Hyder Jung Hearsey—"Hyder"
An Intrepid Adventurer

BY GOPAL BHARDWAJ

The family of Hearsey is of undoubted antiquity. In the year 1708-09, the Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) led his family, tenants and retainers into the field. He and his son were present at the battle of Culloden. A grandson of Theophilus took service with the East India Company and was posted to the army in India. It was from there that he was given a title—The Marquis. When it was time for British girls to come out to India, the offspring of such unions eventually occupied some of the highest positions in the land, one to the post of Governor-General of Jamaica. Others became Colonels of regiments and still others, such as the Hearseys, Skinner's and Gardiners, were dashing soldiers of fortune, each with a private army of his own.

Hyder Jung Hearsey—"Hyder", after Hyder Ali of Mysoor, one of the stoutest opponents of the British in India, was a warlike appellation. It was born about 1782. "Hyder" was born to Pernon and changed to "Young", as befitting a member of a race of intrepid warriors. Hyder was educated at the Maratha Congress. He was sent to England and was appointed Aide-de-Camp to Saadat Ali Khan, the last Nawab of Oudh and father of Ghazi-ud-din, the first King of Oudh.

Life in the Oudh court being insufficiently stirring for the young aide-de-camp, he resigned his post and took service with the Maharajas. As he could speak French, he was given a private duty at the court of Lieutenant and Deputy Commandant of the Agra Fort. He was then only 17 years old, an age at which most boys are still in school.

The idea of converting India into a dependency of France, Hyder, who was intensely loyal to his sovereign, left his service and joined that of George Thomas, an Irish soldier of fortune, who had carved a name for himself in service to various kings. He was then known as the district of Hariana in the Punjab. (Now in Haryana State) Thomas took him into the British army, west of river Satlej, to the dominions of his sovereign. This led to a clash between the two, a clash in which Pernon and Thomas in which the latter, mainly due to the fact that he became dead drunk at a crucial period of the battle of the Angul, was captured. It was then that Thomas returned to his service during the engagement, now decided to take a leaf out of the book of these two adventurers. He collected a force and conquered Mewat, then part of territory of Mathura and Gurugram. He was then barely out of his teens.

Lord Wellesley, the then Governor-General, in 1803, decided to break the power of Pernon. He called on all British and Anglo-Indian officers serving with the Maharajas to join the British army under Lord Lake. Hyder, bringing his own troops with him, answered the call and rendered distinguished services during the Maharaja war.

On the conclusion of the war, he and Colonel William Linsteade Gardiner married two sisters, Princesses of Cambay, who were adopted as his daughters by the Moghul Emperor Akbar II. In consequence of their marriages Gardiner and Hearsey acquired considerable estates in the Saltanat of Cambay, the latter settling down at Kanganse, in the Etah district, and Hearsey at Kedari, in the Bareilly district of the then United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, now in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Hearsey's brother-in-law, the princes of Cambay, threw in their lot with him. Hyder had now risen to the rank of Captain.

During the years 1807-08 the British Government sent out various expeditions to execute surveys of their newly acquired territories and among others was a party, consisting of Captain, Hyder, Hearsey and S. W. Webb, a surveyor, who was dispatched to survey the upper waters of the river Ganges. It was, at this time, uncertain where the river rose, some affirming that it was at its source at Gangotri in Garwhal, while others believed that the apparent source at Gangotri was the mouth of a tunnel which pierced the Himalayas and conducted the waters of the Ganges from the holy lake of Munsarwar in Tibet. The three men set out from Bareilly in April 1808 and made an accurate survey of the Ganges and of the mountain region through which it flowed and

attack the Nepalese from four directions and, in addition, to create a diversion by invading the Gurkha-land province of Bhatipittah and attacking the columns of irregulars commanded by Captain Hearsey and his brother-in-law Lt-Col. William Gardiner. Both were placed under the political control of Gardener's cousin, Edward Gardener, an Indian civilian, who was now appointed Commissioner of Kumaon. This rash, indeed desperate, enterprise was suggested by Hearsey and Gardener themselves, both fearless men. Gardener, at this time, commanded a body of mounted Frontier Police, later known as Gardener's Horse. He was directed to raise 3000 men at Kashipur and Hearsey 1500 Rohillas at Bareilly and Plibhit, in which region he had much property and influence. The plan of campaign was for Gardener to advance into Kumaon up to the Kosi valley and Hearsey up the Kali river and to eventually cut off Aam Singh Thapa, who was fighting Ochterlony near Satlej, from his only line of retreat. The time allotted for preparing the small force was all too short, a month to raise and a month to train. In its third month of existence, Hearsey's contingent was actively engaged with the Gurkhas. In the middle of February 1815 Hyder advanced from Plibhit, entered Kumaon from the east and on February 18th, captured two forts which blocked his road to Timla Pass. He continued his advance successfully and, on the last day of the month, he occupied Champawat, the ancient capital of Kali Kuman, and drove the Gurkhas across the river Kali. He next planned to attack the brother-in-law, Gardener. But his force was quite inadequate to this task. He had no guns and no more ammunition for his infantry than his men had been able to carry, in addition to the difficulty of the country. Worst of all, he was compelled to divide his small force, for it was necessary for him to guard his flank by holding the line of the Kali river.

Hearsey detached 500 men under Lieutenant Martin dell; his only British officer, to surround the fort of Kutulgarh, which was held by 400 Gurkhas; with 300 men he formed a chain of small posts to guard his line of supplies from Plibhit; 300 men held the line of the Kali river and, deducting sick and wounded, there remained about 300 effective men at Plibhit, which place he was forming a deposit of supplies for further advance. So passed the month of March.

The troops were reinforced by 850 men on March 22nd, and took up a position facing Almora. Hyder was already linked up with Gardener, but, on March 31st, he received intelligence that 500 Gurkhas had forced the Kali at a point some 14 miles from Champawat. He promptly made a night march, with only 270 men, and attacked the Gurkhas in the early morning of April 1st. The battle went well with Hearsey for a time. To clench the issue he sent word to Martin dell to come to his assistance. Before Martin dell could join him, at about 3 o'clock in the morning, the Gurkhas under Dal Chhauariya, crossed the river and attacked Hearsey. Early in the fight the Hyder was wounded in the thigh, one of the Cambay Princes was killed, and a number of his officers were wounded. He was brought back to Bareilly, and the battle was Maurice. When they were about to kill Hearsey, he was, fortunately, recognized by Hasti Dal, who saved his life by taking him as a child, his relative and friend, and, in gratitude for his efforts to save him, let him go. When he reached Bareilly, he was given all the medical care and, after a short illness, he returned to his home in Almora, where he remained on foot for several years. This battle, the Cambay prince escaped by sitting on his shield and sliding down a precipitous slope. Gholtam Khan, who was wounded by an arrow through both thighs, also got away. The Manjhi, the Bhils, and the Hobangs were driven from Kali Kuman until April 27, 1815, when that fortress surrendered to Colonel Nicolls, who brought a considerable force and took over command from Gardener. Hyder, therefore, had a lasting victory which gave him a lasting victory which gave him a lasting reputation of his own. He was instrumental in moving the whole of the Company's forces to Plibhit, the construction of the new fort there, and the capture of the fort of Kutulgarh. He was also instrumental in the capture of Chandi, the fort of Mandal, and the defeat of the Gurkhas in the battle of Bhatipittah. He was rewarded with a grant of a large estate in Oudh, and was made a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. He died in 1826, leaving behind him a legacy of service to his country and to the British East India Company.