

Surajah Dowla learnt that the British force was attacking the entrenchment and that some of his troops had begun to retreat, he mounted a fleet riding camel and fled in the direction of Murshidabad.

By 5 o'clock the English were in possession of the whole entrenchment and camp, which they found had just been evacuated. An enormous mass of baggage, stores, camp equipage and cattle was scattered around them. Clive sent at once a detachment under Major Eyre Coote to follow the flying foe. The pursuit was continued for upwards of six miles, "which for want of horse answered no other purpose than that of taking all their artillery consisting of five pieces of cannon."¹ The detachment halted at Daudpore, "where the rest of the arms under Major Kilpatrick joined us."²

So ended the battle of Plassey. The Nawab's army, according to Clive's calculation, lost 500 men; the victors lost only 4 Europeans and 14 sepoy killed, and 9 Europeans and 30 sepoy wounded and 2 European sentinels missing. But it is not wise to estimate victory by its cost. Plassey was a great victory because it was conclusive in result. For a force of 800 Europeans, 8 pieces of cannon and 2,100 sepoy, and no cavalry, to advance against an army of 20,000 horse and 40,000 foot, with a large number of guns, was the height of daring. By well-conducted operations and by perfect coolness of nerve Clive gained his last great battle. It has been stated that Plassey can "hardly be called a battle"; it was a rout.³ But it was a rout because Clive, after exercising the highest of all military virtues, patience, hurled his small force at the right moment against the entrenched lines and ended the contest by a vigorous pursuit.

That evening (June 23, 1757) Clive sent the following brief note to "Charles Watson and the Gentlemen of the Committee of Fort William":

GENTLEMEN,—This morning at one o'clock we arrived at Plassey Grove, and early in the morning the Nabob's whole army appeared

¹ Journal of Military Proceedings.

² Eyre Coote's Journal.

³ "The rout of Plassey, for it can hardly be called a battle."—"British Dominion in India," by Sir Alfred Lyall, p. 132.