

## PAST HAPPENINGS.

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deed of gallantry, performed by our countrymen in the last year of the eighteenth century :

## TAKING OF SERINGAPATAM.

On the 4th of May, 1799, Seringapatam was taken, and the empire of Hyder Ali extinguished by the death of his son, the Sultan Tippoo Sahib. The storming of this great fortress by the British troops took place in broad day, and was on that account unexpected by the enemy. The commander, Sir David Baird, led one of the storming parties in person, with characteristic gallantry, and was the first man after the forlorn hope to reach the top of the breach. So far, well, but when there, he discovered to his surprise, a second ditch within, full of water. For a moment he thought it would be impossible to get over this difficulty. He had fortunately, however observed some workmen's scaffolding as he came along, and taking this up hastily, was able by its means to cross the ditch : after which all that remained was simply a little hard fighting. Tippoo came forward with apparent gallantry to resist the assailants, and was afterwards taken from under a heap of slain. It is supposed he made this attempt in desperation, having just ordered the murder of twelve British soldiers, which he might well suppose would give him but little chance of quarter, if his enemy were aware of the fact.

It was remarkable that, fifteen years before, Baird had undergone a long and cruel captivity in this very fort, under Tippoo's father, Hyder Ali. The sufferings he underwent on that occasion were extreme ; yet, amidst all his sufferings, he never for a moment lost heart, or ceased to hope for a release. He was truly a noble soldier. As with Wellington, his governing principle was a sense of duty. In every matter, he seemed to be solely anxious to discover what was right to be done, that he might do it. He was a Scot, a younger son of Mr. Baird, of Newbyth, in East Lothian (born in 1757, died in 1829). His person was tall and handsome, and his look commanding. In all the relations of his life he was a most worthy man, his kindness of heart winning him the love of all who came in contact with him.

Born May, 1569, at Florence, Italy ; died June 2, 1527, Nicholas Machiavelli, a man for benevolence and intelligence, much in advance of his time. By the irony of fate, Machiavellianism has come to mean ruthless dissimulation, and, of course, breach of faith in international matters. Nicholas, of an ancient, but not wealthy family, was well educated, and so able, that, when twenty-nine, he was appointed Secretary to the Ten, a committee for foreign

affairs of the Florentine Republic. His talents and penetration being quickly discerned, he was sent on, and managed well, difficult missions to foreign powers. The Florentines were rich and weak, and had to trim adroitly between neighbours poor and strong, who envied them. Machiavelli got through ably. "His Despatches to Florence," (writes the good Robert Chambers) "describing his own tactics, and those of his opponents, are often as fascinating as a romance, while furnishing authentic pictures of the remorseless cruelty and deceit of his opponents." Displaced and imprisoned through a revolution in 1512, Machiavelli for several years was "out of politics," and devoted himself to literature. About 1519, he was again employed by the restored Medici, and one of them, Leo X, Pope of Rome, employed him to draw up a new constitution for Florence. At length, Machiavelli, for the information and guidance of his patrons, handed them a manuscript, the *Prince*, unfolding the crafts of the statesmanship of his time, but not recommending such a course except under extreme need. The *Prince* was not published until 1532, five years after the author's death. Says Robert Chambers: "He did no more than transcribe the practice of the ablest statesmen of his time into luminous and forcible language. Our feelings of repugnance at his teaching would have been incomprehensible, idiotic, or laughable to them. If they saw any fault in Machiavelli's book, it would be in its free exposure of statecraft. Unquestionably, much of the odium which gathered around the name of Machiavelli arose from that cause. His posthumous treatise was conveniently denounced for its immorality by men whose true aversion to it sprang from its exposure of their arts. The Italians, refined and powerless in the midst of barbarian covetousness and power, had many plausible excuses for Machiavellian policy ; but every reader of history knows that Spanish, German, French and English statesmen never hesitated to act out the maxims of *The Prince* when occasion seemed expedient. If Machiavelli differed from his contemporaries, it was for the better. Throughout *The Prince* there flows a hearty and enlightened zeal for civilization, and a patriotic interest in the welfare of Italy. He was clearly a man of benevolent and honorable aims, but without any adequate idea of the wrongfulness of compassing the best ends by evil means. *The great truth, which our own age is only beginning to incorporate into statesmanship, that there is no policy, in the long run, like honesty, was far beyond the range of vision of the rulers and diplomats of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.*

May 22nd, 1885, died Victor Hugo, one of the greatest Frenchmen of our epoch. His severe condemnation of the *coup d'état*, early in the fifties, of Napoleon le petit, led to his prolonged exile, chiefly passed in the British Channel Islands. For a more extended notice of this great man, we refer our readers to another column of this number.