probably advance information of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, but was spared knowledge of the end of that ill-fated expedition.

He died suddenly at the height of his power on March 25th 1798, aged forty-three. Poison was suspected.

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Raymond was succeeded in the command by Jean-Pierre Piron. If the British authorities had been anxious about the Jacobin sympathies of the late general, they were outraged by the revolu-
tionary enthusiasm of his successor. Piron was a zealot. His first act on assuming command of Raymond’s brigades was to send General Perron, now in command of Sindhia’s armies, a silver Tree of Liberty and a silver Cap of Liberty as presents. He continued Raymond’s custom of flying the French national flag, and added to it by having the words *Liberté et Constitution* embroidered on his soldiers’ uniforms, thus puzzling the despotic old Nizam. He maintained Raymond’s contacts with the Government in Paris, and entered into even closer relations with the turbulent Tipu. He made no attempt to disguise his hatred and contempt of the English, and treated Kilpatrick, the English Resident in Hyderabad, with open scorn. He was inclined to be a rowdy demagogue, haranguing his baffled troops on the Rights of Man and on the glories of the French Revolution, and expressing similar sentiments at the Court to the irritation of the Nizam and his nobility. Nor did he neglect to send warm fraternal greetings to Colonel Chappuis who had just arrived in Mysore at the head of a number of French volunteers.

The British authorities were extremely sensitive to these proceedings. The Marquis Wellesley was in no doubt about French intentions towards India, and had already despatched an expeditionary force to Egypt in the hope of checking Bonaparte. He was most alarmed about Tipu’s incorrigible intrigues with the French, and in June 1798 resolved on war against Mysore with the intention of depriving Tipu of Mangalore, his port on the coast at which a French army could land. In these circumstances he could hardly be expected to tolerate the frenzied Jacobinism of Piron at Hyderabad. To Wellesley it seemed that the fellow might lead his trained brigades to support Tipu, with or without the Nizam’s consent. The disbandment of these brigades was a necessary preliminary step to the invasion of Mysore. Wellesley entered into negotiations with the Nizam.

For some time the Nizam had been looking askance at the Jacobinism among his best troops, but by himself he was powerless to do anything about it. He therefore received the Governor-General’s proposals favourably, especially so as they offered him considerable benefits. In return for co-operating with the British in disbanding Piron’s brigades, dismissing all the French officers,
and replacing them by British officers, the Nizam would receive an annual payment of Rs. 2,417,100 and a large slice of Tipu's territory when the war was over.

The Nizam and the Governor-General decided to employ strength with cunning. The direction of the plot was entrusted to John Malcolm, then Assistant Resident at Hyderabad, supported by a body of British troops under Lt.-Colonel Roberts. The first step was to secure favourable conditions for the coup. This was undertaken by the Nizam who sent agents to foment mutiny in the brigades against their French officers. The sepoys largely unaffected by the doctrines of Rousseau as expounded to them by Piron were induced to believe that their faith and persons were in danger from the French, and, led by the Nizam's agents and stimulated by money rewards broke into open mutiny, and attacked their officers in their quarters. Then as arranged Colonel Roberts marched up two lines of British infantry with field guns, and the leaders of the mutiny as also arranged laid down their arms without firing a shot. Piron and his officers fled from their besieged quarters to the British, whom, ironically enough, they at first regarded as deliverers. There was no fighting and no casualties. By sunset Raymond's famous battalions were dispersed and all his storehouses, arsenals, gun foundries and powder mills in British possession. The supply of cloth intended for making French republican flags was used instead for the manufacture of the more conservative union jacks. Fortunately the colours were the same.

This easy victory would not have been possible when Raymond was alive. Piron had none of Raymond's ability and subtlety; he was rough, violent, vociferous, and an expert at antagonising everyone at the same time. He moved to Chandernagore, where he died in 1805.

In this ignominious manner Raymond's famous Legion passed into History. It was replaced by six battalions officered by Britons, which provided a token force to represent the Nizam in the war against Tipu. It was commanded by the Governor-General's younger brother, Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, then a simple colonel.

After much deliberation Captain Finglass was allowed to keep
his independent corps, and even permitted to purchase arms and stores from Fort St. George. He was thought to be entirely reliable, for he was not only an Englishman but had been a quartermaster in the 19th Dragoons, which he had left with a good character.

Thus as British power steadily grew and spread relentlessly in the land, the soldier of fortune found less and less scope for exercising his profession. After the submission of the Nizam and the suppression of Tipu, there were only the Marathas and the Sikhs who could offer the adventurer employment. And even that market could not last. In the words printed in the *Public Advertiser*, on May 14th 1773, the time was coming:

“When the rich realms, where Alexander toiled,  
Shall by a Pettifogger’s son be spoiled;  
While London cits oppress the Eastern glebe,  
And pedlars fill the thrones of Aurangzeb:”
PART TWO

Sombre

[1]

The man known to history as General Sombre was among the first of the adventurers who in the eighteenth century swarmed to India as to a land flowing with milk and honey. He was not an attractive character, and, indeed, he is largely remembered only because he was the perpetrator of one of the most atrocious smaller massacres of defenceless people ever recorded in history.

But the wicked flourish as the green bay tree, and Sombre prospered while so many of his more deserving fellows fell by the wayside. In the political maelstrom of eighteenth century India there was little scope and no future in virtue and high-mindedness.

The very lawlessness that attracted adventurers to India had its own rules, and it is scarcely surprising that these were hardly distinguishable at first sight from those of the jungle. In this unhappy land, pirates of every nationality scoured the coasts; thugs, with their ready-made graveyards, dacoits and professional poisoners prowled the roads unchecked; the armies and camp-followers of the warring princes ate up towns and the countryside; highly organized bandits flourished in the hills; public works were neglected with resultant famines; tigers, leopards and hyaenas multiplied in the forests as did crocodiles in the rivers and lakes; malaria, cholera and plague were endemic; and allegiances and loyalties were subject to lightning changes; today’s ally was tomorrow’s enemy, and treachery was at a premium.

In such conditions a military adventurer was necessarily feral; but for success and sometimes even for survival he also required
a shrewd if opportunist political instinct, the judgment and decision to move with rapidly moving events, the ability to impose his personality on others. Such qualities Sombre undoubtedly possessed.

Little is known of Sombre's early years. His real name was Walter Reinhard and he was born at Saltzburg (some say at Trèves), in 1720, the son of a butcher. On reaching manhood, he appears to have enlisted in the Royal French Army, always hospitable to foreigners. He either deserted to join the French Navy, or he was sent in a reinforcement to India, for he arrived at Pondichéry on board a French frigate in 1750, the same year that Warren Hastings arrived in Calcutta. At this time French power and influence in India was at its height. Dupleix was the governor of the French possessions, and his vigour and enterprise seemed likely to make the French Company the dominant European power in India.

Shortly after Reinhard's arrival, however, the French began to suffer serious reverses. Dupleix was recalled by a short-sighted French government and replaced by the timid Godeheu, who patched up an uneasy truce with the English until the outbreak of the Seven Years' War two years later.

As an ordinary trooper, Reinhard no doubt played an obscure part in these important events. He does not appear to have been popular with his French comrades, who thought him morose and sullen. His features, to judge by his portrait, are indeed saturnine, and there is a brooding melancholy about his whole appearance. It is suggested that for these reasons his fellow troopers gave him the nickname of Sombre, the Gloomy One, which was afterwards softened on the Indian tongue to Samru. But there is another explanation of his change of name.

After Dupleix's recall, Reinhard, setting a pattern for his future career, abandoned the French to their failing fortunes and made his way to Bengal, where, for want of better employment, he enlisted as a private soldier in a Swiss batallion employed by the East India Company, giving, it is said, the name of Somers, or Summers, to conceal his desertion. But it is more likely that the name Somers, or Summers, was an English corruption of Sombre.
He remained in the service of the English for exactly eighteen days.

The wheel of events was turning rapidly in Bengal too. Allahvardi Khan, the old and crafty Nawab who had followed a policy of cautious ambiguity towards the English while freely denouncing the French, who were weak in Bengal, died in 1756, and was succeeded by his grandson, Siraj-ud-Daula. The new Nawab at once adopted a truculent and aggressive attitude to the English. He was not an amiable character, but there can be no doubt that he had reason on his side. Since their successes in the Carnatic, the English had assumed the airs of conquerors: they plundered the country, they levied heavy duties on Indian goods entering Calcutta but refused to pay duties themselves to the Nawab; they treated the Nawab’s officials with derision and gave protection to his enemies; and besides Fort William they were busily fortifying their factories without permission and in a manner that boded no good to the Nawab. On his accession to the viceregal throne, Siraj-ud-Daula ordered them to raze their fortifications, and on receiving an insolent reply announced his intention of marching on Calcutta to force obedience. In June he arrived before the city, driving the English to take refuge in Fort William, which surrendered a few days later, the governor and his principal officers having escaped to the boats in the harbour, and the Nawab, rather unexpectedly found himself master of Calcutta.

Sombre was not among the Nawab’s prisoners. With his uncanny instinct for avoiding disaster, he had decamped before the Nawab had arrived outside the walls, and had found sanctuary in the French settlement of Chandernagore, where the governor, Monsieur Law, apparently without asking awkward questions, appointed him a sergeant in the garrison.

He was not to remain undisturbed for long. Towards the end of 1756, news had arrived that the Seven Years’ War had broken out in Europe. The Nawab, who had been driven out of Calcutta by Clive and Watson, and forced to make peace, saw in this war an opportunity to expel the hated English from Bengal with French assistance. He wrote to the French general de Bussy in Hyderabad proposing such an alliance, but unfortunately for the progress of the scheme Bengal was suddenly threatened with in-
vasion by the terrible king of the Afghans, Ahmed Shah Durani. As the French were weak in Bengal and the English strong, Siraj-ud-Daula was forced to ask the latter for assistance to repel the invader. This help was promised on condition that the Nawab gave his consent to an English attack on the French settlement of Chandernagore, where Sombre was peacefully reposing. The permission was given, and then, the Afghan invasion not materialising, withdrawn; but the English army was already in motion. The harassed Nawab ordered his army to protect Chandernagore, and then countermanded the order on being told that the French were certain to be beaten.

Sombre also held this view; for when Chandernagore fell the newly recruited sergeant was not among the casualties or the prisoners. Not wishing to appear before an English court-martial as a deserter, Sombre, having adopted Indian dress, escaped from the City before the attack was delivered, and found his way to the camp of the anxious and frustrated Nawab, in whose army he enlisted as a trooper.

But he was not to be left in peace. All danger from the French in Bengal having been removed, Clive now resolved to rid the Company of the vacillating and pro-French Nawab. With the help of Calcutta merchants and bankers, he decided to replace Siraj-ud-Daula on the throne of Bengal by a complacent and ambitious nobleman named Mir Ja'far. When the conspiracy was ripe, Clive led an army of three thousand men and eight guns against the Nawab’s army of fifty thousand men and forty guns. In spite of the disparity in numbers the issue of the battle of Plassey was never in doubt. Mir Ja'far, who commanded a division of the Nawab’s army, in accordance with the arrangements previously made with Clive, withdrew his forces as soon as the battle began and took no part in the conflict other than that of an interested spectator; and an unexpected downpour of rain damped the Nawab’s ammunition and his enthusiasm, so that, accompanied by a favourite concubine, he turned and fled, followed by his army in disorder. The English lost twenty-two killed and fifty wounded; the Nawab’s losses amounted to less than five hundred.

Once again Sombre was not among the casualties or the pri-
soners. One can hardly imagine him with his well-founded instinct for self-preservation accompanying the Nawab's disorderly rabble into battle against the English. He followed his usual custom and deserted before the battle.

He is next heard of in 1760 in the service of the Faujdar, or regional governor of Purnea. The Faujdar, like many petty rulers of the time, wished to establish himself as an independent prince, and was in open rebellion against his superior, the Nawab of Bengal. He had risen in support of the Shahzada, the wandering heir-apparent of the captive emperor, who had invaded Bihar and was threatening Bengal. While in Bihar the Prince heard of the murder of his father, the Emperor Alamgir II, and had himself proclaimed emperor with the title of Shah Alam, calling on all faithful subjects to support him in his designs on Bengal.

The reckless and ambitious Faujdar was among the few faithful subjects to respond to this call. Having raised his standard, he had to gather an army, and was delighted when a European military expert named Sombre arrived at his court to offer his services. The former private in Siraj-ud-Daula's army was at once appointed to the command of a battalion, with instructions to discipline it and drill it according to the successful European methods.

Unfortunately while Sombre was thus engaged the campaign of the new emperor was going badly. Defeated in his attempt on Patna by Colonel Knox, he moved on Murshidabad, but on being overtaken by a strong British force he set fire to the imperial camp and fled. The invasion was over, but his faithful subject the Faujdar was unaware of it. Three months later, satisfied that his army had been disciplined and trained according to the European method by Sombre, the Faujdar set out to join the Emperor. His march was opposed by an English force under Colonel Knox, and at Rajmahal he was routed and his troops dispersed.

Whether Sombre was present to watch the discomfiture of his employer and the scattering of his newly trained troops is uncertain. It is certain that he did not remain with the unfortunate Faujdar in adversity.

His short service with the Faujdar seems to have been fairly profitable although it ended in disaster for his master. He had
held his first command, and he was fully alive to the possibilities of further lucrative employment in the anarchy then prevailing. He had now definitely adopted Moghul dress and customs. He spoke Persian and Urdu fluently, and had acquired a zenana presided over by a Muslim woman named Bahai, by whom he had a son. Thus equipped he was no longer content with the vagabond life of an ordinary trooper, and he looked around for bigger things. He did not leave to try his fortune elsewhere in the torn land; his political insight made him aware that the best prospects were still in Bengal. He was right.

[2]

The Nawab Mir Ja'far soon repented of his bargain with the Company, for he had become nothing more than a tool of the men he had enriched. Their rapacity had drained his treasury, and they had even appropriated the money consigned for his troops, who were in consequence on the point of mutiny. He had had to pay heavily for the expenses involved in sending the Emperor about his business and was likely to go on paying on one pretext or another because the Directors in London had cut off supplies, considering that their recent successes ought to have made their Indian possessions self-supporting. Irritated and anxious he began to think along the same lines as his predecessor. Siraj-ud-Daula had entertained high hopes of French assistance in expelling the English; but now the French had been expelled from Bengal and were fighting a desperate defensive action in the Carnatic. In default of the French, Mir Ja'far turned to the Dutch at Chinsura, who long jealous of the English did not need to be pressed. They imported troops from Batavia and tried to force their way up the Hoogli, but, attacked by land and sea, met with disastrous defeat and had to accept ignominious terms. Mir Ja'far was at once deposed and replaced by his son-in-law, Kassim Ali Khan, better known as Mir Kassim.

The Company was at first delighted with its new Nawab. Mir Kassim paid lump sums to the Company officials and assigned the districts of Chittagong, Burdwan, and Midnapore to the Com-
pany. Thus encouraged, the English decided to skin the animal twice. They not only insisted that he should finance their army, but claimed the right to carry on an inland trade in country produce such as salt and tobacco free of the duties that their Indian competitors would have to pay. The latter claim was not only unjust, but if admitted would have deprived Mir Kassim of the revenue necessary to maintain his establishment and his payments to the Company. Like his lately displaced father-in-law, Mir Kassim’s thoughts turned to a war of independence.

There being no French or Dutch to appeal to, the Nawab opened secret negotiations for an alliance with the wandering Emperor, who was still hovering on the frontiers, and with the powerful Nawab-Wazir of Oudh. These negotiations being fruitful, he retired up the Ganges to the tiger-infested ruins of Monghyr, where he began to recruit European officers and to assemble his army.

The virtual organisation of this army was left to a crafty Armenian, a member of a well-known Calcutta family, known to the English as Gregory and to the Indians as Gurgin Khan. This adventurer had been the main stimulus to the resistance to the Company for some time, having inspired Mir Ja’far in his defiance. He now became not only the principal adviser to Mir Kassim, but also his commanding general.

Sombre was among the European adventurers who presented themselves before this powerful minister in the hope of being commissioned. Gurgin Khan was impressed by the adventurer’s appearance and manner, and not bothering to ask for references, accepted Sombre at his own valuation and gave him command of two battalions. It further appears that he formed a friendship with the German, confiding in him his dangerous scheme for capturing the hill state of Nepal, for the purpose of using it as an impregnable base against the English. It was a scheme of treachery and surprise, which appealed to the adventurer, who afterwards tried to put it into practice.

The Council in Calcutta disturbed by Mir Kassim’s military preparations decided to send two of its officers, Vansittart and Hastings, to Monghyr to negotiate a settlement with the Nawab. After some weeks of discussion Mir Kassim finally accepted as
satisfactory Vansittart's proposal to modify the former treaties by which the Company's servants were enabled to carry on a private trade without paying duties. But when Vansittart and Hastings reported the terms of settlement to the Calcutta Council, this body, dominated by those interested in becoming rich by private trading, flatly rejected the terms. Messrs. Vansittart and Hastings were instructed to come to a better arrangement with the now infuriated Nawab. In November, 1762 in spite of the difficulty of their mission, they managed to pacify the Nawab and reached an agreement with him which allowed the benefits of the Company's pass, the dustuck, to all bona fide Company imports and exports, but prohibited the evasions of duty by private persons. The duties were fixed at 9 per cent.

But Vansittart and Hastings were wasting their own and the Nawab's time. The self-interest of the Company's servants, whose sole ambition was to return to England as quickly as possible as wealthy 'nabobs', extinguished all sense of justice and shame. In the following January, the Council repudiated the agreement, Vansittart and Hastings being significantly the sole dissenters, proclaimed its servants' right to internal trading duty free, and sent another deputation, consisting of Messrs. Amyatt and Hay, to the long-suffering Nawab.

Both sides were, however, precipitated into action by the reckless behaviour of a certain Mr. Ellis who was chief of the Company's factory at Patna. The Nawab had confiscated a consignment of arms on its way to Patna. The factor, Ellis, at once demanded arrogantly that the arms should be delivered to him: the Nawab refused and Ellis, with the few men at his disposal, took the Nawab's garrison by surprise and seized the city and fort of Patna. The next day the Nawab's forces re-captured the city and fort and imprisoned all the English in the city, including the impulsive Ellis.

This might have been just an unfortunate incident, and war might still have been avoided. But the Nawab had already committed the ultimate sin: he had issued an order remitting all transit dues, thus putting the English on an equal footing with the Indian merchants. This was more than the Calcutta Council could stomach, and they proceeded in July to depose Mir Kassim
and to reinstate as Nawab no other than his father-in-law, the lately deposed Mir Ja'far. The new Nawab at once confirmed all the old treaty rights, and granted further concessions to his benefactors. A force under the command of Major Adams was sent to put down the usurper, Mir Kassim.

The deposed Nawab hit back at once. The discredited deputation led by Amyatt and Hay, proceeding on their way back from Monghyr to Calcutta, was ambushed by the Nawab's orders and murdered on the road. But Mir Kassim's resistance was of short duration. A few days after this murder, Major Adams caught up with him, defeated his newly trained army and captured his stronghold of Murshidabad. In the next few weeks his army was twice defeated, and the Nawab fled to Monghyr where he relieved his feelings by having his chief minister and commander-in-chief, Gurgin Khan, beheaded for having lost the battles. Then, hearing that Adams was marching on Monghyr, the Nawab hastened to Patna, with Sombre in his train.

Defeat had made Mir Kassim almost insane with fury and hatred. Normally he was not a bad man, and had tried sincerely to reach a satisfactory agreement with the Company. Strong-willed and able, he was in no mind to be a puppet ruler; he had sought merely a modus vivendi with the powerful Company and its unscrupulous servants. He had in turn been ignored, chivied, humiliated, and robbed. When he had claimed his rights he had been ridiculed, played with, illegally deposed and ignominiously defeated. It is scarcely surprising that he hated the English; and most of all, Ellis, the factor at Patna, whose foolharden conduct had precipitated the trouble and who, so the Nawab believed, was the immediate cause of his ruin.

It was some consolation to the Nawab that he had his enemy, the author of his sorrows, in his power. He determined to destroy him and also the other members of the accursed race who lay in his prison at Patna. But there was no time to lose. Adams was marching on the city in hot pursuit.

On reaching Patna, Mir Kassim sent for a list of the English prisoners and ordered his officers to put them all to death with the sole exception of a Doctor Fullerton, to whom he was under a personal obligation. The Indian officers added to his fury by
flatly refusing to carry out such a barbarous order. Dismising them
with angry threats, the Nawab sent for Sombre and gave him
the same order.

There is no doubt that Sombre was in a very difficult position.
He was an isolated foreigner then entirely at the mercy of the
enraged Nawab. He had lately seen another foreigner, his former
patron Gurgin Khan, arbitrarily beheaded, and he was in no mind
to suffer the same fate. If he had followed the courageous example
of his Indian colleagues he would most certainly have been exe-
cuted. He was an adventurer not a martyr: he agreed to carry out
the order.

He decided to proceed by guile. There were about a hundred
and fifty English prisoners, including some women and children,
confined in a single barrack inside a high-walled compound. To
lessen the chances of resistance, Sombre planned to deprive them
of their leaders. He therefore visited the prison in the role of a
fellow-European, sympathetic and anxious to alleviate their cap-
tivity. Having thus won their confidence he invited forty officers,
including Ellis, to have supper with him at his quarters. They
accepted with pleasure.

Sombre went home to prepare for their reception. He called
his sepoys together and gave them their orders. At a signal from
him, which he would give during the course of the meal, they
were to fall upon his guests and cut their throats. The soldiers
were horrified. They were Moslems to whom the laws of hospi-
tality were sacred, and they marvelled at the barbarity of their
savage European commander. They respectfully requested that
the English should be given arms to defend themselves so that
they could engage them in fair fight. The European was impatient
at such simplicity. He told them that unless they carried out
his orders to the letter they should all be put to death. He then
gave instructions to his cooks.

His preparations thus completed, Sombre genially welcomed
his guests, and they sat down together to enjoy an excellent meal.
After some time their host, who had suddenly become pale and
distracted, made an excuse and left the room. They continued to
eat and drink merrily until a large number of sepoys, with drawn
swords, their faces tense and their eyes glittering, burst in upon
them. Behind the sepoys stood their host. For a moment, in a shocked silence, no one moved; then Sombre barked out an order and the sepoys hurled themselves at the horrified guests. It was no easy massacre. The English defended themselves bravely with dinner knives, plates and bottles, and inspired by one Lushington, even succeeded in killing some of their attackers; but in the end they were all slaughtered.

The exhausted sepoys filed out, and left Sombre staring gloomily at the bodies in his wrecked and blood-spattered hall.

But there was still work to be done. He led his sepoys to the prison where the rest of the captives were unsuspectingly awaiting the return of their leaders. A number of sepoys took their positions on the top of the compound walls, while another party entered the compound and mounted and partly demolished the flimsy barrack roof. As soon as the roof party could see the startled faces of their victims below they opened fire, and those prisoners who fled into the compound were shot down from the walls. It was a massacre by moonlight. There being little danger to the assailants, Sombre himself took an active part in this butchery. Soon there was nothing left to do except to enter the compound and finish off the wounded.

All the victims were then shovelled into a common grave.

This was in October. On November 6th, Adams took Patna by storm, but Sombre was not among the defenders.

[3]

The dynasty of the Nawab-Wazirs of Oudh had not been of long duration. It was founded in 1820 by a Persian adventurer who had been appointed Subahdar of Oudh by the Emperor Muhammad Shah. His son-in-law, who succeeded him obtained from the Emperor Ahmed Shah, the post of Wazir, or chief minister, of the Empire. The duties of this office were performed by a deputy at Delhi, while the Nawab-Wazir, as he now styled himself, continued to rule Oudh as an independent state. After his death in 1756, his son, Shuja-ud-Daula, supported the imperial heir-apparent in his ill-starred invasion of Bengal in 1760, and as a
reward was also created Wazir of the Empire after the prince had been proclaimed the Emperor Shah Alam.

Lucknow, the Nawab-Wazir's capital, was a large and flourishing city with a population of about 400,000, of whom two-thirds were Hindus. Apart from the beggars, who, as Bishop Heber observed, "occupied every angle and the steps of every door", the rest of the male population had the peculiar habit of walking about the streets fully armed with shields, spears, guns and with the short bent sword called the *tulwar*. This was most unusual, and, in the opinion of the Bishop, a circumstance "which told ill for the police of the town".

In this war-like capital, the Nawab-Wazir Shuja-ud-Daulah, who already had the fugitive Emperor on his hands, received his fellow Nawab and ally Mir Kassim and the remnants of his defeated army. Sombre, still reeking with the blood of Patna, arrived close on his heels with his battalions.

A council of war held. Undeterred by the misfortunes of his allies, the Nawab-Wazir was determined to support them. He feared, with some reason, that unless the power of the English was drastically curbed, his own province of Oudh would soon receive their attentions. But this time it was necessary to proceed carefully to avoid the mistakes which had led to the defeats of the Emperor and Mir Kassim. Sombre was among the officers whom the three chiefs consulted.

At the council of war he advocated the plan confided in him by the late Gurgin Khan. The Company's armies, he stated, were composed of men who were no better than their own; but they had the advantage of better discipline, a greater unity of command, and, above all, greater mobility. Until the Moghuls could equal them in these qualities it was necessary to gain time. What they needed was a secure base which they could use for drilling and recruiting armies, and for subsequent operations against Bengal. And what more impregnable base was there than the mountain state of Nepal, protected by every device of nature and dominating from its height the whole Plain of the Ganges. It was true that the tribesmen were fierce warriors, but they had no political sense. Their only interest was marauding for loot, and they had long been a nuisance to the border officials of Oudh,
Bihar and Bengal. Offer them better chances of plunder and they would accept a change of government, provided that it was already an accomplished act, almost without demur. They would prove invaluable reinforcements for the invasion of Bengal, and their state would prove a safe retreat in the event of failure.

To the war council's natural objection that if Nepal was impregnable to the English it would also be impregnable to them, Sombre replied by outlining Gurgin Khan's scheme for seizing Kathmandu by a combination of audacity and treachery. After some discussion the council acclaimed the plan with enthusiasm and resolved to put it into execution. Sombre's stock was now high. The Nawab-Wazir rather disloyally invited him to desert the now dependent Mir Kassim and enter his own service. Sombre accepted, renounced his allegiance to Mir Kassim, and with the support of his new master, extorted from him with threats the arrears of pay he considered his due. His two battalions followed him.

The next task was the organisation of the seizure of Nepal. Four hundred excellent muskets, fitted with loose barrels which could be screwed in, were made so that they could fit into small boxes. Four hundred brave and reliable men were then selected to carry the boxes. Mir Kassim, who had friends at Kathmandu, secured a passport for the boxes and their porters on the grounds that the boxes contained valuable presents, and were to be opened only in the presence of the Prince in his palace.

The plan had a certain desperate simplicity. On reaching the palace at night the porters were to open the boxes, screw on the barrels to the guns, shoot down all opposition and seize the palace. The two Nawabs sent a force of twelve thousand men to occupy the foothills near Batiya, and wait there until they received news of the coup at Kathmandu, when they were to invade the country with the utmost expedition.

The four hundred porters set off with their boxes. They crossed the frontier and reached the fort of Makwanpur, where they were to spend the night. The Nepalese garrison received them with an open-handed hospitality that was to prove fatal to the scheme. In spite of the Prophet's prohibition, they joined the garrison in a bout of heavy drinking. Drinking led to boasting and boasting to quarrelling. In the course of one such quarrel a drunken porter
told one of the garrison that he should soon see who would be master of the fort and of Nepal. This indiscretion aroused suspicion. The Nepalese broke open the boxes, discovered the guns and at once attacked their treacherous guests and slaughtered them with the exception of three or four who managed to escape to the Moghul army at Batiya. This army promptly retreated.

Sombre and his masters received the news of this set-back calmly. It had been a desperate gamble and had nearly been successful. In any case they had lost nothing except the guns and nearly four hundred brave men. There were now more serious matters to attend to.

The projected English offensive against Oudh had been halted first by the death of Major Adams, and then by a serious mutiny which broke out in the European battalions and then among the sepoys. After a fortnight the new commander, Major Carnac, broke the mutiny, but the troops were considered too disaffected for the invasion of Oudh and were led back to Patna.

Encouraged by the news of the mutiny, the Nawab-Wazir, with the Emperor and Mir Kassim, at once attacked Patna, but were beaten off. After this, Carnac was superseded by Major Hector Munro, who restored discipline by severe measures. By September 1764, the Company decided that its army was now sufficiently loyal and disciplined to take the offensive. Accordingly, it left Patna and marched into Bihar. There, on October 23rd, it met the Moghul army at Buxar and after a long and severe contest completely routed it. The Nawab-Wazir, Mir Kassim and the Emperor fled back to Lucknow.

As we have come to expect, Sombre did not take part in the battle. He was now in command of four battalions of infantry, one of cavalry, and a strong complement of artillery. With this powerful force he had been left behind at Lucknow to guard the Nawab-Wazir's wives and harem. It was, as the Nawab-Wazir soon came to see, an unfortunate choice.

The Emperor and the Nawab-Wazir lost no time in opening negotiations for peace with the victorious Company which was now undisputed master of Bengal, and whose army was poised on the frontier of Oudh. The Emperor found it easy to come to terms. He agreed to issue a firman constituting the Company as
perpetual diwan of the rich and fertile provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and accepted an invitation to settle down comfortably as the Company's pensioner and protégé at Allahabad. The Nawab-Wazir Shuja-ud-Daula found it more difficult. The Company insisted that he should hand over to them the persons of Mir Kassim and Sombre. Mir Kassim partly solved the problem by escaping, no one knew where, with a few friends and some jewels, but the Company was determined to have Sombre's blood. The Nawab-Wazir was willing enough to hand the adventurer over but there was the practical difficulty of taking him as he was in command of a powerful armed force. As an alternative he proposed to have Sombre poisoned, but the Company was adamant: it wanted him alive.

In the meantime Sombre had become suspicious of these prolonged negotiations and gaining an inkling of their purport he put an end to them in his own direct manner. Assembling his battalions he surrounded the Nawab-Wazir's harem, plundered the Begums of all their money and jewellery, used this booty to pay his force in full, and then marched them to Rohilkhand where he entered the service of the Afghan ruler of that country, Hafiz Raimat Ali.

Rohilkhand, the former imperial province of Katahr had been overrun by an Afghan, or, more accurately, a Pathan tribe led by Ali Mohammed as recently as 1743. Since that date the Rohillas had proved themselves a nuisance to the Moghuls, to the Marathas and to the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh, who had them on his north-west frontier. The result was that Rohilkhand was always either being invaded or on the point of being invaded either by the Moghuls, the Marathas, who in 1759 had driven the Rohillas into the mountains, or by the Nawab of Oudh. Hafiz Raimat Ali, pre-occupied in increasing his military strength, was delighted to acquire the services of Sombre and of the considerable force with him.

Shortly afterwards, the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh arrived on the border of Rohilkhand, his province having been overrun by the English. He was closely followed by Mir Kassim, an unwanted guest, who forced his way into the state with the desperate remnants of his supporters. Sombre helped to defeat and expel his former masters. Mir Kassim died shortly afterwards in poverty
and obscurity near Delhi.

In the meantime the Calcutta Council, its forces having gained possession of Oudh, were debating what to do with it. Some were in favour of straightforward annexation, others of installing the Emperor as the ruler of the province. The debate was cut short by Clive, who now returned to India as an Irish viscount and head of the Bengal government. He was in favour of neither policy. While he agreed that it would be useful to have the Emperor's titular authority to seal with legitimacy the Company's actions, he considered it unwise to make the vagabond Moghul into a territorial power by giving him Oudh. Nor was he in favour of annexation, because of the strong feeling in England against the Company's imperialism. He decided that the Nawab-Wazir should be restored to his province, but only as a dependent of the Company.

The Nawab-Wazir was induced to return and meet Clive at Allahabad, where he agreed to the Company's terms. He was allowed to buy back his province for fifty lakhs of rupees and to enter into a permanent alliance with the Company who were to keep troops in his territory. The districts of Kora and Allahabad were detached from Oudh and given as appendages to the disappointed Emperor, who in solemn conclave at Allahabad kept his promise by issuing a firman granting the Company the diwani, the sole financial administration, of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. It was a very satisfactory agreement.

Only one point remained to be cleared up: the punishment of Sombre. The Nawab-Wazir, still smarting from Sombre's robbery of his Begums, joined with the Company in demanding the immediate extradition of Sombre from Rohilkhand. Hafiz Raimat Ali realized that the harbouring of Sombre would lead to a joint Moghul and English invasion of his precarious state; but he was faced with the same difficulty as the Nawab-Wazir had been after Buxar: Sombre was too powerful to be arrested and handed over. The Afghan chief had to try persuasion. Sombre made no difficulties. His fear of the English had now become an obsession. He agreed to take his force out of the state and lost no time in riding south to the fortress of Dig, where he entered the service of Jawahir Singh, the unruly Jat Rajah of Bharatpur.
The Jats were a remarkable race, sturdy, war-like and tenacious. They had first appeared in the time of Timur in the Indus valley, but later had worked their way south. In the Punjab they had amalgamated with the Khattris to form the Sikh community but the rest had settled near Agra in a tract of country round Bharatpur. There they had proved themselves a constant thorn in the side of the imperial government, had held their own against the Marathas, the Moghuls and the neighbouring Rajputs, and had defied the Afghan conqueror, Ahmed Shah Durani. Their late rajah, Surajmal, had made himself master of Agra, and was engaged on an attempt to capture Delhi itself when he was ambushed while hunting by a party of Moghuls, and killed. His son, Jawahir Singh, having formed an alliance with the Maratha chief, Tukoji Holkar, continued to attack the imperial capital.

It was at this stage in the Jat fortunes that Sombre and his battalions arrived from Rohilkhand. Jawahir Singh, who cared nothing for English displeasure, welcomed this reinforcement and engaged him.

Sombre was now forty-five. His wife, Bahai Begum, the mother of his only son, was showing signs of insanity and according to the Moghul custom Sombre solaced his leisure hours with concubines. In 1765, while taking part in Jawahir Singh's unsuccessful siege of Delhi, he acquired a new inmate of his harem, a beautiful, fifteen-year old Mohammedan, whose life up to then had been obscure. She was born in 1751 at Kutana in the Meerut district, the daughter by a second wife of a decayed nobleman named Luft Ali Khan, who was of Kashmiri extraction, and a Sayyidani, or lineal descendant of the Prophet. When she was six years old her father died and she and her mother left Kutana to avoid the cruelties of her half-brother. There were few respectable opportunities for penniless girls in the Moghul dominions and it is hardly surprising that the mother should sell her daughter to the directress of a dancing troupe.

At that time, singing and dancing by respectable ladies were
considered improper, and these arts were the monopoly of professional entertainers. These were of two types: the domni, the girls of the singing caste, and the nachani, the dancing girls. Both groups were recruited at a very early age by directresses who taught them to dance and sing and every other accomplishment likely to give pleasure. The girls were carefully selected for their beauty, a light skin and large dark eyes being essentials. They began to appear in public at the age of ten.

The domni were the more respectable of the two and were admitted into the zenanas, which were usually closed to the nachani lest they should encourage the ladies with their easy morals. The nachani were almost in the same class as prostitutes and their main function was to dance at men's dinner parties and at festivals. They were always present at religious fairs and Akbar, who introduced a special palace fair on the third feast day of every month, permitted the nachani to enter and entertain him and his ladies. Aurangzeb put an end to this practice, of which the mullahs disapproved, but permitted the girls to salute him from a distance every Wednesday in the Hall of Public Audience.

It is fairly certain that the girl, Zeb-un-nissa, came to Delhi in 1760 as a fully trained member of a troupe of nachani, and it was probably in this capacity that she first attracted the middle-aged and bullet-headed German adventurer who bought her from the directress and took her into his zenana.

Within the limits of the zenana women were free enough, and in some respects more emancipated than their European sisters. They indulged in sports such as polo which the contemporary ladies in Europe would have condemned as hoydenish and would have been terrified to imitate. Many of them took a shrewd interest in politics, supporting one faction or another, and sometimes paying the supreme penalty for their mistakes or defeats. In addition to her beauty, Zeb-un-nissa had a keen brain and her influence over her gloomy master grew until it became paramount. It was not long before she exchanged the title of concubine for that of wife; for, in spite of Bahai Begum, she was formally united to Sombre "by all the forms considered necessary by persons of her persuasion when married to men of another." She thus became the second Begum Sombre.
Sombre seemed to bring bad luck to all his employers. Jawahir Singh was forced to abandon the siege of Delhi and was beaten back into the Bharatpur country. Not willing to remain idle in his own territory he at once led his worsted forces against the formidable Rajputs of Jaipur, and in spite of the assistance of Sombre was badly defeated by the Rajput rajah. Undeterred by this defeat, in 1767 he invaded the Rajput country of Ajmir, only to be totally routed by Dalel Singh. In the following year in the imperial palace at Agra, which he still possessed, he was assassinated by a soldier whom he had just degraded.

The death of Jawahir Singh was followed by a period of confusion and dynastic quarrels in the Jat state. Eventually order was restored by Jawahir’s younger brother, Nawab Singh, and under him the Jat power was stabilised from Agra to Alwar with a large revenue and an army of 60,000 men.

During the period of Jat reverses it is probable that Sombre was looking elsewhere for employment. He is reported to have entered the service of the Rajah of Jaipur and to have been dismissed after a few months as “too villainous”. This seems unlikely as he was undoubtedly present in the Jat service at the battle of Barsana in October, 1773.

The imperial government in Delhi was now controlled by a Persian immigrant of high lineage and great ability, named Mirza Najaf Khan, who had attained the position of the premier noble of the Empire. Encouraged by the confusion among the Jats that had followed the death of Jawahir Singh, Najaf Khan determined to reduce them to a proper state of respect and obedience. In the autumn of 1773 he therefore invaded Jat territory with a large army. At the same time a younger brother of the Jat Rajah rebelled and with Moghul aid captured Bharatpur.

The Rajah Naval Singh, who had just succeeded his father, marched from the fort of Dig with a considerable army, including Sombre’s battalions and regiments of infantry officered partly by Frenchmen. On the Moghul side also there were several French officers, notably Réné Médoc, the Count of Moidavre, and the Chevaliers de Crécy and Dudrenecc.
The two armies met at Barsana, between Mathura and Bharatpur. Sombre began the Jat attack with volleys of musketry and repeated showers of grape from the field pieces. It was a deadly fire and Najaf Khan himself was wounded. The Moghuls replied with repeated charges by their heavy cavalry until Sombre was forced slowly to withdraw his men under the protection of his batteries. The battle was hard fought, but in the end the Jats were totally defeated and fled the field. Sombre drew off his forces with skill and was considered to have acquitted himself with credit.

After his victory Najaf Khan proceeded systematically to reduce the Jat fortresses, and the Jats were only saved from complete ruin by a sudden attack on Delhi by Zabita Khan and the Sikhs. Najaf Khan hurried back to Delhi just in time to save the Emperor from being seized in his palace, and the Jats had a respite.

Service with the Jats now ceased to be attractive to Sombre. He began to look around for fresh and safer pastures. He had not far to search. After the battle of Barsana, René Médoc had deserted the Moghuls to take service with the Rana of Gohad. Najaf Khan now wrote to Sombre suggesting that he should take Médoc’s place in the imperial army. The minister thought that Sombre would be especially useful with his knowledge of the Jats in the proposed final campaign against them, and in the occupation and pacification of Agra which the imperial forces had just recovered. Sombre was offered Rs. 65,000 a month for the maintenance of his force if he changed his allegiance. Not over-sensitive in questions of loyalty and urged by his Begum Zeb-un-nissa, Sombre accepted the offer. He wrote a formal petition to the Emperor asking for a pardon for his previous association with rebels.

Prodded by Najaf Khan, the Emperor was only too pleased to pardon the adventurer. Sombre was sent for and finally deserting the Jats he arrived in Delhi in May 1774, where Shah Alam received him with special honour. After presenting his nazár to the Emperor, Sombre thought it necessary to refer to the enmity between himself and the English, and expressed the hope that the Emperor would ignore any demand for his surrender made
either by the Company or by the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh. The Emperor told him graciously "to be easy on that account".

But the general concord was marred by one shadow. The Emperor had no hard cash to offer. Instead Sombre was assigned the revenues of the districts of Panipat and Sonipat, and authorised to make up the difference by plundering the territory of the Sikh governor of Karnal. This provision proved inadequate. Within two months Sombre was complaining in several letters to the Chamberlain, Abdul Ahad Khan, that he had succeeded in raising less than ten thousand rupees from the districts assigned to him, that his forces were in arrears with their pay and that if proper funds for his support were not forthcoming he would have to look elsewhere for an employer. Ahad Khan ignored his letters, but finally Najaf Khan, who was anxious to keep Sombre for use against the Jats, induced Shah Alam to grant the adventurer a jagir for his maintenance.

A jagir was in some respects, but not in all, similar to a fief in feudal Europe. In Europe the granting of fiefs in return for military service had led to the development of a hereditary landowning aristocracy; but in India the grant of a jagir was not a grant of land but of the right to collect the surplus revenue of the land. The land belonged to the townships and village communes on condition that they paid the surplus produce into the public purse. The usual method of collecting such payments was to group a number of communes together and to give charge of each group either to a tax-farmer or to a grantees who was to yield a proportion of the produce, in kind, in cash, or in military service. There was no right of inheritance. While the Emperor was strong a fief was granted as pay or pension and on the holder's death was almost invariably resumed by the Empire. But now, in the absence of a strong central government jagirs were being usurped by the heirs of the grantees, an abuse that Sindhia later unsuccessfully tried to end.

Such was the jagir granted to Sombre. It was situated in the Doab, and stretched from Aligarh to Muzaffarnagar, an extent of well-watered fertile land producing corn, cotton and tobacco, and bringing in an annual revenue of six lakhs of rupees. Sombre chose the village of Sardhana, a few miles north of Meerut, as
the centre of his administration and there he built a palace into which he moved his harem.

At Sardhana Sombre settled down for the first time in his life to lead the life of a country gentleman. He was fifty-five years old and tired of roving. He was encouraged in his life of ease by the Begum Zeb-un-nissa, who gathered the threads of the administration into her own capable hands and actually exercised her husband's powers. At last Sombre could relax.

At the time of Sombre's arrival at Delhi to enter the imperial service, a Moghul observer reported that he had with him five pieces of new cannon, a considerable quantity of ammunition, about two thousand infantry with a few European officers, and six elephants. This is certainly an underestimate, particularly of the artillery. In a letter dated 20th May, 1776, a certain Polier wrote: "His (Sombre's) party is not very considerable. Three battalions of sepoys and about 200 horse compose it; but he has a good train of artillery, 14 guns well mounted and well served with everything necessary."

This force was officered by Europeans, of whom the English chroniclers have little good to say. They were, according to Colonel Sleeman, "the very dross of society—men who could neither read nor write, nor keep themselves sober".

The consequence of such officers was that the battalions were in a constant state of insubordination and, when their pay was in arrears as it frequently was, mutinies were common. Major Lewis Smith, a contemporary adventurer and later pamphleteer, wrote that Sombre's troops were the most mutinous in India, and frequently beat their European officers with clubs. To obtain arrears of pay it was the custom of the troops to place Sombre in confinement until he either produced the cash or borrowed it from bankers. If they were really impatient they formed the habit of divesting their commander of his trousers and then straddling him across a hot gun. This process was known as "grilling", and when one battalion had extracted its dues he was often passed
on to the next to be similarly induced to pay up. "Woe," wrote Smith, "to the unfortunate European who was compelled by his necessities to enter his service."

In the field Sombre followed a cautious rather than a glorious policy. According to Smith, Sombre "never lost a gun and never gained one". He was remarkable for the excellence of his retreats. "Sombre made it a rule in every action to draw his men out in line, fire a few shots, and then form square and retreat." This rule he adhered to with "inflexible exactitude", so that, although he acquired no laurels he lived to retreat another day.

At Sardhana, however, enjoying the ample revenue of his jagir, Sombre and his officers were able to live in comparative peace and without fear of outrage. In the clever hands of his Begum, the administration prospered, the troops were paid and quiescent, and for the time being there were no battles for him to take part in. We are told that this idyllic life was marred by remorse for the massacre of Patna, and by the constant terror of being betrayed into the hands of the English to expiate his crime. In the event of such a contingency he always carried poison about his person with which to terminate his life.

This life of ease did not last long. Najaf Khan was anxious to complete the subjection of the Jats and to stabilise Moghul control of Agra. In 1777 he established his headquarters at Agra, made his nephew, Mohammed Beg Hamadani, governor of the fort, and sent for Sombre and his battalions. Sombre was appointed military and civil governor of the city as distinct from the fort.

At the beginning of May in the following year, Sombre caught a cold, which he neglected. It turned to pneumonia, and he died. He was fifty-eight years old.

He was buried in the garden of his house at Agra. Three years later, Zeb-un-nissa, who had just been baptised and received into the Roman Catholic Church under the name of Joanna, piously exhumed the body of her husband and re-interred it in the Portuguese cemetery at Padretola, Agra. The inscription on his tomb is short and to the point:
It was a concession by the Church. If Sombre had had any inclination towards religion at all it was towards Islam. Furthermore, he had died unshriven and unconfessed of his sins. That the Church should receive him back after death was due to the efforts of the Reverend Father Gregorio, a Carmelite monk, who had baptised the Begum and her stepson, and who had attached himself to the Begum’s person as her confessor and private chaplain. To him the burial of Sombre in holy ground was a means towards an end.

To the English his death was a disappointment. The slaughtered prisoners of Patna had gone unavenged.

After Sombre’s death his jagir should have lapsed, but his troops still remained and Najaf Khan was anxious to maintain the corps. Sombre’s legitimate heir was Zafaryab Khan, his son by Bahai Begum, who was now quite mad. Unfortunately Zafaryab Khan was clearly feeble-minded, and the European officers were determined not to serve under him. They therefore offered the command to Zeb-un-nissa Begum, who had been the real power behind Sombre during his last years. She consented and Najaf Khan induced the Emperor to confirm her in all the titles and dignities of Sombre, and to transfer to her the rich jagir of Sardhana. Henceforth she was known as the Begum Sombre.

The custom of a widow succeeding to the command and emoluments held by her husband was not uncommon in India. Thus, the widow of one of Perron’s captains, Le Marchant, seized the command of his battalions and refused to recognise the authority of his appointed successor. The defiant lady took up a strong position with four guns and Perron had to send a strong force to dislodge her by force. Another lady, the widow of a Frenchman named Yvon in the Peshwa’s service, arrested her husband’s successor, an Englishman named Robinson, threw him in prison and
assumed command of the corps herself. A further instance is pro-
vided by Madame Mequinez, the widow of a Portuguese officer
in the service of Haidar Ali of Mysore. On the death of her hus-
band, Haidar Ali immediately conferred the command of his
battalion on his widow and gave her the rank of colonel. Madame
Mequinez continued to inspect, drill and administer her force
until she was unwise enough to marry a "mongrel Portuguese
sergeant", whereupon Haidar Ali demoted her from colonel to
sergeant, with a sergeant's pay, because she had, the Sultan said,
voluntarily degraded herself.

The Begum Sombre by her remarkable ability and force of
character soon proved herself equal to her responsibilities. Resid-
ing at Akbarabad near Agra, she increased the size of her force,
recruiting several Europeans, including the celebrated Chevalier
Dudrenec, both as officers and to work her artillery, which now
numbered forty guns. The actual command of the force she gave
to a German named Pauli, who was widely believed to be her
lover. A Frenchman, Baours, was second-in-command, and among
the senior officers was an Englishman named Evans, of whom
little is known except that he surrendered to the Company in 1803
and received a pension. We further learn from a letter of the
French general de Bussy that a certain M. Montigny, having heard
that the Begum was very rich, made up his mind to marry her
and to command her corps. But he was frightened off by a series
of events which led to the Begum's disgrace and temporary ruin.

On 28th April, 1782, Mirza Najaf Khan died, and the capital
was thrown into confusion. Najaf Khan was the only great Moghul
statesman of the period, and his resolute policy had alone sus-
tained the imperial prestige. His death left a fatal vacuum. A
deadly struggle for the succession to his office and property now
broke out between his nephew Mirza Shafi, and a favourite fol-
lower, Afrasyab Khan. The feeble Emperor arranged what was
intended to be a friendly meeting between the two contestants,
but at the meeting Mirza Shafi was assassinated by Mohammed
Beg Hamadani, who, on Afrasyab's instructions, was hiding be-
hind a curtain. The contest being thus resolved, Afrasyab was
appointed chief minister.

While these plots and counter-plots were taking place, and
while the Emperor was composing poetry in the Red Palace, a disastrous famine fell upon the land. The two previous years had been rainless and irrigation had been neglected. In the capital wheat was sold at ten times the normal price and in the country whole villages starved to death, so that only a few remained and these were scattered at wide intervals and deprived of intercommunication by the tigers who prowled upon the roads. A contemporary has recorded that wild beasts preyed upon the shrunken bodies of peasants in broad daylight.

Afrasyab proved incompetent to deal with the crisis, and was denounced by the Heir-apparent to the Empire, the Prince Jawan Bakht, who was forced to flee his father’s palace and seek refuge at Lucknow, where he met Warren Hastings. Hastings granted the prince an annuity of four lakhs and advised him to throw himself on the protection of Mahodji Sindhia, the great Maratha chieftain, who was now encamped on the south bank of the Chambal river, watching the confusion in Delhi with greedy interest.

It was at this stage that Pauli, the Begum Sombre’s commander, decided to take a hand in reforming the imperial government. He championed the cause of Prince Jawan Bakht. Mohammed Beg Hamadani, who had seized Agra on his own account, invited Pauli to his camp to discuss terms for a friendly arrangement. Scarcely had the German entered the camp when he was ambushed by a party of horse. His escort was dispersed and he himself seized and brought before Mohammed Beg, who, “by a bloody process”, had him beheaded on the spot.

Afrasyab now arrived in Agra. He proclaimed the Begum to be a rebel, confiscated all her property, and cancelled her imperial titles and jagir. The only relief the Begum obtained from her disgrace with the disappearance of her suitor, Monsieur Montigny. Her disgrace was short-lived. In 1784, Sindhia crossed the river and marched on Delhi. By a lucky co-incidence, Afrasyab was stabbed in his tent by the brother of his victim Mirza Shafi, and Mohammed Beg submitted. The Maratha leader entered the capital where the obliging Emperor gave him complete control of the Empire in return for a monthly payment to meet the imperial household and personal expenses. The Begum was restored to her jagir, and to all her honours and dignities.
During the period of her disgrace the Begum had managed to keep her force together, thus preserving her life, but discipline, never a strong feature of Sombre’s battalions, had almost entirely disappeared. Baours, who had succeeded Pauli, in despair of controlling his subordinate European officers, soon resigned his command and entered Sindhia’s service. Evans, who succeeded him experienced the same difficulties and soon followed Baours.

The indiscipline of the officers was imitated by the troopers and even by the household servants. The Begum decided that it was time that she showed that she had sharp teeth. An opportunity soon occurred.

Two slave girls set fire to the Begum’s houses at Agra before eloping with two soldiers whose duty it was to guard the property. The fire was put out with great difficulty, but not before many of the Begum’s valuable possessions had been consumed. The Begum took immediate action. A thorough search was made for the culprits who were found hiding in one of the bazaars. After a drumhead court-martial the Begum ordered them to be flogged until they were senseless. They were then flung into a grave dug in front of her tent for the purpose, and buried alive. This execution took place in the evening, and the Begum had her bed placed over the grave and occupied it until the morning. The most appropriate comment on this atrocious punishment was made to Colonel Sleeman by the owner of one of the slaves then punished. He was a Persian merchant known as the Aga, and he stated his conviction that the Begum’s object was to restore discipline to her force by a severe example. “In this object”, he went on, “she entirely succeeded; and for some years after her orders were implicitly obeyed; had she faltered on that occasion she must have lost the command—she would have lost that respect without which it would have been impossible for her to retain it a month”. The Aga further pointed out that had the fires not been extinguished many women, children and old people who lived in the houses must inevitably have perished. It was the age of atrocious executions.

Evans was replaced in the command by a Frenchman named Marchand, who was himself succeeded by the Chevalier Durdrenec, a former midshipman in the French Navy and one of Réné
Médoc's most gallant officers. Dudrenec held the command until 1791, when he was enticed into the Maratha service under Holkar. His place was taken by George Thomas, an Irishman of genius, whose remarkable career now joins that of the Begum.

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At Agra on 7th May, 1781, Father Gregorio baptized the Begum Sombre and her stepson Zafaryab. Zafaryab, Sombre's only son by Bahai Begum, was christened Louis Balthazar Reinhardt, and, after a sad career, died a prisoner in Delhi in 1799, having made an unsuccessful attempt to dispossess his stepmother of her command and jagir, and was buried beside his father in the cemetery at Agra.

He was married to Juliana, the daughter of a French adventurer, and left one daughter Julia Anne. Julia Anne was married to Colonel G. A. Dyce, a quick-tempered Scot, who managed the Begum's affairs until he was dismissed in 1827. After the death of Julia Anne in 1820, the Begum Sombre had taken charge of her children and had brought them up as her own. The boy, David Ochterlony Dyce, on whom the Begum appears to have doted, replaced his father as the Begum's steward, and the two daughters were married off with good dowries, one to Captain Rose Troup of the Bengal Army, and the other to Paul Solaroli, an Italian who afterwards became the Marquis of Briona.

In January 1836, the Begum, aged eighty-five, died, and left the bulk of her enormous riches to her favourite, David Dyce, provided that he changed his surname to Sombre. Dyce Sombre, the great-grandson of the slaughterer of Patna, the absolute master of great riches, then visited Britain in 1838 where he met and married Mary Anne Jervis, a daughter of Admiral Jervis, Viscount St. Vincent. The name Sombre did not cause a ripple on the smooth surface of English society. In 1841 he became a Member of Parliament for the borough of Sudbury. He was on the threshold of the conventional career of the wealthy English aristocrat. Then the blow fell.

The blood of his great-grandmother, Bahai Begum, began to
bubble in his veins. That unfortunate lady, after more than half a century of madness, had died at Sardhana in 1838 being more than a hundred years old. Her son had been an imbecile and now her great-grandson became decidedly eccentric in his behaviour. He quarrelled with his wife, and charged her of adultery with his two brothers-in-law. The three of them combined to have him certified by a tame doctor, and Dyce Sombre found himself confined to his residence in the charge of three keepers. After four months of this confinement a Commission declared him of unsound mind and unfit to manage his own affairs. A committee was formed to manage his income of £20,000 a year, of which his wife was to receive £4,000 annually.

But now Dyce Sombre showed some of the spirit of his great-grandfather. On his way to an asylum in Liverpool, he escaped from his keepers and on 21st September arrived penniless in Paris where he was helped by friends until the Committee in England grudgingly made him a small allowance out of his own income. He now began to fight back. He had himself declared sane by a number of eminent foreign doctors, and on this evidence petitioned the Court of Chancery to set aside his certification and to restore to him his fortune. It was a cause célèbre, and inspired Jules Verne to write his novel, The Begum's Fortune. But it was unsuccessful. The Chancery doctors remained adamant in their belief that Dyce Sombre was incurably insane.

Foiled in the courts, he now settled down in Paris to write a book with the object of interesting the public in his case. In the summer of 1848, this book, entitled Mr. Dyce Sombre's Refutation of the Charge of Lunacy Brought Against Him in the Court of Chancery, was published in Paris. In it, at enormous length (582 pages) he declared his sanity, and denounced the conspiracy of his relations, the English doctors, the Court of Chancery, and, with reason, the atrocious lunacy laws then prevailing in England. He concluded in uncompromising style:

“I believe in the unchastity of my wife, therefore I am a lunatic... alas! there is no law for a presumed lunatic, when there are interested parties, whose wishes are that he should remain so.”
The book had no effect. In 1850, broken in health and despairing in spirit, Dyce Sombre returned to London where he died the following year, abandoned by all, at Fenton’s Hotel in St. James’ Street. Sixteen years later his body was taken back to Sardhana where it was buried by the side of the Begum Sombre, whose delight he had been.

Thus were the sins of the father visited on the third generation. The savage, unjust and antiquated English lunacy laws revenged the massacre of Patna on the great-grandson of the perpetrator.
PART THREE

George Thomas

[1]

Under the protection of the Marathas, Delhi enjoyed an uneasy peace for nearly three years. But beneath the surface the embers of revolt still smouldered. The Moghul nobles awaited the day when the Maratha infidels would be finally overthrown, and when they would rule the Empire to the glory of Islam and to the profit of themselves. In the Red Palace of Shah Jehan, the feeble Emperor, composed Persian verse and schemed against his protectors, whom he considered heathen, arrogant and mean with the household expenses.

When in May 1787 the news arrived that Sindhia had been defeated by the Rajput confederacy and driven into Gwalior, and that the Moghul army under Ismail Beg, the nephew of the late Mohammed Beg Hamadani, was besieging the Maratha garrison at Agra, Moghul hopes soared high. Their rejoicing, however, was tempered by the presence of a Maratha garrison in Delhi under the command of Sindhia’s son-in-law, the Desmukh, and by the apparent loyalty of Sindhia’s deputy, Shah Nizam-ud-din. They were soon to be relieved.

Among other effects, Sindhia’s defeat had unleashed a tiger in the north. This was Ghulam Kadir, the son of the late rebel, Zabita Khan. This nobleman had illegally succeeded to his father’s fief in the Doab, and was therefore bitterly opposed to Sindhia’s plan to dispossess the usurping nobility. Turbulent, ambitious and energetic, he was further possessed with an insane desire for revenge; for in 1772 when a Maratha army headed nominally by the Emperor had driven his father from his jagir at Saharanpur,
GEORGE THOMAS

[From a medallion in Franklin's Military Memoirs of Mr. George Thomas]
LIEUT.-COLONEL JAMES SKINNER

[From a plate in the Military Memoir of Lieut.-Col. James Skinner, C.B.]
Ghulam, left behind with the women, had been castrated and converted into a Zenana page. For his mutilation and humiliation he blamed not only the Marathas but also the Emperor.

The moment had now arrived for which he had long waited. After communicating with Ismail Beg, still at Agra, Ghulam Kadir set out from his northern estates and proceeded to occupy the country round the capital. In April he advanced on Delhi, and encamped on the eastern bank of the Jumna facing the Red Palace. The Moghul nobles, little knowing what was in his mind, looked upon him as a deliverer, and hindered in every way possible the Maratha defence. The garrison nevertheless opened fire, which was promptly returned, and then losing heart fled to the Jat fort of Ballabgarh, just as the court chamberlain, Mansur Ali, was welcoming the tiger at the gate.

The Moghul enthusiasm for Ghulam Kadir lasted only a few hours. Entering the city like a conqueror, he swaggered into the Emperor’s presence and occupied the quarters in the palace usually reserved for the Amir-ul-Amara, or premier noble, an office once held by his grandfather Najib but now held by Sindhia. Ghulam demanded this office for himself, and the frightened and browbeaten Emperor had to agree.

The only armed force favourable to the Maratha interest within easy reach of Delhi was that commanded by the Begum Sombre. When Sindhia marched against the Rajputs this formidable lady had accompanied him as far as Panipat, where she was left to guard the communications with Delhi. There she heard with growing indignation that Ghulam Kadir had not only usurped power in Delhi but had also occupied her own fiefs. This was not to be borne, and the Begum ordered her forces to advance on Delhi. She entered the city and encamped in front of the main gate of the Red Palace, where she was soon joined by Najaf Kuli Khan and his men from Rewari. After a vain attempt to bribe the Begum, Ghulam Kadir was forced to leave the palace and rejoin his camp on the other side of the river. From there he opened a cannonade on the palace, to which the Begum replied by bombarding his camp with her battery of 85 guns. Presently Mansur Ali, tired no doubt of dodging the rebel shots that fell into the interior of the building, arranged a compromise. He pri-
vately informed Ghulam that the heir apparent, the Prince Mirza Jawan Bhakt, accompanied by a large army, was on his way to the capital, and recommended the rebel to make peace at least for the time being. Ghulam Kadir therefore apologised to the Emperor for his late behaviour, and reinforced the apology with a handsome present of ready money; in return, the Emperor, also prompted by Mansur Ali, invested the rebel with the dress and insignia of the Premier Noble. Ghulam Kadir then marched off to attack Sindhia's fort at Aligarh, which he took after a dispirited resistance, and thence proceeded to join Ismail Beg outside the walls of Agra. But he was to return.

This left the Begum Sombre the temporary mistress of the capital. The Moghul officials disguised their suspicions of the pro-Maratha lady, and a doubtful Emperor was persuaded to grant her a daily allowance of 1,000 rupees to compensate her for the loss of her jagirs which Ghulam Kadir had over-run. In return the Begum was induced to leave her position at the palace gates and to encamp outside the city.

It was at this camp and in these political conditions that an Irish adventurer applied for and was granted a junior commission in the Begum's forces. His name was George Thomas.

[2]

Victorian and subsequent writers have tended to idealise George Thomas, creating out of the tough and often unscrupulous adventurer a figure of romance and chivalry. According to them, if he had a fault at all it was his addiction to strong drink, which eventually brought about his downfall. Tall and handsome, he had many of the qualities of a hero of romantic fiction: he was undoubtedly brave, a good soldier, possessing although quite illiterate a fertile mind, and capable of generosity on occasion. But although his achievement was remarkable, it was not gained without ruthlessness and bloodshed. Had he remained in Europe, where society offered much less scope for his talents, he might well have ended on the gallows.

He was born in Tipperary in 1756 of poor parents. As a boy
he ran away to sea, and became an able seaman in the British Navy. The living conditions and savage discipline aboard a British vessel at that period were not such as to win either the affection or loyalty of the men who suffered them, especially as the majority had been press-ganged into service; and so when Thomas’ ship sailed for India, the lure of that mysterious land where, as was common knowledge, a man of courage could make his fortune was clearly more attractive to a man of Thomas’ disposition than years of unrewarding hardship aboard one of His Majesty’s ships. The ship had hardly anchored in Madras harbour before Thomas was off.

Well knowing the savage penalty for desertion, he did not delay removing himself as quickly as possible from Company territory. He made his way inland, a solitary traveller in dangerous country, and eventually found employment with the Polygars, a numerous band of outlaws who lurked in the hills and jungles of the southern Carnatic.

Surprisingly he stayed in the jungle with the Polygars for about five years, and no doubt took part in their resistance to the aggression of Tipu Sahib, the Sultan of Mysore. In any case it was a useful apprenticeship for service in the greater jungle of Delhi politics. In 1786 he made his way to Haiderabad, where he enlisted as a private soldier in the army of the Nizam Ali Khan. Evidently not finding this service to his taste he set out to cover the thousand miles that separated the Deccan from Delhi. This was a remarkable and perilous journey for a solitary European, along dusty roads where thugs and dacoits lurked in wait for the unprotected traveller, through countries in a constant state of war and disorder, through the territories of robber barons who preyed upon travellers, and through a land where even the villages were hostile. It is an indication of Thomas’ strength and resolution that he reached Delhi unharmed at the time of the events that have just been described.

He was in urgent need of employment, and as the only regular body of troops in the capital was that of the Begum Sombre, he applied to that lady and was successful in obtaining a subordinate command. His handsome presence, native charm and soldierly qualities soon won him favour and promotion. The Begum pro-
moted him to the command of a battalion, and as a further mark of approval arranged for his marriage with a slave girl whom she had adopted.

In 1788, the Emperor Shah Alam was induced by his officials to make a show of independence by setting out on a little expedition of his own against refractory chiefs in Ajmir, who taking advantage of the anarchy of the times had refused tribute. He was accompanied by the nazir Mansur Ali, a scratch Moghul army and by the forces of the Begum Sombre. One of these offending noblemen was no other than Najaf Kuli Khan, who a few months previously had helped to rescue the Emperor from the attentions of Ghulam Kadir. On the approach of the imperial forces, Najaf took refuge in his stronghold of Gokalgarh, not far from Agra which Ismail Beg and Ghulam Kadir were still besieging. Shah Alam sat down before the walls of Gokalgarh and erected trenches round it, and then he and his army settled down to enjoy themselves in comfort. A few nights later when officers and men were mostly sunk in a drunken slumber, Najaf made a silent and sudden sortie from the fort and carried the investing lines without opposition. Far from being a battle it began to look like a massacre; the Emperor himself was in the greatest danger, his officers being killed all round him, and he and his demoralised troops were on the point of headlong flight when the Begum Sombre arrived in her palanquin supported by a hundred men and a six-pounder gun commanded by George Thomas. Exhorted by the Begum, Thomas opened a heavy fire on the enemy with grape-shot, and after a brief but fierce struggle drove Najaf Kuli’s men back into their fortress and rescued the Emperor. Shortly after, Najaf Kuli surrendered and was fully pardoned, and the Imperial army returned in triumph to Delhi.

The Emperor was duly grateful. At a durbar he styled the Begum “his most beloved daughter,” and entrusted her with the defence of the northern districts against the frequent raids of the Sikhs, bestowing on her the fief of Badshapur-Jharsa to cover her expenses. In this way the Emperor achieved two objects, the defence of his northern borders and the removal of the Begum from the immediate neighbourhood of Delhi.

By his spirited action at Gokalgarh, Thomas established his
reputation. He received a present from the Emperor, and the Begum appointed him to the command of the two districts that had just been assigned to her. He went at once to the new jagir and established his headquarters at the fort of Tappal, the principal place in it. Thus in only a few months since arriving in Delhi, Thomas found himself the ruler of an extensive territory, with an established reputation and excellent prospects. His administration was uniformly successful: he was victorious in numerous forays with the Sikhs, by whom he became known as Jehazi-Sahib, or the Sailor, and so expertly rackrented the unfortunate peasants of his territory that he soon doubled the revenue from it, thus earning the Begum's approval.

In the meantime the pendulum was again swinging at Delhi.

At the end of 1787, Sindhia, having received large reinforcements from Poona, once more crossed the Chambal and marched to the relief of Agra. Ismail Beg and Ghulam Kadir at once gave battle. At Chaksana, the light Maratha horse proved no match for the Moghul heavy cavalry, and it was only the coolness and efficiency of de Boigne that enabled the Maratha general Rana Khan to make an orderly retreat to the Jat stronghold of Bharatpur. There was jubilation, ill considered as it turned out, at the Delhi court, and Ismail and Ghulam Kadir resumed their interrupted siege of Agra. To the Moghul politicians it was as clear as day that the Maratha usurpation was at an end, and now that the Crescent was triumphant it was only a question of who should lead the Moghul renaissance. Certainly not the Emperor nor his Heir-apparent, Mirza Jawan Bakht. The Prince had made a brief intervention in Delhi politics, just long enough for him to write a letter on behalf of his father to George III, appealing for British aid to put a final end to the Marathas and to restore the Empire to its former glory and power. It was a naïve effort, and the Prince was soon driven out of Delhi by the Moghul nobles, the real enemies of the throne, to die a few months later at Benares. The powerful nazir, Mansur Ali had his own candidate for the leadership:
Ghulam Kadir, with whom he was in constant and secret touch.

After defeating the Marathas at Chaksana, Ghulam Kadir had had to hurry to his northern possessions which were being attacked by the Sikhs at the instigation of Sindhia. Thus it was that Ismail Beg had to meet a fresh Maratha offensive without his ally. In June 1788, Sindhia having received further reinforcements from the Deccan again marched on Agra. This time he was successful. Ismail Beg was routed near the red ruins of Fatehpur Sikri, and had to escape by swimming his horse across the Jumna. On the other bank he found Ghulam Kadir, who was making a tardy return to Agra after settling with the Sikhs. The pair decided to proceed to Delhi, where they arrived towards the end of June.

In the capital the cause of the Crescent was in the ascendant. Ghulam Kadir as Premier Noble, supported by the mob of eunuchs and parasitic officials who thronged the palace, was now the undisputed master of the city, and Ismail Beg, as the military commander, occupied the old city of Firoz Shah Tughlak. The Emperor was at their mercy. Sindhia after his victory tarried at Mathura awaiting further reinforcements; the Begum Samru was away in her jagir and in any case lacked the strength to oppose by herself the troops of Ismail; and the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh, the titular chief minister of the crown, was wallowing in sloth and apathy at Lucknow.

The two confederate nobles in collaboration with Mansur Ali soon made their intentions clear. After receiving ceremonial dresses of honour at the hands of the Emperor, they began to make demands for money that grew more and more insolent and pressing. In the extremity of despair, the Emperor, whose enthusiasm for the Islamic cause was somewhat dissipated, wrote to the infidel Sindhia begging him to come to the rescue. The treacherous nazir instead of sending the letter to its destination handed it over to Ghulam Kadir. Very early in the morning of July 27th, Ghulam Kadir presented himself in the Diwan-i-Khas, and demanded that the Emperor should be brought at once from his private apartments.

This elegant hall with its roof of silver filigree, marble colonnades, and the beautiful arch bearing the inscription in black: \textit{If}
there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this, had proved to be anything but a paradise. It had been the scene of a succession of tragedies and was now to witness another which for sheer horror excelled anything than had gone before.

The bewildered and frightened Emperor was brought by Mansur Ali into this hall at 7 a.m. to find his makeshift peacock throne already surrounded by palace eunuchs and other creatures of Ghulam Kadir, whose menacing presence was also manifest. Shah Alam being seated, Ghulam began a long speech in which he announced that the Moghul army under Ismail was now ready to march on Mathura and to destroy the Marathas, but that first it was necessary to pay the officers and men all the arrears of their pay. When the speech at last came to an end, Mansur Ali led the applause, but the Treasurer on being summoned to produce the cash stated that the imperial chests were empty and that payment was impossible. Then as previously arranged Ghulam suddenly blazed into anger. Producing from his bosom the Emperor's letter to Sindhia, he declared Shah Alam to be deposed, and ordered his followers to seize the royal person. On the Shah making a show of resistance, Ghulam drew his sword and would have killed the Emperor there and then had not Mansur Ali interposed and induced the Emperor to retire to his private apartments, where he and his family were kept close prisoners, completely without food or attendance for three days. The Pathan rebel then enthroned a feeble recluse, a son of the late Emperor Ahmed Shah, and proceeded to ransack the palace.

Ghulam Kadir had no time to lose. He was dependent entirely on Ismail Beg’s army, and the Beg was showing signs of having cold feet especially as no money seemed to be forthcoming from the palace. A Maratha force under Rana Khan was moving north from Mathura, and the Begum Sombre was within four marches of the city. Feverishly the Pathan desperado redoubled his efforts to find the treasure that he was convinced Shah Alam had hidden. He sent for the Emperor and had him flogged in his presence. On the next day he stripped the Imperial princesses of their jewels and ornaments, and caused them to be so severely flogged that their shrieks rang through all the glorious galleries of the palace. After behaving indecently with the two most beauti-
ful of the princesses, he drove the ladies out to starve on the streets. Noticing that some gold still adhered to the Peacock Throne in spite of the depredations of Nadir Shah and the Marathas, he ordered it to be totally destroyed and the gold to be melted down.

But all these acts of intimidation did not produce the hidden treasure, and time was running out. On August 10th, lolling in the Diwan-i-Khas smoking a hookah and blowing the smoke into his puppet emperor’s face, he made a final attempt to force Shah Alam to disgorge his gold. Sending for the Emperor he said, “Find me some gold, or I will send you to join the dead,” to which the Emperor replied unsatisfactorily, “I am in your power, cut off my head, for it is better to die than live like this.” With insane fury Ghulam Kadir sprang at the Shah and threw him on the ground where he was held down by the ruffians present. One of these, Kandahari Khan, then dug out with a knife one of the Emperor’s eyes, and Ghulam Kadir with his own hands tore out the other. Then still sitting on the groaning Emperor’s chest, Ghulam Kadir sent for a court painter and said, “Paint my likeness at once, sitting knife in hand upon the breast of Shah Alam, digging out his eyes.” The blinded Emperor was led off howling with pain to his prison, and the Pathan ruffian continued to make futile search for the secret hoard which nobody believed in except himself.

While Ghulam Kadir revelled in the palace, gloom lay over the city. The shops were closed, and famine and death stalked the streets. Bodies of Maratha troops began to appear south of the city, and Sindhia’s general Rana Khan was already negotiating with Ismail Beg, who had now entirely broken his association with his bloodthirsty accomplice. After some unaccountable delay, Rana Khan received the submission of Ismail and marched on the city, and Ghulam having blown up the powder magazine in the palace, hurried across the Jumna on an elephant taking with him his puppet emperor and a number of members of the royal family as hostages. Laden with the spoil of the palace he took refuge in the fort at Meerut, which was promptly invested by the Marathas. After a siege of two months, Ghulam realising that he could hold out no longer, hid the more portable part of
his booty in the saddle of his horse, and fled at night through a sally-port. He did not get far. Arrested by peasants, he was handed over to a troop of Maratha horse under a French officer named Lestineau, who possessed himself of the booty in the saddlebags and promptly decamped to Europe with Ghulam's loot and the pay of his battalion.

The Maratha escort while taking Ghulam in chains to Sindhia at Mathura, angered by the Pathan's taunts took it upon themselves to inflict condign punishment. They first cut off Ghulam's ears, hung them round his neck and led him round the camp with a blackened face; the next day his nose and upper lip were cut off, and he was again paraded; on the third day his eyes were torn out, and after further mutilations he was hanged on a roadside tree. Sindhia sent his ears and eye-balls to the sightless Emperor who received them in the beautiful hall of audience where he himself had lately suffered.

Thus was Maratha power restored to Hindustan, a power which shaped the future and finally caused the downfall of George Thomas.

[4]

For two more years Thomas continued to rule the Begum's frontier districts and to chastise the unruly Sikhs to his mistress's satisfaction. Unlike her other European officers he was not only willing but eager to fight, and instead of being a drain on her purse so squeezed the peasants that he increased her revenue considerably. Furthermore he was personally attractive. This combination of talents made him the Begum's confident and chief adviser if not something more. But it was inevitable that the other officers, who were mostly French, should regard him with less enthusiasm. Apart from natural jealousy and resentment of the usurpation of position by a comparative newcomer, Thomas' nationality by itself was a cause of enmity. It has long been the misfortune of the French to be unable to distinguish the different races that inhabit the British Isles. Often to the indignation of the victims of this ignorance, they parcel together the English,
Scots, Irish and Welsh under the English label, and no amount of argument convinces them that they are mistaken. Thus to the Begum's French officers, Thomas was clearly English and probably an agent of the English East India Company.

This resentment smouldered until the arrival in the Begum's service of a well-born and talented Frenchman named Le Vassoult. This newcomer soon proved a formidable rival to Thomas in the Begum's esteem and affection. Supported by the officers, he set himself up in open enmity to Thomas, losing no opportunity to draw the Begum's attention to the Irishman's faults, not omitting the latter's partiality for strong drink and loose women. Thomas on his side hit back as well as he could by constantly pressing the Begum to dismiss her French officers.

Towards the end of 1792, Thomas left Sardhana on one of his periodic expeditions against the Sikhs. His enemies seized their opportunity. Headed by the personable Le Vassoult they presented themselves in a body before the Begum, and informed her that Thomas in addition to being immoral and unruly was plotting to deprive her of her command and possessions, and that his proposal to cut down expenses by dismissing the Frenchmen in her service was merely a device to leave her without protection against his treachery. In the conditions of that time, when every ambitious man conspired to replace his master, it was a probable story, and the Begum believed it. Encouraged by the conspirators' stirring declaration of loyalty to the death, the Begum struck at the absent Thomas by maltreating his wife. On hearing of this Thomas hastened back from the frontier, rescued his wife and family, and carried them to Tappal, where he set up the standard of rebellion.

His rebellion merely confirmed the denunciations of his enemies. Full of wrath, the Begum mobilised her entire force and marched north to crush the rebellion and to regain her districts. Thomas took refuge with his small force in the fort at Tappal, where he was promptly invested and bombarded with the excellent artillery that he himself had improved. Against such odds he was compelled to surrender. Then to everyone's astonishment and to the dismay of the French, the Begum's mood changed. The Begum not only granted Thomas his life but allowed him to
depart from her territory unmolested.

At the time of this reversal Thomas seems to have been low in funds, and this fact was acclaimed by his early biographers as irrefutable evidence of his integrity. In their praise they seem to have overlooked the ways in which he replenished his purse. Using what little ready cash he had to arm a small band of desperate adherents, he at once rode south and attacked and plundered a large village near Delhi. This was an act of sheer banditry. With the loot thus obtained he increased his band to 250 mounted men, and led them to the British frontier station of Anupshahr. There while drilling his men into some sort of efficiency and discipline, he looked around for a worthy employer. His first choice was Ali Bahadur, the troublesome ruler of Bundelkhand, who was then being attacked by a Maratha force under Appa Khandi Rao. But Ali's terms were unsatisfactory, and Thomas forthwith entered the service of his enemy, Appa Khandi Rao. This was early in 1793.

[5]

With Lakwa Dada and Rana Khan, Appa Kandi Rao was one of the three leading Maratha generals in the service of Sindhia. His experience of Europeans, especially of de Boigne who had first served under his command, had made him an admirer of their military talents and efficiency, and he therefore welcomed Thomas and his ragged band to his service. That Thomas was under a cloud meant nothing to Appa, who knew of his reputation as a courageous if sometimes ferocious fighting man. In any case Appa was himself experiencing the fickleness of fortune. Sent by Sindhia to reduce Bundelkhand, he had completely failed to do so, and what was worse he had not succeeded in raising sufficient plunder with which to pay his troops. These of course were in a state of mutiny, and Sindhia was so disgusted with the entire conduct of the campaign that he had just dismissed Appa from his service. Thus Thomas' arrival was fortuitous to the chief, who eagerly engaged him, and commissioned him to raise a battalion of 1,000 infantry and 100 horse. The only trouble was that Appa
had no money. Instead of ready cash Appa assigned to Thomas the districts of Tijara, Tapukra and Firozpur, to maintain the new corps. These districts belonged to the territory of Rewari, about forty miles south of Delhi, which had formerly belonged to Ismail Beg. It is doubtful whether Appa informed Thomas that the three ceded districts were in a chronic state of rebellion and had hitherto successfully foiled every attempt by the Maratha chief’s troops to collect any revenue at all; but in any case, Thomas’ reputation as a rent collector and his own confidence in the efficacy of his own summary methods made an agreement satisfactory to both sides. Thomas was presented with two guns and a supply of ammunition, and recruitment was begun. Presumably because of the lack of ready cash enlistment was slow, and Thomas had difficulty in increasing his force to some 400 men. With these he decided to march at once to his jaidar in order to raise money to pay them; but he had not gone far before he was recalled by Appa and ordered to accompany his master to Delhi where the Maratha chiefs were gathering on hearing the news of the sudden death of Madhoji Sindhia.

The great Maratha leader and master of the Empire had died not only suddenly but also mysteriously. It was officially announced that he had died of a fever, but few believed that, although he was nearing sixty and had become very fat. He was known to have formidable enemies among the Marathas themselves: Holkar smar ting after his defeat at Lakhairi; Nana Farnavis, the cunning minister of the Peshwa, who resented Sindhia’s influence over the nominal head of the Confederation; and the Maratha conservatives who deplored the abandonment of old Maratha ways, the favours bestowed on foreigners and the adoption of Moghul customs and manners. Well aware of the plots against him, Sindhia moved down to Poona, the capital of the Maratha federation, 10,000 of his best troops under Perron as a precaution against the activities of Holkar and the Nana. Thus as the contest was reaching its climax, Sindhia’s sudden death was suspiciously opportune to his opponents. The well-informed and contemporary author of the Tarikh-i-Muzafari gives a detailed account, according to which Sindhia was ambushed by an armed gang employed for the purpose by Nana Farnavis. The assassins were driven off,
but Sindhia received such severe wounds that he died the next day, February 12th, 1794. His death upset the balance of Indian politics, and destroyed all hope of Maratha unity against the growing power of the East India Company.

Sindhia having died childless was succeeded in his immense possessions and power by his great-nephew Daulat Rao Sindhia, an unscrupulous but vacillating youth of fifteen. The young Peshwa came entirely under the control of Nana Farnavis and shortly afterwards committed suicide.

Daulat Rao met the other Maratha leaders at Delhi. They resolved to maintain the Maratha dominion of Hindustan, and confirmed General de Boigne in the command of the army. Gopal Rao Bhao was appointed Daulat Rao’s governor in Delhi. The leaders and George Thomas were honoured by the unfortunate Emperor, whose ill treatment by his rascally custodian, an avaricious fakir, was becoming a general scandal and had led to protests by de Boigne. Now that Sindhia was dead the Emperor had little hope of redress.

In his capacity of bodyguard to Appa Khandi Rao, whom the other Maratha leaders eyed coldly, Thomas stayed for some time in the capital taking the opportunity of recruiting his force up to 700 men. But this increase merely aggravated the problem of paying the men, and Appa, professing to have no money, could no longer prevent Thomas from setting out for his districts, whose plunder alone could raise the ready cash so urgently needed. How urgently needed it was became soon apparent, for Thomas had hardly left the capital before his pack mutinied and demanded their pay. With threats and promises he led the riotous mob back to Delhi, where he again demanded funds from his chief. In a stormy interview, Appa threatened, promised and lamented, but eventually had to produce 14,000 rupees on account and to execute a bond for the rest of the claim, a bond which, of course, was never honoured. But the ready cash was enough to satisfy the mutineers for the time being, and once again Thomas set forth to take possession of his jaidad.

On his way he was unable to resist the temptation to invade and plunder the Begum Sombre’s domains on the Jumna, and, having increased his funds in this manner, soon arrived at Tijara, the
main town in the districts assigned to him. Although it was dark and wet, the townspeople refused admittance to their new commander, and Thomas and his tired and bedraggled ruffians had to camp outside the walls. While they slept in wet discomfort, some of Thomas’ new subjects crept to the centre of the camp and stole a valuable horse. Enraged by this impudence and the lack of hospitality, Thomas sent out a party to search for the stolen horse; but entering one of the suspect villages, they were ambushed and driven back. Advancing to the rescue with his cavalry and infantry, Thomas found that the Mewatti peasants were now out in full force, and evidently prepared to fight hard for their possessions. This was a new experience for Thomas’ ruffians, and they turned tail and fled leaving Thomas himself with about a dozen men in the greatest danger until he managed to drag up a gun and to disperse the advancing enemy with several rounds of grapeshot. He then proceeded to rally the fugitives, only to discover that apart from the casualties more than half his force had deserted, and was now reduced to 300 unreliable men. Fortunately for him the Mewattis had also suffered heavily from the grapeshot, and were willing to come to terms. A satisfactory agreement was reached: the Mewattis agreed to pay a year’s taxes and to restore the stolen horse, and Thomas was allowed to enter Tijara.

Having enlisted several Mewattis into his depleted force, Thomas then proceeded to carry fire and sword into the rest of his assigned territory, storming towns and sacking villages so close to Delhi that the Maratha viceroy there, Gopal Rao Bhao, became seriously concerned. His suspicions were encouraged by the Begum Sombre, who was anxious to avenge the raid on her Jumna territory, and a combined force was sent to keep a watchful eye on the activities of Appa’s mercenary leader.

Appa Khandi Rao had long been an object of the greatest suspicion by the Maratha authorities. Although treacherous, avaricious and ambitious, he was also courageous and intelligent, and the wide territory he had acquired also made him formidable. After the death of Sindhia, it was widely believed especially by Daulat Rao Sindhia that he intended to seize supreme power in the capital and thus become the effective ruler of Hindustan.
Gopal Bhao therefore in the circumstances could not but be mistrustful of Thomas’ activities. He authorised the Begum to advance into Thomas’ districts with Maratha reinforcements. This she promptly did, and encamped a few miles south-east of Jhajjar, the most important town after Tijara.

Thomas decided to retire to Tijara, but he had scarcely reached his headquarters when he received an urgent message from Appa summoning him to march at once to the fort of Kot Putli, about forty miles away, where Appa was surrounded by his own troops who had been incited to mutiny by agents from Delhi.

Realising that the fall of Appa also meant ruin for himself, Thomas marched at once through heavy monsoon rain and muddy roads to the rescue. Appa and his family were successfully extricated from the fort, and after a short clash with the mutineers, who were disheartened at the sight of Appa charging them on the back of an elephant, reached the stronghold of Kanaund in safety. The gratitude of the chief was genuine: Thomas not only received a sum of money with which to buy an elephant, but several districts yielding an annual revenue of 150,000 rupees were assigned to him in perpetuity.

At the end of 1794, Gopal Rao Bhao, Sindhia’s viceroy in Hindustan, fell into disgrace and was superseded by de Boigne, who delegated most of his duties to the Maratha general, Lakwa Dada. Lakwa now entered Appa’s territory with a large army, and the latter hurried to his camp to pay his respects. For Appa it proved an unfortunate act of courtesy. He was received politely and equally politely asked to pay the arrears of tribute which Lakwa said were due. Appa unable to do this was detained as a prisoner until to secure his freedom he had to agree to mortgage most of his territory, including Thomas’ districts, to a Maratha chief named Bapu Farnavis, and furthermore to pay for the maintenance of Bapu’s troops who were to be stationed in the districts to collect the revenue.

Appa’s humiliation and detention rejoiced his subjects who at once broke into rebellion and refused to pay taxes. Appa sent his chief tax-collector, Thomas, to reduce them to submission, which he did with his usual ferocity and efficiency. Only at one place, the fort of Biri, bravely defended by a number of Rajputs
and Jats, did he have serious trouble. Enraged by the resistance and by the spectacle of one of his wounded officers being thrown into a burning building, Thomas on regaining the ascendant gave the defenders no quarter, and, in his own words, "most of them were cut to pieces."

On this occasion his services were ill rewarded. Once the rebellion was suppressed, he received a pathetic letter from Appa, ordering him to disband his battalion for, by reason of the late injustices, Appa was too poor to maintain it. Appa characteristically offered no suggestions on how Thomas was to disband them without settling their pay, which as usual was greatly in arrears. Thomas therefore marched his men to Appa's camp and demanded an interview with his chief. Appa shiftily explained that it was not his fault but that of the Maratha leaders who regarding him as a dangerous man had demanded his discharge. Thomas at once went to Lakwa Dada and demanded an explanation, and the latter not only denied Appa's allegations but offered Thomas an important command in his own army. The Irishman was in an awkward dilemma but he decided in the end to stay with Appa, who withdrew the order of disbandment, rather than trust the Maratha chiefs whom he knew were encouraging the Begum Sombre to invade his own districts.

To these districts he now returned, his purse replenished after a short but profitable excursion with the Marathas. He found the Begum encamped about twenty-five miles from his stronghold of Jhajjar with four battalions of infantry, 400 cavalry and 20 guns. Against this force Thomas could muster about 2,000 infantry, 10 guns, 500 irregulars and 200 cavalry. Panting for revenge the Begum publicly announced her intention of annihilating Thomas, but before she could begin to do so a mutiny broke out in her army, and she was obliged to return to Sardhana.

[6]

At this time the Begum Sombre was about forty-five years old. In 1793 she had married the Frenchman Le Vassoult, who, it will be remembered, had led the conspiracy which had driven
Thomas out of the Begum's service. In his capacity as prince-
consort, Le Vassoul had taken over the command of the Begum's
forces from a German officer named Legois, who had been friend-
ly with Thomas. Le Vassoul lost no time in making himself
thoroughly unpopular. Although he possessed good looks and
a certain gallantry, the plain fact is that he was an unimaginative
snob, and a less fertile field for snobbery than the Begum's large-
ly illiterate and rascally force could hardly be imagined. Declaring
himself a gentleman by birth and education, he refused to
dine with his fellow officers or to treat them in any way other
than social inferiors. In vain the Begum remonstrated with her
doltish husband, pointing out that their personal safety depended
on good relations with the officers; Le Vassoul continued his
arrogant and fatal way. The result was inevitable. The resentful
officers supported by the troops began to think in terms of de-
posing the Begum and replacing her by Balthazar Sombre, Gene-
ral Sombre's son by his first wife.

The trouble came to a head when the Begum decided on the
expedition against George Thomas. It was Le Vassoul's idea
from the start; for he had never overcome his jealous hatred
of the Irishman he had superseded; but it met with the strong
disapproval of most of the other officers especially Legois.
Legois having protested forcibly was degraded and his place given
to one of his juniors. This was too much for the others who broke
out into open mutiny, thus forcing the Begum to abandon her
expedition and to return in all haste to Sardhana.

There the situation became rapidly worse. Officers and men
ignored all orders and behaved with such insolence that the
Begum began to fear for her life. At last after a period of sus-
pense they heard, probably from Colonel Saleur, a French officer
of some merit who remained sympathetic, that a deputation of the
army had gone to Delhi to invite Balthazar Sombre, also known
as Zafaryab Khan, the Begum's half-witted stepson, to be their
commander and to take over the jagir.

The Begum and Le Vassoul determined on flight. With the
help of an English grammar and dictionary, they composed a
letter to the commander of the British advance post at Anup-
shahr asking for asylum. The English were unwilling to offend the
Marathas, and before granting permission to the Begum to enter British territory sent an envoy to Daulat Rao Sindhia, who agreed to allow the Begum to retire on payment of twelve lakhs of rupees. It was further arranged that Sindhia would confer the command on one of his own officers, and would pay Balthazar two thousand rupees a month for life. On entering British territory Le Vassoult was to be treated as a prisoner of war on parole and allowed to reside with his wife in the French settlement of Chandernagore.

Unfortunately the mutineers were not a party to this agreement, which in any case they would not have approved. As soon as the news leaked in Delhi, they sprang into action. Zafaryab set out for Sardhana to take possession, and sent a detachment of cavalry ahead to seize the Begum and her husband.

On hearing that Zafaryab was on his way to Sardhana, the Begum and Le Vassoult with a few servants fled in panic, but not forgetting to take with them all their portable property in cash and jewels. They took the road to Anupshahr, the Begum travelling in a palanquin and Le Vassoult on horseback. In the emotion of the moment they swore to kill themselves rather than fall into the hands of the mutineers.

The Begum’s palanquin, it would have been grossly improper for her to have travelled in any other way, made progress very slow, and the pursuing cavalry had no difficulty in overtaking them at the village of Kabri, some three miles from Sardhana on the road to Meerut. In vain Le Vassoult urged on the palanquin-bearers; there was no escape. As the horsemen closed on their quarry, Le Vassoult who was riding ahead was suddenly arrested by piercing screams from the palanquin. Riding back he was told by the attendants that the Begum had stabbed herself and was dead. Peering through the curtains and seeing his wife apparently lifeless and covered with blood, he concluded that she was indeed dead, and instead of galloping off to safety as he might easily have done, he gallantly decided to keep his side of the agreement. Drawing a pistol from his holster, and putting the muzzle in his mouth, he pulled the trigger. The ball passed through his brain, and leaping from the saddle high into the air, he fell and died on the muddy road.
The rebel horsemen now arrived. For some time they amused themselves with the corpse, insulting it in every way a pathological mind could conceive, finally leaving it to rot unburied on the ground. Then they turned their attentions to the Begum.

The Begum was not dead. In her fear of capture, she had inflicted a slight wound on her breast with the dagger she carried in her bodice, and the sight of her own blood flowing had made her faint, thus causing the belief that she had stabbed herself to the heart. She returned to consciousness to find herself surrounded by hostile and jeering faces and to hear the bestial yells of those who were mutilating her husband's body. She was taken back to Sardhana and to the old fort where she was tied to a gun-carriage, and left there for seven days in the heat of the sun, exposed to the insults and jeers of the rabble, and deprived of food and water, other than what her few faithful women could supply her by stealth at night. At last Colonel Saleur intervened, and as a result of his efforts she was released from her place of torture and imprisoned in relatively decent conditions.

In the meantime her palace was the scene of dreadful debauchery and disorder. Balthazar Sombre, or Zafaryab Khan, whose cruel nature enjoyed the sight of his stepmother's sufferings, once on the throne gave full reign to his perverted desires. But from time to time he made some attempt to consolidate his precarious position. He considered that his best chance lay in British approval. The Begum was compelled to write a letter to the Governor-General to the effect that Le Vassoult had so ruined her affairs that she had been forced to send for her "beloved son" whom she had of her own free will entrusted with the sole management of her affairs. This letter sent under the Begum's seal was accompanied by one from Zafaryab recommending himself to British favour. But Sir John Shore was not taken in. "I cannot but entertain a suspicion," he wrote, "that the letter is either fictitious and framed by Zafaryab Khan in her name or extracted from her with a view to obtain from this government an acknowledgement of his usurped authority." The Governor-General further stated that he would be happy to afford the Begum every assistance against her stepson's violence apart from direct intervention. The Marathas on the other hand seemed quite content
to accept Zafaryab Khan’s usurpation, provided he continued to pay up.

Throughout these negotiations, the Begum was kept a close prisoner. Even the blind old Emperor was rudely rebuffed when he sought in his quality of her adoptive father to take her under his protection. In despair, seeing no hope of active assistance either from the British or the Marathas, the Begum thought of her old friend and present enemy, George Thomas, whose territory she was invading when the mutiny took place. She contrived, possibly with the help of Saleur, to smuggle out a letter to him in which “in the most abject and despising manner” she reminded him of her previous generosity to him, stated that she was in daily danger of being poisoned or otherwise murdered, and implored him to come to her assistance, offering to pay any sum of money the Marathas might require for reinstating her in her jagir.

Thomas was much moved. Reasoning that now Le Vassoult, who had been the direct cause of his quarrels with the Begum, was dead, there was no sense in holding old grudges, and his natural chivalry aroused by the indignities which his former mistress was suffering, Thomas resolved to help her. And he was now in a position to do so.

During the Begum’s calvary, Thomas had been going from success to success. Having successfully repulsed an excursion of Sikhs into Maratha territory at Lakwa Dada’s request, Thomas had been entrusted with the defence of the Maratha frontier, and had been allotted the important and historical districts of Panipat, Sonpat and Karnal, which were adjacent to his own jagir of Jhajjar, in order to maintain a special force for this purpose. He was therefore not only the lord of an extensive domain, but also high in favour with the Maratha chiefs.

Thomas’ first act was to induce Bapu Sindhia, the governor of Saharanpur, by an offer of 1,20,000 rupees to move some Maratha troops towards Sardhana. Then, realising that a frontal attack might lead to the Begum being instantly put to death, he entered into secret negotiations with a section of the mutinous officers, who were in any case becoming rather tired of the imbecilities and debaucheries of Zafaryab. He represented to them that
the only way to keep Sardhana was to restore the Begum to power, emphasizing that should the Begum die either by direct violence or by the mental and physical torture she was enduring, then Sindhia would undoubtedly disband such a disorderly force useless to himself and resume possession of the lands assigned for its upkeep. Having thus obtained several partisans at Sardhana, Thomas advanced with his forces to the village of Kataoli, twelve miles to the north of Sardhana. Here he announced publicly that he was acting on the authority of Sindhia himself, and that unless the Begum was at once reinstated he would accord no mercy to those who resisted. This declaration had at first the desired effect. Thomas’ partisans among the mutineers received sufficient support from the troops to overthrow and imprison Zafaryab and to release the Begum. But the battle was far from won. Before Thomas could reach Sardhana, a counter-revolt had already taken place, in which the Begum was replaced in confinement and Zafaryab again proclaimed ruler.

Thomas realised that speed was now essential. Ordering four hundred of his infantry to follow, he himself with fifty trusted horsemen galloped forward into the city. At first Zafaryab and his supporters noticing the weakness of Thomas’ escort exultantly thought that they had him in their power, and they were about to attack when they saw Thomas’ infantry approaching in the distance. Thinking the whole Maratha army was arriving, the mutineers staged a third revolution, imprisoned Zafaryab, declared for the Begum and humbly surrendered to Thomas.

A council of war was immediately held. After some trouble with a Mohammedan scribe who refused to describe Christ as the son of God, a paper was prepared in which the officers swore in the name of God and “His Majesty” Christ that they would henceforward obey the Begum with all their hearts and souls, and would recognise no other person whosoever as commander. Another slight difficulty arose in connection with the signatures, as only one officer, Colonel Saleur, could sign his name. This was resolved by all thirty officers affixing their seals to this oath, those of superior learning writing their initials or any two or three letters of the alphabet that they happened to know.

Before sunset the Begum was reelected on the *masnad*. Part
of the sum promised to Bapu Sindhia was paid at once to his representative and the Maratha officer, who was to have commanded the Begum’s troops after her deposition received adequate compensation for his disappointment. The unfortunate Zafaryab, deprived of all his possessions, was sent as a prisoner to Delhi, where he died some eight years later in suspicious circumstances, and was buried beside his father in the graveyard of Agra. We do not know what immediate reward was given to Thomas if any, but the Begum’s gratitude was genuine and extended to his children.

The body of poor Le Vassoult was recovered from the ditch where it had been left to rot, and buried in the cemetery at Sar-dhana. What is left of the inscription is the request to the passer-by: *priez Dieu pour son âme.*

The Begum made no attempt to perpetuate his memory, or to remind people of her unfortunate second marriage. She was not the Widow Le Vassoult; she was the Widow Sombre.

The period of her suffering and captivity lasted over a year. Le Vassoult blew his brains out in June 1795. Thomas effected the reinstallation of the Begum in July 1796. For the Begum it was certainly a year to forget.

Saleur was appointed to the command.

[7]

During the year of the Begum’s captivity, Thomas’ relations with his chief Appa Khandi Rao had grown progressively worse. Since his unfortunate visit to Lakwa Dada’s camp and the consequent mortgaging of his land, Appa had strongly resented Lakwa’s officials being associated with his own in the collection of taxes. Cunningly he set to work to sow dissensions between Lakwa and Bapu Farnavis until the two were quarrelling bitterly, and then Appa reasserted his independence, and ordered Thomas to chase Lakwa’s officials out of the disputed territory. With his usual ruthlessness, Thomas obeyed this order, and after much severe fighting speedily recovered the districts. Thereupon he joined Appa in besieging the strong fort of Narnal, which was command-
ed by one of Lakwa’s Brahmin officials. During the night this Brahmin came secretly to Thomas and offered to surrender the fort if the safety of his own person and property was guaranteed. Thomas agreed, and the next morning the fort surrendered. Appa was at first delighted and presented Thomas with an elephant and a palanquin; but when Thomas refused to surrender the Brahmin, whom Appa wished to hold to ransom, his joy turned to rage, and he left uttering threats and curses.

A few days later Thomas was summoned to Appa’s headquarters, where he was surrounded by armed men and presented with a demand to give up his prisoner. Keeping a cool head in these dangerous circumstances, Thomas strode through the overawed soldiers to Appa’s private apartment, drew that chief’s attention to the strong escort of picked men who were awaiting their leader outside, laid his hand meaningfully on the hilt of his sword, and with many smooth compliments took his leave unmolested. Arriving safely back at his camp, he sent a message to Appa denouncing his treacherous behaviour and informing him that he would no longer serve him.

Concealing his rage, Appa effected a reconciliation, but a further dispute with his commander over some captured artillery decided him to dispose finally of Thomas and at the same time keep the battalion in his service. For this purpose he engaged the services of the Ghussains, a nomadic body of bandits, to whom he offered Rs. 10,000 as a reward for assassinating Thomas. Fortunately for the latter, he had such little faith in Appa that he employed spies from among those closest to the chief. Thus informed of the plot, he made a surprise night attack on the Ghussains’ camp, put them to flight with great slaughter, and then wrote to Appa denouncing his conduct.

Appa was now undeniably a very sick man. He denied all knowledge of the plot, which, he said, had been contrived by some of his servants while he lay ill, and begged Thomas to visit him without delay so that he might receive his last requests. Thomas was by no means convinced of the chief’s innocence, but he was spared the necessity of making a final breach by a sudden incursion of the Sikhs into Maratha territory north of Delhi. Thomas was ordered to repel them which he did so promptly and
efficiently that he entered into the high favour of Lakwa Dada and the Maratha leaders, and was in a position to rescue the Begum Sombre in the hour of her need.

Shortly afterwards, Thomas received a pathetic letter from Appa Khandi Rao, who was dying of cancer. The chief wrote that he was in such great pain that he had resolved to kill himself; that before doing so he wished to see Thomas and appoint him guardian of his nephew and successor. Before Thomas could obey the summons he received the news that his master, one of the great Sindhia's most reliable generals, had drowned himself in the river Jumna.

Bawan Rao, Appa's nephew and successor, lost no time in repudiating his new guardian. Demanding the return of the territory allotted to Thomas by his uncle, Bawan Rao refused all attempts at compromise and tried to expel Thomas by force. He invaded Thomas' possessions, was promptly defeated and forced to take refuge in the fort of Kanaund. Negotiations for peace proved futile, Thomas refusing to enter the fort and Bawan Rao refusing to leave it, and things remained in this unsatisfactory state until Thomas had to leave to defend his frontier districts from an attack by the Sikhs. Bawan Rao at once emerged and attacked Thomas' stronghold of Jhajjar.

Thomas was now summoned to a council of war in Delhi. He found the Maratha leaders greatly alarmed by the arrival in Lahore of Zaman Shah Abdali, the King of Kabul. All preparations were made to withstand an invasion, and Bapu Sindhia, the Governor of Saharanpur, ordered Thomas forward to defend his frontier districts. This, unfortunately, was not what Thomas was able to do. The pay of his troops was as usual in arrears, and they having recently endured some severe fighting with the Sikhs were in no mind to face the terrible Afghan. Thomas' attempts to raise money and inability to carry out orders at such a critical moment caused a serious quarrel between him and Bapu Sindhia. In anger Thomas left Delhi and set out for his jaidad, but was overtaken by a Maratha force, which he beat off. Bapu in person with a strong force, including some battalions of the Begum Sombre, opposed his crossing of the Jumna, but after severe fighting Thomas forced his way across and escaped to his fort of Jhajjar,
which had successfully withstood Bawan Rao’s attack. The Marathas dismissed Thomas from their service, and Bapu Sindhia occupied Thomas’ frontier districts of Panipat, Sonpat and Karnal. And the King of Kabul failed to invade after all, having been checked by the Sikhs.

Thomas was now in desperate straits, caught between Bapu and Bawan Rao, dismissed from his official positions, dependent for his personal safety on a force of 3,000 mutinous soldiers, whom he had no means to pay, having lost all his territory except for the small area round Jhajjar. In these unhappy circumstances he resolved to raise the necessary funds by “levying contributions” from his neighbours. Without wasting time he marched his troops to Harichu, a large town belonging to the Rajah of Jaipur, and invited the governor to “contribute” a lakh of rupees. On the governor declining, Thomas stormed and set fire to the town, and besieged the governor in the fort until the latter settled for Rs. 52,000.

This spectacular piece of banditry apparently impressed his former ward Bawan Rao, whose territories were adjacent, for he at once confirmed Thomas’ possession of the fief of Jhajjar, and employed him to extract revenue from some of his own refractory farmers. In the course of this occupation Thomas finding himself again near the border of the rich Jaipur territory remembered that many years ago some “bandits” from Jaipur had raided Bawan Rao’s territory. Such an act of banditry filled him with indignation, and to punish it he raided Jaipur territory “levying contributions” until his treasure chest was full. Then he returned to Jhajjar to spend the hot season in comfort and prosperity.

Lolling under the heavy punkahs and drinking his fill, Thomas’ brain was still active. His new methods of raising funds pleased him and he liked his independence. The danger was that he was too small to defend himself against retributory action by a big chieftain. The solution was simple: he would become a big chieftain himself.
A bandit ceases to be a bandit when he acquires enough territory to make himself respected: he then becomes a prince. George Thomas had not far to look to find the necessary territory. Eighty-nine miles north-west of Delhi was the ancient city of Hansi, now in ruins and inhabited mainly by lions, the area being one of the few in India where that species of animal flourishes. This ruined city had been the capital of an area of almost three thousand square miles, known as Hariana, or the Green Land. This was a misnomer, for most of it was wild and arid desert without surface water and its few inhabitants had to rely on deep-sunk wells and a scanty rainfall. In the north the river Ghaggar sometimes overflowed its banks, leaving behind a rich, greasy deposit, which proved an excellent fertiliser for wheat and grass, and the cattle that grazed there were said to be the best in Hindustan.

Nevertheless the whole area had once been prosperous and thickly populated by Hindus. Unfortunately it lay in the direct path of invading armies from the north, and the regular devastations over a period of hundreds of years had depopulated the country, destroyed all attempts at canals and irrigation, and made it a wilderness infested by tigers, lions and other predators. The comparatively few peasants who continued to eke a living from the sandy soil were, as can be well imagined, a tough breed, fierce in battle and suspicious of strangers.

Many of the inhabitants worked in or around the town and fort of Kanhori. At the beginning of the rains, Thomas led his army against this stronghold, having discovered to his shocked surprise that its defenders were notorious for "thievish depredations." He did not find it an easy prize. His attempts to take it by storm were repulsed and he suffered heavy losses. Heavy rain prevented him from erecting his batteries, and he was compelled to fortify his camp against fierce sallies by the besieged, who on one occasion put his troops to flight and nearly captured or killed Thomas himself. The coming of finer weather, however, enabled him to subject the fort to concentrated artillery fire, with the result that part of the wall was brought down. Night falling he postponed his assault on the breach until the morning, when he found
that the defenders had evacuated the place.

The capture of Kanhori put an end to all large-scale resistance, except in the north-west where he was forced to fight several actions in order to drive the Sikhs across the river Ghaggar, which he made his northern boundary, and to suppress an unruly tribe called the Battis. Thus in a few weeks Thomas was sovereign ruler of the Hariana.

A sovereign has to have a capital. The old city of Hansi seemed ideal for the purpose. Situated on high land, the ruins lay at the foot of the fortress, whose mud walls were of an enormous thickness, capable of withstanding cannon-shot. There were several wells in the vicinity, some a hundred-foot deep, and a large reservoir which caught and retained the rain-water. Another great advantage was that the surrounding country was flat waterless desert, which would deter the approach of any large invading army.

Thomas set to work energetically on repairs. Having first made the fort as impregnable as he could, he rebuilt the empty city, replacing the crumbling red sandstone and putting new roofs on the derelict buildings and in general making them habitable. Realising that only force of arms could maintain his authority he created an arsenal, making muskets, matchlocks and powder, and casting his own heavy guns, being the first person to apply iron calibres to brass cannon. He offered lucrative employment, housing and protection to all who would work for him, and very soon the formerly abandoned city became a prosperous city of over 6,000 resident civilians.

As a prudent and benevolent monarch should, he took immediate steps to improve the morale of his army by instituting a system of pensions and compensations for his soldiers. Those who were wounded in his service received sufficient for their wants, and the widows and children of those killed in action were granted half the pay of their deceased husbands. These liberal provisions, more generous than those of some modern governments, were estimated to cost Rs. 50,000 a year, being more than a tenth of Thomas' entire revenue. Like many rulers before him, Thomas was in constant need of ready cash. He solved the problem with his usual simplicity. At Hansi he created a mint
and coined his own rupees, which had some doubtful currency in his own territory and in his army. But realising that this was not likely to be accepted for any length of time without other security, he fell back on his old system of "levying contributions" from his neighbours. He therefore determined on an "excursion" into Jaipur territory, which as his first biographer pleasantly explains, "had hitherto afforded a never-failing supply to his necessities, and whose ruler was, in consequence, become his bitter enemy."

Thus expressed one almost feels that the Rajah of Jaipur was unreasonable in his enmity.

Pratap Singh, the Rajput Rajah of Jaipur, had soon further cause for complaint. The Rajah had been remiss in paying tribute to the Marathas, and Daulat Rao Sindha ordered Bawan Rao to go into Jaipur and collect the arrears by force. As an inducement he was to have ten-sixteenths of what loot he could collect. In spite of this handsome offer, he had no enthusiasm for the campaign, for Pratap Singh had large and well-equipped forces and the Rajputs were redoubtable warriors, but the orders from Delhi could not be disobeyed, and he resolved to engage the services of George Thomas. Fortunately, he approached the Irish chieftain at a time when the Hariana treasury was empty, and although Thomas had other plans on receiving an advance payment of a large lump sum he agreed to take part in the expedition.

Early in 1799 with a joint force of 4,000 men and 18 guns, Thomas and Bawan Rao entered Jaipur territory. At first it proved a pleasant excursion. The Rajput force at the frontier retreated, and the headman of the district agreed to buy off the invaders with two lakhs of rupees. Other headmen followed his example, and for a month the two tribute-collectors made a profitable and easy progress into the centre of the State, blissfully forgetting that they were far from their supply and operational base. It was in this happy mood that they suddenly found themselves cut off by a large Rajput army under Pratap Singh. Bawan Rao counselled immediate retreat, but Thomas considering this to be hazardous decided instead to attack the important town of Fatehpur, which when taken would provide defensive shelter and a supply of grain for the army. But Fatehpur was forewarned, and as

1 *The Military Memoirs of Mr. George Thomas*, by William Francklin.
Thomas advanced parties of Rajputs carefully filled up all the wells in the surrounding countryside, which was thus rendered waterless. When Thomas became aware of this, he realised that he faced complete disaster. There was now no possibility of resting his troops. Tormented by thirst, ankle-deep in loose sand, scorched by the sun the troops were driven along for twenty-five miles until they reached the walls of Fatehpur. The town was fully prepared for resistance, and a large party of Rajputs was even then busy filling up the last well outside the gates. There was no time for hesitation: the well was of supreme importance. Spurred on by thirst, Thomas and his exhausted cavalry charged the Rajput working party, and after a brisk encounter seized the well which was happily still usable. It was a narrow escape.

Bawan Rao now entered into negotiations for the ransom of the town, but the townsmen prolonged the haggling in the expectation of Partab Singh's arrival. Impatiently Thomas broke off negotiations and took the place by assault. Hurriedly he repaired the walls as best he could, and fortified his camp in front with a massive wall of thorn-bushes, as it was impossible to dig trenches in the loose sand. He then gathered all the provisions he could lay his hands on, and cleared out and opened afresh the nearest wells. He had hardly completed these preparations when the vanguard of the Rajput army hove in sight.

Partab Singh encamped a few miles away, and for two days was fully occupied in clearing the wells round his camp. On the second night Thomas made a surprise attack on the Rajput forces at the wells. Having driven the Rajputs back to their main camp, Thomas returned to his camp with several captured horses and a head of cattle. This feat annoyed his Maratha allies, whom Thomas had not bothered to inform of his intentions, and who had been left behind asleep.

At daybreak the Rajput army appeared in order of battle. A fierce general engagement ensued from which the offended Marathas largely abstained. By skilful manoeuvre and expert use of his guns he saved his force from annihilation, and in a battle that lasted all day finally forced the Rajputs to withdraw from the field. In this battle of Fatehpur Thomas showed the highest qualities of generalship, but his losses were heavy in relation to the
size of his army. He lost over 25 per cent of his effective fighting men, and among the wounded was an English officer named John Morris, of whom we know nothing further.

The next day a truce was arranged in order to bury the dead, and Bawan Rao took advantage of it to renew negotiations. These proved fruitless and hostilities were resumed in spite of an order from Daulat Rao Sindhia to discontinue the war. It was found easier to start a war than discontinue it.

Thomas' position was again becoming dangerous. The Rajputs were reinforced by the arrival of the Rajah of Bikaner with 5,000 men, and Thomas was suffering from a scarcity of forage, his foraging parties being constantly cut off by Rajput cavalry. In these conditions it was clearly impossible to stay at Fatehpur, and Thomas and Bawan Rao agreed to attempt a retreat home. At daybreak therefore they struck camp and began the long march back to their own country. The Rajputs at once attacked, and were beaten off only with difficulty. They continued however to follow the retreat, harassing Thomas' rear with artillery fire and discharging a large number of rockets. It was also very hot, and the soldiers, already suffering from thirst, toiled painfully through the loose sand, their nostrils and mouths clogged with yellow dust which enveloped them in a cloud. After fifteen hours of this torment they reached a village where they found two wells. So great was the rush for water that two men fell into a well and one was drowned. The second day's march was as bad, and Thomas had to dismount and march at the head of his infantry to encourage the exhausted soldiers. By nightfall they reached a fairly large town with plenty of water. Informed by his scouts that the Rajputs, exhausted by the pursuit, had returned to Fatehpur, Thomas determined to camp here and rest his troops. The wounded were cared for, and after several days of complete rest with food and water in plenty, the small army recovered its health and its fighting spirit, and Thomas was able to resume his plundering operations, levying contributions from villages and towns, until Partab Singh sent envoys to make peace. Bawan Rao accepted a sum of money much less than he had demanded, and marched his men home.

Before returning to Hariana, Thomas decided to pay a visit
to the territory of the Rajah of Bikaner in order to see what he could pick up and to punish him for coming to the assistance of Pratab Singh. Once again, this time equipping himself with a large number of water-skins, he led his men into the desert. Bikaner was a weak state, mostly an underpopulated waterless desert, and there was little resistance. After a few skirmishes, the Rajah capitulated, and bought Thomas off with a lakh of rupees on the spot and another lakh in bills on certain Jaipur bankers. Thomas then led his men back to Hansi.

Shortly afterwards, Thomas presented the Rajah's bills for payment; they were dishonoured. He protested strongly against such fraud and dishonesty.

It was early in the summer of 1799 before Thomas returned to Hansi from his arduous campaigns in Jaipur and Bikaner. But he was not the man to remain idle for long when there was fighting to be done and loot to pick up. He now decided to "levy contributions" from the Sikh states on his northern frontier, and marched his troops against the town of Jhind, belonging to a Sikh chief named Bagh Singh. He made a surprise attack on the town, but was himself surprised to be beaten back with the loss of 400 men. Enraged, he fortified his camp and settled down to besiege the place. Here he was attacked by a relief force from the neighbouring state of Patiala, led by Kunur the intrepid sister of the indolent chief of that place. Kunur was a determined woman; after an initial repulse she rallied her men, captured two of Thomas' redoubts and slaughtered many of his best men. This reverse encouraged the peasants to rise against Thomas, who found his supplies cut off so that he was compelled to raise the siege of Jhind and begin his retreat to Hansi. The whole country now rose against him, and he had difficulty in beating off the constant attacks on his rear and flanks. By forced marches a body of Sikhs overtook him and camped in his path at a place called Narnaund; but Thomas made one of his dashing surprise attacks at dawn on their camp and inflicted a severe defeat on them, capturing much booty. Rallied by the indomitable Kunur and sent back, the Sikhs were dispersed by a false alarm, and the inevitable negotiations followed. Eventually everyone except the Rajah of Patiala agreed to a treaty leaving everything as it was
before the invasion, and Thomas returned to Hansi empty-handed. It was not one of his happier filibuster ing excursions.

Nemesis now enters the story of Thomas in the person of Pierre Cuillier, better known to history as General Perron, who had just succeeded de Boigne in command of the Maratha Army of Hindustan.

The son of an unsuccessful draper of Château du Loire, Perron, like Thomas, had arrived in India as a sailor on a man-of-war. When his ship, the frigate Sardine, was off the coast of Malabar, Perron with three companions deserted, made their way into the interior, where as private soldiers they joined the army of the Rana of Gohad, then commanded by a Scotsman named Sangster assisted by two other Europeans, Tom Legge and Michael Filoze. Here he married a Eurasian lady from Pondicherry, and rose to the rank of sergeant. The Rana of Gohad having been defeated and his corps disbanded, he entered the service of the Jat Rajah of Bharatpur as quartermaster-sergeant, and was present at the battles of Charsana and Agra, and at the occupation of Delhi by the Marathas. Unfortunately the commander of his corps was that fellow-countryman Lestineau who ran away to Europe with Ghulam Kadir's jewels and the pay of his battalion. As a result of a mutiny thus provoked, the corps was disbanded, and Perron found himself out of a job. He tried unsuccessfully to obtain employment first with the Maratha general, Rana Khan, and then with the Begum Sombre, before he was given a commission by de Boigne, who was then raising his First Brigade on behalf of Madhoji Sindhi. He soon won the favourable notice of the general, and was entrusted with an attack on the fort of Kanaund, where he defeated the redoubtable Ismail Beg, and brought him a prisoner to Delhi. During the siege, however, he was unfortunate enough to lose his hand, as a result of experimenting with some hand grenades, and soon became known as Ekdust, or the One-handed.

He was promoted to major, and soon given command of de
Boigne’s Second Brigade. This brigade formed part of the army of 140,000 men that the Marathas sent to exact tribute from the Nizam of Hyderabad. It was largely a battle between two French generals: Francois de Raymond, assisted by an American named Boyd and an Englishman named Finglass, and Perron, assisted by Michael Filoze, the Chevalier Dudrenec and John Hessing. In the battle of Karda which followed Raymond held his own against Perron’s skilful use of artillery until the hysteria of the Nizam’s wives, whom that potentate had brought with him to watch the battle, caused him to withdraw.

The battle of Karda raised Perron high in the esteem of Daulat Rao Sindhia, who in October 1795 took him to Poona in order to settle the dynastic dispute that had arisen from the suicide of the Peshwa and the intrigues of Nana Farnavis. On his return to camp he heard with delight that his benefactor, de Boigne, enormously rich and weary of war and political conflicts had resigned his command. Perron was lucky too that of the two of his rivals for the succession, one, Major Fremont, fortuitously died, and the other, Major Robert Sutherland, a former British officer who had been cashiered from his regiment, was far away subduing Bundelkhand. Perron was on the spot, and having the ear of Daulat Rao was promoted to general and given the chief command of de Boigne’s army.

This was the man who was soon to measure swords with George Thomas.

[10]

Early in 1799, while Thomas had been engaged in the unsuccessful assault on Jhind, there had been another palace revolution among the Marathas at Delhi. Madhoji’s general Lakwa Dada, having supported the losing side in the recent dynastic troubles, was superseded in the chief command of the Maratha armies by Ambaji Inglia. Lakwa Dada did not take his dismissal tamely and occupied the province of Mewar with a large following. Thomas was now offered the job of assisting to expel him at a fee of Rs. 50,000 a month, and having at that moment nothing
better to do he accepted.

His departure south was however not to the taste of some of his troops, whose pay was as usual in arrears and who had no wish to take part in a long and distant campaign, far from their homes and families. Thomas refused the mutineers’ demands whereupon a large part of the army broke into open violence, and tried to seize his person. Thomas attacked them with his usual vigour with the cavalry that remained loyal, succeeded in taking the leaders of the mutiny, one of whom he ordered to be blown from the mouth of a cannon. This proved effective, and Thomas was at last able to march south to fulfil his engagement. When nearing Udaipur he was informed that Sindhia had pardoned Lakwa Dada and that there was no longer any necessity to attack him. Thomas consulted Ambaji, but that jealous chieftain ordered the march against Dada to proceed. Presently he was joined by Colonel Sutherland with Perron’s Second Brigade, and together they advanced until they found Lakwa in a strong position at the head of a narrow pass leading to Udaipur. The two commanders agreed to attack this position the following morning and encamped for the night. The next morning to his complete astonishment Thomas discovered that Sutherland had marched away with his brigade during the night. This strange action was undoubtedly on orders from Perron, who, because he thought Thomas to be English or was conspiring to supplant him in the volatile favour of the Maratha chiefs, had adopted an attitude of implacable hostility towards the Irishman.

Heavy storms now prevented any serious action between the two forces, and Lakwa took advantage of the lull to send envoys to Thomas with some letters from Sindhia, who ordered both sides to stop fighting and nominated Lakwa as governor of all the Maratha possessions north of the Narbada. Thomas replied that he had been ordered to expel Lakwa from the Mewar province, and unless that chief agreed to evacuate that country there could be no treaty. But after much negotiation it was agreed that the two opposing armies should march to the northern frontier of Mewar, and there await further orders from Sindhia. Because of the heavy rain it took the two armies fifteen days to cover the seventy-five miles to Shahpura on the northern border. Here
Lakwa Dada was joined by fresh troops from Ajmir, repeated his refusal to evacuate Mewar and resumed hostilities. Heavy rain however still prevented any major clash.

Thomas now received news of a fresh act of treachery by General Perron, who, it appeared, taking advantage of Thomas’ absence had invaded the latter’s fief of Jhajjar. Ambaji who with his army had joined Thomas denied all knowledge of Perron’s action, and undertook to make him withdraw, once the campaign against Lakwa was concluded.

The heavy rains having abated hostilities were actively resumed. The opposing armies were separated by a stream, the north side of which was occupied by Lakwa, and the south by Thomas and Ambaji. Thomas successfully beat back several sallies from Lakwa’s camp, and Ambaji by a bold stroke captured one of the enemy’s redoubts on the north side of the nullah, and garrisoned it with a strong force of infantry and six guns. But this brilliant coup de main had disastrous consequences which put an end to the campaign, in favour of Lakwa. No sooner had the redoubt been captured than it began to rain heavily, and this continuing for twenty-four hours caused two reservoirs to burst through their banks into the nullah, which became so full of water that the newly captured redoubt became completely cut off. Lakwa seized his opportunity and launched a vigorous attack on the redoubt, his men advancing up to their necks in the torrential water. After suffering terrible losses Ambaji’s garrison surrendered. At this disaster Ambaji’s army became dispirited and began to desert in large numbers. To make matters worse, the Rajah of Shahpura who had hitherto remained neutral now declared for Lakwa and withheld the supplies of grain from Thomas and Ambaji. Thomas was also short of ammunition. In these circumstances there was nothing to do except retreat to Thomas’ base at Singganah, about thirty miles distant. This they did, transporting the sick and wounded on litters, fighting off the constant attacks by Lakwa’s cavalry.

After resting his troops and re-supplying them with ammunition, Thomas advanced north again, but Lakwa declined battle and retired over the disputed border into his own territory of Ajmir.
Thomas now considered that his commission was fulfilled; Lakwa had left Mewar, which was now in Ambaji’s possession. There remained only the congenial task of levying contributions from the towns and villages to reimburse himself and Ambaji for the expenses they had been put to. He therefore prowled round the state raiding and ransoming all likely places until he had collected no less a sum than four lakhs of rupees. He would have raised more had not his happy enterprise been cut short by peremptory orders from Sindhia.

It was now made very clear that Lakwa had been restored to Sindhia’s favour and was about to be re-appointed commander-in-chief of the Maratha army in Upper India. Sindhia now wrote ordering Ambaji to evacuate Mewar. Perron also wrote recommending compliance with this order, threatening in case of refusal to give armed assistance to Lakwa. Ambaji and Thomas had no option but to comply, although Thomas’ feelings were hurt as he had not yet milked the state dry.

Ambaji and Lakwa now staged a reconciliation, and Thomas was ordered to join their joint forces. But knowing Lakwa’s hatred of him and fearing treachery decided to make for home. It was a difficult march through hostile country, threatened with attack by Lakwa, Perron and the Rajah of Jaipur, a third of his army incapacitated by dysentery, but Thomas not only reached Hansi safely but managed to collect two lakhs of rupees on the way.

Back at Hansi, Thomas learned that the Rajah of Patiala had taken advantage of his absence to raid Hariana. He at once prepared a punitive expedition, but before this could march, the Rajah presented his apologies, paid an indemnity for the damage he had done and surrendered a number of villages. This was disappointing until Thomas remembered the dishonoured bills he had received from the Rajah of Bikaner, and he resolved to lead an expedition into Bikaner on the highly moral ground that fraud must be exposed and chastised.

He therefore marched into the unhealthy state of Bikaner, seized one of the Rajah’s forts, burnt the town of Futehbad and would have done more damage had not sickness and heavy casualties forced him to retire to Jhajjar.
GEORGE THOMAS

He did not remain idle for long. After a brief repose he set out for his northern districts to collect the revenue which was in arrears. The peasants in these areas hearing of his coming wickedly determined to defend themselves, and assembling at the village of Safidun boldly opposed his passage. Unconscious of any irony Thomas denounced them as banditti. He attacked them vigorously, and after suffering considerable losses himself, drove them into the village where over seven hundred peasants were ruthlessly massacred. After this act of terrorism the northern districts submitted and paid up.

The strong town of Bihal, near the capital, now revolted, and was forced to surrender and pay a large fine only after a long painful siege. Then after a brief raid into Lakwa’s territory of Saharanpur, Thomas returned to Hansi, where for the next four months while his troops rested he gathered ammunition and supplies for his most ambitious campaign: the conquest of the Sikh states of the Sutlej district.

[11]

The ambition that Thomas had nursed for some years was no less than the conquest of the whole of the Punjab, the Land of the Five Rivers, thus extending his territory to the mouth of the Indus. After subduing the Sutlej states he planned to build a fleet of boats from the timber procured from the forests near Ferozpur, and then to sail down the Sutlej river with his army subduing and settling the country on his route. Having accomplished this, he then proposed to invade the Punjab itself, which, in view of the lack of unity among the Sikhs, he expected to overcome in two years. In this way he would become the ruler of a great and prosperous territory, the conquest of which later cost the English three great wars.

But Thomas was activated not only by ambition but by fear. For long there had been enmity between him and Perron, who had become a formidable and despotic power. With Hariana as his sole base he could not hope successfully to resist for long Perron’s military encroachments. But with the Punjab at his back
it would be another matter. The immediate danger was that once Thomas was engaged on his northern campaign, Perron and the Marathas would take possession of Hariana.

There was only one power in India that could check the Marathas: the East India Company. Thomas suddenly remembered that he was a patriotic subject of King George. He approached the Governor-General, the Marquis Wellesley, and asked him to obtain an assurance of neutrality from Perron on the Governor-General’s guarantee. In return he offered “to advance and take possession of the Punjab, and give up his army to the direction and control of the English; to take the country, and, in short, to become an active partisan in their cause.”

He went on to explain further, “I have nothing in view but the welfare of my King and country; it is not to better myself that I have thought of it (the conquest of the Punjab); but I should be sorry to see my conquests fall to the Marathas, for I wish to give them to my King and to serve him for the remainder of my days.” Perhaps Wellesley was unimpressed by Thomas’ belated patriotism; in any case at that juncture he could not risk becoming embroiled with the Marathas in order to help a private adventurer attempt his dream of conquest. He rejected the petition.

Nevertheless Thomas went ahead with his plan to attack the Sutlej states. First of all he attacked the Rajah of Patiala, who was then busy besieging a fort in which his sister Kunur had taken refuge from his anger. The approach of Thomas coincided with the arrival of Sikh reinforcements, and at the same time the local peasantry rose against the invader, forcing Thomas to retreat to the town of Belad, which he took by storm. Over five hundred of the townspeople were slaughtered; the others ransomed their lives by paying large sums of money. Using Belad as a strong base he marched against the populous town of Bhatt, and after a sharp conflict forced it to buy him off with the sum of fifty thousand rupees.

It was at Bhatt that he received a secret envoy from a neighbouring Rani whose district which included the important cities of Ludhiana and Firozpur was being invaded by the Sikhs. The

\[2 \text{ The Military Memoirs of Mr. George Thomas, by William Francklin.} \]

\[3 \text{ Ibid.} \]
Rani was acting as regent for her son, and had previously had trouble with the Sikhs who had been forced to evacuate her territory by Zaman Shah, the King of Kabul, who happened then to be at Lahore. But Zaman Shah had returned to Kabul, and she was now being attacked by a large Sikh force led by a religious fanatic named Sahib Singh, who claimed to be a Behdi of the race of Nanak. Sahib Singh had refused all offers of compromise, and was determined to take possession of the whole country. He had treacherously seized and imprisoned the Rani’s son, who had subsequently been rescued by Karram Singh, the Sikh chief of Shahabad, who disapproved of the Behdi. When Thomas arrived at Bhatt, the Behdi Sahib Singh was besieging the city of Ludhiana. The Rani’s envoy offered Thomas a down payment of a lakh of rupees and an annual tribute of Rs. 50,000 for his help in expelling the Behdi and restoring her son to power. Thomas accepted.

The Rani’s son having come over to his camp, Thomas at once advanced to relieve Ludhiana. The Behdi, who had proclaimed himself emperor of the Sikhs, incontinently fled leaving behind his baggage, and was not heard of again. The Rani and her son were restored and the chief rebels executed.

The Behdi had gone, but a more dangerous enemy, the Raja of Patiala, was in the field with an army of 15,000 men. Furthermore he received intelligence that the Sikhs had held a general council which had resolved that a general combination of the Sikh states should be formed to expel Thomas from the country. Patiala advanced into the Rani’s country, largely contenting himself with cutting off supplies from Thomas’ camp and preventing him from collecting forage. Several skirmishes took place, but both sides avoided a major action. The main sufferer was the Rani, for all cultivation of the land was stopped, and the country ravaged. Thomas now began to fall short of ammunition, and in spite of the Rani’s pleas that he should stay and defend her, resolved to return to Hansi. The Sikhs closed in and harassed his retreat; in return Thomas devastated the Sikh country, taking the fort of Kanhori and putting its garrison to the sword, and obtaining a ransom from Retara.

In this way he returned to Hansi, where he learnt that a Mara-
the force sent by Perron had invaded the Hariana but had fallen back on Delhi on news of his return. It was an omen of the future.

Whether or not Thomas read the writing on the wall, he paid no immediate attention to it. The Sikhs were massed on his border waiting for the monsoon rains to take the offensive. Thomas could not afford to wait. Moving swiftly he launched an attack on the Sikh forces at Safidun. The action was fierce and bloody; Sikh casualties were heavy, but Thomas was beaten off with the loss of 450 of his best men including the Englishman, Hopkins who was badly wounded. He now faced the main Sikh army at Kaital, painfully aware that a Maratha army under Bapu Sindhia was encamped only fourteen miles in his rear. He was informed that Perron intended to march from Delhi to help the Sikhs, and to add to his troubles, the turbulent districts round Hansi, only recently suppressed, were once more in open rebellion.

He was therefore pleasantly surprised when he was visited by four Sikh envoys with proposals for peace. It is not easy to understand the Sikh motives for this approach. Although they had suffered heavy losses in the recent actions, they were in a strong position with the likelihood of Thomas being caught between two fires. It is more than possible that they were unenthusiastic about Perron’s offer of aid, and unwilling to see the Marathas firmly established on their border. In any case the Sikh chiefs offered Thomas handsome terms, which he was delighted to accept. It was agreed that the Sikhs should pay him Rs. 135,000 as “compensation”, and respect the territory of the lately rescued Rani of Firozpur. The Rajah of Patiala further agreed to cede some disputed districts on the frontier, and to subsidise two battalions of infantry, which were to be stationed on the boundary to keep order. It seems very like an anti-Maratha pact.

Thomas was extremely pleased. In a campaign of seven months he had lost a third of his force killed or wounded, but had gained a favourable peace and three lakhs of rupees.

He marched rapidly back to Hansi just in time to deter Perron who was preparing to attack the town in its ruler’s absence.

Perron drew back for the moment. But Thomas’ star had set.
It was now 1801. In Europe France and Britain were engaged in a death struggle. The ruler of France, the Consul Napoleon Bonaparte, had as was well known oriental ambitions. He dreamed of reconquering Egypt and of creating a vast Eastern Empire that would include India. He hoped to become dominant in India through the co-operation of the Marathas and of Tipu, the Sultan of Mysore. Tipu was an ardent Francophile, going so far during the French Revolution as to plant a Tree of Liberty in his garden and to wear the red Liberty Bonnet. He had long been a thorn in English flesh, until finally in 1799 his incorrigible intrigues with the French led to the storming of his capital at Serigapatam and his death in battle. There remained the Marathas, and especially the French officers in their service.

Perron had long been in contact with the Government in Paris, where the First Consul was advised by General de Boigne. The general project seems to have been that on the arrival of a French expeditionary force under General Decaen at Pondicherry, which was to make contact with Perron at Cuttack, all the districts that Perron held were to be made over to the French government, a transfer which was to be confirmed by the Emperor Shah Alam, in whose name, and under whose authority everything was to be done. The internal dissensions, especially the long-standing rivalry between Sindhia and Holkar, in the Maratha Confederacy would prevent any dangerous Maratha opposition to the scheme.

In the events that follow, therefore, Perron must be regarded as an agent of the French Government intent on bringing a national project to fruition. He could not be expected having regard to the success of his plans to tolerate within easy reach of Delhi a hostile force commanded by a brilliant and daring general whose ambitions were boundless.

And Thomas was most definitely hostile. Apart from his relations with the East India Company, he had an undying hatred of all Frenchmen, probably as a result of his experiences in the service of the Begum Sombre, when Le Vassault and the other French officers drove him out of the command.

After the Sikh campaign Thomas, fully aware of Perron’s hos-
tile intentions, had built up his force to eight battalions of infantry of 750 men each, 1,500 Rohilla irregulars, 2,000 garrison troops, 1,000 cavalry and 50 guns. He was assisted by European officers, notably Captain Hopkins, now happily recovered from his wounds incurred in the Sikh campaign, and Captain Birch.

Perron made frequent representations to Sindhia, pointing out the danger of this considerable force poised on his weakest flank, and urged the necessity of destroying Thomas. But Daulat Rao preferred to try diplomacy first. He pressed Thomas with invitations to join his service. Thomas refused. "Principles of honour," he said, "forbid me from acting under the command of a Frenchman." Instead he offered to serve Sindhia as an independent ally; a proposal that Sindhia turned down. Perron then intrigued with the Sikhs to find a pretext for opening hostilities, and having reached an agreement with them sent an ultimatum to Thomas that he should at once send a representative to discuss Sindhia's proposals. At this critical juncture, news reached Delhi of the disastrous defeat of Sindhia's forces by Jaswant Rao Holkar at Ujjain. This tended to upset the balance of Maratha power politics, as Holkar was now advancing to attack Sindhia's main force. Sindhia ordered Perron to temporise with Thomas and to march immediately to the Deccan to meet Holkar's threat and to re-establish Sindhia's power.

Perron's plans had received a severe blow. As his plot with the French Government was coming to a head he dared not detach his brigades from Hindustan to the Deccan. His power lay in Delhi, and it would be fatal to his projects to lose control even for a few months of the areas he dominated. All the more so because of Thomas' active preparations in Hariana. Through his spies he knew of Thomas' efforts to form alliances with the Begum Sombre, the Rajahs of Jaipur and Ulwar, with Lakwa Dada and with Jaswant Rao Holkar himself. He knew that Holkar was urging Thomas to start hostilities, promising to assist him with men and money. What he probably did not know was the singular fact that two of Sindhia's brigades, those of the Begum Sombre and Filoze, had agreed to assist Thomas against Sindhia's commander-in-chief, Perron.

In his dilemma, Perron hit on a clever solution. He would send
Thomas to do his work in the Deccan and thus satisfy Sindhia, and keep his own brigades intact in Hindustan, which he might use to take over the Hariana in its master’s absence. He therefore received Thomas’ envoy with great courtesy, and requested a personal interview with Thomas himself.

The two European adventurers met at the fort of Bahadurgarh, in an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. Perron was accompanied by ten battalions of infantry and two thousand horse; Thomas had with him two of his most trusted battalions and three hundred horse. But according to James Skinner, then a captain in Perron’s Third Brigade, the conferences were conducted with extreme politeness, and Thomas dined and wine in the most friendly way with Perron’s European officers including Major Bourguien, whom he was shortly to know better. But the conferences brought no satisfactory results. Thomas found Perron’s final conditions unacceptable. He was to surrender his fief of Jhajjar, but to be allowed to retain the fort of Hansi; he was to rank as a colonel in Sindhia’s service, with a pay of Rs. 60,000 a month for his corps, and to serve under Perron’s orders. Finally he was to detach four of his battalions for service against Holkar in the Deccan. This last provision was to Thomas the most suspect of them all. He abruptly broke off negotiations and marched back to Hansi. War was promptly declared.

Perron returned to his headquarters at Koil, and left the conduct of operations in the hands of Major Louis Bourguien, with whom Thomas had dined and dined so recently. This gentleman had had a varied career. His real name was Louis Bernard, and like Perron he had begun as a sailor in Admiral Suffrein’s fleet at Pondicherry. Making his way to Calcutta he had served the East India Company in a kind of Foreign Legion, known as Captain Doxat’s Chasseurs. On the disbandment of this force, he became a cook in Calcutta, shortly afterwards becoming a manufacturer of fireworks for the Vauxhall Gardens at Calcutta. But finding success neither as a cook nor as a business man, he decided to try his hand again at soldiering, and obtained a junior commission in the Begum Sombre’s force, from which in 1794 he entered that of de Boigne as a lieutenant. He does not appear to have been any more competent as a soldier than he was as a
cook and a fireworks' maker. We hear of him next in 1800 when he was sent with one of Perron's battalions to assist the Rajah of Jaipur against Lakwa Dada. Soon afterwards, entrusted by Perron with an attack of Ajmir, he was defeated and superseded by Captain Symes. He swallowed his mortification, his offer of service having been rejected by The Rajah of Jaipur, with the fortunate result that he was given command of Perron's Third Brigade, and entrusted with the war against George Thomas.

Early in September, 1801, Bourguien with the Third Brigade, 6,000 Sikh cavalry and 60 guns invaded Thomas' territory, and, marching to Jhaijar, occupied it without opposition. He then tried to capture Georgegarh, a strong fort erected by Thomas five miles to the south, and named either after himself or His Majesty of England. But Georgegarh being strongly garrisoned his attack was repulsed, so, leaving Captain L. F. Smith, who with his brother were among the many English officers in Perron's command, with three battalions and a battering train to lay siege to it, Bourguien himself set off in hot pursuit of Thomas, who was reported to be in Jhind. Arriving hot-footed in Jhind, Bourguien was annoyed to hear that his quarry was in Patiala, but he set off immediately in pursuit, which was exactly what Thomas wished him to do. The latter now retraced his steps, equipped himself with ammunition and supplies at Hansi, where he left a garrison of Rohillas, and then swooped down on Smith at Georgegarh, covering the last seventy-six miles in two days, while Bourguien with the main army was pressing on with his wild-goose chase in Patiala.

At Thomas' sudden approach Smith fell back on Jhaijar, leaving a rear guard to cover him while he secured the safety of his guns and baggage. After an initial reverse owing to a large part of his army losing its way in the dark, Thomas fell upon the rear guard, utterly defeating it, but his troops were too exhausted to continue the pursuit, and he fell back on Georgegarh. According to Smith, Thomas missed his opportunity: "If he (Thomas) had continued the pursuit," he wrote later, "I must have lost all my guns, and my party would have been completely destroyed."

Smith's guns and baggage were saved by the arrival the next day of Smith's younger brother in command of Bourguien's cavalry.
To help his brother, he had ridden eighty miles in ten hours. And on the next day Bourguien turned up, his men hungry and tired after a march of sixty miles in thirty-six hours. Notwithstanding the state of his troops he ordered an immediate attack on Thomas' position, leaving Major Bernier to conduct it while he retired to the rear.

Thomas had chosen his ground with his usual skill, with Georgegarh and a fortified village on his right flank, and a strong redoubt on his left; and another large walled village in his rear. The approach to this strong line consisted of loose sand, which served not only to slow up the enemy attack but to deaden enemy cannon shot and prevent it from ricocheting. He had about five thousand men and fifty-four guns, as opposed to Bourguien's eight thousand men and sixty guns.

Bourguien's attack began at three o'clock in the afternoon of September 29th. At about four o'clock the two armies were within musket range; Bourguien's men dragging their cannon advanced bravely on, until Thomas opened a withering cross-fire with round and grapeshot on the advancing line, slaughtering them by the score and throwing the main body of the enemy into confusion. The younger Smith bravely restored the position by a gallant cavalry charge on Thomas' centre which began to give way, but young Smith had his leg shattered by a four-pounder cannon ball, and was carried back to Jhajjar, where after suffering the torments of an unskilled operation he died shortly afterwards of gangrene, aged twenty-four.

To save his centre, Thomas ordered Captain Hopkins to attack with bayonets with the right wing and Captain Birch with the left. Bourguien's line was driven back, but his gunners would not abandon their pieces and kept up a heavy fire. Bourguien's cavalry then made another charge, but were repulsed again and pursued by Thomas' horse. But now the unfortunate Hopkins had one of his legs struck off by a cannon-ball, and his men retired in disorder carrying him with them. Whereupon Bourguien's left wing reoccupied the position they had abandoned. Now the fire became so murderous on both sides, that both armies lay flat on the ground, taking advantage of every sand hillock and undulation for shelter. Thus they remained until nightfall, neither
side daring to expose itself to advance or retreat, but maintaining a heavy fire. That night the exhausted troops bivouacked in the open field.

At dawn a truce of six hours was arranged to enable both sides to convey their wounded to the rear and to bury their dead. At noon the flag of truce was hauled down, but after a few cannon shots, Bourguien drew off unmolested, leaving Thomas master of the field.

Thus ended indecisively what has been described as the severest battle ever fought between disciplined armies in Hindustan up to that date. The loss of both sides was enormous, Bourguien losing in killed and wounded 2,000 men, and Thomas nearly a thousand. Four out of the seven European officers in the Third Brigade were casualties, two of them fatal; and Thomas lost his second-in-command, Captain Hopkins, his only real friend. James Skinner, who was present at the battle, said that “had Thomas possessed another officer like Hopkins, he would have gained the day at Georgegarh.”

Although the battle was indecisive, the advantage was with Thomas. “... our commander, Major Louis Bourguien,” Skinner wrote, “was not only a coward but a fool. He was one of those who got on by flattery, and had it not been for Major Bernier, a Frenchman, we should certainly have lost the day.” He expressed astonishment at Thomas’ inactivity after the battle, “We had always heard that Thomas was a brave, active and clever soldier, and an able general. But we were surprised that he now permitted us to remain for fifteen days without attempting to attack us, or to make good his retreat to Hansi; for there is no doubt that had he tried either plan he would have succeeded.” Even more revealing is the account of Captain L. F. Smith whose siege of Georgegarh had started the battle: “Had Thomas taken advantage of Bourguien’s ignorance and folly, and sallied out on the beaten troops of Perron, he would have overturned his power. But Thomas was, in this critical moment, confused and confounded, though he had shown feats of valour during the action... Had he acted with his usual boldness, caution and activity, the forces under Bourguien must have been destroyed; the allies of Thomas would have thrown off the mask, and openly taken his part; and
before Perron could have collected another efficient force, Thomas would have been master of Delhi and the king's person, and probably have extinguished Perron's power and authority. Scindia would have quietly transferred that power to Thomas, for he would have been equally indifferent who governed Hindustan, Perron or Thomas, as he must, from impotence to resist, have bowed to the will and power of every aspiring mind who commanded large bodies of regular infantry."

An exaggerated view, perhaps, of Thomas' prospects, but such prospects were not beyond the bounds of possibility.

The harsh truth is that Thomas remained inactive for the critical fortnight because he was drunk. This was no sudden resort to the bottle to solace his grief for the death of Hopkins and to relieve mental and physical strain; it was, as his Victorian biographer, Compton, observes censoriously "alas! the climax of a long course of dissipation." It was a fatal climax.

While Thomas caroused, the command fell to one of his officers, Captain Hearsey, who instead either of retreating to Hansi or of attacking Bourguien contented himself with fortifying his camp, explaining that he was awaiting assistance from Lakwa Dada.

But as Thomas drank away the golden hours and Hearsey fiddled about the camp, there was feverish activity in Delhi. Drugeot, Perron's deputy there, collected all the doctors in the city and bundled them off to Jhajjar to treat the wounded, and hurried to send reinforcements. Perron at Koil, furious at Bourguien's defeat, superseded him in the command by Major Pedron of the Second Brigade. Pedron set off at once to the front with massive reinforcements, and on his arrival drew a cordon round Thomas of 30,000 men and 110 guns. He gained control of the surrounding countryside, and compelled the peasants to discontinue their usual supplies to Georgegarh, and a squadron of his cavalry seized a reservoir just outside the fort, leaving the besieged with only three wells to rely on.

Now, at last but much too late Thomas emerged from the alcoholic fog in which he had spent the previous two weeks, and suffering no doubt from a colossal hangover resumed the command of his depleted forces. He at once discovered that there
was now no immediate hope of either attack or retreat. He was completely surrounded by overwhelming forces. There was nothing to do except hold on to the camp, and await the promised support from Lakwa Dada. He reinforced his defences with cut thorn trees, which he had found so effective at Fatehpur, took stock of his provisions of which he estimated he had a month's supply, and made frequent sorties to probe the enemy's line for a weak link.

It was now the middle of October. The investing lines grew closer, but there was still no sign of Lakwa Dada, who indeed had his own hands full resisting an attack by Ambaji, and Holkar had just suffered a defeat in Indore. But before his defeat, Holkar had despatched some troops to Thomas' assistance, and these now arrived, having evaded the enemy cordon. Unfortunately they were few in number; nevertheless Thomas decided with their help to attempt to break his way through to Hansi. Accordingly on October 18th, he made a large-scale assault on the northern section of Pedron's line, only to be beaten back with the loss of 400 men. The next day, one of his Afghan officers, Rahman Khan, made a gallant cavalry charge at the head of 2,000 men, but they were shot down and driven back by Pedron's well-posted guns. Thomas' position was desperate. His provisions were very low, and the enemy cavalry cut off his foraging parties; the investing lines were now so close that a complete blockade was established; and the water in his three wells began to fail. And there was worse to come.

Spies and enemy agents now penetrated his camp. Incendiary fires began to break out, culminating in the destruction of several stacks of hay in Georgegarh, which formed the chief forage supply; and a large part of the remaining store of grain was purloined. The agents sowed gloom and despondency among the soldiers, and urged them with bribes and promises to desert their stricken leader. Many of his Indian officers, whose families were in enemy hands were under heavy pressure, and others were offered bribes and promises. Thomas' men began to melt away.

But still he held on waiting for relief that never came. He had no word from Lakwa, and many of his other allies sheered away from a doomed cause, and some of them actually joined Pedron.
Holkar wrote encouraging Thomas to hold out, saying that he was sending help, but none came. On November 6th Thomas himself with a body of cavalry attempted to surprise Pedron's camp by a night attack. But the spies in his camp had done their work; Pedron was fully prepared for the attack, which met a withering fire and was driven back.

Pedron now hoisted a flag and publicly announced that all deserters from Georgegarh taking refuge under it should receive quarter. That night two newly-raised battalions, and later two battalions of Afghan mercenaries passed over to Pedron.

The grain now being entirely exhausted, Thomas' men were fed on an unsuitable meat diet, all the cattle in the fort having being slaughtered for that purpose. For men accustomed to a grain diet this was not only unpalatable but unhealthy. But Holkar had informed Thomas that he had sent him a large convoy of grain which was due to arrive on November 10th. Thomas centred his hopes on this grain reaching him safely. On November 9th, the convoy was captured by a squadron of Pedron's cavalry. The noses of the camel drivers conveying it were cut off and sent with taunts into Thomas' starving camp the next morning.

Thomas now determined to cut his way through the enemy line and flee to Hansi. He ordered the necessary preparations for this desperate course; but his soldiers refused to obey orders, began to pack up their baggage and openly desert the camp. He called a council of war, where he learned that all his officers considered that there was nothing left to do except to surrender unconditionally. Indeed, while the council was deliberating, the Rohillas guarding the wells had gone over to the enemy; later in the evening the whole of the troops on outpost duty had followed the example of the Rohillas. At the same time an incendiary set fire to Thomas' last stack of hay, and as the flames lit up the dark night, the officer in charge of the fort of Georgegarh rode out with his men, escorted by Maratha cavalry who had been waiting by the walls.

The troops now began to desert in all directions, and by the morning Thomas found himself left with three hundred cavalry and what was left of Hopkins' battalion amounting to 200 men.

By all civilised standards, Thomas was a bandit, a ruthless
predatory wolf on the fold. We can discount the imperialist sentiment of Victorian drawing-rooms, and recognise Thomas in hundreds of cases that appeared in the British and Irish courts. But we should not be entirely right. He was proud and brave, and at the time of his fall showed a classic heroism which wins our sympathy.

At nine o'clock on the night of November 10th, 1801, Thomas mustered his Europeans and what was left of his cavalry, in all about 300 men, and led the way slowly out of the doomed camp. He soon approached that section of the enemy lines held by five battalions commanded by George Hessing, a half-caste Dutchman, not noted either for his courage or his tenacity, and raising himself in his stirrups led his last daring charge. His small band succeeded in cutting its way through the surprised enemy, but the alarm had been given and the whole of Pedron's cavalry turned out in pursuit. Soon overtaking the fugitives, they attacked them so furiously that Thomas' small band of horsemen was put to flight, melting into the dark night, leaving Thomas with Captains Birch and Hearsey and two sergeants to fly for their lives alone. Well mounted, the four men by a circuitous route to avoid enemy patrols covered a distance of 120 miles before reaching Hansi in the evening of November 11th.

The few faithful soldiers of Hopkins' battalion left behind at Georgegarh laid down their arms, but refused to enter the Maratha service. Some of the Indian officers who had been in Thomas' service for a long time, "rent their clothes and turned beggars, swearing that they would never serve as soldiers again."³

Fifty guns and all Thomas' camp and baggage fell into Pedron's hands.

[13]

On reaching his capital, Thomas threw all his energies into improving its defences. He now had only 1,200 troops left to him, of whom he considered only 300 reliable. There were only two guns fit for service, but the slow advance of the enemy allowed

³ *European Military Adventurers in Hindustan*, by Herbert Compton.
eight new cannons to be cast and mounted. All the wells in the vicinity of the city were filled up and the reservoirs defiled with beef and pork to make the water undrinkable to either Hindu or Mohammedan. Just outside the city, he built a strong outworks manning it with Rohilla troops. Then he sat back to await the enemy approach.

It was a long time coming. Pedron considering the campaign practically over returned to his brigade headquarters at Aligarh, and Bourguien was reinstated in the command to effect the coup de grâce. Bourguien was in no hurry; marching by easy stages he did not reach Hansi before the end of November. After a pause to clear out some of the wells and to reconnoitre Thomas' defences, he decided that it was first necessary to capture the outworks which defended the gates. Accordingly at dawn three columns of two battalions each led by Major Bernier, Captain Skinner and Lieutenant Mackenzie advanced to the attack. To Thomas' disgust, they met but a nominal resistance, the Rohilla garrison scrambling out and running away, and with very small losses Bourguien captured the works, on which he erected his batteries and opened a heavy fire on the town walls. The fire was cordially returned, but eventually Bourguien's guns effected a breach in the wall, and three columns numbering 1,500 men were told off for the attack.

At daybreak on December 10th, the three columns led by the Skinner brothers and Mackenzie advanced to take the town by storm. The younger Skinner and Mackenzie succeeded in forcing their way into the town, but the elder Skinner was twice beaten back by Captain Birch, who showered the storming party with burning thatch, powder pots and every missile that came to hand "greatly distressing and disheartening them." At the third attempt, however, Skinner's men made good their footing, although Skinner nearly got his head blown off by Birch who fired a double-barrelled gun at him.

Bourguien's three columns now converged towards the centre of the town, driving the defenders before them, until Thomas came up with his reserves. Attacking the younger Skinner, Thomas drove him back to the walls, but the elder Skinner coming to his brother's rescue forced Thomas to retire. The storming columns
now met at the central bazaar, which became the scene of a frightful conflict. Thomas brought up a six-pounder gun with which he sprayed the enemy with grapeshot and obliged them to retreat, but the stormers now received two nine-pounders and regained their position. The fiercest hand to hand fighting now began, young Skinner coming so near to Thomas that he was able to strike at him with his sabre, a blow which Thomas’ armour deflected. The narrow side-streets were choked with dead and the wounded who crawled out of the way. For hours the fighting went on until noon, when Bourguien’s superior numbers began to tell, and Thomas was forced to withdraw into the fort, leaving the enemy in possession of the town. Bourguien had won a costly victory, losing about 1,500 men killed and wounded; among the dead was the gallant Major Bernier. Thomas had now only 500 men left.

The next day, the bombardment of the fort began with 18-pounder guns. Thomas made repeated sorties to no advantage, and his men became disheartened. Provisions in the fort were short, and the constant fire told on the defenders’ nerves. Thomas’ men began to desert. To encourage desertion, Bourguien had letters offering the garrison six months’ pay and permanent service under the Maratha flag rolled round arrows and shot into the fort. These letters did their work, and a majority of the defenders were ready to surrender the fort and hand over their master. Bourguien announced his intention of throwing Thomas into prison, but was induced by Smith, the two Skinners and Mackenzie to allow Thomas the honours of a capitulation. Under a flag of truce, Captain Smith was deputed to visit him and offer terms. Thomas received him gratefully, and accepted the terms offered. He had no alternative. It was agreed that Thomas should be permitted to depart with all his money and private property to British territory, and his troops allowed to march out with their personal arms, and the honours of war; but that everything else in the fort was to be made over to the victors. In the circumstances the terms can only be regarded as generous. On December 20th, the terms of surrender were drawn out and signed, and the fighting stopped. Thomas undertook to deliver possession of the fort in two days. He visited Bourguien and his officers, and was
so dignified and courteous, that Bourguien was won over and invited him and his two officers, Birch and Hearsey, to dine with him the next day.

The dinner was almost a complete disaster. Thomas arrived gloomy and morose, but as the wine began to flow he cheered up and by eleven o'clock at night was completely drunk and belligerent. Taking offence at some remark by Bourguien, he rose to his great height, hurled insults at Bourguien, and drawing his sword, began to wave it dangerously near his host, shouting, "One Irish sword is still sufficient for a hundred Frenchmen." Bourguien fled from the tent and summoned his guard to protect him, as Thomas in swaying pursuit still wildly waving his sword shouted insults after "the damned Frenchman." Thomas' faithful Rajput escort began to gather, and this disgraceful scene might have had an ugly end, had not the officers present kept their heads. Thomas' men were assured that "it was only the Sahib drunk," which was something to which they were doubtless accustomed, and Thomas was finally persuaded to sheath his weapon and return to the feast. Bourguien also ventured to return, begged Thomas' pardon, explaining that he intended no insult, and the two shook hands in the friendliest manner, and the banquet continued. It was now more of an orgy than a banquet, and the elder Skinner, who was orderly officer of the day, seeing how things were shaping, took the precaution of riding into the town to instruct Bourguien's sentries not to challenge Thomas on his return to the camp. Unfortunately he forgot to warn the guard at the south-eastern gate, and, of course, that was the one that Thomas decided to enter by. The sentry challenged him, and the escort replied "Sahib Bahadur." The sentry, who must have been a singularly obtuse man, refused to let them pass, saying that he knew of no Sahib Bahadur. Whereupon Thomas dismounted in a drunken rage, drew his sword and slashed off the sentry's hand. The guard was called out, but before there could be further violence, Skinner turned up. He found Thomas staggering up and down, sword in hand, and Hearsey and several of his troopers trying to catch hold of him. At last a trooper caught him from behind, and his sword was taken from him. He was then placed in a palanquin, and in this state entered his fort for the last time.
The next morning Thomas remembered nothing, but on being told by Hearsey what had happened, he wrote a message to Bourguien apologising for his conduct, and sent for the trooper he had wounded and gave him Rs. 500. He then evacuated the fort.

It was not an edifying end to his career.

[14]

Escorted by a battalion of Bourguien’s infantry, commanded by Captain Smith, Thomas proceeded to the British outpost of Anupshahr, carrying with him his money and jewels, and accompanied by his wife and family. From Anupshahr he went by river to Benares, where he had an interview with Lord Wellesley, giving the Governor-General a good deal of valuable information about the political and military state of Hindustan.

It was his intention to return to Ireland, and he spent some time in Benares arranging his Indian affairs. While there he dictated his memoirs to Captain Francklin. He wished to do so in Persian, which he now spoke more fluently than English, but this was beyond the Captain’s capacity.

In August he left Benares for Calcutta by river, on the first stage of his journey home to Ireland. But he never reached Calcutta. His health had broken down, and he died on August 22nd, 1802, in his forty-sixth year, the victim, says Compton, “of his own fatal weakness”. He was buried in the cemetery at Bahrampur. But there is now no trace of his grave.

After his death, his wife Maria, who was of French parentage, his daughter and three sons found an asylum with the Begum Sombre, who had not forgotten her rescue by Thomas. She adopted John Thomas, the eldest son, and married him to the daughter of an Armenian officer in her service. The Begum provided for the family as long as she lived, and at her death in 1836, the following items appeared in her will: “Maria, wife of Geo. Thomas Rs. 7,000; John Thomas and his wife Joanna (Sohagun Begum) Rs. 18,000 and 7,000; Jacob Thomas and Geo. Thomas Rs. 10,000 and 2,000.” A total for the family of Rs. 44,000.

5 *Begum Samru*, by Brajendranath Banerji.
Nothing more is known of the family, except that in 1867, a
great-granddaughter of George Thomas was the wife of a clerk
on a humble salary in one of the Government offices at Agra.
Perron wrote triumphantly to de Boigne at Paris that he had
succeeded in "destroying that scoundrel, George Thomas."
Thomas may have been a scoundrel, but he certainly was a re-
markable man, the last of the great private adventurers.
It would soon be Perron's turn.
PART FOUR

Benoît de Boigne

[1]

In the view of all authorities Benoît de Boigne was one of the most extraordinary men who ever figured in Indian history. A man of genius and imagination, he was the first to introduce the science of European warfare to the martial races of India, and his method of civil administration that he introduced into Hindustan, later formed the basis of the English civil service.

He was born Benoît La Borgne at Chambéry in Savoy on March 8th, 1751, the son of a hide merchant of moderate means. Belonging to a border state he spoke French and Italian with equal fluency, and received by the standards of that time a tolerably good education at the Jesuit College in his native city. His family intended him to become a lawyer, but his own inclination was towards soldiering, for which his massive physique suited him. But there was no place for the son of a hide merchant among the shabby nobility who formed the officer corps of King Charles Emmanuel of Sardinia, who then ruled Savoy, so the young La Borgne ennobled himself by changing his name to de Boigne, and crossed the border into France.

Here he applied for a commission in the Irish Brigade of His Most Christian Majesty, Louis XV. This Brigade founded to contain the “wild geese” of Ireland, whose exploits, including the murder of Wallenstein, had long made them famous, was now no longer exclusively Irish, but a kind of Foreign Legion, hospitable to suitable recruits of all nationalities. De Boigne’s application was entertained, and he was admitted into the Clare regiment as an ensign. The next three years he spent learning his trade in
Flanders, under the command of Major Leigh, a noted disciplinarian. From there he went with his regiment for a short spell of garrison duty in the distant French possession of Isle de France, now called Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean. In this delightful island he came first in contact with the magical East. But on this occasion he did not stay there long, returning to France eighteen months later, dissatisfied with lack of promotion and money.

In 1774, learning by chance that Russia then at war with the Turks was welcoming volunteer officers, de Boigne resigned his commission in the French service, and set off for Greece, with a letter of introduction from the Sardinian minister at Turin to Admiral Orloff, who commanded the Russian forces. At Paros, he was received by the Admiral, who was sufficiently impressed to appoint him to a captaincy in a Greek regiment in the Russian service.

Unfortunately his new appointment did not turn out to be very profitable. After a short time, his regiment took part in an idiotically planned and executed attack on the island of Tenedos, at the mouth of the Dardanelles. The Russians here suffered a disastrous defeat, and de Boigne was among those taken prisoner by the Turks.

It is not pleasant at any time to be a prisoner of the Turks, but in the eighteenth century an infidel invader could expect scant consideration. According to one account he languished in a Turkish prison at Scio; according to another he was sent to Constantinople and there sold as a slave, employed on menial work until ransomed by his family.

On recovering his freedom, de Boigne went to St. Petersburg, where he appears to have interested the Empress Catherine in his suffering at the hands of the Turks, and that lady, always susceptible to personable young men, promoted him to major. In this capacity, he commanded the escort which accompanied Lord Percy on a tour of the Greek islands. At Smyrna he met a number of English merchants newly returned from the East, and their stories of the anarchy prevailing in India and of the vast fortunes to be made there by men of enterprise and courage determined him to go without delay to that magic land. He obtained from Lord
Percy a letter of introduction to the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, and then returned to St. Petersburg to lay down his Russian commission. He secured an interview with Catherine, and interested her in his plan to make the journey to India overland by way of the Caspian Sea, Tartary and Kashmir. The Russian government had long had imperialist designs on those areas, and later, when Catherine was contemplating an invasion of India, she recalled de Boigne’s suggested route and asked for all information on it.

De Boigne was not successful. War between Turkey and Persia made the proposed route doubly unsafe, and he had to retrace his steps to Aleppo. From there he took ship for Alexandria, was shipwrecked at the mouth of the Nile, rescued by Arabs, and finally reached Cairo, where he met his friend Lord Percy, who not only furnished him with further letters of introduction but secured him a passage on an English ship bound for Madras.

It was a bad time for a former French officer to arrive in British territory. He landed in Madras in 1778, just after England had declared war on France for recognising the independence of the American territories. To the Governor, Sir Thomas Rumbold, de Boigne was clearly a French spy, and perhaps also a Russian one. There were no jobs available for such a suspicious character, and de Boigne was forced to set up as a fencing-master. Eventually, however, the Governor’s suspicions were partly allayed, and de Boigne was allowed to enter the Madras Native Infantry as an ensign. The man who had been a captain in the French army and a major in the Russian could hardly be expected to be happy in this humble post, especially as he heard of the exploits of independent adventurers like Sombre and Médoc, but nevertheless he remained in it for two years, until his resignation was forced after being acquitted at a court-martial of behaving improperly with the wife of another officer. He made his way to Calcutta, where he was cordially received by Warren Hastings, on the strength of Percy’s letter of introduction. He confided in the Governor-General his intention to make his way back to Europe overland, and Hastings provided him with letters to the British agents in India and also to the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh. He went first to the Court of Oudh, where the Nawab-Wazir, as was his genial
custom with recommended visitors, presented him with valuable gifts, on the proceeds of which he settled down at Lucknow to study the languages of Hindustan.

At Lucknow he made the acquaintance of an extraordinary Frenchman named Claude Martine, with whom he formed a friendship which lasted until Martine's death, sixteen years later.

A former private in the French Army, Martine had entered the Company service after the fall of Pondichéri in 1761, and had reached the rank of captain by 1764, when the foreign corps in which he served was disbanded after a mutiny. As, in addition to his other abilities, he was an excellent draughtsman he now was appointed to survey the north-eastern districts of Bengal, and having done this satisfactorily was appointed to do the same thing in Oudh. Here his ingenuity so impressed the Nawab-Wazir that he requested the Company to second him to his own service, and Martine, while keeping his Company commission, was appointed superintendent of the Nawab's arsenal and artillery park. He soon became the Nawab's chief advisor and negotiator with the Company, and thus rose to a position of great power, enjoying not only a handsome salary but also the enormous bribes and presents which petitioners found it politic to give him. Further he established a profitable interest in the state loans, and, taking advantage of the dangerous times, offered to take charge of people's valuables, charging a commission of twelve per cent. In this way he acquired an immense fortune, lived in a large house at Lucknow eccentrically furnished and designed, and gained a reputation for avarice. Judicious presents, however, to the Company, secured his rapid promotion, and he died a major-general in 1800, and was interred in a tomb which he had specially constructed in his house. Among his bequests was a large sum to the Government of Bengal to establish a school called after him La Martinière, where on the anniversary of his death a sermon on his memory is to be preached followed by a public dinner at which a toast to the founder is to be drunk in solemn silence.

Thus in 1783 while in Lucknow, de Boigne was sustained and encouraged by the influential Martine, who helped him to gather a suitable equipment for his proposed journey through Central Asia. In August de Boigne set off for Delhi in the company of a
British agent named Brown, who had been sent to spy on Madhoji Sindhia and on the Moghul Court. Brown was stopped on the way, but de Boigne reached Delhi, where he was refused an audience with the Emperor Shah Alam. Proceeding to Agra, where the Emperor’s wazir was busy besieging the Jats, the latter, Mirza Shafi, discovering that he had been in the company of Brown, regarded him as a British spy and coldly refused to give him any help. Nearby was the camp of Sindhia, and the British Resident at Sindhia’s court, James Anderson, hearing of de Boigne’s arrival invited him to visit him at the camp. But it seemed to be de Boigne’s misfortune constantly to be taken for spy. Madhoji was extremely suspicious. Here was a stranger who had been in the company of Brown, then at Delhi, then at the Moghul camp, and now with James Anderson, whom Madhoji was trying to hoodwink regarding his intentions about Delhi. It was too much to swallow. In order to obtain the information he thought he needed, Madhoji adopted the simple expedient of having de Boigne robbed of all his baggage on his way to Anderson’s camp. Later, through pressure by Anderson, he recovered most of his baggage but not his letters of credit and recommendation, the loss of which made it impossible to continue his proposed journey. Furthermore he found himself stranded and penniless in a hostile area. He had nothing left to sell except his sword. He set about looking for a buyer.

[2]

De Boigne’s resentment at the treatment he had received from the Marathas determined him to offer his services to Sindhia’s enemies. The nearest of these enemies was the Jat Rana of Gohad, whom Sindhia was now besieging at Gwalior. The Rana, Chattri Singh, was assisted in his defence by a disciplined battalion of infantry purchased from René Médoc, and now commanded by the Scotsman Sangster. But instead of applying for a commission in this force, de Boigne grandly proposed to the Rana that he should be commissioned to raise a brigade of five regiments. All he required to effect this was a small advance of one lakh of
rupees. Chattri Singh was unimpressed by this grandiose offer by a complete stranger, and suspecting a trick to get money out of him, contrived to let Sindhia know of it.

De Boigne now applied to another enemy of the Marathas, Partab Singh, the Rajah of Jaipur, who proved more trusting, engaging de Boigne to raise two battalions at a salary of Rs. 2,000 a month. He had hardly begun his task before he was summoned to Calcutta to explain his appointment, the Bengal Council complaining that the Governor-General had given him aid in order to journey across Central Asia and not in order to join the service of an Indian prince. De Boigne obeyed the order, and journeyed to Calcutta, where his explanations satisfied Warren Hastings. But on his return he discovered that Partab Singh had changed his policy as a result of the ratification of the Treaty of Salbai between the Marathas and the Company, and that his services were no longer required. De Boigne was dismissed with a handsome solatium, and went to Delhi. Here he was astonished to receive an invitation from Sindhia to join his service.

The Maratha armies of the period consisted entirely of cavalry. The recent reverses suffered by the Marathas in their war with the English, had impressed Sindhia with the importance of disciplined infantry, and he resolved to raise a force of this arm. Madhoji now offered de Boigne a commission to raise two battalions of infantry, equipped and disciplined on the lines of those in the Company's service. For this he would receive Rs. 1,000 a month with eight rupees a month for each soldier in the force.

Although the pay offered was not over-generous, de Boigne did not hesitate to accept. The Marathas were now the greatest Indian power, and Madhoji Sindhia was the undisputed leader of the Confederacy. Furthermore as a result of the Treaty of Salbai, there was nothing to prevent Sindhia realising his immense ambitions in Hindustan, and re-establishing Maratha supremacy on a surer basis than it had been when it was temporarily destroyed at Panipat.

De Boigne began vigorously to recruit his battalions, from the warrior races of those areas. He fixed the pay of a sepoy at five and a half rupees a month—a revealing commentary on the living standards of the time—thus leaving a surplus from which to offer
attractive pay to European officers. One of the first of these to appear was the Scotsman, Sangster, who had just left the Rana of Gohad’s service.

Little is known of Sangster, except that he was extremely skilled in the casting of cannon, and that he could manufacture excellent musket at the low cost of ten rupees each. De Boigne appointed him superintendent of the arsenal, and he soon established other arsenals in Maratha territory, casting cannon balls at Gwalior, where there were iron mines, and manufacturing gunpowder at Agra, importing the saltpetre and sulphur from Bikaner.

Among other adventurers engaged by de Boigne were the Dutchman, John Hessing, and the French royalist Frémont.

With the assistance of these men de Boigne used all his energy in training and drilling his raw levies and before long they were ready to take the field. Sindhia sent them to gain their baptism of fire under Appa Khandi Rao, who was then subduing Bundelkhand. Although at first received with contempt by Appa’s predatory cavalry, they showed their value in the first engagements and received the highest praise from Sindhia’s general.

They were soon recalled from Bundelkhand. The dissensions and rivalries among the Moghul nobles culminating in the assassination of Afrasyab Khan, the son of Mirza Najaf Khan, the premier noble, gave Madhoji the opportunity he had long waited for. The Emperor, having fled the turbulence of Delhi for Agra, appealed to Sindhia for help. The latter summoned de Boigne and his battalions from Bundelkhand, gathered his cavalry and in October, 1784, crossed the Chambal river, the northern boundary of the Maratha dominions, and joined Shah Alam at Agra. From there he escorted him back to Delhi, re-seated him on what was left of the Peacock Throne, and induced him to issue two edicts, one appointing the Peshwa, the nominal head of the Maratha Confederacy, as viceroy of the Empire, and the other himself, Sindhia, as supreme deputy viceroy, with the governorship of the Delhi and Agra provinces. In return for signing away the regal power, the imbecile Emperor was promised a peaceful existence.

But the Moghul nobles were not so acquiescent. At first dis-
mayed by Madhoji's swift advance and confused by the anarchy they had themselves created, some submitted while others fled. They watched with growing rage, as the Marathas took the fortresses of Aligarh and Agra and over-ran the rich Doab, and felt that they had reached the limit of endurance when Sindhia began to reform the sefif system. In face of the common enemy they temporarily composed their differences and prepared to oppose him. They formed a secret alliance with the Rajput princes, who resented the heavy tribute they were forced to pay to the Marathas.

It was not long before Madhoji got wind of this conspiracy against his power, and resolved to crush it in the bud. In his capacity as Supreme Imperial Deputy, he summoned the Rajahs of Jaipur and Jodhpur and other Rajput chiefs to pay the tribute that they owed as nominal vassals of the Empire. To enforce payment Sindhia then led the Imperial Army, reinforced by the army of Appa Khandi Rao which contained de Boigne's battalions, into Rajputana. Considering his knowledge of the disaffection of the Moghul nobles who were the generals of the Imperial army, it seems to have been a reckless thing to do.

It turned out to be disastrous. Sindhia met the Rajput army drawn up for battle a few miles south of Jaipur at the village of Lalsot. Before action could take place, the two leading Moghul generals, Mohammed Beg Hamadani, and his nephew, the dashing cavalry leader, Ismail Beg, deserted with their forces to the enemy. To avoid further desertions by the dispirited Moghul troops, Sindhia at once gave battle. He scored an initial success in that Mohammed Beg was one of the first casualties being killed by a cannon ball, but Ismail Beg rallied his uncle's wavering troops and led them in such a furious charge on the Maratha cavalry covering Sindhia's right that it was driven back in disorder. Thus encouraged, the Rajah of Jodhpur ordered his justly famous Rathor cavalry to charge Sindhia's left wing, which consisted only of de Boigne and his two battalions.

De Boigne had formed his men into a hollow square, a formation afterwards made famous by Wellington, with his guns hidden from view in the centre. His disciplined troops waited until the cavalry were almost on top of them, and then at de Boigne's
command, the front line fell back behind the guns, which at once discharged a terrible fire of grapeshot. Staggered and shocked by the unexpected fire, the brave horsemen still came on, cutting down the gunners and attempting to reach the centre of the square. Then as they were blinded by the smoke, de Boigne yelled another order, and two thousand muskets fired a murderous volley into the very faces of horses and men. The horses would no longer face the fire, and they turned back, many of them riderless, spreading terror and confusion in the main body behind. In the midst of the smoke and confusion, before the Rajputs could re-group for another charge, de Boigne advanced with his infantry firing deadly volleys at the closest quarters until finally the cavalry broke and fled. Once again the despised infantry had put the cavalry to shame.

All that was now needed to win the victory was for the imperial centre to advance in pursuit of the stricken enemy. They were ordered to do so but refused to move, and the enemy made good their retreat.

Two days later, Sindhia began to form his line to renew the battle, but even as he did so, the whole of the Imperial army with eighty guns passed over to the enemy, with their drums beating and flags flying. Sindhia was helpless to prevent it.

Left only with Appa’s cavalry and de Boigne’s infantry, facing an army heavily reinforced by desertions from his own, Madhoji had nothing to do except retreat. He decided to retire to his stronghold at Alwar, leaving de Boigne to cover his rear. Fortunately the Rajputs, considering they had got what they wanted, refused to take part in a pursuit and dispersed to their own territories, in spite of the remonstrances of Ismail Beg. The latter, mustering what cavalry he could get hold of, set off at once to attack the retreating Maratha columns hoping to destroy them; but all his attacks were beaten back by de Boigne until eight days later Sindhia found refuge within the strong walls of Alwar.

The news of Sindhia’s defeat soon reached Delhi, and Ghulam Kadir, the son of the Rohilla rebel Zabita, expelled the Maratha garrison, reduced the fortress of Aligarh, and then joined Ismail Beg in besieging the Maratha general, Lakwa Dada, at Agra. Madhoji Sindhia convinced that he could no longer hold Hindu-
stan, collected his beaten forces and crossing the Chambal fell back on Gwalior, whence he sent urgent demands to the Peshwa at Poona to send reinforcements.

In April 1788, Sindhia although he had received no reinforcements from a jealous Poona gathered what forces he could and in alliance with the Jats marched to the relief of Agra, where Lakwa Dada was still bravely holding out. They were met by the Moghul army under Ismail Beg and Ghulam Kadir at Chaksana, near Bharatpur. Once again disciplined infantry and the skilled use of firepower proved more than a match for the wild charges of a more numerous cavalry. Lestineau’s infantry, employed by the Jats stood firm against Ghulam Kadir and his horsemen, and as at Lalsot the Moghul squadrons were broken and beaten back by de Boigne’s guns and muskets. But the lightly armed Maratha horsemen were no match for the heavy Moghul cuirassiers and were driven back into the shelter of Bharatpur. Thus left alone in the field, de Boigne and Lestineau after suffering heavy losses from repeated attacks were forced to fall back and join the cavalry behind the thick walls of the fortress. Sindhia had suffered another defeat.

But it was by no means decisive. There were dissensions between Ismail and Ghulam, who had little in common except their creed and hatred of the Marathas. Sindhia now thought it politic to encourage the Sikhs to invade Ghulam Kadir’s own territory of Saharanpur, and sent a force of Marathas to assist them. Ghulam Kadir was obliged to march north at once to defend his own possessions, leaving Ismail to continue the siege of Agra. Having thus divided the enemy forces, Sindhia instructed his generals to resume the offensive, and Appa Khandi Rao and Rana Khan marched to the relief of Agra, reaching it on June 18th, 1788, at the height of the hot season.

The two armies were drawn up on the plain outside the city. Ismail Beg had his back to the Jumna river, and from the red battlements of the fort, the gallant Lakwa Dada watched the coming contest anxiously. It was a long and desperate battle, and de Boigne following his usual tactics of the hollow square and the use of concentrated firepower was largely responsible for the Maratha victory. Towards sunset the Moghuls were in flight.
Ismail Beg, twice wounded, swam his horse across the Jumna, and made his escape to Ghulam Kadir, who was returning to Agra after repelling the Sikhs. The two Moghuls seized possession of Delhi, where the brutal conduct of Ghulam culminating in the blinding of the aged Emperor finally alienated Ismail, who came over to the Marathas. The subsequent flight of the Rohilla desperado, his capture and frightful execution have already been described.

Sindhia took over Delhi at his leisure, reinstated the stricken Emperor, who once more made the Peshwa his viceroy with Sindhia as the supreme deputy.

The battle of Agra was decisive. It put an end to any hope of a Moghul resurrection, finally established the ascendancy of the Marathas, and made Madhoji Sindhia the undisputed master of Hindustan.

The conduct of de Boigne and his two battalions was greatly praised, but de Boigne received no material recognition. Confident in his achievements he sought leave from Sindhia to increase his two battalions to a full brigade of 10,000 men. But Sindhia was short of money, for not only had the war been expensive but he had been unable as yet to collect revenue and tribute from the ravaged country. Furthermore he feared that such promotion of a foreign adventurer would create discontent among his own followers. He rejected the proposal.

De Boigne was both ambitious and mercenary. He also realised that if he agreed to remain in a comparatively junior post he was unlikely to get any further. He offered his resignation, and, perhaps a little to his surprise, Sindhia accepted it. They parted, however, on good terms.

De Boigne left Delhi in 1789 and went to Lucknow, where, with the help of his friend Claude Martine he entered into trade as a cloth and indigo merchant. Although he had had no previous experience, de Boigne's business flourished at once, which is not very surprising since it was sponsored by the powerful and influential Martine.

While de Boigne was turning an honest penny in commerce, Sindhia was consolidating his empire. He ran into several difficulties. The first one was that of garrisoning the conquered coun-
try. The Maratha horsemen were the instruments of predatory warfare and were altogether unsuited to garrison duties; for such work a large infantry force was necessary, and Madhoji began to recruit Mohammedan and Rajput sepoys. The need for infantry was now at last clearly recognised. The second great difficulty was the jealousies and hostilities his successes had provoked. Not only did he have to deal with the natural resentment of Moghuls, Rajputs, Jats and Rohillas, but the much more dangerous hostility of his Maratha rivals, notably Tukoji Holkar and Nana Farnavis, the crafty and unscrupulous minister, who was the real power at the Peshwa’s court. To safeguard himself, therefore, Sindhia resolved to create a special force bound to himself and more completely under his control than the unruly Marathas. Sindhia’s mind turned to de Boigne.

Early in 1790 he sent an envoy to Lucknow to invite de Boigne to return to his service on the basis of the proposal de Boigne had made to him after the battle of Agra. The newly fledged businessman could not resist the temptation. He accepted at once. Helped by Martine he made arrangements for the business to continue in his absence, and indeed he subsequently made use of it to transfer to Europe the large fortune he made by the sword in India. His arrangements completed, he accompanied Sindhia’s envoy to the Maratha camp at Mattra, where he received a commission to recruit a brigade of ten battalions of infantry, with suitable cavalry and artillery support, to be officered by Europeans and disciplined in the English fashion. He was given the fortress of Agra as a base and arsenal.

De Boigne, himself, was promoted to the rank of general, at a salary of Rs. 4,000 a month, later increased to Rs. 10,000, in addition to the natural perquisites of his office. At his interview with Sindhia he made two stipulations: one, that he was not to be compelled to fight the English, and two, that his troops should be regularly paid. This latter provision was most important. Indian rulers in general were lavish with promises but very poor payers, and arrears of promised pay were the usual cause of discontent, desertion and outright mutiny. De Boigne represented strongly to Sindhia that it was impossible to have a reliable army on the haphazard pay system then general. As Sindhia had an innate
reluctance to parting with hard cash, he made over to de Boigne a *jaidad*, or military assignment of territory, the revenues of which were to be used for the expenses of the brigade.

De Boigne’s *jaidad* was in the rich Doab, and in a short time, by good civil administration, he increased the revenue to thirty lakhs of rupees a year, with the result that his soldiers were not only regularly paid, but as he was allowed a 2 per cent commission on all collections he substantially increased his own fortune.

He had no difficulty in recruiting men for his battalions. His own two battalions formed the nucleus of the brigade, to which he added Lestineau’s battalion, the commander of which having decamped to France with Ghulam Kadir’s jewels and the regimental pay. Recruits from Rohilkhand, Oudh and the Doab poured in, for in those days it was better to be a soldier, with the chance of plunder, than to till the land and try to defend it from warring armies, prowling bandits and local tyrants. As for officers he already had Sangster in charge of the arsenals, Frémont, who now became his second-in-command, and the Dutchman Hessing. Among other officers de Boigne engaged at this time were four Frenchmen, Perron, Baours, Pedron and Rohan, and two British subjects, Sutherland, a cashiered British officer, and Roberts.

With his usual enthusiasm and energy, de Boigne threw himself into the training of his new battalions, and by the middle of 1790 he was able to parade his new brigade, marching with precision and discipline behind the White Cross of Savoy, before the astonished gaze of Sindhia and the Maratha chiefs. The new brigade was in startling contrast to the wild and unruly Maratha horsemen, who were all inclined to act as independent individuals and to resent discipline.

The brigade was soon to show its worth in battle.

[3]

Sindhia’s enemies now either capitulated or temporarily acquiesced in his ascendancy until better times should allow them to over-
throw him. But there remained Ismail Beg. The Prince Rupert of the Mohguls had, as Sindhia fondly thought, been bought off by the Maratha general Rana Khan with the gift of the Mewari country, with his capital at Mewat. But Ismail continued to resent infidel rule, and was determined when opportunity offered to strike another blow for the Crescent.

The opportunity came early in 1790. The Rajput chiefs had greeted Sindhia’s victory with sullenness, and now as Sindhia extended his power became ready listeners to Ismail’s proposals for a united campaign to defeat him. They were further encouraged by the offer of the Abdali King of Kabul, Timur Shah, to descend with his Afghans to their support. But Ismail could not wait for Timur Shah and took the field with the Rajahs of Jaipur and Jodhpur. It was a dangerous combination. The qualities of Ismail were well known, the Rathor cavalry of Jodhpur was the best in India, the Rajputs were brave and devoted soldiers, and the likely advent of the Abdalis cast the shadow of Panipat.

Sindhia acted at once. Lakwa Dada with a large army to which de Boigne’s brigade was attached left Mathura in the early summer of 1790.

In May the army reached Gwalior, and a cloud of light Maratha cavalry was sent out to cover the further advance and obtain intelligence of the enemy. Soon they sent word that Ismail was entrenched at Patan, in the rocky country between Gwalior and Ajmir, not far from the scene of the battle of Lalsot. The Rajputs were at hand, and had they effected a junction with Ismail the situation would have become extremely perilous for the Marathas. But Sindhia’s diplomacy had been at work. The Rajah of Jaipur had received presents and promises from Sindhia and agreed to hold aloof from the battle. Nevertheless, Ismail commanded a force estimated by de Boigne at 20,000 horse and 25,000 foot with a hundred guns.

While waiting for the Jaipur army, Ismail kept to his strong entrenchments, and for more than three weeks defended them against Maratha assaults. But neither Jaipur nor Timur Shah turned up, and Ismail ran out of patience and provisions, and sallied out to assume the offensive on June 19th.

The battle was a conflict between modern war and mediaeval
war, between men with muskets and men in armour. Led by the
dauntless Ismail, the Moghul and Rathi heavy cavalry thundered
down upon de Boigne’s field batteries and sabred the gunners
at their posts. Between charges the infantry were pelted by grape-
shot from the entrenchments, and de Boigne had to form square
as fast as the enemy horsemen renewed their charges. The Marat-
tha cavalry was worsted by the Moghuls, and the issue depended
on de Boigne’s newly enlisted infantry.

To induce the enemy to leave their entrenchments, de Boigne
ordered his men to advance in column dragging their guns with
them until they came within reach of grapeshot. He reports the
sequel in his own letter published in the *Calcutta Gazette*, July
22nd, 1790: “... halting, we gave and received from each gun
nearly forty rounds of grape, which made it a warm business, we
being in the plain and they in the trenches. The evening was now
far advanced, and seeing at the same time such numerous bodies
of the enemy’s cavalry in motion, and ready to fall on us if they
could find an opening, I thought it prudent to move on rather
quicker, which we did till the firing of platoons began. But we
had already lost such numbers of people, principally *clashies*
(artillerymen) that those remaining were unable to drag the
guns any further, I, therefore, gave immediate orders to storm
the lines, sword in hand, which was as soon executed.” The first
enemy battery was carried by shock; the second captured at
about 8 p.m. after a hard struggle; the third fell an hour later.
Resistance was now over; infantry and cavalry fled in all direc-
tions; and Ismail, seeing the day irrevocably lost, galloped away
with his personal following to seek refuge at Jaipur, leaving de
Boigne in possession of all his guns, elephants, bazaar and bag-
gage. The next day Ismail’s infantry to the number of 12,000
which had taken refuge in the fort of Patan, surrendered to the
Marathas. “Thank God,” wrote de Boigne in his report, “I have
realised all the sanguine expectations of Sindhia. It was indeed a
signal victory, won by a small body of disciplined infantry over a
force three times their number.

When the good news reached Sindhia at Mattra, he determined
to press home his advantage, and complete the subjugation of the
Rajput states. He ordered de Boigne to invade the state of Jodh-
pur. The old Rajah had made up his mind not to give in without another fight, but meanwhile he tried to bribe de Boigne with the gift of the town of Ajmir and the surrounding country on condition of his joining the Rajputs against Sindhia. He thought de Boigne was no better than the ordinary military adventurer of the time, and was painfully surprised when the French general replied that Sindhia had already given him not only Ajmir but all the territories of Jaipur and Jodhpur, and that therefore the bribe was insufficient.

In fact, de Boigne had already decided to capture Ajmir, a place lying half way between Jaipur and Jodhpur and thus of great strategical importance. He arrived there on August 15th, and at once began to invest the town. But the town was commanded by the fort of Taragarh, built on a peak and almost entirely surrounded by precipices. Its walls were ten feet thick and twenty feet high built of huge blocks of stone hewn and fitted, and in the enclosure there were large tanks of rain water, and a year’s provisions.

For fifteen days de Boigne attacked this fort without making any impression on it, then, hearing that the Rajah and his Rathors had taken the field, he left 2,700 men to maintain the blockade of Taragarh, and marched down the Jodhpur road to meet them.

The flight of the Rathors at Patan had covered them with a disgrace that they felt keenly. They were accused in ribald verse of abandoning on the field of battle the five attributes of manhood: horse, shoes, turban, moustache and the organs of virility. That this was most unjust did not matter: they were now determined to redeem themselves. They came from city, town and village to join the standard of the old Rajah, Bijai Singh. Once gathered they encamped under the protection of the walls of Merta, seventy-six miles north-east of Ajmir, waiting for the indomitable Ismail Beg, who was riding hell for leather from Jaipur to join them.

After a difficult march because of lack of water, de Boigne approached Merta on September 8th. The cavalry was sent ahead to reconnoitre, and was almost taken by surprise by the Rathors, while the infantry dragged their cannon across the river Luni. It was not until the evening of the 9th that de Boigne came in
sight of the Rathor position. His Maratha colleagues Lakwa Dada and Gopal Rao, who seem to have allowed de Boigne to conduct the campaign, urged him to attack without delay, but yielded to his arguments that the men were in need of food and rest, and that the approaching darkness would make any pursuit of a defeated enemy impossible.

The old Rajah and his Rathors passed the night in high festivity, and were still sleeping off their debauch when they were rudely awakened by showers of grapeshot, with which de Boigne had begun his dawn attack. His infantry now advanced and stormed and occupied the outer Rajput lines, and the Jodhpur infantry although fighting bravely amid the general confusion were beginning to waver and break. But now the Rathor chiefs were fully awake. Donning the yellow scarves to denote that they were riding to victory or death, they rapidly formed and mounted four thousand chosen men. At this moment an over-zealous French officer, Captain Rohan, without orders from his general, took it upon himself to advance with three battalions, thus breaking the line and affording a weak point for attack. The Rathors did not miss this opportunity. Charging at a gallop the three detached battalions, they drove them back in complete disorder, and then suddenly wheeling on to the Maratha cavalry on de Boigne’s right scattered it like the wind. De Boigne now found himself surrounded. Coolly as usual he rapidly formed his men into a hollow square, and the enemy cavalry found guns, muskets and bayonets ready to receive them at every point. Like a tempest the Rathor squadrons charged the square again and again, in spite of the frightful fire of grape and shot, but the disciplined brigade held firm. Of the four thousand Rathor cavaliers who had started the attack there were soon no more than fifteen left alive. These in an act of self-immolation joined up and charged the unbroken line, and were shot dead.

The tempest was over. The battalions of de Boigne deployed into line and advanced upon the Rathor camp, supported by their batteries. The Rathors fought well but by 10 o’clock their camp was stormed, and then they fled, their retreat covered by the remainder of their cavalry. The whole camp and a vast plunder fell into the hands of the conquerors; and the town was taken by
assault the same afternoon.

Among the European casualties was a Frenchman named Baours, who was wounded in the thigh and died. He had formerly commanded the Begum Sombre's battalions, succeeding Pauli who had been beheaded by Mohammed Beg Hamadani, but had left her service to command one of de Boigne's new battalions. Lieutenant Roberts had the distinction of being severely wounded by an extraordinary weapon called an organ, which consisted of thirty-six gun barrels so joined as to fire at once, a Rajput forerunner of the machine-gun.

Ismail Beg with hastily gathered forces arrived the day after the battle, furious at having missed the fun. He rode away to Jaipur, after a vain attempt to persuade the disheartened Bijai Singh to renew the battle, but he found the Jaipur Rajah most reluctant to adopt his war-like plans, and so he galloped off to find refuge and a base for future operation in the desert fort of Kanaund, command of which was given him by the widow of Najaf Kuli Khan and the sister of the turbulent Ghulam Kadir.

Bijai Singh soon sued for peace, and accepted the conqueror's harsh terms, which included the cession of Ajmir, which, however, was given not to de Boigne but to Lakwa Dada. The Rana of Udaipur followed his example, and Partab Singh of Jaipur now isolated after a token resistance also submitted. Sindhia was now the undisputed master of Central India as well as of Hindustan.

Sindhia was the first to recognise that he owed his victories to the generalship of de Boigne and to the skill and discipline of his battalions. He was now an enthusiastic convert to the principle of infantry warfare, and de Boigne was accordingly instructed to increase his legion to 18,000 regular infantry with a number of light troops and additional guns. For the support of these forces a further tract of land ranging from Delhi to Mathura, bringing in a revenue of twenty-two lakhs a year, was assigned. He established his headquarters at Koil, near Aligarh, where he built himself a magnificent house called Sahib-Bagh.

For the next few months de Boigne was busy recruiting, organising and supervising the training of his new brigade. At this time also he created a small select body of Persian cavalry to act as his own personal bodyguard, a not unwise precaution in view
of the enemies his success had made. He gave the command of
the first brigade to Frémont, with a Scotsman named James Gar-
der as second-in-command; Perron was made commander of the
second brigade, with a Savoyard named Drugeon as second-in
command.

Among the new battalion commanders appointed was a Nea-
politan, named Michael Filoze, who had been a trooper in Réné
Médoc’s band of freebooters. He later broke away from de
Boigne formed his own corps of eleven battalions, the command
of which descended to his two sons, Fidele and Baptiste, on the
flight of their father after a fairly unsavoury episode. Louis Bour-
guein was also given a command.

But while de Boigne was raising his second brigade, there were
feverish activities in Poona against Sindhia, and his great rival in
the Maratha Confederacy, Tukoji Holkar was creating a disciplin-
ed corps of infantry of his own, to which he gave the command
to a skilled and experienced French officer, the Chevalier
Dudrenec.

[4]

In his favourite cantonment of Mathura, Madhoji Sindhia pon-
dered over the problems that his recent victories had created.
He was well aware of the intrigues against him of Nana Farnavis,
who was in control of things at the Peshwa’s court, and when
the Company in their war against Tipu of Mysore refused his
offer of an alliance and secretly concluded one with the Nana,
the old warrior smelt danger.

Then there was the strange conduct of his old comrade-in-
arms and joint ruler with him of the state of Malwa, Tukoji Hol-
kar. Holkar commanded the forces of Ahalya Bai, the daughter-
in-law of Malwar Rao Holkar, who had died shortly after Panipat.
The Bai had always been friendly to Sindhia, who had saved her
from Raguba, and Tukoji had always shown her great respect
and obedience. But she was now old and worn out with the cares
of administering the new state of Indore and with religious aus-
terities, and Tukoji, whose rancour was encouraged by his son
Jaswant Rao, was now showing definite hostility towards his present partner and former comrade.

The truth of the matter was that the victories of Patan and Merta together with the completion of de Boigne's army had upset the balance of power, and Tukoji realised that he was no longer the equal of Sindhia but inferior to him in strength and position. He resolved to remedy this.

It was first necessary for him to create a disciplined infantry brigade good enough to stand up to de Boigne's battalions. This task he entrusted to the Chevalier Dudrenec, who was induced to leave the Begum Sombre's army, which he then commanded, by an offer of Rs. 3,000 a month.

Dudrenec was a native of Brest, and came of a noble Breton family, his father being a commodore in the French navy. Arriving in India in 1773 as a midshipman, he deserted his ship, made his way to Delhi, where he joined Réné Médoc's corps. On Médoc's retirement in 1782, he entered the service of Begum Sombre, and shortly before he joined Holkar in 1791, he had obtained the command of her troops.

Having thus entrusted Dudrenec with the creation of a new model army, Holkar looked around for allies. There was one enemy of Sindhia who was always spoiling for a fight: Ismail Beg. Holkar decided to make use of the dashing Moghul to create a diversion and spread unrest and confusion in Sindhia's new conquests. His emissaries were soon at the fort of Kanaund, and he and the Beg formed an alliance.

In these circumstances Sindhia judged it necessary to go to Poona himself to counteract the schemes of his enemies, and to make a show of force. Accordingly, after appointing Gopal Rao as his deputy in Hindustan, Sindhia with a small but powerful force commanded by Michael Filose marched slowly through Central India towards Poona, announcing that he was coming merely as a messenger from the Emperor to invest the young Peshwa with the insignia of his office of Vakil-i-Mutluq, or Supreme Deputy of the Empire, to which he had been appointed some years previously. He arrived in Poona on June 11th, 1791, and, in spite of the opposition of the Nana, carried out the investment with a parade of humility which deceived no one. He
then demanded the recall of Holkar's troops from Rajputana, on the grounds that as that chief had taken no part in the victories of Patan and Merta he was not entitled to a share of the spoils.

Scarceley had Sindhia crossed the Narbada when Holkar advanced on Hindustan. Fighting broke out between Holkar's and Sindhia's troops in Rajputana, where both were collecting tribute, and at Kanaund Ismail raised the standard of revolt.

Ismail was the immediate danger, and Gopal Rao and de Boigne decided to strike at him quickly and hard. De Boigne therefore ordered Perron with a brigade of infantry and artillery to march against Kanaund.

Kanaund was a stronghold of earthern walls faced with stone on the border of the Bikaner desert. Nothing grew there except tamarisk scrub, and the soft sand made the approach of a hostile army, especially with guns, extremely difficult. Water was also in scant supply.

Nevertheless Perron lost no time in making his way to Kanaund, where he found Najaf Khan's Begum in charge of the defences of the fort, and outside its walls Ismail Beg with an army of 20,000 men and 30 guns. Perron at once attacked, and although the Beg fought with his usual gallantry his scratch troops were no match of de Boigne's battalions, and he was driven back to take refuge with his men in the fort.

Perron now began the siege of the place, but the thickness of the mud walls allowed them to absorb the cannon balls without being breached, and Perron had too few men to attempt to take it by storm. Ismail maintained a spirited defence, and the siege might have been very prolonged but for an accident. One day the Begum, while playing chess with an eunuch, was killed by a chance stone shot, whereupon the garrison broke into open mutiny against Ismail, whom they now considered a burden they could well do without. Hearing that his soldiers were conspiring to seize him and obtain favour with the besiegers by handing him over, the Beg anticipated their action and surrendered. On receiving the happy news, Sindhia ordered Ismail's immediate execution, but de Boigne strongly resisted this, had his way, and the Beg was sent a prisoner to Agra, where, although treated with respect and living in comfort, he died a few years later.
Ismail had scarcely been disposed of before Holkar crossed the Chambal with 30,000 cavalry and numerous guns, and his four newly raised battalions of regular infantry commanded by Dudrenec. Gopal Rao, Sindhia’s deputy, summoned de Boigne and Lakwa Dada to his aid, and then advanced against Holkar’s army which was in the vicinity of Ajmir. De Boigne brought 9,000 foot into the field, and Gopal Rao and Lakwa Dada had 20,000 horse. Towards the end of September, 1792, de Boigne on whom the overall command had devolved, came upon Holkar at the Pass of Lakhairi, on the way from Kanaund to Ajmir. Holkar, advised by the experienced Dudrenec, had chosen his ground well: the trained battalions held the crest of the pass, the ground at the foot of which was still water-loged after the monsoon floods; the sides were flanked by dense tree-jungle, and there were thirty-eight guns in position.

De Boigne studied the enemy’s position anxiously. He realised that for the first time the new warfare was to be waged on both sides. Previous battles had been of the new against the old; but now it was no longer a matter of armoured cavalry dashing itself to pieces against the rocks of discipline and science; the present battle would be decided by the tactical movement of field artillery and lines of musketry against each other.

De Boigne began the action by sending forward 500 Rohilla horsemen to form a screen behind which he advanced his infantry with fixed bayonets over the swamp that lay between him and the pass. But his columns were at once exposed to a murderous fire from Holkar’s batteries, to which he could not make an adequate reply as his own guns could only advance slowly across the swamp. Then as the oxen drawing his batteries came within range, a terrible disaster occurred. A chance shell struck a tumbrel of ammunition and exploded it, and this was immediately followed by the explosion of twelve others standing near, scattering noise, smoke and havoc. Holkar observing the confusion in the brigade hurled his horse against them from among the trees; the charge was vainly opposed by de Boigne’s light and less numerous cavalry, but de Boigne with his usual skill and calm had moved his broken columns into the opposite jungle, where Holkar’s horsemen could not penetrate. Here he reformed his men,
and from the cover of the trees began to pour a ceaseless volley into Holkar’s frustrated squadrons. The horsemen wavered and then retreated; de Boigne’s Rohilla cavalry charged after them and the retreat became a rout; and then the infantry emerged from the covert to storm the pass. Dudrenec and his corps held the crest and opposed a desperate resistance until almost all the officers and men had fallen, and Dudrenec himself only escaped by throwing himself among the dead and simulating death. The shattered forces of Holkar followed him across the Chambal into Malwa, where their chief in helpless rage harried the countryside and sacked Sindhia’s undefended capital of Ujjain.

The battle of Lakhairi decided for a time the contest between the houses of Ujjain and Indore. Tukoji Holkar never recovered from the defeat, and died four years later. Sindhia was now the sole master of the Maratha conquests in Hindustan, and he recognised that de Boigne had made him so. But the battle did not end the feud between the two great Maratha chiefs, which was inherited by Sindhia’s nephew, Daulat Rao, and Tukoji’s formidable son, Jaswant Rao.

During the late troubles, Pratap Singh, the Rajah of Jaipur, had been encouraged to refuse tribute and to declare his independence. Before returning home, therefore, de Boigne found it necessary to pay him a visit. On the approach of de Boigne’s brigades, which Sindhia now quaintly called the Imperial Army, Pratap Singh offered no resistance, promised to pay tribute regularly, made a down payment of seventy lakhs of rupees as an indemnity, and entertained the victorious general royally in his palace. Paying a similar visit to the Rajah of Alwar, he escaped assassination only because the Rajah, horrified at such a breach of hospitality and fearing the consequences, refused to permit it.

At last he returned to Delhi in triumph. He had vanquished all Sindhia’s enemies, and there was no one left to raise a hand. It is an indication of Madhoji’s greatness that he showed no jealousy of his successful general, but trusted him implicitly and loaded him with honours.

Sindhia himself, was still at Poona plotting and counter-plotting to secure control of the Peshwa from the Nana Farnavis. His wrath was aroused when he discovered that his viceroy in
Hindustan, Gopal Rao, was intriguing against him with the Nana. Gopal Rao was summarily dismissed, and de Boigne was appointed viceroy in his stead. The first act of the new viceroy was to protect Gopal Rao from the consequences of his treachery. De Boigne's humanity is revealed by his efforts at this time to improve the conditions in which the Emperor was forced to live. The blind old man was suffered to exist as a mere symbol of authority, in order that the fiction of governing in his name might be preserved. As custodian of Shah Alam, Sindhia had appointed a rascally dervish, known as Nizam-ul-Din. The latter refused to allow the Emperor any money, on the strange grounds that his poverty would not tempt men like Ghulam Khan to plunder him. A bare minimum of food was issued to the royal household every day, which they had to cook themselves, and the Shah's wives took it in turn to share his daily dinner, which means, as there were two hundred of them, that each wife got a reasonable dinner every eighteen months. All money and presents sent to the Emperor were seized by the custodian, who kept it for himself after allowing the Maratha officials a rake-off.

De Boigne now made frequent representations to Madhoji at Poona that if only for the sake of his own reputation the Emperor's condition should be improved. Madhoji promised to attend to the matter when he returned to Delhi, but he never returned, and under his successor de Boigne found most of his efforts frustrated by the avarice and graft of the Maratha officials, who cared nothing for the Emperor. He did however manage to increase the old man's allowance, to secure a jaidad for the upkeep of the harem, and to make the Crown Prince, the Mirza Akbar, independent by providing him with a jaghir, bringing in an annual revenue of Rs. 30,000.

De Boigne also used his influence to preserve the Taj Mahal, that magnificent monument in white marble inlaid with precious stones, the tomb of Muntaz Begum the favourite wife of Shah Jehan, and although Madhoji Sindhia "did not appear to value it more than the richness of the material," managed to secure a small allowance to keep it in repair.

In the civil administration de Boigne tried to restore a form of order and welfare. Akbar's system had long broken down;
fields long untilled had turned into tiger-haunted jungles; and in
the neglected villages, the peasants reduced in number and used
to violence withheld payment of rent and taxes, and often aug-
mented the scanty produce of the wretched soil left to them by
robbing travellers and lifting cattle. De Boigne established two
departments to administer the vast territory he was responsible
for: the Persian Office conducted by Indian clerks and accoun-
tants, and the French Office superintended by himself. The public
dues were fixed by a reasonably fair assessment of the landed
estates; and rents and taxes were collected with punctuality, mili-
tary stations being established to ensure compliance. Some at-
tempt was made to restore public works and irrigation, and a
measure of protection given to the villages. There was no adequate
legal system in the prevailing disorder; but to check the local
magistrates, de Boigne required them to send reports of all cases
to him for final decision.

Thus de Boigne spent his day. Rising at dawn, he visited his
stores and factories, inspected his troops of which he now had a
third brigade, repaired to his office where he attended to the
civil business of the country, gave interviews, received the re-
ports of the criminal and fiscal officers, carried on diplomatic
 correspondence, and in spite of all this found time to conduct
his own private business at Lucknow. He entertained modestly
in his house at Koil, a frequent guest being Dudrenec, his op-
ponent at Lakhairi, who for a time had a house near his.

On February 12th, 1794, de Boigne was grieved to hear of the
sudden death of his master. Madhoji Sindhia had died suddenly
in a Poona suburb at a critical moment in his contest with the
Nana Farnavis in mysterious circumstances which have already
been related. It was a great personal blow, as de Boigne records
in his memoirs, for he had both admiration and affection for the
great Maratha statesman and general.

[5]

Madhoji Sindhia left no children, and was succeeded by his grand
nephew, Daulat Rao Sindhia, a youth of fifteen, who was entirely
controlled by his minister, Baloba Tantia, who was like many other Maratha officials inimical to de Boigne as a foreign usurper. But it was impossible to change the political and military machine which Madhoji had forged for the rule of Hindustan; de Boigne was confirmed in the command of the army, and in the government of all the Maratha possessions north of the Chambal. Daulat Rao stayed at Poona to continue the conflict with the Nana for the control of the Peshwa, and his position was strengthened by the arrival in the Maratha capital of Perron with a full brigade, ordered down by Madhoji shortly before his death.

De Boigne’s unwavering loyalty to Sindhia’s house, undoubtedly prevented serious disorders and uprisings which Madhoji’s death would otherwise have provoked. Apart from the British, de Boigne commanded by far the most powerful army not only in India but in Central Asia. Had he wished, his position could have been that of a king-maker. He received many tempting overtures at the time of Madhoji’s death, among them one from Zaman Shah the King of Kabul who offered him what was practically a share of the throne if he would establish the rule of the Abdali in Hindustan. Even the old Emperor, in his blindness and misery, had a moment of delusion, and offered to make de Boigne his wazir if he would employ his brigades in restoring an independent Moghul Empire.

Needless to say these offers were all declined. De Boigne was no ordinary adventurer, and as he had been loyal to Madhoji so he would be loyal to his successor. The presence of his brigades deterred the would-be rebels who drew in their claws. A few minor disturbances were quickly suppressed.

His prestige was great. In 1795 a serious mutiny broke out among the officers of the Company’s army in Bengal. The Company in this crisis applied to de Boigne for assistance, which was promptly accorded. The military adventurer placed a cavalry regiment, officered by Europeans, at the disposal of the Governor-General, and the mutiny was quelled.

De Boigne did not draw his sword again. At the beginning of 1795, an impudent demand by the Marathas for tribute from the Nizam Ali of Hyderabad led to the battle of Karda, when the Nizam was defeated by the combined Maratha forces, among
which was de Boigne’s first brigade commanded by Perron.

On this occasion Perron won the favour of Daulat Rao, and the former afterwards boasted that it was his intrigues that forced de Boigne’s resignation. But Perron’s claim to successful disloyalty must be discounted. It is true that de Boigne had many enemies at Poona, and that there was plenty of room for intrigue, but his position was too strong and his prestige too high to be thus easily assailed.

Towards the end of 1795 de Boigne tendered his resignation to Daulat Rao Sindhia. After eighteen active and strenuous years in the hot sun, de Boigne’s health had begun seriously to fail. It was time to return while he yet could to a more temperate climate where he could enjoy the vast fortune his enterprise had made. Daulat Rao at first refused to accept the resignation, and declined to allow the general to leave, but after a personal interview had failed to change his mind he accepted it with regret on the understanding that he would return when his health had been restored after a spell in Europe. Before leaving de Boigne gave Daulat Rao two pieces of advice: one, not to appoint any single successor to the command of the brigades as it was dangerous to give a servant so much power; two, not in any circumstances to make war with the British.

In December de Boigne paraded his brigades for the last time, and said farewell. On Christmas Day he left Koll, escorted by his Persian bodyguard in their green jackets and scarlet turbans, and attended by 4 elephants, 150 camels and many bullock wagons laden with his possessions. He went first to Lucknow, where he stayed some time arranging his business affairs, which he left in the care of Claude Martine. Proceeding to Calcutta he was honourably received by the Governor-General. His bodyguard enlisted in the Company’s service, and their horses and equipment were purchased by the Company.

At last, in September 1796, he embarked in the ship Cromberg bound for England, which he reached early in 1797, carrying with him about half a million pounds sterling. Because of the war with France which prevented him going to his native Savoy, he settled in London. His health was now much improved, and he began to think of returning to India, and perhaps he would have kept
his promise to Daulat Rao had he not become hopelessly infatuated with the sixteen year old daughter of an impoverished French émigré.

[6]

Adèle d’Osmond was the daughter of the Marquis d’Osmond, one of Louis XVI’s officers. Her mother was a lady-in-waiting to Madame Adelaide, the eldest daughter of Louis XV. Adèle therefore was brought up in the Court of Versailles, where she was spoilt by old Madame Adelaide, and by the Queen Marie Antoinette herself. She was also treated kindly by the King, although she was a little intimidated by his coarseness and often eccentric behaviour. “With every intention to oblige,” she wrote, “he would advance towards a person, compelling him or her to retreat to the wall, and then if he found nothing to say, which was frequently the case, he would burst into a loud laugh, turn on his heel and walk away.”

Then came the Revolution. Little Adèle was first hidden in the country, but then as the situation became worse, she was taken by her mother to Rome, where she was later joined by her father, whose appointment as ambassador to St. Petersburg had fallen through. At Rome they were received by the Cardinal of York, the last of the Stuarts, in an unheated palace. The Cardinal wore a night cap and two overcoats, with his feet on a foot-warmer and his hands in a muff, while his guests shivered with cold. Fortunately they also met at Rome a Yorkshire squire, Sir John Legard, whose wife was Madame d’Osmond’s cousin. They accompanied him to Naples, where Adèle made the acquaintance of the Queen, Marie Antoinette’s sister, and of the notorious Lady Hamilton, “a worthless soul with a magnificent exterior.” Legard invited the family to stay with him in Yorkshire, and after a nightmare journey on mules across the St. Gotthard Pass in a blizzard reached Switzerland, thence sailed up the Rhine to Rotterdam, and from there to Harwich and Legard’s country retreat. After some months spent

1 Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne.
2 Ibid.
with Legard, who turned out to be not only a gouty domestic tyrant, but, what was worse, an associate of "the most common-place" people, Madame d'Osmond, whose mother had been Irish, borrowed money from her British relatives, and pleading the need for medical attention left Legard and barbarous Yorkshire for London, where they rented a small house at Brompton, keeping as aloof as possible from the degenerate colony of French émigrés, whose pretensions were even worse than their morals.

A frequent visitor to the house in Brompton was Sapphio, who had formerly been Queen Marie Antoinette's music-master. Sapphio gave music lessons to Adèle, and trained her voice, which it seemed was pleasant enough. He also brought several artists to the house on Sunday mornings, which led to the holding of impromptu concerts, at which Adèle, among others, sang. These concerts became fashionable. One of the regular attenders, a Mr. Johnson, one day asked permission to bring along a newcomer from India, who did not as yet know many people and wished to be introduced into good society. The newcomer was General de Boigne. "... he came and went away again without having made much impression on us." But Adèle had made a deep impression of de Boigne "A voice that must be mine," he remarked, even before seeing her face, which was pretty enough.

After some weeks de Boigne suddenly appeared again, explaining that he had been suffering from a sprained ankle. He insisted on inviting the d'Osmond family to dinner at his house, at which another guest was a certain Mr. O'Connell. The very next day O'Connell turned up at the house at Brompton with de Boigne's proposal to marry Adèle. O'Connell explained to the startled family that although de Boigne was forty-nine years old and fairly war-worn, he had an annual income of twenty thousand pounds, from which he was prepared to make a marriage settlement on Adèle of three thousand pounds a year. The emissary was further entrusted to say that as de Boigne had no relatives nothing would be dearer to him than his young wife and her family.

De Boigne's offer came at an opportune moment. The family was in desperate money straits. Even the small pension that her

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3 Ibid et seq.
mother received from the Queen of Naples, on behalf of Madame Adelaide, who was also broke, had stopped, the Queen having been driven from Naples by her ungrateful subjects. But “my mother’s laments touched me less than my father’s silence and the signs of sleeplessness showing upon his face.”

Adèle was in her seventeenth year. She could discover nothing to the discredit of the general, and apart from his age and the deplorable fact that he had been born “in the lower middle classes,” she concluded that there was a lot to be said for the marriage. On the following day she arranged to meet de Boigne at O'Connell's house. Here she told him rather tactlessly that she could probably never care for him but that if he was willing to provide for the maintenance and independence of her parents, she would be grateful to him and marry him “without repugnance.” De Boigne declared himself satisfied with that, and the bargaining began. Adèle insisted that at the same time that her marriage contract was completed another contract in which de Boigne settled five hundred pounds a year on her parents should be drawn up. De Boigne agreed, but in his character of a Luck-now business man, declared that in that case her marriage settlement would be for two thousand five hundred pounds instead of the three thousand previously offered. Adèle was disgusted at this piece of chicanery, but made no objection.

The marriage took place twelve days later, on June 11th 1798. As might have been expected it was a disaster from the start. The bride discovered that her husband “was endowed with the most ungracious personality that God has ever bestowed on any mortal.” According to his wife, de Boigne delighted in making himself disagreeable. He insulted servants and guests, was stingy but fond of luxury, and “added oriental jealousy of the worst description to that jealousy which is perhaps natural in the mind of a man of his age.” He gave excellent dinners and magnificent concerts at which he encouraged his wife to sing; but would spoil things by becoming orientally jealous of the guests who admired and applauded her, and would express his disapproval to her “in the language of a guardsman.” He also had the habit of taking opium in large quantities, and “this paralysed his moral and physical faculties.”
Unfortunately there is no record of what de Boigne thought of his wife.

In the year 1800, the de Boignes travelled in Germany and Italy, paying a special visit to Verona to see de Boigne's sisters, the existence of whom rather surprised Adèle as she had been led to understand that de Boigne had no living relations. On returning to London, de Boigne took his wife on a visit to Scotland, "for he liked to separate me from my family." In Scotland they went from castle to castle, being received everywhere in such a friendly manner by the Scottish aristocracy that de Boigne "was less disagreeable than usual." Back in London de Boigne sold his house, and for a short time they lived in furnished rooms. Then he announced his intention of leaving England and of allowing Adèle to live with her parents.

In 1802, after the Peace of Amiens was signed, de Boigne moved to Paris, where he bought a fine property called Beauregard.

There seems little doubt that at this time de Boigne became Napoleon's chief adviser on Indian affairs, although he held no actual office. It had long been one of Bonaparte's most cherished designs to re-establish French power in India, and then to drive the British out of their possessions there. For this purpose he had invaded Egypt and intrigued with Tipu of Mysore. The battle of the Nile and the fall of Tipu's capital Seringapatam had not entirely discouraged him, and having regained Pondichery and the other French Indian possessions by the Treaty of Amiens he was inclined to use these as a base for further operations. He also had great hope in the Marathas helping to further his plans. Perron, who was now paramount at Delhi and commanded four brigades of trained infantry had made certain proposals to the French Government that commended themselves to Napoleon. It was therefore natural that he should seek the advice of de Boigne, whose knowledge and experience of Indian affairs was unique, and who was also in constant correspondence with Perron and other French officers in the Maratha service.

De Boigne considered that the great need that existed in Perron's army was that of trained and reliable officers. To supply this need, Napoleon sent out to Pondichery a fleet of six men-of-
war transporting 1,400 picked troops under General Decaen. The officers were given a secret document entitled, "A Memorial on the present importance of India, and the most efficacious means of Re-establishing the French Nation in its ancient splendour in that Country." It detailed the French scheme for the conquest of India, denounced "the treatment received from a company of merchant adventurers by the Emperor of Hindustan, the sole branch of the illustrious house of Taimur," asserted that "the English Company, by its ignominious treatment of the great Mughul, has forfeited its rights and privileges in Bengal," and that "the Emperor of Delhi has a real and indisputable right to transmit to whomsoever he may please to select the sovereignty of his dominions, as well as the arrears (of tribute) due from the English." Napoleon estimated the arrears of tribute due to Shah Alam from the Company at nineteen millions, seventeen hundred and seventy-five pounds sterling, a sum "which greatly exceeds the value of the Company's moveable capital." The octogenarian Mogul should have his due, and Napoleon should be his heir.

Among the troops that came with General Decaen to Pondicheri were two hundred picked cadets, who had been carefully trained in the duties of officers. These young men were to make their way to Delhi in small bodies, through the territories of the Rajah of Berar, whose coast at Cuttack could be reached easily by country-boats. At Delhi they were to take service under Perron, so that when the time came Perron's army, efficiently officered and led, might co-operate with Napoleon in his intended invasion of India. Napoleon was perfectly altruistic: war on the British was to be declared in the name of the Emperor Shah Alam with the sole purpose of rescuing him from British tyranny.

According to St. Genis, de Boigne's first biographer, Napoleon offered de Boigne the command of the French expeditionary force to India, and was angered when the general refused it. But then St. Genis was anxious to prove that his hero was not a Bonapartist. A letter from Perron to de Boigne, however, dated February 28th, 1802, suggests that de Boigne was active in selecting the two hundred potential officers of Perron's brigades: "Yes, I will receive with great satisfaction all the persons you recommend for
appointment in the Brigades."

The British authorities were well aware of the danger. The Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, wrote to General Lake, "M. du Boigne (Sindhia’s late General) is now the chief confident of Bonaparte. He is constantly at St. Cloud. I leave you to judge why and wherefore." The British authorities had also received from a French officer the confidential "Memorial", issued to Delcaen’s officers. The result was that when Delcaen’s army arrived at Pondichéri it found itself entirely caged in, blockaded by land and sea, and Perron’s potential officers languished at Pondichéri until they were taken prisoner on the recapture of the city after the resumption of the war. The great invasion did not materialise, but the French plot, aided by de Boigne, led to the Maratha wars and to the destruction of the army which he himself had created. The Emperor was left without a champion.

Early in 1803 de Boigne had bought a fine estate on the outskirts of his native town of Chambéry in Savoy. Here he built a splendid mansion named Buissonnond. The next year his wife received an unwelcome summons to leave London and join him in Paris. Adèle seemed to be fated to make wretched journeys. She embarked reluctantly at Gravesend in a Dutch ship bound for Rotterdam, laden with whale oil. The crossing was stormy, the waves broached the barrels of whale oil, which added a disgusting smell to the other horrors, and the captain unnecessarily prolonged the journey by losing his way, "probably through inexperience," and she arrived at La Brielle after four days at sea, to find no preparations made for her arrival. After many difficulties she made her way to Paris and took possession of Beauregard. De Boigne soon arrived from Savoy, having misunderstood the date of her arrival, and Adèle then spent the "most tedious three months" of her life, excluded from the social coteries she loved and avoiding all contacts for fear "of those scenes which M. de Boigne was always making about everything and nothing."

Thus the life of connubial misery was resumed, Adèle fretting
and de Boigne, no doubt, consuming large quantities of opium. But not for long. The next year they separated. Adèle left in possession of Beaurepair and her income, entered the gay social life she liked, became friendly with Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier, and became the centre of a cultural coterie of her own. After a while she sold Beaurepair, as being too large for her income, and moved into the manor near Sceaux where Voltaire was born. After the second Restoration in 1815, her father became ambassador to England, and she accompanied him to the Court of St. James, where she remained until her father’s retirement in 1819. On her return to Paris she paid occasional visits to De Boigne usually on her way to take the waters at Aix.

After the separation, de Boigne, himself, spent more and more time at Chambéry, until he finally settled there altogether. He employed his time and fortune in charitable work, building and endowing two hospitals, a lunatic asylum, an institute for teaching trades to young girls, an almshouse, a college and a public library. His wife made a point of being present in Chambéry at the inauguration of the Home of St. Benoît, built to receive forty middle-class persons over the age of sixty and without means, “such as clergymen, retired military men, former officials and so forth, unmarried ladies and widows who had lost their husbands or their parents and were without private fortune.” Adèle spent as long as a day and a half with the newly installed inmates, after the opening dinner with the local dignitaries, and noted their satisfaction. “M. de Boigne had thought of everything which might make their stay pleasant.”

He grew old himself and suffered still from the disease that had caused him to resign his command. Honours were showered on him. King Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia, the ruler of Savoy, created him a count and a lieutenant-general in his army, and decorated him with the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, and even deigned to visit Chambéry to unveil a bust of De Boigne in the library. The Count d’Artois rather oddly gave him six crosses of the Legion of Honour to distribute among worthy people in the town, and Louis XVIII created him a marshal, a knight of the Legion of Honour and conferred on him the Order of St. Louis.
He entertained magnificently and was always pleased to show hospitality to any who had been in India. Many British guests who visited him at Buissonrond were impressed by his old-world courtesy and hospitality and also by his modesty and reticence. "My past," he used to say "appears a dream."

Early in 1830, Adèle received a letter from Chambéry informing her that her husband's health was becoming steadily worse. Not daring to pay him a visit without permission, she wrote and asked him if she might come. He relied that he was already much better and that, as he was about to take the waters, she should defer her visit until the end of July.

She never made the visit. On June 21st 1830, Benoît La Borgne, Count de Boigne, commander of Sindhia's Imperial Army, acting viceroy of Hindustan, died in his home, aged seventy-one, attended by his aged Indian butler.

He left another surprise for Adèle. While in India, he had married "according to the usages of the country" the daughter of a Persian colonel. By her he had a son, Ali Bux, born at Delhi in 1792, and a daughter named Bunu. The children accompanied their father to Europe, and, to the great satisfaction of his biographers, were subsequently baptised, receiving the names of Charles Alexander and Anna. Anna died in Paris in 1810, but Charles Alexander married into the French nobility, succeeded his father in the title and the bulk of his wealth, and lived a life of "unostentatious benevolence." Adèle herself, "after witnessing the downfall of three powerful governments," died in 1866.

In Chambéry, the city erected a monumental fountain to his memory.
PART FIVE

The End of the Breed

[1]

AFTER de Boigne’s resignation, circumstances were very favourable to Perron’s succession in the command. Frémont, de Boigne’s senior officer, opportunely died suddenly, and Sutherland, who also had claims, was far away on a campaign in Bundelkhand, while Perron was in daily attendance on Daulat Rao Sindhia, who had been impressed by Perron’s conduct of the battle of Karda. Perron, therefore, was appointed to the chief command of Sindhia’s “Imperial Army” in September 1796. He at once took possession of the extensive jaidad in the Doab, strengthened the fortifications of Aligarh and enlarged his headquarters at Koil.

His office carried with it that of the governorship of Hindustan, but here he was impeded by the intrigues of Sindhia’s chief minister, Baloba Tantia, who, contrary to the orders of his master, had instructed the Maratha governors of Delhi and Agra not to yield possession of those cities to Perron. Perron therefore was obliged to besiege Delhi for five weeks before the gates were opened. He then appointed Captain le Marchant governor of the city and custodian of the Emperor, so that the wretched Shah Alam was at last rescued from the rapacity and intimidation of his former guardian, the rogue fakir, Nizam-ul-Din. But he had to resort to force to secure possession of Agra, finally taking the city at a cost of 600 men.

Perron was now supreme in Upper India, commanding an army of 24,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry and 120 guns, and possessing territory yielding over one million pounds sterling in annual re-
venue. From his palace outside Aligarh he issued orders to princes, and controlled without interference the civil and military administration of the Empire from the Chambal to the Sutlej. His power was greater even than that of de Boigne and he lived in sovereign state.

Daulat Rao was content that this should be so, for he himself was deep in the intrigues of the Peshwa’s court at Poona, and fully realised that his predominant strength lay in Perron’s legions. Then broke the affair of the Bais, which finally destroyed any semblance of Maratha unity.

The Bais were the widows of the late Madhoji Sindhia, and Daulat Rao on succeeding his great-uncle had, as in honour bound, promised to cherish them and make ample provision for their comfort. They resided at his court, but Daulat Rao made no permanent provision for them, and cherished only the youngest one, the beautiful Bhagirthi, with whom he formed a liaison. The two elder widows, who in any case had no cause to love Daulat Rao, were outraged by such incestuous relations, and made no attempt to hide their opinions, with the result that they were handed over to Ghatke Rao, one of Sindhia’s favourites, who not only imprisoned them but had them barbarously flogged. This high-handed proceeding scandalised the Brahmans and most of the high officials at Sindhia’s court, and, under their pressure Daulat Rao was obliged to release the widows and offer them a separate residence at Baranpur. The two unfortunate ladies had not gone far on their way to the new home, when they were seized on the journey, imprisoned at Ahmednagar, and then brought back to Sindhia’s court.

Sindhia celebrated this breach of faith by marrying Ghatke Rao’s daughter, making his new father-in-law his chief minister in place of Baloba Tantia. He now fell completely under the influence of his new wife and her sinister father.

Meanwhile, the Bais with the help of sympathetic officials had effected their escape, and had found refuge in the camp of Amit Rao, the Peshwa’s brother. Ghatke Rao, who had been busy extorting money from the people of Poona with the utmost violence and torture, now persuaded Sindhia to crush the Bais’ party once and for all. To achieve this, Sindhia sent, on the night
of June 7th, 1798, five battalions from Perron's First Brigade under a French officer named Du Prat to surprise Amrit Rao's camp and seize the women; but Du Prat failed and was beaten back. Force having failed, Ghatke Rao now had resource to treachery. On his advice, Sindhia now declared himself eager to be reconciled with his aunts, and promised to provide for them lavishly if they would return to his protection. Amrit Rao went to Poona to negotiate, but on the way was ambushed by Drugeon, who now commanded Perron's First Brigade, with two battalions and twenty guns, and his troops dispersed. This act of treachery constituted a declaration of war on the Peshwa, around whom the Maratha lords began to gather. The imprisonment of the former minister, Baloba Tantia, also caused widespread resentment, particularly arousing the anger of Lakwa Dada, who was dismissed from his appointment as Maratha commander-in-chief.

Sindhia, who was shrewd enough in spite of his dissipation and weakness, saw the red light, and ordered Ghatke to effect a reconciliation with the Peshwa and the chiefs. But Ghatke preferred to pursue his own murderous course, until Daulat Rao reluctantly ordered his arrest, which was effected by Filoze and Hessing. The arrest of Ghatke and Daulat's promises temporarily pacified the Peshwa, but not the long suffering Bais who had fled with their supporters to Kolapur, where they were joined by the redoubtable veteran, Lakwa Dada. Lakwa at once raised the standard of rebellion, and either because of indignation at the treatment of the Bais, or jealousy of Sindhia, or general desire to make trouble, thousands flocked to it. In a short time, Lakwa was at the head of a powerful army of 20,000 cavalry, 15 battalions of infantry and 20 guns.

Daulat Rao speedily appointed Ambaji Inglia as commander-in-chief of the Maratha army in place of Lakwa Dada, and ordered him to march at once with the cooperation of Perron's brigades against the rebels. But Perron underestimated the enemy, and detached only two battalions under Butterworth to support Ambaji. Butterworth, the son of an English army officer, had had experience of war with the Rajputs before entering Sindhia's service and was a competent officer. This was just as well, for when Ambaji came in contact with Lakwa's army near Kotah
many of his men no doubt sympathetic to the Bais, deserted to Lakwa, and Butterworth and his two battalions had to bear the main brunt of the battle and were at last forced to retire after losing a third of the force.

On news of the defeat, Perron sent up Sutherland with the Second Brigade, and Ambaji engaged George Thomas to strengthen his depleted army. In spite of these reinforcements very little fighting took place between the two armies, but there was much plundering of the country by the troops of Thomas and Sutherland. Perron, impatient of this lack of activity and jealous of Sutherland, charged the latter with intriguing secretly with Lakwa Dada, and suspended him, sending Major Pohlman to take over the Brigade. Poor Butterworth also incurred Perron’s displeasure, and was driven out of Sindhia’s service, and disappears from history.

Pohlman was a native of Hanover, and had formerly served the Company in Doxat’s Swiss regiment and Martine’s foreign legion. He was a cheerful German, who enjoyed the good things of life, maintaining a harem, and causing much comment by his habit of travelling on an elephant, attended by a guard of Mohammedans all dressed in purple, and riding in file in the manner of an English cavalry regiment. But in spite of his flamboyance he was a capable officer.

On this occasion, however, Pohlman was deprived of the opportunity of distinguishing himself, for the campaign against Lakwa Dada had to be temporarily abandoned. Zaman Shah, the King of Kabul, the grandson of the dreaded Ahmed Shah Durani, announced his intention of invading India to re-establish Mohammedan rule. The Marathas had not forgotten Panipat, and the threat of another invasion from Afghanistan was enough to put an end to their internal dissensions and to create unity against the common enemy. A reconciliation was at once effected between Daulat Rao and Lakwa Dada, who was again made Maratha commander-in-chief, and Baloba Tantia was released from prison and re-instated as chief minister. All Maratha troops were ordered to assemble at Muttra, and by December 1799 a great army, containing Perron’s First and Second Brigades, and under the overall command of Perron marched north and encamped at Delhi,
to await the invasion. The English were also concerned and sent a large force to Anupsharh to co-operate with the Marathas against the invaders. But British diplomacy made all these military preparations unnecessary. Sir John Malcolm, who had formerly organised the disbandment of Raymond’s brigades in Hyderabad and was now ambassador to Persia, induced the Persians to invade Afghanistan just at the moment when Zaman Shah was about to lead his warriors into the Punjab. Zaman Shah was forced to return to Kabul to defend his kingdom; the Maratha and British armies dispersed; and the Indian princes were free to resume their internecine struggles.

The late disorders had encouraged the Rajputs to rebel against the Maratha yoke, and Lakwa Dada was ordered against them to restore them to obedience and to collect the arrears of tribute. Pohlman accompanied the Marathas with the First Brigade, as did the Chevalier Durenec with his battalions.

The opposing armies met near Malpura. Here Pohlman had at last the opportunity of distinguishing himself; suffering heavy losses he succeeded not only in driving the Rajputs back but in capturing 40 guns. Durenec did not fare so well. The Rathor cavalry, eager to wipe out what they considered the disgrace of Merta, in their best death or glory mood charged Durenec’s brigade, which, in spite of the deadly reception they gave from cannon and muskets, was overwhelmed and cut to pieces. Out of Durenec’s 8,000 men not more than 200 were left, and once again Durenec escaped only by throwing himself down among the dead, which seems to have become a habit of his. The Rathors then chased after the fleeing Maratha cavalry, a chase that led them far from the field of battle, thus enabling Pohlman to defeat a charge by the Rajah of Jaipur, who, his elephant having been shot dead, mounted his horse and fled to his capital. The Rathors, returning later from their impetuous pursuit, found the field abandoned by their allies, and they themselves, being greeted by grape-shot instead of applause, galloped after the Rajah. Pratap Singh then submitted and paid an indemnity and the arrears of tribute, an example soon followed by the other Rajputs chiefs. Thus once again many men died bravely to decide which of their masters should have a heap of silver rupees.
While Lakwa Dada was occupied in subduing the Rajputs, his position was being undermined again at Sindhia’s court. At the instance of his wife, Daulat Rao had released his father-in-law, Ghatke Rao, who proceeded to overthrow and then to poison his rival Baloba Tantia and to seize the office of chief minister again. The savage minister then induced Sindhia to sanction a wholesale slaughter of all the Maratha chiefs and officials who had shown any sympathy towards the Bais. Those who survived this foolish massacre fled to Sindhia’s enemies, with the result that Daulat Rao found himself solely dependent on Perron’s brigades and his European officers. The Maratha Confereracy had ceased to exist. Lakwa Dada fled to Jodhpur and there raised the standard of rebellion, and an even more dangerous enemy to Sindhia arose in Jaswant Rao Holkar, an illegitimate son of Madhoji Sindhia’s old rival, Tukoji Holkar.

Lakwa Dada joined up again with the Bais and entrenched himself at Sounda in the territory of the Rajah of Datia in Bundelkhand. His army was relatively small, composed of about 6,000 horse, 3,000 irregular infantry and one disciplined battalion commanded by W. H. Tone, the brother of the Irish rebel, Wolfe Tone, but his position was strong and he had been promised the support of other chieftains notably Jaswant Rao Holkar.

Perron was quick to realise that such a federation could destroy Sindhia’s authority and therefore his own position, and was determined to act against Lakwa Dada before his allies could join him. Ambaji Inglia, once again Maratha commander-in-chief, reluctant to fight the Bais, gave the command to his brother, and the army, supported by Perron’s Second Brigade under Pedron and by the independent battalions of two Englishmen James Shepherd and Joseph Bellasis, moved slowly towards Sounda. Having arrived and seen Lakwa’s strong position they were loath to give battle, until at last Perron, impatient at the delay, arrived himself to take command. Personally leading his battalions, Perron took Lakwa’s camp by storm after a severe engagement in which he himself was wounded by a spear. Bellasis and two other European officers were killed, and the Brigade lost over a thousand men. Lakwa although badly wounded in the foot by a musket-ball escaped with the wretched Bais on horseback, but the gallant old
Rajah of Datia was killed, and Tone and his second in command, Evans, were taken prisoner.

Perron treated Tone, Evans and the other adventurers he had taken prisoner with generosity, allowing them to retire into Holkar’s territory and even furnishing them with Rs. 10,000 to cover their expenses. Tone was shot through the head the following year while fighting for Holkar. He was a brave soldier and also had literary ability, and his pamphlet, “Some Institutions of the Maratha People,” became a source of information to future historians.

Lakwa Dada, the great Madhoji’s trusted general and the brave defender of Agra against Ismail Beg, subsequently died of his wound.

At his death in 1707, Tukoji left four sons, two of whom were bastards. But the fortunes of the House of Holkar were at a very low ebb after Tukoji’s disastrous defeat by de Boigne at Lakhairi, and the eldest son, a weak-minded puppet, ruled Indore under the protection of his House’s greatest enemy, Daulat Rao Sindhia. This was too much to bear for the second son, who rose in rebellion, supported by his half-brothers, and was killed in battle, leaving a young son in the hands of Sindhia. The two illegitimate brothers, Vithoji and Jaswant Rao, had to flee from Indore.

Jaswant Rao took refuge in friendly Bonsla territory, and there began to gather around him adherents of his family and Sindhia’s foes, leading them in frequent and profitable raids on Sindhia’s territories. His audacity and success attracted the notice of a famous Pathan freebooter, named Amir Khan, who at once entered into an alliance with Jaswant and joined in the latter’s forays with the utmost gusto. Angry at the repeated raids Daulat Rao sent a detachment of infantry under Dudrenec against the raiders. Jaswant and Amir Khan defeated Dudrenec, who, with his battalions, passed over to Jaswant’s service.

Jaswant Rao’s prestige was now high. He declared himself head of the house of Holkar, and began to form his army of
vagabonds and ruffians into a disciplined body. For this purpose in addition to Dudrenec he engaged several European officers, among whom were William Gardner, Dodd, another Englishman who later was beheaded by Holkar for refusing to fight against the Company, and Plumet, a French gentlemen who later deserted Holkar causing the latter to take a strong dislike to all of that nation.

Jaswant was now able to increase the scope of his attacks on Sindhia’s territory, and soon large parts of Malwa were made a wilderness.

In the meantime Sindhia was preoccupied at Poona, where the death of the old fox, Nana Farnavis, had caused a dangerous confusion. Sindhia had seized the Nana’s estates, and the Peshwa had seized his widow and sons. But in April 1801 they came to a temporary agreement, which was celebrated by the savage execution of Vitthoji Holkar, Jaswant’s brother, at Poona, a particularly cruel execution which the Peshwa attended in person. He was to regret this.

Daulat Rao now considered that he had leisure to crush Holkar, and so assembling a large army he began to move slowly north towards his capital of Ujjain. Daulat Rao then set out to show what a very poor general he was. Hearing that Holkar was concentrating his forces near the capital, he took alarm and sent George Hessing ahead with four battalions to protect the city; then a day or two later he sent two other battalions to reinforce them; three days later he sent another two forward; and then to crown his folly sent two battalions and the artillery under Brownrigg to protect his rear. Thus he succeeded in dividing his army up into isolated detachments, each separated by distances of from twenty to forty miles.

Daulat Rao’s generalship delighted Jaswant, who at once proceeded to take advantage of it. Ignoring Hessing who had reached Ujjain, he fell upon the supporting battalions under MacIntyre and forced them to surrender; then circling Sindhia’s main force he attacked the rearguard under Brownrigg, but that officer’s resolute defence and skilled fire drove him off and compelled him to retreat. But not for long. On July 2nd, 1801, Holkar linked up with Amir Khan, and together they launched an attack on
Hessing at Ujjain. Hessing’s cavalry was put to flight by a charge of Amir’s Pathans, and then the four battalions were subjected to concentrated artillery fire. At this George Hessing, the son of de Boigne’s old officer John Hessing and the nephew of Perron, fled from the field abandoning his men and officers to the subsequent attack by Holkar’s trained infantry battalions. Deprived of their commander Hessing’s battalions fought well and resisted bravely, but were finally overwhelmed by another Pathan cavalry charge led by Amir Khan himself.

Holkar’s victory was absolute, and the slaughter of his enemies great. Of the twelve European officers in Hessing’s battalions, only Hessing himself escaped. Of the others eight were killed, eight were wounded and three, including Major Derridon, Perron’s brother-in-law, were taken prisoner. The heads of the dead officers were cut off and taken to Holkar, who paid Rs. 1,000 for each. The next day, the city of Ujjain, was pillaged and sacked.

The defeat was a severe blow to Sindhia’s prestige, and, so we are told, he writhed “in an agony of rage and vexation.” And well he might, for a formidable coalition was growing round Jaswant Rao. It was essential to crush the bastard usurper without loss of time, for every moment was critical. At Burhanpur, where he had taken refuge, he sent for the troops he had left behind at Poona to maintain his authority there. These included 10,000 horse under Ghatke Rao, and five battalions of the First Brigade under Sutherland. Then he sent urgent orders to Perron at Delhi to join him with his brigades without delay.

But Sindhia waited in vain for Perron’s arrival at Burhanpur. For reasons already related, Perron had no wish to risk his main force in the Deccan at a time when the French conspiracy was coming to a head. Instead of hastening to his master’s help he went to war with George Thomas.

Finally Sindhia could afford to wait no longer. In September he crossed the Narbada with the First Brigade commanded by Sutherland, four battalions under Filoze and 14,000 Maratha horse. In revenge for the sacking of Ujjain Sutherland was sent forward to pillage Holkar’s capital, Indore. Jaswant Rao immediately moved his army to defend his city, but in the resulting battle sustained a heavy defeat, losing all his guns and baggage,
and Indore was taken and sacked. The victory was almost entirely due to Sutherland, whose infantry stormed Holkar's entrenchments and whose guns shattered Amir Khan's formidable cavalry before they could charge. It must also be added that Sutherland won his battle in spite of his colleague, Fidele Filoze, who having previously entered into a secret and treacherous agreement with Holkar, started the battle by opening fire on Sutherland's troops instead of on the enemy. But he had miscalculated: Holkar lost and Sindhia won. Filoze was charged with treason and put in prison, where he cut his throat.

Had Daulat Rao Sindhia followed up his victory, the dissolution of the Maratha Empire might have been retarded. But he underestimated Jaswant Rao's resilience, and thus allowed the events which precipitated the war with the English to take their course. Within weeks of their defeat, Holkar and Amir Khan were again active, raiding and plundering Sindhia's and the Peshwa's territories. Unable to pay his troops Jaswant Rao encouraged them to live by pillage, a policy that attracted all the freebooters of the country, including those professional brigands known as the Pindaris. But he prudently maintained his infantry battalions, now under the command of an Anglo-Indian named Vickers, later to be beheaded by his patron, since the Chevalier Dudrenec in a most unchivalrous manner had deserted Holkar for Sindhia.

On Sindhia's side, the hero of the day was Robert Sutherland, the victor of Indore. The Scotsman was a relation by marriage of Perron, having married the latter's niece, but the two cordially detested each other. Sutherland was aggrieved that Perron had succeeded to de Boigne's command instead of himself; and Perron was not only jealous of Sutherland but regarded him as a menace to his pro-French policy. But now Sutherland had Daulat Rao's ear, and no doubt represented to his chief the general unworthiness of Perron to hold the command, emphasising Perron's failure to obey orders after the disaster at Ujjain.

In fact, Daulat Rao was highly displeased with Perron, and his letters to the latter after his victory were angry and peremptory. He seriously contemplated dismissing Perron and appointing Sutherland, who was backed by Brownrigg, to the command.
Realising the serious danger he was in of being superseded by Sutherland, Perron at last made up his mind to visit Sindhia in order to maintain his position. George Thomas had been defeated and driven out of Hindustan, the Sikhs had been made to pay for the war against him, and other things were for the moment quiet. Leaving Drugeon in charge of Delhi and the Emperor's person, he left for Ujjain with a bodyguard of cavalry and Pohlman's brigade. In March 1802 he arrived at Ujjain, and by a strange coincidence Sutherland arrived there at the same time.

Perron's reception at the court was so lacking in warmth that it was clear to him that his authority as well as his person were in danger. He was kept waiting for five days before being summoned to an audience, and on arriving at the palace with a bodyguard of two hundred horsemen, he was delayed for two hours at the gates while Sindhia was amusing himself flying kites. When Sindhia at last arrived the reception he accorded the Frenchman was so cold and insulting, that Perron retired to his camp in disgust. There he was ignored for another eight days, visited only by Gopal Rao Bhau, an influential but discontented Maratha noble, who warned him that Daulat Rao and Ghatke Rao were plotting to take him prisoner, and had engaged a number of Pathans for this purpose. Accordingly when Perron at last received the summons to attend Sindhia he did so escorted by 800 Indian and 80 European officers, each one with a brace of loaded pistols. It was a wise precaution. When they entered the tent they saw the Pathans grouped on the right of Sindhia, who at once objected to the size of Perron's escort. Perron replied that it was his right to bring his suite, whereupon Sindhia went into an excited discussion with Ghatke Rao and Gopal Rao, while the Pathans eyed Perron's officers fiercely. At last the whispering ceased, Gopal Rao having persuaded Daulat Rao that if he gave the signal to the Pathans for violence they would all be shot to pieces by Perron's men, who laughed heartily as the scowling Pathans were ordered to retire. The dramatic scene is vividly described by James Skinner, who was one of the officers present.

Perron's officers thus having demonstrated their loyalty to their general, Daulat Rao began to have second thoughts about the ease with which he could dismiss Perron, in spite of the assurances
of Sutherland and Brownrigg. Then unlike his rivals Perron had the revenues of Hindustan to draw on. Daulat Rao decided that the best and most profitable policy for the time being would be to conciliate Perron, who, affecting great indignation, took five days to be pacified. At last after much coming and going of intermediaries, Daulat Rao publicly embraced Perron, saying that he regarded him as his uncle, and that he had complete confidence in him. A timely gift by Perron to Sindhia of five lakhs of rupees clinched Perron’s victory.

Sutherland and Brownrigg were thrown to the wolves. Brownrigg was put under close arrest and surrounded by a guard with fixed bayonets, and Sutherland was deprived of his command of the First Brigade, and transferred to the Second Brigade which was to accompany Perron back to Delhi. Sutherland who had no illusions as to what fate was in store for him once he had left the protection of his Maratha supporters, left Perron’s camp at Ujjain “without leave” and with a hundred chosen horsemen rode off to Agra.

This gave Perron the opportunity to reorganise the command of the brigades. He was now able to do what he had long thought necessary if the French plans were to be realised. He eliminated from the senior posts all British citizens: Pohlman was given the command of the First Brigade, George Hessing, a Dutchman, of the Second, Louis Bourguien of the Third, and Dudresec of the Fourth. Hessing’s father commanded the fort at Agra, Drugeoen that of Delhi, and Pedron was in charge of Aligarh. The British junior officers, including Skinner, kept their posts, and Brownrigg, an Irishman, was later released and made commander of the Fifth Brigade.

In the meantime Jaswant Rao had been growing in strength, and by September, 1802, he had fully recovered from his defeat at Indore, and was in a position to challenge Sindhia’s dominance once more. In October with a large force of infantry and Pindaris he moved towards Poona. Baji Rao, the Peshwa, greatly alarmed, tried diplomatic means to halt the advance, but Holkar would accept no terms: apart from political motives he had his brother’s murder to avenge. On October 7th, the Peshwa’s army was scattered and all its guns captured, and Poona lay open to Holkar’s
advance. Then Sindhia stepped in, and sent with all speed an army composed of four battalions of the First Brigade under Dawes, seven Maratha battalions, 10,000 cavalry and 80 guns. To this the Peshwa added four infantry battalions and 6,000 cavalry. Holkar’s forces were superior: he had thirteen infantry battalions under Vickers, Harding and Armstrong, and 25,000 cavalry in addition to irregular forces.

On Sunday, October 25th, negotiations proving futile, the opposing armies took the field. After a prolonged cannonade from both sides, Dawes began to advance with his battalions, beating off a cavalry attack. Jaswant’s lines began to waver, but the chief quick to see the crisis rallied his horsemen and led personally a charge on the Maratha battalions which were already being driven back by Harding’s brigade. The battalions could not stand the shock and broke. Then Holkar turned his attack on the isolated Dawes, who after a third of his men and three of his officers were killed or wounded still continued to fight until a powder cart exploded and he himself was killed. A Frenchman named Hanove continued to resist until taken prisoner.

Holkar’s victory was complete. He himself was wounded while spearing one of Dawes’ artillerymen, and Harding was killed riding by his side.

Before the battle the Peshwa had withdrawn to a palace some miles south of Poona, a precaution that the outcome fully justified. His troops animated by the same spirit had left the battlefield at the first shot and had retired to the safety of the walls of Poona. On the news of Holkar’s victory, the Peshwa with his court and bodyguard fled at once to Singarh, and thence to the coast, where he was picked up by an English ship and taken to Bassein and then to Bombay. This was the beginning of the end of Maratha independence.

Holkar lost no time in seizing Poona. He declared Baji Rao to be deposed, appointed a puppet as Peshwa, usurping the real authority himself. He then gathered his forces to await the expected onslaught of Sindhia’s whole force. But this onslaught was long in coming. Once again Perron had refused to commit his brigades to action in the Deccan.
Perron’s reluctance to commit his strength to the Deccan can be readily understood by historians if they were not by Sindhia and other contemporaries. The scheme to re-establish French power in India was nearing fruition, and Perron was only awaiting Bonaparte’s orders to assign all the vast territory he held in Hindustan to the French Government, a transfer which was to be confirmed by the Emperor, who was securely in Perron’s hands. Out of the five brigades he kept three under his personal command, and began openly to refer to them as “the French army of Hindustan.” The strength of this army was not to be dissipated in pursuing Sindhia’s quarrel with Holkar, nor was it to be removed from Hindustan. Furthermore Perron knew that General Decaen’s expedition was on its way, and that he could expect shortly the contingent of trained French officers, whom he considered necessary in a war with the British.

But although Sindhia may have been baffled by Perron’s present inactivity, Wellesley was not. “There is every reason to believe,” he wrote in his History of the Maratha War, “that the Government of France intended to make the unfortunate Emperor of Hindustan the main instrument of their designs in India, and to avail themselves of the authority of His Majesty’s name to re-establish their influence and power.” The Governor-General was even more explicit in a letter to General Lake. He pointed out that Perron’s territory amounted to “an Independent French State, in which he dictated with the authority of a sovereign of high rank,” and that his army constituted “a menace to the British dominion in India,” and continued, “…the probability of a renewal of the war with France, … urges the necessity of resorting to every practicable measure of precaution and security… the safety of the British dominions requires the reduction of M. Perron’s military resources and power…”

The first step towards this end was the Treaty of Bassein, which the refugee Peshwa was forced to sign by his English protectors. Baji Rao had resisted English pressure to sign for two months, in the hope that Sindhia would drive Holkar out of Poona and re-establish him on the throne. But without Perron’s brigades
Daulat Rao did not think himself strong enough to attack the formidable Holkar. In vain he bombarded Perron with orders to march south, to which he invariably got the reply that the general was preparing to march "immediately." But "immediately" had evidently taken the meaning of the Spanish \textit{manaśa}, for Perron did not come. At last Baji Rao could defer his decision no longer, and on December 31st, 1802, signed the Treaty of Bassein, by which he sacrificed Maratha independence, became a protected prince, submitting his foreign affairs to the control of the Company. He further agreed to accept a British force in his territory and to assign them large and rich districts for their maintenance. He was to discharge "any European or Europeans in his service, belonging to such nations, who shall have meditated injury towards the English, or entered into intrigues hostile to their interests."

In March, Major-General Arthur Wellesley escorted the Peshwa back to Poona, Holkar retiring before his advance to Indore, and invested him. The Governor-General then graciously offered to effect a similar treaty with Sindhia, who furious but powerless refused, and instead formed an alliance with the Bonsla chief of Berar to resist English aggression. His orders to Perron now became peremptory.

Events were happening too quickly for Perron. The arrival of the French fleet carrying the Decaen expedition was delayed and did not appear off Pondichéry until June, 1803. The failure of Decaen to arrive on time combined with the swift British action resulting in the Treaty of Bassein, which secured British dominance at Poona and the whole Deccan, had rendered his plan nearly impossible. He was also well aware of Wellesley's intentions towards him, and he realised that his position was now fully exposed. He lost heart and began to think in terms of securing his own person and fortune.

Meanwhile Sindhia grew "warm and positive" in his demands for the brigades, and the disheartened Perron finally sent him the Fourth Brigade under Dudrenec and the Fifth Brigade under Brownrigg. At the same time he sent his resignation from Sindhia's service. He then applied to the British authorities for leave to proceed to Lucknow with a suitable escort. Wellesley was
of course delighted to accord permission and to issue orders that he should be suitably received and hurried on his way back to Europe with every possible courtesy. Then Sindhia declined to accept the resignation.

When they learned the details of the Treaty of Bassein all the Maratha chiefs were filled with dismay, and, as the Maratha nation had done at the time of the Durani invasion, they tended to unite in face of the common danger. Raghujie Bonsla of Berar sounded the toscin for united action to expel the English intruders and to restore the Peshwa’s independence. All the Maratha chiefs answered the call with the exception of Holkar who remained savagely aloof in his lair.

In refusing to accept his resignation, Sindhia informed Perron of the general alliance and asked him to draw up a plan of campaign to be followed in the event of war. Perron’s hopes began to soar again. A defeat of the British by the Maratha confederacy would make all his plans possible. He withdrew his resignation and agreed to serve Sindhia for another year. Wellesley had to cancel his reception parties.

He drew up a plan of campaign. Sindhia with 38,000 Maratha cavalry was to invade Hyderabad and detach the Nizam from the British cause; Bonsla with 30,000 horse was to ravage Bengal; Holkar was to invade Benares and Bihar; and Ambaji Anglia with 20,000 cavalry was to overrun Oudh and the British Doab possessions. Holkar’s infantry under Vickers was to blockade Surat; the First Brigade under Pohlman, the Fifth under Brownrigg, the Begum Sombre’s battalions under Saleur were to defend the Ajanta Ghat; Bonsla’s infantry was to hold the Kasaberri Ghat; and Perron himself with his three brigades was to defend the passage of the Jumna.

It was an excellent plan; but its success depended on full Maratha co-operation, including that of Holkar, whose attitude to the general alliance was already suspect. Nor did it take into account the jealousies and intrigues that were endemic in Maratha politics. But Perron was enthusiastic, especially as he had now heard of the long-delayed arrival of General Decaen at Pondicherry. He prepared for war with the utmost energy. He withdrew the Third Brigade from the Punjab and stationed it at Panipat,
guarding Delhi; the Second Brigade he concentrated near Agra; and at his stronghold of Aligarh full preparations were made for hostilities.

But Perron’s newly found zeal came too late to allay Sindhia’s suspicions, which the General’s previous disregard of his orders and his procrastination had deepened. In August on the eve of war, he was superseded in the Governorship of Hindustan by Ambaji Inglia, who was also made commander-in-chief, with Perron subordinate to his orders. The blow was made more bitter by the faithless conduct of the trusted Dudrenec, who at once swore allegiance to Ambaji.

In the previous June, Sindhia and Bonsla had crossed the Narbada and had encamped on the Hyderabad frontier. In vain the British resident at Sindhia’s camp, Colonel Collins, demanded the withdrawal of the Maratha armies; Sindhia’s only reply was that the British army under Arthur Wellesley in the Peshwa’s territories should be first withdrawn, a manifestly impossible demand. The Governor-General then sent Sindhia an ultimatum, intimating that (1) a march on Poona would be the equivalent of a declaration of war; (2) an attack on the Nizam would be repelled by British forces; (3) the Governor-General was prepared either to include Sindhia in the Treaty of Bassein, or to conclude a separate alliance with him.” This was followed up by Arthur Wellesley who visited Sindhia and the Bonsla, and was told that they would depart only after the Governor-General had disbanded his army. This was tantamount to a declaration of war. Colonel Collins left Sindhia’s camp on August 3rd, and the British Government forthwith declared war.

The last person to hear about the declaration of war was Perron, whom Sindhia ignored, and even so the notification came from General Lake who was advancing on Aligarh. Lake made overtures to him to change sides, but Perron, bitter and frustrated as he was, rejected them. He was too deeply committed to the French Government’s plans to surrender without striking a blow. Had he done so his return to France would have been impossible. He sent his family and treasure to Agra, and prepared to resist Lake’s advance.

On the declaration of war, Lord Wellesley had issued a pro-
clamoration inviting all British officers in the Maratha service to leave their posts and come over to the British Government, which undertook to pay them pensions graduated to their rank.

Most of the adventurers in Sindhia’s service accepted this offer, among them Captains Carnegie and Stewart, who informed Perron of their intention to leave his service. Perron was furious. He at once dismissed seven other officers, including Skinner, and ordered a general discharge of all British subjects in the Brigades, warning them not to be found within reach of the Maratha camp after a certain date. That this action aroused great resentment among its victims is revealing of the adventurers’ mentality. Apparently they were quite prepared to serve against their own countrymen.

Negotiations with Perron having broken down, General Lake advanced to the gates of Aligarh, before which Perron had drawn up a line of cavalry in a strong position, with a swamp in front of them and the fortress behind. The British commander tried to turn his left flank, and advanced under cover of heavy fire from his galloper guns. Perron’s cavalry at once fled, and their general himself was forced to flee the field with about six thousand horse.

Perron took the road south towards Agra, and here he came across some of the British officers he had previously dismissed resting during the noon heat. Among them was James Skinner, who resented his dismissal strongly and was thinking of appealing to Sindhia. As they were resting at midday on August 29th, they first saw the Maratha cavalry galloping towards them in a disorderly manner, and then they were amazed to recognise Perron, dashing up without his hat. Skinner at once accosted the general complaining about his dismissal and asking to be reinstated. “Ah! no, no,” replied Perron, ‘it is all over. These fellows (the Maratha cavalry) have behaved ill; do not ruin yourself; go over to the British; it is all up with us!”1 At this, Skinner appealed to him to rally his men and make a stand, saying that he and many others were prepared to fight for him. But Perron shook his head and said in bad English, “Ah! no, Monsieur Skinner. I not trust. I not trust. I ‘fraid you all go.” Skinner then told him that he was going to complain to Sindhia, but Perron broke off the discussion,

and saying, "Goodbye, Monsieur Skinner. No trust! No trust" rode off.

Perron went to Hathras, where he made over the command of the Hindustani horse to Fleurea, ordering him to ravage the country round Cawnpore. This Fleurea did most effectively, capturing the Company outpost at Shikohabad, and threatening Cawnpore itself until the news reached the troops of the fall of the fortress of Aligarh, which caused them to ride back to Agra.

Perron had left Colonel Pedron in command of the fort at Aligarh, with instructions to defend it to the last. "Remember you are a Frenchman, and let no action of yours tarnish the high character of the nation," wrote Perron to Pedron. "The eyes of millions are fixed upon you." He assured Pedron that he would relieve the fort in a few days, sending back "the English commander as fast or faster than he came."

Unfortunately his commander's exhortations had little effect on portly little Pedron, who, considering the war already lost and having little faith in Perron's promises, was prepared to capitulate. But his troops were not. They deposed Pedron, "the stout, elderly man in green," and elected a Rajput named Baji Rao as commander. General Lake was forced to storm the fort, which he eventually took after prolonged and fierce resistance. Baji Rao and two thousand of his men were killed, and the English lost two hundred and twenty-three officers and men. Pedron, dressed in his best green uniform with the gold lace, was released from his confinement and made a prisoner of war.

Perron was then at Mattra, busy rallying his forces. Here he learnt of the treachery of Louis Bourguien, his relative by marriage and close friend. This former cook and pyrotechnist, whose military inefficiency was widely known, had been protected by Perron, who, nevertheless, had been obliged to supersede him in the field by other more competent officers on more than one occasion. But Perron's friendship to his compatriot was such that he had always reinstated him in spite of his better judgment. On the outbreak of hostilities with the English, Bourguien commanded the Third Brigade, stationed a few miles to the north of Delhi at Panipat. As soon as he heard of Perron's defeat at Aligarh, he publicly announced that Perron had gone over to the
British, and winning the support of his brigade, he appointed himself supreme commander. He then tried to win over the Second Brigade, which he managed to do after arresting the commander, Geslin, and all the officers. He then entered Delhi and obtained from the old Emperor, who was long accustomed to doing what the latest armed newcomer told him to do, an appointment as commander-in-chief of the Imperial Army. But the Emperor's keeper, Drugeon, remained loyal to Perron, refused to give Bourguien the treasure in his care, mustered the garrison and expelled Bourguien from the fort. Bourguien then ineffectually bombarded the fort, and seized the person of Perron's banker, from whom he extorted several lakhs of rupees. He then wrote to officers at Mattra, denouncing Perron as a traitor and ordering them to seize him, and if necessary put him to death. An attempt to assassinate Perron, at Bourguien's instigation, was only foiled by the presence of mind of his aide-de-camp.

Perron had now had enough. His supersession by Ambaji, the fall of Aligarh, the defection of the First and Second Brigades, the disloyalty of Dudrenec who with the Fourth Brigade had declared for Ambaji, the outrageous behaviour of Bourguien and the attempt to assassinate him finally decided him to go. He wrote to General Lake to inform him that he had resigned Sindhia's service, and now wished to renew his application for a safe conduct through British territory on his way back to Europe. But he was obliged to leave by stealth. He mustered his troops and declared his intention of punishing Bourguien and the mutineers, and to ensure their loyalty he distributed among them three lakhs of rupees. Having thus sweetened the temper of the army, he left Muttra the same evening with his bodyguard, announcing that he was going to Delhi. He crossed the Jumna and bribed the ferryman to keep every boat on his side of the river for the rest of the night. He then rode through the night to Sasni, where he met a British force sent out to meet him, and he and his bodyguard were conducted to the safety of Lucknow.

Thus in ten days from the opening of hostilities, Perron's power had collapsed and he himself was a fugitive in British territory. It was not a glorious end to the career of a man who had ruled Hindustan like an independent sovereign.
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He was treated with respect by the British and given the honour due to his rank. Nevertheless Perron finally left under a grievance. He had left a large sum of money at Agra, and when he heard of the fall of that fortress he wrote to the Governor-General to claim it. Wellesley, however, declared it to be public treasure, and therefore legitimate prize-money to be divided among the officers and men who had captured it. Perron did not take this view and considered that he had been robbed. But he was not in any way short of money, for he had £300,000 invested, oddly enough, in East India Company funds, apart from the money and jewels he had brought with him. Owing to the dispute about the fortune left at Agra he dawdled for some time at Lucknow, then at Calcutta and then at Chandernagore before finally embarking for Europe. In September 1805, he landed at Hamburg, where he applied to the French consul, Bourrienne, for a passport. He told Bourrienne that he had been obliged to pay the British Government three-quarters of his fortune before he could obtain permission to leave India. The consul was impressed by this one-armed adventurer with his two copper-coloured children, a boy and a girl, to whom the general showed the greatest affection. He was even more impressed when he received a present of a magnificent cashmere, of which the general appeared to have a large quantity.

Napoleon, however, was not impressed. The Emperor blamed Perron for the collapse of his Indian schemes. He considered that the general had not even made a token resistance to the British, and had fled at the first shot. It was in vain that Perron tried to exculpate himself by blaming Sindhia, Bourguien, Dudrene and Pedron, who had lost the fortress of Aligarh in one day, when it should have withstood a siege of two months, thus enabling Perron to bring up his infantry divisions, when the monsoon was over. Napoleon dismissed him coldly.

He left Paris and purchased an estate at Fresnes, where he lived in style with his mother and sisters. Some time after he married a Mademoiselle du Trochet, by whom he had a large family. Two of his daughters subsequently married into the Rochefoucauld family, and the “copper-coloured” girl also married a French nobleman.
But in spite of his noble sons-in-law, Perron remained an ardent Jacobin and republican. He did not trouble to conceal his views, so that after the restoration of the monarchy he was regarded with suspicion by the authorities, who placed him under police surveillance and persecuted him in other petty ways. His achievements were belittled and his faults magnified. "Perron," wrote an anonymous French critic in 1822, "under the protection of the British Government escaped the just vengeance of the Marathas, Sikhs, Rajputs and all the people of India. He has returned to France to exhibit before our eyes, as a trophy of his infamy, the diamonds and the millions he stole from the miserable Sindhia whom he betrayed. His infamous treachery was so odious to the Indians that his name was long execrated by them. The conduct of this traitor assured to the English the supremacy of Hindustan, and has done more harm to the name of France than fifty years of misconduct and misfortune could have accomplished."  

"The diamonds and millions" enabled Perron to endure such vicious attacks with fortitude. He was comforted by the luxury with which he was surrounded, which enabled him to reflect that he had not done badly for a man who had started his career by hawking hankerchiefs in a French provincial town. He died at his Château of Fresnes in 1834, in his seventy-ninth year. There is no gravestone to commemorate the name of the last representative of French power in India, the almost sovereign ruler of Hindustan.

The flight of Perron from Mattria left Louis Bourguien triumphant. His prestige among the troops was high, for had he not been the first to see that Perron was a traitor. With general approval therefore he stepped into Perron's shoes as commander-in-chief of the Imperial Army.

After the fall of Aligarh, the army gathered at Delhi. The three brigades were there, with 110 guns and Fleurea's cavalry. But the recent upheaval in the command had made the soldiers dis-

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trustful of their officers and inclined to mutiny on the slightest provocation. Thus when news came that General Lake was advancing on Delhi with forced marches, they imprisoned their new commander Bourguien who wanted to retire from Delhi into the Hariana. But after Bourguien had pledged himself to defend the city he was reinstated.

Accordingly on September 1803, Bourguien led his army out of the capital, crossed the Jumna and formed a line of battle in the concealment of a grass jungle. There he lurked in wait for Lake.

Lake came up after a tiring march of eighteen miles entirely unaware of the presence of the enemy. The British army began to pitch their tents and were actually engaged in cooking their food, when a large body of Bourguien's horse suddenly appeared as if from the ground. Thus Lake was forced to give battle when his men were tired and in the intense noon heat.

Bourguien was in a strong position on rising ground with his guns well posted. A British cavalry charge was repulsed with heavy losses by well directed artillery fire, and it became clear to Lake that Bourguien's position was almost impregnable. He therefore resorted to a feint, often used in battles from the time of Hastings onwards. He ordered the cavalry to retire as though routed and make towards the infantry divisions then coming up. As he had hoped Bourguien's battalions, no longer under the strong hand of de Boigne or Perron, at once left their line and pursued the retreating cavalry with shouts of victory. When they had decoyed the enemy some distance from their strong position, the cavalry fanned open and allowed the infantry to move through them to the front. The cavalry then massed a short distance in the rear. Lake then ordered a general assault which he led in person. Opposed by a heavy fire of grape which mowed the men down in scores, the infantry advanced to within forty feet of Bourguien's guns before opening a terrible volley which shattered the gunners. Then the infantry broke up into columns, thus allowing lanes through which the cavalry could charge with galloper guns. Bourguien and his officers, as usual well to the rear, were the first to flee, and their men left without leaders broke in confusion. By sunset the British army encamped on the east bank of
the Jumna, opposite the city.

Bourguien with some horsemen had fled to Delhi, where he systematically plundered the city before taking off with his vagabonds on the morning of the 12th. Three days later Lake entered the city in state, paid a visit to the Emperor, who, according to Lake, was overjoyed to see him and to be released from French domination. He bestowed many high-sounding titles on Lake, and was taken under British protection. Lord Wellesley was delighted. He wrote, "... His Majesty Shah Alam being placed under the protection of the British Government, no other power can now avail itself of the weight and influence which the Emperor’s name must ever possess amongst the Mohammedan inhabitants of Hindustan." But he never attempted to restore the Moghul power, which he declared "Sindhia and the French adventurers had usurped." Shah Alam and his successors became impotent pensioners of the British.

The next day Bourguien and a handful of French officers surrendered, their lives being in danger from an indignant population. They were sent under heavy guard to Calcutta. Bourguien’s usurped command had lasted a fortnight, and few afterwards believed his claim to have tried valiantly to save the Maratha Empire from destruction.

Indeed, his contemporaries had little favourable to say about Bourguien. George Thomas thought him a fool and made a fool of him at Georgegarh; General Lake described him in his despatch as "a miscreant"; Skinner said that "he was not only a coward but a fool"; and Smith described him as being "as wicked as he was weak".

After his release in Calcutta, Bourguien took ship for Hamburg, where he arrived while Perron was still in the city. The unfortunate Bourrienne, the French consul, had to endure the two men denouncing each other in turns as the author of the Indian disaster. Bourrienne noted that the only thing the two men had in common was an immense fortune.

His visits to the consul at Hamburg are the last we hear of Bourguien. With his ill-gotten riches he disappears from history, remembered only as the cook who for a fortnight became commander-in-chief of Sindhia’s infantry brigades.
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When Lake entered Delhi, Drugeon, the French governor and custodian of the Emperor also surrendered. A sum of five and a half lakhs of rupees in his possession was seized as prize-money, and he himself was sent a prisoner to Calcutta. Drugeon, a Savoyard like de Boigne, was one of de Boigne's first officers, and had commanded the Second Brigade. De Boigne appears to have had an affection for him, and after he had fallen in disgrace with Perron and superseded in his command by Duprat, intervened with Perron to get him appointed to the command of the Delhi fort and to the charge of the Emperor's person. He wrote regularly to de Boigne in France, expressing his dislike of Perron, whom nevertheless he defended against Bourguien's usurpation. He confided in de Boigne that he would have liked to return to Europe, but was hindered from doing so "by an entanglement with a lady of the country, whom I love very much. . . She is a niece of the Nawab Suleiman Khan and a widow, seventeen years old, and is incessantly telling me that she would rather die than leave me."8 Because of the machinations of "his jealous enemies" he had not made a great fortune as had others, but had modest savings amounting to Rs. 30,000 invested in the East India Company. This seems to suggest that he administered the Emperor's income honestly. After his internment at Calcutta, he made his way to Europe, where he died at Nice in 1824.

Shortly after the fall of Delhi, the Chevalier Dudrenec abandoned his command and gave himself up to the British at Mattra, thus ending a colourful career during which he had served seven masters. There is no record of his subsequent life. Like others he departed into the unknown.

After the fall of Delhi, many of the prisoners elected to fight for the British, and of these two regiments were made, commanded by Lieutenants Birch and Woodwill, two of Perron's former officers. Birch had been one of Thomas' officers, who had remained loyal to his chief throughout the siege of Georgegarh and the defence of Hansi. On Thomas' departure he had entered Perron's service until the outbreak of the war with the British when he had taken advantage of Wellesley's offer and resigned his post. After the capture of Delhi he was sent with two of his

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new battalions to reduce Bapu Sindhia, Daulat Rao’s governor of Saharanpur, but was ignominiously defeated by that wily veteran. He was then stationed on the Punjab frontier. We know nothing of Woodwill.

At this time eight squadrons of Perron’s cavalry came over to General Lake, who gave the command of them to James Skinner, recently dismissed from Perron’s service.

The historian is much indebted to Skinner for his Military Memoirs, which is a mine of graphic if prejudiced material. He was born in 1778, the son of a Scottish officer in the Company’s service and a Rajput girl. When he was twelve, his mother committed suicide, and after being sent with his brother Robert first to a charity school and then to a cheap boarding school he was apprenticed to a printer. After three days he tired of printing and ran away, roaming the Calcutta bazaars and doing odd jobs for a living until he was recognised by one of his married sister’s servants and carried back to the printer. From this drudgery he was rescued by his godfather, who gave him a letter of introduction to General de Boigne at Koil. Appointed an ensign by de Boigne and a lieutenant by his successor, Perron, Skinner took part in most of Sindhia’s campaigns of that time, often distinguishing himself by his courage and loyalty. In one minor action he was shot through the groin, and lay from three o’clock in the afternoon until the next morning in a heap with the wounded and dead of his own battalion, feebly keeping the jackals away by throwing stones. At sunrise an old man and a woman with the humanity of the simple and poor came to the battlefield carrying a basket and a pot of water, and gave food and drink to all the wounded. The woman was an untouchable and some of the Hindu wounded refused the succour, preferring to die unpolluted. Skinner was later picked up from the battlefield and recovered. He at once sent a present of a thousand rupees to the woman.

In the British service he transformed Perron’s horse, of which he had been given the command, into an irregular cavalry corps, which became famous as Skinner’s Horse or The Yellow Boys. He was given the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and made his headquarters at George Thomas’ old capital of Hansi, policing the Sikh frontier. There he lived in genial state with fourteen wives,
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by whom he had numerous offspring. He died aged sixty-three in 1841, being buried first at Hansi and then at Delhi.

His younger brother, Robert, served under him in Perron’s brigades, but on being dismissed by Perron in 1803 joined the Begum Sombre’s forces. Subsequently he entered the British service and was given a command under his brother in Skinner’s Horse. He died in 1821, aged forty.

At the end of September 1803, General Lake left Delhi and marched on Agra, which George Hessing held for Sindhia with four thousand fighting men. But the Indian soldiers, after Perron’s defection and the poor showing of Bourguien, had become deeply distrustful of their European officers, and hearing of Lake’s advance mutinied and placed Hessing and his officers in confinement. There was also the delicate question of the treasure that Perron had claimed, which the garrison decided to keep intact. Their distrust was extended to three of Perron’s battalions which had escaped from Delhi and were now led by a gallant Mohamedan, Sawai Khan, and to seven battalions of the Fifth Brigade under Brownrigg, whom Sindhia had sent up from the Deccan. The suspicious garrison refused to admit these battalions into the fort, and they had to take up their positions outside. Brownrigg was admitted into the fort and made a prisoner together with Hessing, Sutherland, Derridon, Perron’s brother-in-law, and Harriot, Marshal and Atkins.

The battalions of the Fifth Brigade thus deprived of their European officers now had to face Lake’s assault. This they did most gallantly and fiercely, inflicting and suffering heavy losses before they finally submitted. Faulty intelligence prevented Sawai Khan and the three Battalions who were thirty miles away at Fatehpur Sikri from coming to their aid. Lake then took the fort by storm, captured all the guns and removed the treasure which to Perron’s lasting indignation was distributed as prize-money.

Lake now started in pursuit of Sawai Khan and the remaining battalions of the Second and Third Brigades who, on hearing of
the fall of Agra, had left Fatehpur Sikri and were marching to the Mewatti country, plundering as they went. He caught up with
them near the village of Laswari, and there the last of de Boigne's
battalions stood their ground and did honour to their founder.

Under the able generalship of Sawar Khan they fought as they
had fought at Patan, at Merta and at Laikhari. They defeated a
determined British cavalry attack, and then valiantly resisted
Lake's infantry columns, the gunners serving their guns until
killed by the bayonet. By late afternoon, decimated by constant
attack, they began to retreat in an orderly manner, but were sur-
rounded and attacked on all sides. When only two thousand men
were left out of the original nine thousand, and there was no
longer a possibility of escape, they finally surrendered. The Bri-
tish lost nearly a thousand men and forty-two officers. After the
battle in his despatch to the Governor-General Lake wrote,
"... These fellows fought like devils, or rather heroes, and had
we not made a disposition for attack in a style that we should
have done against the most formidable army we could have been
opposed to, I verily believe, from the position they had taken, we
might have failed."

Thus the sepoys of de Boigne's brigades, left to themselves put
to shame their recent European commanders.

While Lake was engaged in reducing Hindustan, Arthur Wel-
lesley was facing Daulat Rao's main force in the Deccan. In
addition to 35,000 Maratha cavalry, Sindhia and the Bonsla had
de Boigne's First Brigade, under the cheerful German, Pohlman;
four battalions of the late Fidele Filoze under a Frenchman named
Dupont; and five battalions of the Begum Sombre under another
Frenchman Saleur. This army had entered the territory of Bri-
tain's ally, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and Wellesley chasing after
it found it encamped near the fortified village of Assaye. The
light Maratha cavalry could not withstand the charges of the
British heavy dragoons. As one Maratha commander explained,
"These English are large, powerful men—perfect war-tigers—and
the weight of their sabres almost annihilated my poor troopers.
They unhorsed numbers of us merely by riding against us—I was
so served for one, and, with many others, feigned myself dead."4

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But the sepoys of the trained battalions withstood the shocks of the repeated charges, not receding an inch until they fell under the wheels of their own cannon. For three hours they fought desperatley, until finally overwhelmed. Pohlman left a thousand dead on the field, and the surrounding country was littered with his wounded. The British losses were also heavy, nearly two thousand killed and wounded including six hundred Europeans. Ten European adventurers were taken prisoner, five of them French and five British.

After his defeats at Laswari and Assaye, and the final destruction of his French-trained battalions of infantry, Daulat Rao made peace, and like the Peshwa and the Nizam became a "protected" prince.

Three months later, Jaswant Rao Holkar, who had treacherously remained aloof from the Maratha alliance, launched a war of his own against the British. Disgusted by the feeble conduct of many of Sindhia's European officers including Perron, Holkar made a start by putting to death the Europeans in his service. Among those who were beheaded on Tiger's Hill at this time were three Englishmen: Vickers, who had commanded Holkar's infantry corps and had served him with gallantry at the battle of Poona, and two young adventurers Dodd and Ryan. Their heads were fixed on lances and exposed in front of Holkar's camp, and a public crier proclaimed that such would be the fate of any European who might fall into Holkar's clutches.

Holkar with his freebooters and wild Pindaris reverted back to the Maratha traditional guerilla warfare, which had beaten the hosts of Aurangzeb. His remarkable success supports Arthur Wellesley's opinion that the Marathas as a whole would have done far better to have fallen back on their traditional forms of war than to have opposed the British in modern pitched infantry battles in which the British were superior.

[6]

And so they passed, this sometimes brilliant sometimes shabby company of adventurers, as the times that gave rise to them pas-
Professional soldiers, runaway sailors, army deserters, pastry-cooks, scullions, clerks and unsuccessful traders, they played their part in history. Some reached lasting fame, some made immense fortunes and retired to live in luxury in their native lands, but the majority never saw their homes again and lived in relative poverty until they filled unremembered graves, their children adding to the growing Eurasian population.

They were not entirely without virtue. They were not burdened with colour prejudice; indeed few were in the eighteenth century. Colour prejudice developed after the British conquest as a means of preserving that conquest. They were, of course, predatory, but not more so than the princes and Company officials. They were often treacherous but not more so than the rulers of the time. A few committed atrocities, but as we have seen in our own day atrocities are not diminished but often increased with the growth of strong government, when atrocity often becomes a part of state policy.

As is always the case, the sufferers were the simple and the poor, the peasant mass, who scratching what they could from the soil maintained by their labour not only the rulers who oppressed them but the private armies that ravaged their villages and burnt their crops. Thus behind the glittering cavalcade of the warriors is the picture of looted villages, raped women and wailing and hungry children.

So it was then, so it was before then, and so it always will be until man becomes a rational animal.
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