

CHAP.
XL.

1747.
Sorrow of
Vasudeva
Aiyān at
having
to sell betel
and
tobacco,
at certain
prices

It will be remembered that, on the 9th Purattāsi last [21st September 1746], when Madras was captured, Vāsudēva Aiyān, in spite of his entreaties to be permitted to raise the prices of betel leaves and tobacco, was ordered to sell, as he had before, nine betel leaves for one cash, and twelve pollams of tobacco for one fanam. From that day to this, the grief that he endured was such as he might have felt at the death of his wife and children. At least a hundred times, did he beg the Governor to raise the prices of these articles. On various occasions he stopped the supply to the bazaar-men, and instigated those who furnished betel leaves and tobacco, to protest against the low prices. M. Dupleix remained deaf to all his solicitations. At half-past 8 to-day, however, the man went to him and represented that because, outside the town, five betel leaves were not procurable for one cash, and ten pollams of tobacco for one fanam, the Company was suffering a heavy loss by obtaining supplies from the country, and selling in the town at the rate of nine betel leaves for one cash, and twelve pollams of tobacco for one fanam, and that the people bought these articles in the town, and sold them in the country to their own profit, and to the loss of the Company. In this way he made false representations to the Governor, and obtained from him sanction to sell five betel leaves for one cash, and ten pollams of tobacco for one fanam. When he had obtained this, his joy was such as though he had discovered a vast

He makes
misrepresentations
to the
Governor.

And thus
obtains
permission
to sell at
higher
rates.

treasure, or as though his dead wife and children had been restored to life. He felt the delight which one would experience who had lost many lakhs, and had recovered them all. He then came to me, and saying that he had obtained the permission of the Governor to reduce the number of the betel leaves and the quantity of tobacco sold, asked me to proclaim this by beat of tom-tom. I replied: "Your good fortune is indeed great. During one's lifetime, one should gather honour, but you have sought, and have obtained, disgrace. To drink the heart's blood of countless people does not constitute a creditable phase in your life. Well; as soon as the Council adjourns, I will inform the Governor, and have what you ask intimated by beat of tom-tom. You may now depart." I then went to the Governor, and made my representations. He replied: "I understand you. You tell me of the hardship that will be inflicted on the people. But do you not see the loss which results to the Company by the sale in the town, at a low figure, of the articles purchased in the country, at a high price? We will consider the matter at another time. Meanwhile, you may, as requested, order the revised prices to be announced. After saying this, he remained silent for a while, and then bade me find a remedy for the evil.

The force which had lain encamped at Ariyānkuppam arrived this day at Pondichery. Fifty European soldiers and fifty of the Company's sepoy's were,

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Requests
diarist to
have these
officially
proclaimed.

Diarist
reproaches
him.

And says
that he
will inform
the
Governor.

Diarist
reports
to the
Governor,
who directs
publication
to be made.

And pro-
mises to
consider
matters,
hereafter.

Return of
part of
the troops
at Ariyān-
kuppam.