Count Lally

THE destruction of the French power in India was judicially attributed to the treason of Count Lally.¹ After the passions of the moment had subsided, the sentence was reversed, and the calumny has not been revived. But on other grounds the murdered man has been held greatly accountable for the catastrophe which he strove so stoutly to avert. That, as a fact, he did contribute to bring it about is undeniable; but how far his conduct was morally culpable is by no means so simple a question as it might appear to be; for though his want of judgment and temper was conspicuous and baneful, it is generally much easier to pronounce how he acted wrongly, than how he could, under all the circumstances of the case, have acted rightly; while his angry tone and bitter speeches were partly the result of extreme provocation, partly a desperate expedient for flogging into activity the lagging energies of those who, by their apathy, remissness, and factious obstruction, were, as he thought, reducing him to inaction, and fatally compromising the cause of which he was the ardent champion.

Few men have been so misplaced, so sorely tried by experiences least adapted to their character, their lifelong training and associations, their fixed modes of thought, and hence so certain to make serious and irreparable mistakes. And though it is notorious that Lally's difficulties were very great, and were aggravated by his own conduct, it is impossible to estimate him fairly without taking into account much that is not so well known—the purport of his instructions and their liability to lead him into trouble, the details of his personal relations with Bussy, Lavour, and others, and the insidious conspiracy against his authority and in favour of his rival, which he constantly suspected, and which was at length brought to light; though it is still impossible to prove, by direct evidence, the extent of the combination against him, and the complicity of Bussy himself.

¹ He is described by his son as 'Sir Thomas Lally de Tolendal, connu depuis sous le nom du comte de Lally' (*Mémoire produit au Conseil d'Etat du Roi*, 1779, p. 28).

We hope, in the course of a short sketch of his career, to throw some light on these and other matters, which go far to explain much of Lally's seeming perversity.

M. Tibulle Hamont, to whose monograph on Dupleix we were indebted on a former occasion,² has since given a full and conscientious account of Lally, in a work based on the voluminous materials already in print, and on unpublished matter disinterred from state archives and public libraries.³ So far from being inclined to exalt his subject into a hero, he regards him as the incarnation of an evil principle—direct antagonism to the policy of Dupleix—and consequently as the efficient instrument of blind counsels which deliberately rejected the great prize aimed at by that remarkable man, and still coveted by M. Hamont—French rule in India. And this, in the writer's eyes, unpardonable offence colours his whole estimate of Lally, and precludes all sympathy with him. M. Hamont is also fully alive to his moral defects and their injurious consequences. But he has bestowed much pains on unravelling what we have called the secret history of the Indian enterprise, and has illustrated it with apt and copious quotations from the instructions of the government, the correspondence between the general and his rival, Lally's private letters to friends, his despatches, and other authentic sources of information. He has also minutely criticised and thoroughly discredited the scandalous chronicle compiled by Lavour (the discovery of which, after the author's death, was the immediate occasion of Lally's impeachment) and fully exposed the shameless iniquity of the trial. And strong as is his personal bias against the unfortunate general as a politician, his honest and careful delineation of the under-current of affairs, confirmed by the *ipsissima verba* of the prominent personages, enables the reader to form an independent judgment of Lally's conduct and of that of his domestic adversaries. We shall endeavour, as far as our limits permit, to state the case fairly, though not always confidently, nor always in accordance with M. Hamont's conclusions.

Lally-Tollendal was born at Romans, in Dauphiné, in 1702. His mother belonged to a noble French family. His father, Sir Gerard Lally, was an Irish Jacobite, who after William's triumph became colonel of the Irish regiment in the French service, raised by his relative, General Dillon. An enthusiastic legitimist, he confidently anticipated the re-establishment of the exiled line. But meanwhile he served faithfully the *Grand Monarque*, who had befriended his unhappy sovereign, and provided a military career for the gallant victims of James's perversity. He inspired his son with his own sentiments; and thus the boy's surroundings were

² HISTORICAL REVIEW, No. IV., October 1886.

³ *Lally-Tollendal*. D'après des documents inédits. Par Tibulle Hamont. Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie. 1887.

peculiar; his allegiance was divided, his political position provisional; and his later disinclination to see facts as they were may have been partly due to his inveterate habit of underrating or ignoring the practical obstacles to the fulfilment of his hopes of a Stuart restoration. He was well educated: languages, ancient and modern, history, and science, alternately engaged his attention; and he was devoted from his childhood to the career of arms. A captain's commission in his father's regiment was conferred on him when he was only eight years old; and he was initiated into the mystery of war by spending his holidays with his father in camp, and mounting guard in the trenches before Barcelona. In his eighteenth year the regent offered to make him a colonel, but this honour his father declined. At the sieges of Kehl and Philipsbourg he distinguished himself, and on one occasion rescued his father by a spirited charge.

The conclusion of peace left Lally free to indulge his Jacobite zeal. He visited England, explored the scene with a view to an invasion, cultivated personal relations with the disaffected, and returned with increased ardour in the cause, and a keen desire to promote a rising, aided by an European coalition. In this frame of mind he conceived a scheme characteristically bold in so young a man, even in that age of political adventurers. He thought that an alliance between France and Russia would best serve his purpose, as it would almost certainly involve renewed war with England. This indeed the pacific Fleury was little likely to desire, even had the inducements to such an alliance been stronger than any that Lally could at once suggest. But he might offer his services as a political pioneer, and if encouraged might find on the spot materials for strengthening his case. His deepest motive, of course, he could not avow. And, eager as he was, his pretensions to undertake such a mission were slight. But he was not wanting in self-assurance, and friends at court, hostile to England, brought their influence in his favour to bear on the cardinal, who saw in him a convenient agent for ascertaining informally the secret disposition of the Muscovite court. But for the hope of benefiting the cause of which he was the votary, Lally had little reason to plume himself upon the precarious footing which he had gained on the threshold of the diplomatic establishment. He travelled at his own expense; he had no credentials, not even a passport, and no definite instructions. Thus on landing at Riga he was arrested as a suspicious character; and two months elapsed before he was released, and provided with a passport, through the good offices of the Pretender's agent. Parrying the curiosity, and declining the obliging attentions of the chancellor, Count Ostermann, whose German leanings were not suited to his taste, he yet contrived to be introduced by him to Biron, duke of Courland, first favourite of the czarina. The duke

spoke warmly of the cardinal ; and Lally intimated that he would willingly make these favourable sentiments known in the proper quarter, and then prudently took his leave.

Before long Lally was summoned to a private audience, under the impression that he was charged with a secret commission. Though constrained to disclaim this in form, and to profess himself simply an inquisitive traveller, he again expressed his satisfaction at the duke's friendly disposition towards the cardinal, and at Biron's instance he then and there penned a letter to Fleury with the good tidings. Further conferences followed, in which the favourite showed an increasing desire to establish a confidential relation with Fleury, which might serve, by a shorter and easier course than that of the ordinary diplomatic channels, to accommodate the differences between the courts, and strengthen his own situation. Lally was gratified to find that he had not counted without his host, but embarrassed by his want of an official character, and consequent inability to improve the occasion as he might otherwise have done. In vain he lingered for months ; his letter remained unanswered. The cardinal did not care to commit himself through such a medium, or perhaps preferred to await a more definite communication. Lally felt that he was losing ground, and that his equivocal position was not free from danger. He therefore urged the importance of his immediate return to France, where by personal intercourse with the minister he might accomplish more than he could hope to do by letters. Biron dismissed him with a strong assurance of his desire for a Franco-Russian alliance. Though Lally had not altogether failed, he was mortified at the implicit disavowal of his capacity for regular business, and on his return remonstrated freely with Fleury, who rallied him on his impatience, and asked for a written report of his mission, and of the impressions which he had derived from it. This was promptly tendered, and remains a remarkable monument of his quickness of observation, and adroitness in marshalling and interpreting facts in the direction of his foregone conclusion. This exposition of the internal state and resources of the Russian empire, of the advantages which France might anticipate from an alliance with it, and of Biron's personal interest in promoting such an alliance, seems to have produced some effect on the cardinal. But the course he recommended was too decided to be lightly adopted by so cautious a statesman. Lally tried hard to commit him by soliciting a renewed and more formal mission. But before anything had been arranged the aged minister died, and the scheme fell to the ground.

Reverting to the career of arms, he proved more successful, gained the reputation of a good officer and the honours of his profession. In 1742 his conduct in Flanders caused Marshal de Noailles to select him as chief of the staff. His services at the sieges of Menin, Ypres, and Furnes were recognised by the

raising of a new Irish regiment, which he commanded, and which bore his name. This he rapidly brought into an excellent state of discipline. But his proudest achievements were at Fontenoy, for the defeat of the English was much due to him. Before the battle he averted a great danger by discovering a path which the enemy might have used for turning the French army. If he did not, as his son affirms, suggest the timely use of the guns which, as Carlyle says, slit up like a ribbon the terrible English column, he certainly led the dashing charge of the Irish troops, which completed its overthrow. His rallying cry on this occasion was a Jacobite one. *Sougez que ce n'est pas seulement contre les ennemis de la France, que c'est contre vos propres ennemis que vous allez combattre.* He touched the right chord, and for once triumphed over Hanover. He was wounded. The Dauphin on the battle field announced the king's appreciation of his conduct. Louis made him a brigadier; and his bravery was the general theme. This was the more gratifying because his ancestral sovereign was now in the crisis of his fortune, and with his recent honours thick upon him he could more hopefully advocate French support of Charles Edward's romantic enterprise.

Lally now proposed that 10,000 soldiers should co-operate in the invasion, and this was nominally approved. They were to be commanded by Richelieu, with Lally as his quartermaster-general. Voltaire, who was engaged in the preparations, extols Lally's zeal, boldness, and (singularly enough) his *mœurs douces*, adding, however, *que ses malheurs altérèrent par la suite.* Anticipating the departure of the French armament, he joined the young Pretender with a small part of his regiment, only to find that the march on London had been abandoned at Derby. His announcement of Richelieu's speedy coming was no counterpoise to the depressing passiveness of the English Jacobites; and though he deplored the retreat, he was too good a professional soldier not to detect the incompetence of the clans for regular warfare. This conviction was shared by the marquis d'Eguilles, the French envoy with Charles Edward, between whom and Lally a cordial understanding was soon established; and in a joint memorial they pleaded earnestly for the prompt despatch of the promised force. But the French government, though ready enough to make a threatening demonstration, was not hearty in the cause of the Pretender; the English fleet was on the alert; and the weather was unfavourable. Thus Charles Edward and his gallant Highlanders were left to fight their own battle.

Lally was indeed present at Falkirk; but he soon after repaired to Ireland, and thence to Spain, still in the vain hope of obtaining assistance, and then ventured secretly to visit London. He was detected, escorted to Portsmouth, and ordered to leave the

kingdom. But he returned to the capital, and this becoming known, a price was put upon his head. He fled, disguised as a sailor, and reaching the coast in this costume was pressed by smugglers, and had the piquant sensation of hearing them discuss the chances of gaining the promised reward for his discovery. But he persuaded them that it would be a better speculation to avail themselves of his local knowledge to traffic on the French coast. They were chased and captured by a French cruiser, and carried to Boulogne, where the governor released Lally, who proceeded to Versailles, to try the effect of a personal appeal on behalf of the sinking cause. The answer was so far encouraging that he joined the assembled armament. But it never sailed; and soon the tidings of Culloden filled him with despair. *Songes*, he wrote, *à battre les Anglais de ce côté-ci de l'eau, puisqu'on ne peut les battre chez eux.* The Pretender received his devoted follower in the warmest manner, and wished to decorate him with an Irish peerage. But he declined the hollow emblem of failure, though not the thankless office of petitioning the king to befriend another descent. This being refused, he rejoined the army; led another brilliant charge at Lawfeld, and was indefatigable at the siege of Bergen-op-Zoom, where he was again wounded, and narrowly escaped destruction from the explosion of a mine. In a rash reconnaissance he was taken prisoner. He afterwards took part in the siege of Maastricht, where he was severely wounded, and received high commendation from Marshal Saxe, who made him *maréchal de camp*. On the conclusion of peace he again visited London in the Jacobite interest. The duke of Cumberland soon forced him to depart, but not before he had had a secret interview with the prince of Wales, who thought him odd—a compliment which Lally probably returned. Whatever Voltaire may have found him on the eve of the '45, its ruinous result, and the temporising conduct of the French government, which had deluded and profoundly disgusted him, and lost the fairest opportunity of gratifying his passionate yearning for a Stuart restoration, seem to have greatly soured his temper, and developed his worse qualities, to the most serious injury of his Indian enterprise.

Dupleix's policy had found little favour in France. It was, in itself, too speculative, too artificial, and too liable to the suspicion of personal motives, to inspire confidence; and in practice it had not fulfilled its early promise. The acquisition in the Circars was a substantial gain; but it was accompanied by the onerous obligation of supporting the Nizam on his precarious throne. That a French commercial agent should affect the airs of a Mogul sub-viceroy seemed preposterous and intolerable. And while the company saw in the attempt to establish French ascendancy an alarming prospect of endless war on the coast, wild

enterprises in the interior, suspended trade, and embarrassed finances, the government dreaded that the local contest might swell into the proportions of an international war. Hence the recall of Dupleix, and Godeheu's pacific mission. But it soon appeared that simply to put back the political clock was impossible. Fighting ceased for the moment, but the elements of hostility remained, partly as the ground-swell raised by the late tempest of war, partly from the state of things produced by the pacification. It was easier to announce that both parties were bound thenceforth to subside into quiet traders, than to dispose them to do so, or to remove mutual suspicions that more ambitious designs were no longer cherished. The necessity of self-defence had been too well proved; and jealous rivals, with an armed force at command, would be strongly tempted to employ it on slight provocation against each other, or as before in the service of native rulers, whose assistance they might require in their own extremity. Godeheu's declared aim was to establish an equality between the possessions of the two European companies. The French retained the assignments in the Circars; the English their *jughire* around Madras. But as the Circar grant had been made for the support of Bussy's contingent, this was still left in the Dekkan. That such an arrangement was not strictly consistent with the professed renunciation of Dupleix's policy, the English could not fail to observe; nor could they forget that the subahdar claimed to be over-lord of the Carnatic, and that the French still occupied the stronghold of Gingee, in the heart of the province. On the other hand, the French could as little forget that Mahomet Ali was the creature of the English; and they soon learned that Bussy's position had been much shaken by Dupleix's recall, and had been maintained—or rather regained—only by a remarkable combination of military vigour and diplomatic address; that the subahdar himself was threatened not only by his inveterate enemies, the Mahrattas, but by the ambitious intrigues of his brother, Nizam Ali, who favoured, and was encouraged by, the English. And in defiance of the self-denying ordinance negotiated by Godeheu, Bussy's arms were soon after employed, on the subahdar's behalf, against Mysore, and those of the English in reducing to obedience Mahomet Ali's nominal subjects in the hitherto almost independent country, south of the Caverry. Thus, apart from more remote dangers of disturbance, the European settlers still watched each other with jealous eyes; and their continued connexion with native states, which were by no means friendly to each other, and were exposed to internal revolutions, boded ill for the preservation of peace, and the prosperity of commerce.

Hence the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in Europe probably only anticipated, in a more legitimate and direct form, an impend-

ing recurrence of the old quarrel between the English and the French in the Carnatic. The directors of the French company conceived new hopes from the resolution of the government to employ a strong force on the Coromandel coast. With little help from home Dupleix had kept the contest undecided to the end: what might not a good general, at the head of a regular army, aided by a fleet, achieve, especially if the English were taken by surprise, and assailed before they could be adequately reinforced? A short and vigorous campaign might decide their fate. Their few troops might be overpowered, their settlements captured, their trade ruined; and even if their complete expulsion should not outlast the war, the victors might, in the interval, secure advantages which would give them a permanent ascendancy over their commercial rivals. For the conduct of such an enterprise the directors thought Lally peculiarly fit. His energy, boldness, firmness of purpose, his established military reputation, his intense hatred of Hanoverian rule, his profound contempt for the civilian Dupleix's warlike fever, for Bussy's vaunted triumphs over Asiatics, and for the idea that the transparent artifices of a merchant could place the Mogul empire at his disposal, all recommended him to their patronage. They accordingly preferred an urgent request that he should be appointed to command the expedition. But the minister Argenson knew him too well to comply with their wish, until he had warned them of its probable consequences in terms so distinct that they ought not to have been disregarded, and so prophetic that they demand insertion here.

*Vous vous méprenez. Je sais mieux que vous ce que vaut M. de Lally; mais il faut nous le laisser en Europe. C'est du feu que son activité. Il ne transige pas sur la discipline, a en horreur tout ce qui ne marche pas droit, se dépite contre tout ce qui ne va pas vite, ne tait rien de ce qu'il sent et l'exprime en termes qui ne s'oublient pas. Tout cela est excellent parmi nous; mais dans vos comptoirs d'Asie, que vous en semble? A la première négligence qui compromettrait les armes du Roi, à la première apparence d'insubordination ou de friponnerie, M. de Lally tonnera, s'il ne sévit pas. On fera manquer ses opérations pour se venger de lui. Pondicherry aura la guerre civile dans ses murs avec la guerre extérieure à ses portes; croyez-moi, les plans de Lally sont excellents; mais il faut charger un autre que lui de l'exécution.*⁴

A memorial on the Indian question which Lally at this time submitted to the government ought also to have excited misgivings. For, airily assuming the triumph of the French over the English, it proposed to follow this up by a territorial readjustment quite incompatible with the circumstances of the case, and had it been feasible at the moment, fraught with later danger. But as it was part of his plan that the company should thenceforth maintain an

⁴ Hamont, pp. 65, 66.

attitude of complete political neutrality, his ignorant and rash suggestions made him the more acceptable to those who understood little better than he did the actual condition of the Peninsula.

The instructions of the government expressly enjoined that the company should be disentangled from native alliances:—*Il est essentiel que la Compagnie s'en retire aussitôt qu'elle le pourra, sans se compromettre, avec la ferme résolution de n'y avoir à l'avenir aucune part, et de ne s'occuper que de son commerce.*⁵ But, on the other hand, it is important to notice that this course was not ordered to be taken at once, nor until the stress of the English war should be over. *Tant que l'on sera à la coste de Coromandel dans une sorte d'équilibre avec les Anglais, et qu'on aura la guerre avec eux, celle des deux nations qui voudrait se retirer d'avec les Maures courrait le risque de voir les puissances du pays se réunir à son ennemy contre elle, et par cette raison, il ne convient pas encore de se concentrer dans les établissements que l'on veut conserver.*⁶ Nay further, participation in native warfare is explicitly sanctioned, so far as such action may contribute to the conquest of the English. *On ne peut trop recommander à M. de Lally de ne prendre aucune part dans les guerres des différentes puissances qu'autant qu'il se procurera par là des facilités pour attaquer Goudelaur et Madras, et expulser les Anglais de la côte de Coromandel.*⁷ In the same vein it is suggested that Bussy, or one of his lieutenants, might march from the Circars into the Northern Carnatic, and thus effect a diversion in aid of the operations of the main army. Lally was to use his own discretion as to the withdrawal of Bussy and his contingent from the Dekkan, and to beware of turning Salabat from an ally into an enemy. And when the alliance was renounced, the territorial revenues were to be retained as long as possible. This was a hint that Lally might manage to keep possession of the Circars, without rendering the military service the performance of which was the condition of the tenure. Such hints he was not likely to disregard, especially when they coincided with his own ideas. Thus, a suspicion was intimated that Duplex's scheme had been promoted by the military class for personal objects; that the subahdar was little better than a beggar; and that both he and Bussy and his officers had been liberally maintained at the company's cost. The truth was to be ascertained from an impartial person, well acquainted with the Dekkan. But as it was not easy to obtain such evidence, and as Lally inclined to the same view, he was tempted to use his discretion in summarily cancelling Bussy's appointment, for the evil consequences of which rash act his employers were thus partly accountable.

The same ensnaring ambiguity is discernible in his prescribed relations to the government of Pondicherry. His powers were not

⁵ Hamont, p. 67.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.* 70.

only ample but inquisitorial. Yet he was ordered to defer to those whom he was authorised to control and correct. He was appointed lieutenant-general and inspector-general, and all classes, from the highest to the lowest, were to obey him *comme ils feraient à la propre personne du roi*. At his own request, he was invested with the right of concluding treaties. But his orders were—*de concerter avec les directeurs, gouverneurs et commandants particuliers des établissements de la Compagnie, les projets qu'il formerait sur les opérations de la guerre, par rapport aux influences que ces opérations pourraient avoir sur le commerce de la Compagnie, et aux effets qui pourraient en résulter vis-à-vis des puissances du pays*. M. Hamont remarks:—*Cette clause était dangereuse; c'était créer dans le gouvernement de l'Inde un dualisme, source fatale de conflits et de discordes*.⁸ Though Lally's want of local experience ought to have warned him to distrust his first impressions, to seek information, and adapt his proceedings to ascertained facts, it was certainly perilous to authorise such a comprehensive interference with the exercise of his military judgment. And the danger was much increased by his being also enjoined to guard against the latent sympathy of the governor, Leyrit, with Dupleix's policy, and to institute an inquiry into the administration, reform abuses, and repress corruption. *M. de Lally aura beaucoup de peine à déraciner l'esprit de cupidité qui règne à Pondicherry, et ce serait un des plus grands services qu'il pourra rendre à la Compagnie*.⁹

Another serious danger was involved in the independence of the admiral. He was to co-operate in the attack on the enemy's maritime settlements. But as there was no secure harbourage on the Coromandel coast, and the violence of the monsoon was dangerous to shipping, the fleet was accustomed to repair to the remote French islands during the tempestuous season. And the admiral could not be controlled in his choice of times for departing and returning. A bold and zealous officer might not hesitate to risk much for the attainment of a great object. But too exclusive a care for the security of his squadron might banish the admiral at the critical moment, and ruin the general's combinations.

The campaign was to begin with the siege of Fort St. David, but not until the French force was superior at sea, as well as on land, an inconvenient restriction. Madras was to be next reduced. In both cases the fortifications were to be destroyed, and Labourdonnais' precedent of holding a conquered place to ransom was not to be followed. The general was cautioned against wearing out his army by expeditions into the interior. But it might be necessary to take Arcot and Trichinopoly; if so, Arcot was to be attacked first.

The army was to comprise six infantry battalions, belonging to

* Hamont, p. 65.

* *Ibid.* 69.

Lally's own regiment, and those of Bussy and Lorraine, with a complement of artillery and engineers; the fleet six men of war, and some of the company's ships; the military chest was to contain 6,000,000 livres. The admiral and the chief engineer had been recommended by Lally, and he was accompanied by a brilliant staff. The departure was fixed for February, 1757. But, from the first, an adverse fate seemed to beset the expedition. Aché, a brave but unenterprising seaman, and Dure, an incompetent engineer, were substituted for the men of Lally's choice; and a royal order cut down the proportions of the armament by one-third. Thereupon the general and the admiral prayed to be excused—but in vain; and Lally was reassured by the promise of timely reinforcements. Soupire was despatched in advance with 1,000 men. But official obstacles and stress of weather retarded the final departure of the main body until May; and so much time was wasted on the voyage that it lasted a year. When on 28 April 1758, Lally, fretting at the long delay, caught sight of Cuddalore, Soupire had been several months in India, but had accomplished little; and the English fleet had just arrived. Thus the advantage of a surprise had been lost.

Fort St. David was strong, well-armed, and had a numerous garrison, commanded by Polier, a good officer. To carry it by a *coup de main* seemed out of the question, and Aché raised plausible objections against an immediate investment. But at last he consented to anchor, and Lally proceeded the same day to Pondicherry, in quest of Soupire's detachment and the company's troops. An ominous accident did not improve his temper; he was carelessly saluted by a battery loaded with ball, and his ship was struck. Treating the council with scant ceremony, he demanded information on the strength of the enemy and a supply of money, but could obtain neither. He knew, however, that the English fleet was at hand; and hoping to anticipate its movement, he mustered the available force, 700 Europeans, several thousand sepoy, a small body of cavalry, and eight guns; and marching the same evening, they reached Cuddalore, adjacent to Fort St. David, on the following morning. The want of guides and provisions, the desertion of native porters who had been pressed into the service, the heat and other discomforts of the forced march, gave a foretaste of the severe trials which awaited the army. Preparations were being made for an immediate assault on Cuddalore, and the troops were about to disembark, when the English fleet appeared.¹⁰

Lally's spirit rose with the danger. He scorned to abandon, or even to suspend, the attack; and while Aché engaged the fleet, he maintained his position between the town and the fortress, and

¹⁰ This is M. Hamont's statement. According to other accounts, the fleets fought a running battle further to the south.

constructed his batteries. The sea-fight raged for a time near the coast, and then its thunders died away in the distance. The event was uncertain; and an English victory would render the position of the small French force very critical. Still Lally persisted, and three days after his arrival Cuddalore surrendered, without a blow having been struck in its defence by the garrison of Fort St. David, which had been hastily collected, and was so indifferent in quality that Polier had no confidence in it. Five days later Lally learned that the French fleet had arrived off Pondicherry; his troops soon joined him, but the ships had suffered too severely to obey his summons; his guns were few compared to those of the fort; and his urgent application for ammunition, tools, fascines and gabions produced no effect. The commissariat was in a desperate state, and the detection of several practices injurious to the service, and the backwardness of the government to punish the offenders, inclined the general to suspect that it was less unable than unwilling to assist him. In no placable mood he repaired to Pondicherry, resolved to carry matters with a high hand. In vain he insisted that it was his business to fight, and that of the council to provide him with the means of doing so.¹¹ *J'ai commencé le siège de St. David. Je veux prendre la forteresse, je la prendrai; mais, pour cela, il me faut des canons et des munitions. Votre devoir est de me les fournir. L'œuvre de préparation vous regarde. A chacun son rôle.*

Lally was told that the necessary means could only be obtained with the aid of native alliances, which he reprobated. He thereupon announced his intention of providing transport by a forced requisition; and he seized cattle, carts and boats, regardless of the protest of the government, and of the general outcry. But he did more. Natives of all classes and castes were compelled to do coolie service; and so great was the consternation that the people fled in terror, and the impressed porters and carters abandoned their charges on the way, and were replaced by a fresh batch of equally reluctant recruits. By such means the besiegers were supplied with sufficient *matériel* to prosecute their operations. Three outworks were stormed, a fourth was evacuated, and Dure was ordered to open the trenches. But he began so far off, and with such intervening obstacles, that Lally was obliged himself to choose a more suitable point of departure. The work went on, but the army suffered much from the heat, the drifting sand, and scant nutriment; many died, or became delirious, from sunstroke. The second parallel had been completed, and the batteries erected, when tidings came that, as the sailors had mutinied for want of pay, the fleet was immovable. A strangely worded and strangely spelt letter from Aché confirmed this intelligence, and bemoaned his helplessness.

¹¹ His instructions sanctioned this view.

Lally hastened to Pondicherry, taking with him 400 men to reinforce the admiral's authority ; and with much difficulty, and by advancing 60,000 livres of his own money, induced his colleague to sail. The siege was pressed ; and unrelieved by land or sea, his water-supply failing, his garrison drunken and unmanageable, and his defences crumbling under the fire of the besiegers, Polier surrendered ; and Lally utterly demolished the place, and re-entered Pondicherry in triumph.

Thus he had accomplished the first part of his enterprise, and in spite of serious obstacles had rapidly reduced a fortress which had baffled Dupleix's repeated efforts. The enemy had not ventured either to meet him in the field, or to bear the brunt of an assault. Another resolute effort ought to make him master of Madras, which had been easily taken by Labourdonnais with a force contemptible compared to the French army now to be brought against it. Arcot and Trichinopoly, unaided by the English fleet, must then fall ; and already possessing Gingee in the interior, and Karikal on the southern coast, he might complete at leisure the conquest of the Carnatic. But the siege of Fort St. George was a far more serious undertaking than that of Fort St. David. Its defences had been much improved since Labourdonnais' time. And it was held by troops of a very different description from those whose indiscipline had made Fort St. David untenable. Moreover, the greater the effort and persistence required, the less would they suit Aché's temper. Above all, experience had already proved how little Pondicherry was to be relied upon as an adequate base of operations. Lally, however, was not the man to hesitate an instant on account of the strength of the place ; and he had already overcome the admiral's reluctance to co-operate with him, as it was his duty to do. He had also by his forced requisition taught the governor and his council a lesson, which he hoped would have a salutary effect. He was slow to believe that Pondicherry was incapable of supplying his wants ; he attributed to sinister motives the repeated suggestion that he should seek the aid of a native alliance ; and he did not despair of quickening the zeal of the officials, and shaming or coercing them into the fulfilment of their obligations. Hence, as if to compel obedience by cutting off all hope of foreign help, he abruptly recalled Bussy and his troops from the Dekkan, and ordered them to join his army at once, though the Circars were to be still occupied by a French force. The results of this rash order were most disastrous. It indisposed the subahdar to assist the French with the material resources which they so sorely needed ; it deprived them of his moral sanction, and reduced them to the invidious position of a foreign army of occupation in the territories of the Mogul ; as a retrograde step it impaired their prestige, which had been sus-

tained by their daring attitude in the heart of the Dekkan, it left the Circars exposed to Forde's bold diversion against the incapable Conflans ; it compelled Salabat to protect himself by an English alliance ; it was deprecated by Bussy as a political blunder of the first magnitude, and resented as a grievous private wrong ; and by bringing together, in the delicate relations of superior and subordinate, two men equally haughty and self-confident, who could neither agree, nor agree to differ amicably, it fostered mutual antipathy, and multiplied occasions of discord, which ended in a quarrel fatal to Bussy's usefulness, Lally's authority, and the efficient conduct of the war.

Events soon refuted Lally's calculations. The admiral, despondent as usual, refused to take part in the siege of Madras, and proceeded on a cruise against the company's merchantmen off Ceylon. And Leyrit announced that only enough money remained to feed the army for a fortnight. The treasure brought out in the fleet had been expended, and little had been found at Cuddalore and Fort St. David. But Lavour, the principal of the Jesuits, who had been one of Dupleix's diplomatic agents, and became Lally's evil genius, suggested to him an expedient, which he was the more inclined to adopt, because it had already been recommended in a memoir which he had read on his voyage. When Chunda Sahib had accompanied Mirzapha to Tanjore, he had obtained from the rajah a bond for more than half a million of our money. This unpaid obligation was in the possession of the French government, and Lally might insist on its discharge. There were obvious objections to such a course, especially from Lally's point of view. But the temptation was strong, and the rajah was weak ; and his money might forward the main enterprise by supplying funds for the immediate reduction of Trichinopoly.

In the original project, a small and well-appointed force, led by an officer familiar with the scene, was to make a forced march from Karikal, and surprise the rajah. But Lally's ulterior object led him to proceed with his whole army through a difficult country, cut up by many branches of the Caverry. He expected to make war support war ; but the terrified inhabitants fled, or concealed their stores ; and though violence was freely used, it was ineffectual. To raise money, the plunder of a town was farmed out to a German officer ; temples were ransacked for idols, which proved to be *gilded*, not golden ; Brahmin priests were blown from guns in the sight of their horrified devotees ; but little food was procured. The heat, the parching dust, hunger, and the fatal tendency to drink to excess when a stream presented itself, told severely on the troops, and many men sickened and died. Though the march was too tedious to leave any chance of surprise, it had been begun too hastily to ensure the collection of supplies at

Karikal. And the cruelties perpetrated by the invaders, and above all the outrages upon the Hindoo religion, had nerved the rajah and his people to resistance. They faced the French in the open; were rapidly routed, rallied in the suburbs, were again defeated, and driven into the city. The rajah maintained that a bond given to Chunda Sahib was not a debt to the French, but he agreed to a compromise. As on the former occasion however, the wily Mahratta was in no haste to settle the account, especially as he had applied to Trichinopoly for help, and was in daily hope of receiving it. He was at last provoked by Lally's insolent threats to break off the treaty, and it became necessary to invest the city.

As serious resistance had not been anticipated, no siege train had been brought, and the French were fain to return from their field-pieces balls discharged from the enemy's batteries. The army was starving, and harassed by the necessity of exploring the country far and wide for provisions. A report that the English fleet had taken Karikal placed the general in a painful dilemma. To acquiesce in the loss of his advanced base would be disgraceful, if not critical. To renounce his original enterprise, and confess himself foiled by a petty native prince, was still less palatable. In a council of war the majority voted for an offensive retreat on Karikal, whence, after its recovery, they might return, and resume the siege of Tanjore. Preparations were made accordingly. The enemy, emboldened by the signs of departure, sallied during the night, and planted themselves in ambush around the French quarters. At daybreak a party pushed past the half-awakened sentinels, and made a dash at Lally's tent. He was slightly wounded, but defended himself with a bamboo cane until help arrived, and his assailants were cut down. The ambushed army then emerged, and a battle followed, in which the French gained an easy victory, and were soon on their way to Karikal. There it was found that the English fleet had not taken the town; but the siege of Tanjore was not resumed. The return march was attended by sufferings similar to those experienced on the advance; and the gravity of the general situation was aggravated by this abortive expedition. The military chest was reduced to 1,200 livres. Yet the general was still bent on undertaking at once the siege of Madras. But again Aché positively refused to risk the safety of his fleet during the approaching monsoon. And though the English vessels were still on the coast, and the council protested against his departure, he sailed the day after the return of the army.

The attempt to lay the rajah under contribution had only postponed a crisis at Pondicherry. Lally now bethought him of using his authority to reform the administration. He had already detected several gross jobs. Strict inquiry, exemplary punishment,

and better management, might develop resources hitherto negligently withheld, or corruptly diverted. Leyrit did not encourage the attempt. He asserted that the settlement was totally unable to maintain the army without the promised assistance from France, which had not been received. And he assured Lally that, if he persisted, he would make many enemies. The latter statement at least was quite true. Administrative reform was not a popular project in a community composed almost entirely of lax officials and their cunning native dependents. It is difficult to estimate what amount of improvement might have been effected by calm, patient, and detailed investigation, judicious suggestions, and temperate firmness in enforcing their adoption. But such was not Lally's method of proceeding; and his want of self-control only made matters worse. His imperious tone to the governor and his council, his hasty assumptions and reckless insinuations, his cutting gibes against individuals, his sweeping denunciation of the city as a sink of iniquity, failed to reach the source of the evil, and incensed all classes against him. He became more hateful than the English themselves; nor was his Irish origin forgotten. His late failure encouraged those whom he stigmatised to retaliate, and disparage him even as a soldier. Witty and sarcastic as he was, he had no monopoly of these qualities in a society of Frenchmen; and a bitter lampoon exposed and exaggerated his weaknesses, charged him with vices foreign to his nature, and held him up to general ridicule.

The return of Bussy added fuel to the flame of these civil animosities. Irritated at the peremptory and humiliating change of his destination, and at Lally's slight estimate of his opinions, he was less disposed to be a peacemaker, than to sympathise with the malcontents, and encourage the government in withstanding the general's demands, and resenting his imputations. On the other hand, his popularity in the city was offensive to the general; and the coincidence of his views with those of the government made Lally more distrustful of both, and inclined him to suspect them of a secret combination against himself. He was marching against Arcot when Bussy joined him. Their first interview destroyed all hope of a good understanding between them. Bussy, who was accustomed to be treated with much deference, was irritated at Lally's cold and supercilious manner: Lally listened impatiently to Bussy's arguments in favour of the Dekkan connexion, and was disgusted at his enlarging on his own exploits, and influence in the upper country. And when he abruptly concluded: *Renvoyez-moi à Salabet-Suigue. Je vous ferai compter 150,000 roupies et un diamant de 100,000 francs*, Lally thought that the cloven foot was obvious, and was highly indignant at this audacious attempt to bribe him. Dissembling his anger, he declined the offer, with the

ambiguous retort : *J'ai un projet sur Madras : aidez-moi de votre crédit et de votre bourse, et je ferai après tout ce que vous me demanderez, sans qu'il vous en coûte un sol.* He says of himself that *il fit la coquette vertueuse.* Perhaps he was partly mocking, partly seriously hoping that Bussy, on such terms, would be tempted to remove his great difficulty. If so, he was disappointed. Bussy, finding that he must remain in the Carnatic, tried to secure the consolation of a prominent post there, as well as a specific promise that he should return to the Dekkan later. He produced a letter from France, stating that the king intended to make him a brigadier, and requested that he might be promoted at once, adding :—*Renvoyez-moi enfin dans le Dékan après la prise de Madras, et je vous ferai donner cent mille écus de rente par Salabet-Suigne.* Lally drily objected that he ought not to anticipate the royal order, and closed the interview. In a private letter soon after, he described Bussy as *le plus cupide, le plus avare, le plus menteur, le plus pillard de tous les hommes.* The inference was hasty, and the language strong; but Bussy had certainly gone far to confirm Lally's prejudices against him; and his next move did not tend to soften them. He was an adept at intrigue, and had already been employing influence in France to obtain the post of second in command. With the help of the letter already mentioned, he now induced the officers, who were much impressed by his grand air and great name, to petition that he might be allowed to do duty as first brigadier. They could hardly have made a more unwelcome request. The reply was a sullen compromise—*que Bussy, jusqu'à l'avis officiel de la nomination, ferait le service de brigadier, mais à son rang et comme le dernier.*

Besides the political importance of Arcot, its possession and that of the country around would facilitate the siege of Fort St. George. It was therefore promptly reduced, together with Timeree, Carangoly, Trivatore and Trinomallee. Lally was so far impressed by Leyrit's and Bussy's arguments, that he was inclined to set up a nawab. Bussy recommended Basalut Jung, a brother of Salabat; but Lally preferred rajah Sahib, the son of Duplex' candidate, as likely to be more dependent on himself. The appointment was postponed, and an attack was projected on Chingleput, which intercepted the communication between Pondicherry and Madras. But it was prevented by a mutiny for arrears, and later by the fear of its retarding the great undertaking.

The prospect of success was far from hopeful. The French army was superior to the English; but the latter had been reinforced, and was expecting further accessions. The monsoon kept both fleets off the coast; but the English admiral was more likely to return betimes. The English were well provided, the French much the reverse. The newly conquered territory barely maintained

the troops stationed there. When Lally insisted on the establishment of supplies of grain and cattle at Pondicherry and at each of the more important posts, he was met by the inevitable—*non possumus*! The governor wrote: *Vous savez que, depuis deux ans, nous sommes aux expédients pour nous soutenir—nos ressources sont aujourd'hui épuisées.* The arrears of pay due to the army exceeded 60,000*l.* The fleet had reduced the Isle of France to destitution. And from France itself no help, nor even tidings, had arrived. The great question was accordingly debated in a mixed assembly of civilians and military men. Leyrit and one of his counsellors urged the obvious objections. But Count d'Estaing, one of Lally's best officers, warmly supported his chief, who advanced 140,000 livres of his own money, his officers 30,000, and the die was cast.

The fortifications of Fort St. George, or the White Town, were of respectable strength; the garrison was numerous and resolute, and commanded by Lawrence; Call, the chief engineer, was equal to his duties; the governor, Pigot, and his council were zealous, united, and on good terms with the military; artillery, ammunition, and provisions were plentiful; and a detachment, with Chingleput as its base, was destined to act on the rear of the besiegers. The fortress was covered by the river on the west and south. To the north-west was the Black Town, or native quarter, which was almost open, and was occupied by the French on the day of their arrival. They found it almost deserted, but full of property. Lally's regiment and the marines, under Crillon, took post on the north, near the sea, whence the approaches were to be made; the regiment of Lorraine and the company's Europeans were stationed in the Black Town. The unwonted plenty was too strong for discipline; disorder and drunkenness were so prevalent that they attracted the notice of Lawrence, who during the night ordered a strong sortie. This was at first successful; but Lally in person rallied the troops in the Black Town, and after an obstinate contest the English were repulsed, with the loss of their guns and many of their best men; and though reinforced they regained the fort in much confusion. But for Bussy their retreat would probably have been cut off. Crillon was leading Lally's regiment to block the outlet of a street down which they were retiring, when Bussy joined him and insisted that, as the enemy had guns, he should wait for guns also. He declined, and ordered the troops to advance. Bussy gave a counter-order, *which was obeyed*, though he afterwards represented it as a '*conseil.*' After vainly urging on his men, Crillon indignantly rushed forward, followed by a few, too late to do more than fire on the rear of the fugitives, who had meanwhile cleared the street. Bussy's officiousness caused Lally to suspect foul play. The charge was passionately urged, and coldly parried by an explanation which at least implies that Bussy had taken too much upon him. He

professed to be a 'volunteer' without authority; yet he halted the troops at the critical moment, in defiance of Crillon's positive and repeated orders. Partly perhaps to obviate his irregular activity, Lally gave him the command of the regiment of Lorraine, *vice* Estaign who had been taken prisoner.

In spite of the misconduct which had occasioned the sortie, of Crillon's *coup manqué*, and the capture of Estaign, the general result was reassuring to the French, and created a favourable impression in the country. The rajah of Tanjore seemed inclined to change sides: Dupleix would have courted and won him; but Lally made no sign, and persisted in ploughing the sand. He importuned Leyrit to forward projectiles and powder *par vingt, par cent, par mille livres, par terre, par eau, sur des chameaux, des bœufs, des chevaux, par des coolies, en un mot, par toutes les voies imaginables*. But ammunition came in scantily and irregularly, and the troops lived by pillage. The military chest was almost empty. Lally borrowed on his own security 25,000 livres from an Armenian, and received 12,000 from a native as a gift. A frigate arrived bringing a million livres, nineteen recruits, and a letter from the minister, recommending the strictest economy. This was all the help from France that ever reached him. Its insignificance was the more painful in the light of the letter of advice, which read like cruel irony. But the French government were not directly accountable for this mockery of support. They had despatched four vessels with nearly 1,000 soldiers, and three millions of livres. But Aché had laid an embargo on the whole at the Isle of France; and even the single million now sent had only been extorted from him by the strong remonstrances and threats of the government of the island, and of Count Montmorency, who was on his way homeward to report the capture of Fort St. David.

Though thus abandoned and crippled by his selfish colleague, Lally showed no signs of flinching. But Dure's incompetence delayed, and the deficiency of ammunition at times stopped the operations; and the defence was energetic and well-conducted. Famine prevailed in the camp, much increased by the activity of the enemy's field detachment. The sickness and mortality were serious; the soldiers were depressed by their sufferings, and desertion became frequent. Still Lally's spirit was unsubdued, and his progress, though slow and painful, was considerable. The fortifications were much damaged; a large part of the town was in ashes; and a breach was at last made. Bussy had been slightly wounded, and on this pretext had kept aloof from the general. Lally sought his quarters, probably with some hope of persuading him to advance money, or use his credit, for the relief of the army. Instead, Bussy offered advice: to suspend the siege would not be to abandon it; a strong position might be taken on St. Thomas's Mount,

which would command the approaches to the fort, and restrict its supplies; the condition of the French army would be improved by the change; and as it was still superior to the English, a detachment might be sent to levy tribute and other contributions from the Poligars to the north of Arcot. The enemy had suffered too much to venture on another sortie, and might be starved into surrender. The advice was plausible, but was it given in perfectly good faith? To break up the siege at so advanced a stage would be a confession of weakness, and the material sacrifice would be great and irreparable. The English in the open would not be idle, and might endanger the detachment in the north. Chingleput would still bar the way to Pondicherry; commissariat would still be precarious; and the hostile fleet might arrive at any moment. Hence Bussy's suggestion appears to us as unsatisfactory as his *conseil* on the night of the sortie; and Lally was not prepared to adopt it. The opinion of his officers was against an attempt to storm the breach, for though practicable, it was so much commanded by the enemy's unsilenced batteries as to be pronounced inaccessible. But Lally devised a plan by which he hoped to avoid this difficulty. Under cover of a report that the enemy meditated a sortie in unusual force, he massed his troops along the trenches; and during the night secretly directed a body of volunteers to turn a battery, near the breach, on the sea front, and covering the approach to the sea gate, on the east of the fort. This battery mastered, the volunteers were to push on against the gate and force it, while the troops in the trenches briskly followed up the attack. But the attempt to turn the battery failed; and a heavy fire from the works above drove back the assailants. It only remained to try the bolder course of a regular assault of the breach in the daytime. Orme asserts that the adverse judgment of the officers compelled Lally to acquiesce in raising the siege, before the approach of the English fleet was known. M. Hamont, on the contrary, says:—*Les troupes allaient se mettre en mouvement pour une tentative suprême. Déjà elles prenaient les armes*—when the fleet was descried, and a hasty retreat became inevitable. Though the escalade would probably have miscarried, perhaps with such loss to the assailants as would have hastened the ultimate catastrophe, not the less mortifying was the reflection, that the salvation of Madras was due as much to the French, as to the English, admiral.

Lally's fortune was staked upon this desperate venture. Had Fort St. George fallen, he would have silenced his detractors; and overawed his opponents at Pondicherry, justified his attitude of political isolation, supplied his immediate wants, and multiplied his permanent resources. The capture of the English army, the bulk of which was assembled in the place, would have enabled him rapidly to complete the conquest of the Carnatic, and to recover the

Circars. He could then have maintained a proud neutrality, for the time, in Indian politics; or he might, as he did later, have cultivated Hyder's friendship, as a security against the revival of the English power. Pitt's resignation, and Bute's peace-at-all-price line would have secured his triumph. Whereas, after such a reverse, with exhausted means, a despondent and dwindling army, a factious combination against him at Pondicherry, and little prospect of assistance from any quarter, he would find it hard to make head against the English, who, elated by his repulse and by Forde's success, and sustained by native alliances, now prepared to take the offensive. His conduct of the siege had not belied his reputation; and he had done all that could be achieved under the circumstances. The army could not be insensible to his ability, zeal, and care for its interests, and the French regiments were much attached to him. But the civilians were in no mood to do him justice. His obstinacy in attempting the impossible, his arbitrary ways, and the severe strain that he had put on the settlement, filled them with wrath. And contempt now began to mingle with their anger. He neither understood his business, nor would he learn it. Whatever he might have been in Europe, he was a failure in India, and to them an Egyptian taskmaster. He showed no sympathy with them, and he deserved none.

Hence, when every effort was required to restore the state of the army, he found no response to his appeals: the officials were more inclined to thwart than to assist him; and the government, which had for some time paid the troops in depreciated paper, so conducted the operation as to enrich speculators at the expense of the soldiery. In vain Lally protested against this scandalous, cruel, and dangerous practice; *on répondait froidement que c'était une monnaie de commerce*. He was at last convinced that he must look elsewhere for the sinews of war. A body of native cavalry might sweep the open country, and collect, at the point of the spear, the revenues of the Carnatic. Bussy approved the plan, but recommended Mussulmans from the Dekkan, whereas Lally preferred Mahrattas. Bussy reluctantly undertook to engage them; but they cost more than they brought in; and the failure of the experiment was a new cause of disagreement.

The northern Poligars offered another prospect of relief; and the council advised that Bussy should be sent to raise tribute from them. Before the matter was decided, the tidings of Forde's victory over Conflans at Peddapoor excited general consternation at Pondicherry; and the council, in conformity with public clamour, now recommended that Bussy should be commissioned to retrieve the disaster, and protect the territory which he had acquired. Had he been promptly despatched, with a sufficient force and ample power to negotiate, he might have conquered Forde in the field;

he would more probably have beaten him in the cabinet, and prevented Salabat's defection. But to this Lally could not make up his mind. He resented the dictation of public opinion; he suspected that the council was the subservient exponent of Bussy's ambitious wishes; and he dreaded being committed to a revival of Dupleix's policy, the more so as Bussy stipulated for a larger discretion than he was inclined to grant. Hence he at first proposed to give him the command of the troops, but to entrust the political duties to Moracin, a former governor of Masulipatam; then, yielding to Bussy's objections, he appointed him alone. But this arrangement was suddenly reversed; Moracin was nominated, and Bussy summoned to Arcot.

This vacillation, like so many of Lally's false moves, was occasioned by his want of money. He had at last induced Bussy to guarantee a loan, but only on the condition that the council should join in the security; and Bussy now insisted that part of this sum should be devoted to the Circar campaign. Lally refused, apparently relying on Bussy's ability to pay his way, and increase his fabulous wealth at the court of the Nizam. But Bussy would not give up the point, and this, added to his insistence on the guarantee of the council to the loan, probably provoked Lally to supersede him. He vented his indignation by disobeying the summons to Arcot, pleading sickness. Lally sent him, through the governor, a formal order to join; and in a letter he insinuated disaffection, and complicity with *cette séquelle de gens, que l'intérêt personnel guide*. Bussy at once forwarded a medical certificate, and later a haughty and splenetic reply, defending himself against the imputations of malingering and sedition; accusing Lally, in turn, on the evidence of camp gossip, retailed at Pondicherry, of a deliberate intention to trifle with, spite, and persecute him; and requesting leave to return to Europe. Bussy is, in many respects, a mysterious person. How far he really wished to quit the scene, may be doubted. He may have seriously desired to recruit his health at home, after prolonged and arduous service in the east, to escape from an intolerable position, and to avoid the risk of sacrificing his fortune in an inglorious and unavailing struggle. His request may have been simply the petulant expression of a passing fit of discontent and discouragement. Or he may have deliberately sought to extort an admission that he was indispensable, and to secure better treatment. As he was expecting to receive the appointment of second in command, he may even have thought that a visit to Europe might enable him to mount higher, and to supplant his rival.

Forde meanwhile had stormed Masulipatam, taken there Conflans and the French force, which outnumbered his own, and persuaded Salabat to acquiesce in the expulsion of the French from the Circars, and to cede the conquered city and a district

around it to the English, not in *jaghire*, but absolutely. Moracin found the place in the enemy's hands, and tamely returned with the tidings, which so far from lulling the quarrel, made it more inveterate and notorious. Lally saw too late his mistake in not having sent Bussy at once against Forde, whose rapid progress he had not anticipated. He knew the importance attached by the company to the possession of the Circars, and the national indignation that would be aroused by his successive reverses. Bussy's return to Europe at this juncture would be doubly dangerous, from the loss of his political influence at the court of the Subahdar, and from his intrigues and misrepresentations at the court of Versailles. The offer of a mission to reclaim Salabat would look like an *amende*, and put Bussy in the wrong, if he declined it: if he undertook it, his success would be attended with great advantages; his failure would go far to burst the bubble of his reputation.

Such, as far as we can judge, seem to have been Lally's mixed motives for making the proposal. But again Bussy pleaded sickness. His conduct on this occasion certainly appears suspicious, insubordinate, and wanting in public spirit. Perhaps it may be thus explained. He seems to have felt that it was too late for him to interpose with effect, and that his chief had cut the ground from under him. His personal prestige was gone. The slight esteem in which he was held by the commander-in-chief was no secret to any one. He had been ordered away, at a moment's notice, from the Dekkan, and compelled to remain a passive spectator of the conquest of the districts which he had gloried in acquiring, and which had been the base of his power. His differences with Lally were also notorious, and would impair his weight as a diplomatist; nor could he be sure that he might not be foiled and befooled by some new caprice; for he had learned that Lally had made secret overtures to Nizam Ali, Salabat's disaffected brother, and the friend of the English. Nor did his chief's tone inspire confidence. For he did not profess to approve the mission, but to suggest it because others thought it necessary. Bussy may also have been influenced by some wild expressions in which the writer implied that he was inclined to retire in despair. Might it not be well to leave him to feel the full burden of his troubles, and so hasten the date of his departure?

Lally was furious at the manifest subterfuge: *c'était bel et bien un refus de service!* Bussy was evidently resolved to baffle all his plans, in order to reduce him to impotency, and then step into his place. He forbade *ce singulier malade* to appear in his presence, and was much minded to put him in arrest. The prohibition was conveyed through Lavaur, a double traitor, who, continuing to stand well with both parties, repeated to each the other's indiscreet speeches, and inflamed their mutual animosities.

The army was in a deplorable condition. The soldiers were in

rags, unshod, and famished. Their pay always in arrear, they became turbulent, and it was impossible to punish severely the frequent though partial mutinies into which they were goaded by their misery. Lally deeply sympathised with their privations, and urgently but vainly importuned the council to relieve them. He therefore now resolved to carry out the project of setting up an anti-nawab, partly for the sake of the money and other supplies which his candidate immediately tendered, partly in the hope of realizing through him, as a sort of arch-zemindar, the revenues of the Carnatic. Thus Rajah Sahib was in fact a mere French official, unconnected with the Mogul polity, though he no doubt regarded himself otherwise. Encouraged by the first fruits of this new political departure, Lally was meditating negotiations with Tanjore, Mysore, and Salabat, when the arrival of a French vessel produced new complications. A despatch from the minister conferred on Lally more stringent control over the civil government; but it also notified the appointment of Bussy as second in command. Whatever satisfaction the general might derive from his increased authority in the city, it was more than balanced by his repugnance to Bussy's promotion. But there was one point of consolation: now, at any rate, he could no longer have the face to shirk duty. Serve accordingly he should, and should be compelled to assume the responsibility of the position into which he had insinuated himself. He was summoned; rated in no measured terms; and ordered to submit in writing the measures which he thought ought to be adopted in the critical state of affairs. Instead of doing so, he sent a letter, which could not but add fuel to the fire of his chief's resentment. He affected reluctance to take up his new appointment, and before doing so insisted on an assurance that his services would be acceptable. Such a blended vein of irony and exultation was too much in Lally's own style. He also endeavoured to pledge his chief to what, though he disclaimed it as such, read much like a revival of Dupleix's system. And he took care to add:—*les besoins pressants de l'armée sont un malheur auquel je ne puis remédier*. Lally at once replied that both parties were bound to obey the express commands of the king, irrespectively of their personal differences; and that he could not sanction the departure of an officer *que le roi fixe ici par un ordre exprès*. It was for Bussy to say, would he do his duty—Ay or No—not to exact conditions. Bussy, who had no intention of forfeiting the prize which he had eagerly sought, then forwarded the required minute. Its general drift was to recommend an alliance with Basalut. This would involve his recognition as nawab of the Carnatic, and the removal of Rajah Sahib. Basalut would undoubtedly expect a share of the revenues; but he would secure the remainder to his allies, as Rajah Sahib could not do, and

would himself maintain the sepoy battalions and other native soldiers then in the French service. Thus relieved, assured of supplies, and its operations covered by Basalut's troops, the European army might be turned to full account, which hitherto had been impossible; and Rajah Sahib might retire on a *jaghire*. Great results might have been obtained, had this plan been followed when Bussy first recommended it. He was at once commissioned to carry it out, with full discretion as to the terms of the negotiation. He departed, with a small escort of infantry and cavalry, and two guns, in no sanguine mood: *mon plan est bon, mais il vient trop tard*.

The prospect brightened for a moment by the unexpected arrival of the French fleet. Though his force was superior to the English, Aché had fought an indecisive battle, and was in a desponding temper. And as September was half over, and he dreaded the coming monsoon, he insisted on departing after two days, in spite of the unanimous protest of a general assembly. He was implored to remain on the coast at least as long as the English fleet should do so, and plainly told that to act otherwise was to ensure the loss of the settlement. Yet he set sail after landing a few recruits, 400,000 livres, and diamonds valued at 380,000, which he had taken in an English vessel. His departure, for once, produced perfect unanimity. A 'national' council was held, and a fresh protest, signed by the leading men of every class, declared that by his desertion he would incur the sole responsibility of the loss of the 'colony'; that an appeal for justice against him would be made to the king; and that each of his captains would be served with a copy of the document. This brought him back; and he was with difficulty persuaded to spare 450 sailors. But he persisted in his determination, and when the English fleet hove in sight, he weighed anchor and, avoiding it, went his inglorious way for ever.

Again thrown upon his own resources, Lally attempted to exert his new powers, and reform the administration. He detected scandalous abuses, and endeavoured by personal control of the expenditure, by reducing the civil establishments, and fining heavily the corrupt native agents of the government, to promote economy, and replenish his military chest. This raised a great outcry against him in the city, and provoked the officials to obstruct his measures for the payment of the army. The recoinage of the money, and the sale of the diamonds, were deliberately delayed, though the troops were ten months in arrear.

The long-suffering of the army throughout its terrible trials must have struck the reader of this sad story. The French regiments, like their leader, had been accustomed to an organised commissariat, and had started with high hopes of winning new

distinction in the east. The company's troops had been nurtured by the unremitting care and versatile ingenuity of Dupleix, and led to victory by Bussy. But under Lally, from the first, both had been in very evil case. Wretchedly fed and clothed, constantly unpaid, they had suffered severely from the climate, and from incessant and arduous service, which wasted their energies, and thinned their ranks, without affording them an opportunity of grappling with the enemy in the open field, and at once retrieving their reputation, and alleviating their misery, by a decisive victory. Yet, pitiful, humiliating, and exasperating as had been their lot, they had shown, on the whole, an admirable spirit: and when driven by sheer necessity to mutiny, they had been quickly appeased, and reconciled to their hard fate by very partial concessions of their rights. Whatever were Lally's faults, this fact speaks very strongly in his favour, as to his military management under such adverse circumstances. His officers seconded his efforts, and contributed their money to eke out the soldiers' poor pittance, and tide over each emergency. But the abrupt return of the fleet, and the delay interposed by the officials in providing for the payment of the army, when it was known that treasure had been landed, brought matters to a desperate crisis. The whole army rose in revolt; encamped at a short distance from Wandewash; chose officers from the ranks, two sergeants being declared generals; and threatened extreme measures, unless the arrears were paid in four days. Meanwhile good discipline, and careful precautions against an attack of the enemy, were maintained. Lally, by compelling the council to send their plate to the mint, and procuring a loan from Lavour, raised about 10,000*l.*; which he forwarded with a proclamation, unfortunately entrusted to an unpopular officer. He was tumultuously received, and returned without even reading the document. Crillon then undertook the task; was greeted with military honours; and effected a compromise.

Though the revolt was at an end, Lally's military authority had been shaken to the foundation; and he had only succeeded in re-establishing it for the time, by exposing in the plainest and severest terms the misconduct of the civilians, and exculpating himself, at their expense, from scandalous charges of malversation which, when current in the city, they had at least taken no trouble to contradict, and which had been assiduously circulated in the camp. The desire to guard against another general military combination, and the hope of tapping new sources of supply, led him to commit the great strategic mistake of dividing the army, just as the English had been reinforced, had captured Wandewash and several other places, and were preparing to besiege Arcot.

Meanwhile the application to Basalut had failed. The revolt of the army and a treacherous letter from Pondicherry had cooled his

first ardour for a French connexion.¹² He wavered, took new ground, and finally required three months for consideration. Thereupon Bussy threw up the negotiation and retired. Learning on his return that Arcot was invested, he made a forced march, and with the help of troops from Wandewash, raised the siege. Lally sneered at *la chute des chimères* of his emissary; but not the less sensibly did he feel his own disappointment; and his desponding language and hesitating counsels betrayed his agitation and perplexity. *Si la paix ne se fait prochainement, je m'écroule.* Bussy, he declared, had been inciting the army to revolt. He would join the faithful Crillon in the south, and leave *ce traître* to his own devices at Pondicherry: *Je lui abandonnerai les trois quarts de l'empire volontiers. Que ne puis-je lui céder le tout.* After announcing to the council Bussy's appointment to the command of the army in the north, he changed his mind, and returned to Arcot. Bussy thereupon suggested the recall of Crillon's detachment; a general action might then be fought, with good hopes of a victory, after which operations against Madras might be resumed. But Lally had special reasons for not adopting this advice. The difficulty of subsistence, and the danger of renewed mutiny, had caused him to disperse the troops. And he had fresh occasion to fear the recurrence of these evils, and to mistrust his adviser. For an insidious attempt had been recently made to transfer the chief command to his hated rival. Saint-Estévan, a seditious Jesuit, had opened a professedly religious mission at Arcot, the head-quarters of the army. He had two strings to his bow: the soldiers might be instigated to depose Lally, or the officers to recommend him to resign. Accordingly, in addressing the soldiers, the *soi-disant* missionary lauded Bussy to the skies, and enlarged on the expediency of his being made commander-in-chief. *Il vantait*, says the commandant of Arcot, *la piété et les richesses de Bussy, qu'il appelait l'homme de Dieu.* The officers he approached as a patriot, and a well-wisher to Lally. Confidently assuming that the feelings which he sought to inspire were already operative, he dwelt on the complete estrangement of the soldiers from their general, and their fixed resolution no longer to obey him, and hinted at the probability of his being assassinated. Would it not then be well to persuade him, for his own and the public good, to abandon a hopeless position? The commandant of Arcot forwarded to Lally a letter to this effect, addressed to himself by the Jesuit. An enquiry was instituted among the soldiers, which proved distinctly the practice with them, the falsehood of the charge that they were disloyal, and the complete failure of the attempt to corrupt them. Saint-Estévan, who deserved

¹² *N'ayez aucune confiance en ce que vous dira M. de Bussy. M. de Lally n'a consenti qu'il allât auprès de vous que pour l'éloigner. Gardez-vous de vous laisser séduire par ses promesses.*—Hamont, p. 229.

to be hanged, was ordered to return to Pondicherry. He quitted the city, but opened a new mission in its vicinity. At Lally's request, his principal recalled him. But Lavaur, by his glosing professions of respect and devotion, still averted suspicion from himself.

Was Bussy privy to these machinations? M. Hamont acquits him, but on weak grounds. *Aucun fait ne légitimait les soupçons de Lally contre son rival. Le grief capital, c'est qu'on avait vu Bussy et le Jésuite causer ensemble, avec assez d'animation, pendant près d'une heure, au fond d'une pagode. Bussy a toujours nié avoir eu connaissance des projets du moine, qu'il n'avait jamais vu avant son arrivée à Arcate.*¹³ The second statement is not quite consistent with the first. The long, private, and animated conference looks suspicious. Bussy's denial proves little more than his unwillingness to admit the charge. And as to the last remark, fellowship in evil, like other ill weeds, grows apace. It is impossible to forget the legal criterion — *cui bono*? Saint-Estévan's action is not likely to have been spontaneous. As a Jesuit, he was under the vow of unreserved obedience to his superior, who had long been playing a double game, undermining Lally's influence, and maintaining an intimacy with Bussy. The intrigue was well timed to coincide with the desperation to which the failure of the treaty with Basalut was likely to reduce both Lally and his army; and as to the latter, the reference to Bussy's wealth is significant. The anonymous letter to Basalut is also suspicious; for it may have been intended to mar the negotiation without compromising the negotiator. And if the officers could have been induced to adopt the Jesuit's suggestion, it might be hoped that Lally would resign in disgust, if not in despair; or, if he still held out, the military revolution might be accomplished by a *plébiscite* of the reunited soldiers. Thus, on the whole, the Scotch verdict 'not proven' seems the most appropriate. Lally, of course, went further, and convinced of his adviser's treachery, as a choice of evils, preferred to open the campaign without awaiting Crillon's junction. Though Coote was watching his motions, he crossed the Palar in the night, surprised the town of Conjeveram, the enemy's storehouse, recrossed the river, and sat down before Wandewash, leaving Bussy, with a strong corps, to cover the siege. Though speed was so essential, Dure's leisurely imbecility, as usual, wasted several days. Lally was quite aware of the danger of being attacked while engaged in the siege, and Bussy urged him to raise it, and fall suddenly on Coote with their united forces. But he chose to take the inadequate precaution of ordering Bussy to join him. Two days after his arrival, on 22 Jan. 1760, the English advanced to the attack, and drove in the French outposts. Lally drew up his army in front of his camp, in the rear of which was the town. He

¹³ Hamont, p. 231.

sent forward his Mahrattas to skirmish with the enemy on the march. But they fled at the first fire, and, planting themselves on high ground, witnessed, without sharing, the battle. Lally's own regiment formed the left of his line, commanded by Bussy, and flanked by a tank, in which were posted 200 sailors and some guns. The company's Europeans were in the centre, and on the right Lally took his own station, with the regiment of Lorraine, and the European cavalry. In their rear was a body of sepoys, with fifty European grenadiers, and two guns. The English formation was somewhat similar, their company's Europeans being also in the centre, flanked on each side by a king's regiment. Behind them was a second line of European grenadiers, and a third of sepoys. Lally opened the battle by charging with his European cavalry the enemy's left.¹⁴ His own gallantry was conspicuous, but unavailing. The horsemen showed no alacrity to move; and when, in full career, two saddles were emptied, they faced about, and fled far away to the rear, leaving the general and his aide-de-camp alone, within eighty paces of the enemy. Their want of spirit, or of goodwill, provoked the regiment of Lorraine to err in the opposite direction. The loyalty of these soldiers had been called in question; they had longed to meet the English in the field, and wipe away the reproach; and they had seen with indignation the desertion and peril of their general. Thus their ardour became irrepressible, and without orders they advanced impetuously against the regiment immediately opposed to them. Lally saw the false move too late to arrest it: a furious combat followed; but in the end the French were repulsed and broken. On the right, the fortune of war declared itself not less decidedly in favour of the English. The tank occupied by the sailors was attacked, and stoutly defended. But a tumbril exploded, killed eighty men, and threw Lally's regiment into confusion. Bussy made great efforts to check the enemy by a hot fire, and repeated charges. But he was made prisoner; the tank was stormed; the captured guns were turned on Lally's regiment; it was driven in on the India battalion, and both shared the fate of the right. Then Coote's army advanced to the pursuit; Lally rallied the fugitives at his camp; and while the European cavalry made some reparation for their misconduct by covering the retreat, he burned his tents, destroyed a quantity of ammunition, spiked some guns, carried off ten, and retreated on Gingee, and thence on Pondicherry. The two companies, European regiments, did not come to close quarters, nor were the sepoys on either side seriously engaged. Thus, it was a battle of royal troops from Europe on both sides. Though Coote was an able general, and his soldiers were more numerous, and in better condition than the French, so prompt and complete a defeat

21-22-23-24 M. Hamont says his right; but this is a mistake. I had quoted

seems little reconcilable with Lally's European reputation. But circumstances were exceptionally adverse to him. Bure's dilatory pedantry exposed him to the disadvantage of fighting while entangled in a siege. The Mahrattas proved utterly worthless, and the misconduct of the European cavalry was the first link in a chain of disaster. Had the regiment of Lorraine been kept steadily in hand, it might have sustained the centre, and prevented its being carried away in the rout of Lally's regiment. The explosion of the tumbril, and Bussy's capture, completed the catastrophe.

Such a defeat was, under the circumstances, a mortal blow to Lally's enterprise. Discredited by former failures, deserted by the fleet, receiving no help from Europe, obstructed by the government, destitute of native alliances, hated by the European settlers, plotted against by unrelenting enemies, betrayed by professed friends, on the worst terms, and invidiously contrasted, with his second in command, who seemed destined, if not determined, to thwart all his operations,—Lally had still retained the affection of the French troops; and had hoped, at their head, to strike a decisive blow, recover his good name, and disperse the gloom that had long hung over his prospects. A great victory would have at once removed many of his difficulties; and he had now learned that it would be wise to avail himself of it for making friends of the country powers, and thus strengthening himself until effectual assistance might arrive from France. But that hope was at an end. He had been vanquished in fair fight. His loss had been heavy, and was the more serious as, while it was irreparable, the enemy were being reinforced. Their fleet had returned, and additional ships were on the way. M. Hamont thinks that by recalling his troops from the south, and withdrawing his garrisons, he might have retrieved his position in another battle. But this seems very doubtful. The confidence of the army in his generalship must have been much diminished. To abandon the Arcot country would have been to confess his inability to retain it, and thereby deepen the despondency of his troops; whereas to cut himself off from his sources of supply would be not only discouraging, but a direct incentive to renewed mutiny. And slight was the hope that with his disheartened and famished men he could conquer Coote's stalwart and well-fed soldiers, flushed with victory. Nor could he leave Pondicherry to be attacked by the English fleet, and invested by a rapid movement of his able adversary, while he was concentrating his troops from a distance. Thus his only course was to return to the French capital, and to keep the enemy at bay, on the desperate chance that he might still be delivered from his perilous situation by the arrival of Aché, whom he had summoned with extreme urgency. Forlorn as was the outlook, he might have faced it more calmly had he not been possessed with the idea that his disasters

were due to internal treason. This conviction maddened him ; and his frantic utterances made him not only odious, but contemptible. *Le méchant homme est devenu fou !* was the popular cry. Instead of recognising how much his defeat was due to himself, when his zeal as a cavalry officer interfered with his supreme control as a general, he ascribed it to an *infernal complot*. Well-founded as were many of his complaints, his hysterical violence, at a crisis when self-control and a conciliatory spirit were so requisite, was at once pitiable and grotesque. *L'enfer s'oppose à tout ce que j'entreprends. Le gouverneur, le conseil, les femmes, le peuple, la brigade, le démon, m'ont fait perdre la bataille.* And when Bussy reappeared, expecting to be definitively released on paying a ransom, Lally raised technical difficulties, and forced him to retire, still a prisoner, to Madras. Thus he plays no part in the final struggle in India, but wreaks his hoarded vengeance, with terrible effect, in France.

Coote renewed the siege of Arcot. As he had deposited his prisoners and magazines in Chittapet, Lally proposed to divert him by attacking this place, and was contemplating another battle, when renewed symptoms of mutiny appeared ; and the arrival of reinforcements under Admiral Cornish made the defence of Pondicherry, and the recall of the southern division, imperative. Arcot fell, and within a month Coote had reduced all the outlying French possessions except Gingee, Thiagar, and Karikal. The last was taken by the fleet, and the English army marched on Pondicherry, and captured Valdore, in its immediate vicinity. Both generals occupied entrenched camps, Coote to the west of the city, Lally at Oulgari, near the bound hedge, on the same side. Neither cared to precipitate a battle. Coote knew that time was on his side, and that the French were in the toils, but still formidable. Lally was awaiting the result of a negotiation with Mysore ; and Hyder was preparing to assist him, the immediate cession of Thiagar, and the promise of Trichinopoly when taken, being the price of the alliance. The Mysore contingent entered the Carnatic, escorting a large convoy, and gained an advantage over an English party. But most of the cattle disappeared during the skirmish, and the Mysoreans retired, not (as M. Hamont says) because the English bribed their leader, but because Hyder recalled it, in consequence of the sudden and dangerous defection of his dewan. Lally made a spirited night attack on Coote's position. He was successful on the right ; in the centre the resistance was obstinate ; and as the India battalion on the left did not co-operate, the French were at last obliged to retire. Orme thinks that the company's officer who commanded the defaulting column lost his way in the darkness. Lally of course accused him of treachery. Though the English army had been strongly reinforced, the French with numbers daily diminishing still boldly

maintained their position at Oulgari, the detached fort at Ariancopan, and a chain of redoubts, connected by a cactus hedge. But the English delivered a general assault in the night on all these points. The redoubts were taken; the line of the hedge was thus turned, Ariancopan was evacuated, and the French hastily retreated under the cannon of the city, and after several spirited sorties shut themselves up within the walls. Coote strengthened his lines, and threw up some batteries. But he intended not to besiege, but to blockade the place, and rely on the sure effects of famine.

The situation of Lally was now terrible. Pondicherry he had denounced as a second Sodom; yet his duty was restricted, to making a last stand on behalf of this odious place. The complete reversal of his comprehensive project must have been intensely agonising to such a man. That he had been hampered, thwarted, and betrayed by others, was a poor consolation. He could hardly blind himself to the fact that his disaster was, to a certain extent, owing to himself. Still less could he be unaware that the general voice attributed it, with too much plausibility, to his obstinate perversity; while many were, or professed to be, convinced that he was a deliberate traitor. Plots were hatched against his authority, and his life was threatened. To save the city was a forlorn hope; and if it fell, national indignation would be aroused, and he was too likely to be made the scapegoat for the sins and shortcomings of others. His health was seriously impaired, and he was at this time obliged to undergo a dangerous surgical operation. He was firmly resolved to hold out to the last; but his sufferings were grievously aggravated, and his difficulties increased, by the factious obstruction of the council, and the seditious attitude of the citizens. Hoping to avert an immediate assault by an imposing display of numbers, he ordered a muster of the European inhabitants, in military equipment, on the shore. They were bound to do garrison duty; but they disputed the order, mutinously invaded in arms the precincts of the council chamber, and were abetted by one member of that body, La Selle. In vain the governor himself gave the word to march, and offered to lead them forth. They refused to follow him; and the commotion was only suppressed by the arrival of a party of soldiers with fixed bayonets. Lally did not persist, and contented himself with relegating La Selle and two merchants to Gingee; and arresting the second member of the council, whom he suspected of connivance. A little later the nerves of the invalid were shaken by a peril which might well appal the stoutest heart. After taking some gruel he was seized with convulsions and vomiting; and believed, probably not without reason, that an attempt had been made to poison him. To his husband the provisions he proposed to send away the useless natives. The council raised a cry

of virtuous indignation at his cruelty ; and the postponement of this precaution hastened the day of doom. A merchant who had been caught in the act of selling the rice reserved for the soldiers was heavily fined. The council sided with the offender, and so tormented the general with minutes on this and similar acts of necessary rigour, that he cut the knot by forbidding that such cavils should be formally recorded. Then he was inveighed against as a despot and a *bête féroce*. When he prohibited the export of cattle, lodged the whole stock in the fort, and ordered a general search of houses, including his own, for food, the council again raised an outcry and declared :—*Lally veut effrayer et décourager tout le monde*.

At last, in desperation, he proposed a strange expedient,—to resign his authority, and throw the responsibility of the defence on his opponents. But the officers declared that neither they nor their men would obey any other general ; and the council disclaimed the power of receiving his resignation. Thus matters remained as before, and the only hope of deliverance lay in the return of the fleet. This hope was finally extinguished by tidings from the Isle of France, which informed Lally that Aché absolutely refused to afford him any assistance. On the other hand, he received at the same time still more ample powers from France, and strictures on the council for their opposition to him. He suppressed Aché's disheartening resolve, and with the governor's help tried to establish a better understanding with the council. But Lavour, whom he employed as mediator, as usual, betrayed him, and encouraged them to proceed to greater lengths than before. They accused him of fabricating the last despatches from France, and engaged in a plot to arrest him. But, supported on this occasion by the governor, he erected gibbets, and threatened to use them. Yet no one was punished. A faint prospect of escape was elicited by the stormy outburst of the monsoon, which damaged and dispersed the blockading squadron, and did much mischief to the enemy on the land side. But most of the vessels reappeared ; the blockade was re-established ; and the defenders were reduced to their last meal. Lally in vain endeavoured to arrange with the government reasonable proposals for a capitulation. They insisted on a truce for a fortnight, during which Coote was to provision the city. If not relieved within that time, it was to be given up. The absurdity of such terms was so obvious, that the general was fain to settle his own plan in a council of war. This, in turn, Coote rejected and the garrison was compelled to surrender at discretion. But he was prepared to respect private property, and refer the fate of the city to the king. This did not suit Pigot's views, and he demanded that Pondicherry should be given up to him, as the company's representative, and carried his

point by threatening to stop the supplies of the English army and their prisoners.

Lally was ordered to Madras. When he was borne forth into the street, prostrated by sickness, misery, and shame, the mob assailed and threatened to lynch him; but he was rescued by a party of English hussars. His military secretary, the Chevalier du Bois, who followed him, was assassinated on the spot, and there is much reason to think that the murder had a political object. For Du Bois had with him a mass of official papers, relating to the disputes of Lally with the government, and the abuses of the administration. These were seized and sealed up by the *procureur du roi*, but were never reproduced. At Madras Lally was subjected to indignities and privations which made the blood of the gallant and fiery Coote boil. Nothing can be said in extenuation of such brutality. But, though Pigot carried his work of demolition at Pondicherry further than was necessary for military purposes, Lally's declared intention of extirpating the English, and his destruction of Fort St. David, may palliate the civilian's vindictive vandalism.

The tidings of the fall of Pondicherry produced an immense sensation at Paris. A calm review of the case would have established the fact that the calamity was inevitable; that the French had been hopelessly overmatched; and that it was impossible for a small and exhausted band of veterans to hold out indefinitely against a strong and well-appointed army, aided by a powerful fleet. But Paris was not in a temper to hear reason; and from that day to our own, Frenchmen, when beaten in the field, have been far more ready to raise the cry *nous sommes trahis!* than to own that they are not invincible, and to ascertain the actual causes of their defeat. The national vanity sought a culprit on whom to be avenged. The company was exasperated at the loss of its settlements, and the extinction of its trade. The government, conscious of its own remissness, hesitated between stifling inquiry, and fixing the blame on others. But the former course was impossible. Lally had preferred formal and most serious charges against the local administration, and against Bussy. And the conduct of the admiral had been arraigned by all parties at Pondicherry, and by the government of the Isle of France. Lally had, moreover, announced his intention of instituting judicial proceedings against his adversaries. On the other hand, they were equally determined to call him to account; and as the government had apprised them of his resolution, they felt that not only their reputation but their safety depended on anticipating his attack, and establishing their charges against him. Hence they were assiduous in private circles, at the India Office, with the ministers, and through the press, in misrepresenting his conduct, blackening his character, traducing his motives, and

propagating the legend, that the *Irishman* had been throughout faithless to the cause of France, and had sold Pondicherry to the English. Supremely ridiculous as was this version of the story, it was too well adapted to the occasion to be dismissed with the scorn which it deserved. Moreover, Lally was absent, and before he could obtain his release on parole, and confront his maligners, it was too firmly impressed on the public imagination to be either easily removed or safely ignored. He did, however, at first attempt to ignore it so far as the public were concerned: though to the minister he reiterated his charges, and demanded an inquiry. This was, for the present, declined, and he was ordered to hold his peace, which he did. Encouraged by his silence, the Pondicherry councillors petitioned the king to be allowed to answer his accusations, and presented to the minister a counter-charge of high crimes and misdemeanours. Leyrit and Bussy then came forward for the first time. Bussy was the more formidable because he had married a relative of the Duc de Choiseul, and had taken care to lay his case before the powerful minister. He now addressed a letter to the directors, insisting that his character and the public interest alike required that Lally's imputations against him should be produced and judicially tested *aux risques de l'accusateur et de l'accusé, dont l'un ou l'autre mérite la mort*. Thus he challenged his adversary to mortal combat. The councillors took a similar tone; and public opinion declared itself more emphatically than before against Lally. Bertin, the finance minister, still hoped that the storm would blow over; but Choiseul, who was minister at war, yielding to its violence, or to Bussy's influence, signed a *lettre de cachet*, consigning Lally to the Bastille. The unfortunate general proudly refused to fly; wrote to the duke, *J'apporte ici ma tête et mon innocence*; and quietly retired to his cell.

But a year and a half elapsed, and his fate remained in suspense. His petition for a council of war, composed of general officers, received no reply; nor were further proceedings taken against him. And he might have lingered out his life in prison, or been after a while released, and spent his last years in exile with a clouded reputation, but for the death of his treacherous confidant, Lavour. This man had played his double part throughout with much subtlety; and so persistently had he deceived Lally, that he had been entrusted with the negotiation for the surrender of Pondicherry. He had written and shown to Montmorency, before the departure of that officer from India, an account of the earlier operations, in which Lally's character and conduct were most favourably reviewed. And there is good reason to believe that he had continued the narrative in the same strain, though it was effectually suppressed by those into whose hands it fell after the

author's death. But he had also prepared another continuous commentary in a directly opposite sense.

The absurdity, incoherence, and mendacity of this odious farrago of scandal have been fully exposed by M. Hamont.¹⁵ But it was artfully invested with an air of probability, and was precisely calculated to confirm the current myth, and thus answer the purpose of Lally's accusers. They therefore treated it as a document of immense importance, and indisputable cogency. Here was the secret history of the fell treason, minutely detailed by the great traitor's familiar! It was industriously circulated in suggestive extracts, which produced a powerful effect on the vain and susceptible Parisians; and the general cry for vengeance waxed loud. The *procureur général* based on this disreputable evidence a demand that Lally should be tried for high treason and other offences. The minister offered no opposition; the king yielded, though not without a struggle; and the cause was entrusted to the parliament of Paris, a most unfit tribunal. But to commit the king more directly, without depriving the parliament of its right to pronounce the final sentence, a preliminary investigation was referred to the Châtelet.

Nothing could exceed the iniquity of the process. The king had expressly ordered *qu'on instruirait l'affaire en tout ce qui aurait trait aux faits de l'Inde*. Had this been properly done, the myth would have been dissipated, and the responsibility for the catastrophe would have been widely distributed, instead of being entirely imputed, on false grounds, to the conquered general; and though the accused would not have escaped scathless, and would have been shown to have been grievously deficient in local knowledge, judgment, temper, insight into character, and consideration for others, his honesty of purpose would have been equally manifest; and it would have been clear that he had striven heroically to the last to avert a calamity which his faults had tended to precipitate, but which was mainly due to a fatal combination of circumstances beyond his control. The directors were responsible for pressing his appointment; the ministers for not accepting his proffered resignation, on the eve of his departure. He was thus forced into a false position. For it must be remembered that, whatever his own sentiments, his dissolution of the Dekkan connexion, his suspicion that Bussy advocated it because it enabled him to amass great wealth, his prejudice against the local government as too much inclined to the policy of adventure, and as inefficient and corrupt, were all countenanced in his instructions. And thus he was officially launched upon a career beset with fundamental difficulties, involving unsympathetic and antagonistic relations with those whose goodwill and zealous co-operation were indispensable to his success, and requiring the greatest circumspection, delicacy, patience, and observance of seasons. That he was not the man to execute such a

¹⁵ Pp. 280-288.

commission in such a spirit, both the directors and the ministers were well aware; and thus their insistence on his undertaking the task was the initial cause of the failure. A less headstrong man would not have recalled Bussy in such haste, as the time for taking this decisive step had been left to his discretion, and he had been warned against taking it prematurely. A more prudent and considerate man would have treated the government of Pondicherry less cavalierly, and would not have taken pains to let them know how badly he thought of them. Nor would such a man have so ruthlessly ignored the social distinctions, and violated the religious sentiments, of the natives. A more teachable man would have modified betimes his preconceived notions, and without becoming a convert to Dupleix's system as a permanent institution, would have earlier seen the necessity of adopting it partially, as a temporary expedient for combating the British. His instructions, indeed, intimated the propriety of such a course. This concession to the views of Leyrit and Bussy, the one pleading the emptiness of the local treasury, the other the availableness of the Nizam's resources, would have promoted a better understanding with both, saved endless discord, and averted the penury which so long paralysed the French arms, and gave the English leisure to muster in overwhelming force. Bussy, despatched in the first instance to the Circars, might have done good service; whereas his precipitate recall, and retention with the main army, entailed manifold and fatal evils. How far the subsequent quarrel between two men whom so many circumstances tended to embroil could have been avoided, may be a question. But it is certain that the fault was very far from being only on Lally's side, and that his conduct of the war was seriously compromised by his apprehension of Bussy's treachery, and that of his suspected confederates. Thus Forde's conquest of the Circars was made easier; and the separation of the army enabled Coote to strike the decisive blow at Wandewash. If Bussy was harshly judged and badly used by his commander-in-chief, he certainly gave ample occasion for mistrust, jealousy, and severity. In their first interview he tried to carry his point by coarse bribery. His intervention during the sortie from Madras was officious, looked ambiguous, and helped the enemy to escape. His attempt to force Lally's hand, and anticipate his appointment as first brigadier; his insolent and insubordinate tone when summoned to Arcot, instead of being sent to Masulipatam; his intrigues to force himself into the place of second in command; his intimate association with Lally's enemies; the perfidious expedients employed, with or without his privity, to shake the fidelity of the army, and provoke a military revolution in his favour; the failure, whether casual or not on his part, of the negotiation with Basalut,—were all at once causes of aggravated suspicion, and fatal links in the chain of misfortune.

The Pondicherry government, ever ready to shelter itself under the plea of inability, displayed from the first no zeal in the common cause, no spirit of self-sacrifice, no readiness to reform abuses, prevent jobbery, and make the most of its means. As Lally's difficulties increased, the councillors ventured on more active opposition: they contemned and undermined his authority; drove the army to a general revolt against him; and were probably privy to Saint-Estévan's project, if not the authors of it. During the blockade they reduced the general to despair by their determined resistance to all his precautions for the defence of the city; and by their impracticable proposals as to the surrender, exposed it, as far as in them lay, to be taken by storm. And these were the persons who brought a railing accusation of treason against the man who had done so much to postpone the calamity that they had done so much to accelerate! Again, Dure's incompetence was greatly answerable for the failure of the siege of Madras, and the surprise of Wandewash. The admiral, like the general, was grievously disappointed at the cutting down of the expeditionary force from its original proportions, and embarrassed and disheartened by the real or affected deficiency of resources at Pondicherry. But his dilatory voyage forfeited all the advantages anticipated from a surprise; his premature withdrawal prevented the prosecution of the siege of Madras when the army was almost intact, and flushed with recent conquest; his second still more abrupt departure imperilled the French settlements; and his refusal (though excusable to a certain extent by the orders of the French government) to afford any help at the last, made the triumph of the English certain.

When the scale of the armament had been reduced, Lally had been reassured by the promise of reinforcements. Hard pressed as the French government was in many quarters, it did, on one occasion, redeem this promise. But Aché intercepted this solitary succour, though the general had formerly assisted him with men, and with money out of his own purse. Thus, without vessels, poverty-stricken, his original force minished and brought low by incessant service and suffering, and distracted by the prospect of being left to struggle on feebly in complete isolation, Lally could only offer, for months, a passive resistance, and when his food was exhausted, surrender on the best terms he could obtain. This he did; and he and his gallant officers and men deserve all honour for their long and heroic endurance, and for having yielded only to famine.

Such would have been the conclusions established by a really judicial and exhaustive inquiry. But the whole object of the process was to vamp up the myth, to insure the condemnation of the accused, and to screen other culprits.

The monstrous assumption was, that the leader of the expedition had, from the first, intended to work out the ruin of the French

interest in India ; that he had arranged his plans, and conducted his operations, so as to lead up to this result ; and that he had put the finishing touch to a long course of treason by selling Pondicherry to the English. To give plausibility to this assumption facts were tortured with diabolical ingenuity ; ridiculous fictions were eagerly welcomed by the court ; scandalous gossip was reported, and received as legitimate evidence ; obviously untrustworthy witnesses, who freely contradicted each other and themselves, were heard not only without check, but with marked favour ; while material and conclusive testimony on Lally's behalf, tendered by distinguished officers, was rejected, evaded, carped at, or perverted. The prisoner was denied the help of counsel ; he was disconcerted in his defence by insolent interruptions and brutal threats ; yet after all it was found impossible to prove his guilt by direct evidence ; a mass of distorted facts and arbitrary inferences was focussed into an incriminating *ensemble* ; and thus was patched up a lame apology for a case of constructive treason ; and the parliament condemned the prisoner, and sentenced him to be degraded, to forfeit his property, and to be beheaded. One zealous judge held that he ought to be broken on the wheel !

Lally, under every disadvantage, had fought his desperate battle with his wonted courage, readiness, and pertinacity. His haughty air, his indignant denunciation of the attitude of the tribunal, the pungent sarcasm and suggestive innuendo with which he exposed the characters of the witnesses, and the glaring defects of their evidence, the frank assurance with which he demolished an insidious web of injurious surmise by a simple statement of facts, must have embarrassed his adversaries, and ought to have carried conviction of his innocence to the minds of his judges. And the vigour of his defence is the more to be admired, because he did not deceive himself as to the result. In a touching letter to a relative, Miss Dillon, he said :—*Il n'y a pour me condamner qu'un moyen, celui de m'empêcher de me défendre. On l'a employé en me refusant un conseil. Que voulez-vous que j'ajoute a ce mystère d'iniquité ? Tout mon crime, aujourd'hui, est d'être innocent. Plaignez-moi, mais oubliez-moi le plus tôt que vous pourrez.* But if he could not obtain justice, he would at least leave his judges no excuse for condemning him. He had already published two memoirs, one at the opening of the trial, another to refute the calumnies which it had elicited, and to prove the misconduct of his adversaries in India. Bussy had replied by publishing their mutual correspondence, with a commentary adroitly adapted to represent himself as the innocent victim of persecution at the hands of his tyrannical and unscrupulous commander-in-chief. Lally now determined to submit his whole case to his judges. This included, besides his previous publications, his military and administrative correspondence, the minutes of the council of war relative to the surrender

of Pondicherry, and the instructions of the king and his ministers, which, though fully justifying much of his conduct that had been most severely arraigned, he had hitherto withheld. The whole filled some eight volumes. But it was practically ignored. It was put in late on a Saturday night.¹⁶ Monday was spent in taking additional evidence against him. And on the following morning the judgment was pronounced, with the audacious and heartless recital: *Vu la requête du sieur Lally et les pièces jointes et énoncées*; in other words, these documents were *assumed* to have been read and estimated. In vain Miss Dillon passionately appealed to the king for a respite, that the prisoner might not be executed unheard. Louis XV was inflexible, though he showed some misgivings at allowing such injustice to take its course. Lally was transferred from the Bastille to the Conciergerie, where he was shamefully treated by the warders, and despoiled of his watch and ornaments, even of his shoe-buckles! On the following morning, May 9, 1766, he was led to the chapel, and ordered to kneel, while his sentence was read. At the words, *convaincu d'avoir trahi les intérêts du roi*, he rose, and uttered a vehement contradiction. Then he relapsed into silence, but suddenly exclaimed: *sur quelles têtes frappe donc la foudre, si elle épargne celles des assassins?* Producing a pair of compasses, he stabbed himself, but not mortally. He made no further resistance, even when the headsman insisted on gagging him. Instead of being conveyed in his own carriage to the place of execution, he was consigned to the cart used for ordinary criminals. Calmly confronting the rabble that surged and howled below the scaffold, he declared, in muffled accents, 'I die innocent!' He requested in vain that his arms might be unbound. He was then blindfolded, and the gag was removed. He begged the executioner not to strike until he should have ceased praying and gave the sign. But even this last solemn wish was disregarded; the blow fell prematurely, and amiss. The head was at last severed from the body with circumstances too revolting to be described.

The hideous scene was just over, when a boy fourteen years of age arrived, too late to tender his filial sympathy to the poor sufferer. But it became the passion of his life to procure the reversal of the iniquitous sentence: and before the *ancien régime* was swept away the pious task was accomplished. Stuart misgovernment made the first Lally an exile. Bourbon misgovernment sent the second to the block. The third shared his father's fate under the popular tyranny. Thus three generations of family history connect the English and the French revolutions. And the victim of the Parisian terror bears the stamp of the Emerald Isle: for Tollendal is the French version of Tully-Dale.

SIDNEY JAMES OWEN.

¹⁶ May 3, 1766.